

## **William Dorsey Swann: The First Drag Queen**

### **Overview**

In this lesson students will learn about William Dorsey Swann, the first known drag queen, and his resistance against police violence toward LGBTQ+ people, then connect his story to later milestones in the LGBTQ+ movement.

### **Grade Level**

6-8

### **Time**

Total: 45 minutes (5 minutes warm-up activity, 15 minutes historical background, 10 minutes primary source exploration, 15 minutes jigsaw activity, 20 minutes assessment; assessment can also be assigned as homework)

### **Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Summarize the life of William Dorsey Swann.
- Describe the importance of other historical events, such as the abolition of slavery, to William Dorsey Swann's life.
- Identify the significance of provided primary sources to the study of William Dorsey Swann's life and broader historical themes.
- Explain other instances of the criminalization of drag.
- Compare and contrast other instances of drag criminalization with William Dorsey Swann's story.
- Compare and contrast drag criminalization with the ideals found in the founding documents of the United States.

### **New Jersey Social Studies Content Standards**

6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a: Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans, and Native Americans during this time period.

6.3.8.CivicsPI.4: Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.

6.3.8.CivicsDP.2: Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and the limitations of First Amendment rights (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court decisions).

6.3.8.CivicsPR.3: Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict (e.g., liberty, equality).

### **Common Core Standards**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

### **Resources Needed**

- Copies of primary sources (Appendix 1)
- Student devices with internet access
- Copies of analysis worksheets (Appendices 2 and 3)
- Copies of Declaration of Independence (Appendix 4)

### **Warm-Up Activity**

Ask students to recall their prior knowledge about the LGBTQ+ activism movement. What are the important events and who are the most important figures that they can remember? Can they identify any common threads between these events?

### **Historical Background**

Provide students with the background of William Dorsey Swann's life, as well as the historical context.

[From "The First Self-Proclaimed Drag Queen Was a Formerly Enslaved Man" by Cari Shane, Smithsonian Magazine](#)

*In the late 1880s, a formerly enslaved man named William Dorsey Swann started hosting private balls known as drags, a name possibly derived from "grand rag," an antiquated term for masquerade balls. Held in secret in Washington, D.C., these parties soon caught authorities' attention.*

*As the Washington Critic reported in January 1887, police officers who raided one such gathering were surprised to encounter six Black men "dressed in elegant female attire," including "corsets, bustles, long hose and slippers." The following April, the Evening Star reported on a raid that targeted men in "female attire of many colors," as well as "gaudy costumes of silk and satin." On both occasions, authorities arrested the party guests and charged them with "being suspicious characters."*

*Journalist and historian Channing Gerard Joseph first learned about Swann's parties in 2005, when he was a graduate student browsing an online newspaper database. The article he came across, a Washington Post story from April 1888, spotlighted Swann, "who was arrayed in a*

*gorgeous dress of cream-colored satin.” He “rushed toward the officers and tried to prevent their entering.”*

*Joseph’s chance find marked the beginning of a yearslong quest to uncover Swann’s story—and, with it, the history of drag in the United States. He chronicles the results of this research in an upcoming book titled *House of Swann: Where Slaves Became Queens—and Changed the World*. Drawing on extensive archival research, Joseph presents a compelling portrait of the nation’s first self-proclaimed drag queen. The historian proudly positions Swann as the “first queer American hero.”*

*The identification of Swann as the first reported drag queen in the U.S. is a “major event,” says Jen Manion, a historian at Amherst College. “LGTBQ history is hampered by the lack of diaries and personal letters and family papers, because you just don’t put [those feelings] in writing.” For much of recorded history, Manion adds, being gay or bisexual was considered “a sin; it’s illegal.”*

*Joseph says his research resurfaces the “experiences of queer people, ... historical experiences, not fictionalized experiences, documenting them rather than speculating.” These findings, in turn, helped him pinpoint the birth of “the drag queen.”*

*The definition of drag is subject to debate. According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, the term refers to “a type of entertainment where people dress up and perform, often in highly stylized ways.” Encyclopedia Britannica notes that drag often seeks to undo “gender norms through doing (or dressing) the part of the opposite sex.”*

*Cross-dressing, which is often a component of drag, has a lengthy history on both the stage and the screen, from Elizabethan-era performances in which men played women to Japanese Kabuki theater. In the early 20th century, performers became stars by impersonating women during the vaudeville craze. In the 1950s, Milton Berle dressed as a woman on his variety TV show, as did comedian Flip Wilson in the early 1970s. In the early 1980s, the sitcom “Bosom Buddies” starred Tom Hanks and Peter Scolari as two young men who disguise themselves as women so they can live in an inexpensive, women-only apartment building.*

