

Exploring the Aftermath

Primary Source A – Declaration of Dependence

Petition of 547 Loyalists from New York City, November 28, 1776 (Courtesy of New York Historical Society)

To the Right Honorable Richard Viscount Howe, of the Kingdom of Ireland, and His Excellency The Honorable William Howe, Esquire, General of His Majesty's Forces in America, the Kings' Commissioners for restoring Peace in His Majesty's Colonies and Plantations in North America &c. &c. &c.

May it please your excellencies.

Impressed with the most grateful sense of the Royal Clemency, manifested I your Proclamation of the 14th. Of July last, whereby His Majesty hath been graciously pleased to declare, "That he is desirous to deliver His American subjects from the calamities of War, and other oppressions, which they now undergo;" and equally affected with sentiments of gratitude for the generous and humane attention to the disposition "to confer with His Majesty's well affected subjects, upon the means of restoring the public Tranquility, and establishing a permanent union with every Colony as a part of the British Empire."

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, Inhabitants of the City and County of New-York, beg leave to inform your Excellencies: that altho most of us have subscribed a general Representation with many other of the Inhabitants; yet we wish that our conduct, in maintaining inviolate our loyalty to our Sovereign, against the strong tide of oppression and tyranny, which has almost overwhelmed this Land, may be marked by some line of distinction, which cannot well be drawn from the mode of Representation that has been adopted for the Inhabitants in general.

Influenced by this Principle, and from a regard to our peculiar Situation, we have humbly presumed to trouble your Excellencies with the second application; in which, we flatter ourselves, none participate but those who have ever, with unshaken fidelity, borne true Allegiance to His Majesty, and the most warm and affectionate attachment to his Person and Government. That, notwithstanding the tumult of the times, and the extreme difficulties and losses to which many of us have been exposed, we have always expressed, and do now give this Testimony of our Zeal to preserve and support the Constitutional Supremacy of Great Britain over the Colonies; and do most ardently wish for a speedy restoration of that union between them, which, while it subsisted, proved the unfailing source of their mutual happiness and prosperity.

We cannot help lamenting that the number of Subscribers to this Address is necessarily lessened, by the unhappy circumstance that many of our Fellow-Citizens, who have firmly adhered their loyalty, have been driven from their Habitations, and others sent Prisoners into some of the neighbouring Colonies: and tho' it would have afforded us the highest satisfaction, could they have been present upon this occasion: yet we conceive it to be the duty we owe to ourselves and our prosperity, whilst this testimony of our Allegiance can be supported by known and recent facts, to declare to your Excellencies; that so far from having given the last countenance or encouragement, to the most unnatural, unprovoked Rebellion, that ever disgraced the annals of Time; we have on the contrary, steadily and uniformly opposed it, in every stage of its rise and progress, at the risque of our Lives and Fortunes.

Primary Source B – Selections from the travel journal of Nicholas Cresswell (1776)

9 July 1776

At Mr. Kirk's. News that the Sanhedrim had declared the thirteen united Colonies Free and Independent States. That this was intended by the Northern Colonies from the first . . . *Cresswell travels to Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York, returning in September 1776 to Alexandria, Virginia.*

20 October

No service at Church today. Religion is almost forgotten or most basely neglected. In short, the Parsons are not willing to expound the Gospel to people without being paid for it, and there is no provision made for the Episcopal Clergy by this new code of Laws, therefore Religion as well as Commerce is at a stand. Indeed, the few that pretend to preach are mere retailers of politics, sowers of sedition and rebellion, serve to blow the coal¹⁵ of discord and excite the people to arms. The Presbyterian Clergy are particularly active in supporting the measures of Congress from the Rostrum, gaining proselytes, persecuting the unbelievers, preaching up the righteousness of their cause and persuading the unthinking populace of the infallibility of success. Some of these religious rascals assert that the Lord will send his Angels to assist the injured Americans. They gain great numbers of converts and I am convinced if they establish their Independence that Presbyty [Presbyterianism] will be the established religion on this Continent. Spent the evening with Mr. Robert Muir and Mr. Kirk.

