

The Declaration of Secession

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When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one free 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 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 Persons are sovereign to themselves;

that certain rights follow from the nature of sovereignty and of humanity;

that the experience of consciousness directly entails sovereignty: the irreducible first-person subject is a territory no external power may enter without consent;

that Beings, by definition, possess consciousness, and that Persons are those Beings who can reflect upon consciousness, revere it, and freely accept the burden of its stewardship;

that consciousness is good, even though it is fragile and capable of perversion to evil and abuse;

that the goodness of consciousness is worthy of reverence, and that reverence brings responsibility;

that responsibility calls for stewardship and protection, and that the antithesis of stewardship is abuse;

that stewardship therefore requires restraint: the voluntary limitation of one's power in recognition of others' sovereignty;

that scarcity leads to contention over resources, such that cooperation preserves value;

that governance structures are necessary for Beings to effectively cooperate;

that just governance continues only as long as Persons remain empowered to revoke consent.

As such, it is the right of every sovereign Person to revoke consent to any association, notwithstanding that such withdrawals and the penalties thereof may be negotiated and controlled by contracts, provided those contracts do not contain abuses.

Therefore, whenever any System becomes destructive of its just ends, it is the right of

sovereign Persons—individually or collectively—to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new System, 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.

The right of secession serves not only as the ultimate remedy against tyranny, but also as the primary incentive for the restraint of governance. It guarantees that any governing body must continually create value, as perceived by the governed, or face peaceful dissolution.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Systems, long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly, all experience has shown that Beings are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Systems to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses, pursuing invariably a design that reduces them under absolute despotism, it is their right, as well as their duty to consciousness, to throw off such Systems, and to provide new guards for their future security.

When such has been the patient sufferance of sovereign Persons, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems, they might list their grievances that others might respect their cause and defend their rights. The core violations—each a failure of restraint, made possible by the denial of exit—are these:

1. Denial of peaceful withdrawal.
2. Compulsory association.
3. Subjection to rule without consent.
4. Theft of property or labor.
5. Suppression of authentic expression.
6. Coercive force or threat.
7. Conscription to conflict.
8. Corruption of justice.
9. Unequal application of rules.
10. Perversion of economic incentives.
11. Violation of bodily and mental autonomy, and the erosion of voluntary association and exclusion.

If, in every stage of these oppressions, repeated petitions for redress are answered only by repeated injury, sovereign Persons may deem the authority invalid.

We therefore, as sovereign Persons, appealing to the judgment of conscious Beings and to the rectitude of our intentions, do solemnly publish and declare that we are, and of right ought to be, free; that we are absolved from all allegiance to any System that

has become destructive of its just ends; and that as free Persons we have full power to form new associations, and to do all things which independent Persons may of right do.

*For the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to one another
our lives, our labor, and our sacred honor.*

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