*While some historians would consider all of these cross-dressing performances drag, Joseph takes a narrower approach, believing that drag requires two key elements: an intentional celebration of gender expression and a competition. He points out that Shakespearean actors didn’t dress up as women as a form of self-expression but rather because women were barred from appearing on stage during Tudor times. (The “grand rag” theory put forth by Joseph is one explanation for the origins of the word “drag”; another theory suggests the term originally referred to how long dresses worn by male actors “dragged” across the stage.)*

*Historian Kathleen Casey, author of *The Prettiest Girl on Stage Is a Man: Race and Gender Benders in American Vaudeville*, takes a much wider view of drag. While she includes all manner of cross-dressing performances in her definition, she doesn't think there will ever be "a stable meaning of the term 'drag.'" Casey adds, "Drag is about race, class and sexuality as much as it is about gender. If we focus exclusively on only one of these intersections, we fail to see how drag performances are layered across time and space and can have multiple meanings for different audiences." Drag, she says, is really about a performer's own perspective of their work, as well as audiences' understanding of this work.*

*Many of the "contemporary categories and terms that we use in modern life to describe LGBTQ people or sexual and gender minorities" date to the late 19th century, says Manion. "Lesbian," for instance, was first used in a medical journal in 1883. The historian adds, "We debate amongst ourselves as scholars when it seems appropriate to use contemporary terms to describe things [in] the past, but in this case, these were terms used by ... the people at the time as well."*

*Swann's story is tightly woven with the celebration of Black Americans' emancipation from slavery. Months before Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the D.C. Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862 ended slavery in the nation's capital. The April 1862 act freed more than 3,000 enslaved people and drew thousands of Black Americans to Washington, which quickly became a center of Black political, intellectual and cultural life. Between 1860 and 1870, the city's Black population tripled in size, from 14,136 to 43,404.*

*Swann was born into slavery in Washington County, Maryland, around 1858. According to a 2021 entry by Joseph in the African American National Biography, Swann was the fifth of 13 children born to enslaved housekeeper Mary Jane Younker and enslaved wheat farmer and musician Andrew Jackson "Jack" Swann. (His biological father may have been a white man, but Joseph hasn't found definitive evidence confirming this theory.) After the Civil War ended in 1865, Swann's parents bought a plot of land and started a farm. Encouraged to work as soon as he was old enough, the young Swann found employment as a hotel waiter. In 1880, he relocated to Washington, where he worked as a janitor and sent money back home to his family.*

*Like Washington more broadly, the capital's underground queer networks were divided into white and Black communities that rarely intersected. As a 2019 report prepared for the city's Historic Preservation Office notes, "It was a hushed fact that Lafayette Square in D.C., which is adjacent to the White House, was a known cruising spot for gay men, both Black and white," but the majority of these individuals were only interested in liaisons with partners of the same race. An exception to this trend was Washington's drag scene, which often attracted mixed-race audiences.*

*Forging a place for himself in the city's queer Black community, Swann held parties that Joseph deems the first documented "drag balls" in American history. Held in secret, they provided a safe space for gender expression but were risky to attend. "A large but undetermined number managed to flee during the police raids, but the names of those arrested and jailed were printed in the papers, where the men became targets of public scorn," wrote Joseph for the Nation in 2020. "In post-Civil War America, there was very little patience for men who subverted gender norms." Sentences for those charged with attending drag balls ranged from around three to ten months.*

*At Swann's gatherings, guests donned women's clothing or men's suits and danced to folk music. The balls included a competitive element, a "resistance dance" that hearkened back to the antebellum era, says Joseph. Known as a cakewalk, the contest was originally held by enslaved people on Southern plantations. Coupled dancers "executed walking steps and figures in precise formations as if in mimicry of the white man's attitudes and manners," writes Richard Kislak in *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theater*. Enslavers, seemingly unaware they were being mocked, judged the contest and gave the winning couple a cake as a prize.*

*Around this same time, Swann became enthralled by the "queens of freedom" crowned at Washington's Emancipation Day parades—annual celebrations first held in April 1866. Historically, each neighborhood was represented by a woman who "personified freedom for Black people," according to Joseph. Inspired by these queens, Swann started crowning the winners of his dance competitions the "queen of the ball," says Joseph.*

