

A CONGRESS MAN

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Original Declaration of Independence
July 4th 1776



Dear Sir

Monticello May 8. 29.

Your favor of Apr. 29 has been duly reviewed, and the offer of mineralogical specimens from Mr. Meyer has been communicated to Dr. Esmat our Professor of Natural history. The last donation of the Legislature to the University, was appropriated specifically to a library and apparatus of every kind. but we apply it first to the more important articles of a library, of an astronomical, physical, & chemical apparatus. and we think it safest to see that these will cost, before we venture on collections of mineral & other subjects. The last we must proportion to what ^{we} shall have left only. The Professor possesses already what he thinks will be sufficient for mineralogical and geological explanations to his school. I do not know how far he might be tempted to enlarge his possession by a catalogue of the articles and prices, if both should be satisfactory. if Mr. Meyer chuses to send such a catalogue, it shall be returned to you immediately, if the purchase be not approved.

That George Mason was author of the bill of rights, and of the constitution founded on it, the evidence of the day established fully in my mind. of the paper you mention, purporting to be instructions to the Virginia delegation in Congress, I have no recollection. if it were any thing more than a project of some private hand, that is to say, had any such instructions been ever given by the Convention, they would appear in the Journals, which we possess entire. but with respect to our rights and the acts of the British government contravening those rights, there was but one opinion on this side of the water. ^{all} American ^{thought alike} ~~highly~~ sentiment on these subjects. when forced therefore to resort to arms for redress, an appeal to the Tribunal of the world was deemed proper for our justification. this was the object of the Declaration of Independence. not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to ^{say} things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject; ⁱⁿ terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent state in ^{which} we held ourselves. neither ~~pretending to~~ originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was inscribed to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. all its authority rests then on the harmonising sentiments of the day, whether expressed ⁱⁿ letters, printed essays or in the elementary books of ~~the~~

40998 Henry Lee esq.

of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney &c. The historical documents
which you mention as in your possession, ought ^{all} to be found, and I am persuaded
you will find, to be corroborative of the facts and principles advanced in that
Declaration. be pleased to accept assurances of my ^{great} respect and esteem.

Th: Jefferson



FREDERICK DOUGLASS, AMY POST, CATHARINE STEBBINS, and ELIZABETH C. STANTON, and was unanimously adopted, as follows :

DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.—Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been

the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce; in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given; as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women—the law, in all cases, going upon the false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he

has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.

He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education—all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in Church as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.

He has created a false public sentiment, by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependant and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation,—in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States.

Executive Mansion,

Washington, 186

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that "all men are created equal"

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow, this ground—the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

It is rather for us, the living, ^{we have to speak} to stand here,

dedicated to the great tasks remaining before us—that, from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here, gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people by the people for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

We come here today to commemorate one of the epoch-making events of the long struggle for the rights of man--the long struggle for the uplift of humanity. Our country--this great Republic--means nothing unless it means the triumph of a real democracy, the triumph of popular government, and, in the long run, of an economic system under which each man shall be guaranteed the opportunity to show the best that there is in him.

There have been two great crises in our country's history: first, when it was formed, and then, again, in the time of stress and strain which culminated in the Civil War. If this Republic had been founded only to be split asunder, then the judgment of the world would have been that Washington's work was not worth doing. The men who fought in the Civil War justified the wisdom of Washington and carried to achievement the high purpose of Abraham Lincoln.

In name we had the Declaration of Independence in 1776; but we gave the lie by our acts to the words of the Declaration until 1865; and words count for nothing except in so far as they represent acts. I care for the great deeds of the past chiefly as spurs to drive us onward in the present. In every wise struggle for human betterment one of the main objects has always been to achieve equality of opportunity. In our day, it appears as the struggle of freemen to gain and hold the right of self-government as against special interests, who twist the methods of free government into machinery for defeating the popular will. The essence of the struggle is to equalize opportunity, destroy privilege, and give to every citizen the highest possible value both to himself and to the commonwealth. That is nothing new. All I ask in civil life is what you fought for in the Civil War.

Practical equality of opportunity will have two great results. First, every man will have a fair chance to reach the highest point his capacities can carry him. Second, equality of opportunity means that the commonwealth will get from every citizen the highest service of which he is capable. I stand for the square deal. When I say I want a square deal for the poor man, I do not mean for the man who will not work for himself. If a man who has had a chance will not make good, then he has got to quit. The people of the United States must control the mighty commercial forces which they have called into being. No man should receive a dollar unless it has been fairly earned. Every dollar received should represent a dollar's worth of service rendered. We need laws to regulate child labor, work for women, better safety in industry, and proper education for daily life and work. We need to enforce justice against violence, corporate greed, and corruption, and remember justice for all sides.

The object of government is the welfare of the people. Just in proportion as the average man and woman are honest, capable of sound judgment and high ideals, active in public affairs, just so far may we count our civilization a success. We must have a moral awakening and also social and economic laws to support it. In the last analysis, the most important elements in any man's career must be the sum of those qualities which make him a good citizen.

“█████ score years ago a great American in whose symbolic shadow we stand today signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree is a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But 100 years later the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later the life of the Negro is still badly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. So we’ve come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men—yes, black men as well as white men—would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. . . .

I say to you today, my friends, though, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply ██████ in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be ██████, that all men are created ██████.”

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream . . .

I have a dream today . . .”