

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS MATTER:
AN ANALYSIS OF THREE CRITICAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS
IN AMERICA

A dissertation submitted to the
Caspersen School of Graduate Studies
Drew University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Letters

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August 2025

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ABSTRACT

Social Movements Matter: An Analysis of Three Critical Social Movements in America

Doctor of Letters Dissertation by

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The Caspersen School of Graduate Studies

Drew University

August 2025

Social movements are pivotal in driving societal change by challenging the status quo and envisioning a more equitable future. This dissertation delves into the complexities of attributing specific outcomes to social movements, with a focus on the American Independence, Abolition, and Civil Rights movements. Despite their varied results, these movements are united by a common belief in equality and justice as fundamental ideals. Societies are inherently subject to change, and social movements emerge from the conviction that individuals can shape the future by questioning their current state and envisioning their desired direction. Directly linking social movements to specific events, such as wars, is challenging, as evidenced by the American Independence and Civil Rights movements. Landmark legislation, such as the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, was accompanied by societal unrest, illustrating the varied perceptions of success within the movement and the societal backlash it faced.

The United States, while founded on ideals of liberty and justice, also engaged in exploitation and violence against minorities. This contradiction is reflected in foundational documents that espouse revolutionary ideals while simultaneously protecting slavery. The Declaration of Independence asserts universal equality and inalienable rights endowed by a creator, grounding the belief that no individual has inherent authority over another without consent. Leaders such as Garrison and Douglass emphasized the equality of all individuals and the necessity of suffrage and civil rights

for African Americans, countering prevailing notions of inferiority. Leaders and participants in social movements must maintain hope and faith in progress, a theme echoed from the Founders to civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech: King framed the civil rights struggle as a quest to fulfill a promissory note guaranteeing unalienable rights to all Americans, emphasizing the refusal to accept injustice as final. Social movements involve leaders, participants, and politicians; ideals often become compromised through political processes, as seen in the Constitution's concessions to slavery and the ongoing paradox of American ideals versus practices.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Despite their ubiquity, social movements are not necessarily easy to understand because they are complex social phenomena. Even defining them can be challenging. John D. DeLamater, Daniel J. Myers, and Jessica L. Collett, *Social Psychology*, define a social movement as:

a collective activity that expresses a high level of concern about some issue Its participants are people who feel strongly enough about an issue to act. Persons involved in a movement take a variety of actions—sign petitions, donate time or money, talk to family or friends, participate in rallies and marches, engage in civil disobedience, or campaign for candidates. These activities are drawn from the repertoire of ordinary political activities in society, but are often outside the conventional two-party structure. Within the movement, an organization may emerge—a group of persons with defined roles who engage in sustained activity to promote or resist social change....¹

Similarly, Paul Almeida, *Social Movements*, writes:

A social movement is an excluded collectivity in sustained interaction with economic and political elites seeking social change... In such situations, ordinary people come together to pursue a common goal. Social movements are usually composed of groups outside of institutionalized power that use unconventional strategies (e.g., street marches, sit-ins, dramatic media events) along with more conventional ones (petitions, letter-writing campaigns) to achieve their aims (Snow and Soule 2009). The outsider status and unconventional tactics of social movements distinguish them from other political entities, such as lobbying associations, nonprofit organizations, and political parties (though these more formal organizations may originate from social movements).²

Lastly, Charles Tilly in an essay, *Social Movement and National Politics* wrote that:

¹ John D. DeLamater, Daniel J. Myers, and Jessica L. Collett, *Social Psychology* (Boulder, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1652845>. 599.

² Paul Almeida, "Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Action," in *Social Movements, The Structure of Collective Mobilization* (University of California Press, 2019). 6.

A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavor to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality.... A social movement's commitment to change and the *raison d'être* of its organization are founded upon the conscious volition, normative commitment to the movements aims or beliefs, and active participation on the part of the followers or members.³

This is just a sample of the many definitions of social movements that have been proposed. Most of them, however, include the following elements: (1) a collective organization of some type; (2) change-oriented goals; (3) some degree of continuity and persistence over time; and (4) at least some use of collective action outside the normal channels of political or governmental institutions (e.g. marches, sit-ins, civil disobedience, riots, even revolution) yet they may resort or combine these actions with more institutional forms of claims making (e.g., voting, letter writing, and petitions). It depends on their overall strategy and the response of the opposition.⁴

Because of the complexity of theoretical arguments and data limitations on movements and their activities and the sheer size of the literature on social movements it is obvious that without some specific focus for this project it could easily become overwhelming. Consequently, in order to reign in this topic, I will focus on one movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the efforts of that movement and their impact on the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, no social movement can be compared solely on its own. The roots of the Civil Rights Movement in America are profound and troubling. To trace those roots, I contend that two other social movements in America had an instrumental effect on the Civil Rights Movement. Those two movements are the Liberty or Independence Movement and the Abolition Movement. To classify the American Revolution as a social movement may be somewhat controversial, but I would contend that it is essential to understand the founding principles of this country in order to understand the reason for and the nature of social movements in America.

³ Charles Bright and Susan Friend Harding, *Statemaking and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984). 301.

⁴ David A Snow and Doug McAdam, *Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics and Outcomes* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Canvas.harvard.edu>files>download pdf. 1.

The second movement that I will examine is the Abolition Movement. The Abolition Movement, which during the 1830's becomes not only a social movement for reform but a significant political one with its moral indictment of slavery.⁵ It too must be analyzed to determine the roots of the Civil Rights movement. I would argue that both of these movements had a direct impact on the foundations of the Civil Rights Movement. Not only that, but I would also contend that individually and in combination these three movements made America. The Liberty Movement resulted in the First American Revolution. The Abolition Movement resulted in the American Civil War, or what Eric Foner called "the Second Founding," and James McPherson called the "Second American Revolution."⁶ The Civil Rights Movement was also revolutionary. It was a social revolution that ended segregation in America. It was also revolutionary in that it caused major social change without causing a war.

Undoubtedly social movements have had a major impact on every aspect of American life. My topic explores the impact of a specific social movement, the Civil Rights Movement. and through the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the specific impact it had on the political process. Additionally, I will assert that leadership and organization are critical to the formation, mobilization, and success of social movements. I will also argue that social movements and their organizations (SMOs) have political consequences only if they can successfully exert influence over key political institutions and the outcomes of key political processes such as electoral or legislative processes. Further, since political consequences are external to and not under the direct control of social movement organizations (SMOs), they must work with the political actors directly involved in key political decisions. Therefore, this means SMOs must enlist, influence, persuade and convince both politicians and lobbyists to join their cause. All three parties are vital to the successful attainment of social change in the modern era. Lastly. I will argue that social movements matter because they are a vital catalyst for change in our society. It is critical to understand the nature of that change because the path that social

⁵ Kenneth Stampp, *The Causes of the Civil War: Revised Edition* (Simon and Schuster, 1991). 135.

⁶ Eric Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution* (WW Norton & Company, 2019); James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York, United States: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1992).
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=716649>. 16.

movements take, and their eventual outcomes can lead to revolution and war, or peaceful, beneficial outcomes for the whole society.

It is essential to examine social movements from their inception. A vital question is: How do social movements get their start? The answer is relatively simple. They typically start with some type of dissatisfaction. Typically, a disaffected group of people want to change the way society or governmental institution's function. My research will show that for this to happen there must be a leader, a voice, in essence a prophet, to recognize the failure of the existing social system or government to live up to its promises and formulate a message strong enough to mobilize people into collective social action. There must also be a pragmatist who can help the SMO formulate a potential solution to the problem and develop a coherent argument that resonates not only to the movement members but to the politicians and elites who control social change and the population in general. Lastly, there must be a politician who can recognize an opening in the existing political opportunity structure. It must be a politician who is willing to actively engage in both the cause of the SMO and to be able to utilize the political process to achieve the outcomes the SMO hopes to achieve, and their own political ambitions. The interests of the social movement organization and the politician are intertwined and linked. One cannot succeed without the other.

My approach to this dissertation will be to carefully analyze the Civil Rights Movement in the Sixties as a social movement that resulted in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I chose that social movement because it resulted in one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed in the twentieth century. I will study the historical events and actors surrounding the Act. This will not be just a chronology of events but a narrative. It will tell a story about the past, with well-marked beginning, middle, and end phases. It will be my narrated accounts of the reality that I perceived occurred based on a careful examination and interpretation of the evidence. I will examine various forms of evidence such as oral histories contained in recorded tapes of the key players and public papers that also exist for the key players. Volumes of such material exist for Martin Luther King and Lyndon B. Johnson. I will also use existing biographies and autobiographies of the main figures in this drama.

Furthermore, studies of social movements and of political parties have usually treated them as separate and distinct areas of study. The position I will argue is that, in fact, they are deeply intertwined. Social movements have often shaped electoral competition and party policies; they can even give rise to new parties. At the same time, political parties and campaigns shape the opportunities, personnel, and outcomes of social movements. Few relationships have proved to be more pivotal in changing the course of American politics than those between presidents and social movements. For all their differences, both presidents and social movements are driven by a desire to recast the political system, often pursuing rival agendas that set them on a collision course. Even when their interests converge, these two actors often compete to control the timing and conditions of political change. Nonetheless, during rare historical moments, presidents and social movements have forged partnerships that have profoundly recast not only American politics but American social and economic life.

This dissertation explores the relationship between presidents and prophets. One president, Lyndon B. Johnson and one leader in the prophetic tradition, Dr. Martin Luther King, combined with such SMOs as the SCLC, the NAACP, SNCC, and CORE accomplished the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Perhaps an uneasy partnership, but a partnership nonetheless, that had a critical impact on the passage of the Act. This partnership and the other key politician-prophet partnerships that led up to it are complex and require a careful analysis in their historical context. Yet, a historical analysis alone could potentially miss some of the cultural and political nuances that have occurred. Also, key links between these events might also be missed. Consequently, I will use a variety of social science disciplines including history but also drawing upon such fields as political science, sociology, and anthropology to reveal the patterns that emerge from the epic battles and uneasy partnerships that have profoundly shaped reform and social and political development in America. Finally, I will use scholarship specifically on the presidency. This specialized scholarship is known as presidency scholarship. No less than other specialized fields in political science and history, presidency scholarship can exemplify many examples regarding the power and transformative effects that the presidency can have on American politics and social movements. Studies old and new

portray the institution of the presidency as perhaps the most crucial engine of contentious change in U.S. political development.⁷

I will explore generalized theories on contentious politics in an attempt to identify mechanisms and processes that interact on a dynamic basis to determine the potential for, and degree of success for social movements. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, leading scholars in the study of social movements in their work, *Dynamics of Contention*, dissatisfied with a compartmentalized approach to the study of social movements, utilized a comparative method of analyzing social movements. They contend that by using a comparative approach, recurring combinations of mechanisms and processes that result in contentious politics can be discovered.⁸ Based on their recommendation I will also use the same approach. In their study they compared fifteen major episodes. In this study I will use a narrower focus and concentrate on two major movements leading up to the final civil rights movement. I will be studying the American Revolutionary independence movement led by the Sons of Liberty movement, which I consider to be the first social movement in America, and the abolition movement, a critical necessity to even have a civil rights movement in the United States, and finally the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's. I will be seeking to identify elements and mechanisms that all three episodes in our history have in common. I will also be looking at outcomes and attempting to explain the similarities and differences in the outcomes produced by the three different movements.

The nature of social movements and contentious politics in general requires that this study take a cross-disciplinary approach to examine and explore the various individual aspects of social movements such as organization, leadership, agency, strategy, mobilization, collective action belief frames, and repertoires of contention or resistance. These many and varied aspects of social movements call on virtually all the social science disciplines. I will use a multidisciplinary approach.

⁷ Daniel J. Tichenor, "The Presidency, Social Movements, and Contentious Change: Lessons from the Woman's Suffrage and Labor Movements," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1999), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/27551956>. 14.

⁸ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2001). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=202055>. I loc. 1.

History, of course, is the unifying discipline of my dissertation. It lays out the course of the narrative and the chronology of events, but it also serves as a basis for examining a very fundamental part of this analysis. History will be used to analyze the founding documents and ideas of our country. The founding promise, the “American Dream,” and the collective American mindset are at play in the Civil Rights movement. I will contend that the founding principles as stated in the Declaration Of Independence, namely that “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,” were at the heart of the framing of each one of the three social movements: Independence, Abolition, and Civil Rights.⁹ I will also argue that the Constitution as originally ratified failed to fulfill the fundamental principles of the Declaration and the hoped for promise of the American Revolution.

The study of the history of social movements is central to this dissertation. Therefore, it is only logical to also include a review of the social movement literature. A central theme in the literature is whether social movements have had any major political consequences or can be routinely expected to have them.¹⁰

Edwin Amenta, Neal Caren, Elizabeth Chiarello, and Yang Su, after an extensive review of social movement literature, contained in their journal article “The Political Consequences of Social Movements” have stated that in order “to address the degree to which movements have mattered ...will ... require research designs that compare across several movements and over long stretches of time. Without scholarship comparing across movements, the demonstrated influence of individual movements over specific outcomes is difficult to place in perspective.”¹¹ Therefore, it is logical to conclude that, “One way to do so is to compare a small number of historically similar movements with greatly different results in political influence.”¹²

⁹ Pauline Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States* (Bantam Classics, 2008). 53.

¹⁰ Edwin Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/25735079>. 288.

¹¹ Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." 287.

¹² Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." 302.

As Theda Skocpol and Margret Somers point out in their journal article, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry:”

Comparative history is not new. As long as people have investigated life, there has been recurrent fascination with juxtaposing historical patterns from two or more times or places. Part of the appeal comes from the general usefulness of looking at historical trajectories in order to study social change. Indeed, practitioners of comparative history from Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber to Marc Bloch, Reinhard Bendix, and Barrington Moore, Jr. have typically been concerned with understanding societal dynamics and epochal transformations of cultures and social structures.¹³

They also go on to point out that the comparative history method has been steadily applied to such macrosocial topics as revolutions, political development, and economic modernization.¹⁴

Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, pioneers and leading scholars in social movements have employed the comparative historical method. In their book, *Contentious Politics*, they made an analogy to the process of reproduction in a species in order to explain the comparative method. They stated:

Species reproduction is a collective process that depends on a number of interactive mechanisms that occur between individual mechanisms like courtship, display, sexual encounter, pregnancy, birth, and, in some species, the nurturing of infants. Biologists cannot directly observe species reproduction, but they can study its mechanisms.¹⁵

Mechanisms are the key to disaggregating a complex process like reproduction. Tilly and Tarrow go on to define mechanisms as:

events that produce the same immediate effects over a wide range of circumstances. Example: Diffusion of tactics from one site to another often occurs during major mobilizations, thus altering action at origin and destination as well as facilitating coordination among the affected sites.

Further elaborating Tilly and Tarrow write:

¹³ Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/178404>. 174.

¹⁴ Skocpol and Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." 174.

¹⁵ Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York, United States: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2015). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=2121281>. 235.

We might compare successive petition drives of antislavery activists in Great Britain (each drive counting as a single episode) over the twenty years after 1785, thus not only seeing how participants in one drive learned from the previous drive but also documenting how the movement as a whole evolved.¹⁶

Thus, applying the comparative method to social movements, Tilly and Tarrow argue that:

- We can disaggregate a familiar process, such as mobilization, into its component mechanisms, in order to understand what makes it work.
- We can compare how such a process works in different settings to understand what difference the presence or absence of a particular mechanism makes to a social movement.
- We can examine whether particular mechanisms coincide so frequently with similar outcomes as to constitute a robust process.
- Larger processes such as democratization or nationalist mobilization can also be examined through a mechanism-process approach.¹⁷

Thus, in employing the comparative method, I will analyze three historic social movements; the American Revolutionary movement as represented by the Sons of Liberty and their revolutionary movement, the Abolition Movement, and the Civil Rights movement. In no way will I attempt to relay all the historic aspects of either the American Revolutionary movement or the Abolition movement. I will be comparing just how these three movements developed in social movement terms. Also, for the first two movements my review will stop with the commencement of war. They will not be an analysis of the war itself in terms of battles won and lost. They will, however, analyze the outcomes of those wars.

These three movements are fundamentally linked. One movement stands on the shoulders of the other. Each one builds on the accomplishments of the other. They are continuous and on-going. Each on its own and together, they have had a major impact on the political and social development of America. Additionally, the juxtaposing of these three movements will identify enable the identification of patterns found in each of the movements. These patterns may indicate the possibility of theory formulation which in turn may help us identify patterns of the movements that resulted in positive or negative

¹⁶ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*. 235.

¹⁷ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*. 30.

outcomes. This is a well-known benefit of comparative history known as parallel demonstration of theory.¹⁸

Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow pointed out in *Contentious Politics* that, “no social movement operates in a vacuum.”¹⁹ Social movements operate and are a product of the culture they are born in. Think of the run up to the American Civil War growing opposition between a Northern work culture and a Southern culture of gentility would eventually result in war. In 1831 John Quincy Adams when dining with Alexis De Tocqueville remarked, “Slavery has modified the whole state of society in the south...There the whites form a class which has all the ideas, all the passions, all the prejudices of an aristocracy...”²⁰ This raises a question about culture in America. Is the culture of a black man raised in an urban ghetto the same as a white man raised in the rural south? This then gives rise to the broader question: Is there one American culture or are there many cultures in America? It is clear from these questions that culture must be considered in the study of social movements.

Attempting to define it is probably a good first step. Orlando Patterson in “Making Sense of Culture” wrote:

Culture is defined as the conjugate product of two reciprocal componential processes. The first is a dynamically stable process of collectively made, reproduced, and unevenly shared knowledge structures that are informational and meaningful, internally embodied and externally represented and that provide predictability, coordination equilibria, continuity, and meaning in human actions and interactions. The second is a pragmatic component culture that grounds the first component and has its own rules of usage and pragmatically derived structure of practical knowledge.²¹

This definition describes an individual cognitive process of acquiring, using, and sharing learning and information that results in pragmatic knowledge for the whole

¹⁸ Skocpol and Somers, "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." 175.

¹⁹ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*. 84.

²⁰ George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938). 419.

²¹ Orlando Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 40 (2014), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/43049524>. 1.

society. Viewed in this way culture is conceived of as those patterns of learned behavior that individuals and groups who are part of a social system characteristically exhibit or put on display.²² These are the traits and characteristics that make a culture identifiable. These are the norms, values, beliefs and symbols that individuals experience and absorb from outside themselves which drive their individual and group behavior. In line with this reasoning, in *An Essay on Man*, Ernst Cassirer, a German philosopher who specialized in the philosophy of culture and an expert in the origin, structure, methods, and techniques of political myths elaborated on the concept of culture as a system of symbols. Cassirer in his work distinguishes six distinct symbolic forms: religion, myth, language, art, history and science.²³ Cassirer groups and labels these knowledge structures, patterns, or symbols which makes them easier to recognize.

It is, therefore, important to incorporate culture into the study of social movements for all the explanatory power that it has to offer. Scholars who have incorporated a cultural approach to their analysis have given special attention to two different types of episode. The first is the organization of social movements and contentious action specifically on behalf of ideologies, belief systems, or membership in culturally distinctive communities. The second is taking a network approach using structures such as kinship, trade associations, or volunteer networks in the style of ethnographers who are more concerned with the meaning than with the graphing of those structures.²⁴

Understanding culture and its implications in the study of social movements is important and will be combined with the other social science disciplines to form a wholistic approach to the study of social movements.

As stated before, a key question addressed by most of the scholarship focused on social movements is under what conditions do movements matter politically.²⁵ My topic will explore the Civil Rights Movement and how it developed based on the American

²² Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (1956), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/665488>. 265.

²³ Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Indiana University Press, 2002). 155-156.

²⁴ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. 14-15.

²⁵ Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." 295.

political development that led up to that point. That point being the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. My dissertation will particularly focus on the roles that Martin Luther King, as prophet, and Lyndon B. Johnson as politician, played in the passage of the Act. It is clear that to understand the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on the legislative process we must understand it within the context of its historical roots and within the concept of culture.

Interest in America's political development intensified with the "movement culture" of the 60s and 70s. The mobilization of common people challenged long-established social relations and called for a new examination of America's political resources. The government itself became the object of protest which prompted scholars to step back for a longer view. This in turn resulted in suggested new lines of inquiry into the past, inquiries into the politics of state formation, identity formation, welfare provision, sectional relations, race relations, and cultural antagonism. It also encouraged political scientists to move investigations close to the ground, to delve into the intricacies of political conflict and governmental operations in particular historical settings.²⁶

These historical settings were, the first founding, the American Revolution, and the second founding, the American Civil War. Both of these civil wars preceded the Civil Rights Movement, yet both historical events provided the basis for the framing and mobilization of the Civil Rights movement. Both the Revolution and the Civil War started as social movements, and both had profound political consequences. Those political consequences will be compared and contrasted throughout this work.

Sociology, especially historical sociology examines the institutional structures of our society and how they have interacted and changed over time. It is, therefore, an essential part of the analysis of the Civil Rights Movement. This field provides many of the terms and models for studying the structure, organization, functioning and impact of social movements. Four key elements of social movement structures are defined in sociological terms. These elements are:

²⁶ Karen Orren, Stephen Skowronek, and Orren Karen, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). 2.

1. *political opportunities*, sometimes crystallized as static opportunity structures, sometimes as changing political environments.
2. *mobilizing structures*, both formal movement organizations and the social networks of everyday life.
3. *collective action frames*, both the cultural constants that orient participants and those they themselves construct.
4. *repertoires of contention*, forms of collective action such as sit-ins, protest marches, boycotts and how these repertoires of collective action evolve in response to changes in capitalism, state intervention and response, and other social processes. (I have added emphasis by numbering the components.)²⁷

Furthermore, sociology adds a critical perspective to this work. It is normal social science practice to look for independent and dependent variables. For example, political action like legislation could be considered to be a dependent variable of social movements. A hypothesis could be formulated that social movements matter by asserting a claim that the Civil Rights of 1964 was a direct result of the civil rights movement of 1964. This, however, is a very static view of the interaction between the movement and the United States Government. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Chuck Tilly in *Dynamics of Contention* provide for us an interactive view of collective interaction between movements, making claims that make the government an object of claims, or a party to the claims. It models contentious interaction as dynamic variables that are not static. Further, it shows how different forms of contention – social movements, riots, and revolutions – result from similar mechanisms and processes. It asserts that we can learn more about all of them by comparing their dynamics rather than just looking at them as individual historical events. The model is a model of political struggle that explores mechanisms and processes with the aim of discovering recurring causal sequences of contentious episodes in politics.²⁸

Since social movements are a form of collective action where two or more people are engaged in common or concerted behavior, this normally involves social psychology. Social psychology's primary concern is collective human social behavior. This can include many things— individuals' behavior in collective action situations in the presence of others, the processes of social interaction between two or more people, and the relationships among individuals and the groups to which they belong. Social

²⁷ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. 6.

²⁸ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. 4.

psychologists do not simply document the nature of social behavior; instead, they want to explore the causes of such behavior. They want to understand why people behave the way they do in groups and whether or not that is different than their behavior alone. They want to know the influence of being in a group on individual behavior. Social psychologists also go below the surface of behavior and move beyond action to also include affect (emotion) and cognition (thoughts). In other words, social psychologists are not only interested in what people do, but also what individuals feel and think.²⁹

Social psychology bridges the fields of sociology and psychology. Whereas social psychology studies individuals acting in groups, psychology addresses such topics as individual human learning, perception, memory, intelligence, emotion, motivation, and personality.³⁰ Psychology also considers the principle of homeostasis in social setting. Homeostasis applied to individual human behavior implies that a society will work by means of coordinated actions (including “cultural” actions) by all or some of its parts, to preserve its own integrity by maintaining a minimally fluctuating, life-supporting matrix for its individual members, and will, under stress, take emergency measures to preserve the constancy of this matrix. Stress is defined as a condition in which some part, or all of the social system is threatened with more or less serious damage. The perception of stress, particularly of increasing stress, can be viewed as the common denominator of the panel of “drives” or “instincts” in every psychological theory. The theory of homeostasis as applied to social movements may help reveal how increasing stress or threat can may be a causal factor for both the emergence of social movements and the “backlash” reaction to the movement from the dominant culture or social system.

America has its own unique economic, political, and social system that it has tried to maintain. Changing this system can often present daunting challenges. In the face of a society’s attempt to maintain its homeostasis the presence of injustice has frequently gone unacknowledged and unresolved. The treatment of Black Americans in America’s past is a case in point and the central underlying theme of this dissertation.

²⁹ DeLamater, Myers, and Collett, *Social Psychology*. 3.

³⁰ DeLamater, Myers, and Collett, *Social Psychology*. 7.

A nation dedicated to the proposition that, *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* followed up this stirring Declaration of Independence with a United States Constitution that enabled the counting of slaves for the propose of apportioning taxes and legislators as three-fifths of a human being, thereby, denying even their basic humanity.

In a speech to *Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield*, Abraham Lincoln warned the young men about the troubled times in which they were living and what the spirit of the times could lead to:

While, on the other hand, good men, men who love tranquility, who desire to abide by the laws, and enjoy their benefits, who would gladly spill their blood in the defenc[s]e of their country; seeing their property destroyed; their families insulted, and their lives endangered; their persons injured; and seeing nothing in prospect that forebodes a change for the better; become tired of, and disgusted with, a Government that offers them no protection; and are not much averse to a change in which they imagine they have nothing to lose. Thus, then, by the operation of this mobocratic spirit, which all must admit, is now abroad in the land, the strongest bulwark of any Government, and particularly of those constituted like ours, may effectually be broken down and destroyed—I mean the *attachment* of the People. . . . ; depend on it, this Government cannot last. By such things, the feelings of the best citizens will become more or less alienated from it; and thus, it will be left without friends, or with too few, and those few too weak, to make their friendship effectual.³¹

Unfortunately, that warning was not well heeded and what resulted was a national catastrophe, what James McPherson called the “Second American Revolution.” Lincoln’s speech, nonetheless, was prophetic. He saw injustice and, like the prophets of old he warned of lawlessness and injustice. He was joining a tradition of jeremiad speeches and rhetoric, but I think Lincoln was trying to reach for more. As President, I think Lincoln tried to take America further than it had been. He engaged in what Neal Reimer terms, *Prophetic Politics*.” He saw what was wrong with this country. Lincoln was committed to translating a set of values and norms into goals for behavior in politics and society. He saw the gap between ethical ideals and existing reality. He was trying to close that gap.

³¹ Abraham Lincoln, *The Portable Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Andrew Delbanco (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 2009). 21.

With the passage of the thirteenth amendment, he took a bold step to close that gap. The gap, however, only closed for a brief time and was once again widening. The United States was one of the last nations on earth to give freedom to its slaves. Then, finally when enslaved Black people were given their freedom and Black males were given the right to vote many of their rights were either compromised by or ignored by federal, state, or local laws and practices. They also suffered systemic discrimination which denied them the basic opportunity to achieve economic and social equality. For almost one hundred years Blacks were denied equal justice by the very government sworn to guarantee it.

The question then became, which prophetic values could command the support of the diverse forces of the modern world—religious, philosophical, political, economic, social, scientific. Leading up to the American Civil War, abolitionists tried to impact the laws and political institutions of the United States by invoking a set of prophetic values. William Lloyd Garrison, a leading abolitionist felt that “moral ‘suasion’” was the key to ending slavery.

This in turn raises the question, how did the actions that they took compare to those that came before them, like those of the Sons of Liberty in the Revolutionary War, or those that came after them like the Civil Rights movement? In the sixties Black people, and people in general, in the United States were losing their *attachment* to the government. America was once again wrestling with the same issue that had divided the country - race. The country and the government were not living up to the covenant promised in the Declaration and enacted in the Constitution. *Brown vs. the Board of Education* 347 U.S. 483 (1954) was a small step. But much more was needed.

This was powerfully illustrated in Martin Luther King’s immortal words in his *I have a Dream Speech* on August 28, 1963, when he said:

When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all

men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the ‘unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.’³²

Yet, every once and a while, presidents step up and congressional opposition and fragmentation is overcome by dedicated individuals who were willing to adopt the heavy burden of the prophetic mantle and strike out and change the course of history. Protests, demonstrations, and clashes with demonstrators by police resulted in a flood of public indignation and outrage that left the president and Congress no other option but to confront the national disgrace of racial discrimination. Two men were at the center of that confrontation: Martin Luther King Jr., and Lyndon Baines Johnson. Each played a unique role, the result of which was the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which the *Washington Star* praised as “a historic achievement for American society.”³³

In summary, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed in the face of stiff opposition. Yet it was not the first time that Blacks faced stiff opposition in their attempt to achieve racial justice. The Sons of Liberty in their movement for freedom and independence established American values that were adopted by all Americans and were expected to be found in the administration of their government. Blacks, including slaves were Americans and came to have the same expectations. The frustration of these expectations spawned both the abolitionists movement and the Civil Rights Movement. All of these movements are intrinsically linked to the American value system first established in the Sons of Liberty movement.

Unfortunately, like many social movements, the Civil Rights Movement has not fully lived up to its promise. By analyzing the mechanisms and processes that caused the Civil Rights movement to take shape, we can learn the elements that enabled the Civil Rights Act to pass. The question is, can we learn from history in order to improve racial justice in America today? I believe the lessons of history can guide us in our actions. Lincoln warned us that a house cannot long stand divided. We certainly do not want to have to learn those lessons again. The cost is too high. Two social movements, the Sons

³² Martin Luther King Jr, *The Essential Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I Have a Dream" and Other Great Writings*, Kindle ed., vol. 9 (Beacon Press, 2013). 118.

³³ Charles Whalen and Barbara Whalen, *The Longest Debate: A Legislative History of the 1964 Civil Rights Act* (Seven Locks Press, 1989). viii.

of Liberty Movement and the Abolition Movement, ended in war. Though the Civil Rights Movement did not, it has not fully realized complete social, political and economic equality in America. This dissertation will make every effort to identify the factors for past success and failure of social movements and make every effort to identify the relevance for today.

Chapter 2

American Culture and Ideology

Social movements have impacted every aspect of American life. Movements organized by ordinary people have been behind some of the most momentous changes in American politics and history.³⁴ One of these crucial social movements forced us to reexamine our country's founding principles. It struck at the very heart of the founding principles of the United States. That movement questioned whether we were living up to those principles. This pivotal social movement was the Civil Rights Movement. That movement challenged the fundamental institutions of society and government that had promulgated practices and laws that produced injustice, inequality, and restricted the freedom and mobility of a significant proportion of the citizens of the United States. The Civil Rights Movement sought to remedy these injustices by a fair and equal application of the laws that implemented the ideals and values, and perhaps more importantly, the rights that were instituted by the Founders and which were contained in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Without a doubt, these “unalienable” rights that are contained in America's founding charters did not grow out of thin air. In fact, if we are to understand the phenomena of American social movements it is important to look at how this American social movement got its start.

Origin stories are fundamental to understanding any society and culture. As Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and historian of ideas wrote, “We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance.”³⁵ And it therefore follows, that to understand social movements you must understand the culture and history that spawned them. As Franz Boas, the father of modern American anthropology once said, “In order to understand history it is necessary to know not only how things are, but how they came to be.”³⁶ I would contend that the American Civil Rights Movement's roots go back to

³⁴ Joseph E Luders, *The Civil Rights Movement and the Logic of Social Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). 1.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power” 1982 *Critical Inquiry* vol. 8 Issue 4. 778.

³⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Basic books, 2008). 8.

the very founding of the nation and the interest and ideas that engaged and motivated the revolutionary founders of this nation. Specifically, I would argue that the roots of the Civil Rights Movement go back to the promises contained in the founding charters of our country. The Declaration, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights form the covenant that binds our nation to its citizens and laid the groundwork for the seeds of contention that gave birth to the Civil Rights Movement.

Furthermore, these founding documents were given birth at a very special time. America was founded at a time of momentous cultural and political change in both England and the British American colonies. It was a time when the concept of the nation state was emerging. The changes experienced in the British North American colonies were at the leading edge of a great upheaval in the old-world order. The old order, particularly the monarchical, aristocratic, order was fading away. Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, argues that at the time of the American Revolution fundamental cultural conceptions were changing which enabled the birth of the modern nation state. Anderson points out that three fundamental cultural conceptions that were intrinsic to aristocratic dominance “lost their axiomatic grip on men’s minds” and as a result enabled the rise of the nationalism.³⁷

The first of these cultural shifts dispelled the idea that a particular written language, in this case Latin, could offer privileged access to a small select group of individuals to fundamental truths about man and his existence. The nobility and the clergy had used this restricted use of language to control literacy and therefore restrict the acquisition of knowledge to an elite few. Knowledge is power. As Michel Foucault points out in his essay, “The Subject and Power,” people oppose the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification. He calls these the privileges of knowledge. He goes on to argue that people are also objecting to the way knowledge can be held in secret, not generally shared, deformed or mystified and imposed on people.

³⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition ed. (Verso books, 2016). 36.

What Foucault questioned was the way in which knowledge is circulated and functions, its relations to power. Foucault called it the “*regime du savoir*.”³⁸

The second cultural concept to lose its grip on society was the belief that society was naturally organized around and under kings who were anointed by God. Authority and legitimacy were conferred by divine right and not by popular consent. Lastly, the third cultural concept to fall was a conception of temporality in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable. This was a belief commonly held that the origins of the world and of men were essentially identical and that divine providence was seen as the prime mover of historical events. Therefore, God not man was the prime mover of historical events. Human agency was preordained by the will of God.³⁹ This generally held belief was to fall to a new vision of man and his role in society. The immensely powerful belief in popular sovereignty was beginning to take hold. These age-old beliefs intrinsic to common culture were shattered in America and Europe by the impact of new ideas and new commercial interests. These new ideas were spawned by scientific and non-scientific discoveries which included new sources of classical knowledge and the development of new forms of communication.⁴⁰

Anderson maintained that this new, emerging culture was at the heart of the formation of the new nation state. Culture held together this new “imagined community.” He argued that this binding agent sprung from the cultural beliefs of the people. It dictated the social relationships between people and the rules for their interaction. In America, the culture was shaped by its discovery. It was the new world, and it was different in every way from the “old world.” As a result, following Anderson’s argument, it would be logical to conclude that a new world would produce a new culture that would in turn would produce a new nation state. That new nation state in opposition to British

³⁸ Foucault, “The Subject and Power.” 780-781.

³⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso books, 2006). 36.

⁴⁰ Shane Borrowman, “The Islamization of “Rhetoric”: Ibn Rushd and the Reintroduction of Aristotle into Medieval Europe,” *Rhetoric Review* 27, no. 4 (2008), <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=34294194&site=eds-live&scope=site>. 341.

colonial rule was what would become the United States with a culture unique to the old world.

Culture

The notion of “American Culture” as a culture of the new world gives rise to many basic questions. The first one being what is culture? Then, naturally following; what is American culture?

Despite the centrality of culture in Anderson’s theory of the origins of the nation state, he never provides a very detailed definition of culture. This is particularly important to note for social scientists because there is a long tradition of including culture as a factor in social movement research.⁴¹ Charles Tilly, a noted researcher and writer in the field of social movements, adopted a few methodological constants in his work that I think provide a good path to follow. He approached social movement history from the perspective of a social scientist, which meant, in Tilly's own words, that: "the scientist aims self-consciously at methodological rigor. He defines his terms, states his hypothesis, clarifies his assumptions (in so far as he is aware of them), and stipulates the criteria of proof."⁴² Defining culture then would be an essential place to start. The definition of culture, like so many definitions in the social sciences, has evolved over time.

In 1944 Ernst Cassirer a German philosopher specializing in the philosophy of culture, in his well-known work, *An Essay on Man*, built on the work of the founder of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure. De Saussure, in his foundational work, developed what he termed the new science of semiology. Words in semiology are abstract representations of ideas and beliefs. In his system Saussure called words “signs.”⁴³ Cassirer further elaborated on the concept of culture as a semiotic system of symbols which were transmitted by language. Cassirer categorize this system of “signs” into six distinct symbolic forms: religion, myth, language, art, history and science. These six

⁴¹ *Conceptualizing Culture in Social Movement Research*, Kindle ed., ed. Britta Baumgarten, Priska Daphi, and Peter Ullrich, Palgrave Macmillan, (2014). 1.

⁴² Marcel van der Linden and Lee Mitzman, "Charles Tilly's Historical Sociology," *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 2 (2009), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/44583132>. 241.

⁴³ Mireille Ribière and Mark Addis, *Barthes* (Penrith, United Kingdom: Humanities-Ebooks, LLP, 2008). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3306072>. 23.

forms enable culture to be broken down into its components to enable a framework for analysis.

Somewhat later, but within the same timeframe, the American anthropologist and social theorist, Clyde Kluckhohn, in *Mirror for Man* (1949), defined culture in this way as: (1) 'The total way of life of a people'; (2) 'The social legacy an individual acquires from his group'; (3) 'A way of thinking, feeling and believing'; (4) 'An abstraction from behavior'; (5) 'A theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave'; (6) 'A storehouse of pooled learning'; (7) 'A set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems'; (8) 'Learned behavior'; (9) 'A mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior'; (10) 'A set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment; (11) 'A precipitate of history'... ⁴⁴

Kluckhohn ignored the symbolic nature of culture and developed this all-encompassing definition.

In 1973, Clifford Geertz, who had studied in an interdisciplinary program at Harvard led by Talcott Parson, and had worked firsthand with Clyde Kluckhohn, criticized Kluckhohn's theory of culture. Geertz felt that the problem with Kluckhohn's theory was that it was eclectic and all encompassing. It provided so many directions for the anthropologist to pursue that it forced them to choose and that led to wide diffusion in the field. Geertz proposed an alternative definition and approach. His conception of culture was also essentially like Cassirer a semiotic one, but he added an important distinction. He added observation and interpretation as the essential tools for anthropologists and social scientists. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, he laid out his perspective on culture, he wrote, "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."⁴⁵ As a result, Geertz's anthropology becomes a descriptive science not an experimental one. He focused on giving a "thick description" of culture.

⁴⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, vol. 5019 (New York: Basic books, 1973). <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/concern/monographs/9g54xh780>. 4-5.

⁴⁵ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5019. 4-5.

Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse...it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted. As interworked systems of construable signs..., culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described.⁴⁶ Since everything in society is symbolically mediated, Geertz's concept of culture can be applied to all areas of society. For him, culture was represented and transmitted by language in semiotic form from one person to another or even from one generation to another. Geertz's goal was the interpretation of socially encoded messages that people transmit through their actions and interactions, through their traditions, rituals, and customs, in other words, their culture. Words and language are the conveyance of culture. Edward Sapir the noted linguist and anthropologist said, "Language [is] a symbolic guide to culture. Vocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people. [L]inguistics is of strategic importance for the methodology of social science."⁴⁷

In 1997, Anna Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words*, further the theories of Sapir and Geertz. She stated, ... words encode certain conceptualizations rather than any objective of reality. She went on to write that the same situation or state of affairs can be construed differently because of the unique encoding system formulated by each language. She gives a great illustration of what she means:

To assume that people in all cultures have the concept of 'sadness' even if they have no word for it is like assuming that people in all cultures have a concept of 'marmalade' and moreover, that this concept is somehow more relevant to them than the concept of 'plum jam', even if they happen to have a word for the latter but not the former. In fact, the concept of 'anger' is no more universal than the Italian concept of 'rabbia' or the Russian concept of 'gnev'.

These may be images of independence, opportunity, or even lack of domination by an external force. Wierzbicka using her concept of encoding concepts explains the

⁴⁶ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 5019. 14.

⁴⁷ Anna Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*, vol. 8 (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1997). x.

word freedom in a similar fashion. She wrote freedom presents a certain "view" which is encoded in the very meaning of a word such as freedom. This view encapsulated in the meaning of a word constitutes an important social fact. It reflects the dominant outlook of a society and, to some extent, perpetuates that outlook."⁴⁸ Wierzbicka points out the Latin word *libertas*, from which the English word liberty was derived, primarily denoted the status of *liber*, specifically, a person who is not a slave and it implies the negation of the limitations imposed by slavery. The word freedom is certainly a key word in American ideology yet despite its importance a common understanding of the word and its application in political and social life has been elusive. Erika Harris, *Nationalism*, using Wierzbicka's same reasoning argues that "It then follows that each community has its own language which expresses a community's unique values and ideas. While such exaltation of the uniqueness of a community puts obvious limits on the spread of universal ideas, to Johann Gottfried Herder, the German philosopher and romanticist each culture, each community was of equal value."⁴⁹ The challenge then becomes putting boundaries around a community.

Herder put forth the position that each nation was a unique and individual community by proposing that meaning and thought are synonymous with language. Consequently, he argued that language could be learned only in a community and that those who share the language constitute the fundamentals of a nation. Herder's emphasis on language was meant to underline the human capacity for culture because, following his thoughts, humans are who they are because they were brought up within a particular culture, within a people.⁵⁰ Wilhelm von Humboldt, the founder of modern general linguistics, echoed Herder when he said that "there resides in every language a

⁴⁸ Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*, 8.126.

⁴⁹ Erika Harris, *Nationalism* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=537000.25-26>

⁵⁰ Harris, *Nationalism*. 25.

characteristic world-view ... every language contains the whole conceptual fabric and mode of presentation of a portion of mankind.”⁵¹

It can be reasonably argued that based on the work of many linguists and scholars in other fields that each nation has its own unique culture. Given the assumption that every nation has its own culture; the question that St. John de Crèvecoeur asked before the American Revolution, and has been asked by every generation since, “what is an American?” still seems highly relevant.⁵² America is clearly unique if for no other reason than her shared language, American English.

One of the critical questions that arises out of assuming Americans have a unique culture is whether or not Americans act in a unique way because of their culture. Put another way, is culture an independent variable in causality? Does American culture cause things to happen in a certain way? Both Talcott Parsons and Clifford Geertz approached culture as a system. They both saw culture as an orderly pattern of meanings. According to Parsons, culture is socially produced and consists of relatively stable symbolic systems which are passed on through norms, values, beliefs, and organized knowledge. Parson’s systems view enables culture to be seen as a qualitative or quantitative variable which might be linked to causality in a theory of social action.⁵³ The point of conceptualizing culture as a system of symbols and meanings was to disentangle, for the purpose of analysis, the semiotic influences on action from the other sorts of influences—demographic, geographical, biological, technological, economic, and so on that are mixed with in any concrete sequence of behavior.⁵⁴

Geertz and Parsons, however, did not completely agree with each other on how to analyze social action. Parsons envisioned the social sciences as bounded on one side by

⁵¹ Anna Wierzbicka, *English: Meaning and Culture* (New York: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2007). <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195174748.001.0001/acprof-9780195174748>. 5.

⁵² Henry Nash Smith, "Virgin Land; the American West as Symbol and Myth," (1950), <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/concern/monographs/t148fh16n>. 3.

⁵³ Sandro Segre, *Talcott Parsons : An Introduction* (Lanham, MD, United States: UPA, 2012). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=871300>. 7.

⁵⁴ Victoria E Bonnel, Lynn Hunt, and Richard Biernacki, *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, Studies On the History of Society and Culture, (Berkeley, CA: U of California Press, 1999). <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/concern/monographs/9w032329f>. 43-44.

the natural sciences and on the other by the humanities. These boundaries created two distinct ways of looking at social theory. Parsons labeled them positivist social theory and idealist social theory. Positivist social theory looked in one direction for methodological guidance while idealist social theory looked in the other direction. Positivist social theory sought causal explanation, while idealism sought interpretive understanding. Geertz's methodology definitely focused on interpretation thus putting him in the idealism camp while Parson was in the other camp looking for explanatory mechanisms in culture.⁵⁵ A "cultural tradition," according to Parsons, provides "value orientations." In turn, a "value" is an element of a shared semiotic meaning which provides a standard for selecting certain courses of action among various alternatives in various situations. Culture shapes action by defining what people should want. It defines the ends for action. Culture in Parsons system governs human action by some unique means-end schema. This scheme or pattern is also not utopian ordinary members of society are expected to live by this widely supported body of common moral sentiments. These sentiments are shared, and they define expected conduct and this conduct is considered desirable.⁵⁶

In 1986, in what has become a much-cited article (11,712 cites according to Google Scholar), Anne Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," takes a different perspective on culture. She states, "the reigning model used to understand culture's effects on action is fundamentally misleading. It assumes that culture shapes action by supplying ultimate ends or values toward which action is directed, thus making values the central causal element of culture."⁵⁷ She proposed an alternative analysis of culture. Swidler does not believe that culture is a direct cause of action. She proposed to look at culture in a different way. She proposed three steps for viewing and considering culture. The three steps are as follows:

⁵⁵ Thomas J. Fararo, *Social Action Systems : Foundation and Synthesis in Sociological Theory* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), Book.
<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=182479&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. 86.

⁵⁶ Fararo, *Social Action Systems : Foundation and Synthesis in Sociological Theory*. 99.

⁵⁷ Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no. 2 (1986), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2095521>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095521>. 273.

First step, imagine culture as a "tool kit" of symbols, stories, rituals, and worldviews, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problems. Second, in order to analyze culture's causal effects, focus on "strategies of action," which are persistent ways of ordering action through time. Third, look at culture's causal significance not in defining ends of action, but in providing cultural components that are used to construct strategies of action.⁵⁸ Culture in Swidler's theory is more like a set of skills and habits than a set of preferences or wants. Values in and of themselves do not drive action. Instead, culture provides a set of competencies in a "toolbox" that shapes values and guides actions which take advantage of these cultural competencies.⁵⁹ According to Swidler, culture becomes an independent causal variable because it shapes the capacities needed for crafting strategies of action. Culture in and of itself does not provide causality but provides the necessary repertoire of competencies from a toolbox of alternatives for action. Swidler's perspective on culture is similar to Orlando Patterson's view of culture as the product of two reciprocal component processes. The first is a dynamic process of collecting and sharing knowledge. The second component is a pragmatically arrived at set of rules for the use of that knowledge.⁶⁰

Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, point out that cultural models are not mere tool kits, as sociologist Ann Swidler argued in her paper. They argue that this view is valuable for sociologists in emphasizing the role of individual agency in cultural analysis, it nonetheless fails to capture two other critical aspects of culture. They authors take the tool kit idea of Swidler and further elaborate on the second component of culture that Orlando Paterson emphasizes. According to them, a tool kit is useless if there is nothing to make or do. Cultural elements are always, first, plans for living, blueprints for how to think, judge, and do things. A tool kit is also useless without the knowledge or skill to use the tools. Cultural models are also rules for how to realize cultural plans.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." 273.

⁵⁹ Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." 275.

⁶⁰ Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture." 1.

⁶¹ Lawrence E Harrison and Samuel P Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, ed. Lawrence E Harrison and Samuel P Huntington (Basic books New York, 2000). 209.

Equally important, Harrison and Huntington state that culture as a monocausal explanation for social action is not enough. They add:

The plain truth, of course, is that there is no necessary conflict between the causal use of culture and its treatment in purely descriptive or dependent terms... Furthermore, a cultural explanation does not preclude social causes. Often what's most interesting and useful in any analysis is to identify and disentangle the complex explanatory interplay between cultural and non-cultural factors, an interplay in which both sets of factors can be both independent and dependent in one's causal model."⁶²

To illustrate their point that monocausal explanations are inadequate to explain complex social phenomena Harrison and Huntington give an example that is particularly relevant to the study of civil rights and African Americans. They point out that:

The hostility to cultural explanations is especially marked in the study of Afro-Americans and the many problems that they face. There are good and bad reasons for this. Too many studies of Afro-American problems up to the late sixties-when the reaction set in-relied on a simplistic or untenable conception of culture that was used in a crudely deterministic way to explain Afro-American social problems. Afro-American culture was seen as an encrusted accretion of the Afro-American past that had become a fixed, explanatory black box invoked to explain anything and everything about the group.⁶³

The approach to this study will consider culture as not only a "toolbox" or set of competencies but also a set of boundaries, in other words a context for action. These boundaries will include arrangements to share power, whether symbolic or real, describe various systems of pluralism, ways of drawing boundaries between members of one group and another. Any social system tries to answer the questions: What kind of boundaries? Toward what goals? Enforced by whom? In the real world, whatever the formal power-sharing arrangements, one group usually dominates the others.⁶⁴ Domination and oppression are key to exploring social movements. They are also intimately tied to American values, ideals, and interests.

⁶² Harrison and Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*. 3 and 203.

⁶³ Harrison and Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*. 202.

⁶⁴ Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope : Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (Middletown, CT. 06459, United States: Wesleyan University Press, 1990). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=776793>. 1-2.

American values, ideals, and interests create boundaries both physical and behavioral. Within these boundaries a social system forms a system of societies, each characterized by relative autonomy, by its own territorial organization, and by its own sense of identity. A social system comprises several subsystems or collectivities, all of which are functionally differentiated, interdependent and intertwined. Analysis of such a system focuses on the conditions in which interactions occur within particular collectivities.⁶⁵ These collectivities are characterized by a shared purpose and goals that are all oriented toward certain institutionalized cultural values and norms.⁶⁶

It is also important to remember that these sets of boundaries are not fixed. Just like geographical boundaries cultural boundaries can shift. Scholars and philosophers from Geertz and Kluckhohn to Herder have acknowledged culture is conceived of as a learned behavior and as such is subject to interpretation and change. Culture is acquired or learned by individuals; it is what they know.⁶⁷ Naturally, changes in the economy, the environment or in technology can rapidly impact what we know or what we think we know and consequently have a big effect on the prevailing culture. Change is part of life and adapting to change is part of the struggle of survival.

Anthony F.C. Wallace in “Paradigmatic Processes in Culture” proposed a model for culture that incorporated change. He borrowed from Thomas Kuhn’s, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* the concept of paradigm and applied it to culture Wallace proposed five essential components for the cultural paradigmatic process: innovation, paradigmatic core development, exploitation, functional consequences, and rationalization.⁶⁸ Each stage happens in sequence but after the birth of the new paradigms subsequent stages can overlap and regress and then progress in a continuous process. Cultures are filled with paradoxes, ambiguities, and problems. Cultures are also dynamic, and Wallace saw paradigms as key to that dynamism. In his model paradigms are a set of beliefs employed as a way of approaching and solving cultural challenges. In some sense they are an

⁶⁵ Segre, *Talcott Parsons : An Introduction*. 7.

⁶⁶ Segre, *Talcott Parsons : An Introduction*. 9.

⁶⁷ Harrison and Huntington, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*. 202..

⁶⁸ Anthony Wallace, F. C., "Paradigmatic Processes in Culture Change," *American Anthropologist* 74, no. 3 (1972), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/671529>. 468.

important element of both change and stability for a culture and the social systems found in nations that were spawned by culture. Paradigms are ways of looking at the world. They are for problem solving but they are importantly an agreed upon way of solving problems. The paradigm, or way of problem solving, is shared by the culture. It is also passed on to succeeding generations to use to solve their own problems.⁶⁹ This transference of problem-solving paradigms within and between generations is a recognition and an embrace of the methodology and beliefs of the paradigm. It enables exploitation of the paradigm which is the stage following paradigm formation. Exploitation involves the adoption and utilization of the paradigm by an organization for economic, military, religious, or political interests.⁷⁰ Exploitation, however, has consequences. Exploitation will inevitably create opportunity for some; and if that opportunity is capitalized on by them then functional consequences will result which, in sequence, is the next stage of paradigmatic development. These functional consequences include advantages for some but can also result in new problems for others. This means that the solution to any one problem will have the potential to produce other problems and the solutions to these problems could produce still more problems. Wallace called it the “Pandora's box quality” of continuing core paradigm development and exploitation.⁷¹ Finally, in an attempt to achieve stability cultures, try to pare and “rationalize paradigms to maximize the utilization and exploitation of the most beneficial aspects of a paradigm or a group of paradigms used by a culture. This process of rationalization is at the heart of the political process of a society and its culture.⁷² Unfortunately, rationalization doesn't always work.

Swidler wrote that “a culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction.” Therefore, it is possible for a culture to play a role almost simultaneously of sustaining existing strategies of action, or as Wallace termed them, paradigms, or in constructing new paradigms. This is the dialectic of history. The push of one idea against another for ascendancy. This tension can cause periods of social

⁶⁹ Alexander Bird, "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions and Its Significance: An Essay Review of the Fiftieth Anniversary Edition," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 63, no. 4 (2012). 861.

⁷⁰ Wallace, "Paradigmatic Processes in Culture Change." 470.

⁷¹ Wallace, "Paradigmatic Processes in Culture Change." 470.

⁷² Wallace, "Paradigmatic Processes in Culture Change." 472.

transformation when old established ideas or traditions do not adequately respond to problems faced by a society or a nation. Swidler maintains that “bursts of ideological activism occur in periods when competing ways of organizing action are developing or contending for dominance.”⁷³ For Swidler, ideology is a kind of cultural model. Ideology is a highly articulated, highly organized system of beliefs that establishes new strategies of action.⁷⁴ I would argue that Swidler considers ideology as a driver of cultural change. In a society as diverse and multicultural as the United States there must be some social force that can provide stability and cohesion as well as drive change. Consequently, ideology is the social force that holds America together, particularly in times of change.

Ideology

Terence Ball, Richard Dagger and Daniel O’Neil, in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, explain that ideologies have four distinct functions that enable a culture and its people to cope with change. The first function of ideology is to explain political phenomena to its adherents. An ideology attempts to respond to or make sense of conflict between nations, economic classes, or ethnic groups. It may address economic questions such as: Why is there a depression? or Why is there inequality in the distribution of wealth? A Person’s ideology naturally influences the way they choose to answer those questions and what pathways a person decides to believe and follow. Ideology can also explain political phenomena that would otherwise remain mysterious or puzzling. Why are there wars and rumors of war? Why are there conflicts between nations, between classes, and between races? What causes depressions? Ideologies provide a framework for developing answers. The response that any individual gives to these and to many other questions depends to some degree on the ideology that they believe. A Marxian socialist will answer one way, a fascist another, and a capitalist yet another.

The second, function an ideology provides its adherents with criteria and standards of evaluation. In some sense it provides a moral framework for deciding what is right and wrong, good and bad. For example: Are class differences with disparities in wealth good or bad? Is same sex marriage allowable, and, if so, is it desirable? Is

⁷³ Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." 279.

⁷⁴ Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies." 279.

censorship permissible, and, if so, under what conditions? Again, the answers one gives will depend on which ideology one subscribes to.

Third, an ideology orients its adherents by giving them a collective identity. It gives them a sense of who they are and where they belong. Ideology provides a social and cultural compass with which to define and affirm their individual and collective identity.

Fourth and finally, an ideology supplies its adherents with some form of political program. It provides the grounds for both legitimacy of cause and mobilization of resources. Ideology provides an answer to the question posed by the Russian revolutionary Lenin: What is to be done? And no less important: Who is to do it? With what means?⁷⁵ Ball and his associates summarized ideology in this way:

[P]olitical ideology is a more or less systematic set of ideas that performs four functions for those who hold it: the explanatory, the evaluative, the orientative, and the programmatic. By performing these functions, an ideology serves as a guide and compass through the thicket of political life.⁷⁶

In addition, Erika Harris also directly ties ideology and culture to the concept of the modern nation state. She wrote, “Despite the conceptual controversy surrounding the origins and the meaning of the nation, nationalism is always understood as relating to individual and/or collective identities and carrying a degree of ideological consequence.”⁷⁷ These ideological consequences are typically in the form of demands or goals. Harris goes on to state, “Nationalist rhetoric articulates demands on behalf of and for the national group. Demands may vary in content, gravity, and urgency but the claim is always in the name of justice (redressed or not yet addressed) and the ‘right of the people’. The general aim of nationalism is that ‘the people’ be in charge of their collective destiny.”⁷⁸ Ball and his associates poignantly remind us that ideologies have raised hopes, inspired fear, and drawn blood from millions of human beings.”⁷⁹ They

⁷⁵ Terence Ball, Richard Dagger, and Daniel I O'Neill, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, Kindle ed. (Routledge, 2020). 1.

⁷⁶ Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*.1

⁷⁷ Harris, *Nationalism*. 4.

⁷⁸ Harris, *Nationalism*. 4.

⁷⁹ Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill, *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*. xvii.

also agree with Harris that ideologies center around demands and the inherent obstacles they face in the achievement of those goals.

To be sure, the way cultures manage ideology and the conflict between ideologies can affect the course of history and the fate of an entire society. Even the most stable societies can face discontinuous changes or catastrophic events which cause their tried-and-true beliefs to break down. The old paradigms fail to cope with new challenges. Clifford Geertz felt that problems arise with ideology when “deviations” and “discrepancies” arise between what is believed and what is real.⁸⁰ These “deviations” and “discrepancies” happen most predictably in times of crisis, and they feed on conflict.

Yehoshua Arieli in *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* tried to explore the sources of these deviations and discrepancies. He felt that each conflict presented a challenge to the existing cultural paradigm. He also felt that these challenges provoked a response that either gave birth to a new ideology or were incorporated into an existing ideology. He described the process in this way; “This dialectic process of conceptual attitude formation was related to concrete historical situations in which it fulfilled the social function of creating, maintaining, or destroying consent. Revolutionary or utopian ideologies sought to displace existing elements of social reality, while conservative ideologies-fortified them by setting them in a conceptual context that legitimized and sanctified them.”⁸¹ Consent is the key word here. Consent is an effective force of social action and cohesion.

The challenge is that this consent must be based on common bonds and common interests. One of the first and most famous observers and social scientist of American beliefs was Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville was interested in how these bonds of common interest were formed in America. He asked a basic question about how and why Americans formed common bonds and common interests. He wrote in *Democracy in America*:

How is it that in the United States, where the inhabitants arrived yesterday on the soil they occupy, where they have brought neither usages nor memories; where

⁸⁰ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. 198.

⁸¹ Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*. 4.

they meet for the first time without knowing each other; where, to say it in a word, the instinct of the native country can scarcely exist; how is it that each is interested in the affairs of his township, of his district, and of the state as a whole as in his own?⁸²

Arieli supplies us with the general answer. He argues that the awareness of social bonds and common purpose, the identification of the individual with the group, loyalty to national, religious, or social causes and the very sense of belonging that an individual feels is based upon and directed by the conceptual frameworks or ideologies they employ.

Tocqueville tried to identify the conceptual framework and the belief system that was unique to Americans. He identified individualism with democracy and the “equality of social conditions” that produced it as the key to understanding democracy. Those two abstract concepts are observable and figure prominently in his theories. Another famous figure in American colonial history, William Penn, believed in many of the things observed and noted by de Tocqueville. Penn’s writings famously emphasized notions of egalitarianism, just governance, and moderation in economic pursuits. Twentieth-century scholars took Penn’s rhetoric at his word and interpreted colonial Pennsylvania as nothing less than “the best poor man’s country,” as reflected in the title of one of the most popular histories of the colony.⁸³

American democracy and with it a specific set of beliefs in the form of a commonly held ideology, I would argue that American ideology and its promises have given rise to many of the social movement found in the history and political development of the United States.

