

REDEFINING REVOLUTION: EVALUATING THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGES
OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD 1765–1820

Max Halbach

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Dr. Tom Arne Midtrød

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The American Revolution was remarkably transformative; its ideological, political, and social commitments radically departed from traditional models of society for many demographic sections of America. Ideas of religious separation diluted Protestantism's official influence in government while unfree immigration –whether by indenture or enslavement– decreased with the proliferation of Revolutionary ideals. Formerly uncooperative colonies successfully unified into a novel independence movement coordinated by a centralized government. These sweeping changes were experienced by different sections of American society in myriad ways –from augmented political participation to the leveling of imposed hierarchies ranging from the patriarchy to racial caste. However, when discussing the metamorphic power of the American Revolution, a quandary develops: despite progressive gains in women's political rights, women were gradually pushed back into domestic roles by the 1830s. Although Black people on both sides of the conflict leveraged military service to argue for racial equality, slavery still permeated the nation on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line nearly half a century after the Revolution ended; the international slave trade –which imported enslaved Africans at an even quicker pace after the Revolution– would give way to a rapidly expanding interstate slave trade that separated families and exploited the labor of millions of Black people through the early 1860s. Even though Native Americans experienced a massive change in foreign affairs after the American Revolution as a product of the shifting Middle Ground, the Americans played the same role that British imperialists and Spanish conquistadors had played for centuries: expropriating Indigenous land while giving Native Americans the choice between assimilation and annihilation. To reconcile the dramatic changes and stark continuities of the American Revolution, one must compare social order before, during, and after the Revolution. Although systems of oppression were maintained throughout the Revolutionary period, the Revolution

demanded new justifications for the earlier hierarchical society; the ruling class forged new hierarchies to curb the definitions of the nebulous ideals of equality and freedom spawned from the Revolution, justifying them by integrating pseudo-biological conceptions of women and Black people and constructing an unprecedentedly systematic approach to Indigenous land dispossession. The weakening of traditional hierarchies predicated on unquestionable authority jeopardized the ruling class, resulting in a large-scale transformation of hierarchical rationale as a result of the Revolution.

The American Revolution transformed the experiences of Black people in the United States, though different regions of the growing republic responded to the Revolution in varying ways. Before the Revolution, racialized and hereditary slavery pervaded British American society from Canada to the Floridian coast. The conditions enslaved Black people experienced differed by region. While the North functioned as a society with slaves, where slavery was not the primary economic institution, slavery gradually grew more integrated with colonial economies further South. Leaving the system of slavery was also incredibly difficult for Black people; freedom through self-purchase was difficult and never trustworthy, emancipation by merit was rare, and running away could result in death due to trespassing laws. Although the function of slavery differed between these regions –Northern enslaved labor being a primarily urban phenomenon while Southern colonies adopted rural plantation-style agriculture– slavery’s pervasiveness and interregional profitability discouraged many Americans from questioning the hierarchical system they adopted.¹

The liberal ideology of the American Revolution put this hierarchical system under scrutiny. Though enslaved Black people made several attempts to self-emancipate –certainly

¹ Douglas Egerton, *Death of Liberty: African Americans and Revolutionary America* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2011), 19.

after the 1772 Somerset Decision, which Black people interpreted as the British delegitimizing slavery as an institution— the Revolution offered Black men in particular a chance at social mobility through military service.² When the Virginian Lord Dunmore threatened to emancipate the enslaved workers of rebellious Virginian planters as a rhetorical tool, many Black people took him seriously, endeavoring to enlist in the British Army.³ Although Lord Dunmore’s 1775 proclamation only offered freedom in exchange for military service to enslaved Virginians, the British government extended their offer of emancipation to all colonies in revolt in the 1779 Philipsburg Proclamation.⁴ Though the British announced these proclamations out of wartime necessity for labor, not moral disgust toward slavery, Black people utilized the Revolution to increase their social mobility: many joined the British ranks when the opportunity presented itself. Although fighting for freedom with the British appealed to many Black men, some were inspired to join the Americans. Identified with their cause of liberty and equality and having little to lose, Black Patriots were not uncommon among the ranks of the Continental Army and colonial militias.⁵ Even though some Patriot officials succeeded in rejecting Black soldiers from serving in the army, attempting to invalidate Black people’s claims to citizenship, recruiters often hired Black people as soldiers anyway as a matter of necessity.⁶ Although many Black families fled the United States for Canada after the war, Black Patriots’ commitment to the Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality would put the preexisting racial hierarchy into question.

