

## **Enlightenment and Liberalism: Rights and Revolution**

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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. How did the application of Enlightenment ideas change as they traveled from place to place? What factors allowed the American Revolution’s republican ideals to endure? Why did the French and Haitian Revolutions end so differently? 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: John Locke and “classical liberalism”
- II. American Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Atlantic World
  - A. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, Thomas Jefferson, and the Declaration of Independence
  - B. Thomas Paine, George Washington, and the Marquis de Lafayette: exporting Revolution
- III. The French Revolution and the rise and fall of an Enlightenment dream
  - A. America in Paris: Enlightenment ideas and the French Revolution
  - B. Important events of the French Revolution
    1. The storming of the Bastille
    2. Women’s march to Versailles
    3. The capture and execution of the king and queen
    4. Robespierre and The Terror
  - C. Burke vs. Paine: Enlightenment Principles clash
- IV. Those left out: rethinking the Enlightenment’s “universal” rights through the Haitian Revolution
  - A. Race, slavery, and the Enlightenment ideal
    1. Seeking equality: Vincent Ogé and Haiti’s free men of color
    2. Seeking liberty and equality: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the slaves’ revolution
  - B. A successful slave revolution
  - C. Reactions from both sides of the Atlantic
- V. Legacy of Enlightenment ideals in the Atlantic Revolutions

## Quotes:

1. “. . . We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. . . .” The Declaration of Independence, 1776
2. “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
3. “Humanity has won its battle. Liberty now has a country.” Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, ca. 1781
4. “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.
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. “Is liberty made for all men? I believe so. Must it be given to all men? Again, I believe so.” Vincent Ogé, St. Domingue free black planter, 1789.
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
8. “I was born a slave, but nature gave me a soul of a free man. . . .” Toussaint Louverture, 1797
9. “. . . 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.
10. “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.
11. “. . . 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