John Adams - Speech in Favor of Independence

John Adams, who was part of the Declaration-of-Independence-drafting committee, argued in favor of approving Lee's Resolution to sever the colonies' ties with Britain.

This clip, from the HBO miniseries "John Adams," recreates the scene when Adams does his best to persuade other members of the Continental Congress to vote in favor of declaring the Colonies free of British control.

Adams (portrayed by Paul Giamatti) speaks the words attributed to him by Daniel Webster:

> *Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my hand and my heart to this vote.*
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> *It is true, indeed, that in the beginning we aimed not at independence. But there's a Divinity that shapes our ends...Why, then, should we defer the Declaration?...You and I, indeed, may rue it. We may not live to see the time when this Declaration shall be made good. We may die; die Colonists, die slaves, die, it may be, ignominiously and on the scaffold.*
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> *Be it so. Be it so.*
>
> *If it be the pleasure of Heaven that my country shall require the poor offering of my life, the victim shall be ready at the appointed hour of sacrifice, come when that hour may. But while I do live, let me have a country, or at least the hope of a country, and that a free country.*
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> *But whatever may be our fate, be assured, be assured that this Declaration will stand. It may cost treasure, and it may cost blood, but it will stand and it will richly compensate for both.*
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> *Through the thick gloom of the present, I see the brightness of the future as the sun in heaven. We shall make this a glorious, an immortal day. When we are in our graves, our children will honor it. They will celebrate it with thanksgiving, with festivity, with bonfires, and illuminations. . .*
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> *Sir, before God, I believe the hour is come. My judgment approves this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope, in this life, I am now ready here to stake upon it; and I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration.*
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> *It is my living sentiment; by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence forever.* (Quoted in the July 1895 issue of "Current Literature - A Magazine of Contemporary Record," page 1.)

For a recreation of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, move the video forward to 4:15.

See, also:

Thomas Jefferson's Submitted Draft of the Declaration of Independence - Slavery Indicted

Original Draft of the Declaration with Edits by Franklin

Credits:

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