Objective: The readings selected for the APUSH summer assignment are from college level texts; they constitute outside reading for many American History survey courses. The content in this assignment will serve as an important part of the early units studied in the course. Additionally, the readings provide working models to discuss Historical Thinking Skills, such as Comparison and Historical Argumentation.

Assignment: Carefully read excerpts from *A Short History of the United States* (Remini, Chapters 1 and 2) and *A People’s History of the United States* (Zinn, Chapters 1-4). For your convenience the readings are included in the APPENDIX of this packet. You are required to TAKE CORNELL STYLE NOTES while you read (see Part III for details and resources on the Cornell notetaking method.)

The readings are also available on-line at the following links:

Assessment: Upon our return to school, your notes will be checked on Wednesday September 6th and counted as an assignment grade. You will have an in-class exam on the content of the reading that will count as your first exam of the quarter. This exam will take place on Friday September 8th.

Suggestions: As with any assignment of this length, students are best served by completing it over the course of the summer. Writing Cornell notes while reading will help you to remember the information better and will serve as an excellent resource when preparing for the exam in September.

Any questions concerning the summer assignment can be directed to Mr. Zagari zagarim@gcufsd.net, Mr. O’hagan ohagank@gcufsd.net, Mr. Mcauley mcauleys@gcusfd.net or Ms. Balantic balanticj@gcufsd.net.
PART II -- The Review Book


Previous editions WILL NOT SUFFICE as the APUSH course has been redesigned -- only the 2015 edition reflects this change. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL SEPTEMBER TO ORDER YOUR BOOK. Past experience suggests that the company may run out of copies and you will have to wait several weeks until they can fill your order. You will need the book for the first week of class and we will use it periodically throughout the year.

Part III -- The Cornell Note-taking Method

Directions: Students should follow the Cornell Method described below while completing their summer reading assignment. Students should summarize each chapter and write an overall summary of each reading.

Go to http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html for further description of the method or http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes1.html for an example.

- A legal pad that is already formatted for Cornell notes!!

http://freeology.com/graphicorgs/cornell-notes-template/ - Download the PDF

Cornell Notes

Divide the paper into three sections.
- Draw a dark horizontal line about 5 or 6 lines from the bottom. Use a heavy magic marker so that it is clear.
- Draw a dark vertical line about 2 inches from the left side of the paper from the top to the horizontal line.

Document
- Write course name, date and topic at the top of each page

Write Notes
- The large box to the right is for writing notes.
- Skip a line between ideas and topics
- Don't use complete sentences. Use abbreviations, whenever possible. Develop a shorthand of your own, such as using & for the word "and".

Review and clarify
- Review the notes as soon as possible after class.
- Pull out main ideas, key points, dates, and people, and write them in the left column.

Summarize
- Write a summary of the main ideas in the bottom section.

Study your notes
- Reread your notes in the right column.
- Spend most of your time studying the ideas in the left column and the summary at the bottom. These are the most important ideas and will probably include most of the information that will be tested.
Appendix

“it is a perfect history for our times.” —Robert Dallek, author of *Nixon and Kissinger*
A Short History of the United States

Robert V. Remini

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Discovery and Settlement of the New World

There are many intriguing mysteries surrounding the peopling and discovery of the western hemisphere. Who were the people to first inhabit the northern and southern continents? Why did they come? How did they get here? How long was their migration? A possible narrative suggests that the movement of ancient people to the New World began when they crossed a land bridge that once existed between what we today call Siberia and Alaska, a bridge that later disappeared because of glacial melting and is now covered by water and known as the Bering Strait. It is also possible that these early people were motivated by wanderlust or the need for a new source of food. Perhaps they were searching for a better climate, and maybe they came for religious reasons, to escape persecution or find a more congenial area to practice their particular beliefs. Who knows? Of course some scholars have argued that these ancient people came by sea, and several modern adventurers have sought to demonstrate how it was accomplished. But if a land route did provide the gateway to this New World, when did it happen? How long ago? The best guess—and it is a guess—is that it took place 50,000 years ago, if not more. But was it a single long migration stretching over a number of years? Or did it come in fits and starts during an extended period of time? Scholars have suggested that the migration continued until 2,000 years ago and that extended families came in groups. Over time, these people settled into every habitable area they could find, penetrating to the most southerly region and even occupying the many islands off the coast, especially the eastern coast.

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These ancients established themselves along an 11,000-mile stretch from north to south, and a distance of 3,000 or more miles, in some places, from east to west. They developed a diversity of cultures, depending in the main on the areas where they took up permanent residence; and they spoke at least 300 different languages. Their individual clans formed tribes or nations, and their governments usually consisted of a council of elders and clan chiefs selected by the elders. The highest ruling member of the tribe was the principal chief, chosen from one of the major clans. But many functions of government were normally handled by an individual clan or by a family. The economy was mostly agricultural, that is, hunting and gathering. But these natives were limited in what they could do by the fact that they had not invented the wheel; nor did they have important domesticated animals, such as the horse and cow. And they had not learned the skills of metallurgy, apart from the hammering of sheet copper to make primitive tools and gold and silver for personal ornaments. None of the hundreds of tribes who resided in the area north of present-day Mexico had an alphabet or a written language. Instead they resorted to pictographs to record important events, and they substituted a sign language and smoke signals to communicate over long distances. In the south a more culturally advanced society emerged among the
Aztec and Inca tribes. The Aztecs had a written language and a command of mathematics and architecture. Their great stone temples commanded the cities and towns in which they were built. It has been suggested that the cultural level of the southern tribes in the eighth century after Christ was more advanced than that of any of the countries in Western Europe. If so, the question immediately arises why it came to a full stop and never advanced. That is another mystery that cannot be satisfactorily explained from evidence presently available. More mysteries. According to Norse sagas, sometime around AD1000 Vikings were blown off course while sailing west from Iceland to Greenland, and landed in the New World. Just where they found refuge is uncertain. A little later Leif Eriksson and his crew repeated this journey and probably reached present-day Newfoundland, or possibly some place along the coast of modern-day New England. They made camp and explored a wide area, no doubt visiting sections that later became part of the United States. Further explorations by other Vi-kings may have taken them down the St. Lawrence River. In any event the Vikings never established permanent settlements in the New World, and nothing came of their discoveries. It took several more centuries for Western Europe to begin to initiate important changes in its society that would result in the migration of many of its people to the New World.

The Crusades undoubtedly triggered a good deal of these changes. In 1095, Pope Urban II called Christians to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims who controlled it. Thousands of Europeans responded and traveled to the East, where they were exposed to a different and more exotic culture, a way of life that excited their imagination. Later they returned home from their adventure with new tastes, new ideas, new interests, and new demands for foods and goods that they had experienced in the East, such as spices, cotton, and silk cloth. Their desire for the products of the East was further enhanced by Marco Polo’s account of his extensive travels and life in China, published in the thirteenth century. The gold and silver as well as the spices and silk clothing that Polo described captured the imagination of Europeans. Trade routes were developed to bring these products to an eager market. Soon the manorial, agricultural, closed economy of the medieval world gave way to a capitalistic economy based on distribution of American Indians trade, money, and credit. Existing cities flourished and new ones were founded. This urban development attracted artisans of every stripe who perfected their crafts and initiated a technological revolution. The printing press made possible the wide distribution of books and stimulated learning. It also contributed to the formation of universities in a number of cities. The compass and astrolabe were introduced by which navigation of the seas became safer and encouraged seamen to seek new routes and new worlds beyond those already known. As a result of these, and many other less notable changes the Middle Ages, with their authoritarian and rigid system of beliefs and practices, slowly disintegrated.
The power of the pope and bishops who controlled the Catholic Church was supplanted by that of ruling monarchs and titled noblemen in emerging nation-states. And after Martin Luther posted his list of ninety-five theses on a cathedral door, the Christian religion no longer consisted of a single set of beliefs.
Capitalism, Protestantism, and the nation-states ruled by ambitious sovereigns combined to bring about modern Europe.

Once the astrolabe allowed navigators to determine the longitude of their ships at sea by measuring the angle between the sun and the horizon, daring explorers ventured farther down the coast of Africa. Prince Henry of Portugal, known as Henry the Navigator, subsidized expeditions that ultimately crossed the equator and sailed down the length of Africa. In 1498, Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, crossed the Indian Ocean, and reached India, where he announced to the natives that he had come to trade. Reaching the East by the shortest possible route and returning home with gold, silver, spices, and other exotic products became an ambitious quest for many seamen. An Italian navigator, Christopher Columbus, believed he could reach the Orient faster by sailing due west, not around the continent of Africa. Despite the objections of her advisers, who felt that the long voyage by small caravels into the unknown posed dangerous risks, Isabella the Catholic, queen of Castile, who married Ferdinand, king of Aragon, to form the nation-state of Spain, agreed to finance the trip. On August 3, 1492, three ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria, manned by about ninety sailors, left Palos, Spain, and—after a brief stop at the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa—headed toward the setting sun. It took enormous courage and superb seamanship to undertake this voyage, but on October 12 at around two AM, Columbus and his crew made landfall on what he called San Salvador (it was later named Watlings Island), in the Bahamas. He next sighted a much larger island, Hispaniola, and called the natives who greeted him Indians, in the mistaken belief that he had arrived in India and that China was just a short distance farther west. He returned home to a hero’s welcome and made three further trips to this New World, but he never found the treasures and spices he desired, and he died still convinced that he had reached Asia. The subsequent exploration of a New World by Portuguese and Spanish adventurers prompted their respective monarchs, in 1494, to reach an agreement known as the Treaty of Tordesillas, by which they drew a line, north and south, 1,100 miles west of the Canary Islands, wherein the land west of the line belonged to Spain, and the land east of it belonged to Portugal.

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The search for a route to Asia, and the treasure that adventurers believed they would find, continued into the next century. Another Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, made several trips along the southern coast of the western hemisphere and wrote vivid, if largely untrue, descriptions of what he called this “New World,” which caught the attention of mapmakers and geographers. In 1507 a German mapmaker, Martin Waldseemuller, who published Vespucci’s accounts, suggested that this New World be called America in his honor. Now the continents of the western hemisphere had a new name. Soon other Spanish explorers headed west in search of fortune and glory. These conquistadores were tough, ruthless soldiers who spared no life, Indian or Spanish, to find the riches and honor they sought. They roamed the New World in their search, and in the process of their explorations they established an empire for Spain. They were also convinced that they were performing the will of God by bringing Christianity to heathens. Hernán Cortés, a particularly brutal but capable leader, made his way to the New World in 1504. He participated in the conquest of Cuba and later commanded an expedition to the Yucatán, where he heard stories of great wealth farther west among the Aztecs, who called themselves Mexics. He set out with 500 men to find it. Montezuma, the Aztec emperor, believed that Cortés was the god Quetzalcoatl returning to his country as foretold in Aztec mythology. To greet this returning god, Montezuma sent him as an offering
both food and huge disk the size of a wagon wheel in the shape of a sun and made of solid gold. The Spanish realized that they had come upon unbelievable wealth, and they meant to have it all. Sharp-witted and resourceful, Cortés played the part of Quetzalcoatl and in 1519 captured Montezuma, who paid a handsome ransom for his release. With the help of surrounding tribes who hated the Mexics, Cortés not only conquered the Aztec Nation but also slaughtered the natives with his guns and cannons. His conquest was also aided by the diseases his troops carried with them, such as smallpox, influenza, measles, and typhus, to which the natives had no immunity.