After the Revolution, the new republic found itself at a racial nexus; the nation could accept Black veterans’ interpretation of the Revolution —rejecting the profitable racial hierarchies of the past— or they could ignore their interpretation and recommit themselves to racial

² Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 52.

³ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 69.

⁴ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 84.

⁵ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 75.

⁶ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 78.

inequality. Black veterans in the newly formed United States led the charge for emancipation. However, their calls were limited by local conditions and the sentiments of White representatives in the early republic. Citizens in the North largely accepted the new interpretation, but its implementation varied between states. Massachusetts used its judicial system to dismantle legislation that protected slavery in the 1781 cases of Mum Bett and Quok Walker, who each sued the state for failing to uphold Massachusetts' post-war constitutional promise that all "men are born free and equal."⁷ By preventing the question of freedom from finding open debate in the state congress, the new state government acquiesced to the growing number of freedom petitions and quietly ended the institution in the state. Reform in Pennsylvania and New York started with the creation of manumission societies –Pennsylvania in 1775 and New York in 1785– with each eventually requiring their constituents to free any people they enslaved.⁸ Mounting petitions from Black activists and writers pushed Pennsylvania and New York to adopt more official policies, resulting in gradual emancipationist bills in 1780 and 1799 respectively.⁹ These gradualist approaches to slavery allowed enslavers to continue to profit off of enslaved labor for several decades after the Revolution yet set the institution on a path to destruction in New England and the former Middle Colonies. In the newly conquered Northwest Territory, Article VI of its 1787 ordinance for settlement legally banned slavery north of the Ohio River–though White people continued slavery in practice for decades after; by the 1810s, Illinoisans enslaved more than 1,200 Black people while still more were trapped in indefinitely extended indentures: *de facto* slavery.¹⁰ Ultimately, the northern section of the United States

⁷ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 105-8.

⁸ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 97, 113.

⁹ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 100-102, 117.

¹⁰ John Craig Hammond, "Uncontrollable Necessity: The Local Politics, Geopolitics, and Sectional Politics of Slavery Expansion," in *Contesting Slavery: The Politics of Bondage and Freedom in the New American Nation*, ed. John Craig Hammond and Matthew Mason (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 150.

gradually rid itself of slavery because of the efforts of emancipation societies and minimal initial economic and ideological commitment to the institution.

The same is not true for the South. After the American Revolution, the Southern economy lay in ruin as many formerly enslaved Black people left with the British. In opposition to the North, the Southern states found it much more difficult to maintain their prosperity without enslaved labor; their economies depended on the export of labor-intensive agricultural products. To revitalize, Southern states began importing enslaved Africans in greater numbers through 1808 –and illicitly for more than fifty years after.¹¹ Once slavery had stabilized the region's economy, the South found new incentives for keeping it around; combined with the renewed profitability of cotton due to the invention of the cotton gin, the expansion of the United States west of the Appalachians legitimized the conquest of the fertile land of the Black Belt from central Georgia arching down to the Mississippi Delta. Unlike its northern counterpart, the 1791 Southwest Ordinance that regulated expansion did not contain the same anti-slavery Article VI –permitting slavery's extension into the new Southwest.¹² The labor demands of new plantation owners in these lands created a hellish and profitable interstate slave trade between the coastal and Cis-Mississippian South that intensified attachments to the institution. Even though states like Virginia previously considered Black Patriots' interpretations of racial equality and freedom, there was a greater incentive in the early 19th century to abandon their interpretation.

However, the popularization of these Revolutionary ideals meant that Southerners had to construct a new hierarchical system to justify the institution. They found their answer in pseudo-biology. Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* combined the scientific rationale of the Enlightenment with vehement racism. Suggesting that Black people had a natural and immutable

¹¹ Egerton, *Death or Liberty*, 154.

