

The Enduring Significance of the American Revolution

By Chandler Joseph Burke

The historical and enduring significance of the American Revolution is not found on the battlefield. While no one can diminish the heroism of the many patriots who fought in the American Revolution, their military success over time has been overshadowed by their philosophical victory. War without reason is little more than organized murder. It is the reason, then, that transforms war from an appalling loss of human life into a justifiable defense of freedom. The particular battles of the American Revolution, while interesting and necessary, are secondary to the reasons motivating the patriots to fight. What the patriots fought for is more important than the fight itself.

Thomas Jefferson meticulously spelled out the justification for the American Revolution in the Declaration of Independence. In it, he highlighted three of the core guiding principles for the new nation: “all men are created equal,” the government “derives its power from the consent of the governed,” and each man is “endowed by his creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”¹ Thomas Jefferson drew from other enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*,² as well as other English revolutionaries who protected their freedoms with the Bill of Rights of 1669.³ Yet, the resulting document and principles were uniquely American and served as the founding charter of our nation. Thomas Jefferson himself wrote that the objective of the Declaration was “neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.”⁴ This expression of the rights of man, the blanket that swaddled the nascent republic, has remained indelibly etched into the fabric of the nation ever since.

The American Revolution began long before the famous “shot heard round the world.” Instead, the American Revolution started whenever a colonist of the British Empire embraced the guiding principles expounded in the Declaration of Independence. John Adams said it best in 1818: “The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.”⁵

¹ Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence*. Philadelphia: July 4, 1776.

² Grush, Rick. University of California: San Diego.

<http://mind.ucsd.edu/syllabi/99_00/Empiricism/Readings/Encyc_Phil/Locke.html>

³ Bill of Rights. 1669.

⁴ Bernstein, R.B. *Thomas Jefferson*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 2003.), 33.

⁵ Bailey, Cohen, and Kennedy. “*The American Pageant*.” (Massachusetts: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2010), 126.

The American Revolution, thus, created not only a new country, but also a new way of life and beacon for our country's government. The history books claim that the American Revolution ended with the Treaty of Paris of 1783, but a war that did not begin with a bullet cannot end with a treaty. The American Revolution was won, one patriot at a time, and lives on in the "hearts and minds" of the people, American or not, who embrace the ideals espoused in the Declaration of Independence.

Works Cited

- Bailey, Cohen, and Kennedy. *"The American Pageant."* Massachusetts: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2010.
- Bernstein, R.B. *Thomas Jefferson.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Bill of Rights. 1669.
- Boyd, Julian P. ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson 32 volumes.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-[2011].
- Grush, Rick. University of California: San Diego.
<http://mind.ucsd.edu/syllabi/99_00/Empiricism/Readings/Encyc_Phil/Locke.html.>
- Hamilton, Madison, and Jay. *The Federalist.* New York: October 1787 to August 1788.
- Jefferson, Thomas. *Declaration of Independence.* Philadelphia: July 4, 1776.
- Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Civil Government.* 1690.

Word Count:

My essay includes 533 words, excluding Footnotes and Works Cited.
There are 58 "the's" and 9"a's" included in the 533 words.
So, excluding "the's" and "a's," my essay includes 466 words.