Further, by examining the birth of democracy in America and its founding principles we can better understand what is at the core of many of the social movements in the United States, and, in particular the Civil Rights Movement. Using ideology and interests as a framework for analysis gives rise to several important questions. For

⁸² Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, Delba Winthrop, Paperback Edition ed., ed. Harvey C. Mansfield, Delba Winthrop (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 2000). 226 This quote also appears in Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*. 1.

⁸³ Peter B Kotowski, "" The Best Poor Man's Country?": William Penn, Quakers, and Unfree Labor in Atlantic Pennsylvania" (Loyola University Chicago, 2016), https://archive.org/stream/history-pennsylvania/The%20Best%20Poor%20Mans%20Country%20%28Kotowski%202016%29L_djvu.txt. xii.

example: What conflicting social paradigms and the social, economic, and political systems that they spawned gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement? Is conflict a natural part of American democracy? Did a sense of social bonds and common purpose exist across America at the time of the Civil Rights Movement? Is there such a thing as the American mind?

The critical question we will tackle next is: What is it in American culture and ideology that produced the Civil Rights movement and the movements that led up to it? Does American culture and ideology naturally produce social movements?

Chapter 3

Inheritance and Environment

Something in American culture and ideology gave rise to the Civil Rights movement and the movements that led up to it. This, naturally, raises the question; what is it about the American belief system embedded in its culture and ideology that gave rise to these movements? Is there anything exceptional or unique about Americans that would cause such phenomena? This is not an easy question to answer. Henry Steele Commager in, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*, definitely felt that American character and philosophy were unique. He wrote that over a period of two and a half centuries, since the very founding of the colonies themselves, Americans had formulated an American character and philosophy that were unique and defied definition. Yet such foreign luminaries as Crèvecoeur, Tocqueville, and Bryce, each separated by half a century, came to the same conclusion. The American character was the product of an interplay of inheritance and environment. Commager theorized that our American inheritance was not only British but also European. Additionally, this inheritance was not only developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but over a period of two thousand years. The roots of her culture and her institutions traced back all the way to Greece and Rome and, of course, Palestine.⁸⁴

The details of classical history, and the political ideals of the Greeks and Romans, provided the colonists the basis for ideas, argument and rhetoric. For example, James Otis and John Adams believed that the relation between the Greek mother city and her colonies was ideal, and they wished the colonists to see Great Britain as their mother country and as such hold it in nothing but reverence. Initially, neither man wished for complete independence from Britain but rather for a connection formed by the "silken ties" of patriotic loyalty that bind completely but nonetheless are not so burdensome. James Otis feared that the British Empire was following what he considered the brutal

⁸⁴ Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's* (Yale University Press, 1950). <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/concern/monographs/dj52w516q>. 3.

example of Roman imperialism instead of the humanitarian ideal of Greece.⁸⁵ John Adams, on the other hand, held that even Rome gave her colonists rights equal to that of her own citizens. He argued that the example of the Privernates proved his case. The Privernates were a people who revolted against Roman dominion but were eventually given full rights of Roman citizenship because of the spirit of liberty displayed by their envoys.⁸⁶ The capture of Privernum and the treatment of the Privernates was also used by John Dickinson, in his *An Essay on the Constitutional Power of Great Britain Over the Colonies of America* to argue for enlightened governing of the colonies.⁸⁷ Dickinson wrote: "That the inhabitants of these colonies are intitled to the same rights and liberties WITHIN these colonies, that the subjects born in England are intitled to WITHIN that realm."⁸⁸ He also wrote: "That as the idea of an unconstitutional independence on the parent state is utterly abhorrent to our principles, we view the unhappy differences between Great-Britain and the colonies with the deepest distress and anxiety of mind, as fruitless to her, grievous to us, and destructive of the best interests of both."⁸⁹

America's founders incorporated the Roman historian Titus Livius (59 BC – AD 17), known in English as Livy, and other Roman historians into their arguments and rhetoric. Daniel Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* argued that Livy:

navigates the conflicts that emerge in republics by emphasizing consensus and accommodation. Consensus emerges in the context of conflict and competition, to be sure, but the driving force behind this consensus is goodwill: goodwill directed toward individuals that paves the way for broader-based consensus between individuals and groups. This goodwill is rooted in the friendly attraction to and admiration for virtue and is akin to the *ethos* - and *pathos* - based relationships between speaker and audience. Rhetoric and its tools thus provide Livy with a foundation for building and maintaining consensus. This consensus, however, is

⁸⁵ Charles F. Mullett, "Classical Influences on the American Revolution," *The Classical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1939), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/3291341>. 95.

⁸⁶ Henry H. Armstrong, "Privernum," *American Journal of Archaeology* 15, no. 1 (1911), <https://doi.org/10.2307/497245>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/497245>. 46.

⁸⁷ Mullett, "Classical Influences on the American Revolution." 95.

⁸⁸ John Dickinson, "An Essay on the Constitutional Power of Great Britain Over the Colonies in America," (12/09/2022, Philadelphia, PA: Hathi Trust, 3/30/2023 1774), Resolves of the Committee for the Province of Pennsylvania. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044024440711&view=1up&seq=7>. Unan IV. 33.

⁸⁹ Dickinson, "An Essay on the Constitutional Power of Great Britain Over the Colonies in America." 32.

contingent and depends on the continuous actions and reactions – that is, the display and observation of behavior and character – of Rome’s citizens.⁹⁰

Daniel Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* further argued that Livy:

The Roman historians not only served American politicians and pamphleteers. They also served as key sources for Augustine and other medieval thinkers, such as John of Salisbury and Christine de Pizan; their importance in Renaissance political thought is hard to exaggerate; their status as crucial sources and influences in early modern thought, ranging from Lipsius to Hobbes, to eighteenth-century thinkers such as Rousseau, Madison, and Burke, to nineteenth-century thinkers such as Mill, and to twentieth-century thinkers such as Arendt, have all been the subject of scholarly inquiry.⁹¹

The historians were received and interpreted in many different ways by these writers: Sallust provided ammunition to Augustine in his critique of Roman ideas and practices and to humanists in their conflicts with Italy’s ducal cities, whereas Hobbes would cite him in his own struggles with the practice of rhetoric and the admirers of the Roman republic. Livy provided Machiavelli with themes for his *Discourses* and was a key source for Montesquieu. He has been read as an Augustan, in that he seems to back Augustus’ agenda; he has also been read as a champion of the Senate and a critic of autocracy. Tacitus, for instance, was viewed as both teacher and critic of tyrants – that is, as a “black” Tacitus or “red” Tacitus. An exploration of these historians in their own right is thus a useful contribution to the study of the history of political thought.⁹²

Like any inheritance, history and its value are impacted by time. Many aspects of culture are also impacted by time. All the symbolic forms of culture: religion, myth, language, art, history and science must be viewed and interpreted in terms of the time in which they occurred. Yet the dilemma of historical scholarship is its need to use our current resources anchored in the present to discover and interpret the past. As John Higham pointed out, in “Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic,” “The

⁹⁰ Daniel J. Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought : Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus* (New York, United States: Cambridge University Press, 2011). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=647424>. 81.

⁹¹ Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought : Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus*. 6 -7.

⁹² Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought : Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus*. 6-7.

creative historian lives a double life, responsive on one side to the questions and issues of his own age, faithful on the other side to, the integrity of an age gone by. Too feeble an involvement in the life of the present makes for a slack and routine grasp of the past. But present commitments that are too parochial imprison our imagination, instead of challenging it.”⁹³ American historians are a product of American culture and ideology. It can therefore be challenging to recognize and own biases and offer insightful criticism of our own culture. Recognizing these challenges, I would still maintain that American culture and ideology is unique but stands on the shoulders of the many cultures that contributed to its formation.

America was born at a unique moment in time. Its birth in the eighteenth century signaled the end of one era and the spawn of a new form of government that came to be recognized as the modern nation. America was a nation founded on the ideology of popular sovereignty not solely on ethnicity or culture. America was not founded on romantic notions of ethnicity. Examples of nations founded on ethnicity are represented by the German and Italian nations which were spread over various states and principalities and were eventually united through ethnicity. The creation of German and Italian states happened along an ethnic principle that sought unification, a state-creating nationalism that was based on ethnic origin.

Ethnicity is one form of social bonding. Ethnicity refers to a social bond based on belonging to an ethnic group which defines itself, or is defined by others, as sharing common descent and culture.⁹⁴ Belonging forms the core motive for social interaction. Given that we need other people for our basic survival, Susan Fiske, *Social Beings, Core Motives in Social Psychology*, writes that over time we have developed some core motives that interact with the social situation, to help us survive in groups. Decades of theory building and research involving many major personality and social psychologists have developed models about people’s basic motives. Five motives repeatedly appear in

⁹³ John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: the Historian as Moral Critic," *The American Historical Review* 67, no. 3 (1962), <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/action/doBasicSearch?Query=Changing+Paradigms%3A+The+Collapse+of+Consensus+History>. 609.

⁹⁴ Harris, *Nationalism*. 13.

these models. They are *belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting others*. All five motives orient toward making people fit better into groups, thus increasing their chances for survival.⁹⁵ Fiske states that, “Having some close social ties is about the only objective factor found to correlate with subjective well-being.”⁹⁶

The nation builds this sense of belonging. Belonging is built on a sense of shared experience and beliefs. The nation defines itself as sharing a common culture and history but within a defined sovereign territory and possessing certain legal and political rights therein. The concept of the nation is both inclusive and exclusive. This exclusivity based on sovereign borders and distinct legal and political rights is an important difference between an ethnic group and the nation. It is important because, first, ethnicity is strictly a cultural trait in which the binding issue is primarily a common ancestry, and second, because ethnicity is not necessarily attached to any particular legal structure of the state or political ideal.

Another explanation of the distinction between the ethnic group and the nation would be that, while ethnicity may be construed as a fact of one’s cultural heritage the nation is more of a collective organized around certain commonly shared political ideals and beliefs.⁹⁷ As Harris states, “The nation comes with certain values and norms that accompany a more political and territorial discourse.”⁹⁸

The motive to belong by its people is central to the existence of any nation state. If people generally cooperate with one another and want to be accepted, it helps the group coordinate its actions and operate effectively.⁹⁹ The survival of the nation, not just the individual, is based on belonging. Rousseau emphasized this point in his treatise, *The Social Contract*. He wrote: “The problem is to find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and

⁹⁵ Susan T Fiske, *Social beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, Third Edition ed. (Princeton: John Wiley & Sons, 2014). 15-16.

⁹⁶ Fiske, *Social beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*. 17.

⁹⁷ Harris, *Nationalism*. 13.

⁹⁸ Harris, *Nationalism*. 13.

⁹⁹ Fiske, *Social beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*. 17.

remain as free as before.” This is the fundamental problem of which *The Social Contract* provides the solution, “Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.”¹⁰⁰

I would argue that the construction of the ideology of the United States of America was and is based on both the Social Contract as described by Rousseau and building a sense of belonging. However, there is a fundamental difference between a state built on ethnicity as the foundation of belonging and the United States. The United States was not built exclusively on the unifying force of ethnicity to create a sense of belonging. America had too diverse a population that came from too many other nations to do that. Its sense of belonging was built on ideas and interests and not exclusively on ethnicity.

Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*, argues for a strong connection between belonging and ideology. He maintains that “The awareness of social bonds and common purpose, the identification of the individual with the group, loyalty to national, religious, or social causes and the very sense of belonging have been formed and directed by conceptual frameworks or ideologies.”¹⁰¹

The very creation of America was done through a deliberate effort to build a national identity through a shared ideology and not solely based on ethnicity. Naturally there is an interrelationship between the nation and its culture or cultures. The claim to self-governance, which is American nationalism per se, however, was and is conditioned on the existence of a unique culture. This culture grew out of British and European culture but was uniquely American. It was based on the problems of the “New World.” America was different and the ideology it developed was designed to answer whatever challenges its society faced at that time and into the future.¹⁰² The Founders faced a daunting set of challenges: the legitimacy of the nation state, democracy, political unity and nationalism, cultural diversity, self-determination, representation, suffrage, and

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), Kindle ed. (Dover Thrift Editions, 2003). 9.

¹⁰¹ Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*. 3.

¹⁰² Harris, *Nationalism*. 8.

finally, how all of these challenges interacted.¹⁰³ The Founders were building a new cultural paradigm as well as a new social system in trying to cope with the radically changing environment. In many respects these are the same challenges we have faced for the last two hundred years and that we still face.

In trying to deal with the complex issues that they faced, the founders had several different sources for the ideas that they employed to form the bedrock of American nationalism. These ideas arose, in part, from the Enlightenment and its profound belief in rationality. This rationality enabled the Founding Fathers to mold these ideas into an ideology, a system of beliefs based on rationality and Enlightenment ideals. These beliefs started with the inception of a new way of thinking based on logic, rational thinking, and science. The legitimacy of the divinely ordained, hierarchical, dynastic realm was called into question by ideas formed by the revolutionary ideas of The Enlightenment. These ideas were founded on the belief that men of virtue could rule themselves and be free. The locus of power was changed from the monarchy and aristocracy to the people themselves. Royal sovereignty, a sovereignty determined by birth, was replaced by a political system shaped by the people. The impact of economic change, scientific and technological discoveries, and the development of increasingly rapid communications, drove a harsh wedge between the aristocracy and the common people. Fundamentally new ways of thinking were being introduced.¹⁰⁴ Change was in the air. Victor Hugo in *The History of a Crime*, described it as an “indescribable uneasy swarming which precedes those strange battles of ideas against deeds which are called Revolutions.”¹⁰⁵

In step with the great philosophers: Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Bentham, Rousseau and Mill. the Founders formed an ideology for the United States. Political freedom was freedom from governmental interference with anyone’s individual goals. Government in their vision stayed out of an individual’s private life. It preserved an area of life within which an individual could do what they liked. The limits that governments establish through regulations and restrictions on individual freedom, in a real sense, are the borders

¹⁰³ Harris, *Nationalism*. 9.

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 36.

¹⁰⁵ Victor Hugo, *The History of a Crime - the Testimony of an Eye-Witness*, Kindle ed. (The Project Gutenberg, 2018), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10381>, Kindle. loc 1934.

of individual freedom. These borders dictate the degree to which any of us are enslaved to our government. The wider the area of non-interference with anyone's goals and aspirations the wider individual freedom.¹⁰⁶

Philosophers saw individuals as purposeful and goal-directed, guided by self-interest or values and by the rewards and constraints imposed by the social environment.¹⁰⁷ The social environment or culture, aside from governmental regulation, was also a major constraint on individual behavior. Combining both concepts, freedom and social constraints, John Stuart Mill put it succinctly, "The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs or impede their efforts to obtain it."¹⁰⁸ This then is the fundamental challenge that the Founders faced. It is what some consider the greatest paradox of our American culture and government.¹⁰⁹

In some sense this paradox is one that the Founders inherited. The English had been wrestling with the will of the sovereign, their king, and the general will for many years. The rights of the king versus the rights of Parliament were a hotly contested issue in England. Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, ties this sense of English contentiousness directly to the North American colonists:

All Englishmen in the eighteenth century were known throughout the Western world for their insubordination, their insolence, their stubborn unwillingness to be governed. Any reputation the North American colonists had for their unruliness and contempt for authority came principally from their Englishness. ...[W]e have often overlooked how dominantly British and traditional the colonists' culture still was; indeed, in some respects colonial society was more traditional than that of the mother country. Most colonial leaders in the mid-eighteenth century thought of themselves not as Americans but as Britons. They read much the same literature, the same law books, the same history, as their brethren at home read,

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, Second Edition ed., ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton, 2002). 182-183.

¹⁰⁷ James S. Coleman, "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action," *American Journal of Sociology* 91, no. 6 (1986), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2779798>. 1309-1310.

¹⁰⁸ John Stuart Mill, *Mill, John Stuart*, Kindle ed. (Digireads.com Publishing, 2009), www.digireads.com. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Carl N. Degler, "A Book of Paradoxes," review of *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization.*, Michael Kammen, *Reviews in American History* 1, no. 4 (1973), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2701707>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2701707>. 473.

and they drew most of their conceptions of society and their values from their reading.¹¹⁰

The Brits did not have a great track record with their king or for having peace and tranquility on the homeland or abroad for that matter. Naturally, sending 50,000 British and Irish convicts to America exported the most contentious of English subjects to America which even further intensified this sense of English contentiousness abroad.¹¹¹ Many eighteenth-century migrants from the British Isles-Scotch-Irish and Irish came with bitter grievances against the English government. The English clearly exported their contentiousness to their colonies.¹¹²

Open resistance to the will of the king started as early as 1215 with the signing of the Magna Charta. After John, King of England, also appropriately and derisively called John Lackland, had lost Normandy and Anjou to the king of France in 1204, he spent ten years in England amassing the cash needed to recover his empire, in the process tripling his revenues. In 1214 the eventual campaign of recovery ended in total failure. John returned to England, his money spent, his prestige in tatters. The next year his baronial enemies rebelled and forced him to concede the Magna Carta.¹¹³

David Carpenter, *Magna Carta 1215: Its Social and Political Context*, explains that, under chapter 12 of the Magna Carta, the king is not to levy taxation without the common consent of the kingdom. Under chapter 39, he cannot arrest people or seize their property without judgement of their peers or by the law of the land. Under chapter 40, he is not to deny, delay or sell justice. In these ways, the Charter asserted a fundamental principle: that of the rule of law. The king was beneath the law, the law the Charter itself was making. He could no longer treat his subjects in an arbitrary fashion. Chapters of the Magna Carta are still on the statute books of the United Kingdom today.

¹¹⁰ Gordon S Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (Vintage, 2011). 12.

¹¹¹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 51.

¹¹² Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 110.

¹¹³ David Carpenter, "Magna Carta 1215: Its Social and Political Context," in *Magna Carta*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, history, context and influence (University of London Press, 2018). 19.

The Magna Charta resonated with many of the founders. In the 1760s the political disputes between Britain and its American colonies developed into a revolutionary crisis, which eventually led to war and the creation of an independent United States of America. This crisis was both political and constitutional. The colonists challenged the authority of the British government and the power of the Westminster parliament by appealing to the notion of fundamental law, the principles of the English common law, the liberties granted to them in their colonial charters, and their understanding of England's ancient constitution.¹¹⁴ The Magna Carta featured prominently in their arguments and was the basis of many of their protests.

Harry T. Dickinson, *Magna Carta in the American Revolution*, demonstrates how imbedded the concepts of the Magna Carta were in not only the colonial mindset but also colonial legislation. He pointed out:

Throughout the American crisis of the later eighteenth century the colonists repeatedly insisted that their charters from the king had always granted them the same rights and liberties as their fellow subjects back home in England, including those granted by Magna Carta. They pointed to the Virginia charter of 1606, which had promised that the emigrants who settled in this colony, and their descendants, shall have and enjoy all Liberties, Franchises, and Immunities as if they had been abiding and born, within this our realm of England.' Similar rights were granted to many other colonies in America, from Massachusetts in 1629 to Georgia in 1732.¹¹⁵

The importance of the Magna Carta is not just symbolic. It has very real significance in the history of constitutional development and the rights of Englishmen. The Magna Carta represented a major progression of the concept of sovereignty in English constitutional history that had relevance to the Founders and still has very clear relevance even today. Under chapter 12, of the Magna Carta, the king cannot levy taxes "in our kingdom without its general consent." Under chapter 39, "No free man shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or

¹¹⁴ Harry T. Dickinson, "Magna Carta in the American Revolution," in *Magna Carta*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, history, context and influence (University of London Press, 2018). 79.

¹¹⁵ Dickinson, "Magna Carta in the American Revolution." 80.

send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land.” Therefore, under this provision the king cannot arrest people or seize their property without judgement of their peers or by the law of the land. Chapter 40 states, “To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.” Under this provision the king, or, for that matter anyone else, is not to deny, delay or sell justice.¹¹⁶ David Carpenter asserts that, “In these ways, the Charter asserted a fundamental principle: that of the rule of law. The king was beneath the law, the law the Charter itself was making. He could no longer treat his subjects in an arbitrary fashion. Chapters of Magna Carta are still on the statute book of the United Kingdom today.”¹¹⁷

When the American colonists finally decided on revolution and embarked on the path to independence the influence of the Magna Carta is clearly seen when they began creating new state constitutions for their provinces. Dickinson states:

In drafting written constitutions, they hoped to create fundamental laws, which could not so easily be amended or revoked by sovereign legislature as had happened in Britain in recent decades. Many colonies, including Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina and South Carolina in 1776, New York in 1777, Massachusetts in 1780, and New Hampshire in 1784, incorporated in their new constitutions the essential features of chapter 29 of the 1225 version of Magna Carta...Several states explicitly guaranteed that ‘no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law’, that any accused person must be tried by the law of the land and by a jury of his peers in the vicinity where the offence took place, and that justice should not be sold, denied or delayed. In Massachusetts in 1779, John Adams declared that any government seeking to serve the public interest must be a government of laws not of men.¹¹⁸

Of course, English political development was not static and by the time of **the** American revolution the English had moved on past the Magna Carta. Gordon Wood in, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, neatly sums up English political development by the time of the American Revolution:

¹¹⁶ "Magna Carta," in *Treasures in Full*, ed. and trans. British Library (British Library, 2007). <https://www.law.gmu.edu/assets/files/academics/founders/MagnaCarta.pdf>. I used the 1225 version of the Magna Carta because the English translation from the Latin is easier to understand while still retaining its original meaning.

¹¹⁷ Carpenter, "Magna Carta 1215: Its Social and Political Context." 19.

¹¹⁸ Dickinson, "Magna Carta in the American Revolution." 95.

Since the early seventeenth century the English had radically transformed their monarchy: they had executed one king and deposed another, written charters and bills of rights, regularized the meetings of their parliaments, and even created a new line of hereditary succession. In the years following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 they had become increasingly aware of the marvelous peculiarity of their limited monarchy. 'The constitution of our English government (the best in the World)," they told themselves, "is no arbitrary tyranny, like the Turkish Grand Seignior's, or the French King's, whose wills (or rather lusts) dispose of the lives and fortunes of their unhappy subjects.' Representation in the House of Commons even allowed for the participation of His Majesty's subjects in the affairs of government. It was a constitution specially dedicated to liberty.¹¹⁹

So, it was natural that when the American colonist tried to assert their rights under the Magna Carta their English colonial masters would push back. Such colonial opinions were strongly contested in Britain. In seeking to impose its authority on the colonies the British government, supported by a clear majority in the Westminster parliament, insisted that the supreme sovereign authority in Britain and also in all British North America lay with the combined weight of the three branches of British government, namely the king, the house of lords and the house of commons. This view of the British constitution had been steadily developing since the Glorious Revolution of 1689. The American colonists, reverted to an older tradition and thus appealed to an early, perhaps even obsolete, view of the English constitution. This colonial view raised the law above both the British executive and the British Parliament. This position or view was in direct opposition to what many British politicians believed. Since the Glorious Revolution, they had become convinced that the combined legislature at Westminster possessed the right to pass, amend or revoke any law and could even alter or repeal the rights and liberties granted by Magna Carta. William Blackstone, the celebrated and highly influential jurist, had claimed in 1765 that each state needed 'a supreme, irresistible, absolute, uncontrolled authority', and, in Britain, he asserted, this was the combined legislature of king, lords and commons.¹²⁰ So even though the British North Americans had a similar British tradition and inheritance they parted ways on the belief that the king and Parliament had the power and authority to govern and regulate North America. Gordon Wood points out that:

¹¹⁹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 13.

¹²⁰ Dickinson, "Magna Carta in the American Revolution." 83.

[E]ven those English colonists who were proud of being Englishmen were not very good monarchists. Many New Englanders ritualistically recalled their seventeenth-century Puritan heritage of defiance to king and church; and many of them remained a stern, sober people, not much given to the hierarchies and displays of monarchy. Massachusetts was accused in 1740 of being still 'a kind of commonwealth where the king is hardly a stadtholder.' Everywhere in America, even in the southern colonies where attempts to emulate English ways were *strongest, most colonists had little sense of royal majesty: the crown was too far away to make its presence felt.*¹²¹

What the British also failed to recognize was that out of the Glorious Revolution in America emerged an altered pattern of relationships of the colonies to one another and to the mother country. Out of this turmoil developed the framework of the eighteenth-century British Empire.¹²² In 1689, the English planters in America acted with a unanimity they would not again achieve until 1765, for in that year rebels in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland and the Carolinas seized the chance to imitate events in England and decided to overthrow their local governors. The rebels jailed Sir Edmund Andros, the governor of the Dominion of New England and his retinue and a year or so later packed them off to England with a warning that they were fortunate to escape with their lives. The rebels seized the chance to imitate events in England and decided to dismantle James II's and his plans for a centralized empire.¹²³ Increase Mather summed up a good many people's feelings throughout the colonies when he explained that "No Englishmen in their Wits will ever Venture their Lives and Estates to Enlarge the Kings Dominions abroad, and Enrich the whole English Nation, if their Reward after all must be to be deprived of their English Liberties."¹²⁴

¹²¹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 110-111.

¹²² Michael G. Hall, Lawrence H. Leder, and Michael Kammen, *The Glorious Revolution in America : Documents on the Colonial Crisis of 1689*, Documentary Problems in Early American History, (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1964), Book. <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=965125&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. vi.

¹²³ David S Lovejoy, "Chapter 7. Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776," in *Three British Revolutions*, ed. John Greville Agard Pocock (Princeton University Press, 2014). 251.

¹²⁴ David S. Lovejoy, *The Glorious Revolution in America* (Middletown, CT. 06459, United States: Wesleyan University Press, 1987). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=776809>. 254.

The Glorious Revolution was also changing the narrative in America. American Patriots began to rely more on the belief that their political rights and liberties were better defended by appeals to fundamental law and natural rights than solely by the fundamental laws of the Magna Carta. James Otis and James Wilson for example, maintained that English liberties had existed long before Magna Carta and that the great charter had merely declared what had long been regarded as natural rights and fundamental law in England.¹²⁵

David Lovejoy, *Two American Revolutions 1689 and 1776*, argues that “While the American rebellions were violent attempts to exploit for self-interested purposes England's political and religious crisis, they were also endeavors to claim in the colonies the rights which Englishmen enjoyed and were improving upon at home.”¹²⁶ Lovejoy also pointed out that, “All along the line self-interest and political principle went hand in hand. Self-interest was a spring for constitutional appeal, but the fact that the two were closely related did not vitiate the principle that evolved. This principle as a concept of empire based on a sense of equality; the enjoyment of liberty and property was as coveted a right in colonial America as it was in Lockean England.”¹²⁷

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 touched off major rebellions in five of the American colonies the next year.¹²⁸ In 1689 British Americans laid claim to the same rights won by the Revolution in England. For the first time they sought equality for all free men throughout the empire. The Englishmen of the home county's refusal to share the successes of 1689 with colonists led to a distinction between subjects which was a prime cause of the split in 1776. In 1689 colonists made their own Revolution and fashioned a "separate and equal station" as a new American nation. There were differences, to be sure, but the roots of revolt lay in the conflicts of the seventeenth century and the conceptions of empire which surrounded them.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Dickinson, "Magna Carta in the American Revolution." 93-94.

¹²⁶ Lovejoy, "Chapter 7. Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776." 256.

¹²⁷ Lovejoy, "Chapter 7. Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776." 256.

¹²⁸ Lovejoy, "Chapter 7. Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776." 251.

¹²⁹ Lovejoy, "Chapter 7. Two American Revolutions, 1689 and 1776." 260.

The Revolution was also firmly fixed in the ideas of John Locke. To judge from the citations and quotations to be found in the pamphlets of the American revolution, one of the philosophers who most influenced the American revolutionaries was John Locke.¹³⁰ Locke argued that government should rest on the will of the people and that people have a right to revolution whenever their government becomes a tyranny. The hard part is this: how do you know when a government is turning into a tyranny?¹³¹ The key to that question lies in Locke's assumption about man and his relationship to government. A major tenant of Locke's political theory is that no man is naturally subordinate to another. He held that all men are free and equal and may use the resources of their minds and bodies to achieve their own freely chosen ends, while at the same time respecting the equal entitlement of others to do likewise. These are the fundamental moral principles of liberalism.¹³² This is the foundation of Locke's theory of individuality. According to Locke, in political societies, as long as established ground rules are observed the respect for individuality is entirely consistent with competition on the open marketplace of economic or intellectual life.¹³³ Based on Locke major principles of the American tradition and belief system started to take hold. Individualism, equality, fair competition, and resistance to tyranny are all found in both Locke and the American political system.

Ironically, the British colonials, who would become Americans, learned and developed their traditions and belief system from their ancestors, the British. The American tradition of resistance to tyranny relies on the British philosopher John Locke's call upon a well-established English tradition of constitutional resistance based on the rights and rational of equal men. Geraint Parry in his work, *John Locke*, wrote:

Locke perceives English history as comprising a number of such acts of resistance or 'revolutions', most of which have been provoked by the misuse of executive prerogative... Resistance has been intended not to destroy prerogative but, upon

¹³⁰ Andrew J. Reck, "Natural Law in American Revolutionary Thought," *The Review of Metaphysics* 30, no. 4 (1977), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20126989>. 688.

¹³¹ Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*, Kindle Edition ed. (WW Norton & Company, 2014). 112.

¹³² Geraint Parry, *John Locke* (London, United Kingdom: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1273218>. 29.

¹³³ Parry, *John Locke*. 28.

its abuse, to define it more strictly in accordance with its original discretionary purpose...The Preface to the Two Treatises places William III in this role of the 'Great Restorer'. Locke is using revolution in its accepted contemporaneous sense of a revolution back to the previous or the original constitution...Locke stigmatizes absolutism as a 'new' policy Whether it represents the paternalist or even the managerial attitude to society increasingly typical of Tudor, Stuart and continental absolutism, or the attitude of oriental despotism, it is a policy which no past era of European civil society has found truly acceptable. ...Resistance is not rebellion and it is not, therefore, inherently sinful. It is not a revolt against the principle of subordination, since in politics subordination rests on authority and where the rebellious ruler flouts authority he loses superiority. The resultant state of war is, therefore, between equals, with right on the side of the party who is defending the law (235). A rebellious king in breach of trust dethrones himself and may be treated like any commoner and even prosecuted... Resistance is the reassertion by the people of the authority granted to it, by the very institution of the body politic, to determine the appropriate procedures for the defence of property. An act of resistance is, therefore, an act taken in the name of the body politic to rectify its own government.¹³⁴

The concepts of resistance and revolt found in the writings of Locke and incorporated into American culture and ideology were the basis of the American Revolution.

Further, in addition to individualism, popular sovereignty, and the right to resist illegitimate authority, there is still one remaining concept that is crucial to understanding of Locke and our British inheritance. That is the British concept of property. The Brits raised property from a simple material possession to the level of a right to own property. They also defined the right to own property in the context of the right of government to access or take that property. Consent of the owner became critical to the government's ability to take or access any individual's property. John Locke in his Two Treatise on Government wrote,

The supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his own consent: for the preservation of property being the end of government, and that for which men enter into society, it necessarily supposes and requires, that the people should have property, without which they must be supposed to lose that, by entering into society, which was the end for which they entered into it...¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Parry, *John Locke*. 140-142.

¹³⁵ John Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*, Kindle ed. (1689). 205.

Most importantly, Locke's concept of property was not just land. Locke recognized property in a much more profound sense. Property for Locke involved personal sovereignty and self-direction. It involved the exclusive right to dispose of one's person and of what one has legitimately acquired as one person sees fit. As Locke put it one of the primary reasons to have a government was the "preservation of property."

Also, for Locke, the concept of property right was a broad and inclusive one. His concept of "property right" included freedom of occupation, of expression, and of association for purposes of religion, learning, commerce, or pleasure. An individual's property was involved in their very autonomy. Individual autonomy or liberty could be threatened by despotic and paternalist governments which, for private interests, or for supposedly public good, sought to displace individual guarantees by the general will.¹³⁶

The rights of the majority versus the rights of the individual becomes a major challenge for any government. It is the fundamental paradox of government. It strikes at the basic question of: Why does a government exist? How does the government secure the rights of the individual to secure property and thereby secure their own individualism without sacrificing the general good or play to specific private interests? The issue of government has always been whether individual men and women exist to serve some system of government, or whether a system of government exists to serve individual men and women. In Locke's time there came a growing feeling that government was conducted for the benefit of a few who thrived while the general population suffered.¹³⁷ Since Locke's time, people have sought some form of balance—a limiting force. The American republic was born as a new vision of government. It was a historic process that created the American ideology. It arose from ideas grounded in the past experience of both the British and the British Americans. Thus, arose the notion of popular sovereignty and the concept of written constitutions and laws created by popular participation to control and limit the use of arbitrary power and to protect the concept of private property.

¹³⁶ Parry, *John Locke*. 156.

¹³⁷ Justin Buckley Dyer, *American Soul : The Contested Legacy of the Declaration of Independence* (Lanham, MD, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011).
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1108261>. 112.

The American belief system is our inheritance from the old world but those beliefs are enacted in a new world environment which is markedly different than the old world and has a profound impact on how those beliefs are enacted. Henry Steele Commager in *The American Mind*, pointed out, that American character was shaped, in part by inheritance but not just inheritance. It was also shaped by its environment. Popular sovereignty, the concept of written constitutions and laws, the legitimacy of resistance and revolt against tyranny, that no man is subordinate to another and that all men are born free and equal, these are the fundamental pillars of the American belief system.

Karl Mannheim, the sociologist and the founder of the Sociology of Knowledge, in *Ideology and Utopia*, wrote that the term ideology should not be evaluated with a negative value judgement, such as Fascism or Communism but should designate an outlook inevitably associated with a given historical and social situation. To Mannheim this means that every form of political and historical thought, including ideology is essentially conditioned by the life situation of the thinker and his or her followers.¹³⁸ Commager further extended this by adding another critical factor, he pointed out that it was not just our inheritance but the interplay of that inheritance with the environment. In some sense Commager is further elaborating on Mannheim's notion of "life situation." Commager stated:

Certainly, the hundreds of foreign visitors who swarmed over America and embarked so glibly upon interpretation had no difficulty in distinguishing American from Old World character... Tocqueville, and Bryce, each separated by half a century, returned much the same answer. It required almost a new vocabulary to do justice to the changes in material circumstances which each successive generation of interpreters discerned... It was not, in short, particular environments that determined the American character or created the American type but the whole of the American environment—the sense of spaciousness, the invitation to mobility, the atmosphere of independence, the encouragement to enterprise and to optimism. Whereas in Europe, with its age-old traditions of

¹³⁸ Marguerite R. Howie, "Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge," *The Journal of Education* 143, no. 4 (1961), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/42750357>. 58.

feudalism and nationalism, the particular triumphed over the general, in America...¹³⁹

As Commager mention Tocqueville was an observer and theorist on the American character and its impact on democracy. Tocqueville was one of the most famous observers of America, and perhaps her first social scientist. In his masterful two-volume study, *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville invented the word “individualism” to describe a new sort of secular striving he observed in the United States and used the term “self-interest rightly understood”—a creative construct that emphasized the practical value of moral precepts like reciprocity and self-denial.¹⁴⁰ Individualism and democracy and the “equality of social conditions’ that produced them figure prominently in his theories. Tocqueville said that.

Individualism is a reflective and peaceable sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of those like him and to withdraw to one side with his family and his friends, so that after having thus created a little society for his own use, he willingly abandons society at large to itself.¹⁴¹

This isolation is problematic for Tocqueville, yet he further observes that Americans have found a way out of their isolation and individualism through their own self-interest. He observed the following:

In the United States it is almost never said that virtue is beautiful. They maintain that it is useful and they prove it every day...Americans... are pleased to explain almost all the actions of their life with the aid of self-interest well understood; they complacently show how the enlightened love of themselves constantly brings them to aid each other and disposes them willingly to sacrifice a part of their time and their wealth to the good of the state...Self-interest well understood is a doctrine not very lofty, but clear and sure. It does not seek to attain great objects; but it attains all those it aims for without too much effort. As it is within the reach of all intellects, each seizes it readily and retains it without trouble. Marvelously accommodating to the weaknesses of men, it obtains a great empire with ease, and preserves it without difficulty because it turns personal interest against itself, and to direct the passions, it makes use of the spur that excites them.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Jim Cullen, *The American Dream : A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation* (Cary, United States: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2004). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=280924>. 69.

¹⁴¹ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 482.

¹⁴² De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 501-502.

Self-interest rooted in individualism also manifested itself in another way very characteristic of Americans, namely capitalism. Capitalism also helped to make individualism functional in an organized society. The capitalist system does not operate in isolation. It is a system of market exchange that involves the interaction of people.¹⁴³ It is important to differentiate between isolation and individualism. Isolation is a physical state that individuals can exhibit when they are solitary or cut off from human interaction. Individualism is an abstraction, an attitude, a state of mind. Zubin Meer in *Individualism: The Cultural Logic of Modernity* tries to frame the concept of individualism:

[I]ndividualism connotes a dynamic capitalist economic rationality—utilitarian, competitive, and profit maximizing—inimical to the supposed torpor of feudal and tribal mentality alike. It also implies a Protestant spirituality scornful of the sensuous iconicity and communal sociability of saints, relics, pilgrimages, and traditional church hierarchy... individualism is of course also shorthand for the modern liberal sense of politico-juridical right and entitlement.¹⁴⁴

Meer goes on to say, that “individualism is inexorably tied to the specific but intertwined historical processes that have shaped the last five centuries or so of Euro-American modernity: capitalism and liberalism, secularism and humanism, historicism and science.”¹⁴⁵

Materialism, a potential result of capitalism and its pursuits became part of American ideology. This ideology exalted success and scorned failure and mediocrity. Perhaps even more importantly it was fairly universal. It began early, as Jim Cullen in, *The American Dream* states that “throughout the British colonies—as well as non-British colonies—the prospect of moving up in the world was an avowed motive of virtually every Euro-American. This was particularly true of apprentices and indentured servants who signed contracts to work, in many cases as virtual slaves, for fixed terms in return for the price of passage.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Deirdre N McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity: Why Economics Can't Explain the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). Loc. 288.

¹⁴⁴ Zubin Meer et al., *Individualism : The Cultural Logic of Modernity* (Lanham, MD, United States: Lexington Books, 2011). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=787362>. 12.

¹⁴⁵ Meer et al., *Individualism : The Cultural Logic of Modernity*. 13.

¹⁴⁶ Cullen, *The American Dream : A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. 60-61.

Once again Tocqueville made an important observation about Americans and their materialism:

In America the passion for material well-being is not always exclusive, but it is general; if all do not experience it in the same manner, all do feel it. The care of satisfying the least needs of the body and of providing the smallest comforts of life preoccupies minds universally.¹⁴⁷

Further he states:

What attaches the human heart most keenly is not the peaceful possession of a precious object, but the imperfectly satisfied desire to possess it and the incessant fear of losing it.¹⁴⁸

Commager believed that this striving for material goods and their achievement gave Americans an inherent sense of optimism and that with this sense of optimism came a sense of power.

The American had spacious ideas, his imagination roamed a continent, and he was impatient with petty transactions, hesitations, and timidities. To carve out a farm of a square mile or a ranch of a hundred square miles, to educate millions of children, to feed the western world with his wheat and his corn, did not appear to him remarkable. Because his imagination was constantly challenged by the realities of geography and history, he was receptive to large plans and heroic speculations.¹⁴⁹

The power of this materialistic, capitalistic ideology was that it was collectively shared. In taming the frontier American frequently met hardship with fortitude, partly because he was so sure that fortitude, coupled with hard work and a little luck were bound to be rewarded in the end. American religion reinforced this belief by teaching that laziness and failure were vices more damaging than immorality. Americans were accustomed to prosperity and resented anything that interfered with it and regarded any prolonged lapse from it as an outrage against natural order of things.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 506.

¹⁴⁸ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 506.

¹⁴⁹ Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*. 6.

By the 1850 nothing in all history had ever succeeded like America, and every American knew it....Collectively, Americans had never known defeat, grinding poverty, or oppression, and Americans thought these misfortunes part of Europe and the Old World. Progress was not a philosophical idea but a commonplace of experience: They saw it daily in the transformation of wilderness into farmland, in the growth of villages into cities, in the steady rise of their communities and nation as a whole to wealth and power. Nowhere else on the globe had nature been so generous, and the results so spectacular. Success and riches were available to all who had the enterprise to take them and the good fortune to be white.¹⁵¹

As Cullen writes:

In an important respect, however, the Dream of Upward Mobility, particularly in the South, was actually too successful: it quickly became apparent to those who employed servants that it was in fact quite expensive to support them and that they could become dangerous competition when they moved on. Better, they concluded, to invest in slaves, who cost more initially but who had no payoff price and even rose in value. (Indeed, the slave trade itself became a major means of upward mobility for many colonists.) African Americans, who were only a tiny fraction of Virginia's population in the mid-seventeenth century, represented almost half of it by the mid-eighteenth. And in parts of some colonies, like South Carolina, they were well more than half. By the time of the Revolution, slavery was legal in all the colonies, and indentured servitude was on the decline. Upward mobility remained possible, but the terms had a decisively racial cast. For much of American history, then, upward mobility was understood, even defined, by a visible alternative of immobility.¹⁵²

Individualism, capitalism and materialism could also have a dark side. Unfortunately, exploitation of both indigenous people and the forced immigration and enslavement are part of the American story and ideology.

Clearly, certain key ideals and aspirations were at the foundation of American ideology. Yet it is important to stress that the success of these ideals rested with an acceptance by the people of these ideals and their faith in the type of society those ideals would create. The Founding Fathers did not create what came to be known as the American mindset, they confirmed it and without doubt, this mindset, this American

¹⁵¹ Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*. 5.

¹⁵² Cullen, *The American Dream : A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. 61.

nationalism came hand-in-hand with certain liberal aspirations.¹⁵³ These liberal aspirations were, what Louis Hartz in his classic book, *The Liberal Tradition in America* characterized as “the American democrat.” For Hartz, “the ‘American democrat’ is one who believes in individual liberty, equality, and capitalism and who regards the human marketplace, where a person succeeds or fails by his or her own efforts and ability, as the proper testing ground of achievement.”¹⁵⁴ Hartz believed in a more universal definition of liberal than exists today and so did the Founding Fathers. Gordon Wood in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* further reinforces Hartz when he states that, “Equality lay at the heart of republicanism.”¹⁵⁵ Equality, Freedom, liberty, sovereignty, are all fundamental to the American belief system. They are not only ideals they are also embedded in our culture. They form a kind of covenant between the citizens of the United States and their government.

That covenant, between Americans and their government, is a covenant bound in writing. It is contained in our founding charters, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It was also contained in pamphlets, broadsheets, and writings that inspired them. Benedict Anderson believed the formation of the nation state went along together with print capitalism with its printed media.¹⁵⁶ Print media in the 18th century allowed for the widespread dissemination of ideas that reinforced or at least appealed to the existing values of the culture. The rise of literacy coupled with a wider availability of printed material made it possible for a rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves and to others, in new ways. which increased the possibility of a larger number of people becoming aware of either themselves or of others.¹⁵⁷ The description of the nation as an ‘imagined community’ may not have existed without the growth and expansion of print media. Literacy and ideals are the necessary ingredients in the formation of a community of language and history, the interests of which, once identified, can be promoted, even fought for. The

¹⁵³ Harris, *Nationalism*. 12.

¹⁵⁴ Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*, Kindle ed. (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1955). Kindle Edition loc 25.

¹⁵⁵ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 233.

¹⁵⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 36

¹⁵⁷ Harris, *Nationalism*. 10.

technological advances, the spread of commerce, the growth of liberal ideals, the shift from local, and at most regional colonial communities gave birth to the American nation.

Enormous care has been taken to preserve our founding documents. They have been covered with double panes of plate glass between which a gelatin film filters damaging light rays. They are sealed with lead with helium gas to protect them. They are guarded day and night.¹⁵⁸ Pauline Maier in *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, described the National Archive repository for the founding documents this way:

The 'shrine' itself resembles the awesome, gilded, pre-Vatican II alters of my Catholic girlhood, raised three steps above where the worshippers assembled. The Declaration is its centerpiece, held above the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in what looks like a tabernacle, or perhaps a monstrance, the device used to display the host on special days of adoration. The Constitution and the Bill of Rights are spread out beneath, on the altar's surface. Off to the left as visitors leave they can see another important document, a version of England's Magna Carta of 1215 that was probably issued in 1297, and that has been lent to the National Archives for an indefinite period by its owner, the Dallas businessman Ross Perot. As the Archives explains, the fundamental constitutional documents of the United States emerged from an old English tradition, and some rights mentioned in our Bill of Rights were asserted, or at least foreshadowed, in the Magna Carta five centuries earlier.¹⁵⁹

In many ways gaining an understanding of the founding documents of the United States is an essential step in understanding founding principles of the United States as well as the basis and progression of the Civil Rights Movement. In the next chapter we will attempt to do just that.

¹⁵⁸ Daniel T Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (Harvard University Press, 1998). 6.

¹⁵⁹ Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, Kindle ed. (Vintage, 2012). xiv and xv.

Chapter 4

Founding Principles – The Promise – The Covenant

Danielle Allen in, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*, argues that the founding documents convey a lesson of paramount importance that language is one of the most potent resources each of us has for achieving our own political empowerment.¹⁶⁰ Certainly the Declaration has powerful and moving language. Nonetheless the language that Jefferson put together in and of itself, no matter how inspiring, is not as important as what the Americans did with the political empowerment that the Declaration inspired. Some years later John Adams looked back on the Declaration and pointed out that its sentiments were nothing new.¹⁶¹ As Henry Steel Commager noted, John Adams wryly remarked that the Declaration of Independence was a recapitulation of John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* and had been monotonously reaffirmed many times before the American Declaration. Commager, however, makes a keen observation on Adams' remark. He wrote, "it is pertinent to observe that Locke rationalized a revolution and Jefferson inspired one and that Locke is rather better known in the American translation than the original. Locke's thinking and inspiration are critical to American development, but thinking is not enough. What kind of action did Americans take to build the kind of country that they wanted. What did the American take from the accumulated store of philosophy and what did he do with what he took."¹⁶²

Building on Commager's thoughts I would argue that the Declaration was an offer to all the potential Patriots in America. It was a critical step in the making of the American Revolution. It made an offer to those who would follow, "the cause." It inspired a revolution by declaring that it was necessary for British Americans to "dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the

¹⁶⁰ Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*. 21.

¹⁶¹ J Adams, *The Works of John Adams. Vol. 4: Novanglus, Thoughts on Government, Defence of the Constitution (Altenmünster, Germany)*, Kindle ed. (Jazzybee Verlag). Available at [https://www.amazon.com/Works-John-Adams-Vol-...,2015\).loc.33511](https://www.amazon.com/Works-John-Adams-Vol-...,2015).loc.33511).

¹⁶² Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's*. 26.

Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them...¹⁶³

The Declaration showed the power of words; with one sentence Jefferson turned a typical eighteenth-century philosophical document about political grievances into a lasting proclamation of human rights.¹⁶⁴

The Declaration asserted that, "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." Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, pointed out that, "equality, universality, and naturalness of rights gained direct political expression for the first time in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776... With these words The Declaration of Independence became a revolutionary manifesto that proclaimed and justified the end of British rule over America."¹⁶⁵ It offered all men equality, security, freedom and the ability to pursue their dreams however they would conceive them. The revolutionaries, Jefferson, Adams, Lee, Franklin, and Washington gave the American people a reason to follow them. They made not only an offer but a promise: a promise that all men would be equal and that they would be secure and free to pursue happiness. They were making a promise that if their cause was successful in achieving independence, they would create a government where all men could pursue their dreams.

This promise, however, was contingent upon signing up, so to speak, for the cause of independence and freedom. Isaiah Berlin in a lecture series delivered to a British audience on the BBC entitled *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, employed the power of language to ask several critical questions: "Why should an individual obey other individuals? Or stated another way: Why should any one individual obey either other individuals or groups or bodies of individuals?... Under what circumstances do people obey?... When do they cease to obey?"¹⁶⁶ In sum, though Berlin

¹⁶³ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 53.

¹⁶⁴ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Kindle ed. (WW Norton & Company, 2007). 15.

¹⁶⁵ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 1.

¹⁶⁶ Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*. 1.

was asking what was meant by the State, by society, by the individual, by laws and so forth, the central question that still remained, was why should anyone obey anyone else.

Berlin's question is fundamental to all questions of political philosophy and is also fundamental to the study of social movements and revolutions. In the case of the American Revolution there is a particularly glaring paradox surrounding this question that very question. Why would British American colonist, who by most contemporary standards were among the freest on earth give up that freedom to join the cause for independence?¹⁶⁷ In other words, they were being asked to give up the freedoms that they currently enjoyed under British rule and join a movement that promised freedom. It is a perplexing conundrum. Why did the colonial elite as well as the journey man start to question their freedom. John Adams said that "habits of mind favorable to entire personal freedom had been formed even among a large class who seldom get so far as to an analysis of principles... nurtured in these habits of self-reliance and self-government."¹⁶⁸ Given these principles the American Revolutionary time period marked a real identity crisis for the British American colonists. What were they? Were they something American or something British? Keith Mason in, *The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World*, points out the identity crisis they faced was twofold:

The twin issues of allegiance and identity loomed large in the turbulent era of the American Revolution. While they agonized over how to position themselves in this complex, traumatic, and fluid contest, both fledgling Americans and Britons struggled to get to grips with the wider implications of a struggle that many commentators elected to perceive as a transatlantic civil war. In Britain itself pamphleteers, writing from a variety of different vantage points, competed with

¹⁶⁷ Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (WW Norton & Company, 1991). loc. 5011.

¹⁶⁸ John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*, ed. N. John McArthur, Kindle ed., 10 vols. (Boston MA: Little Brown and Co., 2012; repr., Lexicos Publishing johnsonsdictionary@gmail.com Adams, John. *The Works of John Adams (Annotated)* . Lexicos Publishing. Kindle Edition.). Lexicos Publishing johnsonsdictionary@gmail.com. loc. 6822-6831.

each other in declaiming the potential horrors of this kind of deeply regrettable and destructive conflict.¹⁶⁹

The British had had civil wars before but how was this one different? The difference was British American colonists were becoming independent of Britain. They were becoming Americans. They had and were still developing their own culture based on the principles of freedom, self-reliance, and self-government. The cultural anthropologist, Anthony F.C. Wallace described the process of cultural evolution and change in his seminal paper, "Revitalization Movements." In his paper he lays out the structure of the revitalization or cultural change process. The structure of the revitalization process consists of five stages which in many cases are overlapping, in 1. Steady State, cultural standards in organization, technology, commerce, law, and religion, as well as other routine aspects are well established and maintained; 2. Period of Individual Stress, individuals are discontented with aspects of the current culture and its routines; 3. Period of Cultural Distortion, discontent spreads and becomes widespread, change movements develop ; 4. Period of Revitalization cultural reformulation, communication, organization, adaptation, and general cultural transformation has taken place and routines return, finally, 5. New Steady State exists.¹⁷⁰

The American Revolution fits this model very well. The first stage consisted of the initial period of colonization up until the Stamp Act crisis. Pauline Maier in, *From Resistance to Revolution*, describes the stress felt by the early revolutionaries and how in the progression of the revolution the culture began to be warped into a new American culture based on different "sentiments" and principles:

Independence became possible, finally, because of a corrosion of American affection for Britain, which was, John Dickinson said, the one basic and essential element in any lasting union of Britain with her colonies. During the mid-1760's, the most radical of colonists had taken great pride in their British affiliation, their membership in the freest government in the world. During the Stamp Act crisis, Dickinson feared only a future 'dreadful revolution of sentiments' toward Britain; but by 1774, Joseph Reed told Lord Dartmouth that American fondness for

¹⁶⁹ Keith Mason, "The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World," in *The Loyal Atlantic : Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, ed. Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012). 39.

¹⁷⁰ Anthony Wallace, F. C. , "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 2 (1956), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/665488>. 268.

Britain was already fading. In October 1775, an English observer in New York used stronger words: 'the Minds of the People now begin to be sowered' against Britain....¹⁷¹

Maier goes on to write:

It was this gradual change 'in the minds and hearts of the people' that seemed revolutionary to contemporaries. Only because affection for Britain had been so deep did the change seem fundamental. Because the weaning of attachment was incomplete, and because, too, of the uncertainty in America's future, the decision for separation was not much happier for John Adams or even Arthur Lee than it was for John Dickinson, who in the end could not accede to the Declaration of Independence.¹⁷²

John Adams, Arthur Lee, and John Dickinson were under intense stress and they felt the pressure to make their feelings, beliefs and sentiments publicly known. They also knew there was great risk in publicly declaring their beliefs and framing their cause. This was clearly reflected in the closing lines of the Declaration of Independence, "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."¹⁷³ By 1776, advocacy of a Declaration of Independence had become the defining trait of American radicals.¹⁷⁴

This cultural transition, however, required not only individual stress of the radicals but a fundamental shift in belief systems of a cross section of the population sufficiently large enough to support the revolution. During this transition there is a period of cultural distortion. People feel dissatisfied with their current system and must choose between maintaining their current system and tolerating the stress or changing the system to reduce their stress and dissatisfaction with the current social system or prevailing culture. Social scientists have theorized that alternative belief structures can provide nonmaterial rewards that induce individual participation and ensure social solidarity even

¹⁷¹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc. 5020.

¹⁷² Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc. 5020-5030.

¹⁷³ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 58

¹⁷⁴ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc. 4970.

in the face of harsh countermobilization.¹⁷⁵ Reduction of stress and increased satisfaction coupled with a sense of belonging are powerful nonmaterial rewards for changing the system.

Mason argues that during the lead up to the Revolutionary War colonists faced significant change in their culture. He points out that many colonists agreed with the pamphleteers in fearing considerable ‘carnage and desolation.’ They also dreaded the possibility of a vicious contest that would dissolve that union that had existed for so long between the mother country and her colonies. For many colonists, however there existed an alternative to the existing belief system that prized British colonial rule. British Americans began to believe that to submit to British colonization and rule was a form of perpetual ‘slavery’ which was far worse than the alternative of violence and civil war.¹⁷⁶

A new belief system was developing, an American belief system. Susan Fiske in, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology* described the basic motives at play in the revitalization of cultures. She explains that we need other people for our basic survival:

[S]ocial psychologists have developed ideas about people’s basic motives. Five come up repeatedly: belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting others. All five motives orient toward making people fit better into groups, thus increasing their chances for survival.¹⁷⁷

The colonists were in a struggle with the mother country for their own survival. Self-government, autonomy, and freedom were at the heart of it. The power and autonomy to govern themselves was central to the framing of the movement for independence. The pamphleteers’ earlier writings overflowed with examples of the havoc wrought by power—power unfettered, power released, power allowed to tear at the vitals of free institutions and at the liberties of ordinary folk. They wrote “The “Daemons” of power become worse the longer they wield their illegal force, until their victims, refusing to “be slaves to their own servants,” find it necessary for their survival to oppose them.

¹⁷⁵ Vincent J. Roscigno and William F. Danaher, "Media and Mobilization: The Case of Radio and Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929 to 1934," *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 1 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657392>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2657392>. 24.

¹⁷⁶ Mason, "The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World." 39.

¹⁷⁷ Susan T. Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2018). 14.

And then, they wrote, the great upheavals ensue, as cities and nations are torn apart in the struggle for the uses of power.”¹⁷⁸ The British American colonists were being asked by a group of “patriots” to forget the mother country and become Americans.

The patriot cause and the Declaration pulled at the basic emotions of all Americans. All five basic motives were tugging at American values and beliefs, but one motive was particularly important. Fiske explains that “belonging forms the core motive that underlies the other four.”¹⁷⁹ I believe that all of these five core motives were utilized by the patriots to enlist support throughout the Revolution. They were frequently exhibited in what I consider to be the fundamental pathway for the expression of these motives, namely the Independence Movement. You had to pick a side, Loyalist or Patriot. You had to pick where you belonged. Looking at it from the Patriot view you had to pick who you would obey and follow. In the most radical patriot view, if you picked the patriot cause you were exchanging slavery for freedom. In exchange for joining the patriot cause you would be given the power that membership in the cause would give you to break the bonds that the British Empire had used to enslave you. Freedom and slavery became key words in American political language. Opposite in meaning they nonetheless became central to the American way of life. These two words also came to be at the heart of one of America’s fundamental paradoxes; How does a republic founded on freedom come to have roughly 700,000 or 18% of its population enslaved at the time of the founding of its first written constitution.

Furthermore, even the cause of independence seemed paradoxical in that in order to join the cause of independence you had to give obedience and conformance to group of radicals and their belief system. Belonging by its very nature means belonging to some group of people. That group may take many forms from and nation state to a family group, but any group is formed and maintained by its members adherence to the norms of interpersonal behavior for the group. Harmony and hence the stability of the group is

¹⁷⁸ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, ed. Kindle - 50th Anniversary Edition (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674977952>. ix.

¹⁷⁹ Fiske, *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*. 17.

predicated upon adherence of group members to group norms.¹⁸⁰ Adhere to the norms, standards and beliefs of the group is a form of obedience. Additionally, I would maintain that there is an exchange that takes place in finding a sense of belonging. You feel like you belong because you share the group's norms. In turn for your adherence to group norms the group gives you a sense of belonging. It is a basic exchange relationship.

Margret Clark and Judson Mills in their journal article, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships," point out that, "...all relationships in which persons give and receive benefits are social ... They further theorize that two general types of social relationships exist; exchange relationships and communal relationships.¹⁸¹ They state that "in an exchange relationship members assume that benefits are given with the expectation of receiving a benefit in return. The receipt of a benefit incurs a debt or obligation to return a comparable benefit. Each person is concerned with how much he or she receives in exchange for benefiting the other and how much is owed the other for the benefits received."¹⁸² In a communal relationship each person only has a concern for the welfare of the other people in the community. Members of a communal relationship assume that each is concerned about the welfare of the other. This relationship, however, is different from an exchange relationship in that there is no need for the parties engaged in the relationship to measure, reciprocate, or balance benefits between them for what is given and received. Clark and Mills take it even one step further and state that:

In a communal relationship, the idea that a benefit is given in response to a benefit that was received is compromising, because it calls into question the assumption that each member responds to the needs of the other.¹⁸³

In other words, expecting a benefit in a communal relationship compromises the very nature of the relationship. Expectation of a return for benefits given is a negative. In a communal relationship you come to the aid of your partner or a member of the relationship regardless of the potential reward, or perhaps even more importantly,

¹⁸⁰ Bruce W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63, no. 6 (1965), <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0022100>, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=1965-12187-001&site=eds-live&scope=site>. 386.

¹⁸¹ Margaret S Clark and Judson Mills, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37, no. 1 (1979). 12.