¹² Hammond, "Uncontrollable Necessity," 142.

lower rational capacity, and therefore were incapable of engaging in a participatory democracy and being on equal social standing with White Americans— Jefferson laid the groundwork for scientific racism and rationalized the continued subjugation of Black people across the South. As awful as this trend is by modern standards, it is important to note that these colossal developments were a response to the American Revolution and its critical attack on the legitimacy of slavery as an institution.

The destruction and creation of hierarchies also affected women in the early republic. Before the Revolution, White women's experiences were largely domestic and patriarchal. Although the culturally discriminatory Enlightenment-era theory of conjectural history placed women on a similar social status as men—with women cultivating men's instincts and acting as moral guides— women still largely operated within the household structure and had no direct mode of political expression in colonial America.¹³ The legal doctrine of “coverture” ensured that women held no legal autonomy; instead, they were treated as an extension of the men in their lives—often their husbands.¹⁴ However, as tensions rose, women became the subjects of frequent appeals by the nascent Patriot movement. Since women held considerable power in unofficial channels like household production and emotional support, Patriots wrote plays, poems, and public letters to convince them to join their cause.¹⁵ This is certainly true in the case of Phillis Wheatley, an enslaved woman whose poems applauding the Patriots reached thousands of readers throughout the Revolutionary period.¹⁶ These appeals were relatively successful in New England, where White women had attained a 50% literacy rate by the time they discussed and considered these political arguments.¹⁷

¹³ Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 18.

¹⁴ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 26.

¹⁵ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 22.

¹⁶ “Enclosure: Poem by Phillis Wheatley, 26 October 1775,” *Founders Online*, National Archives.

¹⁷ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 51.

The American Revolution dramatically transfigured women's social and political status. The same liberal ideals of freedom and equality that cast racial systems into doubt also delegitimized the traditional hierarchical patriarchal system. Enlightenment ideas of women's natural social equality stemming from Wollstonecraft and advanced by colonial Americans like Judith Sargent Murray capitalized on the rhetoric of "tyranny" in Revolutionary America. Beyond rhetoric, the Revolution offered direct modes of political expression. Some women melted down symbols of the old hierarchical system—in one case, melting down an equestrian statue of King George III in New York City to make bullets for the Continental Army.¹⁸ Women also directly participated in the Revolution by illicitly enlisting under masculine pseudonyms and crossdressing, evident in the case of Deborah Sampson Gannett. Sampson Gannett joined a Massachusetts regiment of the Continental Army in 1782 and was wounded a year later—resulting in her honorable discharge.¹⁹ Others enlisted in support roles as nurses, while some like Margaret Corbin at Fort Washington took over artillery positions when British and Hessian forces killed Continental soldiers defending their position.²⁰ Praise from Patriot colonial male leaders, who depended upon women's support for the survival of the independence movement, legitimized the stretching of traditional gender barriers for colonial women. Loyalist women, on the other hand, often clung tighter to traditional gender roles as a response to preserve the old hierarchical order. This is exhibited in Elizabeth Johnston's *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist* and confirmed by outside observers like Baroness von Riedesel.²¹ The appropriation of the amorphous ideals of freedom and equality and its associated undermining of traditional

¹⁸ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 24.

¹⁹ Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 36.

²⁰ John K. Alexander "Corbin, Margaret Cochran (12 November 1752–1800)," *American National Biography*, 1 Feb. 2000; Accessed 7 Dec. 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.0200093>.

²¹ Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, "Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist by Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston Written in 1836," ed. Arthur Wentworth Eaton (New York: The Bankside Press, 1901), 45.

patriarchal society by Patriot women during the Revolution created unintended consequences after the war.

