African American History

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The Shawnee fought for the Americans while the Cherokee fought for the British. As for African Americans, slaves from New England were pardoned with freedom if they fought for the Continental Army. While slaves from the South were pardoned with freedom if they fought for the British. Quite a few escaped slaves from the South joined the British army [[1]](#footnote-1). In a nutshell, African Americans and Native Americans weren’t agreed they fought on opposite sides.

The first American to fall in the cause of American liberty was, most ironically, a black man named Crispus Attucks during the Boston massacre. Various other blacks, both slave and free, fought as well. Native Americans taught the American colonials guerilla warfare (ambush, fighting while hidden behind rocks or in treetops), which defeated the British Redcoats whose more European style of warfare was rather formal. Free African Americans and enslaved Africans were enlisted in state militias in-lieu -of their white owners [[2]](#footnote-2). Besides, there were scouts and regiments, from my Iroquois ancestors who played a major role in the success of several major engagements. Other tribal nations have long been allies, of the fledgling United States.

The Revolution’s leaders founding their fight on the idea that all men were created equal and that they all had certain inalienable rights. These ideal directly contrasted with the institution of slavery. The Revolution resulted in slavery being outlawed in 7 of the 13 States that declared independence, although, in some States, the transitioning out of slavery took decades. The Revolutionary ideals also gave rise to an abolition movement, which really did not exist prior to the war [[3]](#footnote-3). The children and grandchildren of the founding generation took the revolutionary ideals to heart. Many of them began movements to end slavery entirely.

In the south, the majority of white were not prepared to end slavery. To justify the contradiction of supporting the ideal of the Revolution that all men are created equal, and at the same time supporting slavery, the racist idea that black people were not really “men” began to grow much stronger. Southern leaders pushed the idea that black men were more like animals than humans and therefore not entitled to basic human rights. So, in the south, the revolution led to no real change for black Americans. If anything, laws made things worse over time, such as forcing free blacks to leave those States. Both factions the British and the colonists offered freedom to blacks who served [[4]](#footnote-4). It should be obvious that this would have been a dream come true for those enslaved a chance of freedom, no matter how fraught with danger, to live and die as a free person.

The Revolution was radical in the North and no change in the South. George Washington, first American President’ was the richest slave owner, and he didn't even want free blacks to serve in the army and only grudgingly allowed it when he was desperate for troops. The Revolution turned conservative once he was chosen - it would be a movement led by gentlemen that would preserve the existing American social order.  Had the struggle continued the way it had from 1773-75, led by true radicals like Samuel Adams and inspired by the likes of Thomas Paine - people who *did*want the social order to change - maybe there would have been faster movement on slavery.

Abolitionism was already on the rise in Britain.  The legal status of slavery had already taken a hit with Lord Mansfield's decision in the Somerset Case of 1772, which said that slavery was not compatible with English Common Law in England proper [[5]](#footnote-5). It's safe to say that slavery in North America would probably have ended sooner if the British remained in charge.

1. Darlene Clark. Hine, William C. Hine, and Stanley. Harrold, *African Americans : A Concise History* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.; Harlow: Pearson Education, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (UNC Press Books, 2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hine, Hine, and Harrold, *African Americans : A Concise History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quarles. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)