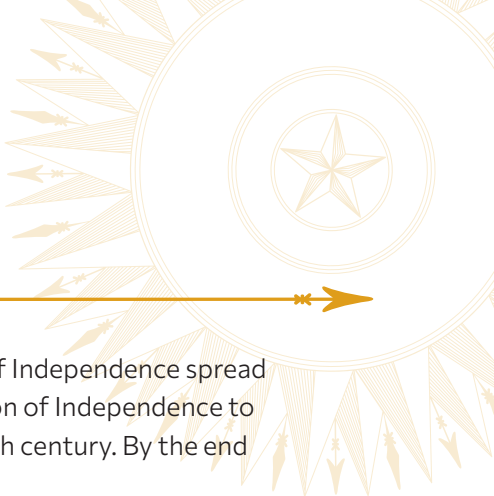


AGE OF REVOLUTIONS



Within a few months of its adoption by the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence spread to various corners of Europe. French translations allowed the ideas of the Declaration of Independence to spread quickly, as French was a widely understood language in Europe during the 18th century. By the end of the year, translations of the Declaration of Independence reached most of Europe.

Europe was not the only region to become inspired by the Declaration of Independence. In Spanish-America, publication and circulation of the Declaration and other revolutionary documents was banned. Despite this, it was translated into Spanish and continued to spread. The Declaration of Independence and its ideals served as inspiration for other countries' own independence movements, while others imitated the very way the document was written. The Declaration and the American Revolution kicked off an Age of Revolutions.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Declaration of Independence makes many references to **Enlightenment** philosophies, or ideas, that were popular at the time. Some of these include John Locke's *natural rights*, Thomas Hobbes's *social contract*, and Jean Jacques Rousseau's popular *sovereignty*. These ideals became very popular during the Age of Revolution.

The French Revolution

France was an important ally to the United States during the Revolutionary War. In cultivating that alliance, ideas spread between the United States and the French people – including ideas from the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration first reached France in late August 1776, and various translations of it quickly made their way into the hands of the French public. So did translations of the new state **constitutions** that the American **states** wrote when they threw off British legal authority. By 1783, a book was circulating in France called *Constitutions des trizeze Etats-Unis de l'Amérique*. It included the complete translations of the state constitutions and the Declaration of Independence. France was enamored with the ideals in the **preamble** of the Declaration. Eventually, a French Revolution was born based on similar ideas about rights and equality.

MORE INFORMATION

A class system that divided people based on wealth and birth led to inequality within 18th century France. Enlightenment ideas, the American Revolution, and this inequality would lead to the first phase of the French Revolution, which created a new French Republic in 1792. The French Revolution continued for many years, and in this time, the country experienced several different forms of government. Today, France is a **republic** governed by a president and parliament.

The Marquis de Lafayette, a veteran of the American Revolutionary War, drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen with the help of his friend and the United States ambassador to France, Thomas Jefferson. Like the Declaration of Independence, Lafayette's declaration leaned heavily on the ideals of liberty, equality, and the right to a government that served the people. It was eventually submitted to the **French National Assembly** and later approved by that body and King Louis XVI. The Declaration of Independence and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen both created ripples throughout the world and inspired countless liberation movements.

DECLARATIONS FOR WOMEN

Olympe de Gouges, a women's rights activist and playwright, wrote another French declaration in 1791. The Declaration of Rights of Women and of the Female Citizen advocated for better treatment of women in France. Years later, women in the United States followed in her footsteps and created the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848 which stated that "all men and women are created equal."

The Haitian Revolution

In the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue, **enslaved** Africans had fought against their enslavement for many years. The success of the American Revolution, the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen added fuel to their ongoing efforts and helped build a revolution that would end in the creation of the independent nation of Haiti.

For over a century, the sugar and coffee industries exploited the labor of enslaved people from Africa. Conditions in Saint-Domingue were so horrendous that an enslaved person typically survived less than 10 years from their arrival on the island. Wealthy colonists in Saint-Domingue felt it more cost-effective to replace those they'd worked to death than to improve conditions.

The Haitian Revolution officially began when a group of enslaved people launched an attack against their enslavers in the north of Saint-Domingue in 1791. Because the French colonists were also dealing with the impact of the French Revolution in Saint-Domingue, what followed was a complicated conflict with multiple island factions and colonial empires fighting for control of the island colony. The colonists and the French **Empire** fought for control of the island, and enslaved people fought for their freedom. Meanwhile, French rivals Britain and Spain hoped to capture Saint-Domingue for themselves. The war would turn in favor of the largest population — the enslaved people of Saint-Domingue.

Free and formally enslaved leaders in Saint-Domingue began abolishing slavery in the regions they controlled, and they pushed for abolition in France and in Spain as well. Their efforts helped lead to the abolition of slavery by the **French National Convention** in February 1794. François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture, formerly enslaved and now a general in the Haitian Revolution, was one of the key figures in this fight. He later became the Governor-General, or leader, of Saint-Domingue. Under L'Ouverture, slavery was abolished, but Saint-Domingue remained in the French Empire operating as a **sovereign state**. In 1802, however, Napoleon took power in France and wished to reestablish slavery. To prevent this, the Haitian Revolution evolved into a war for independence.