After the American Revolution, women's contributions were difficult to ignore. As the legitimacy of the patriarchy was put into question with the rise of Revolutionary rhetoric, White women demanded equality and freedom with new ideological support. For a time, they made substantial progress. From 1790 through 1807, unmarried women in New Jersey could participate in local, state, and federal elections—even women of color.²² In each state, women became more involved with politics outside the home. Explicitly recording and discussing political opinions, women took to the growing newspaper industry to explore politics. As the party system developed in the United States, women publicly aligned themselves with the party they agreed with the most. While Democratic-Republicans like Mercy Otis Warren created a partisan history of the American Revolution, Federalists like Judith Sargent Murray printed an argument for the "Equality of Sexes." Regardless of their political differences, both women found new outlets for political expression as a result of the American Revolution. Women also expressed their political views publicly during national celebrations. These outward expressions of political opinion were not viewed as curious aberrations. Rather, they were encouraged to legitimize partisan politics; because women still could not vote in most states, their newfound political participation was viewed as virtuous.²³ More conservatively, women also expressed their political opinions in the way they raised their children: republican motherhood. Republican motherhood contrasted with the rise of female politicians: extroverted and often partisan women who participated in the early Republic's political processes to a great extent. Many men believed that female politicians risked losing their virtuous femininity by participating in politics. To

²² Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 32.

²³ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 69.

them, direct participation in the political system was a man's job that would corrupt women's innate morality. This perspective was popularized after the War of 1812. Whereas the American Revolution could be remembered as a movement where women were united against a common evil, divisive partisanship dominated the War of 1812.²⁴ Men's backlash to some women's liberal interpretation of Revolutionary ideals coalesced into a mass movement to take women out of politics. However, the traditional hierarchical rationale could no longer be effectively employed to support blatant sexism; the Revolution put unquestioned authoritative supremacy into doubt and women's intellectual inferiority was challenged by their robust political arguments. Utilizing similar justifications used to resubordinate Black people after the Revolution, pseudo-biology provided a new justification for women's gender-wide ejection from politics. Women's anatomical differences, which previously held little significance to political society at large, began to be construed as affecting women's mental capacity; women's mental equality with men was downplayed in favor of a more emotional and inferior status to that of men.²⁵ Because women could not easily change their biological features, which were newly tied to their perceived mental inferiority, American women experienced a gradual decline in political participation. Conservative gender roles secluded women from politics and marked a renewed commitment to domesticity. Although the maintained inferiority of women's social and political condition suggests that the American Revolution did not present a massive change for women—transitioning from one patriarchal order to another—the foundation of the hierarchy shifted significantly from social custom to scientific sexism and called into question the legitimacy of the hierarchical system.

²⁴ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 101.

²⁵ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 168.

At the intersection of the sedimented systems of racial and gender inequity during the Revolutionary period, Black women found ways to navigate and leverage the breakdown of traditional hierarchies. Since methods of social mobility like wartime service, irrespective of allegiance, were exclusively offered to men, formerly enslaved women did not have the same chance of seeking freedom as their male counterparts. Nevertheless, these obstacles did not stop enslaved Black women from pursuing freedom. Although freedom-seeking Black people were most often single men, thousands of women fled to British lines when given the chance.²⁶ Before the Revolution, running away existed as one of the more common, if exceedingly dangerous, methods of emancipation. However, the breakdown of authority during the American Revolution gave women greater opportunities to escape. This is tacitly shown in the narrative of Boston King, a formerly enslaved Black man who escaped to British lines during the 1780 Siege of Charleston. Although King briefly mentions that he married a woman named Violet in New York, he only mentions her again once they relocated to Nova Scotia before moving on to Sierra Leone.²⁷ More explicitly, Deborah Squash, a woman enslaved by George Washington, fled to British lines in 1781 and boarded a British ship as it climbed the Potomac River towards Washington's Mount Vernon plantation.²⁸ Although the Continental Army officially denied military service to Black women, mothers, sisters, and daughters capitalized on the turmoil of the Revolution to seek political freedom. However, after the American Revolution, Black women who did not leave the United States found themselves in an eerily familiar world. Although all unmarried women, regardless of race, could vote in the single state of New Jersey and were

²⁶ "Black Women and American Freedom in Revolutionary America," Karen Cook Bell, last modified July 13, 2021, <https://www.aaihs.org/black-women-and-american-freedom-in-revolutionary-america/#:~:text=During%20the%20African%20Revolution%2C%20one,amplified%20their%20quest%20for%20freedom.>

²⁷ "Memoirs of Boston King," Canada's Digital Collections, accessed June 5, 2023, <https://blackloyalist.com/cdc/documents/diaries/king-memoirs.htm>.