21 October.

This morning I am told that the Committee of this town will not permit me to depart this Colony as they look upon me to be a Spy and that I must be obliged to give security or go to jail. Whether this is done to get me to enlist into their service or some rascal has informed against me I cannot tell. Intended to have gone to Leesburg tonight, but some villain has stolen my surtout coat. Spent the evening at Mr. William Harthorn's.

26 October

[Loudoun County, Virginia]. These three days I have spent most disagreeably 3/4 nothing to do and all alone. When I reflect on my present situation it makes me miserable. I am now in an enemy's country, forbidden to depart. Little to subsist upon and dare not do anything to get a living, for fear of getting myself ranked as an inhabitant and be obliged to carry arms against my native country. My interest and inclination, unhappy alternative indeed, to turn parricide or starve. Am determined to go amongst the Indians. I look upon them to be the more humane people of the two. . . . 28 October. General Muster of the County Militia in town, about 600 men appeared under-armed, with Tobacco sticks in general. Much rioting and confusion. Recruiting Officers for the Sleber Army offer Twelve Pounds bounty and 200 acres of land when the War is over, but get very few men.

Primary Source C – Journal Entry, Samuel Blachley Webb, July 10, 1776

Last night, the Statue of George the third was tumbled down and beheaded-the troops having long had an inclination so to do, tho't this time of publishing a Declaration of Independence, to be a favorable opportunity-for which they received the Check in this day's orders.

Primary Source D – Tories at Hartford

Hartford, Connecticut, July 15, 1776.

Last week, about one hundred and fifty Tories, in the *Nine-Partners*, and places adjacent, rose in a body, fell upon the Sons of Liberty there, disarmed them, and took possession of the Committee-Chamber, but were quelled by a party of near three thousand men from the western parts of this Colony, and about twenty of their number were taken and confined in prison. May their ringleaders soon receive the punishment due to such traitors to the *American States*.

Primary Source E – Extract of a Letter From Albany, July 15, 1776.

Last Saturday evening a plot was discovered here, (by convession of two Tories,) that this week the town was to be set on fire in different places, and the Magazine blown up. Yesterday between two and three hundred men went out with their arms to take up those scoundrels, who, by information, were skulking in the woods, &c. and they have taken several of them. As there are no soldiers in town, the inhabitants watch twenty-four hours round, to guard the Tory Jail, Magazine, &c.

Primary Source F – Resolve to sell the Tories' Chaises and other Carriages; passed July 4, 1776

Resolved, That John Brown, William Cooper, John Pitts, Josiah Sartel, and Edward Rawson, Esqs., being a Committee for taking Inventories, c., of the Estates within the Town of Boston which have been left or deserted by sundry persons supposed to be inimical to the rights and liberties of *America*, be, and they hereby are, directed to make sale of all Chaises and other Carriages belonging to such Estates, they first having the same appraised by the most suitable persons, and then advertising the same for sale at such appraisements; and all that may remain unsold at a day that said Committee may appoint, shall then be advertised to be sold at publick vendue. All which shall be carried into effect by said Committee as soon as conveniently may be, they to be accountable to the General Court for the proceeds of such sales.

Primary Source G – Loyalty Oath, 1776

I do acknowledge the UNITED STATES of AMERICA to be Free, Independent and Sovereign States, and declare that the people thereof owe no allegiance or obedience to George the Third, King of Great-Britain; and I renounce refuse and abjure any allegiance or obedience to him; and I do _____ that I will, to the utmost of my power, support, maintain and defend the said United States against the said King George the Third, his heirs and successors, and his or their abettors, assistants and adherents, and will serve the said United States in the office of _____ which I now hold, with fidelity, according to the best of my skill and understanding

Primary Source H – Prince Hall Appeal, January 13, 1777 (Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society)

To the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts Bay in General Court assembled, January 13, 1777:

The petition of A Great Number of Blackes detained in a State of slavery in the bowels of a free & Christian County Humbly sheweth that your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unalienable Right to that freedom which the Grat Parent of the Universe that Bestowed equally on all menkind and which they have Never forfeited by any Compact or agreement whatever D but that wher Unjustly Dragged by the hand of cruel Power and their Derest friends and sum of them Even torn from the Embraces of their tender ParentsDfrom A populous Pleasant and Plentiful country and in violation of Laws of Nature and of Nations and in Defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity Brough here Either to Be sold like Beast of burthen & Like them Condemned to Slavery for LifeDAmong A People Professing the mild Religion of Jesus A people Not Insensible of the Secrets of Rational Being Nor without spirit to Resent the unjust endeavors of others to Reduce them to a state of Bondage and Subjugation your hononuer Need not to be informed that A Live of Slavery Like that of your petitioners Deprived of Every social privilege of Every thing Requisite and render Life Tolable is far worse that Nonexistence.

(In imitat)ion of the Lawdable Example of the Good People of these States your petitioners have Long and Patiently waited the Event of petition after petition. By them presented tot the Legislative Body of this state and cannot but with Grief Reflect that their Success hath been but too similar they Cannot but express their Astonishment that It have Never Bin Considered that Every Principle from which America has Acted in the Course of their unhappy Difficulties with Great Briton Pleads Stronger than A thousand arguments in favors of your petitioners they therfor humble Beseech your honours to give this petition its due weight and consideration & cause an act of the legislature to be past Wherby they may be Restored to the Enjoyments of that which is the Natural right of all menDand their Children who wher Born in this Land of Liberty may not be held as Slaves after they arrive at the age of twenty one years so may the Inhabitance of this States No longer chargeable with the inconstancy of acting themselves that part which they condemn and oppose in others Be prospered in their present Glorious struggle for Liberty and have those Blessings to them, &c.

Primary Source I – The New-York Gazette: and the Weekly Mercury (Newark) Runaway advertisement, Oct 14, 1776 Graham Russell Gao Hodges and Alan Edward Brown, eds., “Pretends to be Free”: Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey, 2nd Edition (Fordham University Press 2019)

Three Pounds Reward. RUN-away the 8th inst. A negro man named Cato, about 23 or 25 years old, middling stature, well set, very black eyes, will often lap his tongue over his under lip and chin: Had on when he went away, a reddish brown cloth waistcoat, tow cloth trowsers, blue worsted stockings, and check shirt. The above reward, with all reasonable expences, will be paid to any person, for taking up and securing said negro in prison, and informing his mistress thereof: and the expences for bringing him to Mrs. Deborah Gomez, at the house of the subscriber, in Second street, near Walnut street, Philadelphia; or of Mr. Francis Basset, at the hous of Doctor Burnet, in this town. MATTHIAS GOMEZ. It is supposed the

Primary Source J – Extract of a Letter Dated Huntington, Long-Island, New-York, July 23, 1776

Yesterday, the freedom and independency of the Thirteen United Colonies was, with beat of drum, proclaimed at the several places of parade, by reading the Declaration of the General Congress, together with the Resolutions of our Provincial Convention thereupon; which were approved and applauded by the animated shouts of the people, who were present from all the distant quarters of this district. After which, the flag which used to wave on Liberty Pole, having “Liberty” on one side, and “George III.” On the other, underwent a reform-i.e., the Union was cut off, and the letters George III. Were discarded, being publicly ripped off; and then an effigy of the person represented by those letters, being hastily fabricated out of base materials, with its face black, like Dunmore’s Virginia regiment, its head adorned with a wooden crown and stuck full of feathers, like Carleton’s and Johnson’s savages, and its body wrapped in the Union, instead of a blanket or robe of State, and lined with gunpowder, which the original seems to be fond of, -the whole, together with the letters above mentioned, were hung on a gallows, exploded, and burnt to ashes. In the evening, the Committee of this town, with a large number of the principal inhabitants, sat round the genial board, and drank thirteen patriotick toasts, among which were, The Free and Independent States of America; The General Congress; The Conventions of the Thirteen States; Our principal military Commanders; and success and enlargement to the American Navy. Nor was the memory of our late brave heroes, who have gloriously lost their lives in the cause of liberty and their country, forgotten.