¹⁸² Clark and Mills, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships." 12.

¹⁸³ Clark and Mills, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships." 13.

regardless of the cost. Clark and Mill point out that one way of measuring the strength of a communal relationship is the cost a person is willing to incur to meet the other's needs without expecting a specific return.¹⁸⁴ Finally, Clark and Judson conclude that:

[T]he distinction between communal and exchange relationship is made implicitly by most people in their interactions with others, it is not assumed that they are explicitly aware of the distinction or are able to describe how it affects their reactions. Certainly, they do not use the terms communal and exchange relationships. It is also not assumed that everyone makes the distinction in the same way. Some people restrict their communal relationships to only a very few persons, whereas others have communal relationships with a wide circle of others. There are some people who do not make the distinction at all. Some people treat every relationship, even relationships with members of their own immediate family, in terms of exchange.

Social relationships are highly contingent upon a sense of equity between the parties to the relationship. If one of the partners to the relationship feels that they are being exploited because their partner is more concerned about their own welfare and is not concerned with their welfare the relationship disintegrates and falls apart.¹⁸⁵ In any relationship regardless of whether it is exchange or communal there is a risk of exploitation.

Yet despite the possibility of exploitation communal relationships are all around us. They involve anything from the federal government to our family. Nonetheless, even though they are pervasive, strong communal relationships are rare except in the case of family members, romantic partners, and close friends. Significantly, especially for the functioning of government, the weak communal relationships most people have do not provide the degree of motivation sufficient for the giving of costly benefits, except under unusual emergency conditions involving extraordinary need. The regular giving of costly benefits required for the functioning of a modern economy is outside the realm of communal relationships. Clark and Judson maintain that the type of social relationship

¹⁸⁴ Margaret S Clark and Judson Mills, "The Difference Between Communal and Exchange Relationships: What it is and is not," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 19, no. 6 (1993). 685.

¹⁸⁵ Clark and Mills, "Interpersonal Attraction in Exchange and Communal Relationships." 24.

which enables the regular giving of costly benefits and is essential to a modern economy is an exchange relationship.¹⁸⁶

I would argue that in most instances citizens do not engage with their government on a communal basis. It is difficult to envision an act for the government that was so selfless that it did not engage and satisfy one of the core motives and thereby fulfill at least an emotional self-interest. Even for the ultimate sacrifice in war, your life, it is done in exchange not only for your country but for the welfare of your family and comrades in arms. Two quotes, I think exemplify Americans attitudes toward the sacrifice and the returns given for those sacrifices:

Theodore Roosevelt said:

War is not merely justifiable, but imperative upon honorable men, upon an honorable nation, where peace can only be obtained by the sacrifice of conscientious conviction or of national welfare.”¹⁸⁷

Honor is a badge given to those who serve. A debt to country is repaid. Peace is secured. In contrast to themes of honor and national welfare in exchange for personal sacrifice, Walt Whitman, makes war and its sacrifice about comradeship and through the lingering images of the human toll that war takes. Recalling a Civil War veteran’s experience in the war hospitals he wrote in the poem “Wound Dresser:”

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if that would save you.

A soldier is moved by the sacrifice of his brother in arms and is gladly willing to sacrifice his life for him. Even in war there is an exchange relationship. Whether it is a communal relationship or a relationship based on individual self-interest is difficult to determine. Honor is based on individual action, but it is clearly interest in service to the community.

¹⁸⁶ Clark and Mils, "The Difference Between Communal and Exchange Relationships: What it is and is not." 685-686.

¹⁸⁷ "Quotes About War Sacrifice," 2022, <https://quotestats.com/topic/quotes-about-war-sacrifice/>.

Loyalty, devotion, and obedience to country, has at its base, at least in part, a measure of self-interest. This exchange is based on wanting to belong to a group that encapsulates your self-interest in their own self-interest. Perhaps one of the most famous observers of American behavior, Alexis de Tocqueville in, *Democracy in America* looked at obedience as a kind of exchange based on self-interest. He wrote:

Why therefore does he obey society, and what are the natural limits of this obedience? He obeys society not because he is inferior to those who direct it or less capable than another man of governing himself; he obeys society because union with those like him appears useful to him and because he knows that this union cannot exist without a regulating power.¹⁸⁸

Further, Tocqueville explains that in Europe the doctrine of self-interest is less widespread. In America it is different. Tocqueville observed that:

Americans, on the contrary, are pleased to explain almost all the actions of their life with the aid of self-interest well understood; they complacently show how the enlightened love of themselves constantly brings them to aid each other and disposes them willingly to sacrifice a part of their time and their wealth to the good of the state.¹⁸⁹

I would contend, however, that the sacrifice made by individuals for the good of the state is contingent on the state making that sacrifice worthwhile. In exchange for obedience the state gets the pooled resources of its individual citizens and resources. This yields tremendous potential power to the state. Nonetheless, individuals still retain an element of control.

Both Thomas Jefferson, the politician, and Max Weber, the German sociologist, remarkably, viewed power in a similar way. According to one of Jefferson's biographers, Jon Meacham in *Thomas Jefferson and the Art of Power*, Jefferson sought, acquired, and wielded power, which, in Jefferson's view, is the bending of the world to one's will, or the remaking of reality in one's own image.¹⁹⁰ In the *Social Psychology of Power*, authors Ana Guinote and Theresa Vescio noted that "Weber extended and refined the definition, of power making it more explicitly social: in Weber's view, power is 'the

¹⁸⁸ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 61-62.

¹⁸⁹ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. 502.

¹⁹⁰ Jon Meacham, *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, Kindle ed. (Random House Incorporated, 2012). 13-14.

probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.”¹⁹¹

These definitions are interesting and surely show the mindset of Jefferson and Weber about power. Nonetheless, they are one sided. They lack a very important element. Neither definition of power explores what causes people to obey or resist. I would argue that power is contingent upon the consent of the people. The people must perceive that they are obtaining some benefit for compliance. Coercive power or force in the face of resistance can always be employed but historically that usually has not ended well or at the very least makes a poor basis for a peaceful community.¹⁹² Put another way, leadership, is a function of followership or simply put, the consent of the follower. Coercive power has its limits and eventually will meet resistance.

Guinote and Vescio, *The Social Psychology of Power*, also have noted the importance of popular support. They maintain that “in order to endure, power must not only be endowed to the holder but also ratified by the support (the consent) of those who will be subordinate to it. It is the subjects’ consent that provides authority for the power holder to act— that is, consent ensures the capacity to act, and thus constitutes the power itself.”¹⁹³

James Otis, an American political activist, legislator, and lawyer, located in the Massachusetts Bay colony was one of the earliest challengers of Parliaments right to tax the colonists. Otis’s first and arguably most influential work, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (1764) helped lay the foundation of revolutionary doctrine and the natural rights asserted for American colonists. However, Otis’s work was based on Lockean constitutional principles of delegated and subordinated powers. Locke’s principles were used to support claims to parliamentary supremacy in late seventeenth-century England, but Otis refashioned these principles to provide theoretical justification

¹⁹¹ Ana Guinote and Theresa K. Vescio, *The Social Psychology of Power* (New York, United States: Guilford Publications, 2010). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=515883>. 58.

¹⁹² Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 89-190.

¹⁹³ Guinote and Vescio, *The Social Psychology of Power*. 24.

for the legitimacy of colonial assemblies as autonomous institutions within the legal framework of the British Empire.¹⁹⁴

Many of the leading American Revolutionaries also studied Locke's canonical *Second Treatise of Government*.¹⁹⁵ John Locke believed that the source of any peaceful government was the people. He pointed out that the consent of the people was the foundation of government. He wrote in his *Two Treatises on Government* that:

[R]eason being plain on our side, men are naturally free, and the examples of history shewing, that the governments of the world, that were begun in peace, had their beginning laid on that foundation, and were made by the consent of the people; there can be little room for doubt, either where the right is, or what has been the opinion, or practice of mankind, about the first erecting of governments.¹⁹⁶

Peaceful governments who rule with legitimate power rule with the consent of the governed. Once consent was withdrawn, then power was nullified. Locke believed that sovereigns had power as a function of the consent of their subjects.¹⁹⁷ He wrote:

Honour the king, and he that resists the power, resists the ordinance of God; are divine oracles that will never permit it, The people therefore can never come by a power over him, unless he does something that makes him cease to be a king: for then he divests himself of his crown and dignity, and returns to the state of a private man, and the people become free and superior, the power which they had in the interregnum, before they crowned him king, devolving to them again.¹⁹⁸

In both England and the colonies spokesmen for this English revolutionary tradition stood out for their outspoken defense of the people's right to rise up and dismiss their rulers. These traditional rulers were supported in traditional contractual terms. Government was created by the people to promote public welfare. If kings or magistrates

¹⁹⁴ Lee Ward, "James Otis and the Americanization of John Locke," *American Political Thought* 4, no. 2. (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1086/680388>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/10.1086/680388>. 182.

¹⁹⁵ Akhil Reed Amar, *America's Unwritten Constitution: The Precedents and Principles We Live By*, Kindle ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2012). 328.

¹⁹⁶ Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 184.

¹⁹⁷ Guinote and Vescio, *The Social Psychology of Power*. 24.

¹⁹⁸ Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 260.

failed to honor that trust, they automatically forfeited their powers back to the people, who were free and even obliged to reclaim political authority.¹⁹⁹

In 1762, Rousseau published *Du Contrat Social, Principes du droit politique*, in English, literally translated, *Of the Social Contract, Principles of Political Right*.²⁰⁰ Rousseau's work was very influential, and the ideas contained in his work were at the foundation of the Founding Fathers' concept of government. As Clinton Rossiter wrote in, *The First American Revolution*, America's debt to the idea of the social contract is so huge as to defy measurement, and we should not forget that the colonists had a unique opportunity at least they thought—to put the idea into practice.²⁰¹ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, takes it adds a significant point that it was not only the founders who believed in the social contract:

[T]he point of the matter is that the early colonists, not the men of the Revolution, 'put the idea into practice,' and they certainly had no notion of any theory. ...Locke construed this 'original compact,' in line with the current social-contract theory, as a surrender of rights and powers to either the government or the community, that is, not at all as a 'mutual' contract but as an agreement in which an individual person resigns his power to some higher authority and consents to be ruled in exchange for a reasonable protection of his life and property.²⁰²

Social contract theory and Locke's take on it were unconsciously or unconsciously part of a commonly held American belief system. Many things motivate human beings: the need for food, the need for shelter, the need for security. After primary needs such as food and shelter are satisfied, the need to belong is among the strongest of human motivations. These needs might have arisen from evolutionary pressures; our ancestors who were excluded from social groups often died because they found it difficult to hunt, gather, and defend themselves against predators with only an army of

¹⁹⁹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*.loc. 639.

²⁰⁰ Rousseau, *The Social Contract*. 9.

²⁰¹ Clinton Lawrence Rossiter, *The First American Revolution: the American Colonies on the Eve of Independence*, vol. 17 (New York A Harvest Book Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1956). 132.

²⁰² Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1963). 160.

one.²⁰³ The concept and reality of Social Contract theory and ideas go further back than even the founders and were laid out not only at the founding of the United States but also at the founding of the colonies themselves.²⁰⁴

In the theory of the social contract the individual surrenders their individual rights and powers in exchange for the protection and safety the community has to offer. Naturally, security and safety were top of mind for the colonists. Arendt, however, goes on to make a further distinction in the type of social contract the colonists agreed to. She writes that we must recall that in theory the seventeenth century clearly distinguished between two kinds of ‘social contract.’ One was concluded between individual persons and supposedly gave birth to society; the other was concluded between a people and its ruler and supposedly resulted in legitimate government.²⁰⁵

The principal differences between these two kinds of social contract were as follows: The mutual contract by which people commit themselves to each other to form a community is based on reciprocity between individual members and presupposes equality between members; its actual content is a promise, and its result is indeed a “society” or “community.” It could even be considered an alliance. It is a social contract between equals. In such an alliance the community gathers together the isolated strength of the allied partners and binds them into a new power structure by virtue of promises or commitments they have made to each other. It is a contract based on mutual benefit.

The other type of social contract between a people and its ruler is different. In the social contract between a given society and its ruler, each member of the community gives up their isolated strength and power to constitute a government; far from gaining a new power, community members give up some degree of their individual freedom and power by expressing consent to be ruled by the ruler, whose power consists of the sum total of forces which all individual persons have given to and are monopolized by the

²⁰³ Dominic Abrams, Michael A. Hogg, and José M. Marques, *Social Psychology of Inclusion and Exclusion* (Hove, United States: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=183305>. 28.

²⁰⁴ Willi Paul Adams, *The First American Constitutions : Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era*, trans. Rita; Kimber Kimber, Robert (Lanham, MD, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1351164>. 90.

²⁰⁵ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 160.

ruler and his or her form of government for the alleged benefit of all its subjects. As far as the individual person is concerned, he or she gains as much power as the ruler and system of government allows.²⁰⁶ The benefit for the loss of freedom has to be judged by the individual community members.

So, in theory, the individual gives up a certain degree of freedom so as to live in an organized society. This organized society, in turn, provides benefits to its members. This relationship, consequently, sets up a dependency relationship between the individual member of society and his or her government.

For Berlin, despite the necessity of the social contract there is also a dark side to it. When we give up a measure of our freedom to the government, we are delegating to it the authority to use the collective power of society for the ends that it sees proper. Determining the proper end and uses for governmental authority is an age old challenge.

Such giants of political philosophy as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke, have wrestled with the question of authority and governmental power. Berlin points out that:

Nothing is more familiar or more natural in the history of political thought than the question 'How is men's desire for liberty to be reconciled with the need for authority?' It is clear to all political thinkers that individuals wish to be free – that is to say, they wish to do whatever they wish to do, without being prevented from doing it by other people, or coerced into doing something they do not want to do – and that this freedom from coercion is one of the chief ends or values for the sake of which people are prepared to fight, one of the ends whose realization is indispensable for leading the kind of life which most men wish to lead.²⁰⁷

No individual wants to be coerced by their government but how does the government understand the will of the people, the collective will so to speak. Is that even possible?

In order to try and reconcile the difficulty of determining what the people wanted Rousseau in his *Social Contract Theory* came up with the notion of the general will. Rousseau tried to answer the question of how men in a general assembly generate what I would call consensus and Rousseau called a general will. Berlin wrote that

²⁰⁶ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 161.

²⁰⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty-Updated Edition*, Kindle ed. (Princeton University Press, 2014). 30.

Rousseau's answer is that, just as all men who argue rationally reach the same truth about matters of fact (politics and morals apart), and these truths are always necessarily compatible, so men in the same condition of nature – that is to say, unperturbed, uncorrupted, not pulled at by selfish interests, not pulled at by regional or sectional interests, not enslaved by fear or by unworthy hopes, men not bullied, not twisted out of their proper nature by the wickedness of other men – men in that condition must want that which, if it is obtained, will be equally good for all other men who are as good as they are.²⁰⁸

Rousseau starts out with the general will as a sort of harmless kind of contract, which we are accustomed to in our commercial dealing and is typically taken on voluntarily by human beings who come together and agree to do certain things intended to lead to their common happiness; but still only an arrangement of convenience which, if it leads to common misery, they can abandon. This is how it begins; but from the notion of a social contract as a perfectly voluntary act on the part of individuals who remain individual and who pursue each his own good, Rousseau gradually moves towards the notion of the general will as almost the personified willing of a large impersonal entity, called 'the State', something bigger than myself in which I become immersed, that I surrender to in order to achieve my new self which is greater than my old individual self. Berlin's warning is that Rousseau's central doctrine leads to genuine servitude, we move from the absolute freedom of individualism to the absolute despotism of the state. Rousseau's answer to the problem of state domination was a republican form of government. Rousseau believed in the power of assemblies to resolve issues and to do what is right and in line with the general will. Assemblies would work to the benefit of the community and rise above self-interest. They would do that which was right because any rational being by virtue of reason could discover their true self which was their rational self. Their rational self, using natural reason, would arrive at the right conclusion and that conclusion would be shared by all the members of the assembly because the right conclusion is the only conclusion you could arrive at rationally. The members of the assembly would be wise, rational and all become "great, benevolent legislators."²⁰⁹

Notwithstanding Rousseau's somewhat utopian belief in the ability of an assembly, Locke reminds us that legitimacy for any government relies on the consent of the

²⁰⁸ Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty-Updated Edition*. 42.

²⁰⁹ Berlin, *Freedom and Its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty-Updated Edition*. 50-51.

individual members of the community or their chosen representatives.²¹⁰ Thomas Paine took it even further and using the social contract theory he argued for equality. Willi Adam in, *The First American Constitutions: Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era* explained that:

Paine's plea for independence had such great force because he broke with the conventional wisdom that the colonists could enjoy life, liberty, and property best under the British constitution and within the empire. Equality was the basic premise of his rejection of the English constitution and his critique of monarchy. In accordance with the theory of social contract, Paine argued that men were originally equal.... The only distinctions in nature are 'male' and 'female'" he said, and 'good' and 'evil' are theological distinctions. The difference between 'rich' and 'poor' can be explained. But the division of human beings into 'Kings' and 'Subjects' is without any natural or religious justification.²¹¹

Clearly one of the Founding Fathers' principles was popular sovereignty. Harvey J. Kaye in *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*, wrote:

Whereas the Real Whigs saw 'the people' serving vigilantly as a 'check on governmental power,' American radicals began to speak of 'the people' as the real source of power, and of the 'active consent of the governed' as 'the only true foundation of government.' Tapping into popular inclinations, the latter's arguments had the effect of further licensing working people to harass officials, enforce boycotts, occasionally riot, and even press for more democratic polities.²¹²

Popular sovereignty at the time of the Revolution was a radical concept. The American revolutionaries were in a sense radical but they were also somewhat utopian in their goals. Gordon Wood in his history of the American Revolution asserted that,

The republican revolution was the greatest Utopian movement in American history. The revolutionaries aimed at nothing less than a reconstitution of American society. They hoped to destroy the bonds holding together the older monarchical society—kinship, patriarchy, and patronage—and to put in their place new social bonds of love, respect, and consent.²¹³

Revolutionary or utopian ideologies frequently seek to displace existing elements of social reality. Unfortunately, social reality can be tenacious, and reality tends to set in.

²¹⁰ Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 180.

²¹¹ Adams, *The First American Constitutions : Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era*. 113.

²¹² Harvey J Kaye, *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America: A History & Biography*, Kindle ed. (Hill and Wang, 2007). 33.

²¹³ Gordon S Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (Modern Library, 2002). 229.

One part of social reality that is very difficult to dismiss is the issue of taxes. One of the challenges of any legitimate government is funding. All types of government have two features in common. These common features are a means of collecting revenue and a means of coercion. The way most governments collect revenue is through some combination of taxes, tariffs, or fines. Taxes enable the government to fulfill its basic mission of security and the dispensation of benefits to achieve the common good. If taxes are not paid, they are so essential to the communal relationship that coercion by the government might be necessary. Coercion can take many forms from local officials to the police, to the army.²¹⁴ In some instances the issue of taxes and popular consent crash head on. In the wide range of fundamental political questions that Locke addressed he covered to the difficult problem that caused so much resistance and eventually rebellion in the colonies, taxes. Locke wrote:

It is true, governments cannot be supported without great charge, and it is fit every one who enjoys his share of the protection, should pay out of his estate his proportion for the maintenance of it. But still it must be with his own consent, i.e. the consent of the majority, giving it either by themselves, or their representatives chosen by them: for if any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people, by his own authority, and without such consent of the people, he thereby invades the fundamental law of property, and subverts the end of government: for what property have I in that, which another may by right take, when he pleases, to himself?²¹⁵

In Locke's philosophy, Kings and Assemblies, including Parliament, were not without boundaries despite their abilities to arrive at rational legislation. Locke clearly set what he considered the boundaries and guidelines for legislatures. In his *Two Treatises on Government*, he succinctly put down those boundaries:

These are the bounds which the trust, that is put in them by the society, and the law of God and nature, have set to the legislative power of every commonwealth, in all forms of government.

First, They are to govern by promulgated established laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one rule for rich and poor, for the favourite at court, and the country man at plough.

²¹⁴ Jennifer Nicoll Victor, "Understanding the US Government," ed. The Great Courses (Chantilly, VA: The Great Courses, 2020). <https://www.wondrium.com/understanding-the-us-government>. 3.

²¹⁵ Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 206-207.

Secondly, These laws also ought to be designed for no other end ultimately, but the good of the people.

Thirdly, They must not raise taxes on the property of the people, without the consent of the people, given by themselves, or their deputies. And this properly concerns only such governments where the legislative is always in being, or at least where the people have not reserved any part of the legislative to deputies, to be from time to time chosen by themselves.

Fourthly, The legislative neither must nor can transfer the power of making laws to anybody else, or place it anywhere, but where the people have. Consent of the people and laws design by the assembly or legislature for no other end ultimately, but the good of the people.²¹⁶

The Founding Fathers relied heavily on Locke's philosophy, if not in theory, then in practice. Government with the consent of the people, government for the good of the people, and government exercising equal justice for all; these are the principles of our founding and echo throughout the history of the United States. Also contained in both Locke and Rousseau is the sovereign right of the people to abolish the government when they feel it is no longer serving the common good or the general will. John Adams believed, "It is agreed that the end of all government is the good and ease of the people, in a secure enjoyment of their rights, without oppression..."²¹⁷ Adams's people, the people of New England, fled for the sake of civil and religious liberty; multitudes flocked to America with this dependence, that their liberties should be safe. These liberties were based on rights, not privileges, granted by rulers, the legislature or the courts. The struggle for the founders was to find legitimate grounds for resistance to the power of the British empire. The nature and source of the rights of the people had to change from sanctified privileges of the king, divine providence, or some other unearthly power. Rights had to become natural endowments of humanity based on the principles of reason and justice.

The mindset of Americans eventually came around to the Enlightenment way of thinking about rights. But with Americans, as previously pointed out by Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, the early colonists, not the men of the Revolution, put the idea into practice, and they certainly had no notion of any theory. John Locke published his *Two*

²¹⁶ Locke, *John Locke 7 Works*. 207-208.

²¹⁷ John Adams and Charles Francis Adams, *The Works of John Adams Volume 4: Novanglus, Thoughts on Government, Defence of the Constitution*, Kindle ed., 2 (Jazzybee Verlag, 1850).loc. 18487-18502.

Treatises on Government in 1689 and Jean-Jacque Rosseau, who was influenced by that work, published *On the Social Contract* in 1762. By the time of the Boston Massacre on the night of March 5, 1770, the theoretical foundation for the revolutionary mindset had already be laid by Locke and Rosseau. Looking back years later on the events of that night John Adams said, “On that night, the foundation of American independence was laid... Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the foundation already laid then first began to rise to the sight.”²¹⁸

Further, more specifically, the conflict between Britain and the American mindset came over the issue of taxation which raised the fundamental issue of American equality with their British counterparts. David Lovejoy in, *Three British Revolutions*, contends that “Between 1764 and 1776 no more constant theme emerged from the controversy between colonies and mother country than the colonists' demands for equality within the empire. From Sugar Act to Coercive Acts, whether the issue was taxation, trial by jury, quartering of troops, or the Boston Port Bill, colonists' responses repeatedly demanded an equality of treatment which they insisted was their birthright.”²¹⁹ It started with resistance to the Stamp Act of 1765. The colonist had a definition of colonial rights which considered the Stamp Act out to be, not merely an inexpedient measure, but an unconstitutional measure, a measure which the British Parliament had no ‘right’ to pass.²²⁰ Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*, points out how critical the passage of the Stamp Act was to the development of American ideology and politics, she wrote, “The sovereignty of the people, the freedom of the press, the relationship between representation and taxation, debt as slavery: each of these ideas, with origins in England, found a place in the colonists’ opposition to the Stamp Act.”²²¹ These were the principles relied on and invoked by the Founding Fathers to mobilize the American people to revolt against the suppression of these rights by the British Empire. Paine,

²¹⁸ Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*.loc. 6735.

²¹⁹ David S. Lovejoy and J. G. A. Pocock, "TWO AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS, 1689 AND 1776," (1980). 258.

²²⁰ Carl Lotus Becker, *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas*, Kindle ed. (Harcourt, Brace, 1922). 47.

²²¹ Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*, Kindle ed. (WW Norton & Company, 2018). 83.

Jefferson, and Adams, the radicals who became the founders, first started a social movement that became a revolution.

In this dissertation I will be using a comparative method to examine the history of social movements in America. I will be comparing three critical social movements in American history: the Independence Movement leading to the American Revolution, the Abolition Movement which led to the American Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement, one of the only great social movements in America that did not lead to war. All these movements have had a critical impact on American political development. Gaining an understanding of social movements in America is essential to gaining an understanding of American history. I would argue, it is therefore worthwhile to embark on a careful comparison of these three movements to determine their similarities and their differences. Do social movements repeat similar patterns?

The printed word, ideology, and framing are all critical to resistance, social movements, rebellion, and revolution. However, nothing happens or is accomplished without the evolution of thought and belief into organization and action. Max Weber made a keen observation when he argued that the initial source of revolution lies in setting up the authority of an individual against the established order.²²² T.H. Breen observed in his book, *American Insurgents, American Patriots*, Revolutions do not sustain themselves through ideas alone. Just as there is no denying that when we open our eyes to it, the evidence of ordinary Americans mobilizing in response to parliamentary insults and an army of occupation, forging common bonds of sympathy throughout all thirteen colonies, and creating an infrastructure to support and drive forward revolution in the years ahead of the Declaration of Independence is overwhelming.²²³ The change in the hearts and the minds of the people was gradual but it took Sam Adams and the resistance organization of the Sons of Liberty to turn thought and words into a social movement. A social movement that turned into a revolution.

²²² Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Kindle ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009). 66.

²²³ Timothy H Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People*, Kindle ed. (Hill and Wang, 2010). 16.

Next, we will examine the various stages of that movement and how it turned into a revolution. We will also examine how the Sons of Liberty movement laid the foundation for the Independence Movement and many of the future social movements to come in the United States. It also established the foundational principles embedded in American culture that paved the way for the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Chapter 5

The Sons of Liberty

As previously noted, John Adams said “that habits of mind favorable to entire personal freedom had been formed even among a large class who seldom get so far as to an analysis of principles.”²²⁴ Thoughts or habits of mind frequently do not spontaneously appear. They are frequently taught and nurtured by someone. Education is an important element of any revolutionary movement. Today we might call this “educational process” propaganda. But I prefer to think of it as education linked to opportunity. The American Revolutionaries were opportunists who took advantage of and built on popular sentiment. That existed at that time. As Aldous Huxley observed:

Propaganda gives force and direction to the successive movements of popular feeling and desire; but it does not do much to create these movements. The propagandist is a man who canalizes an already existing stream. In a land where there is no water he digs in vain.²²⁵

Pauline Maier in her annotations to, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*, makes an important observation that “the three documents were created to perform distinct, complementary functions. The Declaration of Independence (1776) was a revolutionary manifesto that proclaimed and justified the end of British rule over America; the Bill of Rights (1789–91) stated the basic rights of the American people, and the Constitution (1787–88) created a new federal government that would, hopefully, secure those rights. Americans, in keeping with old British traditions, have learned to revere these documents.

The English had long history of honoring texts dating back to at least the Magna Charta (1215).²²⁶ Yet each one of these revered English texts which in turn gave rise to our traditions was written in very different circumstances. Resistance and revolution spawned not only the Magna Carta but other foundational English documents. The

²²⁴ Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*. loc. 6832.

²²⁵ David Welch, "Nazi Propaganda and the Volksgemeinschaft: Constructing a People's Community," *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 2 (2004), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/3180722>. 214.

²²⁶ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 1.

English Declaration of Rights signed by William of Orange was a result of the English Glorious Revolution of 1688 and was a critically important document in the history of English constitutionalism.²²⁷ The British Historian Steve Pincus points out that:

In the end several of the thirteen clauses in the Declaration did specify new limitations on royal authority— for example, prohibitions on having a standing army in peacetime, the requirement that there would be frequent Parliaments, and the stipulation that excessive bail could not be required of a defendant. While much of what was stated had long been assumed by Whigs to be part of their ancient constitution, it was only in 1689 that they had the power and the opportunity to offer the claims as explicit limitations.²²⁸

The men who wrote the Declaration of Independence were familiar with these English historical events and grasped the power of written words.²²⁹ This attention to English constitutional history reveals itself in the laborious processes by which the founders of our country brought the Declaration of Independence, and their revolution, into being. It shows itself forcefully, of course, in the text's own eloquence. The Declaration is in essence the offer made to try to frame the reason for rebellion while at the same time not only explaining how the British Americans had been injured and exploited but also the potential reward found in a new government. Thomas Paine in his enormously popular pamphlet, *Common Sense*, set the stage for the Declaration when he wrote: We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now.

Lee Cameron McDonald, *Western Political Theory: From Its Origins to the Present*, laid out a succinct theory of why men rebel:

While the anatomy of revolution is strikingly constant, theories justifying revolution are highly volatile. From Aristotle to Brinton the standard pattern of revolutionary activity has been cataloged. An oppressive, inflexible ruling class is unable to recognize the demands a changing society makes upon it. Discontent produces more oppression, which produces more discontent. Finally, the vicious circle is broken by a *coup d'état*. The offending regime is expelled and the

²²⁷ Robert J Frankle, "The Formulation of the Declaration of Rights," *The Historical Journal* 17, no. 2 (1974), https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/pdf/2638298.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A1c11e109b6511ef3989614a56f19f136&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&origin=&initiator=. 265.

²²⁸ Steve Pincus, *1688 : The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven, United States: Yale University Press, 2009). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3420602>. 293.

²²⁹ Allen, *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality*. 21.

moderates attempt to take control. But the pent-up forces of revolt, suddenly released, surge beyond the control of the moderates, carrying them along on the tide for a while until the militarists or extremists replace them: Cromwell replaces Pym, Robespierre replaces Mirabeau, Lenin replaces Kerensky. Then, while idealistic programs and radical ideals are held aloft for public edification, consolidation through growing dictatorship takes place below. Finally, disillusionment sets in and the Thermidorian Reaction takes place. Old forms creep back under new names: Charles II replaces Cromwell, Napoleon replaces Robespierre, Stalin replaces Lenin.²³⁰

McDonald's theory is a good one and applies to most revolutions. However, one of the many interesting points about the American Revolution is that it does not fit this theory of revolution despite it being the most important immediate precursor to the French Revolution and other major revolutions in what Eric Hobsbawm calls "The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848." I do not think it would even be too far a stretch to claim that the American Revolution was the type of breakthrough that stimulated at least some of them.²³¹

Americans both now and at the time of the revolution like to think of our revolution as not being so radical. Furthermore, most of the time we like to consider it downright conservative in its goals and objectives.²³² I think this perspective is mistaken. The American Revolution fundamentally changed the world and was more radical than many Americans would like to believe. Part of this mistaken impression is due to the image we have of our revolutionary leaders in comparison to modern day revolutionaries like Lenin, Mao Zedong and Che Guevara. Gordon Wood in, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, noted that even the revolutionaries themselves did not fit the modern-day image of the revolutionary. They did not appear angry, passionate, reckless, maybe even bloodthirsty for the sake of a cause. We can think of Robespierre, Lenin, and

²³⁰ Lee Cameron McDonald, *Western Political Theory: From Its Origins to the Present*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968). 363-364 Thermidor was the "month of heat" on the new Revolutionary Calendar. It began July 19 on the Gregorian Calendar. With the execution of Robespierre on July 28, 1794, the Jacobian dictatorship; and the Reign of Terror ended. 364.

²³¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution: 1789-1848* (Hachette UK, 2010). 14.

²³² Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 3.

Mao Zedong as revolutionaries, but not George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams.

To those who took stock at the end of three decades of revolutionary activity, the Revolution was not ‘one of those events which strikes the public eye in the subversions of laws which have usually attended the revolutions of governments.’ The Americans were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial shackles to throw off. In fact, the Americans knew they were probably freer and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and hierarchical restraints than any part of mankind in the eighteenth century. To its victims, the Tories, the Revolution was truly incomprehensible. Never in history, said Daniel Leonard, a Tory and a member of the Massachusetts Governor’s Council, had there been so much rebellion with so ‘little real cause.’ The objective social reality scarcely seemed capable of explaining a revolution.²³³

The challenge then becomes how to understand the mindset and emotions that ran through the revolutionary generation. Precisely because the impulses to revolution in eighteenth-century America seem contained in comparison to the impulses that presumably account for modern social protests and revolutions, we have tended to think of the American Revolution as having no social character, as having virtually nothing to do with the society, as having no social causes and no social consequences. It has therefore often been considered to be essentially an intellectual event, a constitutional defense of American rights against British encroachments (“no taxation without representation”), undertaken not to change the existing structure of society but to preserve it.²³⁴

As Andrew Frank, the editor of *American Revolution: People and Perspectives*, puts it in a down-to-earth way:

Traditionally, the story of the Revolution has followed these and other proverbial ‘dead white men on horses’ along their paths to mythic immortality. The story of the experiences of the so-called Founding Fathers, though, is drastically incomplete, and the findings of social historians have led many recent scholars to interpret these individuals within their social contexts. The Revolution was fought and shaped by men and women of all walks of life— whether farmers, day laborers, Indians, Africans, enlisted soldiers, sailors, children, women, Loyalists, or recent immigrants. In cities, on farms, and in the backcountry, ordinary

²³³ Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, United States: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4322022>. 3-4.

²³⁴ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 4.

Americans were central actors in the unfolding drama. They understood the importance of the conflict and made choices according to their religious teachings, economic needs, political connections, personal ambitions, and local contexts. From their vantage points, the Revolution was an ideological, political, economic, military, and perhaps most important, social event.²³⁵

The story of the American Revolution is not just the story of the founders. Even when we recognize that the thinking of the founders was radical for its time, we typically only admit the political aspects of that radicalism not the social aspects.²³⁶ The essence of the American Revolution political thrust was independence from England and freedom for the colonies. The Revolution set the stage for a new government, a federal government. It established a representative government. In our classic, almost mythical reconstruction of the American Revolution we have tried to emphasize the political and deemphasize the social. The Independence Movement wanted to change the structure of the political realm not the structure of society. Some scholars even hold the view that no revolution took place in America. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, observed that many modern historians have drawn the logical conclusion that no revolution had ever taken place in America.²³⁷ Whereas other historians, political analysts and social theorists have seen the Civil War as a major revolution and the civil rights movement as a social revolution.

Nonetheless, if we measure radicalism not only politically but by the amount of social change that actually took place, particularly in the transformation of the everyday relations that bound people to each other, then the American Revolution was as radical and as revolutionary as any social movement in history.²³⁸ By the early years of the nineteenth century the Revolution had created a society fundamentally different from the colonial society of the eighteenth century that existed before. It was in fact a new society unlike any that had ever existed anywhere in the world.²³⁹ It also laid the ground work and fundamental beliefs that would serve as the catalyst for future social movements.

²³⁵ Andrew K. Frank, *American Revolution: People and Perspectives : People and Perspectives* (Oxford, United Kingdom: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2007). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=305239>. xii.

²³⁶ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 4-5.

²³⁷ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 15.

²³⁸ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 5.

²³⁹ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 6.

Historians have recently delineated several streams of culture that ran through eighteenth-century British American society before the Revolution. Many elite Americans took on a new ideal of life in the course of the 1700s, an ideal analyzed by Richard L. Bushman as the ideal of “cultivation,” or “gentility.” Gentility was, as Bushman describes it, an imported ideal, and its proponents deliberately modeled their deportment, manners, and practices on those of English gentlepeople. On its most intangible level, the pursuit of gentility constituted a new way of constructing one’s identity, a striving after a social and aesthetic ideal of personal “grace,” “polish,” or “refinement.”²⁴⁰ The Revolution fundamentally changed the status and the position of the elite in society. The Revolution brought respectability and even dominance to ordinary people long held in contempt and gave dignity to their menial labor in a manner unprecedented in history and to a degree not equaled elsewhere in the world. The Revolution did not just eliminate monarchy and create republics; it actually reconstituted what Americans meant by public or state power and brought about an entirely new kind of popular politics and a new kind of democratic officeholder. Calvin Jillson in *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion Over Four Centuries* concluded that:

Men began to think about the origins, purposes, and conduct of government in new ways. Three changes were most profound. First, the origins of government came to be seen as secular and rational, rather than religious. Second, the purposes of government came to be seen as peace and order—the protection of life, liberty, and property, rather than an all-encompassing effort to recreate Eden. And third, with the origins and purposes of government lowered and limited, public officials came to be seen as accountable to the people, rather than to God.²⁴¹

Redefinition of the community was a central element of the Revolution and an essential ingredient of social change. Community for colonial America meant several things and functioned in several dimensions, for as the cultural anthropologist Robert Redfield pointed out, community is more than just its geographical location. Communication among its participants is also an essential part of community.

²⁴⁰ Barbara Clark Smith, "Social Visions of the American Resistance Movement " in *The Transforming Hand of Revolution: Reconsidering the American Revolution as a Social Movement*, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995). 35.

²⁴¹ Calvin C. Jillson, *Pursuing the American dream: Opportunity and Exclusion Over Four Centuries* (University Press of Kansas, 2004). 40.

Community is made of social networks and the glue that holds any community together is communications.²⁴² Colin Bonwick, "Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited" identified three primary social levels of the community. At their foundation communities are comprised of families, congregations, farms, plantations and especially townships and counties. Before the Revolution, the next social level of the thirteen colonies operated largely separate from the lower rung of society, the base of farmers and merchants. This stratum formed the administrative and legislative branches of each colony. At the highest level of the social structure and social network was the British Empire with its aristocracy. Each stratum of community was interrelated to the others. Communications bound the communities together but there were also other social forces at work at each level. The colonial social networks were strengthened by a dense fabric of economic, geographical, political, military, personal and cultural ties that varied in form, function, and importance.²⁴³

Each level of society was controlled by a group of elites. Elites operated at all levels of the community. Every township and county had its local elite, and above them were the elites of the colony. Initially, until resistance brought greater colonial unity, there was no American elite that presided over all the colonies. The ultimate tier of elites before 1776 was the imperial elite, the aristocracy, located in England. The power of the English elite was impressive. Its power operated throughout the empire and as such was an integral component of the colonial social hierarchy. Within this social structure each elite group exercised influence and authority appropriate to the level at which they operated.²⁴⁴

It is important to stress that the majority of colonists before the 1760s and 1770s willingly belonged to the English Empire with its existing social structure. So naturally the movement for independence brought with it a major cultural revolution in the existing society at that time. The Independence Movement was not only a political revolution but a social revolution as well. When viewed in its geographical context the American

²⁴² Colin Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited," *Journal of American Studies* 20, no. 3 (1986), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/27554789>. 356.

²⁴³ Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." 356.

²⁴⁴ Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." 357.

Revolution could have been considered a “mutiny” of the thirteen British colonial-settlements against their home metropolitan imperial center, however, within its social context it was a rebellion within a single British American community.²⁴⁵ The very structure and functioning of the British imperial social structure was being questioned. After all the American colonies were considering independence from their king and with that independence an end to the British aristocracy in America.

When analyzing and interpreting the American Revolution, it is important to consider the context in which that revolution took place. The imperial society that existed at the time during American resistance and finally rebellion had a significant impact on the process and progress of the social movement started by the Independence Movement. The Revolution impacted the political, economic, and social life of the colonists.

The Revolution fundamentally changed the culture of Americans—making over their art, architecture, it even altered their understanding of history, knowledge, and truth. Most important, it made the interests and prosperity of ordinary people—their pursuits of happiness—the goal of society and government.²⁴⁶ As John Adams argued:

We ought to consider, what is the end of government, before we determine which is the best form. Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all Divines and moral Philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. From this principle it will follow, that the form of government, which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word happiness to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best.²⁴⁷

Unlike many nineteenth-century empires which were ultimately held together by force, initially British North America as part of the British empire functioned essentially by consent.²⁴⁸ Before the Revolutionary crisis broke in the 1760s, there was a mutuality of interest between the component societies of the British North American colonial community. The Privy Council, Parliament, The Board of Trade and other branches and subgroups of the British colonial bureaucracy in Westminster exercised direct control

²⁴⁵ Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." 357.

²⁴⁶ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 7-8.

²⁴⁷ Adams, *The Works of John Adams. Vol. 4: Novanglus, Thoughts on Government, Defence of the Constitution (Altenmünster, Germany)*. 102.

²⁴⁸ Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." 357.

over the colonies as a whole and the colonists gave their active support, as long as it was perceived by them to be in their self-interest and was of mutual reciprocal benefit to all participants in the agreement. At least this was the initial view commonly held among the colonists and seemed to be the government favored by the empire. The British Empire exercised its hegemony over the colonies not by coercion but by persuading subordinate colonial societies to internalize a set of values supportive of British authority. From Lexington onwards Britain changed its strategy and attempted to maintain its American authority by coercion. Ultimately this strategy was a failure.²⁴⁹

The emergence and evolution of a social movement involves several critical factors. Resources and organizational infrastructure must come together to form a social movement. However, resources and organization alone are not enough to sustain a social movement. Movement leaders must convincingly guide and motivate potential supporters to join the movement. They must identify issues, inequities, or grievances and frame them in such a way as to attract and inspire followership and collective action.²⁵⁰ I would contend that the path to Lexington and beyond was started by a social movement called “The Sons of Liberty.” This movement started in Boston and was most likely founded by Samuel Adams, John Adams, and John Hancock. It was a covert revolutionary organization so to name the exact date of its founding along with its founders is somewhat speculative. This social movement gave birth to the wider American Independence Movement.

I would argue that the American Independence Movement was given birth at Lexington and Concord and grew out of the Sons of Liberty Movement. The American Independence Movement was ideologically framed by the first founding document, The Declaration of Independence. The Declaration, as the historian Pauline Maier wrote, was a manifesto. It is a statement of beliefs that helped frame and mobilize the overall Independence Movement. This movement had long roots in both American culture and politics. It was a movement that passed through what Paul Almeida, *Social Movements*, described as the five levels of social movement activity which can be placed on a

²⁴⁹ Bonwick, "The American Revolution as a Social Movement Revisited." 358.

²⁵⁰ Paul Almeida, *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*, 1 ed. (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2019). <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/j.ctvd1c7d7.5>. 49.

continuum of escalating political contention from the least intensive to the most intensive (see figure 1).

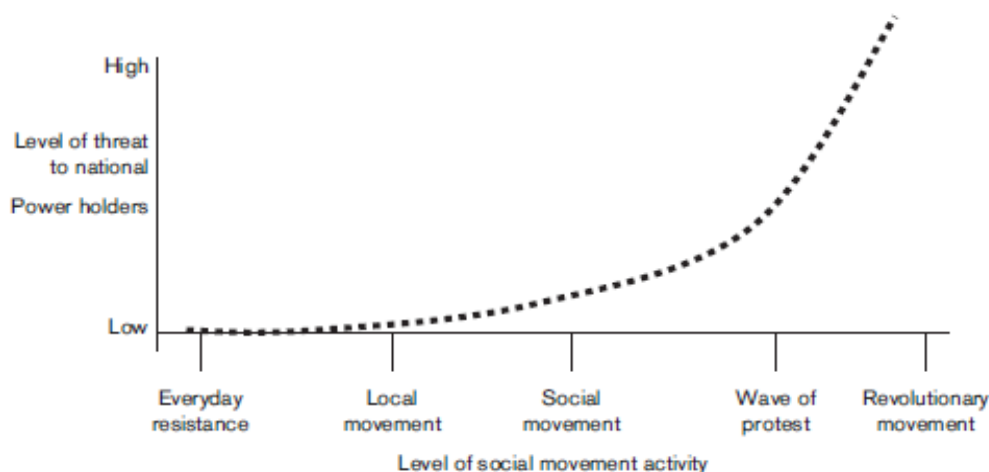


FIGURE 1. Escalating Levels of Social Movement Activity²⁵¹

Looking at the stages of progression of a revolution from resistance to revolution is a useful analytical framework. Yet this type of linear framework lacks a key element of analysis. It lacks the ability to identify the key variables that create the dynamics of the movement that drive it along its own unique trajectory. It lacks the ability to answer the question of what drove the British Americans along the road from resistance to rebellion to revolution? Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly in the *Dynamics of Contention* have built an analytical framework that is different from the approach cited by Almeida. In their model they try to capture the dynamic nature of political and social contention. I think that this approach is useful in explaining what drives social movements along Almeida's continuum toward revolution. This approach is dynamic and not linear. Almeida's model implies a straight linearity, that McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly would argue does not exist. Their approach is dynamic and interactive.

Social Movements, obviously, deal with social change. Sidney Tarrow writes that, "*a social movement is an excluded collectivity in sustained interaction with economic*

²⁵¹ Paul Almeida, *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization* (Univ of California Press, 2019). <https://research-ebsco-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/c/oetvbl/search/details/qkxg6mlnxb?db=nlebk>. 28.

and political elites seeking social change."²⁵² Yet Tarrow and his associates are not just interested in the definition of a social movement. They are interested in the interactive dynamics of a movement. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly:

came to understand that trajectories of contention need not take a parabolic form, that they do not pass through invariant stages, and that the driving force in their progression lies in the interaction of the actors, we came to see the cyclical model as one empirical form of trajectories and were free to turn directly to the mechanisms and processes that power them.²⁵³

They wanted to discover how and how much political opportunities affect potential members of the movement. Their way of theorizing about social movements enabled them to do that. Their framework for analysis also allows research into basic questions about social movements such as: Do mobilizing structures promote communications, coordination, and commitment within and among the participants? Does the framing process produce shared definitions of what is happening and what should be happening?' Do the mobilizing structures and the framing process correctly access the situation? Do the actions taken as part of a repertoire of potential contentious activities produce the intended effects?

The Classic Social Movement Agenda model provides overall analytical framework that is quite compatible with the McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly process dynamics analysis while at the same time providing an analytical framework that is particularly well suited for comparative analysis. The model lays out the continuous interaction between the various stages that take place in any social movement yet not confining those dynamics to a linear development. (see figure 2)

²⁵² Almeida, *Social Movements The Structure of Collective Mobilization*. 6.

²⁵³ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. Loc. 891.

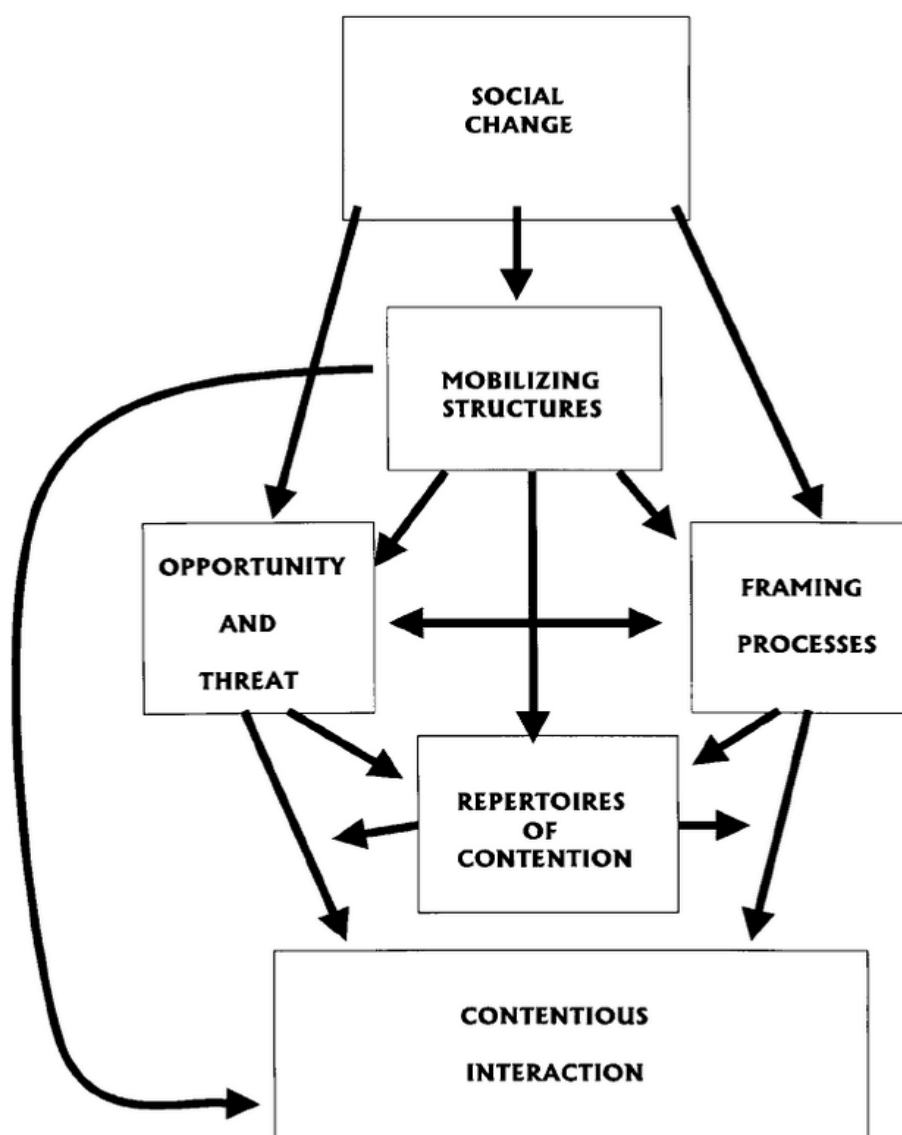


FIGURE 2. The Classic Social Movement Agenda for Explaining Contentious Politics

The Classic Social Movement Agenda model seems to me to be the best suited to analyze and compare the impact of three different social movements on national politics in America. I have chosen three movements to compare and analyze; The Sons of Liberty movement that evolved into the American Revolution, the Abolition Movement that ended with the American Civil War or what James McPherson called the “Second American Revolution,” and the Civil Rights Movement which brought an end to racial

segregation and started a still ongoing cultural revolution.²⁵⁴ Two of these movements resulted in revolution and war. The third movement, the Civil Rights Movement, did not. By comparing the three movements' important similarities and differences in key variables can be associated to outcomes in order to identify potential causality for those outcomes. This analysis will also demonstrate the profound effect social movements have had on American political, social, and economic life. Each phase along the path of the movement from threat or opportunity to outcomes will be studied. Before we begin the analysis of the Sons of Liberty Movement using the Classic Social Movement Agenda model, it is worthwhile explaining the terms used by the model.

Opportunity/ Threat

Any social change can be seen in one of two ways, as either an opportunity or as a threat. Social movements emerge based on the perceptions of social change. Is the change perceived by a society or a subset of the society as a threat or an opportunity and are they willing to act based on that perception? I would contend that in many cases the threat, especially of social or economic change has also created political opportunity. This was the case with the Sons of Liberty Movement.

In the case of the Sons of Liberty, social change was prompted by war. And as so often happens, the social upheaval and revolution that followed the war. Hannah Arendt in, *On Revolution*, observed that there was an interrelation between war and revolution, reciprocation and mutual dependence. Furthermore, the relationship between war and revolution was not a new one. Arendt dates the association between war and revolution as far back as the American Revolution.²⁵⁵ However, I would argue that it went back even further than the American Revolution. The interrelationship between war and revolution in America started with French and Indian War 1754-1763 which precipitated the Stamp Act crisis and the social movement that it in turn spawned. That movement I will identify as the "Sons of Liberty Movement." Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, explains the use of the term:

²⁵⁴ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*. vii.

²⁵⁵ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 7.

The term ‘Sons of Liberty’ in the capitalized version refers here to the resistance organizations formed throughout the American continent during the Stamp Act crisis and those organizations that formed or were reconstituted later under that name. The term was also used generically for all those who were fervent in liberty’s cause.... In the hands of Loyalists or royal officials, however, the term could refer indiscriminately to anyone who perpetrated any disorderly or illegal act.²⁵⁶

I will use the term to refer to the resistance movement that eventually developed into the American Independence Movement and the American Revolution. I do so in that way to illustrate the progression from social movement, to resistance movement, to revolutionary movement.

In North America, the aftermath of the Seven Years War weighed heavily on both the British citizens and the American colonists. The Englishmen had fought an uphill battle with their backs against the wall. They poured both blood and money into the fray and succeeded in winning the war. There was, however, a high cost. British debt was soaring after the war. It had grown from £72,289,673 in 1755 to £122,603,336 in 1763 and to £129,586,789 in 1764. This was a compounded annual growth rate of approximately 7.6%.²⁵⁷ In another ten years the debt would have doubled to approximately £276,430. That rate of growth for the debt was unsustainable. Merely to pay the interest would have required a heavier burden of taxation on the English commoner than they had ever been known before. Undoubtedly, the incredibly rich expanse of Canada and the Mississippi Valley were a tremendous addition to the empire, but in terms of pounds and shillings they were also a tremendous burden. They might pay off in the distant future when they were filled by the prolific, rapidly burgeoning people of the American colonies, who doubled their numbers every twenty-five years, but, for the present at least, this had to be considered a long-term investment. The newly won territory was a liability: right up until the Englishmen could produce enough Englishmen to outnumber the hostile French and Indian population. Until then, there would be constant danger of invasion and repossession by the French. Edmund Morgan, *The Stamp*

²⁵⁶ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc.124.

²⁵⁷ Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis : Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, United States: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4322038>. 22.

Act Crisis, maintains, it was essential therefore that the British maintain a standing army in America. What greater folly than to expend blood and money in the conquest of Canada only to give it up because of the high cost of defense? No one was surprised when the government decided to maintain 10,000 regular troops in America. The wisdom of this move was demonstrated when an Indian uprising under Pontiac in 1763 threatened to drive the British back to the coast. It proved British troops must be in America whatever the cost So the British because of security concerns and the need to secure their newly won territory, stationed a peacetime standing army of 10,000 men in the colonies, tightened control over customs, and imposed a series of revenue measures such as the Stamp Act of 1765.²⁵⁸ This was all as a result of the French and Indian War, as it was called in the British American colonies, and the Seven Years War as it was called in Europe.

Prior to the French and Indian War for a century and a half, the relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies was a tranquil and peaceful one. From 1607 to 1763, Great Britain had maintained a policy of salutary neglect to the American colonies.²⁵⁹ While the mother country had long asserted the right to regulate her colonies, few attempts at direct rule or taxation were imposed on the colonies. This lack of attention meant that British colonial policy toward her North American colonies was one of "benign or salutary neglect," in other words, for the good of both the mother country and the colonies the colonies were left on their own to experiment and implement self-rule. American problems did not often figure prominently in the minds of English ministers and Members of Parliament. William Franklin, son of Benjamin Franklin, future colonial governor of New Jersey and loyalist in his first visit to London accompanying his father on colonial business observed that British officials had "little knowledge of (or indeed Inclination to know) American affairs."²⁶⁰ He also noted that

²⁵⁸ Edmund Sears Morgan and Helen M Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (UNC Press Books, 1953). 22.

²⁵⁹ Benjamin Warford-Johnston, "American Colonial Committees of Correspondence: Encountering Oppression, Exploring Unity, and Exchanging Visions of the Future," *The History Teacher* 50, no. 1 (2016), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/44504455>. 83-84.

²⁶⁰ James Henretta, A. , *Salutary Neglect : Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle*, Princeton Legacy Library, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), Book. <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=9468111&site=eds-live&scope=site>. vii.

those in Administration had prejudices in general against the colonies and considered the weighty affairs they had before them in Europe a priority over the affairs of the colonies.²⁶¹

From 1607 to 1763, Great Britain's policy of salutary neglect enabled self-government to prevail throughout the colonies. Domestic affairs were, for the most part, left up to local governments and provincial legislatures. The British attitude toward the colonies, in effect, promoted American individualism and self-reliance. Laws enacted by Parliament regulating trade and importation were largely ignored or evaded by smuggling.²⁶²

British trade laws were subverted in the American colonies from the very start. For the most part, evasion by colonial traders in the seventeenth to mid-eighteenth centuries was met with imperial accommodation more than enforcement. The reasons were both strategic and practical. Great Britain was first and foremost preoccupied with geopolitical rivalries and therefore wished to ensure the loyalty of its colonial subjects—even if this came at the cost of overlooking a certain amount of illicit commerce. Moreover, sporadic, and short-lived British attempts to improve colonial customs administration had produced dismal results, generating more resentment than revenue. Colonial merchants developed an impressive repertoire of evasive maneuvers to conceal the origins, nationality, routes, and content of their illicit cargoes. This included frequent use of fraudulent paperwork to make the cargo appear legal and authorized. And much to the frustration of the British authorities, when seizures did happen local merchants were often able to use sympathetic provincial courts to reclaim their confiscated goods and have their cases dismissed. Peter Andreas in, *Smuggler Nation: How Illicit trade Made America*, states that:

The first six decades of the eighteenth century can be described as the golden age of illicit trade in the American colonies. Britain's 'salutary neglect' and pragmatic tolerance trumped enforcement and revenue collection. In 1710, there were only thirty-seven customs officers in the colonies; the number had increased to only

²⁶¹ "William Franklin to Elizabeth Graeme, 9 December 1757," Founders Online, Founders Online, National Archives, 1757, accessed 11/21/2022, 2022, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-07-02-0129>.

²⁶² Warford-Johnston, "American Colonial Committees of Correspondence: Encountering Oppression, Exploring Unity, and Exchanging Visions of the Future." 84.

fifty by 1760. During this same time period the estimated colonial population increased from 331,700 to 1,593,600. The imperial customs administrative apparatus in the colonies was fragmented and in disarray; enforcement was typically lethargic. The British authorities had neither the will nor the capacity to put a serious dent in the smuggling business...Customs officials, for their part, went through the ritualistic motions of inspecting ships and collecting modest amounts of duties (while routinely lining their pockets with payments to look the other way). Institutionalized corruption had a pacifying effect; informal financial accommodation meant that violence between smugglers and customs inspectors was rare. For the most part, bribing trumped bullying, producing a win-win situation for the smuggler and the customs agent— even if not for imperial coffers.²⁶³

This period of “salutary neglect,” however, abruptly ceased at the conclusion of the French and Indian War when King George III attempted to assert control over his American colonies. As measures to control colonial governments and revenue generating taxes were implemented and rolled across the Atlantic, King George coupled with new laws from Parliament ran head long into existing colonial notions of liberty and autonomy. These fundamental principles were no minor obstacle and were an integral part of the existing American mindset. Also, at the same time, the king and Parliament were trying to assert their authority prosperity and economic expansion driven by the French and Indian War came to an end. In an analysis of *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, McCusker and Menard demonstrate that “Periods of economic rise and decline affected almost all of the colonies in one way or another...Probably no contraction had more severe results politically than that of 1764-1769, which coincided with a series of British attempts to reform colonial economy and to tighten the imperial administrative system.”²⁶⁴ One theory of the causes of revolt, proposed by James Davies, is the J-curve theory. According to this model, rebellion occurs when there is an intolerable gap between people’s expectations of need satisfaction and the actual level of satisfaction they experience. In response to improved economic and social conditions, people expect continuing improvement in the satisfaction of their needs. As long as they

²⁶³ Peter Andreas, *Smuggler Nation : How Illicit Trade Made America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Book.

