
“REVOLUTION” IS JUST A NICE NAME FOR “REBELLION”

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The American Revolution against Britain is considered to be a great source of nationalistic pride in our country. Our victory in that eight-year struggle cemented our independence as a separate nation in the world balance of power. That victory allowed for the creation of a country that would stand for justice for all and the freedom to speak out without fear for what we believe in. However, the society we have become no longer respects the idea of revolution and freedom from interference, in any situation other than that single revolution in the eighteenth century. We see speaking out against the government as “stepping out of our bounds” and “going against the right.” Our opinions of our nation’s second revolution, also known as the Civil War, are that it was a ridiculous conflict between the moral north and the ignorant south. Shouldn’t that also mean that in our revolution against Great Britain we were the bad guys, the dangerous ones going where we shouldn’t have gone? Our skewed view of history focuses so much on national pride that we don’t take the time to look at ourselves as something other than the victor in these situations. What would we be thinking about Americans now if we all were British?

The American Revolution started in 1775 and continued through 1783. At its end, America celebrated a near-total victory over our parent nation Great Britain. We formed our own republic and constitution and set about making ourselves unique. This war has been considered as “just” here in America, but is this solely because we won? If we look at ourselves from the British point of view, we were nothing more than a complaining, unyielding, rowdy group of farmers, merchants, and craftsmen, who disagreed on how our parent country should let us operate. We wouldn’t allow for

changes in government, and freaked out whenever parliament tried to make us more similar to Britain. We were a disorganized group of protesters, amounting to only one-third of the size of the British population, who used violence and rebellion rather than discussion and reason to gain our victories. In fact, our revolution wasn't very dignified at all. Imagine if Texas decided (again) that it wanted to be a unique offshoot of the country rather than a conforming part of the United States. None of us would support the Texans' side of the argument because they would be disturbing the unity of our nation. We, as Americans, only see unity as a one way street; you're either with us, or you're wrong.

The American Revolution had many causes, both within the socio-economic setting here in North America and in the world outlook of the British Empire. The British, in the conflicts following 1754, reclaimed most of North America from the French. Their mastery of the seas helped them to exert greater control over their colonies in the Western Hemisphere. However, this new global dominance came at a price. Wars in Europe such as the Thirty Years War were costly for the British government. They needed more support from their colonies to keep their heads above water, and so they tried to get it. The thirteen American colonies had previously enjoyed little interference from their true government, and were disturbed at the new taxes and laws coming from across the ocean. These overseas taxes began with the 1765 levying of the first direct tax on the colonists, courtesy of George Grenville and the British government. Rather than using political responses to the seemingly reasonable taxation, however, the colonists simply fumed about it, using ideological reasoning that claimed that they were their own masters; not subject to control by the country that "owned" them. British taxation was

seen as an attempt of the British government to take away that particular responsibility from their colonial assemblies, rather than the measures to preserve the economic strength of a financially struggling British Empire that they truly were. Perhaps the colonists just wanted to reap all the benefits of being part of an empire, without paying the price.

It could be said that Americans began to be ruled by greed in the late 1700's. The French and Indian war brought wealth to many colonists on the receiving end of the British military expenditures. However, when the war ended many North American traders and businessmen realized that they had overextended themselves in their costs, and they were sent into bankruptcy. Their greed greatly damaged the colonial economy, and hard times fell upon most of the continent. It was upon this state of economy that the British taxes fell. Much anger and resentment came about, and blame was thrown upon the mother country of Britain. Then a few rebels, searching for personal wealth and power, saw fit to expand this forming gap until it became wide enough to cause a war between the continent and the island. We argue that it was only a few of the wealthy landowners and exporters of the south who caused the Civil War. Could it be that, similarly, it was only a few of the wealthy merchants and businessmen of the thirteen colonies who started the American Revolution? Doesn't the lack of difference between seemingly opposite historical occurrences make you stop and think?

On the issue of authority, the colonial dissenters claimed to be in control of their own territory. The colonies argued that a British army presence was in violation of their common rights. They argued that they should control their own taxes. They basically said that they were their own separate entity in every way except for name. What would

be the effect today if Indiana were to decide that it would follow only its own laws, yet still wanted to be considered a part of the United States of America? What were the colonists thinking when they demanded Britain to leave them alone? They knew that to defy their government would mean war. Our society views an offensive war as an unjust war. Then what makes this particular occasion of a totally offensive land-grab any better than World War II? We as Americans sometimes seem to tout hypocrisy openly.

Reading of other rebellions in our history books, we see them labeled as good and bad based on our country's interests. It is our own type of propaganda, meant to provoke a unified nationalistic response from those who read it. Our revolution is just one such example of our one-sidedness. Even based on the virtues that our nation supports, this behavior is wrong. However, is there really any real problem with our feelings of nationalism as they stand? Is there really any harm in the views we have learned to express? America is an enlightened nation; we see now more than ever that it is important to see things through the eyes of others. We may have already figured out the complexities of biased viewpoints. We also may have realized the ease with which people are able to twist history into what they want it to be.

Despite everything that it might have been, or should have been, the American Revolution was a great learning experience for the American people. Whether it was a revolution or a rebellion, the new American citizens learned the realities of political life on earth. Governments aren't always right, and it is our job as citizens to keep the government working for us, rather than we working for it. However, the American Revolution, as well as any other revolution or historical event, must be looked

at carefully, with all sides and all of the pertinent information examined in an unbiased way, or we will have failed to become what those rebels wished for us to be.

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