After L'Ouverture's death in the war with Napoleon's forces, Jean-Jacques Dessalines took command. It was under Dessalines that the Haitian Declaration of Independence was adopted. Between the efforts of L'Ouverture, Dessalines, and other leaders, Haiti was established as the first independent, Black-led republic in the Americas. Afterwards, the country continued its involvement in revolutions by supporting independence efforts in Spanish American colonies. It also encouraged anti-slavery societies in Britain and France to increase their efforts. The Haitian Revolution helped advance the idea that a democracy should include everyone.

A FRENCH POLITICIAN

Jean-Baptiste Belley was originally a captain during the Haitian Revolution. In 1793, Belley was elected as the first Black deputy to France's National Convention. He contributed to the debates that led to France's 1794 abolition of slavery.

Spanish American Revolutions

A wave of independence movements continued throughout the first half of the 19th century. Many of these movements occurred within the Americas as countries began declaring independence from the empires of Spain, Great Britain, France, and Portugal. Countries separating from the Spanish Empire made up the largest of this number. The wars that resulted from these movements collectively became known as the Spanish American Wars for Independence.

Spanish American conflict against the Spanish crown dated back to the mid-18th century, but the success of the revolutions in the United States and Haiti against imperial powers helped encourage independence. Early censorship laws within Spanish America had restricted Enlightenment ideas and texts as a part of their efforts to maintain control over their colonies. By the 19th century, Spanish imperial authorities banned the circulation of the Declaration and other revolutionary texts from the United States in hopes of preventing the spread of revolution. Despite this, revolutionary ideas permeated Spanish America.

Spanish American revolutionaries aided in these efforts. One such revolutionary was Chilean Camilo Henríquez, who printed Chile's first newspaper, the *Aurora de Chile*. Despite having already been arrested for reading Enlightenment texts, Henríquez used the *Aurora* to spread the writings of Enlightenment philosophers and United States revolutionaries. This helped introduce more members of the Chilean public to ideas of individual **rights** and the possibility of Chilean independence. The Spanish Chilean government soon began censoring these ideas in the press, but Henríquez continued spreading revolutionary ideals in Chile and later Argentina. Both countries declared independence from Spain before 1820.

Some Spanish American revolutionaries sought refuge in Philadelphia, traveling there as early as the 1790s. Escaping the threat of imprisonment or death by Spanish imperial forces, these revolutionaries saw Philadelphia as a symbol of **republicanism** and independence. Philadelphia became a hub of translations and writings by these Spanish American revolutionaries. Their work influenced independence movements throughout the Americas. Venezuelan Manuel García de Sena published two translations of United States revolutionary documents in 1811 and 1812. His publication *La Independencia* included the Declaration of Independence, the **Articles of Confederation**, several state constitutions, and selections from provocative Revolutionary author Thomas Paine. *La Independencia* acted as a guide in justifying separation from Spain and in creating new forms of **republican** government. Many later American constitutions used García de Sena's translations as inspiration.

A decade later, Ecuadorian Vicente Rocafuerte wrote *Ideas Necesarias* likely while a **diplomat** to the United States. The introduction begins with a letter addressing his "beloved countrymen," referring not just to those in Ecuador but throughout Spanish America. As a diplomat, Rocafuerte also worked to secure European recognition of these new countries.

By 1850, the Spanish Empire had largely vanished from the Americas, leaving dozens of newly independent **nations** in its wake. Many of the declarations produced there in this time were inspired by United States Declaration of Independence.

REVOLUTIONARY REFUGE

Revolutionary Vicente Rocafuerte described Philadelphia, as the "Asilo de los oprimidos, centro de las luces, baluarte de la libertad, el genio de la independencia" in his publication *Ideas Necesarias*. In English, this translates to: "Asylum of the oppressed, center of lights, bastion of liberty, spirit of independence."

In the decades that followed the American Revolutionary War, many independence movements spread throughout the western world. Together, they created an Age of Revolutions. These movements were built on different combinations of the ideas of sovereignty, republicanism, individual rights, and equality. The revolutions during this period built off each other, and new countries frequently were inspired by more than one revolution before their own. Despite the similarities, each new country also gained inspiration from its own unique experiences with imperial powers.

The United States may have been the first successful modern independence movement, but clearly the world was ripe for more. Over the next 100 years, independence and rights movements emerged in European countries, like Austria, Poland, Greece, and Hungary, and in colonies around the world, like those in Spanish America, India, and New Zealand. Liberia also issued the first African Declaration of Independence in 1847, creating an independent republic of Liberia. Not every country had a Declaration of Independence, but most did.

Though these declarations and independence movements were met with varying degrees of success and recognition by the rest of the world, the Age of Revolutions changed the world forever.

TIMELINE OF LATIN AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

1809 – Ecuador	1818 – Chile	1821 – Nicaragua
1810 – Columbia	1821 – Mexico	1821 – Honduras
1811 – Paraguay	1821 – Guatemala	1821 – Peru
1811 – Venezuela	1821 – El Salvador	1822 – Brazil
1816 – Argentina	1821 – Costa Rica	1825 – Bolivia

*These dates are for each country's initial declaration of independence.
For some countries, it would take several years to achieve full independence.*