Black Patriots and Loyalists

FIGHTING FOR EMANCIPATION IN THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

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Long ago, as a student at Walden School in Manhattan from first to fourth grade, I was friends with Andrew Goodman, who went with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Freedom Summer project in 1964 to Philadelphia, Mississippi. There his journey in support of equality ended, with those of James Chaney and Michael Schwerner. They shared in and extended the long journeys for freedom and equality that make American and global history. I dedicate this book to them.

Introduction
Fear, Hope, and the Two Revolutions in America

My declaration that I would arm and set free such slaves as should assist me if I was attacked has stirred up fears in them which cannot easily subside as they know how vulnerable they are in that particular, and therefore they have cause in this complaint of which their others are totally unsupported.

—Lord Dunmore to the Earl of Dartmouth, June 1775

As Aristotle once said of the helots in Sparta, slaves were “lurking in ambush” for their American masters in the early eighteenth century.1 On September 9, 1779, launching what became known as the Stono Rebellion, blacks in South Carolina marched along the Stono River with banners that proclaimed “Liberty!” Led by “Jemmy,” they killed the two owners of a gun shop and armed themselves. By evening, they numbered nearly one hundred. The rebels killed twenty-five whites before Lieutenant Governor William Bull rallied the better-armed whites to kill half of the blacks and eventually to arrest the others.2 Similar uprisings in Manhattan in 1712, where the black slave population rivaled that of free whites,3 and in Maryland in 1740, where authorities suppressed a plot to seize Annapolis,4 reveal an ongoing black resistance to bondage.5

But legends of revolt terrified whites as much as real violence, and even accounts of actual acts of rebellion reveal as much or more about white anxieties concerning the possibility of slave revolts as they do about the black resistance to slavery itself. In 1741, for example, ten fires broke out in New York, and Coffee, a black man, was seen running from one. Powerful New Yorkers, particularly Daniel Horsmanden, a judge and member of the governor’s executive council, suspected a conspiracy. They charged and hanged a group that included both blacks and poor whites, some of whom had congregated at John Hughes’s tavern. Curiously, all other “legal” records have perished; only Horsmanden’s account of the trials survives.

After some confessed, under torture, the authorities charged a wider circle, and in prison some of the accused heard that naming others was the only way to avoid hanging. They later recanted.6 The evidence for
the revolt was thus dubious, but Horsmanden argued that torture as
certained “the appearance of truth”—that is, what the torturer already
knew—despite blacks’ “great deal of craft,” “unintelligible jargon,” “bro-
ken hints,” and the assumption that “it will be chiefly found in the exami-
nations and confessions of negroes” that they “are seldom found to hold
twice in the same story.” Nearly one hundred executions stemmed from
Horsmanden’s suspicions. But ostensible colonial justice paid little at-
tention to the rule of law.

Even for a white “Englishman,” if poor, there was no habeas corpus.
For instance, the Hughsons, who owned the tavern, Mary Kerr, and other
poor whites were swept up in the hysteria and hanged. In 1737 Hughson
had organized gatherings parodying the secretive stuffiness of well-to-do
Masons, which also appear to have been taken for “a conspiracy.” In con-
fessing a desire to burn “white New York,” some poor whites identified
with blacks.

Working-class taverns or “grog-shops,” with their joining of black and
white artisan republicanism, indeed would continue to play a significant
role in egalitarian agitation through Gabriel’s Rebellion in Virginia in
1800.” But the reason that the prosecution of the “conspiracy” of 1741 was
carried out in the racist terms that characterize Horsmanden’s discourse
was that the events occurred against a background of fear about the pos-
sibility of impending black slave revolts and rebellion.

As historian Jill Lepore notes, as early as the 1730s, “from the depths of
cargo holds, Caribbean slaves sold in New York brought stories of [West
Indian] uprisings with them. . . . Dozens of black Caribbeans traveled to
New York in ships owned by New York merchants whose slaves would be
accused of conspiracy in 1741. . . . In all 39 of the black New Yorkers ac-
cused in 1741 were owned by men who directly participated in the Carri-
bbean slave trade.”

In 1792 New York had passed the most draconian legislation against
slaves in the British Empire: “The body of legislation that constituted
New York’s ‘Negro Law’ is a brutal testament to the difficulty of enslaving
human beings, especially in cities. New York’s slave codes were almost en-
tirely concerned with curtailing the ability of enslaved people to move at
will, and to gather for fear that they might decide, especially when drunk,
that slavery was not to be borne and one way to end it would be to burn the
city down.” New York’s “Act for Regulating Slaves” called for castrating
black men accused of raping or “fornicating with” white women.

In 1752, in response to the uprising of that year, New York had carried
out a wave of executions: authorities arrested seventy slaves and four free
blacks, tried forty-three, convicted twenty-five, hanged twenty, and burned
three at the stake. In June 23 letter to the Lords of Trade in London, a
frightened Governor Robert Hunter recounted: “In that court were twenty
seven condemned, whereof twenty one were executed, one being a woman
with child, her execution by that means suspended. Some were burnt, oth-
ers hanged, one broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in the
town, so that there has been the most exemplary punishment inflicted
that could be possibly thought of.” Pointing to the small number of ex-
cursions following Caribbean revolts, he reported to the lords: “I am in-
formed that in the West Indies where their laws against their slaves are
most severe, that in case of a conspiracy in which many are engaged a few
only are executed for an example.”

Like the accounts of Caribbean slave revolts in New York, the accounts
of events such as the Stono Rebellion and the New York revolts of 1712 and
1741 rippled through the colonies, and like them, they propagated fur-
ther fears and anxieties. During the American Revolution, a Hessian cap-
tain, Johann Hinrichs, wrote fearfully of the Stono Rebellion, but got the
date wrong by three years: “In the month of August, 1736, each was told
whom he was to kill” by some mysterious other. Males were to be slain,
women used “to gratify [the rebels] desires,” children to be “sacrifices.”

And naming his fears, on April 11, 1776, James Glen, the royal governor
of South Carolina, warned of “dangerous Enemies, [our] own Negroes, who
are ready to revolt on the first Opportunity, and are Eight times as many
in Number as there are white Men able to bear Arms.” Assemblyman Henry
Laurens of South Carolina, of whose son John we will hear much in the
chapters that follow, feared “domestic broils . . . more awful and more dis-
tressing than Fire, Pestilence, or Foreign Wars.”

The anxiety about the possibility of slave rebellions thus formed a com-
mon bond among many white settlers in both the North and the South. In
1733 Andrew Bradford, editor of Philadelphia’s American Weekly Mercury,
warned of a slave rebellion by recalling the “vilainous attempt” in New
York in 1712, which, but for the local garison, might have “reduced [the
Town] to Ashes . . . , the greatest part of the Inhabitants murdered.” The
editor also invoked a recent “massacre on the Island of St. Johns” in
the Caribbean. In language that Loyalist strategist Joseph Galloway would
echo in 1775, Bradford alerted “communities not to be too careless of their
Safety, with respect to those intestine and inhuman Enemies who are in
some Colonies but too much indulged, and by some particular Persons
rather encouraged in their Vices, than put under a due and necessary
Subjection.”

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Anxieties about the threat of slave revolts also merged with the threats posed by other others: “So soon as the Season was advanced that they could lay in the Woods, one certain Night was agreed on, that every Neo- cro and Negro in every Family was to rise at Midnight, cut the Throats of their Masters and Sons, but not meddle with the Women, whom they intended to plunder and ravish the Day following, and then set all their Houses and Barns on Fire [sic], kill the draught Horses, and secure the best Saddle Horses for their flight immediately towards the Indians in the French Interest.” Similar fears of black–Native American unity haunted elites in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

In 1739, as well during the French and Indian War of 1755, Maryland owners also feared insurrections of blacks in alliance with Catholics transferred by the Crown from Canada. In Maryland, the slave and servant population, added to the despised Catholics, nearly equaled free Protestant whites. In 1755 Maryland jailed William Stratton, a white “servant,” and “two slaves” for poisoning Jeremiah Chase, a member of the House of Delegates. Because slaves were considered less than human, their names went unreported. Governor Horatio Sharp put the militia on alert.

As a restless, ever-present “enemy,” the “witches,” Loyalist Quakers, and “Papists” threatened narrow, Protestant communities in the South. Thus, the Maryland House of Delegates denounced Governor Sharp for encouraging “Papery” because “the constant and unwearied Application of the Jesuits to proselyte, and consequently to corrupt and alienate, the Affections of our Slaves from us, and to hold them in Readiness to arm at a proper Time for our Destruction, together with every Consideration of Danger from a powerful Foreign Enemy, are circumstances truly Alarming.”

White fears were strengthened by slave revolts that continued throughout the Atlantic colonies in the latter half of the eighteenth century, especially in the Caribbean. In 1760 Tacky’s Rebellion burst out in Jamaica. Named for an enslaved Coromantee chief from Africa who gathered fellow Coromantee bondsmen, the rebellion started in St. Mary’s Parish on Easter Monday. According to Edward Long, the sugar planter and historian, this uprising was “more formidable than any hitherto known in the West Indies.” In April, blacks burned the cane fields. As a symbol of allegiance with a revolt that would dominate Jamaica for several months, slaves shaved their heads. Freedom fighters killed sixty soldiers. The British army shot three hundred to four hundred blacks. Some took their own lives rather than submit. Rebellions occurred in Bermuda (1761), Dutch Guiana (1763, 1765, and 1772), Jamaica (1765, 1766, and 1776), British Honduras (1767, 1768, and 1773), Grenada (1765), Montserrat (1766), St. Vincent (1769–72), Tobago (1770, 1771, and 1774), and St. Croix and St. Thomas (1770 and after).

Faced with the reports of past black revolts and the possibility of future slave rebellions, “only the blind could be free from fear,” the historian Winthrop Jordan—“a chilling fear which even the rhythmic tread of daily life could never entirely smother.” But as the tensions between the American colonies and the metropolitan British government grew in the years before the American Revolution, the fears of slave revolts that gripped the white colonists and slaveholders in the British colonies in America were exacerbated by the unmistakable movement on the part of the British government toward the abolition of slavery. That movement did not come to fruition in the British Empire until the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and the abolition of slavery itself in 1833. Its early manifestations, however, appeared at the same time that the tensions between the colonies and the metropolis were coming to a head, and indeed, for some white colonists, the specter of abolition seemed to be among the many impostions on the colonies, North and South alike, that the movement for freedom and independence sought to redress. Thus, the issues of emancipation and independence—the movement for the emancipation of the slaves held across the British Empire and the movement for independence from it in the thirteen North American colonies—were inextricably linked.

