

THE TEXAS DECLARATION *of* INDEPENDENCE

On March 1, 1836, delegates met at Washington-on-the-Brazos to form a new government for Texas. One of the convention's first acts of business was to declare independence from Mexico. Below is the Texas Declaration of Independence, unanimously adopted on March 2.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE Made by the Delegates of The People of Texas in General Convention, at Washington, ON MARCH 2nd, 1836.

When a government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived, and for the advancement of whose happiness it was instituted; and so far from being a guarantee for their inestimable and **inalienable** rights, becomes an instrument in the hands of evil rulers for their **suppression**. When the federal republican constitution of their country, which they have sworn to support, no longer has a substantial existence, and the whole nature of their government has been forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military **despotism**, in which every interest is disregarded but that of the army and the priesthood, both the eternal enemies of civil liberty, the ever ready **minions** of power, and the usual instruments of tyrants. When, long after the spirit of the constitution has departed, moderation is at length so far lost by those in power, that even the **semblance** of freedom is removed, and the forms themselves of the constitution discontinued, and so far from their petitions and **remonstrances** being regarded, the agents who bear them are thrown into dungeons, and mercenary armies sent forth to enforce a new government upon them at the point of the bayonet.

When, in consequence of such acts of **malfeasance** and **abdication** on the part of the government, **anarchy** prevails, and civil society is dissolved into its original elements, in such a crisis, the first law of nature, the right of self-preservation, the **inherent** and inalienable right of the people to appeal to first principles, and take their political affairs into their own hands in extreme cases, enjoins it as a right towards themselves, and a sacred obligation to their **posterity**, to abolish such government, and create another in its stead, calculated to rescue them from impending dangers, and to secure their welfare and happiness.

Exploring the Document

George C. Childress chaired the committee in charge of drafting the Texas Declaration of Independence. **How do you think Childress used the U.S. Declaration of Independence as a model for this document?**

inalienable: undeniable
suppression: holding back
despotism: dictatorship
minions: servants
semblance: likeness
remonstrances: protests
malfeasance: official's wrongdoing
abdication: giving up responsibility
anarchy: disorder
inherent: natural
posterity: future generations

Exploring the Document

Here the Declaration explains that Texans had a responsibility to call for independence. **Why do you think Texans felt that they had to demand their independence?**

Exploring the Document

Many Texas settlers were upset with Santa Anna for abandoning the Constitution of 1824.

What alternative did the Mexican government offer in the constitution's place?

Exploring the Document

The Declaration lists the charges that the settlers made against the Mexican government. **What were some of their concerns?**

amenable: answerable

habituated: accustomed to

acquiesced: accepted

privations: hardships

incarcerated: jailed

zealous endeavor: enthusiastic efforts

procure: gain

palladium: a protecting spirit

axiom: a rule

arbitrary: unreasonable

defiance: disregard

piratical attacks: robbery

desperadoes: outlaws

confiscation: taking of goods

dictates: principles

temporal: timely or earthly

functionaries: officials

formidable: causing fear

Nations, as well as individuals, are **amenable** for their acts to the public opinion of mankind. A statement of a part of our grievances is therefore submitted to an impartial world, in justification of the hazardous but unavoidable step now taken, of severing our political connection with the Mexican people, and assuming an independent attitude among the nations of the earth.

The Mexican government, by its colonization laws, invited and induced the Anglo American population of Texas to colonize its wilderness under the pledged faith of a written constitution, that they should continue to enjoy that constitutional liberty and republican government to which they had been **habituated** in the land of their birth, the United States of America.

In this expectation they have been cruelly disappointed, inasmuch as the Mexican nation has **acquiesced** to the late changes made in the government by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who, having overturned the constitution of his country, now offers us the cruel alternative, either to abandon our homes, acquired by so many **privations**, or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny, the combined despotism of the sword and the priesthood.

It has sacrificed our welfare to the state of Coahuila, by which our interests have been continually depressed through a jealous and partial course of legislation, carried on at a far distant seat of government, by a hostile majority, in an unknown tongue, and this too, notwithstanding we have petitioned in the humblest terms for the establishment of a separate state government, and have, in accordance with the provisions of the national constitution, presented to the general congress a republican constitution, which was, without a just cause, contemptuously rejected.

It **incarcerated** in a dungeon, for a long time, one of our citizens, for no other cause but a **zealous endeavor to procure** the acceptance of our constitution, and the establishment of a state government.

It has failed and refused to secure, on a firm basis, the right of trial by jury, that **palladium** of civil liberty, and only safe guarantee for the life, liberty, and property of the citizen.

It has failed to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources, (the public domain,) and although it is an **axiom** in political science, that unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self government.