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The plunder the intruders seized from the Mexics inspired other conquistadores to range up and down the continents, north, south, east, and west, looking for precious metals. Francisco Pizarro, one such adventurer in search of glory, was told about a civilization farther to the south, in what is now Peru that could provide the wealth he sought. After several unsuccessful expeditions he gained the confidence of the Emperor, Charles V of Spain, from whom he received support in exchange for one-fifth of all the treasure Pizarro discovered. In 1531 the conquistador set out with several hundred men and discovered the Inca civilization in Peru. He overwhelmed all resistance, murdered the Emperor, Atahualpa, and made off with a fortune in gold and silver. These discoveries and the mines that produced such wealth enriched Spain and financed its expansion as the powerhouse of Europe, but the infusion of so much wealth into Spain also brought about inflation that drove the price of goods upward to unprecedented levels. Spaniards swarmed over the Americas. In 1565 the Spanish monarch sent Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to establish settlements along the North American coast. In September of that year Menéndez founded St. Augustine in what is now Florida. It was the first permanent European settlement in North America. Colonies were also established in the Caribbean, and in Central and South America, with viceroys appointed to represent the monarch and administer these colonies. But absolute authority resided in the king, who ruled through the Council of the Indies in Spain. The council members nominated officials and drafted the laws and rules by which the colonies were to be governed. Spanish society in the Americas consisted of several ranks. Those in the highest rank had been born in Spain and were called peninsulares. Next came those born in America of Spanish parents. They were known as criollos, most of whom were landowners. These two groups formed the upper class of society in New Spain. Those of mixed Spanish and Indian blood were known as mestizos. Lower on the social and economic scale were the natives who had adopted Spanish life and culture and constituted the broad laboring class. Next were the mulattoes, those of mixed European and African blood. At the bottom of the ladder were black slaves brought from Africa to work in the mines and fields of the Spanish conquerors.

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Most important was the position of the Roman Catholic Church. Like Spain, the church and state were intricately entwined, each serving the other to the advantage of both. Spanish expeditions also resulted in the discovery, in 1513, of the Pacific Ocean by Vasco de Balboa, and Florida by Juan Ponce de Leon. Even the globe was circumnavigated by an expedition that started from St. Lucar in 1519 and led by Ferdinand Magellan, who was killed in battle with natives in what today are known as the Philippine Islands. Of the five ships and 250 original sailors that set out on this remarkable voyage in 1519, only one ship and
eighteen men returned home in 1522. Hernando de Soto fought his way north into present-day Georgia and the Carolinas from 1539 to 1542, and then westward through Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas. And Francisco de Coronado led force from Mexico in 1540 into the interior of North America in search of the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola that were believed to be paved with gold. California was explored by Juan Cabrillo in 1542; and Catholic priests established missions to convert Indian tribes to Christianity.

The great success Spain enjoyed in establishing a worldwide empire, and raking in a fabulous fortune in the process, encouraged other emerging nations in Europe to follow suit and carve out areas for colonization for themselves. France began its reach for empire in 1534, when the king commissioned Jacques Cartier to search for a Northwest Passage that would lead to the Indies. Cartier failed to find such a passage, but in several voyages he laid claim to the eastern half of Canada and a slice of land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Later, Samuel de Champlain explored the St. Lawrence River area and founded the cities of Quebec and Montreal. The lucrative fur trade in the Great Lakes area became a source of wealth, but it did not attract many French settlers. The Indians constituted the bulk of the population in New France, and Champlain succeeded in forging an alliance with the Hurons that helped that tribe defeat their ancient enemy, the Iroquois. The Iroquois were probably more culturally advanced than some other tribes.

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They occupied the region south of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. The Five Nations of the Iroquois included the Seneca, Onondaga, Mohawk, Cayuga, and Oneida, and were later joined by the Tuscarora, becoming the Six Nations. Farther north, above the St. Lawrence, lived the Algonquin tribes, principally the Hurons, who were leagued with the French. This alliance was a natural one, since the French desired furs and the beaver population in the Algonquin country was judged the best. The Iroquois sought to defeat the Hurons to obtain the furs, which they wanted to exchange for guns, resulting in intermittent Indian wars in which the Iroquois came close to driving the French from North America. The Dutch also tried their hand at enlarging their possessions and obtaining wealth.

In 1609 Henry Hudson sailed up the river that now bears his name and established trading posts. The Dutch West India Company controlled several such posts: the most important of these were New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island, which later became New York, and Fort Orange, which was renamed Albany after the English occupied them following the Dutch War. Like the French, the Dutch concentrated on obtaining furs, not on colonization, and they regularly traded guns for furs with the Iroquois. Then there were the English: those Anglo-Saxons perched on islands in the North Sea and protected by water that they soon ruled. With stout ships and even stouter hearts they searched the world to create an empire. As early as 1497, under King Henry VII, an Italian by the name of John Cabot hunted for a westward passage to the Orient, first along Newfoundland and a year later farther south along the North American coastline, thereby giving England a claim to a large segment of what later became the United States. But not until the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a Protestant, did the English take a serious interest in the New World. For the most part they struck at Spanish power by attacking its merchant and treasure ships plying the high seas. Buccaneers such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake brought home to their queen a hoard of gold and silver. Elizabeth both disclaimed any involvement in the raids and at the same time knighted Drake after he circumnavigated the globe and scooped up a veritable fortune.
Philip II, the Spanish king, struck back in 1588 with a mighty Armada of 130 ships armed with thousands of cannons, hoping to subdue the English and restore them to Catholicism. Between the intrepid British sailors, their highly maneuverable ships, and punishing storms at sea the armada was crippled, and only about half the original number of Spanish ships reached the safety of their ports. England could now make a bid for possession of a healthy chunk of the North American continent. A few years earlier, in 1585, Sir Walter Raleigh dispatched a small group of settlers, who landed on a tiny island off present-day North Carolina and named it Roanoke. The attempted invasion of England by the Spanish Armada postponed any effort to keep Roanoke supplied. When assistance did arrive in 1591, the would-be rescuers found the island completely deserted. No one, to this day, knows what happened to the settlers. Despite this disaster, adventurous English merchants still had hopes of sponsoring colonization of the New World in the expectation of imitating the discoveries of the Spanish. A group of them formed a joint-stock company, the London Company, in which shares were sold to stockholders for twelve pounds ten shillings, in order to sponsor colonization by settlers in North America. A charter granted by James I, the first of the Stuart kings, who succeeded Elizabeth upon her death in 1603, allowed the company to develop the land from the coastline westward to the Pacific Ocean. The area was named Virginia after Elizabeth, known as the Virgin Queen because she had never married. Three ships, the Susan Constant, the Goodspeed, and the Discovery, sailed from England in December 1606 and landed in Virginia in April 1607: the settlement was named Jamestown. These colonists searched for gold, but there was none. Conditions at the triangular fort they built worsened with each month. John Smith took control of the colony during the terrible winter of 1609–1610 known as the “starving time,” and those who survived ate roots, acorns, berries, and even their horses. They received help from the Powhatan tribes who taught them how to grow corn and where best to catch fish. But relations between the Indians and the English became strained to the breaking point because of the rapaciousness of the English, and Smith was taken prisoner by a hunting party while on an exploring expedition. He was turned over to Opechancanough, who was probably the half-brother of Chief Powhatan, and threatened with death.

As a young boy, Opechancanough had been kidnapped by the Spanish in 1559. He was sent to Spain to learn western customs and culture and the Spanish language so that he could be trained and serve as an interpreter and translator between the Indians and the Spanish. He was even given a Spanish name: Don Luis de Velasco. On his return home, sometime in the late 1570s, he renounced his Spanish affiliations and reclaimed his position of authority within the Powhatan tribe. He may also have been instrumental in the slaughter of the missionaries who accompanied him back to Virginia. Most likely he would have killed John Smith, had it not been for Pocahontas, the favorite daughter of the Powhatan chief. At the time, Pocahontas was only eleven years of age, so it is unlikely that there was a romantic reason for her action. A number of historians have guessed that in successfully pleading for Smith’s life she may have been acting out an Algonquin rite in which the power of Chief Powhatan over life and death was demonstrated by accepting Smith and his fellow settlers in Jamestown into his overlordship. By their acknowledgment of his superior position he granted them his protection. Whatever the true reason for Pocahontas’s action, she extended her friendship with other English settlers. She converted to Christianity and married John Rolfe, one of the settlers, in 1614, and their marriage strengthened the friendship between the
Powhatans and the settlers. Pocahontas later traveled to England, where she was treated with the deference due her Indian rank and presented to the king and queen. Unfortunately, she contracted smallpox and died at age twenty-two. Instead of gold, the colonists discovered the value of tobacco, which the Indians had smoked for centuries. Introduced in Europe, this “filthy” habit, as King James labeled it, became very fashionable, and the increasing demand provided the settlers with a cash crop they desperately needed to survive. The value of the trade brought more and more English settlers to America. As a result, large plantations soon evolved to grow the plant, and Virginia became a thriving colony. The London Company sent Thomas Dale, a military man, to govern Virginia, and he instituted stern measures to ensure the continued life of the community. Then, in 1619, the company instructed the governor to summon two landowning representatives from each of the small settlements in the colony to meet in Jamestown to provide advice.

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Twenty-two men gathered in the church in town, disregarded the company’s instructions, and proceeded to enact a series of laws for the colony against gambling, drunkenness, idleness, and Sabbath-breaking. This House of Burgesses, as it came to be called, then adjourned. But it was clear right from the beginning that English settlers were prepared to go their own way and address problems they felt were important for their safety and livelihood. Their action demonstrated a degree of independence that would be imitated by future legislative bodies in North America in asserting their right to solve their own problems in their own way. As the settlers in and around Jamestown prospered, their number steadily increased, so that by 1620 there were roughly 2,000 colonists. Opechancanough watched with dismay the steady strengthening of white men’s control of the region to the detriment of the Powhatan tribes. He therefore decided to put a stop to it. Early in the morning of March 22, 1622, a number of Indians who were unarmed circulated in several settlements and appeared to be friendly. Then, suddenly, they seized muskets and axes and began a systematic slaughter of the inhabitants. It was a typical Indian ploy: an outward show of friendship to allay the apprehensions of the colonists, followed by a sudden, swift killing spree. They wiped out about a third of the settlers, who retaliated with lethal force and attempted to drive the tribe further west. The slaughter on both sides and the resulting turmoil were so intense that King James revoked the London Company’s charter in 1624 and made Virginia a royal colony. But the change in government did not end the killing. Sometime after Powhatan’s death, probably in 1628, Opechancanough became the “Paramount Chief” and renewed the fighting, although sporadically. Then, in 1644, he launched what the colonists called the “great assault” of 1644, in which Opechancanough killed over 500 settlers. But the chief was old, possibly about 100 years, and his faculties were sharply diminished. He was captured and after a short time in prison he was assassinated. Thus ended the Powhatan War. During the interim the House of Burgesses made every effort to meet regularly, and in 1639 the king instructed the governor to summon the Burgesses together each year, recognition of what had already become regular practice.