<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=563816&site=eds-live&scope=site>. 15-17.

²⁶⁴ John J McCusker and Russell R Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, Kindle Edition ed. (UNC Press Books, 2014). 63-65.

experience satisfaction, there is political stability, even if there is a gap between expected and actual satisfaction. If the level of actual satisfaction declines, the gap gets bigger; at some point it becomes intolerable, and collective action occurs. This is, in essence what occurred after the French and Indian War and the economic contraction that followed. Ground gained with great effort would be lost so the mood becomes revolutionary.²⁶⁵

Rather than suffering in silence, colonists, particularly in Boston, began denouncing perceived oppression, and in doing so, they recognized that they were not alone. They did not stand as isolated individuals. Individual frustrations accumulated into community calls for change. Grievances amassed, and momentum spread, while protest reverberated throughout the colonies.²⁶⁶

The colonists began to see their own government as a threat. The colonies had entered into the first step of the social movement agenda. They shared a perceived threat. A threat posed by their own imperial British government. However, if any social movement is to viably contend for recognition and effect desired social, economic and political change it must have leadership and organization. That leadership emerged in Boston. I would argue that it all began with Samuel Adams and the organization that he gathered around himself to resist British oppression, the Sons of Liberty.

The American reaction to these new tax burdens regardless of the British was resistance at first. Then this resistance gave way to revolution. Looking back on the American Revolution in 1818 John Adams tried to explore in his own mind the causes, evolution, and the nature of the American Revolution. He wrote:

But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. While the king, and all in authority under him, were believed to govern in justice and mercy, according to the laws and constitution derived to them from the God of nature and transmitted to them by their ancestors, they thought themselves bound to pray for the king and queen and all the royal family, and all in authority under them, as ministers ordained of God

²⁶⁵ James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review* 27, no. 1 (1962), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2089714>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2089714>. 5.

²⁶⁶ Warford-Johnston, "American Colonial Committees of Correspondence: Encountering Oppression, Exploring Unity, and Exchanging Visions of the Future." 83.

for their good; but when they saw those powers renouncing all the principles of authority, and bent upon the destruction of all the securities of their lives, liberties, and properties, they thought it their duty to pray for the continental congress and all the thirteen State congresses, &c. There might be, and there were others who thought less about religion and conscience, but had certain habitual sentiments of allegiance and loyalty derived from their education; but believing allegiance and protection to be reciprocal, when protection was withdrawn, they thought allegiance was dissolved.²⁶⁷

First the resistance, then the rebellion that finally resulted in revolution and the overthrow of an empire emerged with a change of heart in the minds of Americans about their government. The Revolutionary War cost the Americans incomparably more in personal services, money, debt, and lives lost than the British taxes imposed after the Seven Years War. Yet the Americans seemed willing to pay that high price to achieve their independence.

In the 1760s, Bostonian Samuel Adams recruited artisans, smaller merchants, and dissident intellectuals such as his cousin, the lawyer John Adams, to form the Sons of Liberty.²⁶⁸ The term “Sons of Liberty” was first used and was subsequently attributed to Colonel Isaac Barré, a veteran of the French and Indian War and a staunch supporter of the colonies. Barré understood the necessity of taxing the colonies and never questioned Parliament’s power to do so. He did, however, object to the proposed method of taxation, in this case the Stamp Act. He proposed a method which had previously been endorsed by Prime Minister George Grenville but Grenville for whatever reason had failed to carry through. Barré “most strongly recommended that if there must be a tax laid, tho' he could wish there was to be none, that the Provinces might be indulged with the liberty as heretofore of furnishing their quotas of any sums required and collecting it in their own modes.”²⁶⁹ To this Charles Townshend, soon- to be author of the Townshend Duties, heatedly responded with a question for rhetorical effect asking:

"And now will these Americans, Children planted by our Care, nourished up by our Indulgence until they are grown to a Degree of Strength and Opulence, and

²⁶⁷ Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*. loc. 33511.

²⁶⁸ Harvey J. Kaye, *Thomas Paine : Firebrand of the Revolution* (Cary, United States: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2000). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5763555>. 48.

²⁶⁹ Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis : Prologue to Revolution*. 68-70.

protected by our Arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under?"

Barré's response made him famous throughout the American Colonies and contained the name the group of American insurgents would take as their own "The Sons of Liberty." Barré's inspiring words of response to Townshend were:

They planted by your Care? No! your Oppressions planted em in America. They fled from your Tyranny to a then uncultivated and unhospitable Country— where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human Nature is liable, and among others to the Cruelties of a Savage foe, the most subtle and I take upon me to say the most formidable of any People upon the face of Gods Earth. And yet, actuated by Principles of true english Liberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own Country, from the hands of those who should have been their Friends. They nourished by your indulgence? they grew by your neglect of Em: as soon as you began to care about Em, that Care was Exercised in sending persons to rule over Em, in one Department and another, who were perhaps the Deputies of Deputies to some Member of this house—sent to Spy out their Liberty, to misrepresent their Actions and to prey upon Em; men whose behaviour on many Occasions has caused the Blood of those *Sons of Liberty* to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest Seats of Justice, some, who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign Country to Escape being brought to the Bar of a Court of Justice in their own.

They protected by your Arms? they have nobly taken up Arms in your defence, have Exerted a Valour amidst their constant and Laborious industry for the defence of a Country, whose frontier, while drench'd in blood, its interior Parts have yielded all its little Savings to your Emolument. And beleive me, remember I this Day told you so, that same Spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still.—But prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this Time speak from motives of party Heat, what I deliver are the genuine Sentiments of my heart. 39

Unfortunately, even Barré's powerful words could not change the course of history and Parliament's desire to press its unlimited authority to tax the colonies.²⁷⁰ Barré became so popular with the American colonists not only for the title he gave their movement but the ideas that he associated with that movement. Those ideas resonated with the colonists. Looking back, the approach taken by Townshend and Parliament made the American Revolution seem to have been almost inevitable. In the wake of Britain's triumph in the French and Indian War (1756-63) the British government sought to secure

²⁷⁰ Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis : Prologue to Revolution*. 68-70.

its empire by more firmly asserting its control over its American colonies. They did this by having Parliament enact a string of revenue-raising laws and regulations, including the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, Quartering Act, Declaratory Act, and Townshend Acts. Their intended effect backfired and instead of stabilizing the colonies they destabilized the colonies. Americans rejected Parliament's right to legislate for them. As early as 1764, following the initiation of the Stamp Act, Sam Adams in instructions he wrote for delegates from Boston to the Massachusetts assembly, questioned Parliament's right to tax the colonies or its authority in America. He also included the first threat of a boycott of English goods.²⁷¹ The colonists, led by patriots like Sam Adams, reacted at first with resistance. They decried tyranny, demonstrated in the streets, and organized boycotts and movements such as the nonimportation associations coordinated by Sam Adams and the Sons of Liberty. Their defiance made each ensuing British initiative essentially unworkable. Yet repeatedly, after repealing its latest law or tax, Parliament imposed a new one, instigating fresh protests. The Stamp Act was one of the first acts of Parliament that created an opportunity to achieve American independence because it represented a threat to American liberty and may in and of itself helped to instigate revolution. The Stamp Act did not provoke obedience and compliance in the American colonists as hoped for by the British administration. Instead, it resulted in a cycle of initiation, passage, coercion, resistance, repeal until after recycling many Parliamentary acts between 1765 and 1774. finally resulted in the Intolerable Acts of 1774 and the Declaration of Independence by the colonists in 1776. Through the use of framing, the American Colonists led by such founders as Sam Adams, John Adams, John Hancock, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and others, were able to turn the threat of British oppression into the opportunity for independence.

Framing/Mobilizing Structures/Organization

Out of Parliament's actions the Sons of Liberty emerged as an organized social movement. As the Morgans, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, observed, "The Sons of Liberty were farsighted enough to see the issues involved in the Stamp Act, to see that in the long run it would be to Parliament's advantage to draw as large a proportion of revenue as

²⁷¹ Mark Puls, *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution*, Kindle ed. (St. Martin's Press, 2015). 41.

possible from a people who were not close enough at hand to protect themselves through protest or pressure or the ballot box. The more money Parliament could draw from the Americans the less they would have to draw from their own constituents in England. The Americans could thus be bled dry for the benefit of their fellow subjects in England.²⁷²

This difference in interests between Parliament and the American colonists naturally led to conflict. Conflict in society is not rare. Conflict is an essential sociological perspective. Randall Collins in *Four Sociological Traditions* explains this perspective:

A line of thought going back many centuries emphasizes social conflict. This sounds like it studies only certain dramatic events, but the perspective is much broader and includes all of what goes on in society- Its main argument is not simply that society consists of conflict, but the larger claim that what occurs when conflict is not openly taking place is a process of domination. Its vision of social order consists of groups and individuals trying to advance their own interests over others whether or not overt outbreaks take place in this struggle for advantage.²⁷³

The Sons of Liberty Movement started with conflict between the British empire and a group of its colonists. It was clearly a struggle for influence and a perceived conflict of interest between the colonies and Britain. The British ministers sought to impose by legislative authority or direct executive action backed by force their policies. They particularly recognized the important contribution that the Atlantic trade made to Britain's power and prosperity. They disagreed, however on what were the most important causes of American resentment and on how the grievances of the colonists might be conciliated and ameliorated.²⁷⁴ From 1763 to 1783, British views of the American Revolution varied and fluctuated constantly. There was no monolithic conviction among Tories, Whigs, or radical eighteenth-century Commonwealth men, nor among various segments of the British population at large. The central political principles at issue between Britain and her American colonies were perceived by only a few men, and even when such men agreed in basic political theory, and held the same conception of empire, they still differed in practical policy.²⁷⁵ The issue of sovereign rights was

²⁷² Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*. 195-196.

²⁷³ Randall Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1994). 47.

²⁷⁴ H. T. Dickinson, "The Failure of Conciliation: Britain and the American Colonies 1763-1783," *The Kyoto Economic Review* 79, no. 2 (167) (2010), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/43213389>. 3.

²⁷⁵ Peter J. Stanlis, "British Views of the American Revolution: A Conflict over Rights of Sovereignty," *Early American Literature* 11, no. 2 (1976), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/25070777>. 191.

precipitated when the Grenville ministry passed the Stamp Act (1765), followed after its repeal by the Townshend Act (1767), both of which the Americans resisted, thereby forcing the issue of British sovereignty. Generally, most members of Parliament and the British ministry agreed it was a political issue. It was in their view an issue of British sovereign rights. However, on the practical side potential options to deal with the problem of American resistance varied. British responses to American resistance assumed three possible courses of action: to grant the colonies outright independence; to compel colonial obedience to Parliament through force; or to conciliate the colonies by granting each colonial assembly considerable sovereignty over its internal affairs, including the right of taxation, while maintaining British imperial sovereignty in external affairs.²⁷⁶

The British Government wanted to impose taxes on the American colonist that part was clear, nonetheless, the Sons of Liberty contested the authority of the British Parliament to tax American colonists. Resistance was particularly fierce in the Boston area of the Massachusetts Bay colony where the Sons of Liberty originated. The structure and activities of British Government and their response to that conflict influenced the lines of organization and action taken by the Sons of Liberty in their efforts to influence and mobilize people, resources, and claims for the contentious action they took against the British.²⁷⁷ The Sons of Liberty were instrumental in organizing and mobilizing resistance to and eventually independence from the British Empire but their modes of contention and levels of resistance were highly contingent on the actions taken by the British who alternated between coercion and conciliation. Edmund Burke was famous for his efforts to conciliate the American colonists. However, Burke's three great speeches on conciliation failed to secure majority support in the House of Commons. Many MPs undoubtedly believed that Burke was willing to concede too much to the Americans and was asking for very little in return.²⁷⁸

The other alternative for the British was to meet resistance with coercion. Coercion, however, presents major problems. Byman, Waxman, and Larson, in their

²⁷⁶ Stanlis, "British Views of the American Revolution: A Conflict over Rights of Sovereignty." 192.

²⁷⁷ Amenta et al., "The Political Consequences of Social Movements." 289.

²⁷⁸ Dickinson, "The Failure of Conciliation: Britain and the American Colonies 1763-1783." 5-6.

journal article, “How to Think About Coercion,” write that there are three challenges to implementing coercive strategies:

First, the likelihood of successful coercion is dependent not only on the expected impact of the coercer’s decision but also on the adversary’s countermoves. Second, coercive strategies must therefore be designed not only to raise the expected costs of resistance but also to anticipate and neutralize possible countermoves that would otherwise reduce the impact of the coercive threat or successfully coerce the coercer. Third, binary measures of success—measures that seek simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers—are restrictive.²⁷⁹

The success of coercion is also difficult to measure. Again, Byman, Waxman, and Larson make excellent observations:

The standard coercive ‘equation’—that successful coercion occurs when the expected costs to be inflicted by the coercer outweigh the adversary’s perceived benefits in proceeding—is useful for understanding the problem of coercion in the abstract, but it may confuse the study of coercion when taken as a true depiction of state behavior. One problem is that this equation fosters static, one-sided thinking about coercive contests. It suggests that coercion occurs at a particular instant, at which time the perceived costs of resistance outweigh the benefits, leading to a change in behavior. It also encourages analysts to think about costs and benefits as independent variables that can be manipulated by the coercer, while the adversary stands idle and recalculates its perceived interests as threats are made and implemented.²⁸⁰

I do not believe the British in its efforts to surpass resistance and rebellion envisioned the rise of the Sons of Liberty.

The Sons of Liberty had its origins in Boston and grew out of existing local political organizations. The “Sons of Liberty” was actually not just one organization in one location but eventually became a series of resistance organizations formed throughout the American colonies during the Stamp Act crisis. The Sons of Liberty had its origins in Boston and grew out of existing local political organizations. Later those local organizations would be united or newly formed under the name Sons of Liberty

²⁷⁹ Daniel L. Byman, Matthew C. Waxman, and Eric Larson, “How to Think About Coercion,” in *Air Power as a Coercive Instrument* (RAND Corporation, 1999). 21.

²⁸⁰ Byman, Waxman, Larson, “How to Think About Coercion,” in *Air Power as a Coercive Instrument*. 20.

organization to present resistance to British Parliamentary legislation and organize active acts of resistance.²⁸¹

The Sons of Liberty saw the Stamp Act as both a threat and an opportunity. Britain chose to exert its authority over the colonies by imposing taxes on the colonies. Taxes were imposed without consultation or consent of the colonial legislatures or the colonists. Increased taxes on the colonies were only fair from the British government's point of view. British legal authorities agreed that the power to tax was an inherent power of the state. All states existed based on the power to tax and the coercive power to collect those taxes. The sovereign authority of the state was tied to the power to appropriate property (in taxation) and take life (in justice and in defense). Taxation and coercion were fundamental concepts in the approach the British government took to their colonies. This all-encompassing' indivisible power belonged solely to the tripartite entity constitutionally vested with sovereign authority: the king, the House of Lords and the House of Commons "in Parliament assembled."²⁸² British jurists believed that to divide sovereignty further would lead to anarchy. Of critical note was also the fact that the House of Commons jealously guarded their sole power to tax as a font of their power over the empire. This position taken up by the British Empire setup what Tilly and company calls "Contentious Politics." As defined by Tilly, McAdam, and Tarrow, Contentious Politics is, in its simplest version, when:

...one party makes claims on another. The parties are often persons, but one or the other can also be a group or even an institution... In the elementary version, we can think of one party as a subject (the maker of a claim) and the other as an object (the receiver of a claim). Claims always involve at least one subject's reaching visibly toward at least one object...²⁸³

In this case the British empire was making a claim of taxes due on the American colonies. Parliament attempted to generate funds through enacted revenue acts occurred in conjunction with difficult economic times caused by the economic contraction after the French and Indian War. These revenue acts prompted a strong response from the

²⁸¹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc.40.

²⁸² Fred Anderson, *The War that Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (Penguin, 2006). 243-244.

²⁸³ Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*. 7.

colonists in America.²⁸⁴ The first new revenue act was called the Stamp Act. The short official title for the act was, Duties in American Colonies Act 1765 (5 George III, c. 12) and it commenced on November 1, 1765. Jill Lepore in, *These Truths: A History of the United States*, explains that:

The Stamp Act required placing government-issued paper stamps on all manner of printed paper, from bills of credit to playing cards. Stamps were required across the British Empire, and, by those standards, the tax levied in the colonies was cheap: colonists paid only two-thirds of what Britons paid. But in the credit-strained mainland colonies, this proved difficult to bear.²⁸⁵

Unsurprisingly, the British actions provoked a reaction from the British American colonist that was in keeping with both British and American culture. Gordon Wood in the, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, noted this about British and American culture:

All Englishmen in the eighteenth century were known throughout the Western world for their insubordination, their insolence, their stubborn unwillingness to be governed. Any reputation the North American colonists had for their unruliness and contempt for authority came principally from their Englishness.²⁸⁶

Pauline Maier in, *From Resistance to Revolution* gives further insight into colonial attitudes:

The Colonists' attitudes toward civil uprisings were part of a broader Anglo-American political tradition. In the course of the eighteenth century, colonists became increasingly interested in the idea of seventeenth-century English revolutionaries such as John Milton, Algernon Sidney, John Locke, and the later writers who carried on and developed this tradition—Robert Molesworth; John, Lord Somers; the Anglican bishop Benjamin Hoadly; John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, whose essays, published together as *Cato's Letters*, were a classic for many Americans; the Scottish philosopher Francis Hutcheson; and the celebrated English historian of the 1760's and 1770's, Catharine Macaulay.²⁸⁷

She goes on to write:

Spokesmen for this English revolutionary tradition were distinguished in the eighteenth century above all by their outspoken defense of the people's right to

²⁸⁴ Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*. 82

²⁸⁵ Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*. 82.

²⁸⁶ Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. 12.

²⁸⁷ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc. 632.

rise up against their rulers, which they supported in traditional contractual terms. Government was created by the people to promote the public welfare. If magistrates failed to honor that trust, they automatically forfeited their powers back to the people, who were free and even obliged to reclaim political authority.²⁸⁸

Looking back many years after the Revolution, recalling the Boston Massacre, which occurred on March 5, 1770, John Adams wrote,

The incidents of that night [Boston Massacre] were of momentous importance to the nations of both hemispheres. ‘On that night,’ Mr. Adams said, ‘the foundation of American independence was laid.’ Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the foundation already laid then first began to rise to the sight... that habits of mind favorable to entire personal freedom had been formed even among a large class who seldom get so far as to an analysis of principles.”²⁸⁹

Adams believed this stemmed from “a people nurtured in these habits of self-reliance and self-government...”²⁹⁰

The framing of both resistance and revolution used by Sam Adams and the Sons of Liberty was founded in both British and American culture. Its beauty was its simplicity. The British pose a threat to American freedom by taking away their ability to determine their own government. This is oppression and according to John Locke and British tradition you have a legitimate right to resist oppression. Secondly the British pose a threat to your property by taking your property through taxes. Join us and we will fight together to preserve your life, liberty, and property or as Jefferson wrote your “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Mobilizing Structures

A critical factor in any social movement is how to get people to act on behalf of the “cause” as defined by the social movement. How do they mobilize people to act. Resistance was initially organized and started by a group in Boston organized by Sam Adams called the Sons of Liberty.

²⁸⁸ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. loc. 640.

²⁸⁹ Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*. loc. 6735.

²⁹⁰ Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*.loc. 6822-6831.

Social movements need organization, structure, and leadership. These three elements are necessary to allow the movement to mobilize its members toward their chosen goals and in their attempt to exert and eventually achieve those goals. History is filled with many contingent processes. In this case there was nothing certain about the eventual independence of the American colonies from England. The movement had to start somewhere, and that resistance was initially organized and started by a group formed and mobilized by Sam Adams called the Sons of Liberty. The contentious and sometimes radical actions of the Sons of Liberty were a critical first step in achieving independence. 1765 marked the emergence of an organizations, separate and distinct from the normal popular assemblies, such as the Boston Town Meeting, which were capable of challenging the colonial and ultimately British authorities. These were loose federations for resistance which came to be known as the Sons of Liberty.²⁹¹ These groups fit the definition of a social movement formulated by Almeida: they were an excluded collective engaged in sustained interaction with economic and political elites to affect social change. In this case the change this movement wished to effect was economic, political, and social independence from the British Empire.

The founding of the Sons of Liberty is credited to Sam Adams, one of America's first public figures involved in what Neal Riemer described as "prophetic politics." Adams was dedicated to a fearless criticism of all political orders, to constitutional breakthroughs, and to continuous prophetic scrutiny and futuristic projection of the existing political order.²⁹²

Samuel's cousin and fellow revolutionary John Adams said of Sam that "without the true character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written."²⁹³ I think it is safe to say Sam Adams was a man of strong convictions. Sam was brought up that way. The young Samuel Adams had a father that

²⁹¹ Thomas W. Ramsbey, "The Sons of Liberty: The Early Inter-Colonial Organization," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 17, no. 2 (1987), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/41420902>. 313-314.

²⁹² Neal Riemer, *The Future of the Democratic Revolution: Toward a More Prophetic Politics* (Greenwood, 1984). 6.

²⁹³ John K. Alexander, *Samuel Adams : The Life of an American Revolutionary* (Lanham, United States: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=669793>. 8.

was not like the typical dad. Sam's father, Samuel Adams Sr., in 1712, when he was only twenty-three had already accumulated enough wealth to buy a substantial parcel of land in Boston on which he built an impressive house.²⁹⁴ In addition to his being a successful businessman the elder Adams was very active in local politics. As is true of business, the same is true of politics. The elder Adam's political career did not happen by chance. The eighteenth-century historian Reverend William Gordon asserted that by 1724 Adams organized a political club with his friend Elisha Cooke, a fierce politician who was well respected among the Boston townspeople. Known as the Caucus Club, this organization consisted mostly of working men; in fact, the club may have taken its name from the many caulkers, or ship repairmen, who filled its ranks.²⁹⁵ These working people met in caucus and formulated strategies to get their own candidates into positions of power. Equally important, the Caucus Club would meet regularly to discuss upcoming issues and then they would formulate a view as to what position the town should adopt on various political matters, or who should serve in the town's political offices. Having reached a consensus, the members of the club would then cast their votes together at the next town meeting. The Caucus Club, later called the Boston Caucus, used their voting power to champion economic issues that mattered to everyday people thus gaining wide political favor. The Caucus also strove to protect the political rights of citizens. It fought to ensure the integrity of Boston's town-meeting government, a system that gave the citizens a direct say in determining how their city functioned. The system's democratic features, however, came at a price. The town meeting, which relied on elected committees rather than a few officials to set policy, often proved less than efficient, and that prompted calls for incorporating Boston as a city. Under the leadership of the caucus, the town meeting thwarted various incorporation schemes during the 1730s that would have significantly diluted the elected committee system and compromised the independence of the town meeting. The Caucus also combined its political maneuvers with support for local tax

²⁹⁴ Alexander, *Samuel Adams : The Life of an American Revolutionary*. 10.

²⁹⁵ Alexander, *Samuel Adams : The Life of an American Revolutionary*. 11, also Benjamin Irvin, H., *Samuel Adams : Son of Liberty, Father of Revolution*, Oxford Portraits, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), Book.

<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=160279&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. 17.

officials, often caucus members, who typically overlooked delinquent taxpayers suffering hard times. In this way, Adams's Caucus Club had a powerful voice in Boston politics.²⁹⁶

The Caucus Club ardently tried to protect the rights and the clout of the common citizen by advocating positions that assured their economic wellbeing and independence. These were the pillars of the framing that was used by the Caucus Club to gain the support of their candidates for public office. Vote for the Caucus Club members and we will fight for your economic, social, and political welfare.

Repertoires of Contention

Based on long traditions in England and in the colonies, the people of America utilized a tried-and-true tactic to get Parliament's attention and show their reaction to The Stamp Act; they rioted.

Mobs, riots, and crowds have affected the history of America and society in numerous ways. The collective behavior of mobs, riots, and crowds in localized, or close, collectivities can be powerful agents of social change, an affirmation of existing social mores or a tool of individual transformation.²⁹⁷ The historian, Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, points out:

Eighteenth century Americans accepted the existence of popular uprisings with remarkable ease. Riots and tumults, it was said, happened 'in all governments at all times.' To seek a world completely free of them was vain; it was to pursue 'a blessing denied to this life, and reserved to complete the felicity of the next.'¹ Not that extra-legal uprisings were encouraged. They were not. But in certain circumstances, it was understood, the people would rise up almost as a natural force, much as night follows day, and this phenomenon often contributed to the public welfare. The colonists' attitude depended in large part upon a tradition of popular uprisings that also shaped the forms of popular force during the revolutionary era. The existence of such a tradition meant, moreover, that the people, or, as their opponents said, the mob, entered the struggle with Britain as

²⁹⁶ Alexander, *Samuel Adams: The Life of an American Revolutionary*. 11-12.

²⁹⁷ Cheryl Bourassa, "Localized Collectivities: Mobs, Riots and Crowd Behavior," (Great Neck Publishing, 2019).
<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=89185569&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

an established social force, not as an agency newly invented to serve the ends of radical leadership.²⁹⁸

There were no professional police forces in the eighteenth century. As a result, the power of government depended traditionally upon what was known as the "hue and cry." The hue and cry was raised when a serious crime was committed. It raised the local community who in turn pursued and captured the offender. In its original medieval form, the "hue and cry" was a form of summary justice met out by a mob that resembled today's modern-day lynching. By the eighteenth-century magistrates adopted a more formal process called "*posse comitatus*," or literally translated the "power of the country." When a magistrate called for a posse comitatus all able-bodied men were summoned and assembled in order to assist the local sheriff in the discharge of his duties. In cases where greater and more organized force was needed, magistrates would call out the militia. Both the posse and the militia used the same pool of local men who, ironically, were typically the same men who made up the mob. This was particularly true if the mob formed to force a magistrate to perform his duty or for some other cause that prompted widespread public disapproval. As a result the *posse comitatus* and the militia forms of law enforcement left magistrates virtually helpless whenever a large segment of the population was involved in a mob protest, or when the community sympathized with the rioters.²⁹⁹

This was largely the case at the time of the Stamp Act Riots in Boston. Boston at the time of the passage of the Stamp Act was a city with a history of past mob action. The Boston mob intervened repeatedly to keep foodstuffs in the colony during times of dearth (1710, 1713, 1729) and to destroy bawdy houses (1734, 1737). Boston, however, was not the only city with a history of insurrection and mob action. In 1754 in New Hampshire, a member of the prominent Gillman family who was a mill owner and a militia officer organized an uprising against the King's surveyor of the woods at Exeter. Norfolk in 1766 also showed signs of insurrection, "All the principal Gentlemen in Town" were

²⁹⁸ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*, loc. 179-188.

²⁹⁹ Pauline Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth-Century America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1970), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1923837>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/1923837>. 19.

supposedly present when a customs informer was tarred and feathered. Again in 1767 Norfolk had another incident in which Captain Jeremiah Morgan complained about the virtually universal participation of Norfolkers in an impressment incident that resulted in widespread protest. Further, merchant Benedict Arnold admitted leading a New Haven mob against an informer in 1766. Proprietary colony North Carolina also joined in when, the “resort to force and violence was... a common occurrence, almost the habit of the country”; and even after 1731, when the colony came under Crown rule, ‘scarce a decade passed that did not see the people in arms to redress official grievances.’³⁰⁰

Again and again, the same pattern appeared in the colonies, protesters, rioters, or even what might be labeled insurgents defended the common interests of their people when lawful authorities failed to act. This had been true of the late-seventeenth-century Virginia tobacco uprisings: only after their provincial assembly was prevented by Governor Thomas Culpeper from meeting to vote on curtailing tobacco production in order to avert economic crisis, did insurgents begin tearing up tobacco plants. In Maryland’s Prince George County, tobacco “rioting” was similarly carried on by men in “despair of any relief from the legislature.” Massive rural uprisings in New Jersey and the Carolinas during the mid-eighteenth century also intervened to punish outlaws, secure land titles, or prevent the abuses of public officials only after efforts to work through established procedures failed, and the colonists became convinced that justice and security had to be imposed by the people directly.³⁰¹

Maier observed that:

These incidents indicate a readiness among many Americans to act outside the bounds of law, but they cannot simply be described as anti-authoritarian. Often—as in the Boston whorehouse riot of 1734 or the Norfolk smallpox incident—local magistrates openly countenanced or participated in the crowd’s activities.³⁰²

In 1765, Boston did not immediately erupt into rioting. At first, merchants, lawyers, and other influential colonists objected to the Stamp Act in the media of the time

³⁰⁰ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle. chap1 loc 188-198.

³⁰¹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle. loc. 188-198.

³⁰² Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle. loc 198-209.

by publishing that branded the English revenue initiatives as unconstitutional. After news of the Stamp Act reached the colonies in 1765, resistance stiffened and grew more widespread. On 14 August 1765, the Loyal Nine, an association of prominent Bostonians who were descended from the original puritan colonists, targeted Andrew Oliver, the crown's appointed stamp distributor, as the proper focus for community outrage. The crowd took a focused approach to the framing of the problem and Oliver became not only the focus of framing of the problem but a cause for mobilization. A crowd hanged Oliver's effigy from the Liberty Tree, carried a coffin containing his "body" through the streets of Boston, then beheaded and burned the effigy, pulled down the stamp tax office, and ultimately destroyed Oliver's home.³⁰³ Social movement leaders need to bridge or connect their frames to multiple groups that may be spread across various geographies but are similarly situated in terms of their grievance.³⁰⁴ In this case Andrew Oliver served that purpose. He was used to put a face on the British government and to serve as a focal point for grievance framing and mobilization.

The Boston Sons of Liberty approach to Stamp Act, intimidation, coercion, and street demonstrations quickly caught on and spread to other colonies. As Pauline Maier points out:

The solution was infectious. Without distributors the Stamp Act could not go into effect, so the coercion of stampmen seemed rational, even efficient. It was 'the most effectual and most decent Method of preventing the Execution of a Statute;' it struck 'the Axe into the Root of the Tree.' 'Our Brethren in Boston have endeared themselves more than ever to all the colonies in America,' claimed a letter in the New York Gazette which was promptly reprinted in Philadelphia and Portsmouth, and which hoped that 'the Noble Example ... will be unanimously follow'd by all the Colonies.' By August 20, Newporters were preparing effigies; their demonstration took place on August 27, and two days later their stampman renounced his office. Meanwhile, distributors in New Jersey and New York 'voluntarily' resigned—moves they were later forced to confirm publicly; and the Maryland distributor, Zachariah Hood, fled to New York in panic after being hanged in effigy on August 29 and seeing his warehouse 'pulled down' by a mob of three to four hundred men on September 2. Gradually, all the other colonies followed suit. The New Hampshire distributor was forced to resign first in Boston

³⁰³ Michelle Orihel, "'All Those Truly Acquainted with the History of Those Times': John Adams and the Opposition Politics of Revolutionary England, ca. 1640-41," *The New England Quarterly* 86, no. 3 (2013), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/43285009>. 438.

³⁰⁴ Almeida, *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*. 83.

when he arrived from England on September 12, and later at Portsmouth; Jared Ingersoll had to step down in Connecticut on September 18; and by the end of October mass uprisings, real or threatened, won stampmen's resignations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and South Carolina. In November, North Carolina followed; and before the year was out New Yorkers forced Hood's resignation for Maryland. Only in Georgia did the stampman avoid the humiliation of resignation. Even where there were no stampmen available, the new spirit was manifest. Mock trials for the stamps and stampmen were held, "funerals" for Liberty staged, or effigies of the stampmen, the Devil, and of Lord Bute, who was said to be behind the Stamp Act, were paraded.³⁰⁵

To be sure, the strategy of threatening and intimidating the stampmen was disrupting the collection of the stamp duties. The tactic was working but it was also dangerous. On the night of August 26, 1766, the mob got out of hand or may even have had objectives other than those aimed at the Stamp Act. On that night the mob decided to attack a different target. On that night they attacked the home of Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson. This action was a direct assault on royal authority in the person of the Lt. Governor. J. Patrick Mullins, *Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution*, described the attack this way:

On the night of August 26, 1766, ...rallied around a bonfire on King Street in downtown Boston and formed a torchlit mass of indignation. The crowd divided into two teams, ransacking the private homes of two officers of the British Crown. The mob then re-formed and marched to a three-story Palladian mansion, the home of Thomas Hutchinson, chief justice and lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. An eyewitness, lawyer Josiah Quincy, Jr., documented the riot in a diary entry the following day... The 'Rage-intoxicated Rabble,' Quincy recalled, swept into the house and destroyed or stole everything of value. Over hours of steady work, the rioters pulled down interior walls and tore its stately cupola from the roof. They left a gutted shell behind and dispersed with the approach of daylight.³⁰⁶

The images recalled by Josiah Quincy Jr. are common to witnesses of riots and mob action, but they are misperceptions that carry with them the typical myths about mobs. The common myths hold that people acting in crowds or mobs are irrational, they

³⁰⁵ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle chap 3, loc. 1090-1103.

³⁰⁶ J. Patrick Mullins, "Introduction: Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution," in *Father of Liberty, Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution* (University Press of Kansas, 2017). 1-2.

act purely out of emotion, they are anonymous, destructive, act spontaneously, without direction, and do things they won't normally do but imitate the behavior of the crowd.

After careful systematic observation of mobs by social scientists several popular held beliefs about them were discovered to be false. Killiand and Turner proposed and *Emergent Norm* theory of collective behavior. The theory states that:

Diverse interpretations and action tendencies are usually present in a crowd situation. Someone initiates an act—perhaps in the belief that others will support him or her. Once a person initiates an act, the support of those nearby determines whether that person will persist in attempts to influence others. If enough people reinforce that person's position or behavior, a shared understanding will emerge. The definition of the situation that results from interaction in an initially ambiguous situation is termed an emergent norm. The emergent norm is usually not completely novel; it involves a modification or transformation of preexisting norms.³⁰⁷

The attack on Andrew Oliver, the stampman, was in line with what became an emergent norm among the colonists. The attack on Lt. Governor Hutchinson's house and personal property was something else again. It took the existing emergent norm one step further. It was organized, sponsored, and had political and possibly personal objectives.

Different groups of people were responsible for the successive phases of the riots in Boston.³⁰⁸ The effigies that inaugurated the events of August 14 in Boston were prepared by the Loyal Nine. To intimidate Hutchinson and other conservatives, Boston's Patriot gentlemen recruited Ebenezer Mackintosh, a twenty-eight-year-old shoemaker and a veteran of colonial wars and Pope's Day rumbles. Mackintosh brokered a peace between rival North and South End gangs to create a united mob in support of the Stamp Act riots.³⁰⁹ Moreover, some forty to fifty "respectable people" in the crowd that gathered to destroy Oliver's residence were "decently dressed," as Hutchinson witnessed, or "disguised with trousers and Jackets on," as Governor Francis Bernard claimed. These gentlemen tried to control the mob and limit the violence: after the "stamp office" was

³⁰⁷ DeLamater, Myers, and Collett, *Social Psychology*. 586.

³⁰⁸ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle chap 3, loc.1124.

³⁰⁹ Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W. W Norton, 2016). 100-101.

leveled, the crowd's leaders "gave directions to carry the image to fort hill being near Mr. Oliver's house and then burn it, but to do no damage to his dwelling home."³¹⁰

Mackintosh was also a volunteer fireman and the Loyal Nine not only hoped that he had the necessary leadership skill to control the mob but also control the fires they started. Benjamin Carp, *Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement*, wrote:

Samuel Adams (soon to be appointed a fireward) expressed his approval of these acts; Bostonians were defending their liberty by 'deliberately [and] . . . rationally destroying property, after trying every method to preserve it . . . when the men in power had rendered the destruction of that property the only means of securing the property of all.' Adams applauded Mackintosh, a fireman, for cooperating with patriot leaders to keep the fire of liberty under control. The crowds destroyed property, but only to protect the property of all colonists who felt threatened by the Stamp Act.³¹¹

Mackintosh was a dynamic public figure during the Stamp Act crisis. Years and was well known among the lower classes in Boston. The more established artisans in the Loyal Nine were also "not a little plea'd" that a poor shoemaker was getting "Credit" for crowd actions while they remained behind the scenes.³¹² Carp observed that, "Even his enemies noted his singular leadership qualities: Peter Oliver described him as 'sensible & manly' and 'endowed with superior Honor' as he performed the less honorable Loyal Nine's 'dirty Jobs' . . . with great Eclat."³¹³

Framing Process

A social movement must activate its desired targets by invoking a certain set of social values. Social movement leaders do this through a process called framing. Frames are defined as "metaphors, symbols, and cognitive cues that cast issues in a particular

³¹⁰ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle, chap 3 loc 1124-1135.

³¹¹ Benjamin L. Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674500>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2674500>. 806-807.

³¹² Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 807.

³¹³ Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 807.

light and suggest possible ways to respond to these issues.”³¹⁴ Framing refers to the meaning-making processes associated with the construction and interpretation of grievances, the attribution of blame, the selection of movement targets and tactics, and the creation of a rationale for movement participation. Frames create a central organizing idea that tells the targeted audience or segment of the public what is at issue and outlines the boundaries of action and debate. Organizational leaders, for example, present frames as a way to define a situation as problematic, to identify the responsible party or structure, to articulate a reasonable solution, and to call individuals to action.³¹⁵

The leaders of the Sons of Liberty framed their argument in the language of the mob and used a gang leader to implement their strategy of intimidation and coercion. Their favorite tactic was to invoke the mob to target a specific government official or officials.

One major riot took place on August 26, 1765, and was directed at Thomas Hutchinson. This was no mere leaderless, lawless outbreak with no direction and purpose. In Massachusetts, Hutchinson had built an elaborate patronage machine and came fully into power after the arrival of Governor Francis Bernard in 1760. One of Governor Bernard’s first acts was to appoint Hutchinson Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court of Judicature. Hutchinson’s loyalty to the crown and reputation for integrity, judiciousness and devotion to public service was well known but he was not a lawyer and had no real judicial experience. Further complicating the picture was the fact that a well-qualified lawyer, James Otis Sr. who had been promised the job by the former Governor Shirley, was being passed over for it. Governor Bernard was advised that the appointment of Otis at this time would be inadvisable given the fact that Otis’s son James Otis Jr. was one considered radical, unstable and one of the leading members of the opposition to the Stamp Act and Parliament.³¹⁶ Hutchinson was

³¹⁴ Cara C. Maurer, Pratima Bansal, and Mary M. Crossan, "Creating Economic Value Through Social Values: Introducing a Culturally Informed Resource-Based View," *Organization Science* 22, no. 2 (2011), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/20868869>. 438.

³¹⁵ Conny Roggeband and Bert Klandermans, *Handbook of Social Movements Across Disciplines* (Springer, 2017). <https://link-springer-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/book/10.1007/978-0-387-70960-4>. 16.

³¹⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, Google Books ed., vol. 97 (Harvard University Press, 1974). 48.

appointed over Otis and his son saw this as a major sign of the corruption of the British colonial administration. John Adams and other lawyers and patriots saw it as outrageous that a non-lawyer would be appointed to the court. They objected to the appointment of Hutchinson for both ideological and political reasons.³¹⁷ Additionally, Hutchinson still retained his post as Lt. Governor. The Hutchinson and the Oliver families, by accumulating a number of public offices between them, had managed to bring each branch of government under their influence. To their political rivals and to patriot leaders like Oxenbridge Thacher, James Otis and John Adams this constituted a serious threat to liberty, a “foundation sufficient on which to erect a tyranny.” They believed that these were public officials bent on overthrowing the constituted forms of government in order to satisfy their own lust for power.³¹⁸ The events of August 26 were not just a riot. They were the beginning of a shift in power. This mob was purposeful. It was trying to influence both the political and the legal process by intimidating officials who were in power and therefore had an ability to affect the lives of individuals under their influence. This riot was an uprising and was not in fact a Stamp Act riot: both the testimony of Hutchinson and Bernard and the mob’s peculiar interest in its victims’ papers indicate that it was inspired by a group of merchants who feared they had been named in a set of recent depositions about smuggling. In short, as the governor put it, “private resentments against persons in Office work’d themselves in and endeavoured to execute themselves under the Mask of the Publick Cause.”³¹⁹ It was also an intimidating message to the judiciary not to interfere with the current state of commercial trading regardless of its legality.

As Andrew Stephen Walmsley, *Thomas Hutchinson and the Origins of the American Revolution* put it:

No other colony had an individual of Hutchinson’s stature and acumen who challenged radical arguments so directly. No other colony possessed anyone so willing to oppose the radical position with such vigor and dogged determination. In return his antagonists came to detest him personally and politically. His removal from office and influence became the sine qua non of the opposition

³¹⁷ Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 97. 51.

³¹⁸ Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. 109-110.

³¹⁹ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle chap, 3 loc 1127-1139.

faction. Had Hutchinson not existed, Samuel Adams, James Otis, Jr., Thomas Cushing, Samuel Cooper, and John Hancock would have had to invent someone like him.³²⁰

Peter Oliver, in turn, also saw Samuel Adams, John Adams, and James Otis Jr. as a threat. When writing of Thomas Hutchinson he stated:

Let me tell you then, that the Distinction of Applause which attended him, roused the Envy & Malice of the Leaders of the Faction, who dipped their shafts in more than infernal Gall & made him the Butt to level them at. He exerted every Nerve to save his Country; they were determined to ruin him, tho' they plunged their Country & theirselves too, into absolute Destruction.³²¹

In describing John Adams, he wrote:

Mr. Adams was born at a Town, not far from Boston, of Parentage not very distinguishable. It is generally supposed that he & Mr. Samuel Adams were nearly related but I believe, that there is no Relation, either by Affinity or Consanguinity, except in their united Endeavors in raising & supporting the present Rebellion; & here, one Soul informs both...He was determined to raise himself to a Superiority which he had no claim to; & he unguardedly confessed, in one of his Sallies of Pride, that 'he could not bear to see anyone above him'... Mr. Adams, being a sensible Lawyer, was for some Time, friendly to Government; but being in pursuit of a Commission for the Peace, Sr. Francis Barnard, the then Governor refused him. This Refusal touched his Pride, & from that Time, Resentment drove him into every Measure subversive of Law and of Government & interwove him with the factious Junto.³²²

Mr. Oliver wrote of another leading radical, James Otis Jr.:

Mr. Otis, the original Malecontent, had now outrun himself; & Samuel Adams had taken his Birth. Otis, by drinking, & by Passion, had brought his Business as a Lawyer, & his Finances, to a very low Ebb." Indeed, the Faction had so little Need of him, that they modestly dropped him (he was left out as a Representative in 1770 as they had done others who had served them, & of whom they stood in no further Need.³²³

It is clear from the statements of both sides that there was no love lost between the parties. Consensus regarding the Stamp Act was steadfast and universal — more so, it has

³²⁰ Andrew S Walmsley, *Thomas Hutchinson and the Origins of the American Revolution*, Kindle ed. (NYU Press, 1999). Kindle loc. Preface. 145.

³²¹ Peter Oliver, *Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*, ed. Douglas; Schutz Adair, John A., Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1961), (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1961). 35.

³²² Oliver, *Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*. 83.

³²³ Oliver, *Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*. 83-84.

been suggested, than it has been on any American issue before or since. What remained unclear was the form resistance should take. How to mark the indignity of the day without inciting violence? What laws applied?³²⁴ The resistance leadership turned to the mob as their form of protest. But the mob in the destruction of Thomas Hutchinson's house got out of control and exceeded their mandate. Instead of just burning effigies and intimidation it was a scene of instead "a scene of riot, drunkenness, profaneness and robbery."³²⁵ It left behind a gutted shell. Mullin writes: Historian Bernard Bailyn described the Hutchinson Riot as "more violent than any yet seen in America, more violent indeed than any that would be seen in the entire course of the Revolution."³²⁶ Even more significantly, the destruction of Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson's home by the mob provoked shock and fear in the community because it ignored the prescribed rituals and effigy-parading that the previous riot had carefully followed.³²⁷ Samuel Adams who previously had praised Mackintosh and the mob for cooperating with patriot leaders now condemned the sacking of Hutchinson's house. as "a lawless attack upon property..."³²⁸

After the events of August 26, 1765, had gotten out of hand, the Whig leadership was anxious to reassert its authority.³²⁹ By June 1768 the Boston Sons of Liberty were no longer the Loyal Nine but an organization of prominent men some of whom would be called the founders of our nation and became the nucleus of the Revolutionary movement in Massachusetts. The Sons of Liberty included such prominent figures as John Adams, Joseph Warren, Thomas Young, Benjamin Church, Benjamin Kent, James Otis, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Richard Dana, and Josiah Quincy, Jr..³³⁰

³²⁴ Stacy Schiff, *The Revolutionary: Samuel Adams*, Kindle ed. (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2022). 88.

³²⁵ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Kindle chap 3. loc 1135.

³²⁶ Mullins, "Introduction: Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution." 1

³²⁷ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804*. 91.

³²⁸ Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 80.7

³²⁹ Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 809.

³³⁰ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Chap 6. loc 3139.

Mobilizing Structures

The Sons of Liberty took advantage of existing organizations as their participation in various demonstrations against Great Britain accelerated. Samuel Adams and John Hancock were appointed fire wardens in 1766. Samuel Adams, then used the fire company as a backbone to contact various other organizations, the North End Caucus, the Masonic Lodge, the Merchants Club, various newspapers, and taverns. The intersecting membership, official power, and unofficial influence of these associations formed what one historian calls a "shadow government" in Boston.³³¹ Under this scheme, the enginemen were the secret, extralegal muscle for patriot leaders such as Adams. The enginemen were accustomed to following their fire wardens, who were their field commanders in the streets and their creditors, employers, and leaders in town offices, the militia, churches, and local clubs. Hancock, for instance, sponsored Boston's eleventh fire engine in 1772 as well as many of the Whigs' patriotic celebrations and feasts.³³²

The movement against Britain was largely decentralized. Nonetheless, there was considerable correspondence and communication among the colonies. from the Stamp Act crisis on. They constituted the nucleus of opposition to Britain. By early 1766, similar groups had appeared as far south as Georgia. The leaders were respectable tradesmen and merchants, but most had achieved wealth rather than inherited it, and they often worked beside common journeymen and apprentices in their shops or on their wharves.³³³ The resistance movement organized by the Sons of Liberty was in effect reaching out to a broader swath of society. Familiarity with common men helped to mobilize hundreds of laborers and sailors for mass meetings, parades, and protests. The Sons of Liberty proudly declared that their meetings drew "all ranks and condition," which was a radical development in a political culture where genteel leaders had long excluded the "rabble" from gatherings by the "respectable." Common households became sites of political mobilization as husbands and wives, parents and children discussed public issues. Adams concluded, "Was not every Fireside, indeed, a Theatre of

³³¹ Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 809.

³³² Carp, "Fire of Liberty: Firefighters, Urban Voluntary Culture, and the Revolutionary Movement." 809.

³³³ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 10.5

Politicks?”³³⁴ Through the organization of the Sons of Liberty you can trace the escalation of progressively more aggressive tactics demonstrating increasing resistance to British authority. You can also clearly see the beginning of what would much later be called a Social Movement Organization (SMO).³³⁵ It began with the Sons of Liberty of 1765–6, then was continued within the nonimportation movement of 1768–70, the Tea Act resistance, and the associations and committees that flowered after 1773.³³⁶

The historian Alan Taylor observed that:

The Stamp Act Crisis taught the colonists how to frustrate British measures by combining protest resolutions by elite writers with violent intimidation by common mobs and economic boycotts by everyone. The three forms of resistance worked together. Boycotts required a common front, which intimidation and ostracism helped to produce. In turn, published arguments by leading Patriots vindicated the boycotters and bully boys as defending colonial liberty against a plot by British tyrants.⁴¹ By seizing the initiative, rallying popular support, and wielding intimidating power, Patriots discredited conservatives, including Hutchinson and Oliver.³³⁷

Framing Process – Repertoire of Contention - Political Outcomes

It is difficult to verify the direct relationship between informal organizations like the Sons of Liberty and more formal colonial governmental structures but with the growing tide of resistance it is difficult not to recognize that protests organized by the Sons of Liberty resulted in direct action by colonial legislatures. In October 1765 in New York, delegates from nine mainland colonies met as the “Stamp Act Congress” to coordinate an appeal to Parliament. The representatives appealed to English constitutional values. They pleaded to the crown that it was “unreasonable and inconsistent with the Principles and Spirit of the British Constitution, for the People of Great-Britain, to grant to his Majesty the Property of the Colonists.”³³⁸ Coupled with this petition two hundred merchants gathered at a New York tavern in late October to

³³⁴ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 105.

³³⁵ Almeida, *Social Movements: The Structure of Collective Mobilization*. 12.

³³⁶ Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. Preface Kindle Loc. 63.

³³⁷ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 104.

³³⁸ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 103.

organize a boycott of British goods. At the same time newspapers spread the news of the boycott inspiring similar associations in other seaports to imitate their behavior. In this protest a standard strategy was used which employed economic pain on British manufacturers and their workers, who in turn they believed would pressure politicians in Parliament to repeal the hated Stamp Act. The pressure from British manufacturers and merchants, in the end worked. did sway Parliament.³³⁹ Taylor details the politics in England that helped repeal The Stamp Act:

The colonists also benefited from a change in the imperial government. In July 1765, the king sacked George Grenville as prime minister from a personal dislike for a tiresome bore who failed to show enough respect for the royal family. Lord Rockingham led the new cabinet, which saw no need to defend Grenville's measures, including the Stamp Act. Parliament also balked at the high cost of sending a large army to suppress colonial riots and enforce a tax that would raise little revenue at best.³⁸ In March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act but unanimously passed a Declaratory Act, which asserted the sovereign power of Parliament "to bind the colonies and people of America in all cases whatsoever." The Declaratory Act emulated a 1720 act that rendered Parliament supreme over Ireland. While repealing one tax, Parliament clung to its sovereign right to pass other taxes on the colonies in the future.³⁴⁰

The Stamp Act Crisis taught the colonists how to defy British enacted legislation that imposed unwanted taxes on them It open up for them fundamental participation in democratic action. It enabled them to develop a strategy and a campaign that went beyond one single act like the Stamp Act Congress's petition measures by combining protest resolutions by colonial legislators with intimidation by common mobs and economic boycotts by everyone. The three forms of resistance worked together. Boycotts required a common front, which mob intimidation and community ostracism of loyalists boycott busters helped to produce. These actions were furthered by published arguments by leading Patriots that vindicated the boycotters and mob participants as defending colonial liberty against oppression by British tyrants.³⁴¹ At the same time, the Sons of Liberty also helped wrest control of the direction of the mob from Ebenezer Mackintosh.

³³⁹ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 103.

³⁴⁰ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 103.

³⁴¹ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 104-105.

By 1770 Mackintosh had fallen from the spotlight and was rotting in jail for debt. None of the “Loyal Nine” came to his aid to help pay his debt.

The Stamp Act also dramatically affected the media of the time. The very character of newspapers began to change after the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765.³⁴² The Stamp Act fundamentally changed the functioning of newspapers and another form of popular media, pamphlets, in two ways. First, imperial tensions fueled a popular demand for information about parliamentary policy. Circulation for both newspapers and pamphlets increased across a wide spectrum of colonial readers.³⁴³ Second, the Stamp Act was a tax on all printed paper, including newspapers, As Jill Lepore put it:

Parliament levied a tax that cost the most to the people best able to complain about it: the printers of newspapers. ‘It will affect Printers more than anybody,’ Franklin warned, begging Parliament to reconsider. Printers from Boston to Charleston argued that Parliament was trying to reduce the colonists to a state of slavery by destroying the freedom of the press. The printers of the Boston Gazette refused to buy stamps and changed the paper’s motto to ‘A free press maintains the majesty of the people.’ In New Jersey, a printer named William Goddard issued a newspaper called the Constitutional Courant, with Franklin’s segmented snake on the masthead. This time, asked whether to join or die, the colonies decided to join.³⁴⁴

The media was a key factor in the success of the Stamp Act movement. However, successfully employing the media was only one factor used by the Patriots, also known as the Sons of Liberty. Alan Taylor describes how the Patriots used many of the same techniques as modern social movements. He describes how the Patriots approached mobilization, also a key factor in overall social movement success:

To mobilize a broad following, Patriots subsidized newspapers and pamphlets and staged political theater in the streets by holding mock funerals around a black coffin representing liberty. These performances attracted large crowds of working people, many of them without the property required to vote. To spread word into the countryside and beyond to other colonies, Patriots organized committees of correspondence, which shared information, provocative essays for the press, strategies for resistance, and talking points.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People*. 101.

³⁴³ Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People*. 101-102.

³⁴⁴ Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States*. 82-83.

³⁴⁵ Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750–1804*. 99.

Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004*, observed that in the West after 1750, the social movement emerged from an innovative, consequential synthesis of three elements:

1. A sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities (let us call it a *campaign*);
2. employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering (call the variable ensemble of performances the *social movement repertoire*); and
3. participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies (call them WUNC displays).³⁴⁶

Using Tilly's criteria, the Stamp Act Movement organized by the Sons of Liberty synthesized all of the elements pointed out by him. They made a collective claim on the British Parliament that taxation without representation was tyranny and violated their English Constitutional rights. The Sons of Liberty maintained that they were protecting the property rights of all colonist from unfair usurpation by the Parliament.in contravention to what the English legal scholar Blackstone referred to as an absolute constitutional right of all Englishmen to private property.³⁴⁷ Second, The Sons of Liberty used an effective repertoire of protest actions from marches to boycotts while effectively utilizing the media to reinforce and spread the message of such events. Lastly, the Sons of Liberty at various times publicly displayed their commitment to the movement by burning effigies, mock funerals, and other protest actions. Again, using Tilly's criteria, I would contend that the campaign waged by the Sons of Liberty formed what was, the birth of social movements in America. They may have been what Eric Hobsbawm called "archaic" social movements, but they were what I would call the start of a movement culture in the United States.³⁴⁸ The Sons of Liberty, through their actions promoted a more participatory political culture that eventually provided the spark that led to a revolution.

³⁴⁶ Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2008* (Routledge, 2004). 3-4.

³⁴⁷ Blackstone "Blackstone on the Absolute Rights of Individuals (1753)" accessed August 6, 2025, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/blackstone-on-the-absolute-rights-of-individuals-1753>.

³⁴⁸ Maier, "Popular Uprisings and Civil Authority in Eighteenth-Century America." 3.

Chapter 6

An American Paradox – The Founders and Slavery

The American Revolutionary movement was begun with the Declaration of Independence boldly proclaiming:

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.

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.³⁴⁹

The words that open the Declaration of Independence convey a sense of epic importance. The Declaration of Independence was a bold manifesto. It was a vision of a possible future for the colonies. The Founders did not call it the American Revolution. No one called it that at the time. The British called the American rebellion but to the Founders it was known as “the Cause.” That expression used by the Founders says a lot about the framing and tactics they used for their movement for independence from Britain. Unanimity of purpose was critical for their movement. They had to unite the colonists if they were to even have a hope of victory against the British. They needed a “cause” that would unify the colonists into a nation.

Benedict Anderson in, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread Nationalism* pointed, out that at the time of the American Revolution fundamental cultural conceptions were changing.³⁵⁰ Joseph Ellis, in *The Cause: The American*

³⁴⁹ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 53.

³⁵⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso, 2006), <https://hdl-handle-net.ezproxy.drew.edu/2027/heb01609.0001.001> <https://www-fulcrum-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/concern/monographs/jd472w57m>. 36.

Revolution and its Discontents, 1773-1783, argues that the revolutionaries used the concept of a “cause” to help create a national identity.³⁵¹ Ellis writes that the term “the Cause” was politically astute and served an important function:

These former colonists did not regard themselves as Americans, but rather as New Englanders, Virginians, or Pennsylvanians. No such thing as an American national identity yet existed. The term they used to describe their war for independence was The Cause, a conveniently ambiguous label that provided a verbal canopy under which a diverse variety of political and regional persuasions could coexist³⁵²

The Founders recognized that union had to be their priority. In her work, “*On Revolution*,” Hannah Arendt pointed out that perhaps two of the most famous revolutions, the French Revolution and the American Revolution had a fundamental difference. The French Revolution was truly a revolution that aimed at answering major social problems and is both admired and condemned for attempting to implement its radical agenda all at once and failing. While the American Revolution is criticized for deferring its full promise of liberty and equality and succeeding. Arendt points out that the American Revolution succeeded by achieving its goal of independence from Britain and still did not usher in the *novus ordo saeculorum* or a “new order for the ages.”³⁵³ The American Revolution did not bring on a complete change of society per se. It certainly affected major changes such as abolishing privilege based exclusively on birth. The notion of an aristocratic elite in America died with the Revolution. The Revolution set the stage for a complete change of society, but Arendt points out that the issue of poverty which was so central to the French Revolution was absent in the American Revolution. She theorizes that this “social question” of poverty was responsible for the failure of the French Revolution and the success of the American Revolution. The predicament of poverty and want was largely absent from the American scene but present everywhere else in the world.³⁵⁴ It is important to note, however, that the earliest and most articulate advocates of “The Cause” insisted that they were not proposing a revolution. John Adams insisted that drastic changes in society must be deferred. The American Revolution gave

³⁵¹ Joseph J Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*, Kindle ed. (Liveright Publishing, 2021). xi-xii.

³⁵² Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*.p xi-xii.

³⁵³ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 58.

³⁵⁴ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 58.

birth to an odd kind of political animal, what Joseph Ellis called, the prudent revolutionary.³⁵⁵ The Founders, as revolutionaries may have demonstrated wise restraint in their attempt to change society, but when it came to the enslaved people of America, the deferral strategy proved to be tragic with dire future consequences.

It is clear, the Founders of the American Revolution had a different vision for America than the French Revolutionaries. One of the Founders, John Adams, more than a decade before the actual outbreak of the American Revolution, stated his vision for America: ‘I always consider the settlement of America as the opening of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.’³⁵⁶ Adams was most likely influenced by two notable political theorists of the time John Locke and Adam Smith. These men were two of the most influential thinkers of their time. Locke and Smith heavily influenced the thinking of the Founders. Hannah Arendt writes:

Theoretically speaking, the stage was set when first Locke—probably under the influence of the prosperous conditions of the colonies in the New World—and then Adam Smith held that labour and toil, far from being the appanage of poverty, the activity to which poverty condemned those who were without property, were, on the contrary, the source of all wealth. Under these conditions, the rebellion of the poor, of ‘the slavish part of mankind,’ could indeed aim at more than liberation of themselves and enslavement of the other part of mankind.³⁵⁷

“Labor was seen for the first time as an answer to escaping poverty. The material standard of living enjoyed by the typical white family unit in the thirteen mainland colonies was almost certainly the highest in the world.”³⁵⁸ When compared with contemporary Britain and Europe, the mainland colonies could indeed lay claim to being ‘The Best Poor Man's Country.’”