²⁸ "Life Story: Deborah Squash, Self-Emancipated Woman," New-York Historical Society, accessed June 5, 2023, <https://wams.nyhistory.org/settler-colonialism-and-revolution/the-american-revolution/deborah-squash/>.

generally applauded for speaking publicly on national issues in the 1790s and early 1800s, Black women were largely restricted from overtly participating in the florescence of women's political rights in the early United States. Although the American Revolution challenged racial and gender hierarchies, Black women became the direct subjects of the confluence of gender-based and racial forms of pseudo-biological oppression. This dramatic shift in the rationale behind hierarchies was a product of the American Revolution and its subversion of traditional maintenance of order.

Differing from the experiences of White women and Black people during the American Revolution, Native Americans did not experience a growth of pseudo-biological justifications resulting from a challenge to hierarchies. Caricatures of “noble” and “ignoble savagery” invariably dehumanized Euro-Indigenous interactions and dominated popular conceptions in American media before,²⁹ during,³⁰ and after the Revolutionary period.³¹ Although White people created contradictory models of Native American behavior –employing one stereotype over another depending on its momentary utility– throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their actions during the Revolutionary period dramatically altered internal Indigenous political structures and external diplomatic relations during the American Revolution. Following the Seven Years' War, Native Americans West of the Appalachians were nominally –if not generally– protected from unrestricted White settlement by the Proclamation of 1763. This proclamation line was introduced as a response to Pontiac's Rebellion: a pan-Indian movement that threatened British coastal claims.³² If British colonial settlements West of the line were

²⁹ Melanie Perreault, “‘To Fear and to Love Us:’ Intercultural Violence in the English Atlantic” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 1 (March 2006): 89-93.

³⁰ Rhiannon Koehler, “Hostile Nations: Quantifying the Destruction of the Sullivan-Clinton Genocide of 1779,” *American Indian Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (2018): 431-2.

³¹ Paul Jentz, *Seven Myths of Native American History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018), 1-53.

³² Woody Holton, “The Ohio Indians and the Coming of the American Revolution in Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History* 60, no. 3 (August 1994): 453.

illegitimate, White speculators would have little incentive to provoke Indigenous peoples and White squatters would have no protection against raids.³³ When the faulty 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which would open up Western Virginia and modern-day Kentucky to settlement, was rejected by William Johnson, the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District, Virginians launched a war against the Shawnee and Mingo under shady pretexts with the hope that Western land could be acquired through the right of conquest. Around the same time, Ohioan groups like the Shawnee conversed with Southern groups like the Cherokee to form a strong pan-Indian alliance called the Scioto Coalition.³⁴ Although the coalition never formally came together, the British colonial government refused to recognize any cession of land in violation of the 1763 Proclamation as a product of Lord Dunmore's War—in part because pan-Indianism maintained its role as a deterrent for British expansion. This development infuriated British-American colonials and furthered their antipathy toward the British parliament.

The outbreak of the Revolution changed relationships among and between Indigenous nations. Whereas the concept of the Middle Ground—a precarious foreign policy Indigenous peoples like the Haudenosaunee adopted to maintain survival in the face of colonial powers by playing each off of the other—had been previously difficult to maintain after the French ceded their claims to New France, now Indigenous peoples could pit the British and Patriots against each other. However, manipulating the Middle Ground and defending their territory required immense power; smaller and more isolated groups found their professed allegiance controlled by their proximity to the British or Americans. Larger groups like the Haudenosaunee were able to hold out longer—though the Iroquois Confederacy too would devolve into civil war; factions emerged within constituent tribes of the Confederacy as leaders like Little Abraham, a Mohawk

³³ Holton, "The Ohio Indians," 455-456.

³⁴ Holton, "The Ohio Indians," 463.

man, tried to maintain neutrality. When the rest of the tribe declared allegiance to the British and Little Abraham tried to negotiate with the Americans, he was viewed as a traitor.³⁵ Scenes like this played out among other tribes caught between the Patriots and the British: trying to stay neutral but ultimately joining the cause that would have the least foreseeable consequences. This usually meant that Indigenous peoples joined the British.