13 Discovery and Settlement of the New World

Not all the settlers who came to America searched for gold or other forms of financial gain. A great number came in pursuit of religious freedom. Following the Protestant Reformation and the religious wars between the various sects and creeds, persecution of opposing religious beliefs became standard practice. In England the Anglican Church was established by the monarchy in opposition to the
Roman Catholic Church, although Anglicanism retained many Catholic ceremonies and rituals. As a consequence, any number of Protestants felt that the Church of England needed to be purified of such trappings, and they became known as Puritans. Others, more radical in their thinking, felt compelled to separate themselves from the Anglican Church altogether. A group of English separatists sought even more religious freedom and fled to Holland in 1608, only to find life in this foreign country totally unsuited to their needs and temperament. They decided to relocate. They gained permission from the London Company to settle in Virginia. Thus authorized, they departed Holland and sailed aboard the Mayflower to the New World. They never got to Virginia. They landed at Plymouth on Cape Cod on November 21, 1620, and before they left the ship to establish their colony, forty-one of them signed a compact by which they pledged allegiance to their “dread sovereign, the King” and did “covenant and combine” themselves into “a civil Body Politick.” They further promised to obey whatever laws were thought “meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony.” This Mayflower Compact thereby became the authority by which the settlers made their own laws and chose their own officials. They then disembarked. It is interesting to note that these settlers made an agreement that they committed to paper, stating their position on government and the means by which they had formed their society. The Mayflower Compact became one of many more such documents to follow, by which the people of this New World spoke openly about the ways they would be governed and the principles on which their government would rest.

Relying on a written document as an authority became an American custom in enunciating principles and practices by which the inhabitants in the society would be governed. It was the Pilgrims’ good fortune that they were met by two English-speaking Indians—Squanto, a Pawtuxet tribesman, and Samoset, a Pemaquid—who helped them arrange a peaceful agreement with the surrounding Indian tribes. The Indians also taught them how to raise corn and showed them the best places to fish and hunt. The colony survived and prospered, and the colonists gave thanks for their good fortune. Back in England, King Charles I, who succeeded the “dread sovereign” James I, gave a group of Puritans permission to form a joint-stock company in 1629 called the Massachusetts Bay Company, by which they could establish a colony in an area north of Virginia that John Smith had described in one publication as New England. John Winthrop, like many other Puritans, had become deeply troubled about the moral life in England and the future of religion. He decided to leave and take his immediate family with him. As an influential administrator of the Company, he was chosen to lead a “Great Migration” of Puritans to America. Numbering more than 1,000 men, women, and children aboard a set off 17 ships, these Puritans left England on May 22, 1630, with John Winthrop as their governor, and arrived in America on June 12, 1630, eventually settling in Boston. Upon their arrival, Winthrop assured his followers that if they bound themselves together “as one man,” God would protect them and ensure their prosperity. “We shall be as a City upon a Hill; the eyes of all people are upon us. . . . We shall be made a story and a byword throughout the World.” They believed that they had formed a covenant with God to build a society based on the teachings of the Bible. Church, state, family, and individuals were bound together as a unit to create a government and community in accordance with demands of the Almighty. Many of the settlers were well educated and had enough money to set themselves up in trade, commerce, or farming. Within a few years
the population of the colony numbered 20,000, dispersed among several surrounding towns. The Massachusetts Bay Company had decided to relocate its entire operation to America, taking the charter along as well. That meant there was no need to consult with or take directions from any group in England in making governmental decisions. To a very large extent, the Company was totally on its own. The colony was administered by the governor and eighteen assistants elected by the freemen, called the General Court.

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In 1634 the General Court, responding to criticism, allowed each town to elect deputies to sit with the assistants. Then, ten years later, the court divided into two houses, thus creating a bicameral legislature to fashion the laws for the entire Massachusetts Bay Colony. But there were dissenters among them who objected to particular rulings or actions, or the system of government. One of these was Roger Williams, a young Puritan who led a congregation in Salem and who preached unacceptable heresy—at least it was heresy to the ruling clergy in Boston. Williams truly respected the Indian tribes and their culture. He made no attempt to convert them to Christianity. He felt that individuals could differ in the way they worshipped God. He even tolerated different interpretations of the Bible. God's gift of faith in the formulation of one's conscience was the only road to salvation in practicing one’s religion, he preached. He was banished from the colony because he questioned the right of a civil government to enforce religious beliefs. But he foiled an attempt to ship him back to England by escaping into the wilderness and fleeing south. With group of his followers he founded the town of Providence, the first Rhode Island community where religious freedom and separation of church and state were made possible. In 1644 he received a charter for his colony. Anne Hutchinson, another dissenter, held meetings in her home to discuss religious matters and the worth of individual clergymen. She preached a “covenant of grace” that emphasized an individual’s direct communication with God through divine grace. She attracted a considerable following. Condemned as an “antinomian,” she was expelled from the colony in 1637. She and her disciples fled to Rhode Island and joined the followers of Roger Williams. She and her family were later murdered by Indians. One of the most popular preachers in the Massachusetts Colony was Thomas Hooker, and his very popularity generated jealousy among other preachers, most notably John Cotton, the senior minister in the colony.

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Rather than face expulsion, Hooker decided to lead his congregation across the wooded wilderness to the Connecticut River valley, where his followers established themselves in Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield. Hooker himself was instrumental in writing the bylaws for the colony’s government, called “The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut.” Like Rhode Island, but unlike in Massachusetts, church membership was not a condition for voting; nor were clergymen permitted to participate in politics. A charter was granted in 1662. In an effort to establish a colony that would be loyal to the Anglican Church and would act as a rival to Massachusetts, Sir Ferdinando Gorges obtained a charter to establish a settlement in Maine; but he died before he could attract immigrants, and his heirs sold the charter to Massachusetts. Thus Massachusetts and Maine were joined as a single colony. Moreover, another attempt
at colonizing a northern portion of New England in what is now New Hampshire also failed. The area was subsequently settled in 1638 by another preacher who had been banished from Massachusetts, John Wheelwright, the brother-in-law of Anne Hutchinson. The original grant was subsequently revoked, and in 1679 New Hampshire became a royal colony. Catholics also sought refuge in the New World. George Calvert, the first Lord Baltimore, obtained a charter in which he hoped to establish a colony for Catholics, he himself having converted to that faith. Under his plan, he would be the proprietor, and the land, involving millions of acres, his private estate. Those who settled on this property would pay him a land tax, called a quitrent; he, in turn, was required to pay the king two Indian arrows each Easter. Calvert was empowered to appoint the governor, judges, and counselors; organize the court system; and authorize a legislature to enact the laws. However, George Calvert died before the king had given his final approval to this proprietorship, and it was inherited in 1632 by Calvert’s son, Cecil, the second Lord Baltimore, who immediately sent out an expedition to establish the colony of Maryland. Unfortunately, the area impinged on the charter granted to the Virginia Company, provoking repeated conflicts between the two authorities. And although Calvert expected to dictate his wishes to the settlers as commands, the settlers had other ideas. When the first Maryland legislature met in 1635, it insisted on the right to enact its own laws, and Calvert wisely agreed to this. But Catholics did not swarm into Maryland as the proprietor had hoped. Instead many more Protestants took advantage of his liberal land grants, and by the end of the century they outnumbered Catholics ten to one.

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In 1649 the Maryland assembly accepted Lord Baltimore’s proposal and passed a Toleration Act, stating that no person who believed in Christ would be persecuted for practicing his or her religion. But since non-Christians were excluded from the colony, this legislation had only limited claim to toleration. Thus, over a relatively short period of time, there developed in the English colonies in America three forms of government: royal, corporate, and proprietary. Another proprietary colony was formed when Charles II paid off a series of debts to a group of eight men who had helped him regain the throne in 1660 after the Puritan Revolution that executed his father, Charles I, in 1649, and established a dictatorship under Oliver Cromwell. This colony lay between Virginia and Spanish Florida, and the charter was granted in 1663. The proprietors expected to attract settlers from Barbados, Virginia, and New England and profit from a trade in rice, ginger, and silk. The area was named Carolina after Charles’s wife, Queen Caroline. One distinctive feature of this proprietary colony was the plan of government drawn up by one of the proprietors, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the earl of Shaftesbury, and his secretary, John Locke. It was called the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, and it attempted to engraft in America a feudal system with a sharply defined social structure, including titles, and a similar hierarchical judicial system. Although it recognized and legalized slavery—Carolina was the first colony to do so openly—it did provide for religious freedom and a representative assembly. Settlers were drawn to this inviting area, but they disregarded the feudal aspects—which could never take root in America, because of the vastness of the land—and enjoyed the more liberal attractions of the Fundamental Constitutions. By the end of the century some 50,000 colonists populated the region. But they tended to concentrate in two areas: one to the north around Albemarle Sound, in what is presently North Carolina; and one 300 miles to the south around a community named after the king, Charles Town, today’s Charleston. Both areas prospered and enjoyed increased migration from other parts of the English colonies.
In North Carolina the inhabitants grew tobacco and provided naval stores to shipbuilders. In South Carolina, because of the moisture, temperature, and soil conditions, the colonists cultivated rice and indigo, which is used as a dye. Many of the Carolina colonists were Scots-Irish who were predominantly Presbyterian in their religious beliefs and had initially moved from lowland Scotland to Northern Ireland, where they remained for many years before crossing the ocean and settling in the Carolinas. They engaged the various Indian tribes in defending themselves against the Spanish in Florida. These tribes included the Wateree, Congaree, Santee, Waxhaw, and Catawba, all of whom belonged to the Siouan group. The most dominant tribe, however, was the powerful and fierce Cherokee Nation, who were concentrated in the mountains to the west and related to the Iroquois farther north. The Carolina settlers frequently aided one group of Indians against another in combat and regularly sold captured natives into slavery. Before long these settlers had exterminated or enslaved the Indians in the Carolinas, or reduced them to a state of total dependence.

Charles II and his brother James, the Duke of York, who later succeeded Charles as James II, cast covetous eyes on the Dutch colony of New Netherland, especially the attractive port at the foot of Manhattan Island where the Hudson River ran into the ocean. The Dutch had not been as successful as the English in establishing colonies since its citizens lacked the impetus of English settlers in migrating to America. The people in New Amsterdam, for example, had little regard for the Dutch West India Company and its autocratic governors. The most recent dictator, Peter Stuyvesant arrived as governor in the colony on May 11, 1647, looking “like a peacock.” He was all pomp and majesty. He wore a decorated peg leg, having lost his own in a pitched battle several years earlier. Determined to bring order and one-man control to the colony, he ruled for seventeen years by stern decrees that won him few friends and many enemies. Since England and Holland were commercial rivals, it did not take long for Charles to initiate a war by granting to his brother James all the land between the Connecticut and Delaware rivers. Then a British fleet appeared in the harbor of New Amsterdam and demanded the surrender of Manhattan Island.

The governor, Peter Stuyvesant, swore he would never surrender, but the leading citizens overruled him. They knew they could not fight off the well-armed and determined British, so they persuaded Stuyvesant to surrender the colony. And not a shot was fired. James, now the proprietor, renamed the colony New York. He blithely assumed he could rule the Dutch settlers through his chosen governor without any consultation whatsoever with the residents. He soon learned that such an approach from across thousands of miles of ocean guaranteed disobedience and lawlessness. Thus, when he succeeded his brother as King James II, he did permit the calling of a legislative assembly. Still, his regular disregard of the needs and requests of the New York colonists only generated further discord. The system of semi feudal landholdings of the original Dutch settlers further exacerbated the problem. It produced social, economic, and ethnic tensions between them and the new English arrivals. James turned over the lower section of his holdings to two friends, Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. Since Carteret had served as governor of Jersey in the English Channel, the area was named New Jersey in his honor. Berkeley was in charge of the western half of the province and Carteret of the eastern half. Both men later sold their proprietorships, and Puritans, Anglicans, and Quakers settled the divided province until the King united East and West Jersey into a single royal colony in 1702. One of the more successful attempts
at establishing a proprietary colony resulted from a grant of land in the New World from Charles II to William Penn. While studying at Oxford, Penn joined a radical religious sect, the Society of Friends, whose members denounced war, rejected the authority of priests and bishops, abhorred ceremonial worship, and obeyed only what they called the “inner light of conscience.” These Quakers even refused to bow to the king or remove their hats when confronted by royal officials. They professed complete equality—none excepted. William Penn embraced their beliefs with a fervor that landed him in prison and provoked the anger and disappointment of his father, Admiral William Penn. Once released from jail, he took up missionary work in Holland and Germany, where he organized Quaker societies. Since Charles owed Admiral Penn a large sum of money, he agreed to grant the son a tract of land in full payment of the debt.

