

Enlightenment and Liberalism: Rights and Revolution
Ellen Holmes Pearson
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“We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” *Thomas Paine, Common Sense, 1776*

“I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for liberty cannot be equally strong in the breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow creatures of theirs.” *Abigail Adams, 1776.*

This lecture explores the ways in which people and ideas circulated in the age of the Atlantic-World Revolutions. Within the lecture and readings for this week, here are some words for which you should watch: slavery; freedom; liberty; equality; justice; law; rights; property; citizens. How did the meanings change, depending on who used them and the context within which they were used? How did the application of Enlightenment ideas change as they traveled from place to place? What factors allowed the American Revolution’s republican ideals endure? Why did the French Revolution dissolve into violence and dictatorship? Finally, what is the legacy of the Enlightenment? How universal were universal rights, and how universal are they today?

- I. The foundations of Enlightenment-era revolutions
 - A. English origins: Puritanism and English revolutions
 - B. Enlightenment political thought, John Locke, and “classical liberalism”
- II. Thomas Paine and the American Revolution
 - A. *Common Sense*, Thomas Jefferson, and the Declaration of Independence
 - B. Paine, George Washington, the marquis de Lafayette, and Revolutionary Politics: *The American Crisis*
- III. Citizen Paine: The French Revolution and the rise and fall of an Enlightenment dream
 - A. Americans in Paris: Enlightenment ideas and the French Revolution
 - B. Burke vs. Paine: Enlightenment Principles clash
 - C. Paine, anti-monarchism, and the death of Louis XVI
 - D. Trapped in France: The Terror, the *Age of Reason*, and the fall of Citizen Paine
- IV. Those left out: rethinking the Enlightenment’s “universal” rights through the Haitian Revolution
 - A. Race, slavery, and the Enlightenment ideal
 - B. A successful slave revolution
 - C. Reactions from both sides of the Atlantic
- V. Legacy of Enlightenment ideals in the Atlantic Revolutions

Quotes:

1. "The Grecians and Romans were strongly possessed of the spirit of liberty but not the principle, for at the time they were determined not to be slaves themselves, they employed their power to enslave the rest of mankind." Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*, No. 5, March 21, 1778
2. "Humanity has won its battle. Liberty now has a country." Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, ca. 1781
3. "When the government violates the people's rights, insurrection is, for the people and for each portion of the people, the most sacred of the rights and the most indispensable of duties." Lafayette, date unknown.
4. "I consider the war of America against Britain as the country's war, the public's war, or the war of the people in their own behalf, for the security of their natural rights, and the protection of their own property." Thomas Paine, *On Financing the War*, 1782
5. "The Constitution establishes that sovereignty resides in the people, in all the individuals of the people. Each individual therefore has the right to participate in making the law which governs him and in the administration of the public good which is his own. If not, it is not true that all men are equal in rights, that every man is a citizen." Maximilien Robespierre, 1789
6. "Freedom had been hunted round the globe; reason was considered as rebellion; and the slavery of fear had made men afraid to think. But such is the irresistible nature of truth, that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing." Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, 1791
7. "He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself." Thomas Paine, *Dissertation on First Principles of Government*, December 23, 1791 "I was born a slave, but nature gave me a soul of a free man. . . ." Toussaint Louverture, 1797
8. ". . . we know nevertheless that there must exist among men, whatever their color, only one distinction, that between the good and the evil. Law-abiding blacks, men of color, and whites must be equally protected; when they stray from the law, they must be equally punished. Such is my opinion; such is my wish . . ." Toussaint Louverture, *A Refutation of Some Assertions in a Speech Pronounced in the Corps Législatif . . . by Viénot Vaublanc*, 1797.
9. "There can be no slaves in this territory; servitude is abolished within it forever. All men who are born here live and die free and French." Toussaint L'ouverture, *Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue*, 1801.
10. ". . . those which have been able to enjoy a few precious moments of liberty are most rare, as they soon relapsed into their old political vices; because it is the people moreoften than the government, that bring on tyranny." Simon Bolivar, *Message to the Congress of Angostura*, 1819