EMANCIPATION AND INDEPENDENCE
What exacerbated the fears of white colonists instead appeared to the slaves of the American colonies a source of hope. Fears of the consequences that an imperial policy of freeing the slaves might hold helped motivate many white colonists to join the Patriot cause as the Revolution unfolded. At the same time, hope that the British were recognizing the inhumanity and immorality of slavery and were willing to contemplate freeing the slaves motivated many black slaves to side with the Loyalist cause. As it did for many Patriots, for whom the king, in accord with a long political tradition, literally embodied the nation, for black slaves in the American colonies, hope for redress of their condition sometimes centered on belief in a “good king” misled by nefarious ministers of state. According to Bradford, “Hall’s Negro,” supposedly drunk, had told a white man named Remonds that “the Englishmen were in general a pack of Villains, and that they kept the Negroes as Slaves contrary to a positive Order from King George, sent to the Governor of New-York, to let them all free, Fear, Hope, and the Two Revolutions in America | 5
which the said Governor did intend to do, but was prevented by his C... [word abridged in text: Council] and A... [Army], and that was the Rea-
son there subsisted now so great a difference between the Governor and the People of both Provinces." And in 1774 in St. Bartholomew's County, South Carolina, a black man known only as George feared that a good
king would free the slaves.19
Ironically, in the rhetoric of the Old Whigs that framed the discourses of the American Revolution, what the Patriots were claiming in a just war for independence fought to achieve their own rights as free men and women was freedom from "slavery."20 What black American slaves who embraced the Loyalist cause were claiming was the same thing—not as a hyperbolic
term for the effects of taxation without representation or mercantilist
economics, but as freedom from being treated as mere chattels and prop-
erty. In this context the words "independence" or "soverignty" took on a
resonance among southern Patriots not of "no taxation without repre-
sentation" but of the preservation of bondage from the threat of eman-
cipation.21 As the British abolitionist Granville Sharp pointed out in an
acute way to the Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush, "American liberty
cannot be firmly established without some scheme of general Enfran-
chisement" because "the toleration of domestic slavery in the colonies greatly weaken the claim of natural right of our American Brethren to Liberty." Sharp added: "Let [the Americans] put away the accursed thing (that horrid Oppression) from among them, before they presume to impose the impo-
sition of divine justice."22 But among many white Patriots, the cry "liberty"
in Patrick Henry's famous phrase "Give me Liberty or give me Death" be-
came a perverse call for the "freedom" to hold others as slaves.
Thus, two revolutions were actually under way in the 1770s and 1780s in Britain's American colonies, and the victory achieved in one with the
signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783 both delayed and made imperative victory. In the second, a victory not achieved until fourteen years later.
The struggle for the independence of the American colonies from Great Britain stood in a complex relationship with the struggle for the enfran-
chisement of the black slaves in those colonies. The prospect of an emancipa-
tion promised by the colonial British administration was actually one of the
factors that drove the white slave-owning colonists toward rebellion and independence. At the same time, both the pragmatic tactical advan-
tages of employing freed slaves in the struggle for freedom and the logic of a revolt against a colonial administration perceived as attempting to "enslave" free Englishmen and to deprive them of their fundamental hu-
man rights helped move the Patriots toward a recognition of the contra-
dictions in their own thought and behavior and the eventual necessity of a
further revolution in which emancipation, not just independence, would
be the result.

SOMERSETT, THE DUNMORE PROCLAMATION,
AND THE PROSPECT OF FREEDOM
As the American Revolution approached, the hopes of black Amer-
ican slaves were raised by William Murray, chief justice of Britain and the
first Earl of Mansfield. His 1773 decision in R v Knowles, ex parte Somerset,
held slavery to be illegal in Great Britain, although not elsewhere in the
British Empire, declaring that "the state of slavery is of such a nature, that
it is incapable of now being introduced on any reasons, moral or political;
but only positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, oc-
casion, and time itself from whence it was created, is erased from mem-
ory. It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive
law. Whatever in conveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision,
I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and
therefore the black must be discharged."23
The origins of the case lay in the late 1760s, when Charles Stewart, a
slave owner, returned to London from a job as paymaster in Boston. He
brought with him James Somerset. Two years later, Somerset escaped.
Captain John Knowles recaptured Somerset, imprisoned him on the
slave ship Ann and Mary bound for Jamaica, and attempted to sell him.
Making a test case of bondage, Granville Sharp, one of the first and fierc-
est English campaigners for abolition and a great democratic theorist,
sued on Somerset's behalf. On June 23, 1773, Lord Mansfield emancipated
Somerset.24
No British law, Mansfield argued, sanctioned "so high an act of domin-
ion"—the seizure of Somerset by Knowles on English soil. The opinion
also did not return Somerset to Stewart. Thus, the verdict appeared to
mean that Justice Mansfield granted the freedom of blacks in Britain—
James Somerset had made himself free there.
Yet imperial rulings about slavery were characteristically a patchwork.
This decision could have had only a narrow legal scope. Mansfield cer-
tainly did not manumit all blacks in the British Isles. As Benjamin Frank-
lin, a visitor in London, put it acidly, "Philisical British! To pride thyself
in setting free a single slave that happens to land on thy coasts, while thy
merchants in all thy ports are encouraged by thy laws to continue a com-
merce whereby so many hundreds of thousands are dragged into a slavery
that can scarce be said to end with their lives since it is entailed on their
In other such cases, Mansfield's rulings reject cruelty, but do not abolish bondage. Even in the report of the *Somerset* case, Mansfield hesitated: "The setting of 14,000 or 15,000 men at once loose by a solemn opinion is very disagreeable in the effects it threatens." Despite his triumph in *Somerset*, Granville Sharp rightly indicted the chief justice's willingness to prefer "pecuniary or sordid property, as that of a master in a horse or a dog, to inestimable liberty." But the *Somerset* verdict brought hope to blacks. On June 27, 1772, the *Public Advertiser*, a London newspaper, noted, "On Monday near two hundred blacks with their ladies had an entertainment at a public-house in Westminster, to celebrate the triumph which their brother *Somerset* [sic] had obtained over Mr. Stuart, his master. Lord Mansfield's health was echoed round the room; and the evening was concluded with a ball." Most ordinary people interpreted the *Somerset* decision to emancipate all slaves on English soil.

Blacks then made their way to freedom in London. Often, even the masters shared their belief about *Somerset* or could not stop them. On July 20, 1772, John Riddell of Bristol Wells angrily wrote to Charles Stewart, "I am disappointed by Mr. Dublin who has run away. He told the servants that he had received a letter from his Uncle Somerset [sic] acquainting him that Lord Mansfield had given them their freedom & he was determined to leave me as soon as I returned from London which he did without even speaking to me. I don't find that he has gone off with anything of mine. Only carried off all his own clothes which I don't know that he had any right so to do. I believe that I shall not give my self any trouble to look after this ungrateful villain." In America, twenty-one newspapers published forty-three stories about the *Somerset* decision. For slave owners, that verdict sounded a death knell. They could no longer bring their property to the "Mother Country" because it was illegitimate.

In the black underground, word of *Somerset* spread like lightning. In 1773, for instance, an advertisement warned that a "runaway" couple had fled for Britain, "where they imagine they will be free (a notion now too prevalent among Negroes, greatly to the vexation and prejudice of their masters)." A different advertisement related the story of Bacchus: "About 30 Years of Age, five feet six or seven inches high, strong and well made. . . . He was seen a few Days before he went off with a Purse of Dollars, and had just before changed a five Pound Bill. Most, or all of which, I suppose he must have robbed me of, which he might easily have done, I hav- ing trusted him much after what I thought had proved his Fidelity. He will probably endeavour to pass for a Freeman by the Name of John Christian and attempt to get on Board some Vessel bound for Great Britain, from the Knowledge he has of the late Determination of Somerset's [sic] Case. Whoevers takes up the said Slave shall have 5 £ Reward, on his Delivery to Gabriel Jones." Among blacks kept illiterate by their masters and without access to judicial documents, the public meaning of the decision alone held sway, and they acted on what they had learned, asking to be emancipated by the British authorities. Between 1773 and 1777, three groups of Boston blacks petitioned for freedom to Massachusetts' royal governor Thomas Gage and later to the revolutionary authorities. They appealed to natural rights, as would the Declaration of Independence. In 1777 "a Great Number of Blacks" wrote to the Massachusetts legislature or General Court, denouncing the owners' hypocritical Christianity: "Your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unali- able [sic] Right to the freedom which the Grate Parent of the Unawers hath Bestowed equally on all mankind and which they have Never forfeited by any Compact or agreement whatever." In 1774, if the royal governor would emancipate them, according to a third petition, another "great Number of blacks" volunteered to fight for the British under General Gage.

Anticipating the arrival of English troops in November 1774, Virginia slaves planned an insurrection. Colonists, however, got wind of the rebellion. In a November 1776 letter to Philadelphia editor William Bradford, James Madison urged hiding the truth that it was the British who seemed to colonial slaves to be the defenders of liberty: "If americas and Britain should come to an hostile rupture I am afraid an Insurrection among the slaves may and will be promoted. In one of our Countries lately a few of those unhappy wretches met together and chose a leader who was to con- duct them when the English Troops should arrive—which they foolishly thought would be very soon and that by revolting to them they should be rewarded with their freedom. Their Intentions were soon discovered and proper precautions taken to prevent the Infection. It is prudent such things should be concealed as well as suppressed." Madison was the one being foolish here. On November 7, 1775, in a proclamation that would echo though the colonies, John Murray, the fourth Earl of Dunmore and the royal governor of the colony of Virginia, would indeed offer slaves their freedom:

I do require every Person capable of bearing Arms, to [resort to] His Majesty's Standard, or be looked upon as Traitors to His Majesty's Crown and Government, and thereby become liable to the Penalty the
Law inflicts upon such Offenders; such as forfeiture of Life, confiscation of Land, &c. &c. And I do hereby further declare all indentured Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms, they joining His Majesty's Troops as soon as may be, for the more speedily reducing this Colony to a proper Sense of their Duty, to His Majesty’s Liege Subjects, to retain their Quitrents, or any other Taxes due or that may become due, in their own Custody, till such Time as Peace may be again restored to this at present most unhappy Country, or demanded of them for their former reinstated Purposes, by Officers properly authorised to receive the same.43

The Dunmore Proclamation was a response to a particular situation in Virginia, as we will see, but the strategy that it exemplified and the rise of abolitionist sentiment in the mother country made what had seemed unthinkable as an official policy of the British administration in London—emancipation throughout the empire—suddenly the subject of speculation in the American colonies. Replying to Madison on January 4, 1777, Bradford recognized Parliament’s instigation of slave revolt: “Your fear with regard to an Insurrection being excited among the slaves seems so wellfounded.” According to Bradford, “A letter from a Gentleman in England was read yesterday in the Coffee-house, which mentioned the design of [the] administration to pass an act (in case of rupture) declaring all Slaves & Servants free that would take arms against the Americans. By this, you see such a scheme is thought on and talked of; but I cannot believe the Spirit of the English would ever allow them publickly to adopt so slavish a way of Conquering.”44

As independence neared, the Somerset decision helped ignite a wildfire of egalitarian unrest.45 As we noted in the New York riots of 1741, class and race forged ties of solidarity in opposition to both the slaveholders and the colonial elites. This was particularly evident in the resistance to press gangs, one of the abuses that continued into the nineteenth century and that led to the War of 1812. In the Knowles riot in Boston of 1747, “armed Seamen, Servants, Negroes and others” sought press gangs that forced civilians into the British navy. In 1765 “Sailors, boys, and Negroes to the number of above Five Hundred” rebelled against press gangs in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1765 in Norfolk, Virginia, “Whites & Blacks all arm’d” attacked Captain Jeremiah Morgan. In 1768 a mob of “sturdy boys & negroes” staged a riot in Boston—royal revenue collectors had seized John Hancock’s sloop, the Liberty, provoking a series of uprisings. As historian Jesse Lemisch notes, after 1763 “armed mobs of whites and Negroes repeatedly manhandled captains, officers, and crews, threatened their lives, and held them hostage for the men they presssed.”46 Rebels met imperial force with force.