The British American colonies from a very early point in their development were seen as a land of opportunity and potential prosperity. Cathy Matson in, *Capitalizing Hope: Economic Thought and the Early National Economy*, stresses the idea that great

³⁵⁵ Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*. xii.

³⁵⁶ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 13.

³⁵⁷ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 58.

³⁵⁸ Edwin J. Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America* (Columbia University Press, 1988). <https://www-degruyter-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/document/doi/10.7312/perk90958/html#contents>. 212.

numbers of early national Americans were convinced their potential for material prosperity was unequalled anywhere on earth.³⁵⁹ Because of the American dream of prosperity the colonies grow rapidly as a product of intercontinental migration on an unprecedented scale. The historian Robert Olwell points out:

Between 1607 and 1775, over two million people traveled from the Old World to begin new lives in British America. The volume of migration increased as the colonies grew. During the half-century of English colonization before 1660, approximately 250,000 people left Britain for America. To these, particularly in Barbados and the Leeward Islands after midcentury, were added fifty thousand African slaves. All told, the rate of debarkation in this first period was about six thousand per year. In the next century, a further one and a half million arrived, at an average of fifteen thousand a year. Finally, in the fifteen years before the outbreak of the Revolution, a half-million people came to British America, an annual average of more than thirty thousand newcomers.³⁶⁰

Prosperity was an attractive potential for many new immigrants to America. But having said this, it is important to emphasize that by the mid-eighteenth century twenty per cent of the colonial population was effectively denied any share of this prosperity. By 1770, blacks composed over 20 percent of the colonial workforce; in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina they numbered 320,000 and constituted 38 percent of the population, while in South Carolina, where settlement began in the late seventeenth century, they outnumbered whites by roughly 50 percent.³⁶¹ Blacks, the second largest occupational group of workers in North America, made direct contributions to the exceptional prosperity of the colonies. Yet despite these contributions they never realized the fruits of their labor. They had permanent limitations placed on their participation in its material rewards.³⁶² To a considerable degree the prosperity enjoyed by the free population of colonies like Virginia, Georgia and the Carolinas depended on freedom being denied to black people originally kidnapped from Africa and held in perpetual bondage. The promise of the Declaration of Independence, the promise that was to become the seminal

³⁵⁹ Cathy D. Matson, "Capitalizing Hope: Economic Thought and the Early National Economy," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16, no. 2 (1996), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124250>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/3124250>. 273.

³⁶⁰ Robert Olwell and Alan Tully, *Cultures and Identities in Colonial British America*, Anglo-America in the Transatlantic World, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006). <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=bce440ac-33d8-3543-a0c3-473e797ecca5>. 2-3

³⁶¹ Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America*. 98-99.

³⁶² Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America*. 109.

statement of the American Promise and the American dream 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 was denied to a substantial portion of workers who literally slaved to help make that prosperity possible.

The Founders basking in their victory and newfound freedom from Britain were faced with a vexing dilemma. Hannah Arendt labeled the absence of poverty in America as the missing social question in the American Revolution. However, I think she missed the 900-pound gorilla in the room and that was the social question of slavery. The English essayist Samuel Johnson just before the start of the American Revolution observed that:

We are told that the subjection of Americans may tend to the diminution of our own liberties: an event, which none but very perspicacious politicians are able to foresee. If slavery be thus fatally contagious, how is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?³⁶³

Conquest, expansion, defense of vested interests, conservation of power in view of the rise of new and threatening powers, or support of a given power equilibrium—all these well-known realities of power politics were the causes of most wars in history. They were recognized as legitimate motives to take up arms.³⁶⁴ The American Revolutionaries saw the rise of taxation by England without representation in Parliament as a threatening rise of power that jeopardized the existing power equilibrium. They saw it as a real threat to their vested interests. Hannah Arendt noted that most revolutions were aimed at establishing conditions of freedom rather than solving social questions. As a consequence, these social questions were unfortunately left on the table, left unresolved.³⁶⁵ Slavery proved to be a social question the Founders were unable or unwilling to deal with. Pauline Maier in *American Scripture* points out that:

The Declaration of Independence was, in fact, a peculiar document to be cited by those who championed the cause of equality. Not only did its reference to men's equal creation concern people in a state of nature before government was established, but the document's original function was to end the previous regime,

³⁶³ Samuel Johnson, *Taxation No Tyranny: an answer to the resolutions and address of the American Congress*, Kindle ed., vol. 13 (T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1775). 89.

³⁶⁴ Arendt, *On Revolution*. 3.

³⁶⁵ Arendt, *On Revolution*. xviii.

not to lay down principles to guide and limit its successor. True, the Declaration of Independence offered an implicit standard against which all governments could be compared and found wanting: unless they secured men's inalienable rights, the people could alter or abolish them and institute others "more likely to effect their safety and happiness."³⁶⁶

But the function of stating fundamental principles that established governments had to respect was normally entrusted to declarations or bills of rights like those attached to many state constitutions.³⁶⁷ Founding a government is different than framing a government. The Declaration of Independence was a justification for revolution and independence based on a founding set of principles that the Declaration literally declared were self-evident.

After the revolution the revolutionaries were faced with the difficult task of framing their revolution into a written constitution. The enormous challenge for them was how to frame their ideals while at the same time safeguarding their interests. Charles Beard in his *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* argued that:

Inasmuch as the primary object of a government, beyond the mere repression of physical violence, is the making of the rules which determine the property relations of members of society, the dominant classes whose rights are thus to be determined must perforce obtain from the government such rules as are consonant with the larger interests necessary to the continuance of their economic processes, or they must themselves control the organs of government.³⁶⁸

He also goes on to argue that "economic elements" are the chief factor in the development of political institutions." He goes on to further state that, "The social structure by which one type of legislation is secured and another prevented — that is, the constitution — is a secondary or derivative feature arising from the nature of the economic groups seeking positive action and negative restraint."³⁶⁹

Beard was proceeded by no less than the eminent "founder" and political theorist Karl Marx in believing that, "The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the

³⁶⁶ Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. 262.

³⁶⁷ Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. 263.

³⁶⁸ Charles A Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, The Dover Edition Kindle ed. (2004; New York 2004). 13.

³⁶⁹ Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*. 13.

economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”³⁷⁰ So Marx formulated a theory that has come to be called “economic determinism.” In other words, the political, legal, and social structure of a society is formed by the way a society produces and satisfies the economic needs of its constituents or the economic structure of utilized by a society. Therefore, the mode of production determines the economic structure which in turn determines the legal, political and social structure of a society. Since the economic, the political, and the social are so intimately tied together the social question referred to by Hannah Arendt and an approach to answering it must be embodied in any constitution. The “Founders” and subsequently the “Framers” had to sense that. The whole drive for independence derived from a constitutional question. Jack P. Greene, an American historian and author of *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution* wrote,

Underlining the persistence of the long-standing tensions between metropolitan authorities and the colonial legislatures, these battles all revolved around the familiar issues of the previous century: whether the royal prerogative in the colonies should be placed under the same restraints it had been subjected to in Britain in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, whether royal instructions had constitutional standing, whether the rights of British people in the colonies were civilly equal to those who continued to reside in the home islands, whether colonial legislatures were entitled to the same privileges and powers enjoyed by the metropolitan House of Commons, and whether usage had the same constitutional authority in the colonies as it had traditionally had in Britain.³⁷¹

The framing of a Constitution for the United States was critical to the future nation. The Founders had to convert themselves from Founders into Framers. I would contend that they knew that, but they also had to contend with what Tocqueville, one of the Revolution’s most astute observers, recognized as the “stickiness of both old bureaucracies and habits in the face of revolutionary change and innovation.”³⁷² Not only

³⁷⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition ed., ed. Robert C Tucker (New York, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978). 32..

³⁷¹ Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*, New Histories of American Law, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Book.
<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=335222&site=ehost-live&scope=site>. 136.

³⁷² George Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution*, Kindle ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). 30.

that but the Founders had to contend with the challenge of uniting thirteen different colonies with thirteen different foundings of their own. Thirteen different economies with thirteen different political and social structures. There certainly must have been no shortage of social questions. In fact, one of the greatest challenges in any founding is to attempt to find agreement on those social questions and their solutions.

Each colony had an initial founding. Each founding was predicated on certain founding principles and these principles were not necessarily the same. Additionally, it is important to remember that these Founders were immigrants. Great numbers of Americans loaded into ships and migrated either freely or forced to America. Many of the voluntary immigrants believed that America held great potential for religious freedom and material prosperity. The key question each of these Founders faced was what market policies and market relations would sustain and fulfill economic promise. The colonists had to learn and develop their own schemes and create their own legislative institutions for taxation, currency, land management, and trade.³⁷³ Both Lawrence Fuchs and Susan Martin, who are considered leading experts in immigration, argued that there were essentially three archetypes or models of immigration into the America. They argued America was settled from its very origins by three different models of immigration and each model can be described in relationship to the colony where it most thrived. Maartin wrote:

To oversimplify: Pennsylvania sought immigrants who would be good citizens regardless of their religious background; Massachusetts wanted as members only those who were religiously pure; and Virginia, with its increasing reliance on a plantation economy, wanted workers as cheaply as it could get them, without necessarily welcoming them to membership in the community.³⁷⁴

It all started with Virginia. The first permanent English colony was founded in Virginia in 1607. Established by a trading company that was primarily interested in profits, Virginia largely equated immigration with the arrival of laborers. Indentured servants, convict laborers, and, finally, slaves were brought to the colony. Their labor was welcomed but, particularly in the case of slaves, full social membership was denied. Slaves suffered what Orlando Patterson called, “social death.” Denied their natality and

³⁷³ Matson, "Capitalizing Hope: Economic Thought and the Early National Economy." 273.

³⁷⁴ Susan F Martin, *A Nation of Immigrants* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). 2.

humanity, slaves were treated as chattel or personal property. Although the colonial leaders sought immigrants and, in the case of convict labor and slavery, both forced convict laborers and slaves to migrate, few, if any rights, were assigned to them and they came to be seen merely expendable and exploitable labor.³⁷⁵

Like Virginia, Massachusetts was also settled by a trading company, but its goals were less directed at profits and more directed to loftier goals. The Puritans, as they were known, wanted to establish a colony composed of likeminded coreligionists who shared Puritan theology and values. From the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, the colony's immigration model was to welcome true believers of the covenant but to exclude and, in certain cases, to expel or even kill those whose views challenged their firmly held inflexible beliefs.³⁷⁶

The third and final model that Martin proposed was Pennsylvania. She writes,

William Penn was also motivated by religion in establishing the Pennsylvania colony in 1681, but he brought new ideas about religious tolerance and diversity. Although Pennsylvania was to be a haven for Quakers who faced persecution in Britain, Penn extended a welcome to other groups who wished to immigrate to the new colony. Members of religious minorities throughout Europe responded, making Pennsylvania one of the most diverse colonies in religion, language, and culture.³⁷⁷

Fuchs asserted that the Pennsylvania model was the American ideal that prevailed in making the new nation. That ideal held that immigrants (specifically, white European settlers) were welcomed on terms of equal rights. Fuchs maintained that despite different immigration models some principles were shared among the British immigrants. Fuchs argued that Americans believed that they were members of a political community with a shared “civic culture.” That culture in turn would be widely held by the Founders of the republic. This culture was based on three shared ideas that served as their basis for what they called republicanism:

first, that ordinary men and women can be trusted to govern themselves through their elected representatives, who are accountable to the people; second, that all who live in the political community (essentially, adult white males at the time) are

³⁷⁵ Martin, *A Nation of Immigrants*. 3.

³⁷⁶ Martin, *A Nation of Immigrants*. 3.

³⁷⁷ Martin, *A Nation of Immigrants*. 3.

eligible to participate in public life as equals; and third, that individuals who comport themselves as good citizens of the civic culture are free to differ from each other in religion and in other aspects of their private lives.³⁷⁸

Even though these were shared ideas and principles, however, the Founders believed they had to be codified in writing. The founding revolutionaries firmly believed that a written constitution of some type was the first step towards consolidating a union of the colonies. This process started even before the revolution and is a key part of the process of social change in America.

Contemplating the approach of independence in May 1776, Landon Carter, Virginia planter and retired Burgess, recorded in his diary that the Revolution was an unfortunate contest which Great Britain ‘certainly began with America by attempting to tax her out of the constitutional road.’ Carter took a view of the predominant issue leading to the American Revolution that every Patriot leader in Virginia shared. All the major public resolutions, addresses, and petitions of the colony spoke against a threat to ‘ancient, legal, and constitutional Rights.’³⁷⁹

John Adams was one of the Founding Fathers who advocated a new written American constitution. Shortly after the battles at Lexington and Concord, John Adams began to argue that the time had come for the colonies to declare independence and importantly, to constitutionalize the powers, rights, and responsibilities of self-government. Codifying and putting their constitution in writing became a critical function of the Founders. In May 1776, in large measure due to Adams’s insistence and lobbying, Congress passed a resolution recommending that all colonial assemblies draft new constitutions based on the principles of the Declaration. It was an extraordinary time. The Founders and the leaders of the colonies were forced in opposite directions at the same time. One direction was the demolishing of the old system of government, and the other, the constructing and organizing of new forms of government. Most frequently these set of skills are not found existing in one and the same set of persons; usually the first set, the revolutionaries after having accomplished its work, yields its place to the second set of more conservative activists, which, in turn, performs the act of organizing the new

³⁷⁸ Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope : Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture*. 5-6.

³⁷⁹ Thad W. Tate, "The Coming of the Revolution in Virginia: Britain's Challenge to Virginia's Ruling Class, 1763-1776," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1962), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1920086>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/1920086>. 323.

government.³⁸⁰ John Adams, fortunately for the new government bridged that usual gap and provided a sense of continuity between the Declaration and the Constitution in a simple guidebook. At the request of several colleagues, Adams wrote his own constitutional blueprint. Published as *Thoughts on Government*, the pamphlet circulated widely.³⁸¹ Adams started the pamphlet with simple advice:

Taking nature and experience for my guide, I have made the following sketch, which may be varied in any one particular an infinite number of ways, so as to accommodate it to the different genius, temper, principles, and even prejudices, of different people. A legislative, an executive, and a judicial power comprehend the whole of what is meant and understood by government. It is by balancing each of these powers against the other two, that the efforts in human nature towards tyranny can alone be checked and restrained, and any degree of freedom preserved in the constitution.³⁸²

Adam's model was fairly easy to follow and constitution makers in at least four states used its design as a working model.³⁸³ However, the Southern States had an additional issue. They had to confront the social question of slavery. The Southern States wrestled with the issues that the presence of slavery in their states posed for the creation of their new constitutions. Virginia was one of the first to confront one of those issues, namely, the major issue of equality. In June 1776, the Fifth Virginia Convention, that drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights and Virginia's first state constitution, confronted the fact that assertions of men's equal birth raised problems for a society whose economy was so dependent on slavery. As Jeff Broadwater writes in *George Mason Forgotten Founder*, "By the time the fifth Virginia Convention met most Americans had come to the conclusion that a written constitution could better protect the rights of citizens from government abuse than could an uncoded collection of case law, statutes, and amorphous tradition."³⁸⁴

³⁸⁰ John Adams and Charles Francis Adams, *The Works of John Adams: Autobiography, Discourses On Davila, Essays on the Constitution and Controversial Papers of the Revolution*, Kindle ed., vol. 2 (Franklin Classics, Oct. 11, 2018, 1851). Kindle loc. 45259.

³⁸¹ C. Bradley Thompson, "Adams on the American Revolution " (2024). <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/adams-on-the-american-revolution>.

³⁸² Adams and Adams, *The Works of John Adams: Autobiography, Discourses On Davila, Essays on the Constitution and Controversial Papers of the Revolution*, 2. Kindle loc. 45259.

³⁸³ Thompson, "Adams on the American Revolution." <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/adams-on-the-american-revolution>.

³⁸⁴ Jeff Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*, Kindle ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

The worm in the woodwork of all of this was slavery. The “peculiar institution” of slavery ingrained itself as the principal labor recruitment mechanism several decades after the first indentured servants and the first Africans arrived in Virginia. During the early decades of the 1600s, Africans were not necessarily enslaved in Virginia. Often, they had a term of servitude that was longer than that of British servants but still limited in time. The transition from a largely British workforce of indentured servants to a largely African slave workforce probably occurred in the late 1600s. The shift to slaves from indentured servants was probably due to a decline in the supply of potential servants from Britain. Also at the same time the price of indentured labor increased, the supply of slaves also increased. Direct shipment of slaves from Africa began in 1674, replacing the earlier and more costly transport via the West Indies. With the end of the Royal African Company's monopoly in 1698, the stage was set for major increases in supply as independent traders sought to meet the demand for labor. So, the growth of slavery in the colonies, especially in the Chesapeake, region including Virginia and Maryland, was, to a great extent, motivated by economic considerations.

George Mason, a prominent Virginia planter and a mentor to George Washington before the American revolution, took the lead in drafting Virginia's first state constitution and its famous Declaration of Rights, which influenced not only Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence but constitution writers ever since.³⁸⁵ In writing the Virginia Declaration of Rights, Mason drew on a variety of sources including the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right 1628, and the Bill of Rights of 1689.³⁸⁶ Mason's first draft of the Declaration of Rights combined a succinct statement of republican principles with a mix of constitutional doctrine and separate provisions designed to protect civil liberties. He began the Virginia Declaration in a manner that would later be copied by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. He wrote:

that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural Rights, of which they can not by any Compact deprive or divest their Posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life Liberty, with the Means of

EBSCOhost, <http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=203463&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, Book. 87.

³⁸⁵ Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*. Kindle loc. 65-73.

³⁸⁶ Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*. 87.

acquiring and possessing Property, and pursuing and obtaining Happiness and Safety.³⁸⁷

Broadwater captures the reaction of the Convention to Mason's words:

When the delegates, sitting as a committee of the whole, took up the declaration on 29 May, Robert Carter Nicholas objected to the first line of the first article. How could a slaveholding society declare that 'all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural rights'? Incorporating such language into the state's fundamental law, Nicholas worried, might have the effect of abolishing slavery or inviting a servile insurrection. The convention seemed to flounder on what became one of the fundamental dilemmas of the early republic. The convention shelved the declaration until 3 June, when Edmund Pendleton suggested that the offending clause be modified by adding the phrase, 'when they enter into a state of society.' It hardly resolved the paradox of African slavery in an ostensibly free republic; how after all could the exclusion of American blacks from civil society be justified?

After several days of intense debate, the Convention finally amended George Mason's draft so it said that "all men are by nature equally free and independent" and had "certain inherent rights" that they could not yield for posterity by any compact "when they enter into a state of society." The statement was not an entirely satisfactory compromise, but at least it freed the state of Virginia from an obligation to recognize and protect the inherent rights of slaves since slaves had never entered Virginia's society. Virginia society was made up exclusively of whites. Slaves had experienced what Orlando Patterson in his comparative study, *Slavery and Social Death*, called social death. They had suffered institutionalized marginality. The institution of slavery as practiced in the British American colonies and later in the Southern states had kidnapped African people and forced them to a lifetime of slavery. The ultimate cultural outcome of which was the loss of any sense of natality, or birthplace as well as any honor or power of self-determination. The slave was an external exile who was deprived of any and all claims of community.³⁸⁸

Prior to the Revolution Washington, like most eighteenth-century Americans, especially Virginians, took slavery very much for granted. Eighteenth-century society was composed of many degrees of inequality and unfreedom, and slavery seemed to be

³⁸⁷ Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*. 81.

³⁸⁸ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A comparative study, with a new preface*, Kindle ed. (Harvard University Press, 2018). 103-106.

merely the most base and degraded status in a hierarchy of dependencies. After all, slavery had existed for thousands of years without any substantial criticism, and this was still true in late seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century America.³⁸⁹ Important prominent Founders and Framers of the Constitution were themselves slaveholders. George Washington owned at any one time an estimated 250 slaves. Jefferson owned 200 slaves, Madison owned 100, and Monroe owned.³⁹⁰ Even Franklin owned slaves, although far fewer in number. He personally owned a slave couple, but in 1751 he decided to sell them because they were uneconomical. Nevertheless, he would later, at times, have a slave as a personal servant. When Franklin arrived as a colonial representative in London in 1757, he arrived with his son William and two slaves who were to serve as his household servants. Franklin had also in his past, before the Constitutional Convention, facilitated the buying and selling of slaves through ads in his newspaper.³⁹¹ Of all the well-known Founders who were major slaveholders Washington was the only one who actually ended up freeing his slaves. He was of course no fiery abolitionist, and in his lifetime, he never spoke out publicly against the institution of slavery.

Gordon Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, points out that,

On the eve of the Revolution all the colonies were implicated in African slavery in one way or another. Of the total American population of 1.5 million in 1760, at least one-fifth—over 300,000 men, women, and children—was enslaved. Washington's Virginia, the largest and richest colony, had the most slaves, more than 140,000, or 40 percent of its population.³⁹²

During the first half of the eighteenth-century Virginian planters, even the Founding Fathers, showed no guilt or defensiveness over their holding hundreds of slaves on their plantations. It was a cruel and brutal age, and the life of the lowly everywhere

³⁸⁹ Gordon S Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*, Kindle ed. (Penguin, 2006). 38.

³⁹⁰ "List of Presidents of the United States Who Owned Slaves," (last edited on 8 January 2025, at 08:17 (UTC). 2025). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_presidents_of_the_United_States_who_owned_slaves.

³⁹¹ Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*, Kindle ed. (Simon & Schuster, 2003). 151 and 176.

³⁹² Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. 38.

seemed cheap.³⁹³ The American Revolution changed all this. In the new republican society of equal citizens dedicated to liberty, slavery suddenly became an anomaly, a “peculiar institution” that, if it were to continue, now needed defending and justifying. It was no accident that the first antislavery society in the world was organized in Philadelphia in 1775. All the revolutionary leaders became aware of the excruciating contradiction between their revolution on behalf of liberty and American slavery.³⁹⁴ Thus was born the great American paradox and the birth of a slave republic.

Madison in Federalist No. 10 warned about factions and factionalism. He wrote, “Among numerous advantages promised by a well-constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction.”³⁹⁵ Unfortunately this tendency failed to stop the factionalism that developed between the North and the South. The two sections started to head in different directions on the social question of slavery. Several of the most influential Framers of the Constitution, who were Southerners, accepted the immorality of slavery. James Madison, himself, is an outstanding example. A Virginian slaveholder his entire life, he held slaves in bondage at the same time acknowledged the human impulse to freedom. Another famous founder who held the same world view was Thomas Jefferson. Thomas Jefferson, slaveholder and lead author of the Declaration of Independence, and the other Founders developed a story that they could tell themselves about slavery. The story they told themselves was that the contradiction at the heart of their worldview might someday be resolved: they expected that slavery would gradually be abolished as it gradually ceased to be economically viable.³⁹⁶

Unfortunately, this worldview was not universally shared, sectionalism began to raise its ugly head early on in the new republic. The North started to answer the social question of slavery in a different way than the South. The North began to be inspired by the Revolution and the natural rights thinking that it provoked. That thinking was

³⁹³ Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. 38.

³⁹⁴ Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. 38.

³⁹⁵ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, Kindle ed. (Amazon Global Publishers, 2022).

³⁹⁶ Noah Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*, Kindle ed. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021). 23.

expressed in the Declaration that all men are created equal with certain unalienable rights. This type of thinking produced four significant antislavery achievements in the North. The most dramatic was the abolition of slavery in the Northern states. The easiest victories for anti-slavery came in New England, where there were very few slaves to begin with. Vermont, for example, flatly abolished slavery without fanfare in its 1777 constitution and, less than a decade later, its legislature reinforced emancipation with a comprehensive implementation statute. In Massachusetts, an obscure series of court decisions effectively abolished slavery.³⁹⁷ During the early 1780s, several slaves won their freedom by arguing before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that the provision in the state's bill of rights that all men were born free and equal made slavery unlawful. Later, in the famous case of *Commonwealth v. Aves* (1836), Justice Lemuel Shaw ruled that those words in the 1780 bill of rights were alone sufficient to end slavery in Massachusetts, indeed, he stated that it would be difficult to find others "more precisely adapted to the abolition of negro slavery."³⁹⁸ By March 1780 Pennsylvania was ready to lead the way for the rest of the colonies by passing an act for the gradual abolition of slavery.³⁹⁹

War's end brought further gains to Blacks in America. To the slave soldier, who responded to the call and accepted the responsibilities of citizenship in the new republic before that citizenship was actually extended to him, it brought freedom and, in some instances, a precious land bounty. In New Jersey, slaves belonging to Tories were freed by an act of the legislature. Waged in the name of liberty, the war caused many Americans to give a hard look at their own domestic practices. Abolitionist societies multiplied, often under Quaker sponsorship; Northern states, following Pennsylvania's lead, took action to abolish or circumscribe the slave trade and slavery. Between 1780 and 1787, five northern states as well as the state-to-be of Vermont abolished slavery, not always immediately and some gradually over time, but all five northern states either

³⁹⁷ James Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution," *Cardozo Law Review* 17 (1996 1995). 2027

³⁹⁸ Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. 263-264

³⁹⁹ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (UNC Press Books, 2012). 30

destroyed or severely undermined the legitimacy of holding slaves as property.⁴⁰⁰ The lead that the North took in abolishing slavery, however, was not followed by the Southern state.

In the South, the wartime decline of staple crops— tobacco, indigo, and rice— decreased both the value of slaves and created a reluctance to grant any slave emancipation. Widespread emancipation was not in the immediate or even in the distant future for the majority of slaves.⁴⁰¹ At first it might seem puzzling, why with the decline of staple crops Southerners would not sell their slaves. The Southerners, given their experience with booms and busts, in the sale of agriculture commodity products, did not want to sell their slaves at the bottom of the market. Then the market changed with the invention of the Cotton Gin. Frederick Law Olmsted was not only the famous landscape architect he was also a famous traveler, chronicler, and writer who traveled to the Southern United States. In December 1852, he began the first of two trips through the slaveholding South that lasted twelve months. He was 30 years old. He went for three reasons: he loved to travel; he was interested in learning about unfamiliar forms of agriculture; and he wanted to find out firsthand what slavery was like.⁴⁰² He return and in 1861 published a book of his experiences called, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveler's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States 1853–1861*. In that book he captured the mentality of a plantation owner which I think is so critical to understanding the South and slavery. Olmsted interviewed and recorded his interview with a plantation owner he referred to as Mr. R. Olmsted wrote:

Buying a plantation,' were his words, whether a sugar or cotton plantation, in this country, is usually essentially a gambling operation. The capital invested in a sugar plantation of the size of mine ought not to be less than \$150,000. The purchaser pays down what he can and usually gives security for the payment of the balance in six annual instalments, with interest (10 per cent, per annum) from the date of the purchase. Success in sugar, as well as cotton planting, is dependent

⁴⁰⁰ Benjamin Quarles, Thad W. Tate, and Gary Nash, *The Negro in the American Revolution*, Kindle ed. (Chapel Hill, United States: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 1996). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4321893>. 5.

⁴⁰¹ Quarles, Tate, and Nash, *The Negro in the American Revolution*. xxix.

⁴⁰² John Stauffer, "Looking Southward," *Olmsted* Originally published circa 2008 by John Stauffer of Harvard University, 2024, <https://olmsted.org/looking-southward/>.

on so many circumstances, that it is as much trusting to luck as betting on a throw of dice.⁴⁰³

However, if the dice turned in your favor you could become wealthy. As Sven Beckert in *The Empire of Cotton* writes, “the peculiar combination of expropriated lands, slave labor, and the domination of a state that gave enormous latitude to slave owners over their labor was fabulously profitable for those positioned to embrace it: As early as 1807, a Mississippi cotton plantation was said to return 22.5 percent annually on its investment. Many thousands of planters moved along with the cotton frontier to capture some of these profits.”⁴⁰⁴ Tobacco production in the Chesapeake region of Virginia and Maryland, the region considered the Upper South, became less profitable after the Revolutionary War. But, as plantations proliferated and tobacco production expanded, high profits diminished to increasingly modest, sometimes paltry, returns between 1680 and 1729. Planters exhausted any technological improvements they could make in raising tobacco, and the most that could be achieved in packing it. Under certain circumstances slavery has some specific advantages. In the cultivation of crops like sugar, cotton and tobacco, where the cost of production is appreciably reduced on larger units, the slave owner, with his large-scale production and his organized slave gang, can make more profitable use of the land than the small farmer or peasant proprietor. For such staple crops, the profits can bear up under the greater expense of a large slave labor workforce. There is one large drawback to the plantation owner of slave labor, particularly when it is combined with a tobacco crop. Possibly, with the rare exception of George Washington, the rotation of crops and scientific farming were typically unknown in slave societies. As Jefferson wrote of Virginia, “we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old one.” The slave planter, in the picturesque nomenclature of the South, is a “land-killer.”⁴⁰⁵ The Virginia tobacco crop was already beginning to lose its profitability in the late eighteenth century, mostly as a result of soil exhaustion. Neither Madison nor Jefferson, both proprietors of large plantations, ever made much of a profit from the

⁴⁰³ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States 1853–1861*, Kindle ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1861; repr., 2017). 235.

⁴⁰⁴ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (Vintage, 2015). 117.

⁴⁰⁵ Eric Williams, Colin Palmer, and William A. Darity jr., *Capitalism and Slavery*, Kindle ed. (UNC Press Books, 2021). <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/82284>. 4.

agriculture they practiced with the labor of enslaved persons.⁴⁰⁶ Expansion to new land was believed to be the only answer.

This was further reinforced by a world changing technological breakthrough. In 1794 Eli Whitney patented the invention of the cotton gin. Feldman writes, “In a single technological stroke, the cotton gin made cotton growing into a highly profitable enterprise throughout the huge swath of the North American continent that would come to be called the Cotton Belt—profitable, that is, if the intensive labor of picking the cotton could be performed by slaves who were not paid wages for their work.”⁴⁰⁷ By 1830 fully 1 million people (or one in thirteen Americans) grew cotton in the United States—most of them slaves. The expansion of cotton production, as a result, reinvigorated slavery and led to an enormous shift of slave labor from the upper to the lower South.

Slave owners were encouraged by the growth of cotton farming to sell their slave property to the lower South. In the thirty years after the invention of the gin alone (between 1790 and 1820), a quarter million slaves were forcefully relocated, while between 1783 and the closing of the international slave trade in 1808, traders imported an estimated 170,000 slaves into the United States—or one-third of all slaves imported into North America since 1619. Altogether, the internal slave trade moved up to a million slaves forcefully sold to the Deep South, most to grow cotton.⁴⁰⁸ By 1820, a third of U.S. cotton was grown west of Georgia; by 1860, the proportion had grown to three-quarters. The upshot was that national westward expansion became a necessary condition to keep the cotton profits growing. As Beckert put it, it was a land rush driven by a “military-cotton complex” that constantly pushed the boundaries” of the United States, “seeking fresh lands to grow cotton.” In the middle of the nineteenth century, fully two-thirds of U.S. cotton was growing on land that had not been part of the country when the century began.⁴⁰⁹

Given the economic, political, and social environment, it was obvious that given its dependency on slaves the start of the process of gradual emancipation was unlikely.

⁴⁰⁶ Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*. 23.

⁴⁰⁷ Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*. 23-24.

⁴⁰⁸ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. 109.

⁴⁰⁹ Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*. 24.

The South, unlike the North, had become a slave society. Understanding this concept of a slave society is fundamental to understanding slavery in the South and that regions' refusal to recognize slaves as people and citizens with fundamental rights. Seymour Drescher in *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* made note of a critical observation for understanding the emergence and evolution of slavery. He stated that many historians have used two categories to understand and classify the development and evolution of the institution of slavery in various countries and settings. These two categories make a distinction between societies with slaves and slave societies. In slave societies, the dominant social groups depended far more upon the wealth generated by slave labor. Above all, in slave societies, slavery became the normative model of social relationships at the center of economic production. For Moses Finley, who initially articulated the distinctive characteristics of slave societies, it was the dual location of slaves, at the centers of both production and power, which provided the key to understanding the emergence and maintenance of a slave society.⁴¹⁰

Eugene Genovese, the Marxist historian, also used these same two classifications in his study of slaveholders and slaves in Southern society. Genovese describes two social systems. He classifies them as seigneurialism and capitalism - both are capitalistic systems each vying with each other for supremacy in the early republic. Genovese defined seigneurialism as the mode of production which is characterized by a dependent labor force that holds some claim to the means of production. This definition makes seigneurialism roughly equivalent to serfdom but not exactly so, for it includes regimes in which the lord's claims on the economic surplus produced by their land are met by payments in money or labor services. In this system laborers are bound to the landholder.

In contrast, capitalism, defined as another mode of production, is characterized by wage labor and the separation of the labor force from the means of production. In capitalism, the labor force is free and independent. These definitions constitute an initial approximation designed to establish broad categories and are not intended for purposes of rigid classification. They are merely definitions being used as tools for historical analysis.

⁴¹⁰ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, Kindle ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2009). 6.

The great value of this viewpoint lies in its focus on human relationships inherent in labor systems. As such, it should be understood to transcend mere economic categories and to define each mode of production as a social rather than as a narrowly defined economic system. This type of classification system, Genovese suggests that the relationship of master to slave is fundamentally different from that of the capitalist to wage worker and that this difference is decisive for an understanding of Southern ideology and class psychology as well as economics.

Utilizing Drescher's definition of a slave society and Genovese's classification system, Virginia was clearly a seigneurial slave society and perhaps the most powerful of the original colonies in terms of population and economic resources.⁴¹¹ The Founders of the Virginia colony and their revolutionary heirs, Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, were raised and lived in a slave society.

To further explain, James Huston in, *The British Gentry, the Southern Planter, and the Northern Family Farmer: Agriculture and Sectional Antagonism in North America*, states that when founding Virginia, the English migrants to North America brought with them their practices of farming, tastes for certain crops, use of animals—and ideals about society and economy.⁴¹² Lorena Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit: Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763*, states that “the Founders of the first permanent English settlement on the North American mainland hoped to establish a commercial outpost—a plantation—that would produce handsome profits from the mining of precious metals and iron, from trade with the local population, from the gathering or raising of exotic tropical crops, and from the production of naval stores, wine, silk, dyestuffs, and other staple commodities that Englishmen heretofore had to buy from other nations. She goes on to point out that what motivated Englishmen to emigrate, as Robert Wintour, a Catholic gentleman from Gloucestershire who intended to move to the new Maryland settlement, explained in a treatise of 1635, were honor, pleasure, and, above all, profit. Settlers could gain honor from strengthening the English

⁴¹¹ Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States, (Philadelphia: Childs and Swaine, 1791). 3.

⁴¹² James L Huston, *The British Gentry, the Southern Planter, and the Northern Family Farmer: Agriculture and Sectional Antagonism in North America* (LSU Press, 2015). 100.

state by becoming “Founders of a nation” and from converting the Indians to Christianity and civilized European ways. Pleasure would come from owning one’s own land, producing one’s own food in plenty, harvesting fish and game from one’s own estate, basking on cold days before a good fire made of one’s own wood in one’s own chamber or parlor, having servants to serve their master meat on Sundays, and enjoying the “friendly neighborhood” of other like-minded freeholders and gentlemen settled in the area. Such pleasures could be realized in the Chesapeake colonies, including Virginia.⁴¹³ Even though motivation is a strong force, what really happened in North America was determined by a combination of five factors: availability of land, availability of labor, climate and soil, the native population, and attitudes toward wealth.⁴¹⁴

Slavery on the North American mainland emerged first in the tidewater region of the Chesapeake colonies—Virginia, Maryland, and the northeast corner of North Carolina. In 1612, a breakthrough occurred, that was ultimately responsible for the preeminence of English culture, language, and laws in the American colonies. That year, a Virginian colonist named John Rolfe planted some seeds of *Nicotiana tabacum* that he had obtained from Trinidad.⁴¹⁵ Here rich land, a moderate climate, and, most important of all, abundant waterways (necessary for transportation) provided the perfect conditions for tobacco cultivation. Annual exports of tobacco (almost all from the Chesapeake colonies) surged from 20,000 pounds in 1619 to 38 million pounds in 1700, as growers sought to take advantage of the seemingly insatiable European demand and then stabilized at a fluctuating level of 25 to 60 million pounds in the eighteenth century.

Tobacco provided the basis for a highly commercial, increasingly prosperous, and almost totally rural society in the upper South. Throughout the colonial period, Virginia was the most populous of Britain’s mainland colonies; more importantly, Virginia and Maryland not only led all other mainland colonies in the value of their exports to Britain

⁴¹³ Lorena S. Walsh, *Motives of Honor, Pleasure, and Profit : Plantation Management in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1607-1763* (Chapel Hill, United States: Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture, 2010). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4321881>. 1.

⁴¹⁴ Huston, *The British Gentry, the Southern Planter, and the Northern Family Farmer: Agriculture and Sectional Antagonism in North America*. 100.

⁴¹⁵ Iain Gately, *Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization*, Kindle ed. (Open Road+ Grove/Atlantic, 2007). 70.

but together provided more than half the value of those exports.⁴¹⁶ The downside to tobacco planting is that it was extremely labor intensive and required what the colonists lacked most: manpower. Iain Gatley in, *Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization* explains how Jamestown solved its problem:

A rapid rise in immigration rates was largely offset by an average life expectancy of six months. In 1620, Jamestown's population was 900. By 1624 it was only 1275, despite having received 3500 immigrants in the interim. A solution appeared to Jamestown's labour problem in the form of a Dutch trading ship which dropped anchor in Chesapeake Bay in 1619. The colonists bought twenty 'negars,' i.e. African slaves, who were set to work in the tobacco fields. The Dutch traders recognized a promising market and returned in subsequent years with more slaves for sale, and slavery quickly became essential to the colony's economy. In this manner tobacco was responsible for the introduction of slavery to North America.⁴¹⁷

By choosing to produce one staple farm crop, tobacco, the South, starting with the Chesapeake region, started to embark on a very specific agricultural strategy. Using Marx concept of "economic determinism" the real foundation of any society is its economic structure. The legal, political, and social structures are built on an economic base. In Virginia, first, followed by the rest of the South, the economic base was built on slavery which logically, according to Marx, turned the South into a slave society.⁴¹⁸

Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence raised an elaborate charge against King George III. He charged him with the entire responsibility for the slave trade. Jefferson's charge foundered and was deleted from the final draft because the image of King George personally, "captivating and carrying" innocent Africans into slavery was patently unbelievable. Notably, the Declaration never calls for the abolition of slavery or freedom for the Africans who were captivated and carried away to Virginia.⁴¹⁹ In 1822 in a letter to Timothy Pickering, an American politician who was the third United States Secretary of State under Presidents George Washington and John Adams, in referring to Jefferson's deleted charge, Adams wrote, "I knew his Southern brethren would never suffer to pass in Congress."⁴²⁰ Part of the reason they would not approve it was his

⁴¹⁶ Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877*, Kindle ed., Hill and Wang, (2003). 42.

⁴¹⁷ Gatley, *Tobacco: A Cultural History of How an Exotic Plant Seduced Civilization*. 73.

⁴¹⁸ Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 32.

⁴¹⁹ Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. 173.

⁴²⁰ Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*. 173.

Southern brethren knew that slavery was an intricate part of the agricultural strategy that Virginia had chosen to pursue since its founding.

Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* wrote:

According to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depends upon one simple economic factor—'plenty of good land.' The British colonial possessions up to 1776, however, can broadly be divided into two types. The first is the self-sufficient and diversified economy of small farmers, 'mere earth-scratchers' living on a soil which challenging at best but a secure and certain investment. The second type is the colony which has farms or plantations for the production of staple articles on a large scale for an export market. In the first category fell the Northern colonies like Massachusetts; in the second category fell Virginia and the mainland tobacco colonies and the sugar islands of the Caribbean. In colonies of the second type land and capital were both useless unless the demand labor could be met. Labor, that is, must be constant and must work, or be made to work, in cooperation with the year round demands of a staple crop. In such colonies the rugged individualism of the Massachusetts farmer, practicing his intensive agriculture and wringing by the sweat of his brow meager returns from a grudging soil, must yield to the disciplined gang of the plantation owner practicing extensive agriculture and producing on a large scale.⁴²¹

The Virginia colonies were of the second type. Virginia's farm strategies were all wrapped up in the nature of farm economics and British mercantilism. The economic historian Ronald Seavoy explained that the economics of farming basically dictated two fundamental different strategies for farm production. The farmer has to choose between subsistence and commercial farming. Seavoy goes on to point out that the motivation for the subsistence peasant farmer and the commercial motivation of the yeoman or freeholder farmer is very different.⁴²² This critical choice made by farmers impacts the entire economy. Commercial food production is an absolute prerequisite for economic development. Ironically, industrialization is also dependent on commercialization of food because the rate at which non-agricultural employment can increase depends on the rate of growth of marketed food supplies.⁴²³

The British Empire recognized early on the importance of external trade in economic growth and developed a preference for relying on their colonies for trade rather

⁴²¹ Williams, Palmer, and Darity jr., *Capitalism and Slavery*. 2.

⁴²² Ronald E. Seavoy, *Subsistence & Economic Development* (Westport, United States: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2000). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3000133>. 2.

⁴²³ Seavoy, *Subsistence & Economic Development*. 2.

than foreign countries that they saw as competitors. The British developed mercantilism as a policy of the government. If the state could not free itself completely from trade with foreign nations, it sought to control that trade in its own interest as much as possible.

The English mercantilist policy aimed to gain for England a high degree of security or self-sufficiency, especially as regards food supply which was seen as essential for industrial development. Industrial development provided a degree of superiority in the production of materials for security and if need be, war. The end of this policy was to be achieved in large measure by means of effective control over the British Empire's external activities and resources. To achieve that control the mercantilists preferred colonial dependencies to independent foreign countries in seeking sources of supply.⁴²⁴ The American colonies initially existed and were founded by England for economic reasons. Richard Pares, who was considered an outstanding British historian, stated that "colonization and empire-building are above all economic acts undertaken for economic reasons and very seldom for any other."⁴²⁵ The object of colonization was to obtain goods which were complementary to the products of the mother country - raw materials of industry such as silk, cotton, and dyewoods, and articles of consumption which could not be grown at home were to be produced in the colonies.

Virginia implemented a commercial farm strategy based on the one crop – of tobacco. Bernard Bailyn in *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction*, explained the impact of choosing tobacco on labor:

We now know, for example, that it was the failure of southern English labor supply to provide the manpower needed in the expanding Chesapeake tobacco fields that led to the first large-scale importation of black slaves. All the correlations are consistent: the rising numbers of indentured servants through the 1650s, then the falling away in the sixties, as English population growth slackened, as fire and plague both reduced the available labor supply in London and created a greater demand there, and hence as real wages rose. All of this tended to consume what labor there was in domestic markets, while the imports of slaves in Virginia and Maryland rose significantly. Blacks did not outnumber whites in the labor force of the tobacco colonies until the 1680s, and thereafter, as

⁴²⁴ Curtis P. Nettels, "British Mercantilism and the Economic Development of the Thirteen Colonies," *The Journal of Economic History* 12, no. 2 (1952), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2113218>.

⁴²⁵ Richard Pares, "The Economic Factors in the History of the Empire," *The Economic History Review* 7, no. 2 (1937), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2590147>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2590147>. 119.

the scale of production continued to rise, the dependence on an almost endless supply of black laborers became permanent.⁴²⁶

Tobacco was the first crop to initiate commercial farming strategy and in turn contributed to the establishment of the first regional slave economy. However, it was not the only crop that was developed to fulfill commercial farming objectives. Peter Kolchin in his book, *American Slavery 1619-1877*, points out that:

a second regional slave economy emerged along the coast of the lower South, in South Carolina, Georgia, and the southeastern portion of North Carolina. First settled by the English half a century later than the Chesapeake, South Carolina had a small, struggling population until rice was introduced as a staple crop in the 1690s. Rice soon became as central to the economy of the lower South as tobacco was to that of the upper South; rice exports (almost all from South Carolina and, after the mid-eighteenth century, Georgia) soared from 12,000 pounds in 1698 to 18 million pounds in 1730 and 83 million in 1770. From the middle of the eighteenth century, Carolinians also began producing indigo (unlike rice, grown on dry land) for export, but rice remained the lower South's most important and profitable crop, and the economy, as in the Chesapeake colonies, remained oriented almost exclusively to commercial farming.⁴²⁷ Kolchin goes on to say that still a third slave society emerged in a part of the South not under British control: Louisiana. First settled by the French at the end of the seventeenth century, ceded to Spain in 1763, and briefly reacquired by Napoleon in 1800 before being sold to the United States in 1803, colonial Louisiana lacked the overwhelming staple-crop domination of Britain's plantation colonies. Settlers grew tobacco, indigo, and rice, but sugar did not become a major crop until the very end of the eighteenth century, and Louisiana's rulers valued the colony more for strategic than for economic reasons.⁴²⁸

Although Americans like to think that the United States was “conceived in liberty,” the reality is somewhat different. Almost from the beginning, America was heavily dependent on coerced labor, and by the early eighteenth century slavery, legal in all of British America, was the dominant labor system of the Southern colonies.⁴²⁹ The offshore Atlantic sugar complex notwithstanding, plantation slavery in the Americas and the slave trade that supported it had no precedents in Africa or Europe. Experience of the system

⁴²⁶ Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders*, Kindle ed. (Vintage, 2007). 370 and 381.

⁴²⁷ Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877*, Kindle ed. (Macmillan, 2003). 43.

⁴²⁸ Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. 45.

⁴²⁹ Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. 13.

was bound to affect more than the economic sphere.⁴³⁰ The early American Republic and the Atlantic world that it operated in, can be thought of conceived of as an immensely complex and regionally differentiated Euro-Afro-American labor system. When tobacco and sugar prices rose in European markets, production expanded in plantations 3,000 miles away, new areas of cultivation were opened up, and the need for plantation labor, both slave and free, increased accordingly.⁴³¹

Slavery generated undeniable contrasts between the North and South, and scholars have tended to divide into two major camps. One group has emphasized the causative role of deep-seated socioeconomic, political, and cultural differences between the sections. Advocates of this stance have described the antebellum North and South in terms of stark dichotomies: free labor versus slavery; nationalism versus states' rights; democracy versus aristocracy; capitalism versus agrarianism; bourgeois modernizers versus seigneurial planters; guilt-driven devotees of self-control versus hot-blooded paladins of tribal honor; latter-day Puritans versus latter-day Cavaliers; stolid Anglo-Saxons versus mercurial Celts.⁴³²

After the American Revolution the mindset of many Americans changed. In the new republican society of equal citizens dedicated to liberty, slavery suddenly became an anomaly, a “peculiar institution.”⁴³³ Sean Wilentz, *No Property in Man*, observed that:

‘Property in the persons and labors of other men, is a thing in itself absurd,’ Noah Webster’s American Minerva declared in 1796, ‘it is a violation of the law of nature and society—of course every constitutional declaration and every law, authorizing such violation, is ipso facto void.’ In fact, slavery involved stealing the slave’s personhood and then selling it—a double crime. ‘It is said by some, that the masters of slaves have a property in them,’ the abolitionist and Pennsylvania Abolition Society member Charles Crawford observed, ‘and that to deprive a man of his property is unjust.’ But ‘no man can have a property in stolen goods,’ Crawford charged, regardless of whether the goods were inherited

⁴³⁰ David Eltis, "Free and Coerced Transatlantic Migrations: Some Comparisons," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (1983), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1865402>, <http://www.jstor.org/ejproxy.drew.edu/stable/1865402>. 3.

⁴³¹ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, Kindle ed. (Harvard University Press, 2005). 92-94.

⁴³² James Tice Moore, "Of Cavaliers and Yankees: Frederick W. M. Holliday and the Sectional Crisis, 1845-1861," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 3 (1991), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4249231>. 351-352.

⁴³³ Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different*. 38.

or bought from another. ‘The common maxim,’ he concluded, that the receiver is as bad as the thief,’ extends to this as well as every other species of theft.’⁴³⁴

Before emancipation for most of American history the core property rights of slaveowners were accepted and enforced, built into economic behavior in ways that implied expectations of long-term viability for the institution. The one major exception was the abolition of slavery in the northern states after the Revolution, a break from a long history during which slavery not only existed in the North but also was accepted without significant opposition.⁴³⁵ This, however, was radically changing with the birth of abolition campaigns during and immediately after the American Revolutionary War. Slavery was emerging as a decisive institutional distinction between the North and the South and a challenge to the new republic. No matter how long the process took, the abolitionists were beginning to successfully challenge slavery’s bedrock principle, the legitimacy of property in man. The Rhode Island gradual abolition law of 1784 most pointedly of all the emancipation laws announced the abolitionist achievement to the world: The law began, “All Men are entitled to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness, holding Mankind in a State of Slavery, as private Property, which has gradually obtained by unrestrained Custom and the Permission of the Laws, is repugnant to this Principle, and subversive of the Happiness of Mankind.” The text of the new law, its words, were galling to northern slaveholders but more critically, they were truly alarming in the South.⁴³⁶ Abolition was coming, and it held a major threat to the South. Abolition would cause major social change in the United States in what James McPherson called, “The Second American Revolution.”⁴³⁷ The next chapter will present a detailed analysis of one of the most important social movements in American history, abolition.

⁴³⁴ Sean Wilentz, *No Property in Man*, Kindle ed. (Harvard University Press, 2018). 44-45.

⁴³⁵ Gavin Wright, *Slavery and American Economic Development* (LSU press, 2006). 234.

⁴³⁶ Wilentz, *No Property in Man*. 46.

⁴³⁷ McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution*. 3.

Chapter 7

Free at Last – The Abolition Movement

Freedom is and has always been America's root concern, a concern that found dramatic expression in the abolitionist movement. The abolition movement the most important and revolutionary reform movement in our country's past, forced the American people to come to grips with an anomaly that would not easily be put to rest—the existence of slavery in the land of the free.⁴³⁸ Slavery was a paradox in the American social, political, and economic fabric. It was a fundamental fault in the fabric of the “United” States that would eventually tear it apart. The battle over slavery had a tremendous cost in both lives and dollars. The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History staff estimate that the cost in human lives was a staggering 623,026 people. That compares to 291,557 lost in World War II.

There were two abiding legacies of the American Revolution: independence and slavery. These two founding antithetical principles established the central paradox at the very start of the republic.⁴³⁹ The entire history of liberal reform in the United States starts with a mandate contain in the Declaration of Independence to assure the unalienable Rights of all Americans to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is Jefferson's utopian vision of the ideal society that each generation of Americans should aspire to more closely attain.⁴⁴⁰ It eventually became known as the American Dream.

Slavery was established early on in the colonies. Virginia was the first colony to engage in the slave trade. During the century and a half between the arrival of twenty blacks in Jamestown in 1619 and the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776, slavery spread through all the English colonies. Colonists eager for material gain imported hundreds of thousands of Africans to toil in their fields. During the eighteenth century, slavery became entrenched as a pervasive—and in many colonies central—component of the social order. Slavery was clearly the dark underside of the American

⁴³⁸ Benjamin Quarles, *Black abolitionists* (1969). vii.

⁴³⁹ Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*. xvi.

⁴⁴⁰ Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*. 88-89.

dream.⁴⁴¹ In response to slavery an antislavery or abolition movement arose in an attempt to stop the rise and spread of slavery.

David Richards, a law professor at New York University, in his book, *Conscience and the Constitution: History, Theory and the Law of the Reconstruction Amendments*, described the abolitionists as a small, highly contentious, fissiparous, group of social critics who frequently criticized each other as energetically as they criticized slaveholders and the public in general. They disagreed amongst themselves on matters of both substance and strategy.⁴⁴² This internal dissention caused the abolition movement to ebb and flow in what Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, characterized as waves. Sinha divided the period of the Abolition Movement into two waves: The First Wave, from approximately 1721 to 1827, using a slave uprising led by Captain Tomba on an English slave ship, *Robert*, in 1721 as the start of the first wave; to the Second Wave, started by the growth of the Second Great Awakening, a Protestant religious revival during the late 18th to early 19th century and the publication of David Walker's *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* in 1829. I intend to further divide the Second Wave into a Third Wave, starting with the Kansas-Nebraska Act 1854. The Kansas-Nebraska Act effectively repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and this dissertation will contend, started the third wave that I am going to refer to as the Abolition War. Despite all the challenges and the difficulties, the Abolitionists encountered, it is critical to remember two points: The history of abolition begins with those who resisted slavery at its inception, and those enslaved brave souls who regarded the Abolition Movement as their own cause. Frederick Douglass in his biography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, wrote:

Every little while, I could overhear Master Hugh, or some of his company, speaking with much warmth and excitement about 'abolitionists.' Of who or what these were, I was totally ignorant. I found, however, that whatever they might be, they were most cordially hated and soundly abused by slaveholders, of every grade. I very soon discovered, too, that slavery was, in some sort, under

⁴⁴¹ Kolchin, *American Slavery: 1619-1877*. 14.

⁴⁴² David Richards, A. J. , *Conscience and the Constitution : History, Theory, and Law of the Reconstruction Amendments*, Princeton Legacy Library, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), Book.

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=790914&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s8998431>. 58.

consideration, whenever the abolitionists were alluded to. This made the term a very interesting one to me. If a slave, for instance, had made good his escape from slavery, it was generally alleged that he had been persuaded and assisted by the abolitionists. If, also, a slave killed his master—as was sometimes the case—or struck down his overseer, or set fire to his master’s dwelling, or committed any violence or crime, out of the common way, it was certain to be said, that such a crime was the legitimate fruits of the abolition movement. Hearing such charges often repeated, I, naturally enough, received the impression that abolition - whatever else it might be - could not be unfriendly to the slave, nor very friendly to the slaveholder. I therefore set about finding out, if possible, who and what the abolitionists were, and why they were so obnoxious to the slaveholders.⁴⁴³

The colonies started in many instances with backwoods settlers who prided themselves on their rugged lifestyle and self-reliance. Most of all this lifestyle carried over into their political philosophy. That philosophy valued individual freedom most of all.⁴⁴⁴ That’s why it is most appropriate to call those early abolitionists in the first wave “pioneers.”

Pioneers – The First Wave of the Abolition Movement – 1721 to 1827

As stated before, slavery made an early appearance in the colonies in 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia. Fortunately, early on in the history of the colonies, abolition also made its presence felt. When the Friends (Quakers) came to settle in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, they were familiar with the idea of slaveholding. Ships loaded with slaves began arriving in Philadelphia as early as 1684. Much like many of the colonies, newly acquired farmland needed to be planted, cultivated, and harvested. This, in turn, created a high demand for labor and the Quakers turned to slavery and the enslaved population grew rapidly. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, the Quaker or Society of Friends Philadelphia Yearly Meeting expressed concerns about the destabilizing influence of large slave imports and, as early as 1696, admonished Delaware Valley Quakers to be careful not to encourage the bringing in of any more Negroes. However, the meeting did not condemn slaveholding itself. Indeed, between 1681 and 1730, slaveholders and occasional slave traders occupied most of the positions of leadership within the Delaware

⁴⁴³ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (2003; New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003). 89.

⁴⁴⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, "Western State-Making in the Revolutionary Era I," *The American Historical Review* 1, no. 1 (1895), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1834017>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/1834017>. 13.

Valley's Quaker meetings.⁴⁴⁵ Against this background, individual Friends and small groups began denouncing slavery in the late seventeenth century. German and Dutch Mennonite converts to Quakerism from Germantown argued, "We shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are." The petition censured Quaker slaveholders for treating human beings like cattle. Early Quaker abolitionists were not just individual voices having no impact; at their meetings they inaugurated an ongoing discussion of the propriety of slaveholding: the Chester Quarterly Meeting took the lead in recommending action against slavery and the slave trade.⁴⁴⁶

Early quaker abolitionists in colonial America emerged from that level of colonial society which could identify with the miseries of slavery through their own experience as indentured servants. Starting with the Germantown protest of 1688, antislavery writers regularly alluded to slave resistance as evidence of the injustice of slavery. John Hepburn, a tailor from New Jersey who had immigrated to America as an indentured servant in 1684, wrote, "We disgrace ourselves [when] we condemn and punish our Negroes for seeking by Running away to get their freedom." Moreover, slaveholders were called "man stealers," who "whipped naked to common view" and "racked and burned to death" recalcitrant and rebellious slaves.⁴⁴⁷

Over the next few decades Hepburn was joined by other writers with working class backgrounds such as Benjamin Lay, the hunchbacked, vegetarian Quaker who begged forgiveness at the end of his abolitionist book because "it was written by one that was a poor common Sailor, and an Illiterate Man."⁴⁴⁸ An abolitionist zealot, Lay, carried his activism into print in 1738 with one of the world's first books to demand the abolition of slavery: *All Slave-Keepers That Keep the innocent in Bondage, Apostates*.

⁴⁴⁵ Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank, *Quakers and Abolition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), Book.
<http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=816321&site=eds-live&scope=site>. 2.

⁴⁴⁶ Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, Kindle ed. (Yale University Press, 2016). 29.

⁴⁴⁷ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 37.

⁴⁴⁸ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 30.

Manisha Sinha in *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, wrote that Lay was:

Sickened by the brutalities of the African slave trade and slavery he had witnessed in Barbados; Lay kidnapped the son of a Quaker slaveholder to acquaint him with the grief of Africans who were torn apart from their families. He disrupted a Quaker meeting by splattering the Bible with pokeberry juice, representing the blood of slaves. Calling slavery a vile and hellish practice and slaveholders, especially slave-owning ministers, a 'Parcel of Hypocrites, and Deceivers . . . under the greatest appearance and Pretensions to Religion and Sanctity that ever was in the World,' he charged that those who consumed sugar, molasses, and rum literally consumed the blood and flesh of slaves. Images of slaves mangled by punishment, bent from work, starving and naked dotted his book.⁴⁴⁹

Marcus Rediker wrote in: *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist*, "all enslaved people were innocent, Benjamin believed, so he called for all to be emancipated, immediately and unconditionally, with no compensation to slave owners. Slave keepers had transgressed the core beliefs of Quakerism in particular and Christianity in general: they should be cast out of the church. ...No one had ever taken such a militant, uncompromising, universal stand against slavery in print or in action."⁴⁵⁰

Benjamin Lay was an extraordinary individual who was one of the first social movement leaders who was class-conscious, gender-conscious, race-conscious, environmentally conscious, vegetarian radical who very publicly and bravely advocated positions that were not at the time popular or widely accepted. He was not only one of the first to publish anti-slavery abolitionists tracts but advocated taking non-violent action against slavery by urging his fellow Quakers and colonists to boycott commodity sugar which was produced with the blood and suffering of its producers. He stated, "sugar was made with blood."⁴⁵¹

Benjamin Lay was clearly an innovator who pioneered tactics such as public published criticism of slavery and slave holders and the boycott of slave produced goods and commodities. These two tactics, anti-slavery abolitionist tracts and boycotting slave

⁴⁴⁹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 39.