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William Penn realized that it could be a haven for persecuted Quakers, and in 1681 he received a charter, which made him the proprietor of what is now the state of Pennsylvania. Young Penn also persuaded the duke of York to cede to him the three lower counties on the Delaware River that the Dutch had seized from the Swedes years earlier. These three counties remained a part of the Penn proprietary domain until the American Revolution, when they asserted their independence and became the state of Delaware. What is remarkable about Pennsylvania was the liberality with which it was governed. It became a “holy experiment” in which every-one could live in peace and harmony. And that included Indians. In his Frame of Government of 1682, Penn included a governor with an appointed council who originated all laws, along with an assembly, which initially lacked real authority but over time became more self-assertive. Most important of all, Penn advertised in England and on the continent, inviting people of all nationalities to settle in his colony and offering land at extremely low prices. Dutch, Welsh, Swedish, French, German, and English emigrants responded to his appeals, and Pennsylvania soon became the most populous and prosperous of all the American colonies. In 1732, Georgia was founded, when James Oglethorpe obtained a twenty-one-year charter from George II to a group of trustees for land between Savannah and Altmaha rivers.

Because of climate variations, soil conditions, the type of settlers, and the reasons that brought them to the different areas of the New World, among other things, a distinctive culture soon evolved within each of three areas: the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies. New England, for example, engaged in shipbuilding because of the sturdy, straight, tall pines that grew throughout the region. Fishing also became an important component of the New England economy. But many settlers built small farms in clusters around a seaport or farther inland near rivers or streams. Each cluster comprised a village, with a section of land held as commons to serve all the nearby inhabitants for such purposes as grazing cattle. Since the settlers were predominantly Puritan, their lives centered on the local church they built and the minister who preached to them and guarded their moral behavior.

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The New England colonies were founded primarily for religious purposes. In the Middle colonies, farming and commerce developed in which wheat, corn, and vegetables were grown; while beavers, raccoons, and other animals provided fur for export. Ships from New York City and Philadelphia regularly put to sea carrying these commodities not only to Europe but also to the southern colonies and the West Indies.
Most settlers had farms of small or moderate size, except in New York, where the Dutch had laid out enormous estates that extended across an entire county, such as the Van Rensselaer tract that straddled both sides of the Hudson River. The Dutch influence in New York continued after the arrival of the English and had an impact on architecture, language, and customs. Germans in Pennsylvania added a strong flavor to the colony's culture. Although Pennsylvania had been founded for religious and idealistic reasons, the other middle colonies were settled to exploit the wealth of the area.

The population of this region tended to be quite diverse. Because the cultivation and harvesting of tobacco, cotton, rice, and indigo in the Southern colonies necessitated the creation of sizable plantations and a large workforce, life in this section of the New World was distinctly different from that in regions farther north. Initially there was the reliance on indentured servants, individuals who signed contracts to work for a period of four or five years for the holder of their contract in return for passage to America. Then in 1619 a Dutch ship arrived in Virginia with twenty Africans who may have been slaves or indentured servants. It is not clear just what their status was. In any case, slavery soon became institutionalized, as more and more Africans were brought to America. By 1700 there existed in the South a master class and a slave class, and life and death were determined by the former without regard for the rights or needs of the latter. A small middle class that provided services not available on plantations, such as legal assistance, arose in urban centers of the South near harbors and sea ports. The people of these Southern colonies tended to be more homogeneous than those of the Middle and New England colonies. And the governments of these British colonies differed in some particulars, depending on whether they were royal, corporate, or proprietary, but they had several common characteristics. Each colony had a governor who represented the king, the proprietor, or the corporation and was expected to enforce all English laws passed by Parliament or the policies devised by the Privy Council who advised the king. In purely local matters, the governors had wide discretion. They were advised by resident landowners who were appointed to their position. Elected assemblies or legislatures enacted local laws but theoretically had limited power since their actions could be annulled by the governor or the royal authority in England. In actual practice, however, these elected assemblies exerted considerable authority.

Since they enacted local taxes they had the power of the purse, which they used to compel the governor to heed their demands. They could deprive him of his salary, for example, or the salaries of his assistants. He, in turn, could dismiss them and call for new elections; but he could not compel them to pass laws they opposed. James II did attempt to exercise greater control over several northern colonies in 1686, when he created the Dominion of New England, consisting of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. Later he added the colonies of New York and New Jersey. He appointed Sir Edmund Andros governor of this dominion, and granted him the power to enact laws, including taxes. The loss of the considerable freedom the colonists had enjoyed engendered resentment and anger. And Andros himself was a mistake. Arbitrary, contemptuous of individual rights and traditions, he exercised dictatorial rule over the settlers and soon came to grief. King James was hated both in America and in England, especially for his defiance of Parliament and its laws. He was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. As a Catholic in spirit if not in fact, he was feared by many Protestants, who revolted when James’s wife gave birth to a son who would inherit the throne, most probably as a Catholic. So Parliament invited James’s daughter Mary, a Protestant, and her husband, William of Orange, to take the
English throne as a pair. When word of James's overthrow reached Boston, the colonists arrested Andros and terminated the Dominion of New England. The colonial governments and local officials were reestablished.
The Parliament in England made no attempt to resurrect the dominion. The action of James II in establishing the Dominion of New England to bring the northern colonies under closer supervision, and the action of his predecessor, Charles II, in creating a Council of Trade and a Council of Foreign Plantations, by which a favorable balance of trade with the colonies could be achieved, were not simply expressions of political ambitions or goals. Actually they reflected economic need. These monarchs hoped to acquire wealth for England, and that meant gold and silver. To achieve such wealth necessitated a favorable balance of trade, wherein the money owed to a nation would be paid in specie.

Colonies were therefore necessary to provide the goods the mother country could sell abroad—selling more to foreigners than it bought and thus producing the favorable balance. The American colonies could supply raw materials such as tobacco, naval stores, cotton, rice, indigo, furs, and sugar, which England could sell to other nations. At the same time the colonies would provide a market for the mother country's manufactured goods. This program was called mercantilism, and through a series of Navigation and Trade Acts, Parliament in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acted to monopolize the trade of its colonies and exclude foreign nations from that trade. In Boston a mercantile class developed, transporting furs, naval stores, and fish to other colonial and Caribbean ports. The Bostonian merchants traded lumber and furs for West Indian molasses, which could be distilled into rum. New England shippers took their wares to England and the European continent and then sailed to Africa, where they acquired slaves to transport to the southern colonies. This triangular trade—Africa, West Indies, and North America—was carried on in violation of the Navigation Acts, but these enterprising merchants were an intrepid lot and managed to get away with it. They were so successful that they soon acquired sufficient wealth to displace the New England Puritan elite of the earlier generation. The amount of money an individual acquired became the means by which an American rose to the upper class of society. This became the norm throughout America, not simply New England. Money or property determined social rank. Material goods replaced birth and heredity as the most important component in determining one's position in society.

Religion had always been a prime factor in bringing settlers to America. Some colonies were actually founded as a haven for adherents of a particular creed or church. Puritans and Quakers were obvious examples. Puritans were governed along congregational lines, that is, the congregation formulated the rules of society and its economy. But as the commercial activity of New England expanded, ministers became aware of the threat to their authority and sought to counteract it by holding synods, which spelled out doctrinal errors and demanded conformity in understanding the will of the Almighty.
Obtaining membership in the church that would allow a male to vote and hold office involved a lengthy examination to make certain an individual had genuine conversion and actually experienced the presence of God. At synod in 1662 the clergy established what they called the Halfway Covenant by which individuals were granted “halfway” status if they were the grandchildren of “saints,” thereby conferring on them the right to vote and hold office. In Quaker-dominated Pennsylvania problems arose over the fact that Quakers refused to take oaths, insisting that oaths violated the Bible. This made testimony in legal disputes difficult to obtain; and it complicated the pledging of allegiance to the crown. Moreover, Quakers were pacifists and refused to engage in warfare against the Indians. Over time the Quaker-domination of the government in Pennsylvania evaporated, and William Penn’s “Holy Experiment” came to an end. A revival of strong religious practice occurred in America in the middle of the eighteenth century with what is known as the First Great Awakening. It began around the 1720s in New England and New Jersey and affected all classes of society and all regions of the country. Ministers such as Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts; Theodora’s Frelinghuysen in New Jersey; and the young George Whitefield, who came to this country from England in 1739, preached salvation to all who would repent and place their trust in Jesus Christ. Whitefield toured the colonies, mesmerizing those who heard him. He helped regenerate the revivalistic fervor that swept the country. In Philadelphia he preached to 10,000 who were hungry for salvation. Jonathan Edwards and other revivalists, called New Lights in New England, likened humans to the lowest of God’s creatures who were in desperate need of salvation. In a sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Edwards declared, “The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire . . . is dreadfully provoked.” Only His mercy stays His hand from allowing the wicked to fall into hellfire. But unless His creatures repent and desist from their sinfulness He will surely and utterly destroy them. This Great Awakening evoked intense emotional outbursts both from the ministers and from those who heard them.

One could hear “screaming, singing, laughing, praying all at once,” with people experiencing convulsions and falling into trances. It was not uncommon for an audience to become so aroused that it bordered on frenzy. Many of these preachers were itinerants and insisted that there must be a direct and close connection between the sinner and God, thus undermining the authority of the resident clergy. This individual and personal relationship was necessary for salvation, they argued, not the ministration of preachers. Preachers emphasized the fact that individuals alone were responsible for their final end. Without doubt, the promotion of individualism was one of the important effects of the Great Awakening. Another was its anti-authoritarianism, which permanently altered and diminished the power of resident ministers in both religious and secular affairs. Still another important effect was that it fostered the founding of new colleges to provide an education which would help individuals achieve salvation as well as to train New Light ministers. Such schools as Princeton, Dartmouth, Brown, Rutgers, and Columbia were established, and Jonathan Edwards himself became the president of Princeton. By the 1770s, the fervor of the Great Awakening began to fade, but it succeeded in convincing Americans that they had a choice in religion and that it was up to them to earn their salvation. Such ideas carried into the political realm as well. Colonists reckoned that their government should be grounded in the will of the people, that they had a choice in the kind of government they wanted, the kind of government that suited their needs.
The British royal authority in London failed to provide the colonies in America with regular direction, and as the settlers moved farther west they encountered problems that required immediate solutions. The Indians and the invading French from Canada in the western country resisted English encroachment, and so the colonists were obliged to attend to this problem themselves and conduct their own affairs without outside guidance, instruction, or contradiction. Thus they relied on their own assemblies to address their concerns and pass the necessary legislation to resolve them. Since they believed they were unrepresented in Parliament, they felt justified in raising taxes to operate their local governments, pay the salaries of their officials, and increase the size of the militia to fight the Indians and ward off French intrusion.