Revolts thus often occurred in ports. As historian Markus Rediker stresses, “With their promise of anonymity and an impersonal wage in the maritime sector, [ports] served as a magnet to runaway slaves and free blacks throughout the colonial period and well into the nineteenth century. Most found work as laborers and seamen. Slaves too were employed in the maritime sector, some with ship masters as owners, others hired out by the voyage. By the middle of the eighteenth century, slaves dominated Charleston’s maritime and riverine traffic, in which some 20 per cent of the city’s adult male slaves labored.”47 Thus, slaves, free blacks, and impressed and free whites worked together.48

With commerce and the tides, sailors spread news of liberty, and in the second revolution, the revolution for freedom and equality for all, the emancipatory idioms of sailors played a role. In London, North American, and Caribbean ports, sailors denounced impressment as “slavery plain and simple,” governed by the lash and an absence of rights.49 In 1773 John Allen’s “Oration on the Beauties of Liberty” condemned the corruption of gangs, which “ought ever to be held in the most hateful contempt, the same as you would a banditti of slave-makers on the coast of Africa.”50 Black sailors, free and slave, carried these words among bondsmen. They brought their knowledge to a subterranean network proceeding from slave to slave, house to field, and plantation to plantation across hundreds of miles.51

In 1773 slaves rebelled against bondage in Perth Amboy, New Jersey; in 1774 a joint African-Irish movement arose in Boston, again uniting blacks and poor whites. In December 1774, in St. Andrews Parish, according to the Savannah (GA) Gazette, “six negro fellows and four wenches” killed a master and an overseer and attacked neighboring plantations.52 British authorities burned two of the leaders alive. At a meeting the next year, St. Andrews’s residents expressed “abhorrence” of slavery, but did not free blacks.53

In 1775, in Ulster County, New York, Dorchester County, Maryland, and Norfolk, Virginia, blacks demonstrated. According to the Dorchester Committee of Inspection, “The insolence of the Negroes in this country is come to such a height, that we are under a necessity of disarming them which we affected on Saturday last. We took about eighty guns, some bayonets,

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swords, etc. The malicious and imputent speeches of some among the lower classes of whites have induced them to believe that their freedom depended on the success of the Kings troops. We cannot therefore be too vigilant nor too rigorous with those who promote and encourage this disposition in our slaves."

In Wilmington and Tar River, North Carolina, owners suppressed "conspiracies." In Tar River, Merrick plotted with a white sailor to obtain arms. In June, also in North Carolina, the Wilmington Committee of Public Safety instituted "patrols to search & take from Negroes all kinds of Arms whatsoever." As Janet Shaw, a "Lady of Quality," records in her journal, the committee aimed to force each black to return home by nine at night. Shaw adds that a Whig "killed"—we would now say murdered—one of these blacks. No insurrection took place because, she thought, slaves did not possess guns. Nevertheless, she noted, when a posse jailed forty blacks, tormenters gave them each "a hundred lashes" and "cropped their ears."70

Patriot protests about British denials of law and liberty were thus fundamentally compromised by persistent, despotic Patriot violence toward blacks. From St. Bartholomew Parish in South Carolina, Thomas Hutchinson wrote to Henry Laurens that a certain Jenny denounced a leader named George for stirring revolt: "Prince andPatience belonging to Francis Smith, Jack, hecet & daphney, belonging to William Smith, Shifnul, Quaashey & Jupiter, belonging to his Master," Ben & Pearce, belonging to James Parson's Esq. & Ben, belong to Jno. E. Hutchinson are Preachers, & have (many of them) been preaching for two Years past to Great crowds of Negroes in the Neighborhood of Clyhaw, very frequently, which [Jenny] himself attended ... that at these assemblies he had heard of an Insurrection intended & to take the Country by Killing the Whites."

On the testimony of one witness, citing words, not acts, a South Carolina "count" murdered George.

We can turn to none other than John Adams as the voice of opposition to the second American revolution. In 1770 Crispus Attucks led a demonstration in Boston against the forcible quartering of troops with civilians and the English redcoat competition with American journeymen for jobs. (British soldiers also took civilian employment.) Of African and Native American ancestry, Attucks had escaped bondage and became a sailor.

In the "Boston Massacre," redcoats murdered him and five others. In a shining moment, John Adams would fiercely advocate the Declaration of Independence. Yet his speeches and writings were often sublimely reactionary. As the Crown's lawyer, Adams denounced Attucks: "This Attacks ... appears to have undertaken to be the hero of the night; and to lead this army with banners, to form them in the first place in Duck square, and match them up to King street with their clubs ... . This man with his party cried, do not be afraid of them. . . . To have this reinforcement coming down under the command of a stout Molatto fellow, whose very looks was enough to terrify any person, what had not the soldiers then to fear? He had hardiness enough to fall in upon them, and with one hand took hold of a bayonet and with the other knocked the man down."72 Adams spoke for the elite who feared the revolutionary activism of blacks and poor whites. If they struck against the British, might they not also strike at American slave owners?

The Declaration of Independence maintains that each of us is "endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights" and that among these are "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." But at the time, this founding document restricted these liberties to whites. Thus, Jefferson suspected that George III could use blacks and Indians—those most oppressed by the colonists—against the American cause. As the Declaration avowes: "He [the King] has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavowed to bring in the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an indistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."73

Perhaps out of shame, Jefferson did not name blacks.74 And in drafting the Constitution, William Paterson, a New Jersey representative, stated flatly that Congress "had been ashamed to use the term 'Slaves' and had substituted a description." According to another New Jersey delegate, the Constitution's authors sought by omission to avoid any "stain" on the new government. Nevertheless, the practice of bondage betrayed the American Revolution more deeply than a word.75

Faced with rebellions in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia and the menace of newly freed black redcoats, owners experienced ceaseless "dread of insubordinate insurrections," in the common phrase. Parallel to the Declaration of Independence in a 1776 book, North Carolinian James Iredell denounced Britain's "diabolical purpose of exciting our own Domestics (Domestics they forced upon us) to cut our throats, and involve Men, Women and children in one universal massacre."76

The two revolutions in eighteenth-century America—the revolution for independence to escape from the "slavery" imposed by the imperial British administration and the revolution for freedom and...
emancipation from the slavery imposed by many of those who sought to achieve independence from Great Britain—thus proceeded together, often at odds with each other and always in a complicated relationship in which both the highest principles of the Enlightenment and of Christianity and the basest motives of human prejudice, fear, and greed contended, sometimes in the same person, to shape the future of the new United States and the world beyond.

**Chapter 1**

Lord Dunmore, Black Insurrection, and the Independence Movement in Virginia and South Carolina

[Dunmore's proclamation tended] more effectively to work an external separation between Great Britain and the Colonies, than any other expedient, which could possibly be thought of.

—Edward Rutledge, South Carolina signer of the Declaration of Independence, December 1776

In Virginia, in a fraught atmosphere in which white Patriots believed themselves threatened alike by the oppressions of the colonial administration and the prospects of slave revolts, not just the Dunmore Proclamation but a whole series of actions by Governor Dunmore exacerbated the hostility between the Patriots and the Crown, simultaneously hastening the advent of the American Revolution and helping to put in motion the revolution that paralleled it, the revolution in the status of America's black slaves. A similar situation prevailed in South Carolina, where advocates of the revolution for American independence were both motivated by and opposed to the revolution in the status of black slaves. The specter of slave revolts incited by Dunmore's actions seemed to many Patriots in both colonies to be of a piece with other deliberate acts by the colonial administration contrary to the interests of the colonial settlers.

Attracted by British freedoms, blacks thronged to Dunmore's standard. One result was the central role of the Royal Ethiopian Regiment on the British side in the first battles of the Revolution in Virginia. Another was a continuing ferment, for instance by Loyalists William Dalrymple and Joseph Galloway, to enlist and emancipate slaves while Patriot elites, zealous to preserve bondage, railed.

Already in 1774, Governor Dunmore, contemplating the emancipation of colonial slaves, had written to Colonial Secretary William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth, that Patriot slave owners, "with great reason, trembled at the facility that [their] enemy, would find in such a body of men, attached by no tie to their Master nor to the Country... It was natural to Suppose that their Condition must inspire them with an aversion to both, and [that they] therefore are ready to join the first that would encourage
rens Roper, owned the table on which delegates to the Continental Congress had signed the Declaration of Independence. To proclaim South Carolina's secession in the Civil War, the Confederacy requested its use. "[I will] burn it to ashes first," Martha Roper replied, her sense of honor fierce. Central in South Carolina history, the Laurens family, across generations, fought for emancipation. As of the 2000 election, South Carolina still flew the Confederate flag. The state's "official" history effaces the history of the Laurens family, as has American history. However, they played a significant role in simultaneously advancing both of the two American revolutions.158

Chapter 4 Black Fighters for Freedom

Patriot Recruitment and the Two Revolutions

It is justifiable that Negroes should have their freedom, and none amongst us be held as slaves, as freedom and liberty is the grand controversy that we are contending for.

—Lieutenant Thomas Kenn, "To the Honorable Council in Boston," April 3, 1778

The second revolution could have sustained the first. The emancipation of America's black slave population in the name of the liberty for which the American Revolution was fought could have transformed a self-contradictory claim for universal natural rights restricted to whites into a genuine aspiration for equal freedom. In addition, from a practical point of view, the exclusion of blacks crippled the Patriot cause. In 1775, the colonies' population totaled two and a half million; of roughly half a million blacks, all but fifty thousand were in bondage. Many free Americans, perhaps one-third, became Loyalists, but a much higher percentage of blacks did.

Compared with the South, a smaller proportion of slaves and Tories lived in New England, where citizens were often more deeply committed to freedom. New England provided a disproportionately large number of troops to the American Revolution. The central role of free or newly freed black soldiers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania served as a symbol of emancipation to more reactionary states. In their efforts to supply troops to the Continental army, the states soon exhausted the pool of available whites, and to fill enlistment quotas, several legislatures in the North focused on and occasionally manumitted blacks. Moreover, opting out of the Revolution, many white "citizens" presented blacks in their stead. Thus, many Patriot soldiers were slaves or new ex-slaves.

