

The Declaration of Interdependence, December 2017

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AN INTRODUCTION

The time for the celebration of independence, as reflected in our founding document, may have passed. We have entered an era in which forces larger than governments impinge on and threaten our freedom. This subset of the population has harnessed our historical heritage, offering us a kind of sham independence via a proliferation of technological gadgetry that, for the most part, nobody actually needs. By breaking into our political and social system and taking it over through the power of money and other forms of influence, they have declared, and largely effected, *their* independence, both from the general population and from our system of societal restraints. In the process they have created and fostered a potentially fatal, blind dependence on our part; dependence on the good will of this same dubious few. Our most enlightened response might well be to declare and affirm our *interdependence*, rather than our independence, asserting that interdependence must become our preeminent model for human interaction, with all the political, commercial, and cultural upheavals and adaptations that this change in values demands.

What follows is an experimental attempt to imagine and draft a modern day Declaration of Interdependence, with some inexpert but reverent attention to the tone and style of the original founding document.

THE DECLARATION OF *INTERDEPENDENCE*

When, in the course of human events, the wishes, wants, and needs of an advantaged few become forcefully elevated above those of the great mass of humanity, thus increasing natural inequities in the distribution of resource, opportunity and privilege, it is natural and right for people thus imperiled to invent new forms of connection with and amongst themselves, and with people of other nations, and with those to whom the common liberty and wellbeing have been entrusted. Accordingly we, who are so moved, declare our intent to abstain from the pursuit of exaggerated, isolating ideals of independence, and to form instead a new and consciously *interdependent* union, open to all who share this value.

To that end, we hold these truths to be self-evident: that the laws of probability and unearned advantage play at least as great a role in any man or woman's success or quality of life as do individual attributes and aspects of character; that all people are equally endowed with fundamental wants and needs; and that the satisfaction of these, or the lack thereof, gives rise to the greatest imaginable extremes of both joy and suffering. The absolute equality of the experience of human joy and suffering dictates that no person's wishes, wants, and needs can be held to be more inherently real or important than those of any other. We hold that this is unalterably so, regardless of gender, social, financial, racial, national, or religious distinctions.

Given this, we affirm that all persons are endowed not only with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but also with the right to *voice*—to be heard equally in the process of collective decision. Conjoined with these rights is the inalienable responsibility, on the part of all, to work interdependently with others to ensure safe, universal access to the opportunities arising from our collective productivity.

This responsibility is, self-evidently, the equal companion of our right to liberty, and is a continuing acknowledgment that we live and thrive not merely as a result of our own efforts and attributes, but as a direct outgrowth of the sufferance, tolerance, restraint, and support of our fellow creatures.

As we declare this commitment to *enlightened mutual interest*, societal momentum veers regressively onto old paths of radical independence and dependence. Our nation, and others, are enduring increases in inequality of wealth and income, decreases in support for civil rights, ongoing signals of indifference to, or tolerance for, violence or other harm toward women and minorities, the systematic undermining of access to health care and education, the destruction of the separation of church and state, and the unwinding of efforts to remove the influence of money from politics, and greed from commerce. Also in ascent: The abandonment of scientific and evidence-based approaches to the establishment of fact, of which denial of climate change is an egregious and representative example.

When a long train of such abuses and usurpations evinces a design to reduce a population under a new form of despotism, it is that population's right and duty to invent and install more interdependent mechanisms of government and commerce, and to provide new guards for their future security.

For the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor, in the hope that our cherished, progressive experiment in liberty on Earth shall endure.

Paul Richards

Click the link below (or cut and paste it into your browser window) to add your name and become a signatory of the Declaration of Independence, 2017.

<https://www.sentecenter.net/the-declaration-of-interdependence>

Postscript

According to family documents written in the 1800's, a direct ancestor of mine, along with his brother, donated their estates to the Revolutionary War effort and joined the Continental Army as officers under George Washington.

They would surely have signed the original Declaration of Independence, had it been asked of them, and indeed they took on an equivalent risk for the cause of freedom.

Our circumstances in the present era are thought by many to include threats to life and liberty that equal or surpass the grave threats faced by the founders of the United States. The above document is, of course, only my personal guess as to what a realistic, present-day declaration, in a tone approximating that of the founders, might look like. It is intended as no more than an expression of a thought experiment, and at most a starting point in a potential conversation that might lead to a gentle coalescence of the like-minded, and to better and more refined ideas.

Patty and I contemplate circulating this draft to members of our community on the Internet, and are curious about the social resonance of this sentiment. If you would like to be a signatory to the final draft of this Declaration of Interdependence, please feel free to add your digital signature and pass it along, by going [here](#).