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It was an arrangement by which England followed a policy of “salutary neglect,” a policy that suited the needs of the inhabitants and buttressed their sense of their right as Englishmen to conduct their own affairs. The problem of Indian resistance to the constant need of colonists for land frequently resulted in all-out war. When the Puritans moved into the Connecticut River valley in the 1630s a full-scale conflict broke out with the Pequot in 1637 and resulted in the virtual extermination of that tribe. This was followed by King Philip’s War in 1675. The Indian chief of the Wampanoag tribe, Metacom, but dubbed King Philip by the British, launched a war that centered around Plymouth. This tribe had greeted the Pilgrims when they first arrived on Cape Cod and had had friendly relations with the settlers. But these relations soured overtime, and the hanging of several Wampanoag, including the brother of Metacom, touched off the war and soon involved many of the other tribes in the surrounding area. It ended with King Philip’s death in August 1676, when his severed head was put on public display. The French constituted another problem for the English settlers. In their search for furs they had spilled down from Canada into the western regions beyond the Appalachian Mountains and around the Great Lakes. As directed by the French governor of Canada, Marquis Duquesne de Menneville, they built a series of forts from Lake Erie to the Ohio River to ensure their control. The rivalry for empire between England and France had already developed into a hundred years of warfare, starting in the late seventeenth century, in both Europe and America. It began in Europe in 1689 with the War of the League of Augsburg, called King William’s War in America. In that war colonists under the command of Sir William Phips captured Port Royal, Nova Scotia, but it was recaptured by France a year later. The War of the Spanish Succession, which started in 1702, was called Queen Anne’s War in the colonies. Then came the War of the Austrian Succession, or King George’s War, in 1740. At its conclusion France ceded Newfoundland, Arcadia, and Hudson Bay to Great Britain.

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In all these wars both the French and the English allied themselves to Indian tribes, the French arming the Algonquin and the English the Iroquois. In the final war of this struggle for empire, the Seven Years’ War, or French and Indian War, actually started in America. In 1754, Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia dispatched his militia, led by a twenty-two-year-old colonel, George Washington, to construct a fort at the juncture of the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers that forms the Ohio River. Driven off the site of the junction, the Virginians built a stockade fifty miles away, called Fort Necessity. The frontier became a living hell for colonists in the west as the French and their Indian allies ravaged the American settlements in one military defeat after another. Then the situation made a complete about-face. When
William Pitt became prime minister, he completely altered British policy in fighting this war. He left the conflict on the European continent to his Prussian ally, Frederick the Great, and concentrated on the war in the colonies. He sent crack troops and his best generals to America, including generals James Wolfe and Jeffrey Amherst. Amherst had a reputation for gifting the Indians with smallpox-infected blankets. After a series of engagements the French abandoned Fort Duquesne in what is now Pittsburgh. Louisbourg, Ticonderoga, Quebec, and Montreal were captured by the British. In the siege of Quebec both General Wolfe and the French general, Marquis de Montcalm, were killed. At the peace treaty signed in Paris in 1763, France surrendered Canada to Great Britain. To compensate its ally, Spain, for losing Florida to Great Britain, France ceded Louisiana to her. The acquisition of Canada pleased fur traders because it provided an enormous territory in which to hunt animals, and it pleased the colonists, who no longer feared the presence of the French and their incitement of Indians on the frontier. The French minister, Étienne-François deChoiseul, sagaciously predicted that the colonies would break free of Great Britain once Canada was ceded. At the outset of the conflict between American colonists and their French opponents on the frontier, particularly at Fort Duquesne, there was an attempt at unified action. Representatives from seven colonies—Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland—met in Albany in June 1754, along with 100 Iroquois chiefs, and agreed on a Plan of Union for the common defense

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Devised for the most part by Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, the plan recommended the creation of a continental government with representatives from each colony. A president-general appointed by the king would act as the chief executive officer with veto power over all legislation. The single house would meet annually to regulate such matters as Indian affairs, public lands, and a colonial militia. This was the first attempt by American settlers to form a continental government to act for the entire English population within the colonies. But to Franklin’s intense disappointment, the king and several colonial legislatures rejected the plan. Because of their long history of conducting their own local affairs, the colonists believed they were merely acting on their rights as Englishmen. Besides, the policy of “salutary neglect” pursued by Parliament seemed to confirm their claim. They regarded their legislative assemblies as one expression of their right to enact laws commensurate with perceived local needs, not the gift of a temporarily distracted or overburdened Parliament. Parliament, of course, saw it differently. The colonists were British subjects and therefore obliged to obey the laws enacted by the central government in London. It was all well and good to have local assemblies operating in the colonies, but they were inferior to Parliament, which could alter or nullify what they enacted when and if it conflicted with imperial needs. Such a difference of conception about their position and rights was sure to produce a collision. And it was not long before the collision burst into violence.
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Although the titanic battle for empire between the French and British ended with a total English victory, it created monumental problems in London as to the administration of this vast domain. French forces had been swept from the region west of the Allegheny Mountains, but thousands of Indians lived in the area and resented and resisted the ever-increasing invasion of their hunting grounds by English colonists. The Indians also demanded that the British continue the French practice of supplying them with weapons and ammunition and lower prices on other trading necessities. The British had no intention of imitating French practice, and in the summer of 1763 the Indians finally rose up, under the leadership of the Ottawa chief Pontiac, in an effort to drive the settlers back to the ocean. Tribes from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico joined the rebellion and destroyed every frontier fort west of the mountains. The British government not only decided that it must keep a standing army of at least 10,000 troops in North America to maintain order and control, but also issued the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains. It drew a north-south line at the crest of the mountains with the idea of reserving the land west of the line for the Indians. This was meant to pacify the tribes but served only to infuriate the colonists, who refused to be bound by the Proclamation.
Another problem arising from the cessation of hostilities between the British and French involved expense. The national debt in England stood at £147 million, and the Prime Minister, George Grenville, was determined to reduce it. One of his worst headaches was administering this expanded empire. It proved so costly that Parliament abandoned the policy of “salutary neglect” and passed a series of laws levying duties on English imports into America, with part of the revenue to go towards paying the salaries of royal officials in the colonies. The first bill was the Sugar Act, passed in 1764, which established duties on foreign sugar, textiles, coffee, indigo, rum, wine, and several other items. It was the first law approved by Parliament intended specifically to raise money in the colonies. Grenville expected this act to yield at least £45,000 annually if properly enforced. The Sugar Act was not simply a customs duty but a program that threatened to disrupt American trade and the livelihood of thousands. This act was followed the next year by the Quartering Act, which required the colonies to provide lodging for troops stationed in their communities to protect them. The Stamp Act, which came a few days later, added a tax stamp to be placed on newspapers, legal documents, contracts, playing cards, marriage licenses, land deeds, and a host of other items that involved paper. It was the first direct tax levied by Parliament on the colonies. These acts—the Sugar, Quartering, and Stamp Acts—created quite an uproar in the colonies—the legal class was particularly hard hit by the Stamp Act—and James Otis in Massachusetts proposed that a general meeting of delegates from each of the colonies meet to take action against the Stamp Act. The proposal won a favorable response from the various colonies, and delegates chosen by their constituents met in October 1765 in New York City to protest the despised legislation. All but four colonies were represented at this Congress; in a “Declaration of Rights and Grievances,” written chiefly by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, the delegates insisted that only their own duly elected legislatures had the right to tax them. Parliament in no way represented them, they insisted, and was prohibited from imposing taxes on them. Taxation without representation, they declared, was nothing less than tyranny.

In London, Benjamin Franklin, an agent for Pennsylvania, warned Parliament that any attempt to enforce the Stamp Act with troops might lead to rebellion.

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Organizations such as the Sons of Liberty and the Daughters of Liberty were formed in 1765, and several riots occurred. The Sons of Liberty did not hesitate to resort to violence. All the stamp agents resigned. The violence and the disastrous effect on merchants and businessmen, finally prompted Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act in 1766, but again it asserted in the Declaratory Act the government’s “full power and authority . . . to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.” But Americans were so delighted that they had forced Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act that they simply disregarded the Declaratory Act. If nothing else, their Stamp Act Congress had demonstrated that by unified action the colonies could compel Parliament to respect their rights. Let Parliament attempt another such tax, and the consequence might be the onset of rebellion. It is interesting and important that they used the word “Congress “to describe their assembly. The word did not have the same meaning as it does today, namely that of a legislative body. A congress in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries usually denoted a diplomatic assembly of sovereign and independent states. Thus the delegates to this Stamp Act Congress represented a collection of individual
and distinct entities who considered themselves as having rights and powers as Englishmen by which they had full power to enact legislation for the benefit of the people living in their respective colonies.

In Virginia, a young, eloquent lawyer by the name of Patrick Henry, got up in the House of Burgesses and railed against both the king and Parliament. He argued so vehemently and so convincingly forth rights of colonists against the authority in London that someone in the room shouted, “Treason!” He was quick to respond, saying that if standing up for one’s rights is treason then the colonists should take advantage of it. He introduced seven resolutions denouncing the monarchy and Parliament. Although the Burgesses passed only four of the less extreme of them, newspapers printed all seven and distributed them to the other colonies. At this point a change in government in London brought the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, to the head of government, a man who rejected every argument Americans put forward regarding their rights.

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To demonstrate his contempt, he persuaded Parliament to impose what he called an “external” as opposed to “internal” taxes on a wide variety of items to be imported from England, including glass, paper, and tea. Worse, part of the revenue to be collected would pay the salaries of royal officials in the colonies. Not only did these duties tax colonists without their consent, but they also eliminated the one lever of power the colonists had over their royal governors: namely, the appropriation of their salaries and the salaries of their advisers and other officials. In another act the Parliament, on October 1, 1767, suspended the New York assembly for refusing to provide supplies to the troops quartered in the colony. This suspension was an all-out assault on what Americans regarded as their fundamental rights. Suspension could lead to an abolition of legislative assemblies, they contended, and resulting virtual enslavement of the settlers. John Dickinson of Pennsylvania spelled out the colonists’ complaints in a popular pamphlet, Letters from an American Farmer. The suspension of the New York assembly, he wrote, was a damnable “stroke aimed at the liberty of all these colonies. . . . For the cause of one is the cause of all.” Moreover, “Those who are taxed without their own consent are slaves,” he cried. “We are taxed without our own consent. . . . We are therefore—SLAVES.” A new prime minister in London, Lord North, took over from Townshend in 1770 and ordered the repeal of the duties, except for a tax of three pennies a pound on tea, which was meant more as a symbol of Parliament’s authority than as a producer of revenue. Radical activists who plotted to bring about a revolution kept stirring up popular resentment against British rule. Sam Adams, a cousin of John Adams, wrote letters and articles in newspapers, summoning “the people of this country explicitly to declare whether they will be Freemen or Slaves.” A new prime minister in London, Lord North, took over from Townshend in 1770 and ordered the repeal of the duties, except for a tax of three pennies a pound on tea, which was meant more as a symbol of Parliament’s authority than as a producer of revenue. Radical activists who plotted to bring about a revolution kept stirring up popular resentment against British rule. Sam Adams, a cousin of John Adams, wrote letters and articles in newspapers, summoning “the people of this country explicitly to declare whether they will be Freemen or Slaves.”

