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Jacob Hafer

La Salle University, haferj2@student.lasalle.edu

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The American Revolution: A Brief Overview

By Jacob Hafer

The history of the United States of America has its origins all the way back to the Colonial Era during the eighteenth century. The late eighteenth century was a time of revolutionary change for the British colonies in North America. This change was based on the ideas of liberty, freedom, independence, and equality for all people. The revolution was more than just a war for independence, it was a war fought to preserve the rights for future generations of Americans. The American Revolution has a lasting impact then and now because the revolution introduced a democratic form of government, started the fight to end colonialism, and exemplifies the need for basic human rights.

The American colonists felt that they needed to sever all ties to Great Britain due to its repressive system and authoritarian government. King George III, leader of the British Empire at the time of the revolution, came from a class of virtuous rulers who were determined to conform subjects to their policies whether they like it or not.¹ The colonists believed that they were being treated unfairly, especially when it came to taxes and lack of representation to British parliament. Taxes such as the Stamp Act and Tea Act infuriated the colonists because they felt that these taxes were too much of a burden and they never had any diplomats to represent the colonies in parliament to provide feedback on the new taxes². The American colonists believed that the British government were infringing upon their rights and believed that it is time for them to

¹ Francis Jennings. *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105.

² Richard M. Ketchum. *The American Heritage Book of The Revolution*. (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), 53-63.

govern themselves. After declaring independence from British rule and succeeding in beating the British military in the Revolutionary War, the United States of America were formed with a democratic republican government that would be always be represented by the people.³

Another reason why the American Revolution is so significant is that it was one of the first conflicts that was fought to end colonialism. Ever since the discovery of the Americas, European nations raced to colonize the newly discovered lands so that they can profit of the valuable resources like furs, silver, sugar, cotton, etc. However colonial communities were always left out of the global market so that the mother countries like Great Britain may profit off the resources acquired by the colonists⁴. This was another reason why the American colonists distrust the British; they felt that they were being used just so their British authorities could become rich off of the hard work of the colonial people. Thomas Paine, an English-American political activist, wrote “Common Sense” where he influenced the colonists by his idea that one country should not control another from across the ocean.⁵ Anti-colonialism became another theme in the revolution and would inspire many revolutions later in history such as decolonization in Africa and Asia by European powers in the twentieth century.⁶

The fight to for basic human rights is another theme to why the American Revolution is so important in history. Before the War for American Independence, all subjects had to submit to the will of the King, who was believed to be ordained by God.⁷ Over time, some philosophical thinkers like John Locke believed that government should only exist to protect the

³ Richard M. Fulton. *The Revolution That Wasn't*. (Port Washington: Kennikat Press Corp., 1981), 227-237.

⁴ Richard M. Ketchum. *The American Heritage Book of The Revolution*. 19-22

⁵ Francis Jennings. *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire*. 123-125

⁶ *Ibid*, 273-280.

⁷ Richard M. Ketchum. *The American Heritage Book of The Revolution*. 20-22

basic rights of the people, not to influence the power of monarchs.⁸ Locke's ideas inspired the colonists to fight for the protection of their rights given by God. This led the American Continental Congress to adopt the Declaration of Independence which outlined the unalienable rights of every human being including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. After the end of the War for American Independence, the newly formed American government established the Constitution which guaranteed the protection of rights of every citizen in the United States.⁹ The idea to protect basic human rights became a theme for other revolutions through the next 250 years for nations experiencing abuse of government power and persecution of ethnic groups.

The significance of the American Revolution is indeed greater than it can be possibly imagined. The revolution exemplifies the fight to stop a tyrannical government abusing its authority on the common people. It was also the first conflict that inspired many others that dealt with fighting colonialism by large empires. And if not for the War for American Independence, there would be no laws or policies that guarantee the basic rights of all people based on equality, freedom, and liberty. The American Revolution did not just shape the United States, it also reshaped how the world works even to this day.

⁸ Richard M. Fulton. *The Revolution That Wasn't*. 203

⁹ Richard M. Ketchum. *The American Heritage Book of The Revolution*. 132

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