



## Impact of the Revolutionary War: Women, Native Americans, Enslaved Peoples

### Objective

*Analyze the impact of the Revolutionary War on marginalized (historically oppressed) groups.*

**Historical Context:** The Declaration of Independence was written and agreed upon in 1776 by political representatives of the 13 colonies. While the document was meant to represent the sentiments of **all** Americans, it was not the standard by which **all** Americans were treated by the American society.

### Primary Source Document 1: Abigail Adams to John Adams - March 31 1776

1	I long to hear that you have declared an independency from England -- and by the way in the
2	new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would
3	Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors.
4	Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would
5	be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are
6	determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we
7	have no voice, or Representation.
8	
9	That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no
10	dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the
11	more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious
12	and the Lawless to use us with cruelty...Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which
13	treat us only as the servants of your mankind. Regard us then as Beings placed by destiny
14	under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for
15	our happiness.

### Analysis Questions:

- 1) *Close Reading:* According to lines 2 - 3, who is Abigail Adams asking John Adams to remember when making the new laws for the new country, the United States of America?
- 2) *Close Reading:* According to lines 6 and 7, what is Abigail warning John Adams of if the founders do NOT give women equal rights?
- 3) *Close Reading:* How does Abigail Adams describe men in line 9?
- 4) *Analysis:* What does this source suggest to you about how women were viewed in America in 1776?

Primary Source Document 2: The Chickasaws Send a Message to Congress, 1783

1	...we are yet in confusion & uncertainty. We also receive talks from the Governor of Georgia...the
2	Virginians Call upon us to a Treaty, and want part of our land, and we expect our Neighbors who
3	live on Cumberland River, will in a Little time Demand, if not forcibly take part of it from us, also
4	as we are informed they have been marking Lines through our hunting grounds: we are daily
5	receiving Talks from one Place or other, and from People we Know nothing about. We Know not
6	who to mind or who to neglect. We are told that the Americans have 13 Councils Composed of
7	Chiefs and Warriors. We Know not which of them we are to Listen to, or if we are to hear some,
8	and Reject others, we are at a loss to Distinguish those we are to hear...we hope you will also
9	put a stop to any encroachments on our lands, without our consent, and silence all those People
10	who sends us Such Talks as inflame & exasperate our Young Men, as it is our earnest desire to
11	remain in peace and friendship with our Brother: the Americans...
12	
13	...it is very hard when we have let the Americans have so much land for so little value, they
14	should want to cheat us in this manner of the small spots we have left for our women and
15	children to live on.

**Analysis Questions**

- 1) *Close Reading*: According to the document, how had the Native Americans been treated by the Americans?
- 2) *Close Reading*: According to lines 3 and 4, what is slowly happening to Native American lands?
- 3) *Analysis*: From the excerpt of this primary source, what do you infer was the general stance or position for the Americans towards Native Americans immediately after independence?
- 4) *Analysis*: When the Declaration of Independence was written, the first few lines written by the founding fathers read: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are equal...". Based on this document above, do you think the founding fathers and Americans at this time thought that Native Americans were included in the general category of "men"? Why or why not?

[Primary Source Document 3](#): Petition from Enslaved Peoples to Council and House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts-Bay in General Court assembled January 13th 1777.

1	The Petition of a great number of Negroes who are detained in a state of Slavery in the Bowels
2	of a free and Christian Country Humbly ask:
3	
4	That your Petitioners apprehend that negroes have, in common with all other Men, a natural
5	and unalienable right to that freedom, which the great Parent of the Universe hath bestowed
6	equally on all Mankind, and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement
7	whatever—But they were unjustly dragged, by the cruel hand of Power, from their dearest
8	friends, and some of them even torn from the embraces of their tender Parents, from a
9	populous, pleasant and plentiful Country—and in Violation of the Laws of Nature and of Nation
10	and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity, brought here to be sold like Beasts of
11	Burden, and like them condemned to slavery for Life...
12	
13	Your Honors need not to be informed that a Life of Slavery, like that of your petitioners,
14	deprived of every social privilege, of every thing requisite to render Life even tolerable, is far
15	worse than Non-Existence....They cannot but express their astonishment, that it has never
16	been considered, that every principle from which America has acted in the course of her
17	unhappy difficulties with Great-Britain, pleads stronger than a thousand arguments in favor of
18	your Petitioners.
19	
20	They therefore humbly beseech your Honors, to give this Petition its due weight and
21	consideration, and cause an Act of the Legislature to be passed, whereby they may be
22	restored to the enjoyment of that freedom which is the natural right of all Men—and their
23	Children (who were born in this Land of Liberty) may not be held as Slaves after they arrive at
	the age of twenty one years.

### Analysis Questions

- 1) *Sourcing and Contextualization*: Who wrote this? Was it written before or after the Declaration of Independence?
- 2) *Analysis*: Where do you see the influence of the Declaration of Independence in this document? Cite evidence from the text to support your claims.
- 3) *Analysis*: From the excerpt of this primary source, what do you infer was the general stance or position of Americans towards enslaved peoples immediately after independence?
- 4) *Analysis*: When the Declaration of Independence was written, the first few lines written by the founding fathers read: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are equal...”.