*Swann also adopted the title for himself. As the *Washington Critic* noted on April 13, 1888, "William Dorsey, who, by the way, was the 'queen,'" was one of 13 people arrested during a raid on a "drag party" the previous night.*

*"There's this concept of drag, which is separate, and there's the concept of queens of freedom, and in D.C. in this particular time, post-slavery, post-Reconstruction, these two concepts collide," says Joseph. "To identify as a drag queen, which is what William Dorsey Swann did, is combining these two strains, these two cultural traditions."*

*The 1880s saw a "wave of laws passed in cities all across the country explicitly banning cross-dressing," says Manion, who adds that the rules were "applied very selectively" and were riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions. The arrests of Swann and his friends were "even more sensationalized in the press and probably drew the attention of authorities because most of the participants were Black," Manion explains. "And this is in Jim Crow America. For queer ... Black Americans to just see so much joy and freedom in their gender expression at this time was definitely seen as a threat."*

*In late 1895, authorities arrested Swann for “keeping a disorderly house”—a euphemism for a brothel. As the Evening Star reported on January 13, 1896, “a number of men, white and colored, were found in this place, which Judge Miller characterized as a ‘hell of iniquity.’”*

*The court sentenced Swann to 300 days in prison. After serving three months of his sentence, Swann, who had pled not guilty, filed a petition for a pardon from President Grover Cleveland, says Netisha Currie, an archives specialist at the National Archives, which houses a copy of the petition. In a show of support, 30 of Swann’s friends signed the document. But U.S. Attorney A.A. Birney argued vehemently against the pardon, stating, “The prisoner was in fact convicted of the most horrible and disgusting offenses known to the law; an offense so disgusting that it is unnamed. ... His evil example in the community must have been most corrupting.”*

*Ultimately, Cleveland denied the petition. Still, wrote Joseph for the Nation, Swann’s unsuccessful attempt to clear his name represents the earliest documented example of an American activist taking “specific legal and political steps to defend the queer community’s right to gather without the threat of criminalization, suppression or police violence.”*

*As Manion says, “What’s unique about [Joseph’s] work is that it captures a collective community. When we have been able to identify queer and trans figures in this era and earlier, we find them in isolation. And we can seldom connect the dots to say, ‘Oh, these two couples were friends. They always hung out.’ ... We have very little evidence of collective socializing.”*

*Writing in the African American National Biography, Joseph noted that Swann, “feeling defeated and likely unable to find work given his growing infamy ... had retired from Washington’s queer underground by 1900 and returned home to Hancock,” where he died in December 1925. But drag balls continued in D.C., even expanding to other cities and becoming public events in the early 20th century. One of Swann’s younger brothers, a tailor named Daniel J. Swann, continued in his sibling’s footsteps by costuming the Washington drag community until his own death in 1954.*

*No known pictures of Swann survive. But his contributions to queer activism in Washington will soon be recognized with the redesignation of a stretch of Swann Street Northwest in his honor. The street was originally named for Thomas Swann, a former Maryland governor and Baltimore mayor who bore no relation to the drag queen.*

*“We have seen so much anti-trans and anti-drag legislation and rhetoric around the country in a very problematic way,” says Brooke Pinto, a D.C. Council member who introduced the bill. “In Washington, D.C., where we are proud to have so many trans residents, we [need to] speak up and recognize, sometimes through symbolism, sometimes through legislation, how important these issues are.”*

*The bill also calls for a historic plaque to be posted in Dupont Circle, a Washington neighborhood with a rich LGBTQ history. The plaque will sit at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue, Swann Street Northwest and 17th Street Northwest.*

### **Primary Source Exploration**

Split students into four groups and provide each with a primary source related to the life of William Dorsey Swann (Appendix 1). Ask each group to study their primary source, and then answer the following questions:

- Where does this source come from?
- What does this source show?
- What does this source tell us about William Dorsey Swann?
- What does this source tell us about life, particularly for Black people and queer people, in the period of the Civil War and Reconstruction?

Once complete, ask a member of each group to share their answers with the whole class. When students' answers differ, prompt them to reflect on the differences between the sources. What separates them in terms of their production, content, and quality? Finally, ask students to discuss how these sources change their understanding of the historical background provided.

### **Jigsaw Activity**

Split students into six groups. Provide each group with a different example of drag performers—three examples are contemporaries of William Dorsey Swann, and three are examples from other points in history.