As a consequence, in some northern states even before the Continental Congress passed the Laurens proposal to free and recruit blacks to the Patriot cause, the role played by free or newly freed black soldiers both paved the way for acceptance of the proposal and served as a symbol of emancipation to more reactionary states. While the enlightened opinions
of elites and the pragmatic exigencies of the Revolutionary War motivated decision makers to accept freedom for America's black slaves, the arbiter for liberty and the performance of black troops already enlisted in the Patriot cause contributed significantly to the mutual progress of the two revolutions.

Initially, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Virginia barred slave enlistment with the Continental army. As in the South, elites feared insurrections by armed blacks. But slave owners throughout the colonies could free individuals and offer them to the military in the master's place. In 1776, in what was a typical case, Elkanah Watson of Plymouth, Rhode Island, sent "Dolphin Negro" for "thirty days' service." Jonathan Giddings of New Fairfield, Connecticut, hired a black substitute throughout the war. In North Carolina, William Kitchen, a recaptured deserter, professed a black Griffin in his stead. In turn, these blacks hoped that the Patriots would eventually grant freedom to those who fought. Yet these practices also make the ratio of enslaved to free blacks among Patriot troops hard to estimate. Ironically, these masters' very lack of patriotism for the new country led to freedom for many individuals. Until defeat and lack of money to pay troops added their stimulus, however, Dunmore's example did not lead George Washington to emancipate slaves in exchange for recruitment. Still, a substantial number of the already free, as well as these substitutes for their owners, joined the Continental army in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. As a Hessian officer put it, "One sees no regiment in which there are not negroes in abundance, and among them are able-bodied, sturdy fellows." Between October 22 and November 20, 1777, Colonel Christopher Greene led four hundred soldiers, mainly free blacks, in defending Fort Mercer on the Delaware River. According to historian Phillip Foner, "The black Continentals... successfully held off waves of attacks by superior numbers of Hessians and British regulars. Faced by overwhelming odds, Colonel Greene... abandoned the fort and withdrew with the surviving black soldiers in good order. He had been commended by Congress and his assignment to head the Rhode Island black battalion was a logical aftermath." In June 1778, two months after the battle of Monmouth, New Jersey, Alexander Scammell, an adjutant general, drafted a roster or "return" of blacks under Washington's command (see table 1). The list does not include those already recruited in Rhode Island; these were but a fraction of the black soldiers enlisted by the Patriots. In contrast to the Crown, however, this return reveals an aggressive American response to military necessity. These blacks were predominantly soldiers. "They were enrolled in fourteen different regiments and represented several States," Scammell wrote. "Five hundred and eighty-six were in active service, out of a total muster of seven hundred and forty-two." The list reveals substantial recruitment by Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and even New Jersey, a bastion of slave-owning in the North.

Nineteenth-century abolitionists and some modern historians maintain that blacks opted for whichever side would give them freedom. Opposing bondage in the new United States, these abolitionists would have elicited no sympathy from mainstream American politicians by recognizing that initially blacks fought mainly for the Crown. However, these historians rightly argued that the same person could go back and forth between sides and that blacks from the same family sometimes fought for different sides. According to William Nell, a black abolitionist writing in the mid-nineteenth century: Seymour Burr was a slave in Connecticut. . . . Though treated with much favor by his master, his heart yearned for liberty, and he seized

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Total | 596 | 98 | 71 | 755

an occasion to induced several of his fellow slaves to escape in a boat, intending to join the British, that they might become free men, but being pursued by their owners, armed with the instruments of death, they were compelled to surrender. [Burr's own] asked what inducement he could have for leaving him.

Burr replied that he wanted his liberty. His owner finally proposed, that if he would give him the bounty money, he might join the American army, and at the end of the war be his own man. Burr, willing to make any sacrifice for his liberty, consented, and served faithfully during the campaign, attached to the Seventh Regiment. 18

In 1784, Nell also reports, the Loyalist Claims Commission in London heard the tragic story of Benjamin Whitecuff, a twenty-year-old New Yorker. Whitecuff's father, a Patriot sergeant, tried to recruit Benjamin and his elder brother. Out of conviction and perhaps a rebellion common among younger brothers, Benjamin sided with the Crown. He became a spy. Patriots captured and hanged Whitecuff from a tree. Before he strangled, however, imperial troops miraculously rescued him. According to the account, "His Father took the American side... He would have persuaded him to go too but he refused. His older Brother went with [the Father]... He was employed for 3 years as a Spy by Sir Henry Clinton and Sir William Amysough. ... He says he was hung up by the Rebels at Cranbery in the Jerseys for three months but was saved by a detachment of the 9th light Company. ... He has heard his Father was killed at Chestnut Hill. His Brother was killed at Germantown. 19

But lists compiled by today's historians often dramatically understated the number of blacks on the American side. They tend to be based on the clearest indication that the names were of blacks, for instance, African, ancient Greek and Roman, and geographical first names or occasionally the surnames "Freedom" or "Negro." On most lists, however, these names make up but a fraction of the blacks enlisted by the Continental army. 20

RHODE ISLAND

Among the earliest and most distinguished group of black recruits to the Patriot cause was the First Rhode Island Regiment. Scholars have often neglected the First Rhode Island, but even when they invoke it, they obscure the wider role of free black and Native American soldiers from that state.

In 1777 the Crown reconquered Newport, the capital of Rhode Island. Encamped at Valley Forge, the two Rhode Island Patriot battalions had few soldiers. On January 2, 1778, General James Mitchell Varnum wrote to Washington: "The two Battalions from the State of Rhode Island being small, there being a necessity of the State's furnishing an additional number to make up their proportion in the continental Army; the field officers have represented to me the propriety of making one temporary Battalion from the two, so that one entire Corps of Officers may repair to Rhode Island, in order to receive & prepare the Recruits for the Field. It is imagined that a Battalion of Negroes can be easily raised there." 21

Writing for Colonel Christopher Greene, Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah Ossory, and Samuel Ward Jr., Varnum urged Washington to "give the officers employed in this business all the assistance in your power." 22 Washington forwarded Varnum's letter to Rhode Island governor Nicholas Cooke. In February, Cooke submitted the proposal to the state legislature. The subsequent Rhode Island Resolution for Negro Recruitment of 1778 combined the two revolutions for American freedom. It declared: "That every slave so enlisting shall, upon his passing muster before Col. Christopher Greene, be immediately discharged from the service of his master or mistress, and be absolutely free, as though he had never been incumbent with any kind of servitude or slavery." 23

Debating the proposal in the legislature, a proslavery delegate suggested that the state could not consistently recruit "a band of slaves" to defend American liberties. In a revolution for the natural rights of man, the inconsistency lay in the bondage this delegate commended. As another delegate imagined, this act would subject Americans to ridicule by the British similar to the one "we so liberally bestowed upon them on account of Dunmore's regiment of blacks." 24 Yet opponents could suggest no alternate source of recruits.

The resolution recalled that the Roman Republic freed slaves to defeat Hannibal, stating that "history affords us frequent Precedents of the wisest, the freest, and bravest nations having liberated their Slaves and enlisted them to fight in defence of their country." 25 In Rhode Island, imperial forces had conquered "the Capital... and a great part of this State," and the legislature declared that "every able-bodied Negro, mulatto, or Indian man slave... may enlist into either of the said Battalions." 26 It mandated that "every slave so enlisting shall be entitled to and receive all the bounties, wages, and encouragements allowed by the Continental Congress." Rhode Island recruited Narragansett Indians mainly into the First Regiment. 27

To recruit soldiers, the state offered to purchase slaves "at the rate of $10 for the most valuable." The resolution created a committee of five
members of the Rhode Island General Assembly to oversee black enlistment: Thomas Runmell of Newport; Joseph Humphrey of Warren; Judge Thomas Tillinghast of East Greenwich; Christopher Lippitt, former colonel of the Second Rhode Island Regiment; and Samuel Babcock of South Kingstown. Babcock had signed a slave-owners' petition against the resolution. Even these committee members embodied the conflict over emancipation.

The resolution also called for reimbursement of the Rhode Island legislature by the Continental Congress for the purchase of slaves to free in order to fight on the Patriot side. But Congress had not promised to recompense owners. Governor Cooke had written to Washington that whites would not enlist for what the Continental army could pay. The Patriot cause in and of itself did not inspire enough whites. Emancipation would move blacks more deeply. Enrolling blacks was thus feasible; it was, Cooke insisted, "impossible to recruit our battalions in any other way." William Greene, the next governor, argued in the legislature that the demoralization of soldiers arising from "not having been paid their wages for several months past" was serious. In contrast, he argued, freedom was a profound form of "pay" for blacks, though until long after the war it was their only wage.

On passage of the resolution, Cooke wrote to Washington, "Liberty is given to every effective slave to enter the service during the war; and upon passing muster, he is absolutely free, and entitled to all the wages, bounties and encouragements, given by Congress to any soldier enlisting into their service." Cooke added, "The number of slaves in this State is not great but it is generally thought that three hundred and upward will be enlisted."

On February 19, 1778, a large crowd of blacks gathered in South Kingstown. According to Captain Elijah Lewis, some whites, notably Hazard Potter, attempted to frighten recruits. Cuff Greene, a former slave of James Greene, and Dick Champlin and Jack Champlin, who had belonged to Stephen Champlin, enlisted in the Continental army. In Narragansett or South County, which had the largest ratio of blacks to whites, approximately one in three joined. But owners campaigned to discourage blacks from enlisting. As Governor Cooke wrote to Nathanael Greene on April 19, 1778, "Your observation upon South Kingston in respect to the Negro Rigiment is very Just; they are not pleased with it at all and grumble a good deal."

Yet on the general treasurer's account, from February 25 to October 14, 1778, sixty-seven blacks joined: twenty in April, seventeen in May, thirteen in June, thirteen in July, one in August, two in September, and one in October. Along with slave-owner "grumbling," the general assembly found its new defense of freedom frightening. On June 10, it decreed the great resolution "expensive and impractical" and sought to halt black recruitment. But the combination of black zeal for freedom and Patriot military necessity rendered the later decree ineffective. According to muster rolls, enlistment in the black and Narragansett battalion continued until the close of the war.

According to an initial return for the First Rhode Island Regiment, July 6, 1778, the four companies had 19 commissioned officers and 144 noncommissioned officers and privates. On July 16, Nathanael Greene wrote to Washington that the regiment was "about 130 strong." An additional company soon brought the total to 245 officers and enlisted men. Historian Lorenzo Greene estimates that between 225 and 250 blacks—mostly slaves—signed up. Given casualties, desertions, and discharges, as well as incomplete muster rolls, treasurer's lists, payrolls, and casualty lists, that figure is probably low.