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He was not a British nobleman sent by the crown to enforce absolute control of the province. Rather, he was a Harvard-educated fifth-generation American, but a devoted loyalist who had served in the assembly and later became chief justice of the highest Massachusetts court. Because Hutchinson hated and sought to quell public demonstrations and mob action as a way of getting across their demands,
Bostonians regarded him as the figurehead of everything they detested about British rule. And although he deplored the stupidity of the Stamp Act, he defended the right of Parliament to tax the colonies. The rage against him grew to such an extent that his house had been ransacked in 1765, when he was the chief justice. Hutchinson had also defended the use of search warrants, called writs of assistance, in an effort to curb smuggling in the colonies during wartime. James Otis gave a crowd-pleasing tirade against the writs, a speech so powerful that John Adams hailed it as the beginning of the American Revolution. “Then and there,” Adams later wrote, “the child Independence was born.” Then, on March 5, 1770, the mounting antagonism between the British authority and the citizenry of Boston erupted in violence. British soldiers guarding the customhouse, commanded by Captain Thomas Preston, were jeered at and heckled by agitators who threw stones and snowballs at them. The soldiers reacted by firing into the crowd, killing five men and wounding six others. A general melee was avoided when Hutchinson, at the insistence of Sam Adams, agreed to withdraw the troops from Boston. Preston and eight of his soldiers were arrested and charged with murder. John Adams and Josiah Quincy accepted the request that they defend the soldiers. Preston and six of his men were acquitted, but two soldiers were found guilty of manslaughter and were released after being branded on the hand.

This “Boston Massacre,” as it was called, was regularly remembered each year in Massachusetts, and a print of the bloody scene was circulated throughout the colonies. But it was the tea tax that really set off a series of events that played into the hands of the most radical colonial agitators. The East India Tea Company verged on bankruptcy and turned to the government for help. It had a monopoly on the importation of tea into England and held a surplus of 17 million pounds of tea. But it could not pay the duty required by law, and therefore could not sell the tea in Britain. Parliament responded in May 1773 by passing a Tea Act allowing the company to sell its tea in America, where the tax of three pence per pound of tea would be collected

Under this arrangement the company could under sell American merchants and smugglers and create a monopoly for itself, a situation the colonists fiercely resented. The Sons of Liberty condemned the act and called for a boycott of tea. Governor Hutchinson was determined to enforce the collection of the tax when three ships arrived in Boston with a large cargo of tea. His two sons and a nephew were among the agents assigned to sell the shipment. Resistance and determination reared on both sides of the issue. Finally, on the night of December 16, 1773, colonists dressed as Mohawk Indians boarded the ships and dumped 342 chests of tea worth £90,000 into the harbor. The British reacted sharply to this “Boston Tea Party” and labeled it an act of rebellion. They chose to believe that a conspiracy had been hatched in Boston to initiate a rebellion against the crown and win independence for the colony. Angrily, in the spring of 1774 Parliament enacted the Coercive Laws, or, as the colonists called them, the Intolerable Acts, by which the port of Boston was closed to all trade until the tea was paid for; it forbade town meetings; it altered the voting for members of the Massachusetts assembly; and it included a new quartering of soldiers that applied to all colonies. Parliament had gone beyond simple punishment for the Tea Party, according to the colonists. It had now abridged their fundamental freedoms as Englishmen. Following the Intolerable Acts came the Quebec Act, which was passed on May 20, 1774, and extended the boundaries of Quebec to include the territory west of the Allegheny Mountains. In an effort to conciliate French-speaking Roman Catholic Canadians, Parliament had unwittingly roused fears among Protestant colonists about a “popish”
plot to gain greater control of government. More troubling, however, was the fact that it annulled the territorial claims of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. At this juncture, in August 1774, Thomas Jefferson published a pamphlet titled A Summary View of the Rights of British America, in which he defended the Boston Tea Party as the action of a “desperate people” struggling to protect their basic rights as citizens. So powerful, so well-crafted and so direct were the arguments in this pamphlet that Jefferson overnight became the leading spokesman for colonial rights.

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In addition to all the other outrages perpetrated by the crown, Hutchinson was replaced as governor of Massachusetts by General Thomas Gage, accompanied by an army of 4,000 soldiers, who promised to put an end to the colonists’ resistance to British law. “The die is cast,” King George informed Lord North. “The colonists must either triumph or submit.” Submit they would not. Once more delegates assembled from all the colonies, except Georgia, to agree on demands and devise plans to make Britain acknowledge their basic rights as Englishmen. This First Continental Congress convened in Carpenter’s Hall in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774, and included such radical activists as Sam and John Adams of Massachusetts and Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. However, moderates led by Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania preferred a more conciliatory policy. They offered a variation of the Albany Plan of Union, but the Congress rejected it. Instead, the Congress adopted a Declaration written by John Adams, which affirmed the rights of colonists to “life, liberty, & property,” and condemned the recent acts of Parliament as “unconstitutional, dangerous, and destructive.” Again they used the word “Congress,” asserting once more their existence as separate, individual, and sovereign states. Forthwith, the delegates demanded repeal of the Intolerable Acts, and of all taxes by Parliament. Moreover, they agreed to collective economic action involving nonimportation of British goods, starting on December 1, 1774, and non-exportation of American goods on September 1, 1775. This Continental Association was to be enforced by local committees within each colony. When this Congress adjourned, the delegates truly believed that they had vindicated American rights. They agreed to reassemble the following May. But events soon developed that pitched the colonies into all-out war with the colonial authorities. On April 18, 1775, General Gage in Massachusetts sent 1,000 troops to seize suspected supplies of guns and ammunition at Concord. Paul Revere rode out of Boston to warn Americans of the approach of the soldiers. At Lexington a company of colonial minutemen tried to block the advance of the British and were fired upon. Eight minutemen died in the clash. The British troops continued to Concord, where they destroyed whatever weapons were found, and then turned around and headed back to Boston. But along the way they were attacked by thousands of colonists, who hid behind trees, bushes, and stone walls. By the time the British arrived back at headquarters they had lost almost 300 men.

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The situation escalated when Colonel William Prescott fortified Breed’s Hill with 1,600 colonials on the night of June 16, 1775, and General Gage sent his army to dislodge them. It took three assaults and the loss of over 1,000 men before the British finally reached the trenches at the top of the hill where the Americans were hidden. Their powder gone, the colonials abandoned the trenches and fled from their attackers. They suffered about one-third as many casualties as they inflicted on the British, who lost over 1,000 men. This Battle of Bunker Hill, incorrectly named after a hill nearby, was one of the bloodiest in the entire Revolutionary War. One-eighth of all the British officers who died in the war were killed at
Bunker Hill. General Henry Clinton, who—together with Generals William Howe and John Burgoyne—had recently arrived in Boston with reinforcements, wrote a fitting comment on this battle: “Another such victory would have ruined us.” With violence increasing each month, the Second Continental Congress assembled on May 10, 1775, and decided to pursue more radical measures in seeking redress of grievances. The delegates raised an army, appointed General George Washington to command it, issued Continental currency, and opened negotiations with foreign powers to win their support and intervention. To subdue this rebellion, the British hired 20,000 German mercenaries and shipped them to America, thereby intensifying Americans’ determination to seek independence. The publication of Common Sense by Thomas Paine in early January 1776, called for immediate independence. He labeled George III the “Royal Brute” and accused the king of instigating all the wretched legislation directed against the colonists. Paine acknowledged that many Americans looked upon Britain as the “parent country,” but if true, he said, the recent acts were all the more outrageous: “Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families.” But the “Royal Brute” could and did “unflinchingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly slept with their blood upon his soul.” America was destined for a republican form of government, Paine insisted, not a “monarchical tyranny.” It has been and will continue to be “the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe.”

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Paine’s pamphlet had such an impact on those who read it that it persuaded many to adopt the cause of independence. More than 100,000 copies of the pamphlet were snapped up by an eager public, and the work enjoyed twenty-five printings in 1776 alone. George Washington referred frequently to its "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning. “On April 12, 1776, North Carolina instructed its delegates in Congress to seek separation, and on June 7 Richard Henry Lee of Virginia offered a resolution stating that these colonies "are and of right ought to be, free and independent states. John Adams seconded Lee’s resolution, but there were some in Congress who argued for reconciliation with the mother country. Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania reminded them, however, that if the members of the Congress did not “hang Westward Expansion together,” they would “all hang separately.” Ultimately the advocates of independence prevailed. As Jefferson explained, “The question was not whether, by a declaration of independence, we should make ourselves what we are not, but whether we should declare a fact that already exists.” A committee was formed to write a justification of the action to be taken should Congress choose to accept the resolution. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert R. Livingston of New York composed this committee, but a subcommittee of Jefferson and Adams was actually assigned the task of writing the document.
Because Jefferson was known to be a “felicitous” writer, he was prevailed upon to prepare what turned out to be an eloquent statement about human liberty and equality. Adams and Franklin added some minor amendments. On July 2, Lee’s resolution was passed, and on July 4 the Declaration of Independence was adopted without dissent and signed by the president of the Continental Congress, John Hancock. The Congress also adopted a flag, on June 14, 1777, one consisting of thirteen red and white alternating stripes and thirteen white stars on a field of blue. As delegates from sovereign, independent states, the members were united in their determination to win freedom from the tyranny of Great Britain, but they had little enthusiasm for creating a controlling central government. Still, they needed some sort of central authority to attend to such matters as providing for military and financial needs in prosecuting the ongoing war. So another committee was chosen to lay out the specifics for a national government that could address these concerns. The document produced by this committee, known as the Articles of Confederation, was chiefly the work of John Dickinson of Pennsylvania. What the document proposed was a Confederation of states, not a Union of people. As a result, the government it projected was doomed.
from the start. Nevertheless, it was a major breakthrough in the evolution of a representative government that would encompass collection of thirteen independent political entities. The Articles declared that the several states were to be joined in a “perpetual union” and a “firm league of friendship.” But it also admitted that all the states would retain their “sovereignty, freedom, and independence.” A unicameral legislature was established for this “union,” representing all the states.

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And although it could enact laws, it had no authority to enforce them. It relied on the states and the people to obey whatever it decreed, but voluntary compliance proved to be virtually impossible. In addition, the government lacked the power to tax. To support its operation and pay for carrying on the war, it had to rely on contributions from each state as set forth by the national legislature. But few states paid what they owed. If hard-pressed for cash, they would pay less, and there was nothing the central government could do about it. Two other problems were present in the Articles. First, the unanimous agreement of all the states was required before the document could go into effect. Maryland withheld its consent until all the states ceded their western lands to the central government. That state had no claim to the western country and hoped to share in the largess of more fortunate states, such as Virginia. Not until 1781 did all the states agree to the condition and Maryland finally added its consent. The second problem involved amending the Articles once the government began operation. Again it required unanimous approval by the states, and that proved to be impossible. What the document created was a government subservient to thirteen other governments. It must be remembered that at the time, the delegates who produced the Articles of Confederation had no experience in establishing a work-able central authority that would understand and recognize the sovereignty of each state. It would take a learning experience of almost half a dozen years for others to decide what had to be done to create a permanent Union that could pass and enforce laws to protect liberty and property for its citizens and show proper regard for the rights of the states. In a word, a federal system needed to be erected. The delegates debated the Articles of Confederation for over a year, and not until November 15, 1777, was it formally adopted. Then, it took another three and a half years before all the states agreed and the government under the Articles was established. The war itself had begun at Lexington and Concord, but to put down the rebellion the British had to destroy General Washington’s ability to remain in the field or militarily occupy the entire country.