⁴⁵⁰ Marcus Rediker, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist*, Kindle ed. (Verso Books, 2017). 3.

⁴⁵¹ Rediker, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf Who Became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist*. 115.

produced good were used against slavery up until emancipation itself and are still used by social movement protests today.

What is also worthy of note is that Lay did this all without the approval of the Quaker community or its leadership. This may be due in part to the fact that Quaker leaders owned slaves but also were also heavily involved in commerce and trading. Quaker abolitionists not only voiced their opposition to slavery in writing they also broadened their criticism to slave owning and trading under a broader critique of warfare, wealth making, and commerce. John Hepburn ridiculed slave owners and merchants as “fine powdered Periwigs, and great bunched Coats” with wives who “paint their Faces, and Puff, and powder their Hair,” growing fat on the cruelties inflicted on slaves. Ralph Sandiford, used the Gospel as his source of authority, according to Sandiford, The Gospel, “excepts not nor despises any for their complexions.” Sandiford was a Quaker shopkeeper, but he too excoriated ill-gotten wealth. Sandiford also published a work attacking slavery, “A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times” which was published by Benjamin Franklin. In it Sandiford asked:

What greater injustice can be acted, than to rob a man of his liberty, which is more valuable than life, and especially after such a manner as this, to take a man from his native country, his parents and brethren, and other natural enjoyments...

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Lay was convinced that Quaker elites had hurried Sandiford to an early grave because of their ostracism of him. Lay, who republished Burling’s tract, renounced all worldly materials, especially those made by slave labor, and thought no good ever came from the pursuit of “Riches.” Hepburn argued, “Riches, gotten by wronging the Labourer, is cursed.” Quaker abolitionists urged boycotts of goods made through the exploitation of slaves.⁴⁵³

Over the next few decades with the exception of Elihu Coleman, a Quaker in Nantucket who managed to get approval from his meeting for the publication of his antislavery essay, none of the early Quaker abolitionists had their writings officially

⁴⁵² Brian Temple, *Philadelphia Quakers and the Antislavery Movement*, Kindle ed. (McFarland, 2014). Loc. 517.

⁴⁵³ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 76.

vetted or approved by Quaker meetings, and several abolitionists, particularly in the Philadelphia area, were formally denounced.

An important shift came in 1752, when a number of future abolitionists, including Anthony Benezet, were appointed to Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's Overseers of the Press.¹¹ Early in 1754, the Overseers approved and helped circulate John Woolman's antislavery essay "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes," and later that year, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting issued a corporate statement, "*An Epistle of Caution and Advice concerning the Buying and Keeping of Slaves*," which directed Quakers to avoid "being in any respect concerned in promoting the bondage" of "Negroes and other slaves." The *Epistle of Caution and Advice* marshalled strong arguments against slaveholding but did not call on masters to free their slaves, and it had little disciplinary force.⁴⁵⁴

Additionally, in 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting formally condemned slaveholding, although the meeting did not begin automatically disowning masters until 1776. The year 1758 was pivotal for Quaker antislavery. The London Yearly Meeting issued a strongly worded statement against participation in the Atlantic slave trade, admonishing Friends to "keep their hands clear of this unrighteous gain of oppression."⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless there is no doubt that, at least in the colony's early beginnings Quakers were the principle slaveholders in Pennsylvania, and probably owned more slaves than any other people in the colony.⁴⁵⁶ In the Philadelphia area, small Quaker committees visited slaveholders and struggled to convince them to free their slaves, but even at the end of the 1750s, seventy percent of Quaker masters in Pennsylvania refused to free their slaves. At one time even William Penn owned slaves.⁴⁵⁷ One of the obstacles to immediate emancipation was the Quaker reformers' strong belief that there were ongoing, reciprocal obligations between the former masters and slaves. Masters were

⁴⁵⁴ Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*. 3.

⁴⁵⁵ Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*. 3.

⁴⁵⁶ Edward Raymond Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 36, no. 2 (1912), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/20085586>. 130.

⁴⁵⁷ "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery - March 1, 1780," Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission, 2015, accessed 3/12/2025, 2025, <https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/documents/1776-1865/abolition-slavery.html> (This is a static, archived version of the PHMC Our Documentary Heritage website which will not be updated. It is a snapshot of the website with minor modifications as it appeared on August 26, 2015.).

obligated for the care and welfare of their slaves and in return slaves were obligated to service. Before a slave could gain complete freedom from their Quaker masters, they were obligated into agreeing to long labor contracts binding them to their Quaker. These contracts often lasted for years. Quaker reformers such as Anthony Benezet, Joshua Evans, and John Woolman emphasized that before former slaves could be fully integrated into free society on a basis of equality, the Quakers owed them support, education, and perhaps (Woolman suggested) compensation for the injuries they had suffered and the uncompensated labor they had performed as slaves.⁴⁵⁸ This compensation was referred to as “freedom dues” which were a colonial custom that had marked the end of servitude. When requested by former slaves, however, this custom was frequently ignored or fell on deaf ears.⁴⁵⁹

The Quakers struggled to gradually and peacefully disconnect themselves from slavery, but their efforts had also had an impact on the wider American debate on slavery in the Revolutionary Era.⁴⁶⁰ In 1774 the Philadelphia Meeting resolved that Friends who held negroes beyond the age at which white apprentices were discharged, should be treated as disorderly persons. The work of abolition among the Quakers was practically completed in 1776, when the resolution passed that those who persisted in holding slaves should be disowned. Since in Meetings questions were rarely decided except by almost unanimous vote, it was clear that by that year the practice of holding slaves was nearly extinct.⁴⁶¹ The outbreak of the Revolutionary War, however, brought all the citizens of Pennsylvania together in their struggle for freedom and independence. At the beginning of the war some of the citizens of Philadelphia petitioned the Legislature to pass a law making manumission of slaves easier.⁴⁶² Many now began to believe that all slaves ought to be free. According to an old manuscript a slave at this time was set free because "all

⁴⁵⁸ Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*. 3-4.

⁴⁵⁹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 76.

⁴⁶⁰ Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*. 4.

⁴⁶¹ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 135.

⁴⁶² Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 136.

mankind have an Equal Natural & Just right to Liberty."⁴⁶³ The first abolition society was formed in Pennsylvania.⁴⁶⁴

On April 14, 1775, a number of men met at the Sun Tavern in Philadelphia and adopted a constitution for what they called "The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, unlawfully held in Bondage."⁴⁶⁵ Most of its supporters in the early days were the Friends. Seventeen of the first 24 members who attended the initial meetings were Quakers. "A majority of its members always belonged to that denomination," says the first society historian. John Baldwin was chosen president. The turmoil and upheaval which resulted from the Revolutionary War caused the Society to almost immediately suspend its meetings. In 1784 the Society once again resumed its activities.⁴⁶⁶ In 1787 a new constitution was adopted, the name was changed, and Benjamin Franklin was elected president. Two years later the State legislature granted it a charter of incorporation. The official title of the organization at its official incorporation was "The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race." The work of the society has been continuous right up until the present day. It is now called the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.⁴⁶⁷

Emancipating people who had been enslaved their whole life presented many challenges to the newly emancipated and to the society of which they were cast. The Quakers who worked to free Black people recognized this. Edward R. Turner in "The First Abolition Society in the United States," a journal article in 1912, wrote that "when the negro was free the Society took him into care, helped him find employment, furnished him with letters of recommendation, and saw that his employer did not take advantage of him."⁴⁶⁸ The most successful and the most remarkable work of the Society was the help and assistance Quakers gave to the newly freed. Turner wrote that "Help was given in

⁴⁶³ Edward Raymond Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 36, no. 1 (1912), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/20085581>. 136.

⁴⁶⁴ Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States." 92.

⁴⁶⁵ Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States." 94.

⁴⁶⁶ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 94.

⁴⁶⁷ Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States." 94.

⁴⁶⁸ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 95-96.

many different ways. Sometimes the Society paid a master to give liberty to his slave. Sometimes the master was assured that he would not be held chargeable, as the law ordained, in case the negro manumitted failed to support himself.⁴⁶⁹ Then when the negro was free the Society took him into care, helped him to find employment, furnished him with letters of recommendation, and saw that his employer did not take advantage of him.”⁴⁷⁰ Turner went on to write:

In 1789 the Society appointed four committees to assist negroes in solving the social and economic problems which confronted them. It opened schools to teach children and night schools for adults, practically the first and certainly the best schools which these negroes ever had. As the rising prejudice against negroes, which increased so strikingly after 1800, became more and more apparent, the abolitionists did their utmost to appease the white people, and teach the blacks to behave in such a manner as to win respect. When the authorities threatened to pass discriminatory legislation, they opposed it earnestly and successfully. In 1801 the State Senate proposed to emancipate the remaining slaves in the Commonwealth, and pay the masters by levying a special tax upon the negroes who were free. At once the Society made a vigorous protest. Why tax those least able to pay? In carrying on all this work the members collected information and statistics which are the best the historian is now able to obtain.⁴⁷¹

The issue of the abolition of slavery is always complex.⁴⁷² The emancipation of slaves poses the first and foremost question of freedom and how to grant freedom to enslaved people. At least one hundred thousand Africans were enslaved, purchased, and brought on board ships yearly from the coast of Africa.” The sheer number of slaves present in American society was an enormous challenge to emancipation.

The emancipation of slaves can be accomplished in a number of ways. One is individual manumission, some of which occurred in the United States but not nearly enough to threaten the system’s viability.⁴⁷³ Manumission typically frees slaves on an individual basis and unless it applies to all slaves it does not abolish the institution of slavery. The second form of emancipation is emancipation by legal means. This can apply to an individual slave or a class of similarly enslaved people and can take place at

⁴⁶⁹ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 95.

⁴⁷⁰ Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States." 95-96.

⁴⁷¹ Turner, "The First Abolition Society in the United States." 95-96.

⁴⁷² David Brion Davis, "Reflections on Abolitionism and Ideological Hegemony," in *The Antislavery Debate : Capitalism and Abolitionism As a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). 172.

⁴⁷³ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 23.

the municipal, state or national court level. However, the United States Constitution from its initially framing was almost universally understood to bar national interference with slavery in the states. Slavery was a product of state law and the law and as such was subject to change by state legislatures or state courts, as happened in the northern states after the American Revolution. Legal emancipation is feasible in “societies with slaves,” to borrow the formulation of historian Ira Berlin (and before him, Moses I. Finley), where slavery is one element of the social and economic order, not its foundation, and owners lack the political power to prevent the passage of abolition laws.⁴⁷⁴ This, however, is very different in “slave societies,” where slavery is central to the economy and slaveowners therefore more powerful, “the persons who make all the laws...” as Adam Smith put it, “are persons who have slaves themselves.” In the colonies and afterward in the United States any change to the laws on slavery faced the Old South, which was the largest, most powerful slave society in modern history.

A third mode of attacking slavery is military emancipation. War destabilizes; it strips away constitutional protections. Contending sides make slavery a military target to weaken their opponents. Slaves of the enemy are urged to run away and are frequently given shelter and potential freedom in enemy territory. The enemy can also enlist slaves as soldiers in their armies, usually promising them freedom.⁴⁷⁵ These former slaves are a very threatening form of soldier to their former masters. They are highly motivated because victory helps to ensure their freedom and a possible a better future for them and their families. Emancipated slaves also typically know the enemy territory and provide valuable information and guidance to attacking forces.⁴⁷⁶

Military emancipation has happened many times in wars in the Western Hemisphere. The British used this mode of emancipation fairly effectively both before and during the American Revolution. Before the formal Declaration of Independence, the patriot cause actively embraced a conservative approach to revolution. When some of the more ardent American revolutionaries embraced the radical implications of the Declaration of Independence and its meaning - the end of the property qualification to

⁴⁷⁴ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 23.

⁴⁷⁵ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 24.

⁴⁷⁶ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 23-24.

vote, the expansion of women's rights, a gradual emancipation program to end slavery—a chorus of voices, led by John Adams, insisted that such drastic changes must be deferred. The inconvenient truth was that any attempt to implement the full meaning of The Cause would have undermined the unity necessary to win the war and thereby rendered American independence impossible.⁴⁷⁷ The Cause, as the American patriots called it ignored the Women's Cause and the Slave's cause for sake of unity. We can and should argue about the wisdom of that deferral strategy, but it became apparent in November 1775 that there were risks to this strategy.

During the American Revolution, for instance, thousands of slaves gained their freedom by escaping to British lines. Early on John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, royal governor of the British colony of Virginia knew the potential of enslaved people as an “internal enemy” to the patriot cause.⁴⁷⁸ In 1772, Dunmore alerted his superiors that Virginians, “with great reason, trembled” because their slaves were “ready to join the first that would encourage them to revenge themselves, by which means a conquest of this Country would inevitably be effected in a very Short time.”⁴⁷⁹ On November 7, 1775, Dunmore, issued a proclamation that shook the colony to its very foundation and could not help but impact some of the leading Founding Fathers such as Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. All of these men were Virginia slaveholders. Dunmore by way of a proclamation declared martial law and promised freedom for indenture servants, “negroes” or others who joined the British Army. Outraged by Dunmore's conduct, the Virginia delegates joined the New Englanders in urging a vigorous war to oust the British troops from the colonies.⁴⁸⁰

Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*, relates the results of Dunmore's proclamation:

By early 1776, about 800 enslaved men, and an equal number of women and children, flocked to Dunmore's encampments and ships. If Dunmore wanted men as soldiers, he also had to receive their families, although feeding and sheltering them all strained his resources. Dunmore organized the men into a special unit,

⁴⁷⁷ Ellis, *The Cause: The American Revolution and Its Discontents, 1773-1783*. xii.

⁴⁷⁸ Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (WW Norton & Company, 2013). 24-25.

⁴⁷⁹ Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. 24-25.

⁴⁸⁰ Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. 24.

the ‘Ethiopian Regiment,’ commanded by white officers, for he was no racial egalitarian. But American slaves sought to make him one, spreading far and wide his renown as a supposed liberator. In Pennsylvania, a master posted an advertisement seeking the return of a runaway: ‘As Negroes in general think that Lord Dunmore is contending for their liberty it is not improbable that said Negroe is on his march to join his Lordship’s own black regiment.’⁴⁸¹

Many slaves could not wait for benevolent masters and mistresses to set them free. From northern New England to the Georgia-Florida border, previous strategies to obtain freedom—petitioning legislatures for a general emancipation, bringing individual freedom suits before local courts, and taking flight in the hope of successfully posing as free men and women—now expanded to a fourth highly risky but less complicated option: offering the British their services in exchange for freedom and inducing the British to issue a general proclamation that would provide an opportunity for masses of slaves to burst their shackles.⁴⁸²

Dunmore’s proclamation had thrown into sharp relief the contradiction between the patriots’ rhetoric of freedom and the reality of an American slave-based economy, this forthright challenge to slavery made abolition a topic of wide discussion.⁴⁸³ But these events, while freeing many slaves, did not destroy slavery, which survived and expanded in the early republic. Moreover, slaves freed through military action sometimes suffered re-enslavement when the fortunes of war shifted.⁴⁸⁴ The idea of a potential internal enemy and imbeds the concept in the longer history of slavery and Virginia. Most importantly, during the early nineteenth century, Virginians thought of blacks in two radically different ways. Masters often felt secure with the slaves that they owned and were well known to them. But when slaveholders thought of all slaves and the institution of slavery, they imagined, what the historian Alan Taylor calls a “dreaded internal enemy” who might, at any moment, rebel in a midnight massacre to butcher white men, women, and children in their beds. Virginians dwelled on lurid reports of

⁴⁸¹ Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. 25.

⁴⁸² Gary B Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: the Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*, Kindle ed. (Penguin, 2006). loc. 3244.

⁴⁸³ Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: the Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America*. loc. 3236.

⁴⁸⁴ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 23-24.

massacres associated with the massive slave revolt in Saint-Domingue, a French West Indian colony that became the republic of Haiti in 1804.⁴⁸⁵

Emancipation by legal means is typically more effective, secure, and long lasting than emancipation by military means. By 1778 there was a widespread sentiment favoring legislative abolition and emancipation by legal means. In 1779 a bill was drafted in Pennsylvania for the gradual abolition of slavery.⁴⁸⁶ Public feeling and support became thoroughly aroused favoring abolition. Several prominent revolutionaries such as Benjamin Rush, Thomas Paine, and Richard Wells noted the hypocrisy of Americans "who condemned the tyranny of England's colonial policies...while holding one-fifth of the colonial population in chains."⁴⁸⁷ Petitions were sent to the Legislature, and several letters were published in the *Pennsylvania Packet*. By 1780 strong support for abolition legislation was widespread in Pennsylvania.⁴⁸⁸ Anthony Benezet, the Quaker abolitionist, visited every member of the Legislature to ask for their support for the act. The Pennsylvania Assembly on March 1, 1780, passed "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery." It was the first such legislative enactment in America. Drafted by a committee of Revolutionary Pennsylvania's new political leaders and probably guided through the Assembly by George Bryan, the act begins with an expression of gratitude for deliverance from the "tyranny of Great Britain" and for the opportunity to "extend a portion of that freedom to others." It specified that "every Negro and Mulatto child born within the State after the passing of the Act (1780) would be free upon reaching age twenty-eight. When released from slavery, they were to receive the same freedom dues and other privileges "such as tools of their trade," as servants bound by indenture for four years. People currently enslaved were to be registered and those not recorded were to be free. The bill passed by a vote of 34 to 21.⁴⁸⁹

Despite such resistance to change, slavery in Pennsylvania declined after the passage of the act. Increasingly, as slavery's inconsistency with religious beliefs and

⁴⁸⁵ Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*. 13.

⁴⁸⁶ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 136.

⁴⁸⁷ "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery - March 1, 1780."

<https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/documents/1776-1865/abolition-slavery.html>

⁴⁸⁸ Turner, "The Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania." 136-137.

⁴⁸⁹ "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery - March 1, 1780."

<https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/documents/1776-1865/abolition-slavery.html>

philosophical principles became apparent owners freed their slaves during their lifetimes, while others provided for freedom in their wills. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society purchased a significant number of slaves and promptly set them free. Furthermore, some slaves did not wait for such humanitarianism or for the Act to set them free but escaped from bondage. Between 1790 and 1800, the number of slaves dropped from 3,737 to 1,706 and by 1810 to 795. In 1840, there still were 64 slaves in the state, but by 1850 there were none. The act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania had achieved its sponsors' objectives - very gradually.⁴⁹⁰

Pennsylvania led the way for the Northern colonies, however, the destruction of the institution of slavery even in the North was slow and very gradual. In fact, though the number of slaves in the North declined after the Revolutionary War, slavery continued to exist there well into the nineteenth century. Between 1777 and 1804, all of the states north of Maryland did take steps that would eventually doom slavery within their borders. But only in Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire were slaves emancipated relatively swiftly, and even in these states, abolition measures were ambiguous and their implementation inconsistent. In Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, state legislatures adopted gradual abolition legislation, which dismantled slavery over a period of half a century.⁴⁹¹ The Republic of Vermont had limited slavery in 1777, while it was still independent, before it joined the United States as the 14th state in 1791. Subsequently, five Northern states adopted policies to at least gradually abolish slavery: As stated before, Pennsylvania was first in 1780, then New Hampshire and Massachusetts in 1783, and Connecticut and Rhode Island in 1784. These state jurisdictions thus enacted the first abolition laws in the Atlantic World. Finally, by 1804, all the northern states, including New York in 1799 and New Jersey in 1804, had abolished slavery or set measures in place to gradually abolish it. As Brycchan Carey, *Quakers and Abolition*, points out, "simply put, the Quakers inspired the project of gradual emancipation."⁴⁹²

⁴⁹⁰ "An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery - March 1, 1780."

⁴⁹¹ David Menschel, "Abolition without Deliverance: The Law of Connecticut Slavery 1784-1848," *The Yale Law Journal* 111, no. 1 (2001), <https://doi.org/10.2307/797518>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/797518>. 183-184.

⁴⁹² Carey and Plank, *Quakers and Abolition*. 4.

It is critical to note, however, that this abolition fervor took place based on America's most elemental principles of natural rights of freedom and equality as contained in The Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was based on Jefferson's dream of "a perfect world, at last bereft of kings, priests, and even government itself. In this never-never land, free individuals interact harmoniously, all forms of political coercion are unnecessary because they have been voluntarily internalized, people pursue their own different versions of happiness without colliding, and some semblance of social equality reigns supreme."⁴⁹³ This vision however was not the real world.

The American Revolution marked a turning point in many ways in the start of the abolition movement. The Revolution produced four significant antislavery achievements that contributed to the abolition movement. The first and most significant was the abolition of slavery in the northern states. The second was the manumission of tens of thousands of individual slaves. St. George Tucker estimated that there were 2000 free blacks in Virginia when the state legalized manumissions in 1782; by 1790 there were 12,000. Between 1755 and 1790 the number of free blacks in Maryland more than tripled. By the time the first federal census was taken in 1790 there were more free blacks in the South than there were in the North.⁴⁹⁴

The relative weakness of the slave economy in the upper South helped make such manumissions possible, but not inevitable. Virtually all masters who freed their slaves cited the inconsistency between the ownership of slaves and the Revolutionary ideals of universal freedom. Still others were motivated by a Christian belief in the spiritual equality of all human beings. But whatever the motives of individual owners, the manumission of thousands of slaves established the nucleus of a large and significant free black community in the upper South.

The third, Revolutionary achievement was the nearly universal withdrawal from the Atlantic slave trade. It was accomplished in several different ways because at that

⁴⁹³ Joseph J Ellis, *Revolutionary Summer: The Birth of American Independence*, Kindle ed. (Vintage, 2014). 78.

⁴⁹⁴ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." loc. 2027-2028.

time the regulation of commerce was primarily a state matter, and each state was therefore free to approach the slave trade differently.

Before the Revolution the most popular legal device for terminating the slave trade was the imposition of prohibitive duties on slave imports. In 1755, Virginia added a ten percent surtax to existing duties on slaves brought into the colony, but the Board of Trade in London disallowed the law. In 1757 the colonial legislature reinstituted the ten percent duty and increased it to twenty percent in 1759. Two years later, Pennsylvania imposed a prohibitive duty of ten pounds for every slave imported into the colony.²⁶ New Jersey followed suit two years later, and by the time the colonies declared their independence, the legislatures in South Carolina and Maryland had also attempted to restrict the slave trade by imposing prohibitive import duties. In most cases, however, the Board of Trade in London or royal governors acting under orders from the crown disallowed such tariffs. This was probably because the British themselves, through the Royal African Company carried “great quantities of Negroes, for the supply of this *Majesty’s American Plantations* to the great advantage of the Inhabitants ...”⁴⁹⁵ After all, before the American Revolution British investors, including John Locke himself, were involved in investments in the Royal African Company and the slave trade and therefore directly profited from the trade and did not want anything to interfere with those profits. After 1776 and the Declaration of Independence that all changed and, Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina imposed prohibitive import duties, effectively stifling the international slave trade in those states.⁴⁹⁶ The upper south most likely had slaves enough and with the international slave trade squeezed out by prohibitive duties Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina would be able to get rid of any surplus human property they had through a thriving and growing domestic slave trade.⁴⁹⁷

After 1776 and the Declaration of Independence the new nation faced many critical questions and issues in its formation. In “The Dimensions of an ‘Empire for Liberty’: Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825,” Reginald Horsman points out that, “The question of size and republican government was a persistent theme in the first

⁴⁹⁵ Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*. 72 and 77.

⁴⁹⁶ Oakes, “The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution.” loc. 2028-2029.

⁴⁹⁷ Sinha, *The Slave’s Cause: A History of Abolition*. 125.

decades of the new American government, and was continued, at times in a somewhat different form throughout the nineteenth century.”⁴⁹⁸ Expansion of the republic was clearly a part of the Founders vision for America. It was pointed out by Alexander Hamilton and others that Montesquieu himself had maintained that a "confederated republic" could solve some of the problems of size. More importantly, some of the most respected English theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, often influenced by Machiavelli, had written of the desirability of an expanding republic. James Harrington had wanted the English Commonwealth to pursue a career of world expansion. Harrington argued that his "Commonwealth for increase" would improve the condition of the world. "If your liberty be not a root that grows, " he wrote, "it will be a branch that withers.”⁴⁹⁹

Oceana (1656) was Harrington’s vision of an ideal constitution promulgated to facilitate the development and expansion of the English republic. It was often cited by the revolutionary leaders.⁵⁰⁰ It was cited not because of its utopian vision of government but because, as J.G.A. Pocock points out:

What is being idealized is not a commonwealth isolated from the history of mankind, but the immediate present or imminent future which Harrington presents England as occupying in history as he understands it. *Oceana* is not a utopia so much as an *occasione*, a moment of revolutionary opportunity at which old historical forms have destroyed themselves and there is a chance to construct new forms immune from the contingencies of history (known as *fortuna*).⁵⁰¹

Unfortunately, the issue of slavery, as it did to so many other issues in the early formation of the government reared its ugly head in the issue of western expansion and became a major source of deep-seated resentment and contention. Early in the life of the Continental Congress the expansion of slavery to the Western Territories became an issue. “The Western people are already calling out for slaves for their new lands” George

⁴⁹⁸ Reginald Horsman, "The Dimensions of an "Empire for Liberty": Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825," *Journal of the Early Republic* 9, no. 1 (1989), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3123522>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/3123522>.

⁴⁹⁹ Horsman, "The Dimensions of an "Empire for Liberty": Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825." 2.

⁵⁰⁰ Horsman, "The Dimensions of an "Empire for Liberty": Expansion and Republicanism, 1775-1825." 2.

⁵⁰¹ James Harrington and J. G. A. Pocock, *Harrington: 'The Commonwealth of Oceana' and 'A System of Politics'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), EBSCOhost, <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=4d61bcd3-3802-3247-ac25-d7906e981422>. xvii

Mason told the Constitutional Convention in August.⁵⁰² Various other members of Congress opposed that attempt to introduce slavery and tried to restrict the expansion of slavery into the western territories. Their proposals were unsuccessful until 1787 when an antislavery clause was attached to the Northwest Ordinance at the last minute and was passed by Congress without debate. The Northwest Ordinance legislated against slavery in that part of the West where it did not exist and left it alone in the South where it already was.⁵⁰³ The Ordinance was poorly framed and ambiguously worded, the Ordinance did not definitively end slavery in the Old Northwest. It did, however, establish a major precedent for congressional restraint on the expansion of slavery. The Northwest Ordinance was the last, and final of the Revolution's antislavery achievements.⁵⁰⁴

All of these antislavery achievements-northern abolition, southern manumission, state and congressional restrictions on the Atlantic slave trade, and national restraints on the westward expansion of slavery-were accomplished in the years between 1776 and 1787, before the Constitution was ratified. Although their roots stretched back into the colonial years, particularly the long history of growing Quaker commitment to abolition, they were nevertheless the direct products of the Revolution itself.⁵⁰⁵

The Revolution, however, was really only just the beginning of the story. Joseph Ellis, in *American Creation*, argues that "there were really two founding moments: the first in 1776, which declared American independence, and the second in 1787-88, which declared American nationhood. The Declaration of Independence is the seminal document in the first instance, the Constitution in the second. The former is a radical document that locates sovereignty in the individual and depicts government as an alien force, making rebellion against it a natural act. The latter is a conservative document that locates sovereignty in that collective called "the people," makes government an essential protector of liberty rather than its enemy, and values social balance over personal liberation. It is extremely rare for the same political elite to straddle both occasions. Or,

⁵⁰² Staughton Lynd, *Class Conflict, Slavery, and the United States Constitution* (1967).

⁵⁰³ Staughton Lynd, "The Compromise of 1787," *Political Science Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (1966), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2147971>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/2147971>. 232.

⁵⁰⁴ Lynd, "The Compromise of 1787." 225.

⁵⁰⁵ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." loc. 2030.

to put it differently, it is uncommon for the same men who make a revolution also to secure it.”⁵⁰⁶ The problem is that the founders who wrote and endorsed the Declaration of Independence were not the same people as the framers of the Constitution. Only six Founders signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution: George Clymer, PA, Benjamin Franklin, PA, Robert Morris, PA, George Read, DE, James Wilson, PA, and Roger Sherman, CT. None of the signers of both documents were from the deep South. Four of the six were from Pennsylvania, the same state that was the first to emancipate its slaves in 1780.⁵⁰⁷

Of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention, about 25 owned slaves. Many of the framers harbored moral qualms about slavery. Some, including Benjamin Franklin (a former slaveholder) and Alexander Hamilton (who was born in a slave colony in the British West Indies) became members of anti-slavery societies.⁵⁰⁸

On August 21, 1787, a bitter debate broke out over a South Carolina proposal to prohibit the federal government from regulating the Atlantic slave trade. Luther Martin of Maryland, a slaveholder, said that the slave trade should be subject to federal regulation since the entire nation would be responsible for suppressing slave revolts. He also considered the slave trade contrary to America’s republican ideals. "It is inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution," he said, "and dishonorable to the American character to have such a feature in the constitution."

John Rutledge of South Carolina responded forcefully. "Religion and humanity have nothing to do with this question," he insisted. He threatened that unless regulation of the slave trade was left to the states, the southern-most states "shall not be parties to the union." On the other side of the debate, a Virginia delegate, George Mason, a large slaveholder who owned hundreds of slaves, spoke out against slavery. He pronounced

⁵⁰⁶ Joseph J Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic*, Kindle ed. (Random House Large Print Publishing, 2007). 15-16.

⁵⁰⁷ NCC Staff, Myth four: The same Founders who wrote the Declaration wrote the Constitution., "Top myths about the Constitution on Constitution Day," *Constitution Daily Blog, National Constitution Center*, 3/13/2025, 2024, https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/top-10-myths-about-the-constitution-on-constitution-day?gclid=Cj0KCQiAtJeNBhCVARIsANJUJ2EgrCaZI6BKYrd-cdUOM-m-6OkFt-VYhT3HdoD9JTaGri-IJvKySyEaAoPsEALw_wcB.

⁵⁰⁸ "Historical Context: The Constitution and Slavery," History Resources, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2019, accessed 3/13/2025, 2025, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teachingresource/historical-context-Constitution-and-slavery>.

that "Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves." Slavery also corrupted slaveholders and threatened the country with divine punishment, he believed: "Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a country."⁵⁰⁹

Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut accused slaveholders from Maryland and Virginia of hypocrisy. They could afford to oppose the slave trade, he claimed, because "slaves multiply so fast in Virginia and Maryland that it is cheaper to raise than import them, whilst in the sickly rice swamps of South Carolina and Georgia foreign supplies are necessary."⁵¹⁰ Ellsworth argued that ending the slave trade would benefit slaveholders in the Chesapeake region, since the demand for slaves in the deep South would raise the price of slaves on the internal domestic market once the external African supply was cut off.

The controversy over the Atlantic slave trade was ultimately settled by compromise. In exchange for a 20-year ban on any restrictions on the Atlantic slave trade, southern delegates agreed to remove a clause restricting the national government's power to enact laws requiring goods to be shipped on American vessels (benefiting northeastern shipbuilders and sailors). The same day this agreement was reached, the convention also adopted the fugitive slave clause, requiring the return of runaway slaves to their owners.⁵¹¹

As Noah Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*, points out:

In the original Constitution, the slavery compromise could be glimpsed in three provisions:

1. The three-fifths compromise specified that the number of congressmen in the House of Representatives, as well as the apportionment of direct taxes, should be determined 'by adding to the whole number of free persons ... three fifths of all other persons'—in other words, enslaved persons of African descent.

⁵⁰⁹ Mintz, "Historical Context: The Constitution and Slavery." <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teachingresource/historical-context-Constitution-and-slavery>

⁵¹⁰ Mintz, "Historical Context: The Constitution and Slavery." <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teachingresource/historical-context-Constitution-and-slavery>

⁵¹¹ Mintz, "Historical Context: The Constitution and Slavery." <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/teachingresource/historical-context-Constitution-and-slavery>

2. Until 1808, Congress could not prohibit “the migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit,” thus protecting the slave trade for twenty years.
3. Finally, the Constitution demanded that “no person held to service or labor in one state ... escaping into another, shall ... be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up upon claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due.” This clause came to be known as The fugitive slave clause. In intent and effect, this clause superseded the Northern states’ commitment to principles of abolition and freedom. It subordinated the courts and other legal institutions of the free states to the constitutional principle of sustaining slavery.⁵¹²

Inclusion of these provisions into the Constitution of the United States secured slavery’s place in law. Furthermore, it also bled into the debate about the morality of slavery by eliminating the Constitution as a guarantee of liberty and equality for all people. As a result abolitionists and Northerners in Congress had to appeal to the Declaration of Independence as proof and justification that the Founders had hoped for the gradual abolition of slavery everywhere and its eventual extinction.⁵¹³

Rawlins Lowndes who served as South Carolina’s second president during the American Revolutionary War, made clear, slavery was at the very heart of the matter. "Without negroes, this state is one of the most contemptible in the Union . . . Negroes were our wealth, our only natural resource; yet behold how our kind friends in the north were determined soon to tie up our hands, and drain us of what we had!"⁵¹⁴

Lowndes position forced other Southerners like General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a Founding Father and military veteran of the American Revolutionary War, to reassure his fellow Carolinians of what he had struggled for four long months at the Constitutional Convention to achieve—that the new Constitution did, in fact, protect and even encourage the institution of slavery.⁵¹⁵

George Mason, a prominent citizen and slaveholder of Virginia, was a delegate who held moderate political views. Mason expressed two very specific, and very different, complaints about the new Constitution. First, Mason condemned Article I,

⁵¹² Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*. 43-44.

⁵¹³ Feldman, *The Broken Constitution: Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America*. 48-49.

⁵¹⁴ Lawrence Goldstone, *Dark Bargain: Slavery, Profits, and the Struggle for the Constitution*, Kindle ed. (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2006). 3-4.

⁵¹⁵ Goldstone, *Dark Bargain: Slavery, Profits, and the Struggle for the Constitution*. 4.

Section 9, which prohibited Congress from interfering with the Atlantic slave trade until the year 1808.⁵¹⁶ Mason condemned the clause as an affront to the nearly universal understanding among Americans that the slave trade was "diabolical in itself, and disgraceful to mankind." He reminded his listeners that the colonists had long blamed Great Britain for imposing the slave trade on them and that they had cited the slave trade as one of the causes of their separation from England.⁵¹⁷

Mason's second complaint about Article I, Section 9. Even as the Constitution protected the slave trade, he complained, it offered no security for the property in slaves which the slaveholders already had. Mason pointed out there was "no clause in this Constitution," he declared, that would "secure" slavery in its place.⁵¹⁸ As Mason read the document, the new Congress would be free to levy a prohibitive tax on slaves that "will amount to manumission. "This only compounded the terrible consequences of the slave trade provision; taken together these provisions, the continuance of the foreign slave trade and the weak or nonexistent ownership assurance provided to slaveholders would assure that more potentially rebellious slaves would be imported. The Constitution, he concluded, "would bring weakness and not strength to the Union."⁵¹⁹

"Mason's speech was paradoxical at best. Bristling with the fury and indignation of a righteous man groping for the moral high ground, his words seemed to spring from an overriding concern to strengthen slavery, not to weaken it."⁵²⁰ Despite its perceived weakness by slaveholders, the proslavery clauses of the Constitution suggest a decidedly proslavery constitution in both intention and defect.⁵²¹ There may have been good pragmatic reasons, such as the very creation of the union itself at stake but nonetheless the Constitution institutionalized slavery in the new republic and did nothing to directly contribute to its eventual downfall. However, one of the most significant features of the Constitution is that it can be amended. In the First Congress, lawmakers pointed not just to the Preamble's words but also to its more immediate "practical" effect concerning the

⁵¹⁶ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." 2023.

⁵¹⁷ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." 2023.

⁵¹⁸ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." 2024.

⁵¹⁹ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." 2024.

⁵²⁰ Oakes, "The Compromising Expedient: Justifying a Proslavery Constitution." 2024.

⁵²¹ David Waldstreicher, *Slavery's Constitution: from Revolution to Ratification*, Kindle ed. (Hill and Wang, 2009). 9.

right to amend. By ordaining the federal Constitution, Americans had in practice altered their state constitutions and abolished the Articles of Confederation. The Preamble of the Constitution stood for ongoing popular sovereignty – the people’s right to change their mind as events unfolded.⁵²²

The amendment process depends on the will of the people and the expression of their will. The challenge is how to correctly capture that will and implement it. It was commonly agreed that the Constitution left slavery beyond the reach of the national government. State law reigned supreme in the matter of slavery. State law established and maintained slavery and states could abolish slavery or prohibit its establishment. During the American Revolution the Northern States began the process of gradual abolition of slavery and the emancipation of the slaves. The Southern states chose to maintain slavery, intact and unmodified. Abolitionists faced a big hurdle, if not an impossible task. Abolition had never been that successful in societies that were dependent on slavery for their economic well-being.

The Constitution was a big roadblock to change. The abolitionists nearly always acknowledged what came to be called the “federal consensus”—that the national government had no power to take direct action against the institution of slavery in the states that protected it. As the country expanded, a rough balance was maintained between the number of free states and the number of slave states. This resulted in a political stalemate between the free states and the slave states since changes to the Constitution required approval by two-thirds of Congress and three-quarters of the states, an amendment abolishing slavery was highly unlikely. The historian Linda Colley has observed that written constitutions often function as “weapons of control” rather than “documents of liberation and rights.” As far as slaves were concerned, this certainly applies to the original Constitution.⁵²³

In order to grasp the profound political, economic, and social changes that American society needed to make it is fundamentally important to understand the status of African Americans at the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and at the

⁵²² Akhil Reed Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography*, Kindle ed. (Random House, 2012). 11.

⁵²³ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 2.

time of the 1860 presidential election. In 1787, at the time of the Constitutional Convention, around 700,000 slaves lived in the United States. They made up 40 percent of the population of the states from Maryland to Georgia. By 1860, there were a little under four million slaves and half a million free blacks in the United States. Slavery was politically powerful and economically thriving. Slave-grown cotton was by far the nation's most important export, and the profits generated by slavery enriched not only planters in the South but also merchants, manufacturers, and bankers in the free states.⁵²⁴

“Yet perhaps the paramount lesson to be learned from our nation's constitutional founding is that, although a constitution is the product of the specific individuals involved in its creation, partisan self-interest among our founders did not generate a largely inefficient or unfair constitution, at least from the perspective of many observers.”

⁵²⁵ Although the Constitution was influenced by the economic interest of its framers it also is true that there are many general aspects of the Constitution that do not appear to have been overtly influenced by partisan economic interests. Thus, from the perspective of not only most Americans but also much of the world, our constitutional government is greatly admired and is not viewed as overly self-interested.

This is where the amendments to the Constitution play such an important role. The Bill of Rights is the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution. It spells out Americans' rights in relation to their government. It guarantees civil rights and liberties to the individual—like freedom of speech, press, and religion. It sets rules for due process of law and reserves all powers not delegated to the Federal Government to the people or the States.⁵²⁶ The original Constitution without its amendments focused primarily on issues of organizational structure and democratic self-governance: federalism, separation of powers, bicameralism, representation, republican government, and constitutional amendment. By contrast, the Bill of Rights proposed by the first Congress is generally

⁵²⁴ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 1.

⁵²⁵ Robert McGuire, A. , *To Form A More Perfect Union : A New Economic Interpretation of the United States Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), Book.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=690183&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s8998431>. 212.

⁵²⁶ "The Bill of Rights: What Does it Say?," America's Founding Documents, National Archives, updated April 27,2023, 2023, accessed 3/26/2023, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/what-does-it-say>.

thought to focus on vesting individuals and minorities with substantive rights against popular majorities. A close look at the Bill of Rights also reveals structural ideas tightly interconnected with the language of rights, such as states' rights and majority rights as well as individual and minority rights. The Bill of Rights took it another step further to protect various intermediate associations such as church, militia, and juries.⁵²⁷ It also would eventually be used to protect the abolition movement by protecting the rights of abolitionists to express their political, social, and economic views about slavery in the press, in church, in assembly and convention. Freedom of the Press, Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Assembly are essential to any free republic and are the pillars of a free democratic society. They are also the essential pillars of any social movement. The framing of ideas and mobilizing supporters of those ideas into action are essential components of any social movement. The Bill of Rights empowers both minorities and majorities and even enables a degree of fluidity between the two groups so that any minority could someday become the majority. This concept of fluidity and integration of the majority and minority races in America posed enormous social, political, and economic issues.

The first wave of abolitionists was confronted with the challenge of moving from intellectual argument to action. Max Weber the German sociologist was the first to make a distinction between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. Weber called people who tried to influence government policy "political actors." Under this definition abolitionists were political actors. Weber's political actor cannot afford to be so saintly a person, according to Weber, he or she must also be prepared to use coercion and even deadly force when the situation calls for it. Yet this is a complicated situation, as however much a politician may want to base all their decisions and actions on an ethics of conviction, there are times when their potential actions must also be guided instead by an ethics of responsibility that considers the consequences of political action and decisions. The political actor must be prepared to suffer very serious disappointments or losses and still stay true to their convictions. The difficulty when challenging authority or the existing political power structure is to judge when an ethics of conviction will be

⁵²⁷ Akhil Reed Amar, *The Bill of Rights: Creation and Reconstruction*, Kindle ed. (Yale University Press, 1998). loc. 93.

called for, or when an ethics of responsibility should take precedence. It is a matter that calls for discernment of the complexity of the situation and judgement.⁵²⁸ It also may require compromise.

Early abolitionists achieved some success with a ban on the slave trade starting in 1807. The famous observer of American politics and behavior Alexis de Tocqueville, however also issued another famous report based on his observation on slavery in the French colonies. The report was entitled, "Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies."⁵²⁹ It was issued in 1839 and reflected attitudes towards enslaved blacks that had existed. He wrote, "Those, who, while they admit that slavery cannot always continue, desire to defer the period of emancipation, say that before breaking the chains of the negroes we must prepare them for independence."⁵³⁰ Tocqueville's advice was simple: "Enlighten his religion, reform his habits, establish for him the family relation, extend and fortify his intellect, until his mind can conceive the idea of the future, and acquire the power of forethought. After you have accomplished all these things, you can without fear set him free."⁵³¹

Tocqueville pointed out the irony that the very state of slavery itself precluded the preparations necessary to free a slave while they were a slave. "True; but if all these preparations cannot be made in a state of slavery, to exact that they shall have been made before servitude can cease, is it not in other words to declare that it never shall cease? To insist on giving to a slave the thoughts, the habits, and morals of a free man, is to condemn him to remain always a slave. Because we have made him unworthy of liberty, can we forever refuse to him and his descendants the right of being free?"⁵³² This same "Report on Abolition" elicited an infuriated southern response. The French consul in New Orleans reported to the French foreign minister that "it would be impossible...to

⁵²⁸ Fred Guyette, "Garrison versus Douglass on the Abolition of Slavery: An Ethics of Conviction versus an Ethics of Responsibility," *Max Weber Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24579871>. 256.

⁵²⁹ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies*, (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1839).

⁵³⁰ De Tocqueville, *Short Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies*. 6.

⁵³¹ De Tocqueville, *Short Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies*. 6.

⁵³² De Tocqueville, *Short Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies*. 6.

describe to you the impact that it [the Tocqueville Report] produced in the United States, which, if it were enacted, would cause a veritable revolution in the colonies, and would not be without effect on the future of the United States..." In the consul's opinion, it was Tocqueville's Report that had so "exalted" American abolitionist passions that it had caused the passage of a cloture resolution on all abolitionist petitions to Congress.⁵³³ This was probably an exaggeration on the consul's part since Congress passed the "gag rule" which forbade legislators from raising or discussing slavery or matters related to slavery in 1836 and renewed the rule every legislative session until 1844 when the rule was repealed.⁵³⁴

As no European visitor to Jacksonian America could fail to notice, northern emancipation of slaves had not led toward equality, but to the adoption of policies designed to maintain hierarchy and separation. This widespread consensus of inevitable marginalization and potential violence made the prospect of emancipation in the middle and lower South appear to be invitations to racial warfare with echoes of servile insurrection.⁵³⁵

The Southern view that American Republic was white man's country was actively opposed by the first wave of abolition. Benjamin Rush, whose involvement in organized abolition began in the 1790s after he freed his slave, asserted in his presidential address to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS) that "when we have broken his chains and restored to the African his rights, the work of justice and benevolence is not done, newborn citizens must receive instruction, educate him in the highest branches of sciences and learning, prove to enemies of truth that despite the degrading influence of slavery they are in no wise inferior to the more fortunate inhabitants of Europe and America."⁵³⁶ Dr. Rush's enlightened view of African Americans, unfortunately, was not shared among many American.

⁵³³ De Tocqueville, Short Report to The Chamber of Deputies on the Abolition of Slavery in the French Colonies. 6.

⁵³⁴ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 251.

⁵³⁵ Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*. 300-301.

⁵³⁶ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 113.

Race was a dimension of political as well as civil rights. It was a national, not a sectional, phenomenon. Some of the major initiatives against slavery such as the ban on African slave imports in 1807 and the launching of the American Colonization Society a decade later, were premised upon a widely shared hostility toward the presence of blacks in America.⁵³⁷ The idea of a homogeneous all white nation and of removing "free" blacks from living next to white people began in 1691 when the governing body in the colony of Virginia prohibited any further emancipation of enslaved blacks unless the owner provided transportation beyond the limits of the colony (the wilderness) within six months after emancipation.⁵³⁸ By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century a large bisectional coalition of religious and political leaders from the North and upper south, including Sen. Henry Clay and President James Monroe, sought to solve the problem of slavery and race by promoting the colonization of African Americans. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was modeled after societies like the American Bible Society, the American Sunday School Union, and the American Tract Society.⁵³⁹ The ACS was founded by a Presbyterian minister and educator joined by a likeminded group of clergymen including Jedidiah Morse, Samuel Mills, Nathan Lord, and Leonard Bacon. They supported colonization as a plan for gradually ending slavery and for Christianizing Africa. In his *Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks*, Finley, posed the question, "What shall we do with the free people of color?" The answer he proposed was "the gradual separation of the black from the white population."⁵⁴⁰

During the 1820s the focus of antislavery attention was the American Colonization Society, with its program of gradual, compensated emancipation combined with resettlement of the blacks in Africa. In the North and perhaps for most Americans at that time were apathetic and a sort of fatalism had set in that regarded slavery as an immutable feature of the landscape that long ago was fastened onto the United States by generations long since passed. As usual, there was an exception to the rule. While living and working in western Virginia Benjamin Lundy caught sight of Wheeling's slave pens

⁵³⁷ Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery*. 300-301.

⁵³⁸ Haroon Kharem, "Chapter Four: THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY," *Counterpoints* 208 (2006), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/42980005>. 76.

⁵³⁹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 163.

⁵⁴⁰ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 163.

where slaves were chained awaiting shipment down the Ohio River. Lundy could not shake the terrible memory of that slave coffle. In 1816, Lundy sold his saddlery business to become a witness and prophet, as the Quakers John Woolman and Benjamin Lay had done in the years before the American Revolution, on behalf of emancipation and the Golden Rule. Lundy was demanding attention to an issue that had lain dormant for a generation.⁵⁴¹

As part of his mission, Lundy wrote antislavery articles for a friend's newspaper and eventually learned the mechanical aspects of printing well enough to issue the newspaper himself. Next, he traveled across Tennessee and North Carolina like an itinerant preacher, holding meetings wherever he could, encouraging the formation of societies, and borrowing time in a friendly printing office to print the next issue of his paper. Thinking that he could extend his influence by publishing on the eastern seaboard, and hoping to be a rallying point for abolitionists, Lundy moved to Baltimore in 1824. There he tried to make his paper "The Genius of Universal Emancipation," a weekly instead of a monthly paper and hired a printer with funds solicited from sympathetic donors in order to free his time for lecturing and organizing. Lundy personally inspired dozens of slaveholders to emancipate their slaves. Perhaps most importantly Lundy served as an inspiration to his young apprentice, William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison later in life declared that, Friend Lundy, "opened my eyes" and "Inflamed my mind" on the subject of slavery.⁵⁴²

The Garrisonians – and the Second Wave of the Abolition Movement – 1830 to 1854

The whole slavery question took on a new momentum about 1830, when William Lloyd Garrison assumed the leadership of the antislavery movement. Garrison had attracted national attention in 1829 when he wrote for Benjamin Lundy's newspaper *The Genius of Universal Emancipation* a blistering personal attack on a New England slave trader, who operated out of the port of Baltimore. He was arrested and imprisoned for libel in Baltimore, where Lundy's paper was then published. Arthur Tappan, a wealthy

⁵⁴¹ Henry Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*, Kindle ed. (WW Norton & Company, 2008). 51.

⁵⁴² Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 52.

New York merchant and philanthropist, who became a financial pillar for abolitionism, paid Garrison's fine and got him released from jail. While confined behind bars, Garrison productively used his time by writing and preparing a series of lectures for delivery when he got out.⁵⁴³

After trying in vain to rent the use of an auditorium in Baltimore for these lectures, the young abolitionist crusader headed for Philadelphia, where he was able to secure a lecture hall located in the Franklin Institute. There he lectured on three successive evenings, August 31 and September 1 and 2, 1830 to audiences consisting chiefly of Quakers and blacks. While lecturing in Philadelphia Garrison he met several individuals who were to be his principal allies in his fight against slavery. Most notably he met James and Lucretia Mott, who became the central figures in abolitionism during the formative years of the abolition movement.⁵⁴⁴

Aberbach and Walker, "Political Trust and Racial Ideology," wrote that "No government yet established has had the loyalty and trust of all its citizens. Regardless of the popularity of its leaders or how careful they are in soliciting opinions and encouraging participation in the process of policymaking, there are always those who see inequalities and injustices in the society and harbor suspicions of the government's motives and intentions. Resentment and distrust are elements of disaffection and the first step toward resistance."⁵⁴⁵ Garrison had the natural distrust of government that is so second nature to newspaper publishers coupled with the zeal of a crusading missionary. The covenant with slavery the framers had made in the Constitution, Garrison believed tainted the Union and corrupted the very idea of liberty.⁵⁴⁶

In 1831, thirty years before the firing on Fort Sumter Garrison founded *The Liberator* and dedicated it to the immediate abolition of slavery and the realization of equal rights for all. *The Liberator* remains today an unrivaled example of personal

⁵⁴³ Ira V Brown, "Pennsylvania," Immediate Emancipation," and the Birth of the American Anti-Slavery Society," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 54, no. 3 (1987). 163.

⁵⁴⁴ Brown, "Pennsylvania," Immediate Emancipation," and the Birth of the American Anti-Slavery Society." 163.

⁵⁴⁵ Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, "Political Trust and Racial Ideology," *The American Political Science Review* 64, no. 4 (1970), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1958366>, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/1958366>. 1199.

⁵⁴⁶ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 398.

journalism and heroism in the service of civic idealism.⁵⁴⁷ Garrison pointedly encouraged conflict, but not violence. He believed that agitation began with conviction of personal duty, and he consistently advocated the highest standards of moral citizenship. Garrison did not shy away from the fact that a challenge to slavery would require a direct confrontation with American assumptions about white supremacy. At personal risk, a Boston anti-abolitionist mob in 1835 threatened to hang him, he coupled a demand for immediate emancipation with an insistence upon equal rights for black people. Equality for black people was a stand that very few public figures took at that time. It was a stand that eluded many prominent political figures of his time⁵⁴⁸

Garrison commenced his abolitionist career with an outspoken, unusually radical for the times, Fourth of July address at Boston's Park Street Church in 1829. His words mirrored those of black abolitionists comparing the "pitiful detail of grievances" in the Declaration of Independence with the much greater "wrongs which our slaves must endure!"⁵⁴⁹

Garrison rested his case for the abolition of slavery on four fundamental propositions that framed the second wave of abolition and broke new ground for the antislavery movement. The Park Street Address proved to be a pivotal moment in the history of liberty and equality.

Garrison's first proposition was aimed at the free states of the North. He insisted that enslaved Americans had the strongest possible claims for redress and that the people of the non-slaveholding states had a righteous duty to break the political silence that prevented the slaves' cause from being heard. He further argued that the degradation inflicted by of slavery could not be used to justify a denial of liberty to its victims and that black people could—and should—rank equally with whites as citizens. Even though Garrison was speaking in a church filled with an audience that was favorably disposed to his antislavery arguments he boldly broke new ground for his audience by asking them not for their charity but for justice. The great majority of the slave population was

⁵⁴⁷ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. xiii.

⁵⁴⁸ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. xiii.

⁵⁴⁹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 215.

American-born and “entitled to all the privileges of American citizens,” he emphasized, that their children also “possess the same inherent and inalienable rights as ours.”⁵⁵⁰

Garrison used the powerful, almost sacred, phrases of the Declaration of Independence, when he drove his point home by asking his listeners to imagine the language that American slaves could use in justifying to the world a rebellion of their own. In the cadences of Jefferson’s declaration, Garrison then catalogued a long course of usurpation and tyranny: “They have invaded our territories... They have wedged us into the holds of their ‘floating hells.’... They have sold us in their marketplaces like cattle... driven us in large droves from State to State, beneath a burning sky... They have lacerated our bodies with whips... They would destroy our souls...”⁵⁵¹

Garrison insisted that slaves possessed the same inherent rights as white people. Garrison also insisted; the states had a democratic right to voice the concerns of the non-slaveholding majority in the halls of Congress and in the governance of the nation. He stated, “We have a common interest...as members of one great family...to demand a gradual abolition of slavery.” Even if one were to disregard the Golden Rule and “the common dictates of humanity,” Garrison reasoned, the free states had a stake in the matter “because by slavery’s continuance, they participate in the guilt thereof and are threatened with ultimate destruction.”⁵⁵²

Garrison employed the idealism of the American Revolution coupled with the reforming spirit of the Puritans. He sought the reformation of a corrupt world by a return to fundamental principles. As Henry Mayer in, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*, observed, “Garrison delivered a jeremiad worthy of the divines who had once held sway in Boston’s pulpits. He emerged from the Park Street Church as a visionary, who still regarded Boston as the city on the hill, a moral beacon as well as a political one, and who summoned the citizens of a Christian republic to honor their covenant with God and with themselves.”⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 64-65.

⁵⁵¹ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 64-65.

⁵⁵² Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 64-6.5

⁵⁵³ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 67.

Once again using the terminology of the Classic Social Movement Agenda, Garrison used a moral argument to frame his version of the abolitionist movement.⁵⁵⁴ Garrison following in the footsteps of his mentor and based upon his own experience and abilities launched a newspaper called *The Liberator* on January 1, 1831, which was continuously published as a weekly until the final issue published on December 29, 1865. Garrison grounded his moral argument in the same arguments the Founders of America put forth in the Declaration of Independence. In the first issue of *The Liberator* in an editorial “To the Public” Garrison laid out the philosophy and the mission of his newspaper. He wrote:

Assenting to the 'self-evident truths' maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, 'that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights—among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. In Park Street Church, on the Fourth of July 1829, in an address on slavery, I unrelentingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus publicly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren, the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice and absurdity. A similar recantation, from my pen, was published in the 'Genius of Universal Emancipation,' at Baltimore, in September, 1829. My conscience is now satisfied.⁵⁵⁵

Garrison drew support for his cause from the Declaration of Independence. This was not the case with the Constitution. Garrison described the Constitution as a proslavery compact - a “covenant with death” and “an agreement with Hell.” Under the slogan “No Union with slaveholders,” as the masthead for his newspaper, *The Liberator*, he rejected electoral politics because voting implied support for “the proslavery, war sanctioning Constitution.” In an even more radical stance, Garrison wanted the union to dissolve or if that did not happen, he wanted the North to secede from the Union. He felt that this was the only way to create a truly free country. The sin of slavery had to be purged from the Union, or the Union had to be dissolved. Paul Finkelman, explains that, “Garrison’s position in part grew out of his perfectionism and his desire to avoid the

⁵⁵⁴ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, Kindle ed., 2 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001). loc. 283

⁵⁵⁵ William Lloyd Garrison and William E Cain, *William Lloyd Garrison and the Fight Against Slavery: Selections from The Liberator*, The Bedford Series in History and Culture, (Boston: Bedford Books, 1995). loc. 823..

moral taint of slavery that supporting a proslavery Constitution would entail.”⁵⁵⁶

Finkelman goes on to note that the Garrisonians also had pragmatic reasons for rejecting politics. If the founding charter of the nation, the Constitution, was proslavery then the political system that it created would also have to be rigged to protect slavery. If that were true, then political action was a waste of time. They were far better off trying to persuade northerners to avoid the American political system with its moral taint of slavery than debating which candidate had the least evil in his relationship with it. If northerners were to engage in traditional political activity this would create popular support for the constitutional order, and this in turn would strengthen the stranglehold slavery had on America and its people.⁵⁵⁷

Garrison used *The Liberator* to frame his antislavery campaign and to bring that campaign to the general public. Garrison wanted to create a shared responsibility for slavery in all Americans. He made major contributions to movement by turning the movement from a legal framework of natural rights used to free the slaves into a moral imperative for all Americans not just the courts and lawyers to free themselves of sin and corruption and free the enslaved. Garrison endeavored to make his one little newspaper a counterweight to the entire burden of political practice in the United States, and he cheerfully agreed with those friends who warned him that his “wild notions” of immediate and complete emancipation would only provoke more hostility. “That they will create much opposition, I cannot doubt; that therefore they should be abandoned, I cannot admit... New truths, like new improvements, are slowly adopted,” he explained; they are always “disorganizing in their operation.” He wanted controversy and considered it a vital social process; “let us all begin to talk...and depend upon it, something noble will be done—and not till then.”⁵⁵⁸ Garrison’s refusal to water down his “visionary” slogan was eminently practical to his followers, much more so than the course of the antislavery senators and congressmen who often wrote letters to abolitionist leaders justifying their adaptation of antislavery demands to what was attainable. Garrison, while

⁵⁵⁶ Paul Finkelman, *Supreme Injustice : Slavery in the Nation’s Highest Court*, The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), Book. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=nlebk&AN=1723017&site=eds-live&scope=site&custid=s8998431>. 11.

⁵⁵⁷ Finkelman, *Supreme Injustice : Slavery in the Nation’s Highest Court*. 11.