Contemporaries to William Dorsey Swann:

- [Stormé DeLarverie](#)
- [Julian Eltinge](#)
- [Fanny and Stella](#)

Later in History:

- [Compton's Cafeteria](#)
- [The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence](#)
- [RuPaul's Drag Race](#)

Provide students with the analysis worksheet for Swann's contemporaries (Appendix 2) or later examples (Appendix 3) and allow them to complete the first half of the worksheet to analyze their source. When finished, split the students into pairs in which each pair consists of one student who looked at one of Swann's contemporaries and one student who looked at a later historical example. Ask them to complete the second half of the worksheet to compare their sources.

### **Assessment**

Ask students to review the First Amendment ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the

government for a redress of grievances”) and Declaration of Independence (Appendix 4). Then write a short essay that summarizes Swann’s case and one other case of drag in history, and then analyzes whether these examples support or conflict with the ideals described in the founding documents.

### **Assessment**

Ask students to imagine that they are asking a government official or donor for funds to continue holding FireBalls, either in the 1990s or in the present. (The class can also be split, with half writing as though it is the 1990s and half writing about the present.) Have them write a short letter about the importance of the events, using primary and secondary sources to support their arguments. Students can use the sources shared in class and incorporate new sources that they find independently.

This assessment can be completed in class or as homework. Students can also be asked to share their work in groups or with the class to evaluate their arguments.

### **Appendix 1: Primary Sources**



A 1903 postcard that depicts two Black actors, one of whom is dressed in drag, performing a cakewalk in Paris.



### **RAIDING A "DRAG."**

**A Fall Where All the Ladies Were Imitations.**

Six colored men, dressed in elegant female attire, were arraigned in the dock at the Police Court this morning on a charge of being suspicious persons. They were arrested last night at a "drag" held at the house of Pierce Lafayette, a colored messenger in the Pension Office, No. 1716 Fifth street. The names of the defendants are Benjamin, Daniel and Dorsey Swan, Ed. Williams, William Johnson and Charles Meyers.

They nearly all had on low neck and short sleeve silk dresses, several of them with trains. They all wore corsets, bustles, long hose and slippers, and everything that goes to make a female's dress complete. One of them had on a pink satin Mother Hubbard, trimmed with fur, a long wig and bangs and pink hose, and old gold slippers, bogus diamond earrings and breastpins, and pearl necklace. The lace on their skirts was very heavy, and apparently of good material.

The raid was made by Detectives Raff, Horn, Carter and Mahon, and Sergeant Hollinberger, and the reserve of the Eighth Precinct. The house was nicely furnished, and the ball was in full blast when the officers arrived, about 10:30 o'clock. Each of the detectives and Sergeant Hollinberger and one of the privates took one of the stylishly-dressed individuals on their arms and marched them to the station house, followed by a large crowd. They each got three months on the farm.