Aside from the First Regiment, other free or newly freed black recruits served in Rhode Island. In December 1778, Captain Ebenezer Flegg's company had twenty-nine black privates and, in the ranks of those whose duties would later become icons in depictions of the American Revolution, one black fifer and one black drummer. In November 1778, Captain David Dexter's company had thirty-two blacks, and in April 1779, it had thirty-one. On December 31, 1779, the Second Company had thirty black privates and one black fife. In addition, skilled black workers included two tailors, one carpenter, seven cooperers, three wagoners, three teamsters, and one blacksmith. Fifty-four black laborers amounted to roughly 30 percent of all minority recruits. Another 5 percent fought at sea. Twenty-three served as sailors, three as "captain's boys," three as waiters, two as "ships carpenters," two as cooks, and one as surgeon's mate.

More often than others, Rhode Island recruits kept their owner's surname. Some blacks came from the largest slaveholding families: British Salonstall from Dudley Salonstall; Cato Greene from Governor William Greene; Cato Vernon from William Vernon of Newport; Jack, York, July, Newport, and Sharp Champlin from the slave merchants Hazard and Stephen Champlin of Newport and South Kingston; Mingo Robinson from Sylvester Robinson; and Jacob and Peter Hazard from Robert Hazard, one of the biggest landowners in New England. Curiously, no black on the list "belonged" to John Brown, the wealthy Providence revolutionary and slave trader after whom Brown University is named.

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In 1855 William Nell recounted how freedom for blacks moved some owners who were patriotic about liberty. In Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, Nell reported, "When his master told him [the man's name is, unfortunately, not mentioned] that they were on the point of starting for the army, to fight for liberty, he shrewdly suggested, that it would be a great satisfaction to know that he was indeed going to fight for his liberty. Struck with the reasonableness and justice of this suggestion, Gen. S. John Sullivan] at once gave him his freedom."

To Patriots, the black First Rhode Island Regiment served as a standard of dedication. In the Battle of Rhode Island between August 5 and 31, 1778, the regiment defended the Continentals' right flank. According to Samuel Greene Arnold's History of Rhode Island, "Posted behind a thicket in the valley, [Sullivan's brigade] three times drove back the Hessians who charged repeatedly down the hill to dislodge them." The Hessian colonel promptly asked for a transfer "because he dared not lead his men into battle, lest his men shoot him for having caused so much loss."

In that encounter, the British suffered 247 dead or wounded, the Americans 69. Eleven were members of the First Rhode Island Regiment. The regiment then fought in the South, including at the Battle of Yorktown. Its example contrasts strikingly with the slave-hunting Patriot militias of South Carolina and Georgia.

The average term of service in the regiment was three years. Many served for five. The British killed 126 soldiers—8 percent of the regiment: one in five of them died in the Patriot cause. Thus, if we factor in shorter terms due to death, the average service among surviving soldiers probably nears four years. Coming from warrior cultures, Native Americans also served longer terms. In contrast, white militiamen engaged for, at most, twelve months. As Yorktown would reveal, blacks provided the core of American fighters.

In the Battle of Rhode Island, the redcoats took seventeen black prisoners. The regiment's officers reported seven blacks as wounded. In general, blacks suffered heavier casualties. At the battle of Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario in 1783, for instance, many lost fingers and limbs from frostbite. Like whites, blacks and Native Americans often deserted: eighty-two (nearly 13 percent) fled from the regiment during the war. In the Rhode Island Gazette, the army advertised for twenty-seven of these men. Revealing the Patriot's desperation for recruits, six were allowed to rejoin the regiment. Four were retained. Five deserted twice.

Officers whipped black soldiers more frequently than they did whites. Colonels Greene and Olney ordered this punishment for leaving camp.
Eldridge is concerned, however, with the transfiguring aspect of freedom: "Oh, liberty! What power dwells in the softest whisper of thy sweet lullabies, acting like magic upon the human soul? He who first woke thy slumbering echoes, was a magician more potent than ever dwelt in the halls of genius for he had learned a spell that should rouse a principle of the soul, to whose voice, throughout the whole wide earth, every human spirit should respond." Freedom’s "fires," she wrote, moved her relatives to fight longer, in more difficult circumstances, and with greater enthusiasm than others, for instance, at the battle of Fort Oswego: "These poor slaves toiled on in their arduous duties; and while they literally left footprints of blood, upon the rough flint, and the eroded snow; they carried a fire within their bosoms which no sufferings could extinguish."

Eldridge’s words capture the exhilaration of liberty: "These slaves fought as bravely, and served as faithfully, under the banner of Freedom...as if the collar had never bowed down their free heads, nor the chain oppressed their strong limbs...Did they not already see the morning star of Freedom, glistening in the East?...Were they not soon to start up from the rank of goods and chattels into men?"

In 1783 Rhode Island released Eleanora Eldridge’s emancipated relatives from military service. But the Eldridges lacked resources to claim the promised land: "At the close of the war they were pronounced free; but their services were paid in the old Continental moony, the depreciation, and final ruin of which, left them no wealth but the one priceless gem, Liberty...Having no funds, they could not go to take possession of their lands on the Mohawk. And to this day, their children have never been able to recover them.” In effect, they weren’t paid at all.

On behalf of her siblings, Eleanora Eldridge would pursue Robin Eldridge’s claim. She spoke for her silent father, uncle, and thousands of others. Aside from her autobiography, these Eldridges have faded from history. Even Louis Wilson’s list of members of the First Rhode Island Regiment does not include names that sound English. This omission again suggests how extensively such lists underestimate the number of black Patriots. Historians guess that five thousand blacks enlisted in the Continental army. Though others may, in the future, emulate Wilson’s meticulous work, no way exists at this time to get an exact picture. The actual number was probably substantially higher.

The fate of black Patriot soldiers is a gauge of the uneven progress of American freedom. Lifting the independence movement from the bottom of the social order to victory at Yorktown, these men were a measure. On June 13, 1783, at Saratoga, New York, Rhode Island disbanded the regiment. Like other American soldiers, its members may not have been paid, but they had won their freedom. In a farewell address, Lieutenant Colonel Osey praised their "unsampled fortitude and patience through all the dangers and toils of a long and severe war." He lamented that "such faithful service has hitherto been so ill rewarded, and painful indeed is it to me to see the officers and men retire from the field without receiving any pay, or even their accounts settled and the balances ascertained." These soldiers’ dedication profoundly moved Oley. In 1784 Rhode Island would pass a gradual emancipation law that would free bornnew boys and girls only at twenty-one and eighteen, respectively. But the federal and state governments offered no payment to the soldiers. In 1789 black soldiers again petitioned the Treasury for lost wages, but to no avail.

In 1791 Oley urged Arthur Fenner, secretary of the Rhode Island Abolition Society, to take up the case of Jack Burrough, one of the first "free black men" in the regiment. New Orleans authorities had imprisoned him. Oley hoped the society would consider "this unhappy condition...and prosecute such just and efficacious measures as will prove the happy consequence of his speedy release and Return to the State in whose service he was engaged in the late War and thereby obtained his Freedom." Oley offered "cheerfully" to contribute expenses toward "delivering the unfortunate." In addition, he reported that authorities had reenslaved Jack Champlin, another of the first recruits, at the island of Hesperides near Spain.

On April 3, 1794, to Oliver Walcott, comptroller of the U.S. Treasury, Oley urged payment for seven members of the regiment: Job Burton, Jesse Redding, Michael Demus, Wally Allen, Cato Bannister, James Northrup, and Peter Harris. Because the last three had died, Oley requested income for their relatives. He also mentioned a March 23 letter, which has not survived, supporting five others.

By the 1820s, Rhode Island finally honored these heroes of the Revolution, providing pensions and land to 23 percent of the blacks who were members of the First Regiment. Many had died, but the benefits also went to relatives: sixty-six received land, fifty-nine received pensions, and twenty-four received both land and a pension.

In Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, similar fitsful sympathies between the struggle against British oppression and the struggle against the oppression of slavery played out in the years surrounding the American Revolution. As a result, in an epochal achievement, through legislation or judicial decisions, the northern states would gradually and, again, fitfully, unite the two revolutions.

*Patriot Recruitment and the Two Revolutions*
In Connecticut many citizens took the idea of democracy seriously. Joining the army in 1776, Thomas Hooker of Farmington freed his slave: “I will not fight for liberty and leave a slave at home.” In 1778 a Connecticut woman emancipated another “because I believe that all Mankind ought to be free.”

In 1776, on the grounds that bondage was “injurious to the poor and inconvenient,” the Connecticut General Assembly banned the slave trade. In May 1777, it formed a committee “to take into consideration the state and condition of the negro and mulatto slaves in this State, and what may be done for their emancipation.” Written by Matthew Griswold of Lyme, the committee’s report called for recruiting newly freed blacks to the Continental army. For determining “value” to be paid to former owners, it mandated estimates by town selectmen. The state would pay an owner the recruitment bounty ordinarily given the soldier and half the soldier’s salary up to “value.” Furthermore, if freed blacks could not subsist in their new circumstances, owners would owe them no support. Though the lower house passed the bill, the upper house rejected it.

This proposal preceded Rhode Island’s creation of a black regiment. Just as Washington’s urging prompted the creation of the First Rhode Island Regiment, according to J. Hammond Trumbull, the mid-nineteenth-century Connecticut recorder of records, Washington’s permission to enlist blacks “was regarded as a rule of action, both by the selectmen in making up, and by the State Government in accepting, the quota of the towns.” In May 1777, the assembly allowed that any two men “who should procure an able-bodied soldier . . . [or] either of the Continental battalions” could avoid military service. As in Massachusetts, a lack of subscription for owners paid for black freedom; two owners were exempted for each black recruited.

This practice resulted in the case of Prince Dupleix, among others. From 1777 to 1780, Dupleix fought for Connecticut. Discharging him on June 1, the state paid him eleven pounds, eight shillings, and three farthings. In Farmington, on September 18, Dupleix signed over his wages for the entire war—forty-four pounds, eight shillings, and three farthings—to one Jonathan Barnes. Like most slaves, Dupleix could not write. A justice of the peace named Hart signed the certificate transferring the money in Dupleix’s name. From these records, we may infer that Barnes had been Dupleix’s owner, that Prince had kept a different owner’s name, that Dupleix had gone to war as a substitute for Barnes, and that Barnes had granted Dupleix his freedom for doing so. Alternately, Barnes might have paid Dupleix’s owner and gotten Dupleix to substitute for him or for both Barnes and the owner. Dupleix then reimbursed Barnes in exchange for liberty.

Only Rhode Island enlisted more black soldiers than Connecticut. To celebrate their emancipation, Connecticut recruits often changed their names from those they had received in slavery. For instance, in the Second Company of the Connecticut Fourth Regiment, forty-eight blacks included ten—more than 20 percent—who did so: Jeffrey Liberty, Pomp Liberty, Sharp Liberty, Cuff Liberty, Dick Freedom, Ned Freedom, Cuff Freedom, Peter Freedom, Jube Freedom, and Prinna Freedom. Among the 399 possibly black Connecticut soldiers identified by historian David White, twenty-four emancipatory names appear: Cash Africa and Buel Africa, seventeen named Freedom or Freeman, and five named Liberty. These contrast with a very large group, 119, indicated only by first name and the surname “Negro.” The choice of “Freedom” or “Africa” reveals black aspirations. The prevalence of “Negro” attests to the recruiters’ slave-owning mentality.