⁵⁵⁸ Mayer, *All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery*. 74.

criticizing such compromises, would insist that his own intransigence made favorable compromises possible. Aileen Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism*, put it this way, “He might have stated his position thus: If politics is the art of the possible, agitation is the art of the desirable. The practice of each must be judged by criteria appropriate to its goal. Garrison explained: “We have never said that slavery would be overthrown by a single blow; that it ought to be, we shall always contend.”⁵⁵⁹

Agitation by the reformer or radical helps define one possible policy as more desirable than another, and if skillful and uncompromising, the agitation may help make the desirable possible. It is the tactic that Garrison used of always stating the principle toward which public opinion must be educated, no matter how far ahead of public opinion it might be. To criticize the agitator for not trimming his demands to the immediately realizable - that is, for not acting as a politician is to miss the point. The demand for a change that is not politically possible does not stamp the agitator as unrealistic. For one thing, it can be useful to the political bargainer; the more extreme demand of the agitator makes the politician's demand seem acceptable and perhaps desirable in the sense that the adversary may prefer to give up half a loaf rather than the whole. Also, the agitator helps define the value, the principle, for which the politician bargains. The ethical values placed on various possible political courses are put there partly by agitators working on the public opinion that creates political possibilities.

Here again is seen the significance of the slogan of immediate and unconditional emancipation. In addition to being the “end” of the movement, it was also a means; in fact, throughout the life of the movement, it was used primarily as a means, a tool for reaching the conscience of the hearer.⁵⁶⁰

Unfortunately, uncompromising views can often lead to problems with group cohesion and unity. Garrison was advocating a radical change in American society, economics and politics. He took a strong uncompromising stand on not just abolition but other major issues of the day such as the size and influence of the Federal government,

⁵⁵⁹ Aileen S Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850*, (No Title), (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1969). 29.

⁵⁶⁰ Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850*. 28.

pacifism, and women's rights. On the topic of the Federal government Garrison was influenced by John Humphrey Noyes, the founder of the utopian Oneida community. Noyes described the Federal Government as a bloated, swaggering libertine, trampling on the Bible, the Constitution and ignoring the petitions of its own citizens. Garrison was also influenced by another utopian founder of the Hopedale community. Ballou published article on what he called "peace principles" and nonresistance. Garrison believed all governments involved tyranny, violence, and inequality and were contrary to equality, peace, and freedom. He rejected "all human politics, worldly honors and stations of authority," especially military office, armaments, and war. Garrisonian nonresistance antagonized both religious and political abolitionists. His radical pacifism, translated into a rejection of the use of force by the state. He opposed capital punishment, perceiving early on its differential racial application, and called his opponents "hanging clergymen."⁵⁶¹

Garrison also had problems with organized religion. Like many abolitionists, Garrison believed that the "American Church" which in part was responsible for sustaining slavery was stained with the blood of innocent souls. Garrison pressured the churches to act against slavery. He also embraced the views of the patriot and founder Thomas Paine. Garrison echoed Paine's skepticism of the Bible as the revealed word of God. Garrison also believed every day, not just Sunday should be observed as a holy day. Finally, he condemned the racial segregation found in church meetings and urged religious congregations to do away with the "negro pew."⁵⁶² At its third annual meeting of the American Antislavery Society passed a resolution by Garrison denouncing the American Republic as a "land of religious despotism" and "home of republican injustice."⁵⁶³

Garrison clearly was one of the primary leaders of the abolition movement but as I stated before the movement was by no means a highly regimented single movement. The movement had other leaders aside from Garrison and because of Garrison's view on religion, nonresistance and separatism he would eventually be subject to leadership

⁵⁶¹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 257-258.

⁵⁶² Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 257.

⁵⁶³ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 259.

challenges that caused the movement to fracture. Many Americans had seen the new nation as the promised land. Now Garrison, in the tradition of the great New England Puritan jeremiad saw the promise of America as an unfolding prophecy and urged all Americans to rededicate themselves to the “divine cause” of the great migration and rid themselves of the sin of slavery.⁵⁶⁴

Garrison and the second wave of the abolition movement had achieved no small measure of success. In 1836 Garrison reported the formation of 7 state antislavery societies with over 500 auxiliaries. The American Antislavery Society (AASS) reported a total of 527, the largest numbers of auxiliaries being in Ohio (133), New York (103), and Massachusetts (87). The AASS also shared members with the old Pennsylvania Abolition society (PAS) and the New York Manumission Society (NYMS). The Abolition movement seemed to pick up speed and grow even faster in the last years of the decade. According to its secretary, James G. Birney, in his answer to Rep. Franklin Harper Elmore, who, at South Carolina Senator Calhoun’s behest, posed a series of questions on the nature and aims of antislavery societies, by 1838 the AASS had over 1,000 auxiliaries with around 100,000 members. Birney also added that he had given the lowest possible membership figures yet nonetheless the numbers showed that the one person in ten in the northernmost states was an abolitionist and one in twenty in the middle states.⁵⁶⁵

Naturally growth brought with it differing points of view and ambitions. Growth fueled divisions. As the movement progressed in time so did frustration with what detractors called Garrisonianism which mixed all of Garrisons beliefs into one belief system. All abolitionists were radicals when it came to slavery and race but not all believed in separation from the Union, nonresistance, and nonparticipation in the political process.⁵⁶⁶

Garrison’s view of the Sabbath and formalized religion also proved a negative response even among abolitionists. Rev. James Woodbury, a Representative to the Massachusetts General Court, a prominent preacher from Acton Massachusetts, and an

⁵⁶⁴ Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, United States: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3445263>. xii-xiii

⁵⁶⁵ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 252-253.

⁵⁶⁶ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 256.

abolition activist issued a wide-ranging condemnation of Garrison. Apparently, the tipping point was Garrison's support of the Grimké sisters, whose anti-slavery lectures were attracting mixed-gender audiences and generating disagreements about the role of women in society. Into the fray stepped Acton's Reverend Woodbury. He wrote a long letter in support of the Clerical Appeal that was published in the *New England Spectator* and reprinted on the front page of *The Liberator* (Sept. 1, 1837). In his letter he wrote:

I am an abolitionist...but I never swallowed Wm. Lloyd Garrison. I became alarmed some months since, for the cause of abolition in such hands...*he is determined to carry forward and propagate and enforce his peculiar theology.* He is not satisfied to teach his readers and hearers the truth as he holds it in reference to slavery and its abolition, but he must indoctrinate them, too, on human governments and family government and the Christian ministry and the Christian Sabbath, and the Christian ordinances. Slavery is not merely to be abolished, but nearly everything else... Desert the cause of abolition? No—never. But desert Mr. Garrison, I would, if I ever followed him.⁵⁶⁷

In a pointed personal attack Rev. Woodbury accused Garrison and his followers of idolatry. He said, “Garrison is the god of their idolatry. He embodies abolition. He is abolition personified and incarnate.”⁵⁶⁸ Garrison was forced to defend his abolition credentials, recalling that he “was a poor, self-educated mechanic” with “no family connexions, without influence, without wealth, without station... The clergy was against me—the rulers of the people were against me—the nation was against me,” when he began his crusade. Two more clerical appeals followed Woodbury's letter, leading Garrison to sever all connections between the *Liberator* and the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society (MASS), to the newspaper's financial disadvantage.⁵⁶⁹ Garrison was between a rock and a hard place. In order for the Abolition Movement to effect the changes in society it wanted to see it need support for that change. The irony of trying to bring about major changes in society, you need the support of the society you are trying to change. Lewis Tappan, a major financial sponsor and executive committee member of the American Anti-Slavery Society Garrison founded explained to Garrison that despite his invaluable efforts to the slave cause the AASS could not support him in his difficulty

⁵⁶⁷ "Abolition and Reverend Woodbury," Acton Historical Society, 2018, accessed 3/28/2025, 2025, <https://www.actonhistoricalsociety.org/blog/abolition-and-reverend-woodbury>.

⁵⁶⁸ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 258.

⁵⁶⁹ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 258.

with the Massachusetts clergy. The clergy was an invaluable constituency in the fight for abolition.

Every social movement must contend with certain social phenomena such as; mobilization of support for the movement, mobilization of support from different segments of society and its institutions, support from different geographical regions, The movement must build coalition, and cohesion for the movement while at the same time dealing with fragmentation or coalescence of movement as it meets the challenge of its ongoing struggle to change the society in which it exists. This ongoing struggle may also force the movement to cope with the mutation of the paths it must take in order to achieve its objectives. Lastly it must be able to cope with its opposition. The level of resistance to change and the strength of the opposition will definitely affect the course of the movement and the reaction of its members. Frustration on both the part of its members and its opposition can cause members of the movement or its opposition to become more aggressive and eventually more radicalized. Once radicalization sets in on either side a binary can form. You either support the movement or you are against it. You are either in favor of slavery or against it. Any society composed of binary elements of this type forces its members to face fundamental questions; the most basic of which is who am I? In everyday life this means, how to do I present myself to others? What am I willing to sacrifice to be a member of this community?⁵⁷⁰ Remember individual liberties and social membership entail social costs.⁵⁷¹

Garrison and his newspaper played a key role in shaping the abolition movement. The relationship between identity construction and media and communications is a strong one. It is long standing and prominent.⁵⁷² Garrison saw himself in the same way as the prophets of ancient Israel. According to Max Weber, the German sociologist and his study of ancient Judaism, the great prophets were outsiders in their own society.⁵⁷³ They challenged the existing norms within a society. "...according to their manner of

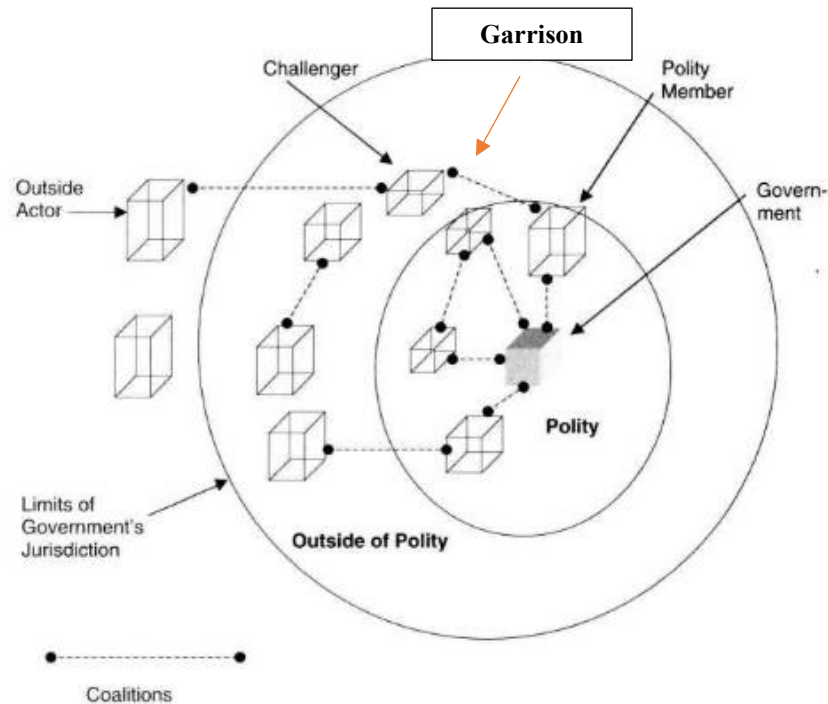
⁵⁷⁰ Myria Georgiou, "Identity," in *Keywords for Media Studies*, ed. Laurie Ouellette and Jonathan Gray (NYU Press, 2017). 94..

⁵⁷¹ Carol S. Steiker, "Second Thoughts about First Principles," *Harvard Law Review* 107, no. 4 (1994), <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341995>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1341995>. 820.

⁵⁷² Georgiou, "Identity." 94.

⁵⁷³ Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism* (Simon and Schuster, 1967). 24.

functioning, the prophets were objectively political and, above all world-political demagogues and publicists. No matter how strongly they stated their uncompromising positions they were no political partisans. They pursued no political interests. The state and its doings were by themselves, of no interest to them.⁵⁷⁴ Garrison was above what he believed was a corrupt system of politics. He stood outside of the polity as its critic.



Simple Polity Model⁵⁷⁵

War Abolition – The Radicals and the Third Wave of the Abolition Movement – 1854 to 1865

Whether Garrison wanted to admit it or not he was involved in politics at least if we use the definition of public politics, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, in *the Dynamics of Contention*, use:

⁵⁷⁴ Weber, *Ancient Judaism*. 23.

⁵⁷⁵ McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*. 219.

Public politics consists of claim making interactions among agents, polity members, challengers [Garrison], and outside political actors. Contentious politics consists of that (large) subset in which the claims are collective and would, if realized, affect their objects' interests.

Garrison wanted no part of professional politics or political parties but that was not the case with other abolitionists who saw a constituency in the anti-slavery movement. Garrison embraced nonresistance, Christian perfectionism, and women's rights, while other leading abolitionists like James G. Birney, Henry B. Stanton, and Charles Sumner were concerned with the direction of Garrison's abolition movement. Like Garrison, they were moved by the events of the 1830s in their contemplation of the future direction of the movement, however, unlike Garrison, they believed the future of the movement lay in entering politics. Stanton had enjoyed considerable success in politics. James G. Birney, also a publisher of an anti-slavery newspaper, the *Philanthropist*. The *Philanthropist* editorialized that politics would not result in gradualism or a falling away from abolitionist principles, as many feared, but allowed abolitionists to "operate with increased vigor" and "enlarged hope of success."⁵⁷⁶ Birney felt that abolitionists needed to combat the political power of slaveholders through the ballot box. Birney was appalled by nonresistance pacifist articles that appeared in the *Liberator*. He suggested that those who championed extraneous, unpopular concerns should resign from the AASS. If Garrisonians advocated the reformation of a corrupt state and society, political abolitionists wanted to take over the reins of government.⁵⁷⁷ At the annual of the MASS meeting, Stanton hoping to challenge Garrison's views on voting, asked him whether he thought voting was a sin, to which Garrison replied, "Sin for me." Stanton and other political abolitionists wanted to make voting the duty of all abolitionists.⁵⁷⁸

At a meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in May 1840, the Anti-Garrisonians broke away from the AASS to form a new abolitionist organization the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. The new organization included many

⁵⁷⁶ Manisha Sinha, "Architects of Their Own Liberation: African Americans, Emancipation, and the Civil War," *OAH Magazine of History* 27, no. 2 (2013), <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/23489715>. 260.

⁵⁷⁷ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 260.

⁵⁷⁸ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. 260.

political abolitionists who gathered in upstate New York to organize the Liberty Party ahead of the 1840 elections. They believed that working in the major parties was fruitless; moral suasion, while good and noble in itself, was not coming close to ameliorating the condition of the slave; and William Lloyd Garrison was taking the American Anti-Slavery Society down a road that most of them did not wish to follow. They chose to experiment, and their major experiment in 1840 was the Liberty Party.⁵⁷⁹

The Liberty party consisted of earnest anti-slavery men who pursued their objects by political action. They were not in sympathy with those abolitionists who lost themselves in "no government" theories, who denounced the Union and the Constitution as a "covenant with death and agreement with hell," and who abhorred the exercise of the suffrage under the Constitution as a participation in sin. In the language of Birney, they "regarded the national Constitution with unabated affection."⁵⁸⁰

Tragically, ironically the Founders and the Framers were vindicated by Garrison's movement. After all Garrison's movement had its roots in separatist Puritan doctrine. Henry Adams an American Historian and a member of the prestigious and political Adams family and a descendant of two American presidents observed: that antislavery politics "swept him back into puritanism with a violence as great as that of a religious war."⁵⁸¹ Moral 'suasion allowed no compromise with slavery. The Framers of the Constitution clearly compromised the value of the Republic by the slave provisions of the Constitution yet at the same time, as they predicted, without that compromise the Union fell apart costing more than 600,000 lives to put it back together again.

Garrison and his uncompromising version of abolition with its "wild notions" of immediate and complete emancipation drove the country into binary camps that were eventually organized by region and political party. The Liberty party would support James G. Birney as a candidate for president in 1840 and 1844. This party would morph

⁵⁷⁹ Reinhard O Johnson, *The Liberty Party, 1840–1848: Antislavery Third-Party Politics in the United States*, Kindle ed. (LSU Press, 2009). 444.

⁵⁸⁰ William Birney, *James G. Birney and His Times: The Genesis of the Republican Party with Some Account of Abolition Movements in the South Before 1818* (D. Appleton, 1890). Vii.

⁵⁸¹ Kenyon Gradert, "Swept into Puritanism Emerson, Wendell Phillips, and the Roots of Radicalism," *The New England Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (2017), <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/stable/26405834>. 103.

into the Free Soil Party and finally the Republican Party with Abraham Lincoln as its presidential candidate and eventually president. It was the election of Lincoln at the head of the Republican Party that lit the fuse of war. Garrison's "moral suasion" was taken to its extreme by another product of New England and Puritan descent John Brown. From the South's perspective, seventeenth century Puritanism had contributed to the Northern cultural evils that found their culmination in John Brown. Garrison and Brown were linked in a powerful Puritan heritage that allowed the breaking of human law in the name of God. Puritans antinomian rebels, from Anne Hutchinson onward, put divine grace above social codes.⁵⁸² Garrison was willing to forsake the Constitution to end slavery. Brown was willing to do anything.

Fredrick Douglass, one of his most ardent followers and partners broke with Garrison over the direction of his pacifism and his separatism. Douglass had a much greater willingness to forge connections between the rhetoric of liberation, politics, and armed intervention. In 1851 Douglass announced a major change in his position on dissolving the Union. He also changed his position on the Constitution.⁵⁸³ The Constitution had the potential to be wielded on behalf of emancipation. He believed that the power of the Constitution should be invoked to do away with slavery and promulgate emancipation. He turned against the dissolution of the Union. He felt dissolution would only abandon the slaves in the South without any protectors or advocates.⁵⁸⁴ Despite the loss of Douglass, Garrison still held to his original position. For Southerners John Brown epitomized the Twin horrors of Northern aggression and slave revolts. Brown and Garrison represent only factions of the abolition movement.

Did Garrison and his movement achieve its objective to end slavery? I think not. Garrison did not attempt to forge a new nation with inclusion for all and a legal system with one law impartial overall. His remedy, separation, may have worked for the Puritans but colonization was rejected by African Americans and eventually by all Americans. If

⁵⁸² David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*, Kindle ed. (Vintage, 2009). 16.

⁵⁸³ Guyette, "Garrison versus Douglass on the Abolition of Slavery: An Ethics of Conviction versus an Ethics of Responsibility." 260.

⁵⁸⁴ Guyette, "Garrison versus Douglass on the Abolition of Slavery: An Ethics of Conviction versus an Ethics of Responsibility." 260.

Garrison's movement had worked the Civil War would never have happened. The Underground Railroad would have proved to be unnecessary. Garrison's solution to slavery, separatism and "no Union with slave holders" set his branch of abolition on the road to frustration and failure. It also helped give rise to Brown and other radicals that just resulted in war. Even in 1855, after the infamous Kansas-Nebraska Act had aroused violence in several previously mild reformers, such as Thoreau and Henry C. Wright, Garrison could affirm, "Non-resistance makes men self-governed. The kingdom of God is within them."⁵⁸⁵

Passivity and resistance are not the answer. Engagement is the only way that a movement can affect change. The Thirteenth Amendment was a political process that ended slavery. Politics cannot be forsaken or ignored by any social movement that hopes to make major changes in the society in which they live. The only other alternative is the radical path of revolution which destroys the polity at great cost to both movement members and the society in which they live. To me the greatest irony is that Garrison's movement and Southern secessionist became aligned. They both ultimately wanted to break the Union. I think the old adage "watch what you wish for could apply here. It was a politician and politics that put it back together again while at the same time freeing the slaves. Any social movement has to be clear about its objectives and take responsibility for its outcomes.

⁵⁸⁵ Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights*. 96.

Chapter 8

The Civil Rights Movement

The Legacy of Abolition

The Abolition Movement resulted in one of the greatest social transformations in American history. However, it is important to remember that the Abolition Movement achieved its success in stages. First was the Emancipation Proclamation which was a presidential executive order issued on January 1, 1863, which made the destruction of slavery an objective of the Union War effort. It was a crucial step in abolishing slavery but by itself it did not free all the slaves. It applied only to those 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the Confederate states that declared secession from the Union and therefore, in effect, ruptured the Union of American states. The proclamation did not apply to the border states: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia. The Proclamation drew on a vaguely defined “military necessity” to claim legality under the Constitution.⁵⁸⁶ Even before Lincoln issued the Proclamation, abolitionists insisted that the war should produce a new nation “with one law impartial over all.”⁵⁸⁷ Nonetheless, the Emancipation Proclamation was a dramatic departure from Lincoln’s previous statements and policies regarding slavery. It was immediate, not gradual, contained no mention of compensation for slaveowners, and made no reference to colonization. Since emancipation no longer required the consent of slaveholders, these inducements were now irrelevant.⁵⁸⁸ More than any other single act, emancipation announced the existence of a new kind of national state, one capable of abolishing the largest concentration of property in the country (slaves as property were worth nearly four billion 1860 dollars) and identified that state with the expansion of freedom and human rights.⁵⁸⁹ When the Civil War ended, the white South accepted the reality of military defeat and desired above all a quick reintegration into the fabric of national life.

⁵⁸⁶ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 18.

⁵⁸⁷ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 15.

⁵⁸⁸ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 27.

⁵⁸⁹ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 15.

At the end of the great Civil War, the country was poised for great changes. Slavery had been abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Hope abounded, at least in the North, about the possibility of bringing forth a more egalitarian nation through what was already being called “Reconstruction.” Lincoln’s Republican Party took the main responsibility for Reconstruction after his death, and those on the party’s most progressive wing—such as Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, and Senator Benjamin Wade of Ohio—hoped to transform the erstwhile slave South into a region where the freed people could vote, find work, own property, and have the same rights and privileges as white people.⁵⁹⁰ The period immediately after the Civil War, known as the Reconstruction period, is generally agreed to have encompassed the period from 1865 to 1877. The historian and filmmaker Henry Louis Gates in *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*, argues that during the Reconstruction period, at least in theory, the United States attempted to come to grips with the original sin of the founding – slavery. Gates, however, moves beyond Reconstruction and defines the period immediately following, starting in 1877, as the Redemption period. During the Redemption Period any political, social, or economic gains that were made by black people in the United States were systematically erased. The Southern white majority made every attempt to reinforce and re-establish control of the newly freed slaves. Some form of legislation to control the actions of slaves had existed on the books of some states for a long time. However, “Jim Crow laws” or the “Black Codes,” which appeared at the end of the Reconstruction period, renewed with great vigor the Southern white’s reestablishment of control of the formerly enslaved, and marked the rise of a white supremacist ideology in the South. The former Confederate states “redeemed” themselves at the expense of black rights, especially the right of black men to vote.⁵⁹¹

Before his death, Abraham Lincoln had embarked on a course of sectional reconciliation, and during Presidential Reconstruction (1865–67), his successor, Andrew

⁵⁹⁰ Robert S Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson* (WW Norton & Company, 2021). xiii-xvi.

⁵⁹¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr, *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*, Kindle ed. (Penguin, 2020). xiii.

Johnson, attempted to carry out Lincoln's magnanimous policies. Johnson's efforts were opposed and eventually thwarted by the Radical Republicans in Congress.⁵⁹²

Early generations of historians saw Reconstruction as a bad idea that was badly executed. Led by Eric Foner, today's historians of the period see Reconstruction as an era of tragically unfulfilled promise, a "second founding" that failed to realize its noble vision. It was also a time when African Americans were terrorized and murdered so regularly that racial violence, and Black resistance to that violence, became part of everyday life.⁵⁹³ Reconstruction turned out to be a failed promise. Even though the South accepted military defeat and they truly wanted quick reintegration, the end of slavery was a bitter pill for them to swallow. The white South wanted their culture, and therefore their social life and hierarchy, to change as little as possible. Almost all the states of the old Confederacy passed laws in 1865 which came to known as the "Black Codes." The point of these codes was to preserve Southern culture and the Southern prewar lifestyle. The codes attempted to regulate many aspects of the newly freed slave's life.⁵⁹⁴ These codes, in effect, established, a kind of American caste system. This caste system in every way resembled the Indian caste system that Gandhi campaigned so vigorously against. The blacks were "the untouchables" in the American caste system.

To give an example, the 1865 laws or "Black Codes" of Mississippi, plainly intended to ensure that blacks would work as laborers, on farms and plantations owned by whites. No freed slave could own any farmland in Mississippi. As laborers, blacks were forced to work under written contracts that dictated their terms of employment. Any black laborer who quit "without good cause" could be arrested and dragged back to his employer. In Mississippi, blacks still could not testify in cases where plaintiff and defendant were white. Intermarriage between races was strictly forbidden. Blacks could not sit on juries. There were also stringent vagrancy laws in Mississippi and other states, which could be, and were, used to keep blacks under strict social control.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, Updated Edition ed., (No Title), (2014). 13.

⁵⁹³ Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*. xxvi.

⁵⁹⁴ Lawrence M Friedman, *A History of American Law*, Kindle ed. (Simon and Schuster, 2005). 382

⁵⁹⁵ Friedman, *A History of American Law*. 382.

The North—at least the radical Republicans—found this kind of law totally unacceptable. The Black Codes were eliminated; Congress enacted a strong Civil Rights Act (1866), anticipating the Fourteenth Amendment (1868). The South was put under military government. The Freedmen’s Bureaus was established by Congress on March 3, 1865. Blacks were elected to Congress and held state offices.⁵⁹⁶ The Freedmen’s bureaus was supposed to help newly freed slaves adapt to the white man’s society and economy. These legislative moves were noble at best but unfortunately fell short of their optimistic goals.

Later in Reconstruction, Congress would determine that, under the Fourteenth Amendment, it had the authority to outlaw private practices that interfered with the promise of equal citizenship, including victimization by racially motivated violence and exclusion from hotels, transport, and other public venues. But the Supreme Court and its decisions would apply a rigid understanding of state action to weaken dramatically the amendment’s impact.⁵⁹⁷ Together with far-reaching congressional legislation meant to provide former slaves with access to the courts, ballot box, and public accommodations, and to protect them against violence, the Reconstruction amendments, the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments, greatly enhanced the power of the federal government, transferring much of the authority to define citizens’ rights from the states to the nation. They forged a new constitutional relationship between individual Americans and the national state and were crucial in creating the world’s first biracial democracy, in which people, only a few years removed from slavery, exercised significant political power. All three amendments end with a clause empowering Congress to enforce their provisions, thereby guaranteeing that Reconstruction would be an ongoing process, not a single moment in time.⁵⁹⁸

But Reconstruction did not last. The Freedmen’s Bureaus practically ceased operation by 1869. Even during its short existence, it was constantly understaffed and underfinanced; and their most aggressive initiatives were frequently thwarted. For example, abandoned land redistribution on the Sea Islands of South Carolina—were

⁵⁹⁶ Friedman, *A History of American Law*. 382.

⁵⁹⁷ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. 79.

⁵⁹⁸ Foner, *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*. xix-xx.

frustrated by the policies of the Johnson administration and most of the seized or abandoned properties went to army officers, government officials, Northern speculators and finally, cotton companies or textile firms. Only a small portion of the land went to the former slaves who worked the plantations who pooled their meager resources to purchase the land.⁵⁹⁹

Years before the end of slavery, black abolitionist Charles L. Reason had predicted that emancipation would impose “severe trials” upon the freedmen: “The prejudice now felt against them for bearing on their persons the brand of slaves, cannot die out immediately.”⁶⁰⁰ Even Lincoln’s funeral illustrated the problem, for when his body reached New York, the city’s municipal authorities sought to bar blacks from marching in the procession, only to be overruled by the War Department. Yet in a society resting on ideals of individual autonomy and competitive equality, could there be a permanent holding place between slavery and citizenship?⁶⁰¹

By 1875, the North’s passion for equality, never very profound, had all but dribbled away. The North lost interest in black welfare. Northern racism, briefly and thinly covered over, came to the surface once more. The South would be left to solve the “Negro problem” on its own. As for the white South, it eagerly embraced the new situation. The Ku Klux Klan terrorized the blacks. Blacks who offended against their code—or even blacks who were too successful for their own good—were beaten and sometimes murdered.⁶⁰²

When considering social movements and the Civil Rights Movement in particular, it is important to remember Newton’s Third Law, which, simply stated is, that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Perhaps even more relevant to the social sciences are the theories of Hegel and Marx who also reiterated this theory, but in the form of a dialectic. Marx’s Manifesto described a dialectical process in which labor is transformed into its opposite, capital, and the workers’ labor impoverishes them, as it is

⁵⁹⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. 109.

⁶⁰⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. 138.

⁶⁰¹ Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*. 139.

⁶⁰² Friedman, *A History of American Law*. 382.

externalized in the capital it creates.⁶⁰³ In Marxist theory, the terms "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" describe a dialectical process of change, particularly in the context of social and historical development. The thesis represents an existing idea or condition. The antithesis is a contradictory or opposing idea or condition that challenges the thesis. Finally, the synthesis is a new idea or condition that emerges from the conflict and reconciliation of the thesis and antithesis.⁶⁰⁴

The American Civil War was, in essence, a clash of social systems; social systems that were in opposition: slavery versus a free society. One concept of a society or thesis was expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and another, or antithesis, expressed in the first Constitution. The American Civil War was a war that turned into a revolutionary movement to end slavery, or create a new synthesis, which attempted to reconcile the conflicting systems of government, one free and one slave. The war, in essence, was a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by a portion of the overall society to reconstruct a more egalitarian, free, and just society to reconcile and synthesize at the same time.

The anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace called these attempts to synthesize one societal paradigm with another, "revitalization" movements.⁶⁰⁵ Wallace wrote, "Revitalization movements are evidently not unusual phenomena, but are recurrent features in human history. Probably few men have lived who have not been involved in an instance of the revitalization process. They are furthermore, of profound historical importance."⁶⁰⁶ The Civil War and Reconstruction after the war certainly qualify as a revitalization movement. American society was going through a radical fundamental change. Four million formerly enslaved people were now free and claiming full

⁶⁰³ Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life*, Kindle ed. (WW Norton & Company, 2013).

⁶⁰⁴ Hardik Gupta, "Karl Marx's Theory of Dialectical Method," *Indian Journal of Integrated Research in Law* Volume III, Chicago 17th ed.

Hardik Gupta, "Karl Marx's Theory of Dialectical Method," *Indian Journal of Integrated Research in Law* 3, no. 5 (September-October 2023): 1-10, no. Issue 5 (September-October 2023), https://heinonline-org.ezproxy.drew.edu/HOL/Print?public=true&handle=hein.journals/injloiid5&div=85&start_page=1&collection=journals&set_as_cursor=0&men_tab=srchresults&print=section&format=PDFsearchable&submit=Print%2FDownload.

⁶⁰⁵ Wallace, "Revitalization Movements." 265.

⁶⁰⁶ Wallace, "Revitalization Movements." 267.

citizenship in American society. That claim sparked large-scale political activism that centered on the rights of African Americans. The quest for competitive equality for all blacks with whites was on. That claim, of course, did not go unopposed. White citizens' groups stood in active opposition. As civil rights activists organized, white Mississippi counterattacked. The state established a cloak-and-dagger spy agency called the State Sovereignty Commission, which employed misinformation, espionage, intimidation, and extortion to keep blacks from crossing Jim Crow lines. The commission funneled \$5,000 a month in state tax money to the White Citizens' Councils, which was used to bribe black editors and ministers to oppose integration, pay informants to betray the civil rights movement, and spread the gospel of white supremacy nationwide with a speakers bureau.⁶⁰⁷

The political scientist, Dennis Chong, refers to the Civil Rights Movement as “public-spirited collective action.” Civil Rights as a form of collective action aims, in principal, to obtain socially defined goals equally for all people. One example of a civil rights goal is the unimpeded right to vote. The right to vote in Chong’s terminology is a public good. Chong states that public goods, are distinguished by three qualities: (1) they are “jointly supplied”; (2) noncontributors to the production of these goods cannot be excluded from their benefits; and (3) the benefits from these goods are not susceptible to “crowding.”⁶⁰⁸ In other words, the enjoyment of a public good by an individual does not crowd out the use or benefit of a public good to another member of society. My enjoyment of a public good does not prevent you from enjoying the same good. If I vote, it does not crowd out or prohibit you from voting. Chong explains that the proverbial pie, for instance, is a private good; it can be cut into any number of equal or unequal slices and distributed, or it can be given whole to one person. On the other hand, the public goods that were pursued over the course of the civil rights movement were close to being pure public goods, and as such should have been available to both black and white citizens. Indeed, the removal of restrictive laws known as Jim Crow laws, the passage of national legislation expanding the rights of blacks, the curtailment of racial prejudice, and

⁶⁰⁷ Bruce J Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: the Black Freedom Struggle in America*, Kindle ed. (Routledge, 2021). 114.

⁶⁰⁸ Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*, Kindle ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2014). 2.

other goals achieved or partially achieved by the civil rights movement attempted to make public goods available to both blacks and whites.⁶⁰⁹

Naturally public goods are not without their problems. Civil rights, women's rights, peace, and other collective goals, moreover, are public goods that can be produced only if large numbers of people work to achieve them. Organization and mobilization are critical aspects of any movement. Blacks, women, students, and antiwar protesters had to marshal their collective resources to make their demands for equality felt in the political system. No individual could supply the public good for the benefit of the entire group, and, more importantly, no average contributor could significantly affect the likelihood that the public good would be produced; rather, a collective effort was necessary to obtain a group objective.⁶¹⁰

Power, according to Hobbes, is the accumulated control that permits the individual to fix prices and regulate supply and demand in such a way that they contribute to his own advantage. The individual will typically only consider his advantage in complete isolation from other members of society. In other words, from the point of view of an absolute minority, himself; he will then come to the realization that he can pursue and achieve his interest only with the support of the majority of his fellow members of society.⁶¹¹ The challenge of any movement or the organizers of a movement, is to get the necessary public support to achieve the production of a public good, and be willing to share that public good, in this case equality for both black and white members of society.

Hobbes saw this formation of a binary state, in which the majority seeks to control the minority, as a natural evolution of the individual's attempt to accumulate power. Hobbes believed that power accumulation was absolutely necessary in the state of nature because it was the "condition of perpetual war" of all against all.⁶¹² Individuals submitted to the authority of the state for security and to put an end to a perpetual state of

⁶⁰⁹ Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. 3.

⁶¹⁰ Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*. 3-4.

⁶¹¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle ed. (marinerbooks.com HarperCollins. Kindle Edition. , 1948). 140.

⁶¹² Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 142.

war. The Civil Rights Movement, however, was a revolutionary movement and almost inevitably, as Wallace points out, this type of movement will encounter resistance. Resistance may in some cases be slight and fleeting but more commonly it is determined and resourceful and held by a powerful faction within society.⁶¹³ This is especially true if that powerful faction feels threatened by the movement; and especially, if that movement threatens to change the current power structure. The Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens' Councils, and Southern political and civic leadership stood in strong opposition to any changes in the current structure of society and the position of blacks within that structure. The Civil Rights movement aimed directly at the power structure in the South.

After the Civil War the South immediately reacted to emancipation and the freeing of black people into Southern society. The South, in various states, through legislative enactment, sanctioned segregation. The practice of requiring by legislative enactment that African Americans use railroad coaches or compartments separate from those for whites, became commonly referred to as "Jim Crow" legislation. This type of legislation appeared in the South in the closing decade of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest states to enact this type of legislation was Tennessee. The legislature of Tennessee in 1881 enacted a law requiring railroads to provide separate cars or compartments for the use of black people.⁶¹⁴

Robert Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*, notes that today's historians of the period see Reconstruction as an era of tragically unfulfilled promise, a "second founding" that failed to realize its noble vision. Levine noted that the tragedy of Reconstruction was much more than the failure of a noble vision. It was also more than just segregation of schools and public transportations and public accommodations. It was also a time when African Americans were terrorized and murdered so regularly that racial violence, and Black resistance to that violence, became part of everyday life.⁶¹⁵ Terror was used as an instrument to rule masses of people with certain common characteristics, principally their

⁶¹³ Wallace, "Revitalization Movements." 274.

⁶¹⁴ Stanley J. Folmsbee, "The Origin of the First 'Jim Crow' Law," *The Journal of Southern History* 15, no. 2 (1949), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2197999>, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2197999>. 235.

⁶¹⁵ Levine, *The Failed Promise: Reconstruction, Frederick Douglass, and the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*. xxi-xxii.

race, without any regard to their specific individual behavior. Assimilation into white Southern culture for blacks was a matter of being assimilated or eliminated.⁶¹⁶

Leslie Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws*, points out that,

From 1881 to 1964, Jim Crow laws separated Americans by race in 26 states. The laws created *de jure* segregation or the legal separation by race of Americans. In most American cities, towns, and states, North and South, people lived in segregated neighborhoods and attended schools that were all white or all black. However, attitudes and history, not laws, created that separation or de facto segregation. The ‘majesty of the law’ stood behind legal segregation in Jim Crow states. ‘The rule of law’ imposed penalties and punishments on people who broke those statutes and ordinances mandating segregation. The most common Jim Crow laws made it illegal for anyone to marry someone of another race and demanded that business owners separate their customers by skin color and protected their right to legally refuse service to people because of their race.⁶¹⁷

A good example of “Jim Crow” instituted immediately after the war was the 1865 laws of Mississippi. That law plainly intended that blacks would work only as laborers, on farms and plantations owned by whites. The South discovered to its relief that cotton could be grown without slave labor. White landowners replaced slavery with sharecropping, which proved a most devastating combination with Jim Crow segregation. Former slaves were not paid any reparations by their former owners upon their emancipation and, as a result, former slaves had no money nor could they accumulate wealth. To work the land, even as a sharecropper, newly freed slaves had to go into debt to purchase seeds to plant or equipment to farm. Between exploitation of his or her labor by the sharecropping system and unscrupulous storekeepers and landlords, “the former slave inevitably ran a greater and greater debt, living in virtual debt peonage. This system in many respects became neo-slavery.”⁶¹⁸ Any black laborer who quit “without good cause” could be arrested for vagrancy and dragged back to his employer. In addition, according to the black codes in Mississippi, blacks still could not testify in cases where plaintiff and defendant were white. Blacks could not sit on juries. Intermarriage between the races was strictly forbidden. In short, Blacks were kept under strict social control.

⁶¹⁶ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. 6 and 273.

⁶¹⁷ Leslie V Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws*, Kindle ed. (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2012). 10-11.

⁶¹⁸ Gates Jr, *Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow*. 16-17.

The goal of Jim Crow laws was to create a legal system that offered the same protections against black “beastliness,” that had been established by slave codes. Chains, whips, and beating were replaced with laws, jails, powerlessness, and with the constant fear of death in the night. Jim Crow laws separating blacks from whites, always backed up by fear of a lynch mob, a beating, or a bombing kept blacks from ever coming close to achieving equality. Demanding that black children go to separate schools, that were generally inferior to white schools or that blacks use separate, different, washrooms from whites used, were all part of the system of white supremacy. The Southerners saw it as part of the natural order of the universe. Breaking those laws would destroy that entire universe and the “southern way of life,” which outsiders could never understand.

At first, the North, at least the radical Republicans, found the Black Codes totally unacceptable and passed a strong civil rights act, the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This law was further strengthened with the Civil Rights Act of 1875 which added an integration of public accommodations provision to the law. The Supreme Court once again intervened on the side of Southern property owners and declared the law unconstitutional. The Constitution, the Court said, applied only to state discrimination; private parties, including hotels, inns, and other public accommodations, were free to discriminate if they wanted to. Nothing much happened to alter this situation until the civil rights movement and the civil rights laws of the 1960s. That marked an almost 82-year hiatus from the Civil Rights Act of 1875 and the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

Frederick Douglass, who was perhaps best known during his life as a consummate orator, was frequently sought out to speak on behalf of African Americans and persecuted people everywhere. He insightfully noted in 1890 the state of affairs for blacks in America. In an address delivered on October 21, 1890, before The Bethel Literary and Historical Association in the Metropolitan A. M. E. Church in Washington D. C., he coined a powerful phrase that would last up until at least the era of the modern Civil Rights Movement if not beyond. In that speech he described what he said was popularly known as “The Negro Problem.”⁶¹⁹ This problem presented itself not just as one problem

⁶¹⁹ Frederick Douglass, Literary Bethel, and D. C. Historical Association of Washington, *The Race Problem: great speech of Frederick Douglass, delivered before the Bethel Literary and Historical*

but a set of problems. Each one had occurred repeatedly in the 200 year history of white people and black people trying to live with one another. Douglass objected to characterizing the relation subsisting between the white and colored people of this country as the Negro problem. He stated that the phrase “The Negro Problem, implied that the Negro had precipitated that problem, and that he was responsible for the problem. He went on to explain that Lincoln stated that the “The Negroes were the cause of the war.”⁶²⁰ This was a reference Douglass made to Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address. It made Douglass’s point, but it was a bit of an exaggeration. What Lincoln actually said was, “One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war.”⁶²¹ As Negroes were the only enslaved people in the United States, therefore since conflict over the institution of slavery caused the Civil War, and all slaves were Negroes, then Negroes caused the Civil War. I think this might be considered a tautology but I think in truth it was just used by Douglass as a rhetorical point that served to introduce his point. He went on to say, “There may be rest for the weary, but there seems at present no rest for the Negro. He has been solving problems during all his history.”⁶²²

He went on to enumerate some of the problems that Negroes continually faced. The first problem he pointed out was, “Ought the Negro to be baptized in water and admitted to membership in the Christian church?” Douglass explains:

The controversy over this problem was long and furious, and the Negro only won a partial victory after all. The matter was finally settled, as usual, by a kind of compromise. The Negro was baptized and admitted to the church, but a sort of second table was set for him. He could take the Lord’s supper only after his white brethren had finished eating the bread and drinking the wine. He was not even allowed to enter the same door of the sanctuary by which his white

Association, in the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church, Washington, D.C., October 21, 1890 ([Washington?, 1890). <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008727440>
<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002003186195>.

⁶²⁰ James Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*, Kindle ed. (Courier Dover Publications, 2013), Kindle. 90.

⁶²¹ "Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln," Yale Law School - Lillian Goldman Law Library, updated 2008, 1865, accessed 6/27/2025, 2025, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp (Text of Second Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln).

⁶²² Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 90.

brethren entered. A separate door was cut for him in the wall, a sort of hole in the wall, leading to a high and dark place in the gallery, where his presence could give no offense to the Lord's white children on the floor. It is strange that this state of things did not disgust and repel the Negro, make him an infidel, and drive him from religion altogether, but it did not. He clung to religion all the same. Believing that half a loaf was better than no bread, he took what he could get of the church, kept on praying and singing, and sometimes shouting.⁶²³

Douglass went on to point out other problems caused by their former status as slaves. One of the most serious problems was whether a Negro could contract a valid marriage. If a slave could marry and could enforce his rights to his wife and children, it would provide a limitation on his master's power. If what God joined together no man could eliminate, the right to sell the wife from the husband and the husband from the wife would have to stop. The only solution would be that the master had to have the right to buy and sell as he pleased. This terrible solution to the marriage question meant that the Negro was unable to contract valid marriage, the Negro felt himself unrestrained, and licensed to do as he pleased. He was not expected to limit his conduct by any rule or principle of morality or decency. He had, in law, no wife, no family, no children, and did not own himself. The consequence of this state of things would be seen in their own city at the police court and elsewhere, and the strange thing is, the very people who were responsible for this immorality and crime would then talk solemnly about the terrible Negro problem.⁶²⁴ In enumerating the "terrible" problems of the Negroes from invalid marriages, to lack of literacy, to the perennial problems of crime, poor health, lack of adequate housing and poverty, Douglass was making the point that all of these problems can be attributed to past slavery and a racist society in the United States. Douglass proposed that Reconciliation after the Civil War could be achieved "without confusing the moral sense of the nation and misleading the public mind. There was no need to go about creating doubt, inflaming passion, arousing prejudice, and attracting to the enemies of the Negro popular sympathy by representing the Negro as an ignorant, base, and dangerous person, and by presenting to those enemies that his existence to them is a dreadful problem. With their usual cunning, these enemies of the Negro have made the

⁶²³ Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 90-91.

⁶²⁴ Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 92.

North partly believe that they are now contending with a vast and mysterious problem, the mere contemplation of which should cause the whole North to shudder and come to the rescue. The trick is worthy of its inventors and has been played for all that it is worth.”⁶²⁵

In his conclusion to his speech Douglass argues that:

The true problem is not the Negro, but the nation. Not the law-abiding blacks of the South, but the white men of that section, who by fraud, violence, and persecution, are breaking the law, trampling on the Constitution, corrupting the ballot-box, and defeating the ends of justice. The true problem is whether these white ruffians shall be allowed by the nation to go on in their lawless and nefarious career, dishonoring the Government and making its very name a mockery. It is whether this nation has in itself sufficient moral stamina to maintain its own honor and integrity by vindicating its own Constitution and fulfilling its own pledges, or whether it has already touched that dry rot of moral depravity by which nations decline and fall, and governments fade and vanish. The United States Government made the Negro a citizen; will it protect him as a citizen? This is the problem. It made him a soldier; will it honor him as a patriot? This is the problem. It made him a voter; will it defend his right to vote? This is the problem. This, I say, is more a problem for the nation than for the Negro, and this is the side of the question far more than the other, which should be kept in view by the American people.⁶²⁶

Unfortunately, as Douglass had sensed, the United States Government was not living up to its potential or its promises. In contrast to what the United States stated was its ideology of equality and freedom, tragically, for much of its history, as slavery had before it, Jim Crow segregation had the protection of the U.S. Constitution and U.S. Supreme Court. This new form of social control employed in the South known as Jim Crow laws, enjoyed the legal protection of the U.S. Supreme Court, which laid the constitutional foundation for the era of Jim Crow. The Court once again, as it had done at the founding, sanctioned this new form of controlling black citizens. In three separate decisions the Supreme Court, on segregating people by race -- *the Slaughterhouse Cases* (1873), *the Civil Rights Cases* (1883), and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) -- the court provided the ex-Confederate states with the constitutional backing they needed to construct a completely segregated society.⁶²⁷ Segregation, at least in the mind of the

⁶²⁵ Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 93-94.

⁶²⁶ Daley, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 94.

⁶²⁷ Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws*. 48.

Southerners, was absolutely necessary to control free blacks. This antithesis to Northern thinking invariably set up a basis for conflict within the United States and laid the grounds for the Civil Rights Movement.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) was an especially bad decision for the status of African Americans in American society. It put the Supreme Court's stamp of approval on apartheid. The Court reviewed a law that called for "equal but separate accommodation for the white, and colored races" in railway carriages.⁶²⁸ Lawrence Friedman, *A History of American Law*, describes the Plessy Case:

Plessy, a light-skinned black, brought a test case on behalf of a New Orleans group that wanted to fight the segregation law. Plessy bought a ticket and refused to move from the white section of the car to the 'colored' section. He was arrested; and the case went up to the Supreme Court of the United States. The Court turned down Plessy's complaint and upheld the statute. The decision, which was eight to one, showed a disregard for the realities of life in the South for black people; according to the Court, if blacks thought such a law imposed 'a badge of inferiority,' that was 'not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction on it.' In any event (said the Court), laws are 'powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences.' In reply, Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote a lonely but powerful dissent: Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.⁶²⁹

Even if Plessy did not inspire the expansion of segregation, it may have provided legitimacy to the practice and thus delayed its eventual demise. As one historian notes, after Plessy, separate but equal "bore the imprimatur of the national government." Measuring the symbolic or educational effects of Court decisions is nearly impossible.⁶³⁰

New voices for the black community arose and a new spirit of activism was generated by such powerful and diverse characters as W. E. B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, and Marcus Garvey.⁶³¹ New organizations also sprung up such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which was founded by such notable black activist as Ida B. Wells and W. E. B. Du Bois. The NAACP started

⁶²⁸ Friedman, *A History of American Law*. 385-386.

⁶²⁹ Friedman, *A History of American Law*. 385-386.

⁶³⁰ Michael J Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*, Kindle ed. (Oxford University Press, 2004). 48.

⁶³¹ Eric Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A brief history with documents*, Kindle ed. (Bedford/St. Martin's Boston, 2003). 9.

publishing a quarterly magazine *The Crisis* and it had as its editor W.E.B Du Bois for 24 years. The NAACP is the largest and oldest civil rights group in America. Heightened black activism and political awareness proved an enormous boon to the NAACP during the World War I era. National membership increased from roughly 10,000 in April 1917 to 44,000 in 1918 and 91,000 in 1919. Many new southern branches were formed. Michael Klarman argues that “The war provided the occasion for the NAACP to urge (successfully) that President Wilson condemn lynching and (unsuccessfully) that the national government abolish railroad segregation for black servicemen. Several branches outside of the South convinced cities to ban the white supremacist film *Birth of a Nation*, and others—mainly in peripheral South cities but also in Atlanta and Birmingham—conducted successful voter registration drives.”⁶³² In some respects, somewhat tragically, the success of the NAACP can be gauged by the ferocity of the southern white backlash which can easily be demonstrated by the increase in the number of lynchings that occurred. The number of lynchings went from thirty-six in 1917 to sixty in 1918 to an unconscionable seventy-six in 1919.⁶³³

The Great Migration

Nonetheless, as the American Civil War and the American Revolutionary War before it proved, war changes things, and World War I was no exception. Two things impacted African Americans in a major way. One was migration and the other was education. The World War I era saw what came to be known as the “Great Migration.” Unprecedented numbers of African Americans moved from Southern to Northern states. The magnitude of the migration quickly generated a significant public debate over its causes, implications, and significance. White southerners blamed the migration on northern labor agents eager to satisfy the ever-growing labor needs of the industrial revolution taking place in the North. They accused the northern agents of luring away black workers with false promises of high pay and better working conditions. For the black migrants themselves it reflected their desire to escape racial and economic oppression and to create better lives for themselves and their families. Regardless of your

⁶³² Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 104.

⁶³³ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 104.

point of view, in reality, the migration generated problems of acculturation and adjustment for the migrants. Migrants faced struggles over resources such as jobs and housing. Those struggles further complicated race relations in the North by putting the migrants in direct competition with whites for jobs and such scarce resources as affordable housing.

One positive aspect of the Great Migration was that after World War I, black secondary and college education in the South progressed “at a breath-taking rate.” The number of public high schools for blacks in the South rose from about 100 in 1915 to 1,000 in 1930. In 1900, only about 1,000 blacks attended college in the United States, but by 1930 roughly 20,000 did. The importance of black literacy for the cause of black civil rights cannot be underestimated. It is clear from the study of social movements that effective social protest requires educated leadership. The reasons for this are clear; educated people are more likely to resist subordinate caste status; literacy facilitates the dissemination of information and therefore the coordination of social protest; and the response of blacks to education negated much of the Darwinian arguments for observable racial differences that had been used by white supremacists to justify segregation and disfranchisement.

The progress that African Americans achieved was never all in a positive direction. The Great Migration eventually improved black political and economic power as compared to their conditions in the South. Nonetheless, there were social costs to that progress. The influx of new black migrants generated interracial friction over jobs and housing, greater discrimination in public accommodations and schools, frequent bombings of black homes in white neighborhoods, and several deadly race riots during and after World War I.

Despite large number of blacks moving North as late as 1940, more than three-fourths of American blacks still lived in the South. The stark reality of life in the South for blacks still subjected them to legal segregation, disfranchisement, Jim Crow justice, and occasional lynchings. Moreover, despite the accelerated pace of urbanization occurring in the South, three-fourths of all Southerners were still rural dwellers in 1920. Finally, though the First World War had egalitarian ideological and material

consequences, it also incited a furious white backlash. Fearful that returning black soldiers would launch a social revolution, southern whites prepared for a race war. The Ku Klux Klan began riding high again through the South, warning blacks not to “get any new-fangled ideas about democracy.”⁶³⁴ Black soldiers were assaulted, forced to shed their uniforms, and sometimes lynched. In Orange County, Florida, thirty blacks were burned to death in 1920 because one black man had attempted to vote. White violence succeeded in suppressing incipient black protest and quickly restored racial “normalcy” to the South. Whatever the long-term trends, the immediate prospects for American blacks were bleak in the 1920s, as revealed by snapshots of American race relations in the North, in the South, and at the national level.⁶³⁵

Conditions for blacks in the North were different from the conditions they endured in the South. In the North, African Americans enjoyed considerably more political and social rights than did their southern counterparts. With the arrival of World War I, which cut-off European immigration, the range of jobs now open to blacks increased dramatically. For many black southerners, the North appeared as a “promised land” where wages were higher, educational opportunities vastly superior, political rights secure, and where they would suffer fewer, if any, of the daily indignities they suffered in the Jim Crow South. Undoubtedly, life in the North was, for many, a distinct improvement over what they had left behind. But as migrants quickly learned, what some called the “land of hope” by no means welcomed them with open arms.⁶³⁶

Black migration to the North fed the racial prejudice of northern whites. Northern blacks were more likely to be excluded from public accommodations in the 1920’s than previously, and in 1925 the NAACP noted “a distinct movement towards segregation in public schools in Northern states.”⁶³⁷ Even formerly egalitarian institutions, such as Oberlin and Harvard Colleges, now segregated black students in dormitories. Most northern whites did not easily tolerate blacks moving into their neighborhoods, and they resisted through racially restrictive covenants, hostile neighborhood associations,

⁶³⁴ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 105.

⁶³⁵ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 105.

⁶³⁶ Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A brief history with documents*. 163.

⁶³⁷ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 105.

economic pressure, and violence. The NAACP's biggest case in the 1920s involved defending Dr. Ossian Sweet, a black doctor from Detroit, and several family members, who were charged with murder for allegedly killing a member of a mob that was attacking their home in a white neighborhood. Whether attributable to legal or extralegal causes, northern residential segregation increased dramatically in the 1920s. Housing segregation meant school segregation, even if authorities did not gerrymander attendance zones or use discriminatory transfer policies, as they frequently did.⁶³⁸ Rising racial tensions in the North reminded migrants and "old settlers alike that racial equality remained an elusive goal that may lie in the distant future."⁶³⁹

Chicago provides an excellent example of what life turned about to be like for the new arrivals. Arnesen writes:

During the summer of 1917 the Chicago Urban League made a canvass of real estate dealers supplying houses for Negroes and found that in a single day there were 664 Negro applicants for houses, and only 50 houses available. In some instances as many as ten persons were listed for a single house. This condition did not continue long. There were counted thirty-six new neighborhoods, formerly white, opening up to Negroes within three months. At the same time rents increased from 5 to 30 and sometimes as much as 50 per cent. . . . Meeting actual conditions of life in Chicago brought its exaltations and disillusionments to the migrants. These were reflected in the schools, public amusement places, industry, and the street cars. The Chicago Urban League, Negro churches, and Negro newspapers assumed the task of making the migrants into "city folk." The increase in church membership indicates prompt efforts to re-engage in community life and establish agreeable and helpful associations. It also reflects the persistence of religious life among the migrants...⁶⁴⁰

Unfortunately, in the North things were not quick to improve either. To give another example, this time from the 1960s, a publication periodically published by the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, in July 1961, published an article entitled "Negroes and the Suburbs" that announced:

The suburbanward drift of factories, shopping centers, and service establishments that employ Negroes in large numbers is providing an added incentive to the suburbanization of the Negro population. Many of the neat, little suburban cement-block cottages built for World War II veterans are now 20 years old, and

⁶³⁸ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 105.

⁶³⁹ Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A brief history with documents*. 164.

⁶⁴⁰ Arnesen, *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A brief history with documents*. 166-167.

are sufficiently depreciated 'dated', in need of repair, and undesirable in comparison with other suburban homes to make them 'ripe' for non-white occupancy. The 1960 census will almost certainly show a sizeable upturn in the amount of Negro suburbanization when the tabulations are available. The decade of the 1960's should see an ever greater movement of this type.⁶⁴¹

It is unclear whether the Commission was happy or unhappy with this trend. Whether one opposed, cautiously approved, or enthusiastically endorsed the migration of blacks to the North, one thing was clear: the Great Migration represented an important point in African American history and race relations in the United States.

The Black Church

Wherever Black families migrated, they brought with them their social customs, their music, and, most important of all, their faith. Sometimes entire congregations migrated, along with their pastors.⁶⁴² This fact proved critical to the birth of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Professor Henry Louis Gates in, *The Black Church This is Our Story, This is our Song*, makes the critical point that "Rooted in the fundamental belief in equality between Black and white, human dignity, earthly and heavenly freedom, and sisterly and brotherly love, the Black Church and the religion practiced within its embrace acted as the engine driving social transformation in America, from the antebellum abolitionist movement through the various phases of the fight against Jim Crow...."⁶⁴³ The Black Church and the traditional Christian religion practiced within its walls acted as the engine driving social transformation in America, from the antebellum abolitionist movement through the various phases of the fight against Jim Crow, up to and including the modern civil rights movement led by the Reverend Martin Luther King and others.⁶⁴⁴

Why were the Black churches so important to the Civil Rights movement? Aldon Morris, in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, explains that the black church

⁶⁴¹ Non-White Population Changes 1950-1960, (Chicago Illinois: Chicago Commission on Human Relations, 1961). From an address entitled "Who will live in Chicago during the 1960's" by Prof. Donald J. Bogue of the University of Chicago at the University's Downtown Center.

⁶⁴² Henry Louis Gates Jr. , *The Black Church: This is our story, this is our song*, Kindle ed. (Penguin, 2022). 110.

⁶⁴³ Gates Jr. , *The Black Church: This is our story, this is our song*. 4.

⁶⁴⁴ Gates Jr. , *The Black Church: This is our story, this is our song*. 4.

functioned as the institutional center of the modern civil rights movement. Churches provided the movement with an organized mass base; a leadership of clergymen largely economically independent of the larger white society and skilled in the art of managing people and resources; an institutionalized financial base through which protest was financed; and meeting places where the masses planned tactics and strategies and collectively committed themselves to the struggle for equality and freedom. It was also critical to the success of the Civil Rights movement that it was not just a Southern movement that it was a national movement. The Black Church provided a unifying base for the movement. The Great Migration was key to the origins of modern gospel, as southern sounds spread into northern cities. "The multitude of denominations that opened those storefront churches during the Great Migration were not just Pentecostal, but were Holiness, Pentecostal, Apostolic, and Deliverance churches."⁶⁴⁵ These churches offered a touch of something dear and familiar to the migrants. They also spread a social gospel of black pride and equality. Out of a commitment to help their own, Black churches built upon the framework broadly known as the social gospel: Christianity's attempt to address social and economic problems, drawing upon the tenets of the Bible to scale these persistent, seemingly unmovable chronic problems of the black community.⁶⁴⁶

Black migration also had a tremendous impact on the South. The migration was not only to the North. There was another aspect of the Great Migration. A movement of rural blacks to the urban South. Between 1940 and 1960 the black population in cities in Alabama like Birmingham and Montgomery increased dramatically. In Birmingham the black population increased by 84 percent. In Montgomery, the black population increased by 40 percent. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the black population increased by 453 percent during the same period, while in Tallahassee, Florida, it increased by 145 percent. Newly urbanized Southern blacks established close ties with the institution they knew best, the church. Numerous problems attended the major shift from rural to urban life, and the church facilitated the transition by offering valuable friendships and social networks works through which the migrants could assimilate into urban life. Moreover, the Southern urban church was similar to its rural counterpart in that it provided an

⁶⁴⁵ Gates Jr. , *The Black Church: This is our story, this is our song*. 120.

