



## Highlights from July 4th 2009 at the National Archives

The National Archives celebrated the 233rd anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Hosted by NBC News National Correspondent **Bob Dotson**, the program featured welcoming remarks by Acting Archivist of the United States **Adrienne Thomas**, a keynote address by **Timothy Naftali**, Director of the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, and our annual dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence.

**BOB DOTSON:** I'm Bob Dotson from the NBC "Today" show, the host of a segment called "The American Story." For the last 3 decades, I have wandered around this country coaxing stories from people like us, the folks who don't have time to send out press releases because they're too busy reshaping the world as they hope it should be—the dreamers and the doers like the men and women who gave us the reason to celebrate the fourth of July today. So, thank you for joining us on this very special day in this very special place. And now please rise as the Continental Color Guard presents our flag with Old Guard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> United States Infantry and Duane Moody singing the National Anthem.

**DUANE MOODY:** [SINGING]

O say, can you see  
By the dawn's early light  
What so proudly we hailed  
At the twilight's last gleaming?  
Whose broad stripes  
And bright stars  
Through the perilous fight  
O'er the ramparts we watched  
Were so gallantly streaming?  
And the rockets' red glare  
The bombs bursting in air  
Gave proof through the night



That our flag was still there  
O! Say does that  
Star-spangled banner yet wave  
O'er the land of the free  
And the home of the brave?

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen, the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps.

**ADRIENNE THOMAS:** The National Archives is celebrating more this year than simply the fact that we've existed for 75 years. We are celebrating our role in our nation's democracy, a role built on ensuring that the citizens of our country are free to inspect, use, and learn from the records of their government.

[Applause]

When I joined the National Archives, I could not have imagined the wonderful opportunities I've experienced these past 39 years. I've witnessed naturalization ceremonies hosted right here in this building and in our facilities across the nation. I've inspected records from all periods of American history, and I've watched researchers do the same. I've learned about my family history through these records, and I've witnessed students of all ages discover the history of this nation as they research these records. The records are here for you so please come in today. Visit our facilities across the U.S. and check us out on-line at [archives.gov](http://archives.gov).

**TIMOTHY NAFTALI:** It was 35 years ago this month that Representative Barbara Jordan of Texas reminded us that our Charters of Freedom--the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights--are flexible instruments whose meaning has evolved over time as we have evolved, "we the people". The Preamble of our Constitution meant something quite different in the late 1700s, but the architects of our liberty chose words and phrases that contained the promise of even more freedom. "All men are created equal," wrote Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence--all, not some, all--yet those words were spoken in a country that was 1/5 slave and only 4/5 free. Jefferson understood that, though the essential truths within the Charters would remain forever relevant, how each generation of Americans--that each of us would interpret this nation and its Charters and those interpretations would change.



**DOTSON:** Let us listen now to the words of liberty as we read aloud the Declaration of Independence, and for that I'm happy to introduce a very special group of people who will read that Declaration. First, 3 middle-school students, and they're going to stand and wave when I read their names so their mamas can see them.

[Laughter]

Luke Trinity.

[Applause]

Luke just completed the seventh grade at Alice Deal Junior High here in Washington, DC, and last year, Luke served as Co-President of the Mini United Nations here in Washington. This year, he participated in the National History Day in performing with the junior group.

Louisa Stanwich. Louisa?

[Applause]

She just completed the seventh grade at Oakcrest School in McLean, Virginia, where she was Class President. She's a member of the National Junior Honor Society and plays the viola in the Oakcrest String Ensemble and is a loyal National Archives junior volunteer.

[Applause]

Sharmen Hettipola.

[Applause]

She just completed the eighth grade at Alice Deal Junior High, and she was President of the school, very interested in math, but she loves all of this, too. On National History Day, she placed third in citywide competition.

And next, to read the grievances against King George III, we have 3 members of the Second Continental Congress. I'll ask them to stand and wave, too, but you should know them because 2 of the 3 are on your money.



[Laughter]

Mr. Thomas Jefferson...

[Applause and cheering]

Mr. John Adams...

and Dr. Benjamin Franklin. Ladies and gentlemen, the Declaration of Independence.

[Applause]

**TRINITY:** In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776. 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.

**STANWICH:** 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.

**HETTIPOLA:** 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.

**TRINITY:** 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.

[Applause]

**JEFFERSON, ADAMS & FRANKLIN:** Huzzah! Huzzah!

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

**FRANKLIN:** 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.

[Crowd boos]

**ADAMS:** 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.

[Crowd boos]

**ADAMS:** He has endeavored 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.

[Crowd boos]



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

[Crowd boos]

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

[Crowd boos]

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

[Crowd boos]

**ADAMS:** He has kept, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

[Crowd boos]

**JEFFERSON:** He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the civil power.

{Crowd boos}

**ADAMS:** 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.

{Crowd boos}

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

[Crowd boos]



**ADAMS:** For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences: For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring 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.

[Crowd boos]

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

[Crowd boos]

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

[Crowd boos]

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

**VOICE:** Down with King George!

**ADAMS:** 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.

[Crowd boos]

**ADAMS:** He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored 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.

**FRANKLIN:** Hear, hear!



**STANWICH:** 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.

**HETTIPOLA:** 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.

**TRINITY:** 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.

[Applause and cheering]

**FRANKLIN:** Hear, hear!

**TRINITY:** 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.

[Applause and cheering]

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.

[Applause and cheering]



**STANWICH:** 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.

[Applause and cheering]

**DOTSON:** Private Hector, give us the names of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

**HECTOR:** Maryland-Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, and Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Virginia-George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton.

**MOODY:** "God Bless America" ladies and gentlemen. If you are a proud American, raise up your flags! Rise up your fans and wave them like you don't care! Come on! Here we go! Join me! "God Bless America."

[SINGING]

God bless America  
Land that I love  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night  
With a light from above  
From the mountains  
To the prairies  
To the oceans  
White with foam  
God bless America  
My home sweet home  
God bless America  
My home sweet home  
Sing like you mean it! Come on!  
God bless America  
Land that I love  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Through the night  
With a light from above  
From the mountains



To the prairies  
To the oceans  
White with foam  
God bless America  
My home sweet home  
God bless America  
My home sweet home