Unlike what happened in Rhode Island, Connecticut’s liberation of blacks in exchange for service was not universal, and not all blacks who fought for Connecticut were emancipated. The situation of Brister Baker, a New Haven soldier in the Second Regiment, is a case in point. Baker’s discharge certificate, signed by George Washington, awarded him the Badge of Merit for six years faithful service, from 1777 to 1783. But Baker’s owner liberated him only in 1784, saying that Baker “has been a good soldier . . . and capable of Business Equal to most white men in Way of Husbandry, and being . . . but about 38 years old . . . it is reasonable that he should be set free as he has been fighting for the Liberties of the Country.” Because, on average, blacks lived to around forty, Baker may not have enjoyed a long experience as a free man.

Perhaps because a public act emancipated those who served, no Rhode Island blacks took the name “Freedom.” They had a deeper sense that they were free. Manumitted only haphazardly, perhaps Connecticut blacks adopted the name “Liberty” to inspire others and push Connecticut whites toward decency.

Declaring themselves “friends to America, but slaves,” eight blacks from Lyme—Great Prince, Little Prince, Luke, Caesar, True, and her three children—petitioned the general assembly for freedom. Ironically inverting the then-ordinary relationships between whites and blacks, they suggested that their “master,” Colonel William Brown, fled “from his native country to his master, King George; where he now lives like a poor slave.”
They prayed that "our good mistress, the free state of Connecticut, engaged in a war with tyranny, will not sell good honest Whigs and friends of the freedom and independence of America." This plea should have weakened the assembly. Appealing to whites, however, the blacks took too seriously the metaphorical enslavement of Patriots: "because the Whigs ought to be free and the Tories should be sold." 70 On the contrary, one might say, Tories should be vanquished, but no one should be enslaved.

Benjamin Harrison, a future president, leased out William Brown's confiscated estate. The lessee, Harrison suggested, could pay the rent and free the blacks. 71 Once again, the lower house assented to the petition, but the upper house "negativ[ed]" it. Exemplifying Connecticut's tepididelity to freedom, a conference committee deadlocked.

Among Washington's sides, David Humphreys of Connecticut, like John Laurens and Alexander Hamilton, urged emancipation in exchange for fighting and sought to abolish slavery. According to Frank Landon Humphreys, David Humphreys's relative and biographer, "There were about one hundred [black troops] scattered throughout the fifty or more companies in the Connecticut Line. When the ... consolidation took place ... on January 1, 1781, the Connecticut negro soldiers appear to have been brought together into one company in Colonel Butler's regiment and put under the nominal command of Col. Humphreys. It is a tradition that he was one of the first men in the country to recognize the possibilities of the Negro as a soldier, and by his own influence and that of his faithful body-servant, Jehro Martyn, among people of his own race, created much enthusiasm for the cause of freedom among the Negroes of Connecticut."

Servants often fought heroically for the Crown. On the American side, Jehro Martyn, Humphreys's servant, and William Lee, George Washing-
ton's, fought alongside them. On both sides, the status of servant was not sharply distinct from soldier. But imperial servants were free. 72

The Second Company of Connecticut's Fourth Regiment had black priv-
ates and white officers. 73 As White found, "Close to three hundred black soldiers can be unmistakably identified as serving either in Connecticut's regiments of the Continental Army or with the State militia. Names on Connecticut's military rolls suggest that more than one hundred others were also black. These three to four hundred soldiers made up less than two percent of Connecticut's Revolutionary troops. While this is a small percentage, it should be noted that blacks made up only three percent of Connecticut's population and that almost all of the black enlistees served in the Continental Army which saw more duty than the State militia." 74

White's cautious estimate discounts even one hundred whom he lists by name and who were probably black. As in guesses about blacks in Rhode Island, White's number understates—perhaps quite dramatically—the number of blacks who served in the Continental army from Connecticut. In that state, legislative debates and the widely known role of black soldiers encouraged a general recognition of freedom. By 1784, the same year that Rhode Island freed its slaves, the Connecticut legislature, too, affirmed gradual emancipation.

MASSACHUSETTS

Like Rhode Island and Connecticut, Massachusetts had difficulty recruiting white soldiers. In 1777, to fill its quota of fifteen regiments, the Massachusetts legislature reversed Washington's ban on black enlistment and recruited everyone but Quakers. In 1778 it included enlistment of "Negroes." On April 3, 1778, Thomas Kench, an artillery captain, proposed to the state representatives to recruit a black regiment in return for immedi-
ate freedom. Krench offered to lead the troops himself: "A re-enforcement can quickly be raised of two or three hundred men. Will your honors grant the liberty, and give me the command of the party? And what I refer to is negroes."

Massachusetts already has "divers of them in our service," Krench noted, "mixed with white men." With keen insight into the military impact of slaves' hunger for freedom, he suggested that it would be "proper to raise a body by themselves," to recruit an all-black regiment, for "their ambi-
tion would entirely be to outdo the white men in every measure that the fortune of war calls a soldier to endure." Subduing the invader, they would win "a peaceful inheritance" for themselves and their former masters. 75

Mirroring British companies, Krench envisioned white commissioned officers and an orderly sergeant. Yet he also suggested "three sergeants black, four corporals black, two drums and fifes black, and eight-four rank and file."

Though Krench asked for one company, he left open the possibility of more. "And I doubt not," he concluded too easily, "that no gentleman that is a friend to his country will disapprove of this plan, or be against his negroes enlisting into the service to maintain the cause of freedom, and suppress the worse than savage enemies of our land." 76

On April 7, however, Krench wrote of a "disturbance with Col. Seara, Mt. Sear, and a number of other gentlemen, concerning the freedom of negroes, in Congress Street." Even in Massachusetts, with its compara-
tive zeal for liberty, the cause of freedom for blacks often lost. In con-
trast, with a telling sense of America at its best, "as freedom and liberty is the grand controversy that we are contending for," Krench argued to the

Patriot Recruitment and the Two Revolutions
Massachusetts House of Representatives, Patriots should emancipate blacks. But he now knew the legislators better: "I will not enlarge, for fear I should give offense."  

The legislature rejected Kent's proposal. Still, it appointed two committees, one from each house, to study the recent Rhode Island measures to recruit a black regiment. And ultimately, Massachusetts formed two black companies, one under Major Samuel Lawrence and the other, "the Bucks of Massachusetts," commanded by Colonel George Middleton. The latter was the only Patriot unit led by a black man.

Few traces survive of this Massachusetts company. The Bucks were the last black company formed on the American side, and they fought at Yorktown in 1781. Appallingly, no record of numbers of men or their service in particular battles exists. But in 1783, Governor John Hancock would present the company with an elegant white-and-blue silk flag embroidered with a rearing deer, a pine tree growing out of the earth, and thirteen stars. It had initials on it—JGW—from Hancock and George Washington.

Though abolitionists would celebrate black revolutionary efforts, a tidal wave of racism flooded over many stories. For instance, reprints of John Trumbull's engraving of the Battle of Bunker Hill "white out" black soldiers. Apparently, although the Bucks fought for the Continental army, they did not do so as regular troops. They may have fought as guerrillas. Alternately, the Bucks may have served as a local militia to defend Boston. At age fourteen, however, James Forten encountered black companies marching through Philadelphia to join Washington and confront "Lord Cornwallis, [who] was overrunning the South, when thick gloom clouded the prospect." According to William Nell, Forten recalled that "I saw... when the regiments from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts marched through Philadelphia, that one or two companies of Colored men were attached to each." His glimpse suggests the striking role of blacks, though not the larger estimates—25 percent of the Continental forces at Yorktown—of Baron Ludwig von Cloesen, an aide to Rochambeau, and Georg Daniel Flöhr, a private in Rochambeau's forces, who observed the troops more closely. Very likely, the Bucks were one of these.

Except for the account of Nell, no official records connect Colonel Middleton to the Bucks. Yet the family of abolitionist Lydia Maria Child lived across the street from Middleton, and she referred to him as "Colonel" and "commander of the Bucks." Like many white Christian opponents of bondage, Child had a patronizing bent. In an odd remark, she wrote that Middleton "was not a very good specimen of the colored man... His morals were questioned." Middleton married three times, which perhaps provides part of the reason for her comment. She added, "He was passionate, intemperate and profane." Child, however, might have dwelt on another of her observations: "He was greatly respected by his own people, and his house was thronged with company."  

Each year, she recalled, blacks celebrated black celebrations of the congressional ban on the slave traffic. "Our negroes," for many years, were allowed peaceably to celebrate the abolition of the slave trade; but it became a festive for the white boys to deride them on this day, and finally, they determined to drive them, on these occasions, from the [Boston] Common. The colored people became greatly incensed by this mockery of their festival, and this infringement of their liberty, and a rumor reached us, on one of these anniversaries, that they were determined to resist the whites, and were going armed, with this intention."  

As a veteran of the Revolution, Middleton brooked no intimidation by racist thugs. When a melee broke out, Middleton appeared with a gun and rallied the blacks:

"About three o'clock in the afternoon... terrified children and women ran down Beantown Street, pursued by white boys, who enjoyed their fright. The sounds of battle approached; clubs and brickbats were flying in all directions. Col. Middleton opened his door, armed with a loaded musket, and, in a loud voice, shrieked death to the first white who should approach. Hundreds of human beings, white and black, were pouring down the street, the blacks making but a feeble resistance, the odds in number and spirit being against them. Col. Middleton's voice could be heard over every other, urging his party to turn and resist to the last. His appearance was terrible, his musket was leveled, ready to sacrifice the first white man that came within its range."  

Middleton disrupted the terrorizing of blacks. Following his resistance, Captain David Lewis intervened with the racists, while Child's father intervened with Middleton. Child's account shows that Middleton was accustomed to leading in battle. As it did a century and a half later, when the color barrier in the U.S. armed forces finally was dismantled after World War II, the participation of black troops and black leaders such as Middleton on the Patriot side in the American Revolution helped advance the revolution that led to the abolition of slavery in the North. In 1780 the state legislature added a Bill of Rights to the Massachusetts Constitution. Ruling on a series of cases brought by slaves, the courts outlawed bondage. However, that did not
mean that free blacks and whites enjoyed equal rights, and the role being played by black recruits in the revolt against Great Britain supplied those who would further the revolt against inequality with arguments for equal treatment under the law.

For example, Paul and John Cuffe were free citizens of Massachusetts, yet they could not vote. Income restrictions on suffrage denied the vote to free blacks and poor whites alike. In response, in a precursor of Thoreau's civil disobedience, the Cuffes refused to pay their taxes. On February 10, 1780, in a petition to the legislature, they invoked the Boston Tea Party, indicting the first revolution from the standpoint of the second by the core moral standard of its proclamation "No taxation without representation"; they were disenfranchised and not represented, but "contrary to the invariable custom and practice of the Country, we have been, and now are, taxed both in our Polls and that small pittance of estate which, through much Hard Labor and industry, we have got together to sustain ourselves and families." The Cuffes also noted that "by reason of Long Bondage and hard Slavery, we have been deprived of enjoying the profits of our Labor or the advantage of inheriting estates from our Parents, as our Neighbors the white people do, having some of us not long enjoyed our own Freedom."