After the War for Independence ended, many Native Americans West of the Appalachians had reason to believe they won; they scored several victories against the Americans in the Ohio River Valley and still had their land. Although they believed they won the war, they would lose the peace. The 1783 Treaty of Paris ceded British claims west of the Appalachian mountains to the new republic; low on cash and unable to levy taxes, the Confederation Congress began the process of acquiring Indigenous land and selling it to American citizens. No longer protected from expansion by royal authority, congressmen under the Articles of Confederation and Constitution needed to be receptive to the American people—and the Americans wanted land. With peace came the slow destruction of the Middle Ground. Though earlier revived during the war, peoples like the Miami and Shawnee could no longer rely on British goods and protection. In 1786, the Shawnee united with other Ohioan groups to form the Northwestern Confederacy: a coalition opposing American expansion into its constituent territories. In the early 1790s, the Confederacy led by the Shawnee Blue Jacket and the Miami Little Turtle successfully defended their territory in the Ohio River Valley from American military expeditions and imposed treaties.³⁶ However, the Confederacy's 1794 loss at Fallen Timbers and the subsequent 1795 Treaty of Greenville made it clear that the British would never

³⁵ Caitlin Fitz, "'Suspected on Both Sides': Little Abraham, Iroquois Neutrality, and the American Revolution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 28, no. 3 (2008): 332.

³⁶ Roger Carpenter. "Coping with the New Republic," in *"Times Are Altered with Us": American Indians from First Contact to the New Republic*, (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 265.

officially help the Northwestern Confederacy, which in turn disincentivized participation in the Confederacy and made dispossessed tribes more dependent on American goods.³⁷ The treaty also established a precedent for land expropriation, shifting the diplomatic relationship towards extraction over international respect. Acquiring more land, the United States had to justify its forceful treaties with corresponding ideology. They found this in the Civilizing Policy: Native Americans were to abandon their own culture and adopt White culture –creating and self-justifying a new civilization-based hierarchy in the process. Even if Native Americans did not acculturate to White society, White people would still have their land.³⁸ The expropriation of Indigenous land was also encouraged by the profitability of slavery. Although many Native American tribal leaders in the Southeast adopted hereditary racialized Black slavery to refute the premise of the Civilization Policy, White settlers did not care. The Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Muscogee nations, who held areas with productive soil in the South, found their land being sold out from under them by American-appointed annuity chiefs. These “annuity chiefs” disrupted traditional Indigenous political structures and threatened Indigenous lifeways even further. These radical changes in expropriation and the imposition of a cultural caste system were unlikely to have arisen had the British contained colonial expansion and the United States developed a system of government unresponsive to the avaricious demands of settlers.

The American Revolution was indelibly and undeniably transformative. Despite slavery’s rapid growth –dependent on the dispossession of Indigenous land– after the Revolution, Revolutionary ideals put previously held racial structures into question and killed the institution in the North –if a slow death. Even though women, irrespective of race, experienced a “revolutionary backlash” following a period of brief liberal political participation, the old

³⁷ Carpenter, “Coping,” 273-274.

³⁸ Robert Owens, “Jeffersonian Benevolence on the Ground: The Indian Land Cession Treaties of William Henry Harrison,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 22, no. 3 (2002): 427.

patriarchal order was no longer indisputable as men scrambled to adopt new reasons women should be excluded from politics and live a domestic life. Although Indigenous nations continued to experience cultural assimilation and annihilation throughout the Revolutionary period, the pace and scale of dispossession and the destruction of internal political structures increased rapidly in the face of new settlers. If the American Revolution undermined racial and social hierarchies for Black men, women, and White women, it also inspired methodical and conservative counterattacks to curb new interpretations of Revolutionary rhetoric and limit social changes by selectively implementing Enlightenment-era biology. Weaponizing biology against Black people and White women combined with the coordinated attacks from a growing federal government against Indigenous nations suggests that the results of the American War for Independence meant more than the transition from a monarchy to an exclusionary democracy; it marked a transformative revolution for Black people, White women, and Native Americans.

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