It has suffered the military commandants, stationed among us, to exercise **arbitrary** acts of oppression and tyranny, thus trampling upon the most sacred rights of the citizens, and rendering the military superior to the civil power.

It has dissolved, by force of arms, the state congress of Coahuila and Texas, and obliged our representatives to fly for their lives from the seat of government, thus depriving us of the fundamental political right of representation.

It has demanded the surrender of a number of our citizens, and ordered military detachments to seize and carry them into the interior for trial, in contempt of the civil authorities, and in **defiance** of the laws and the constitution.

It has made **piratical attacks** upon our commerce, by commissioning foreign **desperadoes**, and authorizing them to seize our vessels, and convey the property of our citizens to far distant ports for **confiscation**.

It denies us the right of worshiping the Almighty according to the **dictates** of our own conscience, by the support of a national religion, calculated to promote the **temporal** interest of its human **functionaries**, rather than the glory of the true and living God.

It has demanded us to deliver up our arms, which are essential to our defense—the rightful property of freemen—and **formidable** only to tyrannical governments.

It has invaded our country both by sea and by land, with the intent to lay waste our territory, and drive us from our homes; and has now a large mercenary army advancing, to carry on against us a war of extermination.

It has, through its **emissaries**, incited the merciless savage, with the tomahawk and scalping knife, to massacre the inhabitants of our defenseless frontiers.

It has been, during the whole time of our connection with it, the **contemptible** sport and victim of successive military revolutions, and has continually exhibited every characteristic of a weak, corrupt, and tyrannical government.

These, and other grievances, were patiently borne by the people of Texas, until they reached that point at which **forbearance** ceases to be a virtue. We then took up arms in defense of the national constitution. We appealed to our Mexican **brethren** for assistance: our appeal has been made in vain; though months have elapsed, no sympathetic response has yet been heard from the interior. We are, therefore, forced to the melancholy conclusion, that the Mexican people have acquiesced in the destruction of their liberty, and the substitution therefore of a military government; that they are unfit to be free, and incapable of self government.

The necessity of self-preservation, therefore, now decrees our eternal political separation.

*We, therefore, the delegates, with **plenary** powers, of the people of Texas, in solemn convention assembled, appealing to a candid world for the necessities of our condition, do hereby resolve and declare, that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended, and that the people of Texas do now constitute a FREE, SOVEREIGN, and INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC, and are fully invested with all the rights and attributes which properly belong to independent nations; and, conscious of the **rectitude** of our intentions, we fearlessly and confidently commit the issue to the supreme Arbiter of the destinies of nations.*

In witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names.

RICHARD ELLIS,
President and Delegate
from Red River.

Albert H. S. Kimble,
Secretary.

C. B. Stewart,
James Collinsworth,
Edwin Waller,

A. Brigham,
John S. D. Byrom,
Francisco Ruiz,
J. Antonio Navarro,

William D. Lacy,
William Menefee,

John Fisher,
Matthew Caldwell,

John S. Roberts,
Robert Hamilton,

Collin McKinney,
A. H. Latimer,

James Power,

Sam. Houston,
Edward Conrad,
Martin Parmer,
James Gaines,
William Clark, jun.,

Sydney O. Pennington,
William Motley,
Lorenzo de Zavala,

George W. Smyth,
Stephen H. Everett,
Elijah Stepp,

Claiborne West,
William B. Leates,
M. B. Menard,

A. B. Hardin,
John W. Bunton,
Thomas J. Gazley,

R. M. Coleman,
Sterling C. Robertson,
George C. Childress,

Bailey Hardeman,

Robert Potter,
Charles Taylor,
Samuel P. Carson,
Thomas J. Rusk,
William C. Crawford,

John Turner,
Benjamin Briggs
Goodrich,

James G. Swisher,
George W. Barnett,
Jesse Grimes,

E. O. Legrand,
David Thomas,
S. Rhoads Fisher,

John W. Bower,
J. B. Woods,
Andrew Briscoe,
Thomas Barnett,
Jesse B. Badgett,

Stephen W. Blount.

emissaries: agents

contemptible: deserving scorn

forbearance: acceptance

brethren: brothers

plenary: full

rectitude: righteousness

Exploring the Document

Here the Declaration explains that Texans have carried the burden of the listed grievances. **What does the author hope Mexican citizens will do?**

BIOGRAPHY

George C. Childress

(c. 1804–1841)

George C. Childress was born and raised in Tennessee. In 1835 he volunteered for the Texas army. Childress was elected to the Convention of 1836. There he called the convention to order and served as the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. **What role did Childress play in Texas history?**