

DSDI 2024 Essay

While reading the list of grievances against the King of Great Britain to rationalize the writing of the Declaration of Independence, I reflected on what my ancestor, Philip Livingston, would have thought, what the public would or would not connect with, and how it would resonate with me in our contemporary society.

After reading the grievances, I believe my ancestor, Philip Livingston, felt an array of emotions, including fear, anger, and bravery. Each of the grievances exposed the unfair treatment against our ancestors. The King used his power to forbid passing laws, harass our people, impose unjust taxes, quarter troops among our ancestors, and destroy lives. He made decisions for the new land without the consent of our ancestors, the ones who were living on this new land. These grievances show how much power he held over the colonists. Livingston felt powerless and fearful of what the King could do. Livingston shifted his fear of the King to anger as an individual dreaming of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The King was unjust, and Livingston knew the American colonists should not be treated this way and deserved better. Livingston joined a group of brave men to address the King's wrongdoings and inform the British Crown why they grieved. However fearful they were, Livingston and his comrades' anger turned to bravery, and they put their lives on the line for the future of our soon-to-be independent country.

After the Declaration of Independence was signed and presented to the colonies, the public would have resonated with many of the grievances because they were part of the same community unfairly treated by the King. One grievance that would partially resonate with the public was Grievance Number Two: "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." This grievance shows that the King needed to approve of laws before they were passed, and he often neglected them, meaning the laws would never pass. The King forbade passing laws of utmost importance that would directly impact the public's safety. The right to legislate and protect their community was necessary for the governors, and this would have resonated strongly with the public that needed specific laws and protection.

The public would accept most of the grievances, but a few might have been ignored. For example, Grievance Number Eleven states, "HE has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing

Armies, without the consent of our Legislatures.” Grievance Number Eleven refers to the King stationing soldiers among the colonists. The public might have ignored this grievance or seen it as less significant than others, perceiving the soldier’s presence as a form of protection. However, the Signers would have seen this presence as a threat rather than a safeguard, as they understood the importance of developing their own defensive military rather than relying on an external military presence.

A grievance that particularly stood out to me was Grievance Number Four: “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.” Grievance Number Four reveals that the King made gatherings inaccessible to the colonists, negatively impacting representatives’ ability to attend and participate in legislative processes. In today’s society, I have learned the importance of accessibility in all aspects of life. For example, accessibility is crucial within the dental field. As a future dentist, my goal is to reduce oral health care disparities and allow all patients access to the best possible care. Unfortunately, many rural areas of the country currently lack accessible dental care. Similar to how the colonists faced challenges attending gatherings due to distance, patients in rural areas are excluded from accessing the oral health care they need. Therefore, I am committed to contributing to the effort to extend dentistry to individuals residing in underserved rural areas. To do so, I plan to actively participate with mobile dental vans and establish clinics in remote locations to bridge the gap in dental care accessibility. With Livingston as my middle name, I feel a profound connection to my ancestor and a sense of duty to follow in his footsteps. Like Livingston, I will fight for accessible practices within our country, especially accessible oral health care for all.

Our ancestors wrote these grievances to inform the King of his wrongdoings. To fulfill and carry on the values of our ancestors, we can reflect upon these grievances and find inspiration to improve our contemporary society and future. We must fight for what we believe in and protect our community, just as the Signers did over two hundred years ago.