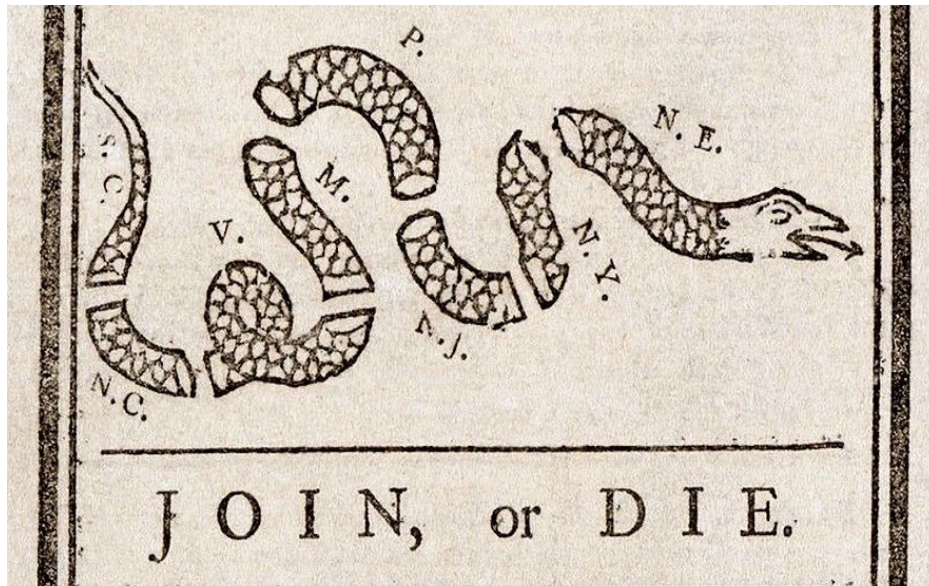


“Declaration of Interdependence,” by Richard Blanco



Such has been the patient sufferance...

We're a mother's bread, instant potatoes, milk at a checkout line; her three children pleading for bubble gum and their father. We're the three minutes she steals to page a tabloid, needing to believe even stars' lives are as joyful and bruised.

Our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury...

We're her second job serving an executive in a shark-grey suit absorbed in his Fortune magazine at a sidewalk café. We're the shadow of skyscrapers like giant chess pieces in a game he bet his family on, and lost. We're the lost. We're a father who can't mine a life anymore in a town where too much, too little has happened, for too long.

A history of repeated injuries and usurpations...

We're the grit of his main street's blacked-out windows and spray-painted truths. Or a street lined with Royal palms—home to a Peace Corps couple who now collect art and winter in Aruba. We're their dinner-party-talk of wines and picket signs once wielded, retirement accounts and draft cards once burned. We're their knowing it's time to do more than read the New York Times, buy fair-trade coffee and grass-fed beef.

In every stage of oppressions we have petitioned for redress...

We're the canned corn of a farmer who plows into his couch as worn as his back by the end of the day. We're watching news having everything, nothing to do with the field dust in his eyes or his son nested in the ache of his arms. We're his son. And a black son who drove too fast or too slow, talked too much or too little, moved too quickly, but not quick enough for a bullet. We're our dead, our blood-stained blackboards, dance floors, church pulpits.

We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor...

We're the living who light vigil candles and the cop who didn't shoot. We're the inmate with his volunteer teacher diagramming sentences, the Buddhist alongside the stockbroker serving soup at a shelter. We're the grandfather taking a selfie with his grandson and his husband, the widow's fifty cents in the collection plate and the golfer's ten-thousand-dollar pledge for a cure.

We hold these truths to be self-evident...

We're them. They're you. You're me. We're us: a handshake, a smile good morning on the bus, a door held open, a seat we give up on the subway. We tend restrooms or sell art, make huevos rancheros or herbed salmon, run for mayor or restock shelves, work a backhoe or write poems. We're a poem in progress.

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people...

to fulfill the promise of being one people, necessary to abolish any government that becomes destructive of these ends, necessary to dissolve the political bans that keep us from speaking to each other, necessary to avow our interdependence, to look straight into each other's eyes the way we behold the moon, and declare to one another: I see you. I see you. I see you.