On May 10, 1780, petitioning a Dartmouth town meeting, the Cuffes condemned the inconsistency of denying the vote to free blacks "with the liberty we are contending for." Their petition asked to eschew a clause that required for suffrage "an annual income of three pounds or an estate of the value of sixty pounds." The Cuffes' measure linked the interests of whites and blacks, long visible in ethnically diverse revolutionary crowds. I found no record, however, that the Dartmouth council responded to the petition.

On February 18, 1781, the Cuffes had praised the numerous black Patriots of Massachusetts: "We think that we may be clear from Being Called Tories though some few of our Colour hath Redcoats & some wickedly however we think that there is more of our Colour gone into the Wars according to the number of them into the Republican [word unclear] troops." This petition shows why at least five thousand blacks fought to extend the liberties spelled out in the Declaration of Independence. Yet the General Court ignored it. In 1783, however, finally responding to the Cuffes, the Massachusetts legislature voted to unite taxation to suffrage for all citizens.

Politically and philosophically, in northern states such as Massachusetts, the second revolution's abolitionists, both black and white, understood liberty and democratic representation more profoundly than the Patriots of the first.

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**Pennsylvania**

The situation in Pennsylvania was more complicated. Given the powerful impact of Quakers on other Protestants and the role of urban artisans, Pennsylvania had a strong abolitionist movement. It also had a strong proslavery interest, and many slaves in Pennsylvania had fled to the Crown to gain freedom. In 1780 Pennsylvania was to become the first major colony to emancipate blacks. ( Vermont, though not part of the thirteen original colonies, freed blacks in its 1777 constitution.) Also, Pennsylvania enlisted fewer blacks in the war than Rhode Island, Connecticut, or Massachusetts. Only gradually did Pennsylvania's antislavery leanings against abolition as a goal, and this gradualism interfered with the mutual progress of the two revolutions.

In April 1775 at the Rising Sun Tavern in Philadelphia, ten citizens founded the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. Initially, Quaker artisans and shopkeepers, led by Thomas Harrison, a tailor, made up the society's membership. Unfortunately, they took a retrograde legal position, challenging only wrongful or illegal enslavement of individuals. Referring to individuals held unlawfully as slaves, even this group's name indicates liberty's precariousness in America.

The society proceeded only on a case-by-case basis. For example, when slave traders seized Dinah Nevel, a free black and Indian woman, and her three children and sold her to a Virginian, Benjamin Bannerman, Harrison and Israel Pemberton, a merchant, sued on her behalf. A Pennsylvania court ruled for Bannerman. Harrison then convinced Samuel Moore, a Philadelphia brewer, to purchase Nevel and two of her children. Moore transferred ownership to Harrison, who emancipated them. I found no information about the fate of the third child.

The first emancipations in Pennsylvania were acts by individual owners. Between 1767 and 1774, thirty-eight owners freed forty-four blacks (one in fifteen of those in slavery in the colony)." During the Revolution, fifty-five owners emancipated another one hundred—15 percent of the slaves in Pennsylvania. Practical motivations joined spiritual insights into equality and humility. Many artisans and merchants concluded that wage labor protected them against economic downturns. While they could fire the workers, they would have to provide for slaves, however miserably.

And as in the South, the Loyalist cause seemed to offer greater prospects for the success of the second revolution than did the Patriot standard. In 1777 British commander William Howe's victory at Philadelphia spurred black escapes. Historians Gary Nash and Jean Soderlund found that "scores of slaves from the region fled their masters when the Brit-
ish occupied the city in September 1777, and still more when the British evacuation began in 1778. Probably at least one hundred were crowded onto the ships... with the British army. Eighteen months later, a Philadelphia newspaper reminded readers that "by the invasion of this city... a great part of the slaves hereabout, were enticed away by the British army."

However, this dynamic would spur Patriot efforts to unify the two revolutions in Pennsylvania. A concatenation of causes—Christian doctrine, public discussion of natural rights, fear of insurrection, imperial recruitment, and the unprofitability of slavery—all shook the legitimacy of bondage. In August 1778, when George Bryan, an abolitionist, became acting president of the Pennsylvania Executive Council, competition with the British for the recruitment of black slaves to the Patriot cause exerted a powerful influence on Pennsylvania law. As Bryan wrote, "No period seems more happy for the attempt [at abolition] than the present, as the number of [slaves]... ever few in Pennsylvania has been much reduced by the practices & plunder of our late invaders."

But gradualism remained characteristic of Pennsylvania's response to the contradiction posed by slavery in a revolution undertaken in the name of freedom. In November the council endorsed gradual emancipation. Freeing black children at age twenty-one would provide for "the general abolition of Servitude for life... in an easy mode."

Yet the Pennsylvania house did not respond to Bryan. Three months later, however, the council proclaimed that bondage disgraced a nation ostensibly fighting for liberty. Its draft emancipation law required children to work for their mothers' masters as indentured servants and freed girls at eighteen and boys at twenty-one. Affirming the rule of law, the measure mandated the use of the same courts for free blacks and whites. It barred subjection of black redcoats captured by the Patriots to beating or hanging and banned the further importation of slaves.

Still, this document limited the testimony of slaves to cases involving other slaves. Furthermore, it barred interracial marriage. For violations, this measure fixed blacks one hundred pounds or sentenced them to servitude for seven years. Another reactionary clause bound blacks to service "if they refused to support themselves." But the legislature would not pass the measure.

Responding to an abolitionist groundswell among citizens, however, a legislative committee that included Bryan revised the bill. A new preamble likened American despotism toward blacks to British tyranny. Abolition would provide "substantial proof," in Bryan's new preamble, of Pennsylvania's gratitude for escaping the Crown. This bill dropped the ban on intermarriage and the threat of renewed servitude for blacks who could not support themselves. Still, even the new bill delayed emancipation until blacks reached age twenty-eight.

Lively public deliberations marked the long Pennsylvania campaign against bondage. For instance, when Chester County's representatives resisted, Bryan published a series of "Letters to a Minister." Invoking Quakers to shame Presbyterians, he noted, "Quakers, who we think have but gloated views of the gospel, have nearly cleared their society of this opprobrium of America." Would Presbyterians be "so void of charity and justice, as to... labour for the continuance of it?" By maintaining a class of internal enemies, Bryan argued, bondage conflicted with democracy. He stressed the military threat of English recruitment and emancipation. Only American abolition could remove the cause. Moreover, the labor of free workers would outproduce that of bondsmen. In a burgeoning workforce, Bryan suggested, emancipation would accompany a new emigration from Europe. Competing with states dependent on servitude, Pennsylvania would benefit from reliance on free workers.

In November 1779, by a vote of thirty-eight to eight, the house adopted the bill. But Philadelphia slave owners soon moved to restore bondage. In 1781, in the Freeman's Journal, Cato would aver that "I am a poor negro who with my wife and children have had the good fortune to get my freedom. I am told the assembly are going to pass a law to send us all back to our masters... This would be the cruellest act... To make a law to hang us all would be merciful." Even Pennsylvania's emancipation enabled slave owners to exploit bondspersons and their children for nearly their whole lifetime. For the first two generations, blacks such as Cato found promises of "gradual" emancipation hollow.

In the South, on the Patriot side, John Laurens had struggled, with limited success, to recruit and free black fighters to fight for the colonies' independence. In the North, emancipation and independence more often might serve as common ends, although even there, proponents of the first revolution resisted the second. As we will see next, however, in the South, where proponents of independence often feared the consequences of emancipation, it was the opposition between the two revolutions, not their possible consonances, that drove the recruitment of blacks—recruitment on the side of those fighting to prevent the independence of the colonies.
vulgar to induce or dissolve the fascination[—word missing] of self-interest." Hamilton to John Laurens, September 1779, Papers of Henry Laurens/John Laurens. This handwritten letter has holes in it, sometimes removing vital words. Oddly, this letter does not appear in Hamilton’s Papers.


127. Ibid.

128. Ibid., 105.

129. Ibid., 215.

130. Ibid., 35.

131. Manley, John Laurens, 6, 30, 60, 100, invoked, but does not spell out, Montesquieu’s influence on Laurens.


134. Washington later sent Lincoln to accept the British surrender at Yorktown.


136. Livermore, Historical Research, 535-34.

137. Ibid., 534.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Quarles, Negro in the American Revolution, 64-65.


143. Quarles, Negro in the American Revolution, 67.

144. In 1758 Jefferson and Madison wrote the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, which defended the rights of immigrant and citizen against the Alien and Sedition Acts, a unique, liberty-affirming instance of “states’ rights.”


146. John Laurens to Hamilton, July 14, 1779, PWM, 2104, 103.

147. Ibid.

148. Ibid.

149. See “Going Down: On a Democratic Interpretation of Plato,” Democratic-individuality.blogspot.com/2010/06/going-down-on-democratic-interpretation.html. Despite capture in the temple at Calumnia, Demosthenes secretly took poison. He said “Archias, a confidant of Antipater, ‘Now, as soon as you please you may commence the part of Creon in the tragedy [Sophocles, Antigone], and cast out this body of mine abroad. But . . . I, for my part, while I am yet alive, arise up and depart out of this sacred place; though . . . the Macedonians have not left so much as the temple unpol- luted!’ After saying these words, he passed by the altar, fell down and died” (Plutarch, “Demosthenes”).


152. April 1779 (PWM, 214), Hamilton wrote to Laurens of “the favorable omens that pre- cede your application to the Assembly,” underlining how little the proposal appeared to him a joint effort.

153. If Laurens had survived the war and become a force in national politics, perhaps even president, he might have led America toward gradual emancipation.

154. A Department of Education curriculum on Teaching American History in South Carolina, which provides summer institutes for teachers (last grant from the US Department of Education in 2005) includes only Henry Laurens’s imprisonment in the Tower of London and no mention of John Laurens. In 2009, the University of South Carolina Press published Gregory Mussey’s John Laurens and the American Revolution. Starringly, Mussey downplays Laurens’s role in converting Washington and the Continental Congress to emancipation in South Carolina and concludes, “He did not live to see his country win independence, nor did his espousal of emancipation even dent an institution to which his fellow Carolinians were committed universally” (180). See also Mussey, John Laurens, 75-74, 194, 230-34. But black and white crowds, often anti-slavery, protested British press-gangs in Charleston before the Revolution. In addition, with Thorough and John Brown, there is something noble in being “a majority of one.”

CHAPTER 4
1. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, such substitution occurs indirectly: though the free slave—defendant during Vietnam or, more recently, poverty and a “volunteer army.”