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The rebels, on the other hand, simply had to get the British to tire of the war and withdraw. They did not need to win battle after battle. If they could maintain an army in the field over an extended period of time, it was very likely that they could obtain their objective. On July 12, 1776, the British sent reinforcements to New York to link up with Sir William Howe’s army, which came down from Halifax. They rendezvoused with other British troops from South Carolina under General Henry Clinton to constitute a powerful force of 30,000 soldiers. Washington had less than half that number and realized he could never hold New York. Still he was determined to put up a fight. On August 27 he challenged the British on Long Island. Following an inevitable defeat, he moved his army under cover of a thick fog across the East River to Manhattan. Howe pursued him up the Hudson River valley, and Washington retreated to New Jersey. New York remained in British hands for the remainder of the war. Washington crossed the Delaware River at Trenton and tried to keep his army together. But his soldiers shivered in the December cold and
began to desert, since the situation looked hopeless. Their general pleaded with Congress to provide supplies and additional troops but had little success. As the situation became desperate, Thomas Paine, from an American camp, wrote the first number of

The Crisis, in which he declared, “These are the times that try men’s souls.” Indeed, Washington himself almost lost hope. “If every nerve is not strained to recruit a new army,” he wrote, “I think the game is pretty well up.” Then he attempted something truly daring. On Christmas evening, with about 2,500 men, he crossed the ice-filled Delaware River about nine miles northwest of Trenton and attacked the Hessians who had taken the town and were sleeping off their Christmas celebration. The Americans captured more than 900 Hessians. Lord Cornwallis attempted to strike back, but Washington hit the British rear guard at Princeton and forced Cornwallis to retreat to protect his military supplies. What Washington had done by his daring action was restore his army’s confidence that it could win and spike the determination of the British to bring the war to a speedy end. Resolved as ever to put down the rebellion, the British came up with a three-pronged plan. They would bring down two separate armies from Canada, which would meet in Albany and then join a force sent northward by General Howe in New York, thereby cutting off New England.

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Cutting off New England was an important objective for the British. But the army marching down from the St. Lawrence via Lake Champlain and commanded by General John Burgoyne was surrounded by thousands of Americans from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York led by General Horatio Gates. Recognizing the hopelessness of his situation, Burgoyne surrendered his army of 6,000 at Saratoga on October 17, 1777. It was quite a disaster for the British and prompted the French to conclude that an alliance with the United States would be to their advantage. On February 6, 1778, American ministers, led by Benjamin Franklin, signed two treaties with the French government. The first was a treaty of amity and commerce in which both countries were granted most-favored-nation status; they further agreed to guarantee forever each other’s possessions in the New World. The second was a treaty of alliance whereby neither country would lay down its arms until Great Britain acknowledged the independence of the United States; this second treaty was to become effective when war broke out between France and Britain. The surrender at Saratoga also convinced Lord North and King George to make concessions, and a bill was introduced in Parliament that granted virtually all the Americans’ demands, to wit: Parliament would not levy any tax on the colonies; all unacceptable laws enacted since 1763 would be repealed; and leaders branded as rebels would be pardoned. But the bill did not win passage until nearly two weeks after the alliances with France had been signed, and the Americans had no wish to revert from Free states back to dependent colonies. On June 17 France and Britain clashed on the open sea and war was declared between them. That spring Count Charles d’Estaing, commanding twelve French warships and several regiments of troops, headed for America. Meanwhile, Howe took part of his army and headed south to capture Philadelphia, apparently with the approval of London. Washington hastened to thwart the British move but was outflanked at the battles of Brandywine Creek and Germantown. So while Howe spent the winter in the city enjoying a life of parties and dances, Washington took up a position at Valley Forge, twenty miles northwest of Philadelphia, where he and his men, numbering 12,000, endured a dreadful winter. Men and camp followers sickened and died from lack of proper shelter, food, clothing, blankets, and medicine. Again the General begged for assistance from Congress but received very little.
General Clinton took command in place of Howe and decided to return to New York. Washington followed and met the British at Monmouth, New Jersey, on June 28, 1778, where he managed to turn back Clinton's counterattack. It was the last battle that Washington directed prior to his assuming command of a combined French and American force at Yorktown in Virginia. The French had planned all along that the fleet under d'Estaing would head for the West Indies in the hope of capturing several British islands, such as Jamaica or one of the sugar islands. The Americans had little naval might to challenge the British fleet patrolling the coastline, but one American ship, commanded by John Paul Jones, captured several hundred British vessels and raided a number of English coastal towns. Jones himself became something of an American hero in this war. The country needed heroes, and there were so few. Then, when Spain entered the war against Great Britain in the expectation of recapturing Gibraltar and Florida, the ministry in London decided to change its strategy and shift the war to the southern American colonies. It began with the capture of Savannah in December 1778. General Clinton sailed from New York with an army of 8,500; captured Charleston; and compelled the American general, Benjamin Lincoln, to surrender his army of over 5,000. Lord Cornwallis replaced Clinton, who returned to New York, while Congress appointed General Gates to supersede Lincoln. Gates's appointment was a mistake. He suffered the worst American defeat of the war at Camden, South Carolina, when his troops fled the field in disarray. Gates ran too. The British then came to a very wrong conclusion—that untrained, undisciplined American soldiers would drop their weapons and flee when confronted by professional British troops. Another disaster occurred on September 25, when Benedict Arnold, a splendid general who had participated in the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga, turned traitor and deserted to the British. In need of money to pay his many debts, he agreed to turn over West Point, which he commanded, to the enemy. It turned out that he had been spying for General Clinton for the past year. The capture of Major John André, who carried messages between Clinton and Arnold, revealed the treason. Arnold fled.

He later became a British general and joined Lord Cornwallis, who had moved his army from the Carolinas into Virginia, where he took up a position at Yorktown. The urgent call to the French for help resulted in the arrival of 7,000 men aboard a fleet of twenty warships commanded by Admiral François de Grasse. The combined Franco-American army of 16,000 under Washington's command surrounded Cornwallis while de Grasse's fleet blocked the entrance to Chesapeake Bay, thus preventing the British from escaping the net that had been tightly wound around them. On October 18, 1781, the British general surrendered his army of 8,000 regulars and sailors. For all intents and purposes the American colonies had won their independence. The House of Commons in London voted to end the war and authorized a negotiating team to arrange a peace treaty with the former colonies. Lord North resigned and was succeeded by Lord Rockingham. A year later, on November 30, a provisional treaty was signed in Paris by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Jay, and Henry Laurens for the United States. Commissioner Richard Oswald signed for Britain. On April 15, 1783, Congress ratified the treaty. According to the terms of this treaty U.S. independence was recognized, and its boundaries stipulated—although the treaty failed to include the cession of Canada to the United States as demanded by Franklin. The boundaries ran from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and from the forty-fifth parallel in the south to Maine and the
Great Lakes in the north. The treaty also called for the cessation of hostilities and the evacuation of British-held territory within the United States. In addition it provided fishing rights for Americans, and that the rights and property of loyalists would be restored. It was a very generous treaty as far as the former colonists were concerned. The French bitterly criticized it because they had not been consulted in arranging the terms. A diplomatic response from Franklin soothed the hurt feelings of the French and prevented the two allies from breaking off relations. The next several years were difficult for the United States. Individual states quarreled with one another and with the central government.

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Boundaries between states were one problem; commerce, debts, and currency were others. To make matters worse, a rebellion flared in Massachusetts when economically depressed farmers demanded laws to protect them against farm foreclosures and cheap money. When violence resulted, Governor James Bowdoin called out the militia to restore order. But Daniel Shays, an officer during the Revolution, assembled a force of 1,200 men in the late fall of 1786 and marched on the town of Springfield. After several engagements, the militia, commanded by General Benjamin Lincoln, crushed the rebellion by March 1787. Shays himself fled to Vermont and was later pardoned. The government under the Articles of Confederation did nothing to help the Massachusetts authority despite the fact that Congress authorized the Secretary of War, Henry Knox, to raise a 1,000-man force to fight. There were a few bright spots during this period of the Confederation. In Virginia on January 16, 1786, the House of Burgesses adopted a statute of religious freedom, written by Thomas Jefferson. It declared that no one could be compelled to join or support a church or suffer discrimination on account of religious beliefs. Jefferson ranked his authorship of this act along with his writing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the University of Virginia as his most significant contributions as a public official. But nationally, things went from bad to worse. Topping off the problems for the central government was an economic recession that lingered for several years during the 1780s. Trade and wages declined, and paper currency issued by the several states mounted to nearly $1 million and its value steadily declined. Some people began to consider amending the Articles but quickly realized what an impossible task it would be. Congress, however, did enjoy one notable success under the Articles. On July 13, 1787, it passed the Northwest Ordinance, a scheme by which future states could be added to the Union. The Ordinance provided a government for the territory north of the Ohio River which had been ceded by New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Virginia. On the basis of a plan devised in 1784 by Thomas Jefferson, the western region would be surveyed and laid out in townships, six-mile-square with parcels set aside for education.

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The area was placed under the control of a governor, a secretary, and three judges appointed by Congress. When the number of adult white males in the area reached 5,000, they could elect a bicameral legislature and send a non-voting delegate to Congress. Once the number reached 60,000, they could apply for admission as a state on an equal basis with all the other states. Freedom of religion, trial by jury, and support for public education were guaranteed. Slavery was prohibited. It was expected that three to five states would be created out of this Northwest Territory. Later, the Congress under the Constitution adopted the procedure formulated by the Northwest Ordinance, a process that settled once and for all the method by which new states could be joined to the Union. But the problems confronting Congress under
the Articles grew worse with each passing year, and many Americans recognized that something had to be done. A start in that direction occurred when Virginia and Maryland met at Mount Vernon in 1785 to address the question of interstate commerce, in particular the navigation of the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac River. It soon developed that Delaware and Pennsylvania also had an interest in the problem and wanted to take part in the negotiations. Whereupon Virginia invited all the states to send delegates to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1786 to see if they could find a solution to the problem of interstate commerce. Nine states accepted the invitation, although only five (New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) showed up in time to take part in the proceedings. So Alexander Hamilton of New York suggested that they attempt something far more comprehensive than interstate commerce. He wrote a report, adopted by the convention, in which he proposed that the delegates invite the several states to send representatives to attend a special convention in Philadelphia in 1787 for the purpose of devising such “provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union.” Put another way, he wanted the Articles thoroughly overhauled to create a truly workable central government with genuine powers that it could enforce. The Congress under the Articles added its recommendation to the proposal that the delegates had issued and called on the states to appoint delegates to the convention in Philadelphia “for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation.”

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All the states except Rhode Island responded, and dispatched total of fifty-five representatives to this new convention, which met in May 1787. From this turnout it was clear that most states realized something had to be done if the Union was to last. Not surprisingly, a number of notables attended. First and foremost was General George Washington, who by this time had achieved the status of a national hero and whose presence lent a high degree of legitimacy to the meeting. Others included James Madison of Virginia, who would provide the basic frame for a totally new government; and Alexander Hamilton, who argued effectively for a stronger and more potent national government. Still other distinguished members included Gouverneur Morris and James Wilson of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, and George Mason and Edmund Randolph of Virginia. William Jackson of Georgia was elected to serve as secretary, but his journal is so substantively thin that it provides little information about what took place at the convention. Fortunately James Madison kept extensive notes, which were published in 1840, shortly after his death. The first thing the convention did was unanimously elect George Washington president. Next, the members decided to keep their debates secret, as most colonial assemblies did. They agreed on secrecy for the simple reason that they decided, at the start of their deliberations, to scrap the Articles and write an entirely new document. Had this decision been known, several states might well have recalled their delegations. Once the convention began its serious work, Governor Edmund Randolph of Virginia introduced, on May 29, a suggested form of government prepared by Madison and based on the people rather than on the states. This “Virginia Plan” or “Large State Plan,” as it was called established a government consisting of three independent branches—legislative, executive, and judicial—in which each would have certain powers and could check the others. Checks and balances were the ideal it hoped to create. Congress, the legislative branch— which the founders regarded as the centerpiece of government—consisted of two houses. The lower house (elected every two years by the people) would be proportional to population and would elect the members of the upper house from nominations put forward by individual states.
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This proposal conferred broad legislative powers on the Congress and could annul state law, a feature that generated immediate criticism. The legislature would also choose the executive, as well as the judiciary, which would include a supreme court and such inferior courts as necessary. Finally, a council of revision composed of the executive and members of the judiciary would exercise a veto over legislative acts. The Virginia Plan obviously favored the states with the largest population, a fact that troubled small states. Their delegates preferred a different proposal, the one put forward by William Paterson of New Jersey on June 15 and known as the “New Jersey Plan” or “Small State Plan.” This proposal imitated the Articles in that it called for a unicameral legislature in which each state would have one vote. The state governments, not the people, would elect the representatives to this Congress and choose a plural executive and a supreme court. The executive would not have veto power. Although the New Jersey Plan granted the government additional authority to tax and regulate foreign and interstate trade and included a statement that the laws of Congress would be the supreme law of the country, it was hardly more than a slight modification of the Articles which everyone knew had proved unworkable. The Virginia Plan, on the other hand, was too lopsided in favoring a proportional system of representation, but it did provide for an entirely new and innovative form of government. Some members of this convention actually preferred nothing more than a set of amendments to the Articles of Confederation, as difficult as that might be. They did not want to participate in any way in the diminution of states’ power and rights, and in the case of several members, like Governor George Clinton of New York, their own individual authority. Clinton and several others withdrew from the convention when they realized that their position found little favor with the other delegates. The members of the convention spent days arguing and debating the two proposals; and since they were genuinely interested in resolving the governmental problems that beset the country—specifically, maintaining viable states and a strong central authority—they finally resorted to compromise to bring about a solution.