### **Colored Men in Female Attire.**

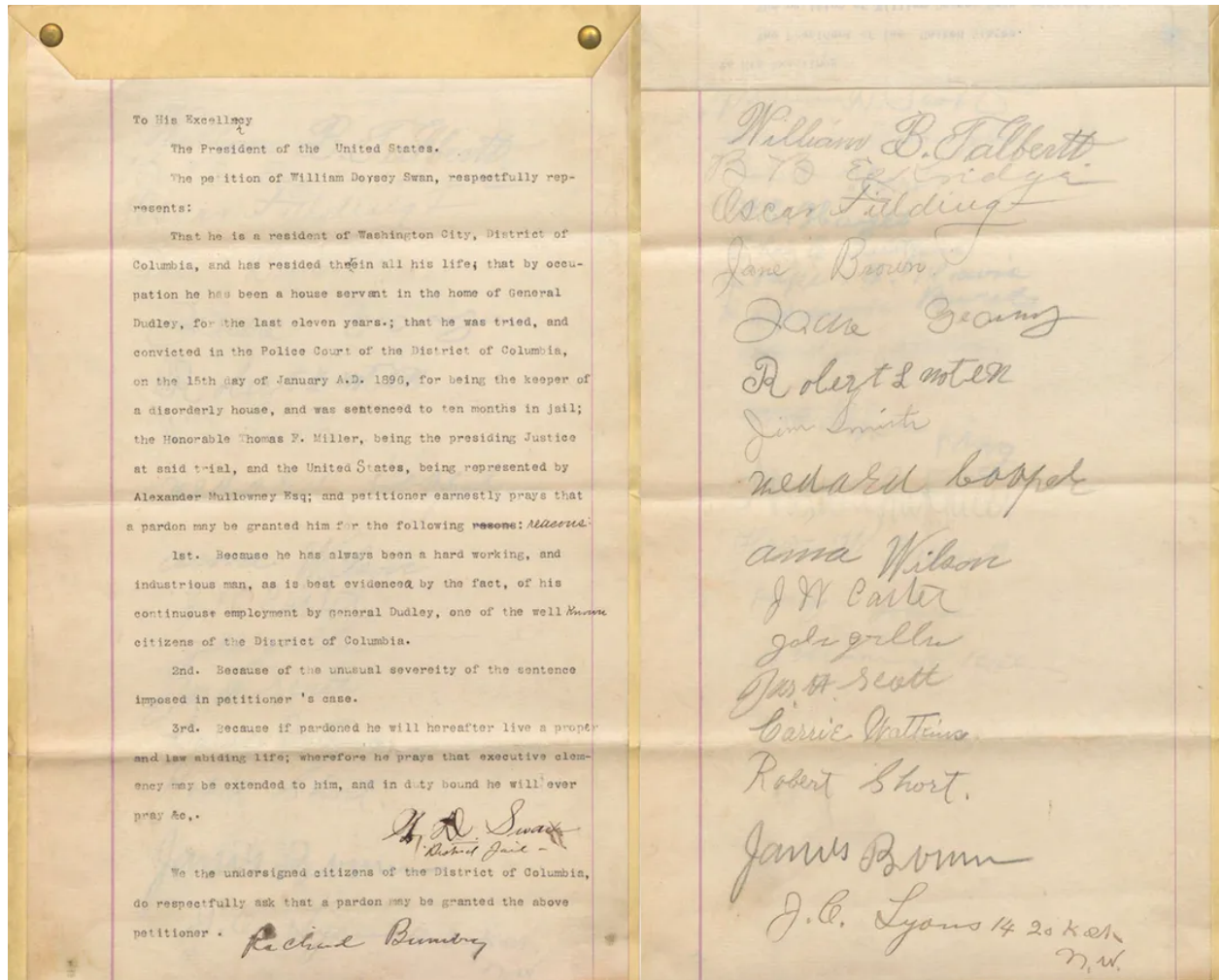
**POLICE RAID ON A DANCING PARTY.**

Last night a party of colored men gave a ball in a house near the corner of 12th and F streets northwest. Most of them appeared in female attire of many colors. The dance was in progress between 11 and 12 o'clock when Lieut. Amiss, with a squad of officers, appeared, and brought the ball to a sudden termination. The men in female attire began to drop their gaudy costumes of silk and satin, and several of them jumped through the back window and escaped. The officers arrested eleven of them, after a struggle, and locked them up. This morning the prisoners were followed to the Police Court by a large crowd of persons, and when the case was called the courtroom was crowded. The prisoners, who gave their names as John Smith, Jake Bayard, William Dorsey, Charles Myers, John Lewis, Samuel Jackson, James Waters, James Howard, James Taylor, Benjamin Moore and Albert Lee, were arraigned on the charge of vagrancy. They stood in the dock with their faces hid from view. The officers gave their testimony and showed the court several silk and satin dresses which they picked up where the men left them. They were sentenced to give bonds or each go down for 30 days.

Newspaper articles about Swann's drag balls.



Black women sitting on a decorated carriage during a Juneteenth celebration in Texas in 1913.



Pages from Swann's petition for a pardon, including a list of supporters' signatures.

## **Appendix 2: Swann's Contemporaries Worksheet**

### Part I

How is this story similar to Swann's story?

How is it different?

What factors could contribute to the similarities and differences?

### Part II

How is your story similar to your partner's story?

How is it different?

What factors could contribute to the similarities and differences?

How is the historical context of your story similar to your partner's story?

How is it different?

How could your story have led to your partner's?

## **Appendix 3: Later Historical Examples Worksheet**

### Part I

How is this story similar to Swann's story?

How is it different?

How could Swann's story and activism have led to this event?

How is your story similar to your partner's story?

How is it different?

What factors could contribute to the similarities and differences?

How is the historical context of your story similar to your partner's story?

How is it different?

How could your partner's story have led to yours?

## Part II

### **Appendix 4: Declaration of Independence**

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station 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 which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute 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 shewn, 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 right, 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 these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We



have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.