⁶⁴⁶ Gates Jr. , *The Black Church: This is our story, this is our song*. 113.

institutional alternative to, and an escape from, the racism and hostility of the larger society.⁶⁴⁷ The urban churches of the South became organizations of considerable social power. The principal resource of the church was its organized mass base. The church not only organized the black masses but also commanded their allegiance. The fact that the church has been financially supported by its economically deprived parishioners clearly demonstrates that allegiance. Furthermore, the black community has always contributed the voluntary labor necessary to meet the church's considerable needs in its role as the main community center. W. E. B. DuBois, commenting on the large volume of church activity, stated, "so frequent are... church exercises that there are few Negro churches which are not open four to seven nights a week and sometimes one or two afternoons in addition."⁶⁴⁸ These activities emerged from an elaborate organizational structure.⁶⁴⁹ It was (and is) common for black ministers in a community and even in different communities to have personal relationships among themselves. They met at conventions, community gatherings, civic affairs, and the like. At times they exchanged pulpit duties and encouraged their choirs to sing at the churches of colleagues. Furthermore, black ministers in a community were linked formally by either a city ministerial alliance or an interdenominational alliance, through which they were able to debate and confer on issues important to the black community.⁶⁵⁰ Using church organizations as their base of recruitment local civil rights movement centers sprung up in Montgomery, Tallahassee, and Birmingham. The movement organization in Montgomery was known as the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and was organized in December 1955; the Inter Civic Council (ICC) of Tallahassee, was organized in May 1956; the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) organized in Birmingham in June 1956. These organizations became the centers for the civil rights movement in the tumultuous years that lay ahead.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁷ Aldon D Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (Simon and Schuster, 1984). 6.

⁶⁴⁸ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 6.

⁶⁴⁹ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 6.

⁶⁵⁰ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 11.

⁶⁵¹ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 40-41.

The Modern Civil Rights Movement – Resistance – Protest - Change

As early as 1941, fourteen years before Rosa Parks took her momentous stand in Montgomery, the March on Washington Movement was organized. It was especially important as a forerunner to the modern civil rights movement. The MOWM demonstrated conclusively that masses of blacks could be organized for collective protest. During the MOWM, huge mass meetings and other forms of collective protest were organized across the country. Moreover, A. Philip Randolph, the leader of the MOWM, anticipated the upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s when in 1943 he explicitly called for mass nonviolent demonstrations against Jim Crow laws, to be modeled after Gandhi's passive resistance movement in India. The threat of such demonstrations was enough to force President Roosevelt to issue executive orders forbidding racial discrimination in defense industries. The MOWM played a significant role in inspiring the formation of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942 and thrust a cadre of nonviolent leaders such as James Farmer, Bayard Rustin, and E. D. Nixon to the forefront of black protest. In the early 1940s a nucleus of these activists became convinced that a black nonviolent movement could be launched in the United States. They would become key leaders of the modern movement.⁶⁵² Early on in the movement, much like the Abolition Movement before it, different strategies and tactics developed to forward the movement. The oldest of all the civil rights organizations, the NAACP preferred taking a legal approach using the courts to forward the movement. In 1940 Thurgood Marshall founded the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF). Marshall served as its first Director-Counsel. As, Juan Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, "His great achievement was to expand rights for individual Americans. But he especially succeeded in creating new protections under law for America's women, children, prisoners, homeless, minorities, and immigrants. Their greater claim to full citizenship in the Republic over the last century can be directly traced to Marshall."⁶⁵³ Williams pointed out that, of the three leading black liberators of the twentieth-century America - Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X—Marshall was the least

⁶⁵² Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. x-xi.

⁶⁵³ Juan Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, Kindle ed. (Crown, 2011). 6.

well known. Yet it was Marshall who ended segregation in the United States by representing the NAACP Legal Defense Fund before the Supreme Court and winning victories that broke the color line in housing, transportation, and voting. It was Marshall who won the most important legal case of the century, *Brown v. Board of Education*, ending the legal separation of black and white children in public schools. The success of the *Brown* case sparked the 1960s civil rights movement.⁶⁵⁴ Marshall's life work helped to define and influence race relations in the United States for the entire twentieth century. However, MOWM and CORE took a different approach. They saw a real possibility that legal and mass-oriented approaches could work together simultaneously. Marshall rejected the idea of non-violent direct action as rhetorical fluff, which accomplished no permanent change in society. Marshall held a deep abiding conviction that integration and only integration would allow equal rights decisions made in court to take hold.⁶⁵⁵

Non-Violent Resistance

Courts, however, were not the only way to change. There was another way. That other way was pioneered by a prophet born in India. The other way was through non-violent direct action. The concept of non-violent direct action was based on the teachings, beliefs and actions of Gandhi. "Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) was called 'Mahatma' ('Great Soul') because of his extraordinary achievements as leader of the Indian movement for independence. Gandhi was not primarily a theorist but a reformer and activist. When pressed for a treatise on his philosophy, he protested that "I am not built for academic writings. Action is my domain."⁶⁵⁶ Yet his actions were always guided by values and ideas that were remarkably adaptable to the American Civil Rights Movement. Chief among these ideas were his unique concepts of freedom and power, or, to use his terms, of *swaraj* and *satyagraha*.⁶⁵⁷ *Swaraj* for Gandhi meant self-rule but not in the traditional American sense of independence. Gandhi grounded the meaning of *swaraj* in ancient Vedic tradition. This allowed for interpreting *swaraj* as freedom but in

⁶⁵⁴ Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*. 6.

⁶⁵⁵ Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*. 7.

⁶⁵⁶ Dennis Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*, Kindle ed. (Columbia University Press, 2012). 30

⁶⁵⁷ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 30.

two ways. Swaraj meant literally “self-rule” and could denote, in a strict political sense, a sovereign country’s freedom from colonial rule. Or it could mean freedom in a spiritual sense as being free from illusion and ignorance. From this perspective, a person is not only liberated but gains greater self-knowledge and as a consequence of that knowledge self-mastery. Freedom, therefore, comes as we learn through self-discipline to rule ourselves.⁶⁵⁸ This idea of “inward freedom” associates swaraj with an internal journey or search for self-knowledge that liberates one from the sort of fear and insecurity that fuels both a desire to dominate or to be dominated. “The pilgrimage to *Swaraj*” he said, “is a painful climb,” and that life can be viewed as an arduous journey to achieve swaraj.⁶⁵⁹ This painful journey could therefore be compared with those who have suffered from racism and whose response might be seen as a personal struggle for freedom from fear and domination. When this journey is shared by a group of people, then social reform results, as well as individual self-purification. Swaraj is writ large for the whole of society. In Gandhi’s case this meant individuals must take responsibility for reforming three major social problems in India; Hindu-Muslim religious conflict, the discrimination imposed by the caste system and the labeling of people as “untouchables” and finally, economic inequality.⁶⁶⁰

The other key concept so central to the teachings of Gandhi was *satyagraha*. In 1930, William Shirer, an American journalist went to India to report on what he saw as Gandhi’s “peculiar revolution.” He described the civil disobedience campaign of that year in compelling terms and then concluded that *satyagraha* was Gandhi’s “supreme achievement,” which “taught us all that there was a greater power in life than force.”⁶⁶¹ Gandhi believed that power lay in the spirit of Truth and Love not in force. He further believed that the phenomenon and power of *satyagraha* was here for all of us to know. And whether or not you accept the belief that power is derived from “Truth and love,” the people in the thousands that followed Gandhi believed it and also believed in him. The Indian independence movement remains one of the largest mobilizations of people in protest in history. More significantly, it did exercise a form of power dramatically

⁶⁵⁸ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 31-32.

⁶⁵⁹ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 38.

⁶⁶⁰ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 38.

⁶⁶¹ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 39.

different from that of governments or armies or violent revolutions and yet managed to achieve independence from one of the greatest colonial powers in history, Britain. This was because its leadership conceived of how to convert the power of nonviolence into political action.⁶⁶² A satyagrahi (a practitioner of satyagraha) concentrates on the common interest and strives not for retribution, revenge, or victory but to transform a conflict situation into an opportunity for the parties in conflict to come out of a confrontation convinced that they had achieved their mutual interest by resolving the conflict.⁶⁶³

After participating in World War II to defeat Adolf Hitler, tensions began to build in the United States over its own civil rights record, asking how it could be that America had both so much democracy and so much racism. The reality and shocking truth were that Hitler's Nuremberg Laws were patterned after American Jim Crow race laws and drew on those laws as a source of legitimation for their own social controls which were implemented to control their own Jewish citizens.⁶⁶⁴ Hitler's policies exemplified the extremes to which discriminatory practices could be taken, something the United States decried as evil, and yet, America had its own dismal civil rights record. Especially in the aftermath of World War II, and as both black and white soldiers returned from the war, more people began to wrestle with the paradox that existed between the ideals touted in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution and the reality of life in the U.S. for African Americans. People began to speak out, and as they did, tension mounted in the U.S., especially the South as American culture came to grips with the glaring inconsistency between the ideal as expressed in the Founding documents and everyday life for blacks in America.⁶⁶⁵

Post war America was a place of growing contention and that is when one woman decided she had had enough. Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, Rita Dove, once wrote,

⁶⁶² Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 40.

⁶⁶³ Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi: Nonviolent Power in Action*. 41.

⁶⁶⁴ James Q Whitman, *Hitler's American model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*, Kindle ed. (Princeton University Press, 2017). 15.

“History is often portrayed as... all... heroics. Some of the most tumultuous events, however, have been provoked by serendipity.”⁶⁶⁶

Such was certainly the case with Rosa Parks and the role she played in launching the civil rights movement in this country by simply staying in her seat.⁶⁶⁷ On December 1, 1955 Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old seamstress, and a member of the NAACP became a practitioner of Gandhi’s satyagraha and the Mother of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Parks with a simple, non-violent—even polite—act of defiance, would spark a movement that would ultimately change the face of a nation. It all began in Montgomery, Alabama when Parks boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus to go home from work, as was her usual practice. Segregation laws at the time had designated a black and white area of the bus, and Parks sat in the first row in the black section. As the bus filled up, all of the seats in the white section were occupied, and when white passengers were forced to stand, the bus driver asked Parks, along with three other black passengers in that first row of the black section, to move and surrender their seats so that the white passengers could sit. Three of the black passengers who were asked to give up their seats did so without objection and without a fuss. Parks, on the other hand, refused to move when the bus driver, James F. Blake, asked her to. Parks had had enough of being treated like a second-class citizen. Blake informed Parks that he would have to call the police and have her arrested if she did not move. Parks, in an open act of defiance, refused to move, and she told Blake to go ahead and call the police; she was not moving. In a short time, the police arrived on the scene and placed Parks under arrest. She was bailed out of jail that evening. However, clearly Rosa Parks was not the only one fed up with being treated as a second-class citizen. Her case went on to spark the Montgomery bus boycott, where some 40,000 African Americans boycotted riding the bus in Montgomery on the day of her trial, December 5, 1955.⁶⁶⁸

It is certainly risky to attempt to pinpoint the starting date of any movement, but Montgomery certainly has to be considered a good candidate. However, in fairness, in June of 1953, blacks successfully carried out a mass boycott against that city’s segregated

⁶⁶⁶ Chuck Bednar, *Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Activist*, Kindle ed. (Simon and Schuster, 2015).loc. 20.

⁶⁶⁷ Bednar, *Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Activist*. loc. 20.

⁶⁶⁸ Hourly History, *Rosa Parks: The Woman Who Ignited a Movement* (Hourly History, 2017), Kindle. 4-5.

bus system. The authorities were forced to make concessions to the demands of the black masses. It is conceivable that the Baton Rouge protest represented a turning point, in that the famous 1955-56 Montgomery bus boycott and similar confrontations immediately afterward were partly inspired by the Baton Rouge effort and, to some extent, modeled after it.⁶⁶⁹

Boycotts, various types of sit-ins, and mass marches began in earnest throughout the South. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was the first and most famous of its kind, but communities throughout the South initiated their own boycotts and other means of collective action against segregated institutions. As Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, notes:

The modern civil rights movement broke from the protest tradition of the past in at least two crucial ways. One, it was the first time that large masses of blacks directly confronted and effectively disrupted the normal functioning of groups and institutions thought to be responsible for their oppression. The hallmark of the modern civil rights movement is that these mass confrontations were widespread and sustained over a long period of time in the face of heavy repression. Two, this was the first time in American history that blacks adopted nonviolent tactics as a mass technique for bringing about social change.⁶⁷⁰

The justices finally invalidated state mandated segregation in transportation in *Gayle v. Browder* (1956), a case that was a direct result of the Montgomery bus boycott. Yet, in the post-Brown hysteria of southern politics, many Deep South cities defied that ruling for years. That defiance of court rulings forces a basic question about the effectiveness of legal action versus non-violent direct action. Thus, regarding segregation in local transportation, some changes in practice occurred before court rulings had compelled them, and when those rulings finally materialized, they often proved powerless to compel further change in practices because of overwhelming white resistance. In the context of local transportation, the correlation between Court rulings and actual social practices was highly attenuated.⁶⁷¹ Brown motivated litigation, but what about direct-action protest? What is the connection between Brown and the Montgomery

⁶⁶⁹ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. ix-x.

⁶⁷⁰ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. xi.

⁶⁷¹ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 266-267.

bus boycott or the 1960s sit-ins, Freedom Rides, and street demonstrations? Some scholars have treated Brown as the “spiritual father” of direct-action protest, occasionally even suggesting that, without Brown, the 1960s civil rights movement would not have taken place when it did. Evidence for this causal connection is weak. There is no denying Brown’s symbolic importance to African Americans. One black newspaper stated a widely shared view: Brown was “the greatest victory for the Negro people since the Emancipation Proclamation.”⁶⁷² Yet, neither the symbolism of Brown nor the hopefulness it inspired were tantamount to putting black demonstrators on the streets. One cannot know for sure, but the evidence that Brown directly inspired such protests is thin.⁶⁷³ I would argue that it is clear that demonstration, sit-ins, marches and other forms of direct non-violent action were responsible for changes in U.S. law and the breakdown of segregation in the South and well as other key institutions.

Of course, although tactics and framing of the Civil Rights Movement were critical to its success, leadership and organization were also critical to success. Out of the Montgomery Bus boycott would come a new civil rights organization and a new leader. The group that initially organized the Montgomery bus boycott recognized their success and realized that they needed to form a new organization if they wanted to continue the protest. The new group was dubbed the Montgomery Improvement Association, and a young, mostly unknown minister was elected as president of what became known as the MIA. That minister was the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church.⁶⁷⁴ King wrote in his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, that when he is asked: Did the NAACP start the bus boycott? He responds:

Actually, no one can understand the action of Mrs. Parks unless he realizes that eventually the cup of endurance runs over, and the human personality cries out, ‘I can take it no longer.’ Mrs. Park’s refusal to move back was her intrepid affirmation that she had had enough. It was an individual expression of a timeless longing for human dignity and freedom. She was not ‘planted’ there by the NAACP, or any other organization; she was planted there by her personal sense of dignity and self-respect. She was anchored to that seat by the accumulated indignities of days gone by and the boundless aspirations of generations yet

⁶⁷² Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 369.

⁶⁷³ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 369-370.

⁶⁷⁴ History, *Rosa Parks: The Woman Who Ignited a Movement*. 5.

unborn. She was a victim of both the forces of history and the forces of destiny. She had been tracked down by the zeitgeist—the spirit of the time.⁶⁷⁵

King went on to argue that “in a real sense the arrest and conviction of Mrs. Parks had a twofold impact: it was a precipitating factor to arouse the Negroes to positive action; and it was a test of the validity of the segregation law itself. I am sure that supporters of such prosecutions would have acted otherwise if they had had the prescience to look beyond the moment.”⁶⁷⁶

The Montgomery bus boycott demonstrated the tactical value of nonviolent protest. Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Fight for Racial Equality* suggests, “The ‘quiet courage, dignity, and magnanimity’ with which Montgomery blacks protested their racial oppression virtually ensured that white opponents, who used economic reprisals, trumped-up criminal charges, and even bombings, would face a ‘damning indictment’ in the eyes of observers.”⁶⁷⁷ The boycott attracted national and international attention. Thousands of dollars in financial support (as well as many shoes) poured in from around the country, and supporters participated in a national “deliverance day of prayer” to demonstrate solidarity with Montgomery blacks. The boycott also revealed the growing intransigence of southern whites toward even minimal black demands for reform, thus increasing the stakes of the burgeoning racial controversy in the South. The greater resistance of whites explains why the Montgomery boycott lasted a year, while the one in Baton Rouge was over in a week, and why the initially minimalist demands of Montgomery blacks turned into a federal court challenge to segregation.⁶⁷⁸ The case, *Browder v. Gayle*, 352 U.S. 903 (1956) was brought by four African American women - Aurelia Browder, Claudette Colvin, Susie McDonald, and Mary Louise Smith – who challenged the constitutionality of Alabama statutes and Montgomery city ordinances that mandated racial segregation on public buses. Browder filed the charges against defendant William A. Gayle who was the mayor of Montgomery at that time. The question went all the way to the Supreme Court. The question before the

⁶⁷⁵ Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, Kindle ed. (New York: Beacon Press, 2010). 39.

⁶⁷⁶ King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. 48.

⁶⁷⁷ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 370.

⁶⁷⁸ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 370-371.

Court was: Did the district court err in striking down the racially separate but equal bus system in Montgomery Alabama? The Per Curium Decision handed down by the Supreme Court summarily affirmed the district court decision and in effect overturned the long-standing decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).⁶⁷⁹

The Montgomery bus boycott demonstrated the resolve, courage, resourcefulness, and leadership of ordinary black people in Montgomery Alabama. It also showed that ordinary people can accomplish extraordinary things when the band together to fight for a noble cause. The boycott clearly demonstrated the power of nonviolent protest by showing southern whites that blacks were not satisfied with the racial status quo and they were willing to actively resist white oppression. It threw out a challenge to other southern blacks to match the efforts of those in Montgomery and, through skillful media coverage, managed to enlighten millions of whites around the nation and the world about the evils of Jim Crow. It was a momentous accomplishment for the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Civil Rights Movement.⁶⁸⁰

After Montgomery, surprisingly little direct-action protest took place in the South until 1960. The Montgomery Improvement Association undertook no further direct action. City parks and other public facilities, including schools, remained segregated. Blacks in a few other southern cities conducted bus boycotts that were patterned after Montgomery's—most notably, in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and in Tallahassee, Florida—but these proved less successful. On Brown's third anniversary in 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr., led a prayer pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., in support of black voting rights, but the turnout was disappointing—only 15–25,000 people, as compared with the 50–60,000 that had been predicted. The prayer pilgrimage was part of the voter registration drive of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the "Crusade for Citizenship," which floundered in the late 1950s.

The late 1950s proved to be a time of retrenchment for the Civil Rights Movement but it was also a time of rebuilding and renovation. The SCLC developed into

⁶⁷⁹ "Gayle v. Browder," 352 US 903 (1956), United States Supreme Court 1956, accessed 6/26/2025, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1956>. 342.

⁶⁸⁰ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality*. 372.

a regional direct-action organization between 1957 and 1960. Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, explains that:

SCLC had a deep regional network across the South that provided the mass base capable of sustaining a heavy volume of collective action. It augmented also the activities of CORE and the NAACP Youth Councils, that were also closely tied to the church. Thus the SCLC, closely interlocked with NAACP Youth Councils and CORE chapters, to develop solid movement centers by late 1959. The centers usually had the following seven characteristics:

1. A cadre of social change-oriented ministers and their congregations. Often one minister would become the local leader of a given center, and his church would serve as the coordinating unit
2. Direct action organizations of varied complexity. In many cities local churches served as quasi-direct action organizations, while in others ministers built complex church-related organizations (e-g- United Defense League of Baton Rouge, Montgomery Improvement Association, Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights of Birmingham. Petersburg Improvement Association). NAACP Youth Councils and CORE affiliates also were components of the local centers.
3. Indigenous financing coordinated through the church.
4. Weekly mass meetings, which served as forums where local residents were informed of relevant information and strategies regarding the movement. These meetings also built solidarity among the participants.
5. Dissemination of nonviolent tactics and strategies. The leaders articulated to the black community the message that social change would occur only through nonviolent direct action carried out by masses.
6. Adaptation of a rich church culture to political purposes. The black spirituals, sermons, and prayers were used to deepen the participants commitment to the struggle.
7. A mass-based orientation, rooted in the black community, through the church.⁶⁸¹

The period between the 1950s bus boycotts and the 1960 sit-ins provided pivotal resources for the emerging civil rights movement.⁶⁸²

Out of the ministerial meetings in Atlanta and New Orleans had come tentative prescriptions for treatment of the rapidly deteriorating racial health of the South. In 1958, the embryonic organization that would become the Southern Christian Leadership

⁶⁸¹ Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 194.

⁶⁸² Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*. 194.

Conference (SCLC) had established its headquarters in Atlanta, under the capable superintendence of Miss Ella Baker, a former field secretary for the NAACP. Late in July 1959, the first nonviolent institute was held on the Spelman College campus in Atlanta, sponsored by the SCLC, CORE, and FOR (Fellowship of Reconciliation). More than sixty delegates attended the three-day affair and heard speeches by A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Lawrence Reddick, Richard Gregg, Reverend James Lawson, and Dean William Stuart Nelson of Howard University. Dean Nelson's keynote address, "The Tradition of Nonviolence and Its Underlying Forces," traced the origins of nonviolence from Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism through Christianity to Tolstoi and Thoreau. Lawrence Reddick contrasted the slowly vanishing caste system in India with the increasingly virulent manifestations of bigotry in America. The practical management of nonviolence was in the hands of Abernathy, Lawson, Fred Shuttlesworth, James Robinson of CORE, and Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker. These men and other delegates drew up a five-point manifesto, the vagueness of which did not detract from its militant determination to achieve full citizenship for American blacks. The five-point manifesto that resulted was as follows:

1. We thank President [Albert] Manley, the faculty and staff of Spelman College for so graciously opening its facilities to our institute.
2. The Institute re-affirms our dedication to the principles and practices of nonviolent resistance as the supreme instrument of social change.
3. We recommend that this institute be held annually and that similar institutes and workshops should be held nationally, regionally, and locally as the opportunity arises. We call upon the sponsoring organizations to initiate plans to implement this resolution.
4. We commend the several local organizations who have been engaged in nonviolent direct action projects.
5. We commend the 50th Anniversary Convention of the NAACP for reaffirming its position of rejecting the use of violence in securing social change.

We urge the sponsoring organizations to produce a handbook on: The Principles and Techniques of Nonviolence, as related to social change in race relations.

We recognize the importance of legislation as an instrument of social change, and the use of constitutional procedures. We further recognize the responsibility of a democracy to insure the equal rights of all citizens. We therefore call upon the

Congress and the President to support and implement the desegregation decisions of the Supreme Court.

We make common cause with the oppressed and submerged peoples of the world—particularly the unfreed peoples of Africa and the former “untouchables” of India. We call upon them to adhere to the principles of nonviolence in our common world struggle.

9. We call upon organizations active in the field of social action and civil rights to initiate plans for a nation-wide demonstration against all forms of racial discriminations and segregations.⁶⁸³

Thus closed the quiet period of the late 1950s until this point and the beginning of 1960 the Southern resistance had been able to persuade itself that the civil rights movement was wholly the result of “outside agitators,” that blacks in the South were contented and happy with their “Southern way of life.”⁶⁸⁴ They wanted to be left alone and were satisfied with segregation. Protesting segregation would have never occurred to them. In 1955-56 the yearlong Montgomery bus boycott in protest against segregation had served notice that things were changing but, somewhat surprisingly, nothing much happened after it was resolved. All was quiet. Then in 1960 all that changed. 1960 proved to be the year of a massive awakening for African Americans in the South—indeed African Americans across the country.⁶⁸⁵

Greensboro

It all started up again in Greensboro, North Carolina. This time, however, it was not just a protest against the segregation of youth against the older generation, against the parental “Uncle Toms” and their inhibitions. It even took the NAACP and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) by surprise. Blacks were in charge of their own movement now, and youth was in the vanguard. It was a generational uprising against black accommodating behavior. It was an uprising of youth against the older generation, against the parental ‘Uncle Toms’ and their inhibitions. It even took the NAACP and

⁶⁸³ "Resolutions, First Southwide Institute on Nonviolent Resistance to Segregation held on 22 July-24 July 1959," Stanford The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, 2025, accessed 6/26/2025, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/resolutions-first-southwide-institute-nonviolent-resistance-segregation-held>.

⁶⁸⁴ C. Vann Woodward and William S. McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford, United States: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1994). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/drew-ebooks/detail.action?docID=430524>. 168.

⁶⁸⁵ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 169.

CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) by surprise. Blacks were in charge of their own movement now, and youth was in the vanguard.⁶⁸⁶

On February 1 of that year, 1960, four African American college boys, freshmen at the Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, North Carolina, asked politely for coffee at Woolworth's lunch counter and continued to sit in silent protest when refused service by the worried and upset white counter staff. This "sit-in" tactic proved to be highly effective against segregation and became the nemesis of Jim Crow. In a week it spread to six other cities of the state, and by the end of the month to seven other Southern states. The self-discipline and fortitude of these young African American men, who silently bore abuse, insult, and even injury, touched the white South's respect for courage.⁶⁸⁷

These men actively and effectively were committed to, and employed, the philosophy of non-violent direct action advocated by Martin Luther King and other leaders of the movement. As Doctor King said, "We will soon wear you down by our capacity to suffer and in winning our freedom we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process."⁶⁸⁸ King firmly believed that all but the most incorrigible white resistance was vulnerable to such tactics.⁶⁸⁹ The sit-in became a permanent alternative in the repertoires of contention used by civil rights protestors, both black and white.

Young African Americans were in charge of their own movement, and they were in the growing tide of involvement and protest. In April 1960 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), was formed—small, militant, very youthful, largely Negro, and Negro-led.⁶⁹⁰ The sit-in demonstrations gained momentum and power as they spread through the whole South and involved non-violent direct action by thousands who had never protested before. The sit-in tactics were broadened to attack segregation in theaters, hotels, public parks, swimming pools, and beaches, as well as in churches,

⁶⁸⁶ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 169-170.

⁶⁸⁷ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 169.

⁶⁸⁸ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 170.

⁶⁸⁹ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 170.

⁶⁹⁰ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 169.

courtrooms, libraries, and art galleries. Boycotts supplemented sit-ins to deal with discrimination in service or employment among merchants and other business establishments. Some disorder and rioting broke out and thousands were jailed, but for more than a year serious violence was minimal. Considering the masses involved and the emotions aroused, the record was remarkable.⁶⁹¹

It is beyond the scope of this paper to cover all the subsequent civil rights marches and their impact. However, starting with the Albany Movement certain patterns, in terms of framing, tactics, and mobilizing structures common to all the marches start to emerge. I will therefore use a detailed analysis of the Albany Movement to attempt to identify common elements. Nonetheless, in my research it became apparent that the Civil Rights Movement was a combination of local movements that combined to form a national movement made up of various organizations all attempting to achieve rights for African Americans that were equal to white Americans at both a local level and a national level. The Civil Rights Movement was really a combination of many movements.

Albany

In his *Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. DuBois, a leading intellectual, a sociologist, and a historian described Albany, Georgia, as a “wide-streeted, placid, Southern town, with a broad sweep of stores and saloons, and flanking rows of homes—whites usually to the north, and blacks to the south. Six days a week the town looks decidedly too small for itself, and takes frequent and prolonged naps.”⁶⁹² Sixty years later, DuBois's Albany remained unchanged in its essentials. Albany was still the lethargic center of southwest Georgia's Black Belt. David Levering Lewis in his *King: A Biography* described Albany this way; “Albany slept the racial and political slumber induced by a condition of sated tyranny.”⁶⁹³ James Gray, editor of the daily *Albany Herald* voiced the thinking of the city's responsible white citizens on racial politics. On the day before the first arrests of civil rights demonstrators, Gray was moved to condemn government officials who

⁶⁹¹ Woodward and McFeely, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. 170-171.

⁶⁹² William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and Manning Marable, *Souls of Black Folk*, Kindle ed. (Gildan Media LLC) G&D Media, 2019). 136.

⁶⁹³ David Levering Lewis, *King: A Biography*, Kindle ed. (University of Illinois Press, 2012). loc. 2237.

claimed to see parallels between the independence struggles of African nationals and the American Revolution. Referring to the African nations, he said: “These emerging people have not yet served their apprenticeship in the arts of responsible independence.” If pressed, Editor Gray would very likely have given the African higher marks than the black citizen of Albany.⁶⁹⁴

Southwest Georgia was spectacularly unlike the American ideal of a Jeffersonian yeoman farmer’s life. Rural life in Georgia was unequal, hard, and, for nonwhites, especially brutal. In each of these rural Southern towns stands a tree whose limbs, tradition has it, have supported the death agony of blacks at the end of a rope. There was very little justice in such places. For whites, there was consideration determined by social status; for blacks, there were whimsical sanctions ruled by affection, sadism, and fear. The minority race (which frequently outnumbered the white population) did not vote, except for a handful of “respectable” blacks who were believed to be safely housebroken. Naturally, blacks did not sit with whites in public or commercial places even when they were allowed to enter them. Buses, when a town's size justified their use, were segregated. Literally, the black American survived from one generation to the next by feigning spinelessness and stupidity.⁶⁹⁵

In 1959, Albany Attorney Chevene B. King proposed filing suit to end the city's segregated polling stations. After a conference with Atlanta's black oligarchy, the leaders decided to delay application for legal remedy. The younger men were not content to wait for outside forces to bring change to the community. Two of the King brothers (unrelated to MLK or the Atlanta Kings), Slater and Chevene, Dr. William G. Anderson, Mrs. Irene Wright, Marion Page, and the members of the NAACP's Youth Council decided to force Albany to step to the quickening beat of Southern racial progress. In February, 1961, they addressed a letter to the city commissioners calling upon them to desegregate public facilities. The reply was indirect but unequivocal. The Albany *Herald's* editorial column exhorted the commissioners to reject the proposals out of hand. In the ensuing months, the white community used scattered unprovoked violence to instill fear and deter the

⁶⁹⁴ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2237.

⁶⁹⁵ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2248.

blacks from any attempts to desegregate public facilities. Arrests for spurious traffic violations increased. A costly civil suit was instituted against Clennon W. King, whites drove through the Albany State campus, and a number of students were molested. The year was nearly over and it appeared that it would almost certainly end on a futile note.⁶⁹⁶ SNCC headquarters in Atlanta had followed the Albany unrest with growing interest. The September 22 decree of the Interstate Commerce Commission banning segregated buses and station facilities spurred the organization to action.⁶⁹⁷ In the fall, 1961, three activists from SNCC arrived in Albany to challenge city sanctioned segregation by encouraging black citizens to engage in direct action non-violent protest. Charles Sherrod, a young Baptist preacher from Virginia, 18-year-old Cordell Reagon from Nashville, Tennessee, and Charles Jones, SNCC's direct-action chairman, aimed at mobilizing the entire black community, especially students from local high schools, trade schools, and Albany State College. Pushed by SNCC, the NAACP, the Ministerial Alliance, the Negro Voters League, and the Federation of Women's Clubs formed a partnership called the Albany Movement, which was led by William Anderson, an osteopath and drugstore owner, and Slater King, a realtor whose father was a founder of the city's NAACP chapter.⁶⁹⁸

Sherrod, Reagon, and Jones, proved to be particularly effective at organizing students. On the morning of November 1, Sherrod, Reagan, James Forman, Charles Jones, and a white member of SNCC, Salynn McCollum (who was to contact the Justice Department to report the anticipated violations), boarded the Trailways bus for Albany. Atlanta police were aware of the quintet's intentions and phoned the Albany police. The Albany bus terminal was closely guarded by ten officers by the time they arrived. They decided to wait until later in the day for a try at the white waiting room. That afternoon, after Sherrod and Reagan had visited the Albany campus, nine students unobtrusively entered the station and took seats in its sanctum sanctorum before they could be stopped. They were ordered to leave or face arrest. Here was a patent and public violation of the ICC ruling. Miss McCollum, who observed the scene, telephoned the Justice Department in Washington upon her return to Atlanta. She was thanked for her citizen's vigilance but

⁶⁹⁶ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2268-2276.

⁶⁹⁷ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2276.

⁶⁹⁸ Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: the Black Freedom Struggle in America*. 91.

no action was initiated. Albany's bus and train stations had disregarded the ICC's recent order to desegregate.⁶⁹⁹

The student sit-in at the bus station episode pushed Albany's black leadership into unified action. On November 17, there was an amalgamation of the city's black organizations to form the Albany Movement, with Dr. Anderson, an osteopath, as its president. The Albany Movement made good organizational sense. It brought together and united a diverse set of organizations within the city of Albany. It was an excellent way to mobilize diverse groups into a common goal. It also served to marshal the resources of not only local groups but groups with both regional and even national ties. The Albany Movement brought together the Ministerial Alliance, the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Negro Voters League, the Criterion Club, and the NAACP together with its Youth Council. It was theorized by one participant of the Movement that the Albany Movement was created to insulate the NAACP from the friction it had with its own Youth Council led by Sherrod and Reagan. An NAACP spokesman said as much when he declared "I wouldn't say we didn't want the students here, I would say, however, that they found us not too receptive to them."⁷⁰⁰

The newly formed Albany Movement sprang into action five days after. Once again, the Youth Council was in the vanguard. Three members of the Youth Council entered the Trailways station dining room and were arrested by Chief of Police Laurie Pritchett. That same afternoon, two Albany State students, Bertha Gober and Blanton Hall, were taken into custody for the same offense. They were charged with disorderly conduct, failure to obey an officer, and behavior tending to create public disorder and were released on bond. The date of their trial was set for December 11. In response the whites in Albany began to mobilize their forces. City government elections took place on Monday, December 4, before the trial. White voters saw a threat in the potential for a large black turnout to vote. As a result, white voters turned out to the polls in record numbers. Blacks, unfortunately failed to capitalize on the momentum of the Albany Movement and the Movement itself failed to turn out large numbers of black voters. The

⁶⁹⁹ Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: the Black Freedom Struggle in America*. 91

⁷⁰⁰ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2291-2307.

blacks, not yet fully adjusted to taking advantage of opportunities that circumstance presents, failed to vote in large numbers. Asa Kelley and Buford Ellington were elected Mayor and Mayor pro-tem, respectively. The new government would take office officially on January 11.⁷⁰¹ Kelley and Buford, both white, were confident they had the support of and geared up to take on the black insurgency.

The blacks were also gearing up. Again, the Albany police learned that Freedom Riders were arriving from Atlanta. Freedom Rides started in 1961, during the first year of John F. Kennedy's presidency. At that time more than four hundred Americans participated in a dangerous experiment designed to awaken the conscience of a nation complacent to the problem of segregation. The "Freedom Riders" challenged the mores of a racially segregated society by performing a disarmingly simple act. Traveling together in small interracial groups, they sat where they pleased on buses and trains and demanded unrestricted access to terminal restaurants and waiting rooms, even in areas of the Deep South where such behavior was forbidden by law and custom. Raymond Arsenault in his book *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* describes how the Freedom Rides began:

The Freedom Rides began in early May with a single group of thirteen Riders recruited and trained by CORE's national staff. By early summer the Rides had evolved into a broad-based movement involving hundreds of activists representing a number of allied local, regional, and national civil rights organizations. Attracting a diverse assortment of volunteers—black and white, young and old, male and female, religious and secular, Northern and Southern—the Freedom Rider movement transcended the traditional legalistic approach to civil rights, taking the struggle out of the courtroom and into the streets and jails of the Jim Crow South. Empowered by two U.S. Supreme Court decisions mandating the desegregation of interstate travel facilities, the Freedom Riders brazenly flouted state and local segregation statutes, all but daring Southern officials to arrest them. Deliberately provoking a crisis of authority, the Riders challenged federal officials to enforce the law and uphold the constitutional right to travel.⁷⁰²

For this particular "Freedom Ride," nine people - four black and five white - were traveling by train. They sat together in the "white" car, ignoring the conductor's orders

⁷⁰¹ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2291-2307.

⁷⁰² Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*, Kindle ed. (Oxford University Press, 2006). 2.

that the blacks must move to the rear of the train. James Forman, SNCC's executive secretary, Norma Collins, SNCC's office manager, Lenore Tait, a volunteer worker, and Bernard Lee of the SCLC were black. Robert Zellner of SNCC, Per Laursen, a Danish writer, Tom Hayden of Students for a Democratic Society, his wife, and Joan Browning from Georgia were white. The Albany Movement sanctioned the "Freedom Train" concept and action because they thought it had the potential to generate positive national publicity. After all, the demonstrators were just exercising their constitutional right to freedom of association and the constitutional right of freedom of travel.⁷⁰³

At approximately 3:30 on the afternoon of December 10, 1961, the Atlanta train pulled into the station. Several hundred blacks were there to greet and to welcome the riders. Chief Pritchett and a detachment of police were also on hand. The passengers entered the white waiting room. Chief Pritchett was obviously upset by the crowd and their serious and dignified behavior. He was also irritated by the widespread support that "outside agitators" had achieved, as evidenced by the large crowd they had raised. In reaction, Chief Pritchett ordered them away, and they prepared to leave. Something deep in Pritchett's viscera snapped. He lost his cool professionalism. Following the riders outside, he bellowed, "You are all under arrest." Of the nine, all were arrested but one. Charles Jones, Bertha Gober, and a student bystander were also arrested. This was a scenario of which the SNCC and SCLC strategists had dreamed. Pritchett's actions were sufficient to unite the black community around its martyrs. During the next four days, hundreds of singing, praying blacks marched to city hall to protest the November and December arrests. On the morning of the December 11 trial of the bus-station offenders, four hundred high school students demonstrated before city hall. By December 15, nearly five hundred people were in jail.⁷⁰⁴

Ironically, that same day, the city agreed to hold unofficial talks to attempt to resolve the issues. A biracial committee of six was formed. Despite appearances, it was difficult to tell whether this committee was for show or sincere about reform. The appearance of white conciliation was somewhat negated by the spirit of intransigence of

⁷⁰³ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2307.

⁷⁰⁴ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2321.

the white committee members. “The teams have no authority for action,” the local newspaper the *Herald* emphasized, “and are merely trying to see if some areas of agreement can be found.”⁷⁰⁵ Mayor Kelley and Mayor pro tem Ellington, together with a segment of the business community, were leaning toward a compromise. The Albany Movement's demands were not excessive: integration of bus and rail facilities, establishment of a permanent biracial committee, and lastly dismissal of all charges against demonstrators. As a good faith gesture, Mayor Kelley ordered the release of more than one hundred of the arrested demonstrators. Kelley, however, was limited as to what he could do by political considerations. No Southern mayor could risk the epithet “nigger lover,” and Kelley protected himself by simultaneously negotiating while playing hard ball by requesting that Governor Ernest Vandiver dispatch a unit of the Georgia National Guard to the city just in case. Negotiations collapsed before the day ended, in the miasma of rumor and bad faith. The leader of the Albany Movement, Dr. Anderson, offered the city a final opportunity to negotiate honestly until 10 A.M. Saturday, December 16.⁷⁰⁶

What exactly Dr. Anderson did next is not exactly clear. It is not even clear how many leaders of the Albany Movement sanctioned Dr. Anderson's next move. He decided to invite Martin Luther King to Albany to discuss the next steps. He asked Dr. King to come to Albany immediately. The SNCC leaders, Sherrod and Reagan, were openly hostile to the idea. They had not been impressed by Dr. King's conduct during the Atlanta sit-ins. Sherrod's stated his position: “When Dr. King comes into a situation several things happen. The power structure of the state is alerted. The federal authorities are alerted, and publicity—the public media are extra-sensitive, extra there.”⁷⁰⁷ Sherrod and Reagan, SNCC generals, preferred to keep their leadership and goals local rather than to see the contest inflated into a rhetorically charged and grandly symbolic struggle between the white and the black South. Nor was the Movement's secretary, Marion Page, enthusiastic about Dr. King's intervention. Slater and Chevene King appear to have stayed out of it and asked that they be able to defer judgment for the moment. The Ministers in the Movement were generally more receptive to the proposal. It is also

⁷⁰⁵ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2322.

⁷⁰⁶ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2321.

⁷⁰⁷ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2331-2339.

important to remember that Dr. Anderson was an osteopath. He was not an experienced civil rights leader. There were even rumors that his responsibilities had begun to oppress him psychologically. It was only natural for him to be anxious to share the burden of leadership with an experienced civil rights leader like Dr. King. Couple this with the mounting threats against his life, and this lent particular urgency to Anderson's request. There was an additional factor at play here. Dr. Anderson knew Dr. King's associate Ralph Abernathy. Ties of friendship went back to Anderson's student days. They were students together at Alabama State College, and he could depend upon Abernathy to do his utmost to smooth away the misgivings of the local leadership. With the negotiations at an impasse, Anderson contacted Ralph and Martin that Friday evening, December 15.⁷⁰⁸

Dr. King's first move upon arrival was to do what he did best. At the Shiloh Baptist Church Dr. King spoke to a capacity audience. Powerfully, with only the rhythms, a Southern preacher and prophet could match, King exhorted his people. He implored them, "Don't stop now, keep moving. Don't get weary, children. We will wear them down by our capacity to suffer." There was the great Mahatma Gandhi combined with the baritone abilities of a great preacher. In the antiphony of amens accompanying his speech, it was evident that what had been lacking—an inspiring leader. Dr. King filled that gap from that moment on.

The NAACP was represented at the meeting by Ruby Hurley, its Southeastern regional director, who spoke of the two forces that the white man understood—the dollar and the ballot. The movement was in motion. Dr. King initially expected to just make a speech at the rally and then leave, but at the end of an emotionally charged rally, Anderson unexpectedly asked King to lead a march on city hall the next day.⁷⁰⁹ Dr. Anderson told the people to reassemble at 7 A.M. at the church for a march on the court house. "Eat a good breakfast," he advised, "wear warm clothes and wear your walking shoes."⁷¹⁰ The presence of Martin and Ralph notwithstanding, the turnout the following morning was disappointing. It was one thing to chant hallelujahs in the charged but

⁷⁰⁸ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2331-2339.

⁷⁰⁹ Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: the Black Freedom Struggle in America*. 92.

⁷¹⁰ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc..2343.

secure atmosphere of a Baptist prayer meeting. It was another thing for those who had jobs to protect.⁷¹¹ It was not unheard of, that marching in a black protest march could cost you your job. The Movement leaders faced a challenge all movement leaders face. The challenge of mobilizing a sufficient number of marchers to have an impact. Mobilization, given the risks to the marchers, is never easy. It was well into the afternoon before the Movement leaders and their assistants succeeded in rounding up a crowd of 257 people. From Shiloh, they set out at 4:30 P.M. with Martin, Ralph, and Anderson in the forefront. As they marched, they gained courage, and the vigor with which they sang “We Shall Overcome” increased. As the marchers reached the intersection of Jackson Street and Oglethorpe Avenue, they were met by Chief Pritchett and more than a hundred police officers. After repeated warnings to disperse, Martin, Ralph, and Anderson were arrested along with the other demonstrators. The number of people imprisoned now exceeded seven hundred.⁷¹²

Although King vowed not to accept bond, his attorney hammered out a verbal agreement with the mayor and Chief Pritchett that gained his release and the release of all local activists. The city in return for an end to the demonstrations promised to comply with the ICC’s desegregation ruling and initiate biracial negotiations. When Dr. King departed, unfortunately, local officials reneged on the agreement. It was all a “hoax,” King realized later. Once King was released, a federal judge forbade him from leading any more marches in Albany, an order King obeyed. Tired of Albany and what turned out to be a costly quagmire, King declared the agreement a victory and left segregation intact. Because King felt humiliated in Albany, he vowed not to dive into future crises. “I don’t want to be a fireman anymore,” he said wearily. He had not won a major civil rights victory in the six years since the Montgomery bus boycott, and SCLC was flat broke.

Even in momentary defeat, the Albany Movement profoundly affected the larger civil rights movement because new techniques were developed to sustain mass militancy. The Albany campaign was unusual in its broad membership, its comprehensive attack on Jim Crow, its use of energizing music, its alliance of local and outside leaders, and its

⁷¹¹ Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2343.

⁷¹² Lewis, *King: A Biography*. loc. 2347.

multiple strategies, including mass demonstrations, jail-ins, sit-ins, boycotts, and litigation. These patterns would play out in virtually every other major protest of the Civil Rights Movement.

Although King had departed, the local movement continued in Albany, resulting in more registered black voters and the repeal of segregation statutes just a year and a half later.⁷¹³

Even so, this innovative campaign against segregation raised questions about the potency of direct action and the efficacy of nonviolence if applied to impervious politicians, as opposed to more vulnerable business owners. An outside power—the federal government—had to take the side of African Americans, but the Kennedy administration did not yet have the will to do so. It took President Johnson to out Kennedy Kennedy.

Johnson's greatest exertions in his first months as President were made in the field of civil rights. There, consensus politics would not be enough. He recognized that retreat on this issue would jeopardize not only the transition but the approaching nomination. Before Kennedy's death, it was generally thought that the civil rights bill as finally enacted would fall considerably short of the original Kennedy draft. Johnson shared this view:

Even the strongest supporters of President Kennedy's civil rights bill in 1963 expected parts of it to be watered down in order to avert a Senate filibuster. The most vulnerable sections were those guaranteeing equal access to public accommodations and equal employment opportunity. I had seen this 'moderating' process at work for many years. I had seen it happen in 1957. I had seen it happen in 1960. I did not want to see it happen again.⁷¹⁴

Johnson succeeded where Kennedy had not and achieved one of the greatest accomplishments of his administration, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 enacted July 2, 1964, a landmark law that outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin. In 1964, the Civil Rights Movement had achieved a major victory. Tragically, the nation would then turn its focus away from what could have been the

⁷¹³ Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement: the Black Freedom Struggle in America*. 92.

⁷¹⁴ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream: The most revealing portrait of a president and presidential power ever written*, Kindle ed. (Macmillan, 1991). 244.

beginning of the end for de facto and systemic discrimination and concentrated on what was probably the worst mistake of Johnson's career, the Vietnam War.

Chapter 9

Conclusion – Social Movements Matter

The question is not whether societies change over time, but how and to what end. Social change is inevitable. One of the clearest points that emerges from the comparison of these three social movements is that participants in social movements believe that they can shape the future. But to shape the future you have to ask a basic set of questions first: Where are we?” and Where do we go from here? As both Doctor King and Congressman and civil rights activist leader John Lewis, both noted, it could be chaos or community. These are the recognizable queries that mature human beings persistently pose to themselves—and to their communities—as they explore the way toward their best possibilities.

The challenge is in establishing a direct causal link between any social movement, their mission and intended outcomes, and the outcomes that actually occurred. In other words, did the American Independence Movement cause the revolutionary war? Did the Abolition Movement cause the Civil War? Do social movements cause war? And then, if social movements can cause war, why didn’t the Civil Rights Movement result in war?

The potential power of social movements has clearly been demonstrated. Nonetheless, intentions and outcomes can vary drastically. The Civil Rights Movement had two stunning policy achievements: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Both were landmark pieces of legislation. However, just days after President Lyndon Johnson signed the hard-won historic Voting Rights Act, the Black community of Watts, in Los Angeles erupted. The Black community exploded in fire, frustration, and rage when King and several of his coworkers rushed to Watts to engage some of the young men who were most deeply involved in the uprising. In response to the logical question of why, and what did they hope to achieve, one of the young leaders replied simply, “We won.” Looking at the burned-out ruins of what was once a neighborhood. The civil rights leaders asked what winning meant to these young men. One of the young men loudly declared, “We won because we made them pay attention to us.”

King's goal, of a nonviolent "beloved community" must have seemed very far away at that point. Additionally, the reaction of the white American community and the media was predictable: they condemned "Negro violence." And it led them to justify a "white backlash" against the continuing attempts of the freedom movement to move northward toward a more perfect union. (King wisely identified the fashionable "backlash" as a continuing expression of an antidemocratic white racism that was as old as the nation itself.)

The harsh truth is that we like to think of the United States as conceived in liberty and justice for all, but in reality, the country was also founded on a dismal track record of exploited coerced labor, threat and intimidation, and violence against ethnic minorities.

It goes back to the very founders and the founding documents. As stated before, the three founding documents were first created to perform distinct, complementary functions. The Declaration of Independence (1776) was a revolutionary manifesto that proclaimed and justified the end of British rule over America; the Bill of Rights (1789-91) stated the basic rights of the American people, and the Constitution (1787-88) created a new federal government that would, hopefully, secure those rights. Americans have learned to revere documents such as these, from their English ancestors, who themselves had long honored written texts such as the Magna Charta (1215). The glow that these documents have taken on has blinded us to some of their shortcomings.

The Declaration states:

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.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁵ Maier, *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States*. 53.

These clearly are powerful words, and they are a key ingredient of any social movement, but particularly the American Independence Movement.

As Thomas Paine said, “We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now.”⁷¹⁶ This belief held by many social movement participants is that it is in their power to shape the future for the better. The objective of making a better world is common to all three of the movements I studied. This framing of the ideals of the American Revolution occurs again and again.

Lincoln said, during a speech at a Republican Banquet in Chicago December 10, 1856:

Our government rests in public opinion. Whoever can change public opinion can change the government practically just so much. Public opinion, on any subject, always has a ‘central idea,’ from which all its minor thoughts radiate. That ‘central idea’ in our political public opinion at the beginning was, and until recently has continued to be, ‘the equality of men.’ And although it has always submitted patiently to whatever of inequality there seemed to be as matter of actual necessity, its constant working has been a steady progress toward the practical equality of all men.⁷¹⁷

Lincoln would later put it, “a nation so conceived and so dedicated” to the principle “that all men are created equal.”⁷¹⁸

This framing is often used by social movements. Equality and justice are frequent movement objectives. Indeed, they are fundamental beliefs enshrined in the Declaration and are grounded in American’s fundamental belief in the equality of all people. This, however, raises the question, why do the Americans believe this? Actually, it seems contrary to the normal and everyday experience of humanity. We are, all of us, or almost all of us, born not into a state of nature, but into a political society. It is not a sufficient answer to this observation to say the Declaration is speaking of some remote past and of our more or less remote ancestors, ancestors, because the text says something surprising:

⁷¹⁶ Thomas Paine, *The Thomas Paine Reader*, Kindle ed. (Start Publishing LLC, 2012), 289

⁷¹⁷ Abraham Lincoln, *Abraham Lincoln: Complete Works*, vol. 1-3 (New York, NY: Open Road Integrated Media, 1915; repr., 2017). loc. 6943-6953.

⁷¹⁸ Michael P Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived: Abraham Lincoln and the Paradox of Democratic Sovereignty* (University Press of Kansas, 2022), Kindle. 83.

“All men are created equal,” all human beings share in this equality, whether they were born 10,000 years ago or just yesterday.

The Declaration gives us some aid in understanding this odd affirmation of universal original equality. Before there was government, human beings not only were equal in the sense described, but they were “endowed by their creator with certain inalienable right:” rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is clear that they possess these rights before government is made, for the Declaration tells us government is made “to secure these rights,” so even in a state of equality or state of nature, human beings have these rights. Indeed, the Declaration’s point seems to be that we know human beings, all human beings, are to be conceived of as “created equal” because they are “endowed by their creator” with these rights. This equality is inferred from the fact that all human beings possess rights.⁷¹⁹ They are born with them and are endowed by their creator with them, and all men have the same creator.

The Declaration goes on to tell us what those inalienable rights are. Human beings are said to possess the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In regard to these rights, human beings have the right to act freely and to pursue happiness in their own way, so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others in so doing. Because human beings have these quite comprehensive rights to direct their own lives, they must be conceived of, every last one of them, as created equal, that is, not subject to political authority except when they have given their consent to be governed by that authority. This logic follows, for if they are naturally subject to rule by others, they would be denied the right of overall self-government or self-direction, with which their primary natural rights endow them. Moreover, if individuals have the right to free action in pursuit of happiness, then it must follow that nobody has a right to rule them by virtue of any kind of claim or inherent quality. Being wiser, stronger, more holy, more virtuous, more industrious, more reliable, more sensitive, more caring and sharing — these may all be admirable qualities, but they are never claims to rule another human being without that other’s consent. Authority or rule by birth or monetary wealth is exceptionally repugnant to the values stated in the Declaration. Thus, Thomas Jefferson once said that even Isaac

⁷¹⁹Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived: Abraham Lincoln and the Paradox of Democratic Sovereignty*. 306.

Newton, probably the greatest genius he knew of, had no right to rule the most illiterate and uneducated person without that person's consent.⁷²⁰

Likewise, Garrison argued incessantly for the equality of all men; black or white. In one letter, Garrison bluntly describes ACS (American Colonization Society) members' condescension for blacks:

[I]n a single sentence: they have an antipathy against the blacks. They do not wish to admit them to an equality. They can tolerate them only as servants and slaves.... They tell us that we must always be hostile to the people of color, while they remain in this country. If this be so, then we had better burn our bibles, and our Declaration of Independence.⁷²¹

Frederick Douglass also strongly argued for the equality of African Americans. In one of his most famous speeches, Frederick Douglas lays out his argument on why African Americans both desire and deserve not mere "generosity," but full equality and suffrage under the law. Delivered within days of Lincoln's assassination and the end of the civil war, this speech took place in early April of 1865 at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Boston. Douglass said:

By depriving us of suffrage, you affirm our incapacity to form an intelligent judgment respecting public men and public measures; you declare before the world that we are unfit to exercise the elective franchise, and by this means lead us to undervalue ourselves, to put a low estimate upon ourselves, and to feel that we have no possibilities like other men. Again, I want the elective franchise, for one, as a colored man, because ours is a peculiar government, based upon a peculiar idea, and that idea is universal suffrage.⁷²²

He went on to argue:

the story of our inferiority is an old dodge, as I have said; for wherever men oppress their fellows, wherever they enslave them, they will endeavor to find the needed apology for such enslavement and oppression in the character of the people oppressed and enslaved.⁷²³

⁷²⁰ Zuckert, *A Nation So Conceived: Abraham Lincoln and the Paradox of Democratic Sovereignty*. 306

⁷²¹ Timothy J. Pifer, *William L. Garrison's Life in Ideas: The Philosopher Abolitionist*, Kindle ed. (2005). 35-36

⁷²² Frederick Douglass, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*, ed. Mary Carolyn Waldrep, Kindle ed., ed. James Daley (Dover Thrift Editions, 2013). 53.

⁷²³ Douglass, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 55.

Despite the fact that African Americans were frequently treated as inferiors or held apart in substandard condition, Douglass had hope for the future of America. He emphasized that the business of government was to hold its shield over everyone to make sure that every American citizen was alike, equally protected in his civil and personal rights:

My confidence is strong and high in the nation as a whole. I believe in its justice and in its power. I believe that it means to keep its word with its colored citizens. I believe in its progress, in its moral as well as its material civilization. Its trend is in the right direction. Its fundamental principles are sound. Its conception of humanity and of human rights is clear and comprehensive. Its progress is fettered by no State religion tending to repress liberal thought: by no order of nobility tending to keep down the toiling masses: by no divine right theory tending to national stagnation under the idea of stability. It stands out free and clear with nothing to obstruct its view of the lessons of reason and experience. The various conditions of men and the different uses they make of their powers and opportunities in life, are full of puzzling contrasts and contradictions.⁷²⁴

Here, as elsewhere, it is easy to dogmatize, but it is not so easy to define, explain or demonstrate. The natural laws for the government, and the well-being and progress of mankind, seem to be equal and are equal; but the subjects of these laws suffer inequalities, variances and contrasts.

Hope, and faith in the future, are essential aspects of any participant in a social movement. That is especially true of the leaders of a movement. They must have hope of a better future state, or the risks and sacrifices they ask of their movement followers is doomed to failure. To be sure, all their efforts will come to nothing if they do not believe in their own movement. Belief and framing are critical to the mobilization of any movement and the beliefs in equality that were held by the Founders, and by the Abolitionists, were subsequently held in common with the civil rights workers.

Doctor Martin Luther King continued the tradition of the founders and the great social movers, such as Douglass, Garrison and Lincoln, when he delivered his renowned “I Have a Dream” address delivered at the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom:”

In a sense we’ve come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the

⁷²⁴ Douglass, *Great Speeches by Frederick Douglass*. 103.

Declaration of Independence (Yeah), they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the 'unalienable Rights' of 'Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.' It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colors are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.' [sustained applause] But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. (My Lord) [laughter] (Sure enough) We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we've come to cash this check (Yes), a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom (Yes) and the security of justice. [applause].⁷²⁵

The Declaration expresses the ideals of the Independence Movement. As in any social movement that attempts to influence a nation, there are three essential parties to the movement: the movement leader, who plays the role of the prophet who identified and characterized the social problem; the movement participant, who wants to help the leader to do something to ameliorate or even eliminate the problem; and lastly is the connection to the institution that has the power to eliminate the problem: the politician. Whether we like it or not, the leader and the followers frequently have to enlist the aid of a politician to get anything implemented. This was even true of the Declaration and the Founders. As was frequently the case, the Revolutionaries and the Founders had to turn over their ideals to the politicians, the Framers, if they wanted to implement their ideals. Unfortunately, what typically happens is that ideals turn into interests when turned over to the politicians. As Charles Beard pointed out in, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, economic considerations triumphed over the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. This is clearly evident in the three provisions of the Constitution that protected the slavers: the three-fifths clause which counted slaves as three-fifths of a person for purposes of headcount to determine the number of congressional representatives; the postponement of the international slave trade for twenty years until 1808; and the fugitive slave act which required all states to aid in the assistance and capture of runaway slaves, even for those states that had already eliminated slavery. These three provisions not only recognized the legitimacy of the institution of slavery but clearly fortified the abominable institution as well. The

⁷²⁵ Gary Younge, *The Speech: The Story Behind Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream*, Kindle ed. (Haymarket Books, 2013). loc. 41-51.

Constitution not only gave structure to the government of the United States it also gave great legitimacy and motive for the second American social movement, abolition. The Amendments to the Constitution also gave institutional support to the American ideals of free speech, a free press, and the right to free assembly which are essential to vibrant and effective social movement. At every historical turn America was, and remains, a paradox and a font of social movements.

Social change is like a river. It flows continuously but nonetheless its course can be altered. Social movements can and do alter the course of social change. It is difficult to establish direct causality between social movements and social change. It is my hope that this paper, in a small way, has demonstrated that link and the incredible importance and effect social movements have had on American history.

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School		Place	Degree	Date
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Collegiate	DeSales University	Center Valley, PA	BA	1973
Graduate	University of Hartford	West Hartford, CT	MSOB	1981
	University of Chicago	Chicago, IL	MLA	2003
	Drew University	Madison, NJ	DLitt.	2025