5. George H. Moore, Historical Notes, 171; Charles Snow’s Bolton, Private Sally, 75.


7. See—he actual number was 735. Frank Landon Humphreys, Life and Times of David Humphreys, 1701-92.

8. Emancipation for free blacks in Virginia also reveals this embryonic trend as well as how limited it was.

Notes to Pages 82-83 | 285
10. ibid.
12. For instance, for the National Archives, Debra L. Newman, "List of Black Servicemen," 1973, 2, counts several hundred black soldiers in the revolutionary army. She based her estimate on four categories. The first includes African names or words: John, Cudjo, Quok, Mingo, and Coffee. Second, an ugly parody of their ostensible republicanism, slave owners often named blacks for Roman and Greek politicians, tyrants, gods, or philosophers: Caesar, Cato, Sципio, Nero, Jupiter, and Plato. The third category is geographical names: Africa, Congo, London, Boston, and York. The fourth recognizes black adoption of the names of freedom: Free, Liberty, Freedom, and Freeman. Owners foolishly used the blanket surname "negro," however. Newman also includes such names under the heading "status." As she rightly notes, however, no more than 5 percent of all blacks had names in these categories.

On a list of blacks who escaped to the British from Rhode Island, a list drawn up for Congress in 1786, five of thirty-eight had such names: around 14 percent. Original document in the RHIS. Only Louis Wilson's careful study ("List of Black and Narragansett Patriots in Rhode Island," RHIS, 1920) of 649 blacks and Narragansetts Indians begins to depict the numbers on the Patriot side.

16. PNG, 2134677, Greene and Olney would command the regiment.
17. George Livermore, Historical Research, 118–19, Arthur Zborovski, First Emancipation, 193, surprisingly misses that the First Rhode Island Regiment fought throughout the war.
20. Colonists also enslaved some Narragansetts. Rhode Island had already enslaved free blacks and Narragansett Indians, but analysis of black and Native American records from Rhode Island shows that just 1 percent were ex-slaves for whose liberty the state had paid.
28. Residence not reported.
60. A 1777 return shows Burroughs, along with Jack and York Chaney, to be the initial three recruits. The roster is in the RHIS.
61. Olney to Petersen, May 28, 1794, Jeremiah Olney Papers, RHIS.
62. On this list, only Cato R. Signer would otherwise identify as black.
63. Olney to Wollcott, April 2, 1794, Jeremiah Olney Papers.
64. Mary H. Mitchell, "Slavery in Connecticut," 301, does not name the woman.
66. Livermore, Historical Research, 133-14.
67. Ibid., 141-14.
68. Ibid.
69. Four certificates concern the military service of Prince Duplessy; see Duplessy File, Manuscript Division, LOC.
70. Hooff's first name is unclear; perhaps it was Sabah.
71. David O. White, Connecticut's Black Soldiers, 35-64.
72. Ibid., 50-60.
73. At a celebration of Crispus Attucks's Day in Boston in 1878, organizers displayed this certificate.
74. White, Connecticut's Black Soldiers, 35.
75. In Massachusetts, only Jupiter Free changed his name; see Quailes, Negro in the American Revolution, 32-3.
76. Livermore, Historical Research, 116-17.
77. Ibid.
78. Humphreys, Life and Times of David Humphreys, 1791-94.
79. Washington freed William Lee in his will.
81. White, Connecticut's Black Soldiers, 8, 25, 57-64.
82. Keneb to the House of Representatives, in Livermore, Historical Research, 123.
83. Ibid.
84. Keneb, "To the Honorable Council in Boston," April 7, 1776, in Livermore, Historical Research, 126.
85. Ibid.
86. Reverend Theodore Parker suggested that the initials are of Washington and Hancock. In an unpublished manuscript, the historian Anne Bentley speculates that the initials may be of Hancock's infant son, John George Washington Hancock, who died in February 1777. In Colored Patriots, 44-45, abolitionist historian William Nell interviewed Mrs. Margaret R. May of Boston, daughter of the consul who received the flag, and reports that Hancock and his son presented the company with the flag. Nell purchased it from May and eventually gave it to the Massachusetts Historical Society. The society also preserves a silver badge with many of the same inscriptions: the initials "M. W." differ. Nell's research on black Patriots kept many stories alive.
87. Livermore, Historical Research, 93-95.

89. At a ceremony in 1797 at Faneuil Hall, Reverend Theodore Parker described the Bucks as "the first company, I think it was, of colored persons ever organized in Massachusetts." He contrasted them to the "association of colored men called the "proctors" who guarded the property of Boston merchants during the Revolutionary war." Most likely, the Bucks fought alongside the Continental army. Four witnesses, Raye, a Mrs. Brown (daughter of Clementia Haskell, killed at Bunker Hill), Grandmother Bostom (age 80), and Father Vassall (age 88), all of whom had direct ties to the soldiers or lived through the period, attended the celebration. See Liberarin, March 12, 1798.
92. Ibid., 26. This painstaking phrase preserved her. All democrats should celebrate this day, white as much as black. Perhaps the election of Barack Obama as president finally indicates this.
93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Karl Marx, Capital, 1231ff.
96. Nell, Colored Patriots, 97-98.
97. Ibid., 89-90.
98. Paul Cuffe and John Cuffe, February 16, 1786, draft of petition, in Cuffe, Papers, LOC.
100. The first clause of the Vermont Bill of Rights, July 8, 1777, states: "That all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent and unalienable rights. . . . Therefore, no male person, born in this country, or brought from over sea, ought to be held by law, to serve any person, as a servant, slave, or apprentice, after he attains to the age of twenty-one years, nor female, in like manner, after she attains to the age of eighteen years." See http://faculty.uga.edu/pennington/inv11/vermontBillRights.htm.
102. Ibid., 79-80.
103. Ibid., 81.
104. Ibid., 95.
105. Ibid., 84-89.
106. Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 146.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. Firing blacks and Native Americans against whites, and "miscegenation" legislation would characterize racial relations in the United States from colonial times through the mid-twentieth century. Such alliances broke down divisions crucial to elite rule.

Notes to Pages 110-114 | 187
606. Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 137; Pennsylvania Packet, March 4, 1779.
607. Pennsylvania Packet, December 23, 1779; Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 139.
608. Zilversmit, First Emancipation, 139; Pennsylvania Packet, December 25, 1779,
January 3, 1780; Burton Alva Konkle, George Bryan, 390.

CHAPTER 6
1. General Order Book for the British Troops under Genl. Howe, 1776–78, Headquar-
ters, Philadelphia, March 23, 1778, Howe Papers, WL-C-UM.
2. Eva Berlin, Many Thousands Gone, 35.
3. Return of Persons Who Came Off from Virginia with General Matthews in the
Fleet the 24th of May, 1779, PRO 20/55/5.
4. Kirkland to His Majesty’s Commissioners, Clinton Papers, vol. 43, no. 38,
WLC-UM.
5. Ibid.
6. Robert O’Hara, Masters, Slaves and Subjects, 399; Alsop Hornsby Jr., Negro in
Revolutionary Georgia, 111.
9. Ibid.
11. Archibald Campbell to Unknown, January 9, 1779, Proehau Papers, SCS;
Owell, Masters, Slaves and Subjects, 199.
12. “South Carolina Prisoners of War” in Owell, Masters, Slaves and Subjects, 357.
14. Jefferson to Gordon, in George Leacock, Historical Research, 137.
15. In an example of wish fulfillment, Jefferson also exaggerated: twenty-seven
thousand were killed by disease. Both numbers add three zeroes to his report from his
own plantation. Nonetheless, such guesses indicate a rough magnitude. Jefferson meant,
“[I] lost every slave, my neighbors lost every slave, most owners lost every slave.” To
Gordon, he wrote: “From an estimate I made at the time . . . I supposed the state of
Virginia lost, under Lord Cornwallis’s hand, that year, about thirty thousand slaves;
and that, of these, twenty-seven thousand died of the small-pox and camp-fever; and
the rest were partly sent to the West Indies, and exchanged for rum, sugar, coffee,
and fruit; and partly sent to New York, from whence they went, at the price, either to
Nova Scotia or to England. From this last place, I believe, they have been sent to Anno
History will never relate the horrors committed by the British Army in the Southern
States of America.” See Jefferson to Gordon, in Leacock, Historical Research, 137–38.
18. James W. S. G., Walker, Black Loyalists, 57.
20. Thirty-nine scouts and eight waggoners; see Clinton Papers, vol. 37, no. 39.
21. Sixty-two men (sixty woots and two “wagoners”), twenty women, and fourteen
children; Clinton Papers, vol. 37, no. 38.
22. Forty-two men (forty-one scouts and one “wagoner”), nineteen women, and
eight children; Clinton Papers, vol. 54, no. 20.
23. Forty-three men, thirty-two women, and twenty-eight children; Clinton Papers,
vol. 66, no. 36.
24. One man and three women had joined; Clinton Papers, vol. 69, no. 17.
25. Order concerning Virginia Refuges, June 18, 1789, vol. 55, no. 65, item no. 10235,
summarized in Report on American Manuscripts in the Royal Institution, 145.
26. Each company had three white officers, six black sergeants and corporals, thirty
“for duty,” four sick in barracks and the hospital, and six who had “deserted since
they came from Philadelphia.” But the companies had varying numbers of casualties:
one, three, and three, respectively, who had been discharged by order of Lord Raw-
don, as well as ten, twenty-eight, and twenty dead, respectively. Each unit had since
recruited twelve; the soldiers were supposedly accompanied by exactly sixteen women
and fifteen children for each unit.
28. Seventy-four black men, sixteen women, and fifteen children.
29. Ibid.
30. On the ship Margery, three are listed as servants (who were probably not slaves);
the rest are soldiers’ widows and their families.
31. Return of Those Who Came Off from Virginia with General Matthews in the
Fleet, May 24, 1779, PRO 30/55/5.
32. Once again, even among whites, the ratio is forty-six men to forty-four women
and children.
33. Return of the Number of Men, Women, and Children of the British and Foreign
Regiments New Levies Civil Departments & Victualled at New York and the Different
Out Posts between 24th & 21st November, 1779, signed by Daniel Wier, Clinton Papers,
vol. 76, no. 21. Four other returns survive for this period: for March 16 to 24, July 13 to
19, August 21 to 29, and September 19 to 26.
34. Fifty-six men, twenty-five women, and twenty children; Ibid.
35. Ibid. For March 16–24, Wier indicates a greater number: 29,650 men, 3,386
women, and 3,956 children. “Stuart’s Black Company” included a smaller number
than the later report: 41 men, 19 women, and 8 children, for a total of 68. Clinton Pa-
pers, vol. 54, no. 20.
36. Ibid.
37. In the South, large numbers of blacks worked in the artillery and engineers.
The Royal Regiment of Artillery lists 505 men, 137 women, and 103 children; the Eng-
lish Department includes 304 men but only 12 women and 15 children.
38. Memorial of the Officers, Emmerich’s Chasseurs, June 23, 1779, Clinton Papers,
vol. 61, no. 20.
between the 15th and 30th September, 1779, Clinton Papers, vol. 69, no. 17.

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