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When there are opposing views to any problem, let alone a set of problems, they agreed, the only way to resolve them is through compromise. To reach an agreement, both large and small states had to yield something to the other side in order to gain what they felt was important for their particular requirements. To break the impasse, Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested what has been called the Connecticut Compromise: that is, a Congress consisting of two houses, in which the lower house would be elected by the people on the basis of population, thereby satisfying the large states, and the upper house would be elected by the states with each state having two representatives, thus providing equality of representation and thereby meeting the demand of the small states. Further compromises included counting three-fifths of the slave population in determining the population for a state’s representation in the lower house. And there was to be no interference with the slave trade for twenty years. The convention also agreed to permit Congress to regulate trade, as the North demanded, but forbade the imposition of ex-port duties, which the South insisted upon to protect its exports of cotton and tobacco. These various compromises were adopted toward the end of July and then submitted to a five-member committee of detail to draft the completed Constitution. The committee finished its work and submitted the result to the convention on August 6. After a month long debate the delegates agreed on a two-year term for representatives, a six-year term for senators and a four-year term for the chief
executive. States were forbidden to issue paper money or infringe on the obligation of contracts. The
document went on at length in describing the powers delegated to Congress but said little about the other
two branches. It obviously meant to imply that the legislature would attend to the needs of the executive
and judiciary. What it did say about the other two branches was the manner in which the President
would be elected (by a College of Electors chosen in each state) and the justices appointed. It awarded the
chief executive veto and appointive powers, and the position of commander in chief of the armed forces.
It also decreed the establishment of a Supreme Court and such inferior courts as Congress would from
time to time establish. It prohibited bills of attainder and ex post facto laws.

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It further stipulated that the members of the three branches of government would receive compensation
from the national treasury, not from the states. Having agreed substantially to the important segments of
this federal government, the convention appointed a five-man committee on style and arrangement to
prepare the final document. Principally written by Gouvernor Morris, the draft included a preamble that
declared, “We the people of the United States” establish this Constitution—not “we the states” as stated in
the Articles of Confederation. The preamble went on to identify the objectives of this new government to
“form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common
defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.”
The document also stated that the Constitution, the treaties, and the laws of the United States “shall be
the supreme Law of the Land.” This draft was submitted to the convention on September 12 and
reviewed at length. After a few minor changes each of the twelve state delegations voted to approve the
Constitution on September 17, 1787. Of the forty-two members present, three refused to sign the final
copy: Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, and Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia. The signed
document then went forth with a letter of recommendation to the Congress under the Articles that the
states call special conventions elected by the people to approve or reject the instrument. When nine
states ratified it, the Constitution would replace the Articles of Confederation and go into effect in those
states. Delaware was the first state to give its approval to the new document, on December 7, by a
unanimous vote. It was followed by Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts,
Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, and New York. The approval by New York on July 26
provided the eleventh state to ratify, but Rhode Island rejected the Constitution and North Carolina
delayed its approval until November 21, 1789. Rhode Island subsequently reversed itself and ratified the
document on May 29, 1790. During the debates in the ratifying conventions there were many complaints
about the Constitution’s failure to provide a bill of rights, especially a statement that those powers not
expressly granted to the national government were reserved to the states.

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A number of states made recommendations that this deficiency be addressed as soon as possible. Once
the ratification by eleven states had been achieved in July, the Congress under the Articles of
Confederation decreed that on the first Wednesday of January 1789, electors would be chosen in the
several states who would vote for President and Vice President; that on the first Wednesday of
February 1789 those electors would cast their ballots; and on the first Wednesday of March 1789—which
happened to be March 4, a date that would mark the beginning of each new administration until passage
of the Twentieth Amendment on February 6, 1933, when it was changed to January 20—the newly elected
Congress would assemble in New York City, the seat of the American government since 1785, tabulate the ballots, and announce the names of the chosen President and Vice President, thereby completing the election of the legislative and executive branches. Once the individuals of these two branches assembled, they could then begin the process of establishing the judiciary and name the individuals who would sit on the Supreme Court. There was virtually no question as to who would be elected President. George Washington was universally loved as the military hero who had won the nation’s freedom. Without him no Union seemed possible. So the electors unanimously elected him chief executive and John Adams Vice President. Coming from Massachusetts, Adams provided a good balance to Washington, a Virginian—thus both North and South were represented in the executive branch—and his career as a public servant and his contributions in the struggle for independence placed him in the front ranks of American statesmen. He was among the members who had negotiated the treaty that ended the Revolution, and he had represented the new nation at various times in France, Holland, and England. When these two men were notified of their election, Adams hurried immediately to New York, but Washington endured an eight-day triumphal march from his home in Mount Vernon through Philadelphia and New Jersey to New York City, where on April 30, 1789, he was inaugurated with as much pomp as befitted this incomparable hero. He rode to Federal Hall in a yellow carriage drawn by six white horses and attended by four footmen in livery.

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Members of Congress marched behind, along with the New York militia. Washington was dressed in a suit with silver buttons embossed with eagles, and he wore white silk stockings and pumps with silver buckles. Strapped around his waist was a ceremonial sword. Thin-lipped and tall, with a prominent Roman nose, the most distinguishing feature of his slightly pockmarked face, he both looked and acted presidential. Washington was sworn into office by Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, the highest legal officer of New York, as he stood on the open gallery of the second floor of Federal Hall so that an adoring crowd outside could see and applaud him. To deliver his inaugural address, an address composed in large measure by James Madison, he returned to the adjoining chamber, where he told the assembled members of Congress that he had been "summoned" to the presidential office “by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love.” He then spoke in general terms about virtue and duty and the need for providential guidance. He also called for the passage of a bill of rights as amendments to the Constitution, thereby acknowledging the many complaints heard during the debates in several state ratifying conventions. Madison had resisted such a bill in the Constitutional Convention, since the proposed government enjoyed only delegated powers and therefore would not concern itself with personal rights. But he subsequently learned from his constituents that they felt such a bill was absolutely necessary for inclusion in the Constitution for the protection of their rights. When the ceremony ended, the President walked to Saint Paul’s Chapel, a short distance away, where the Episcopal bishop invoked divine blessing on this new administration and government. One representative, Henry Wynkoop of Pennsylvania, said, “The Rooff is now raised & the federal Edifice completed.” A Union of states and people had now been accomplished. But would it endure?
A People’s History of the United States, 1492-Present
By Howard Zinn
1. Columbus, The Indians, and Human Progress

Arawak men and women, naked, tawny, and full of wonder, emerged from their villages onto the island's beaches and swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat. When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, speaking oddly, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts. He later wrote of this in his log:

They ... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned... . They were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features.... They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane... . They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

These Arawaks of the Bahama Islands were much like Indians on the mainland, who were remarkable (European observers were to say again and again) for their hospitality, their belief in sharing. These traits did not stand out in the Europe of the Renaissance, dominated as it was by the religion of popes, the government of kings, the frenzy for money that marked Western civilization and its first messenger to the Americas, Christopher Columbus.

Columbus wrote:

As soon as I arrived in the Indies, on the first Island which I found, I took some of the natives by force in order that they might learn and might give me information of whatever there is in these parts.

The information that Columbus wanted most was: Where is the gold? He had persuaded the king and queen of Spain to finance an expedition to the lands, the wealth, he expected would be on the other side of the Atlantic -the Indies and Asia, gold and spices. For, like other informed people of his time, he knew the world was round and he could sail west in order to get to the Far East.

Spain was recently unified, one of the new modern nation-states, like France, England, and Portugal. Its population, mostly poor peasants, worked for the nobility, who were 2 percent of the population and owned 95 percent of the land. Spain had tied itself to the Catholic Church, expelled all the Jews, driven out the Moors. Like other states of the modern world, Spain sought gold, which was becoming the new mark of wealth, more useful than land because it could buy anything.

There was gold in Asia, it was thought, and certainly silks and spices, for Marco Polo and others had brought back marvelous things from their overland expeditions centuries before. Now that the Turks had conquered Constantinople and the eastern Mediterranean, and controlled the land routes to Asia, a sea route was needed. Portuguese sailors were working their way around the southern tip of Africa. Spain decided to gamble on a long sail across an unknown ocean.

In return for bringing back gold and spices, they promised Columbus 10 percent of the profits, governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new tide: Admiral of the Ocean Sea. He was a merchant's clerk from the Italian city of Genoa, part-time weaver (the son of a skilled weaver), and expert sailor. He set out with three sailing ships, the largest of which was the Santa Maria, perhaps 100 feet long, and thirty-nine crew members.

Columbus would never have made it to Asia, which was thousands of miles farther away than he had calculated, imagining a smaller world. He would have been doomed by that great expanse of sea. But he was lucky. One-fourth of the way there he came upon an unknown, uncharted land that lay between Europe and Asia-the Americas. It was early October 1492, and thirty-three days since he and his crew had left the Canary Islands, off the Atlantic coast of Africa. Now they saw branches and sticks floating in the water. They saw flocks of birds.
These were signs of land. Then, on October 12, a sailor called Rodrigo saw the early morning moon shining on white sands, and cried out. It was an island in the Bahamas, the Caribbean sea. The first man to sight land was supposed to get a yearly pension of 10,000 maravedis for life, but Rodrigo never got it. Columbus claimed he had seen a light the evening before. He got the reward.

So, approaching land, they were met by the Arawaks, who swam out to greet them. The Arawaks lived in village communes, had a developed agriculture of corn, yams, cassava. They could spin and weave, but they had no horses or work animals. They had no iron, but they wore tiny gold ornaments in their ears.

This was to have enormous consequences: it led Columbus to take some of them aboard ship as prisoners because he insisted that they guide him to the source of the gold. He then sailed to what is now Cuba, then to Hispaniola (the island which today consists of Haiti and the Dominican Republic). There, bits of visible gold in the rivers, and a gold mask presented to Columbus by a local Indian chief, led to wild visions of gold fields.

On Hispaniola, out of timbers from the Santa Maria, which had run aground, Columbus built a fort, the first European military base in the Western Hemisphere. He called it Navidad (Christmas) and left thirty-nine crewmembers there, with instructions to find and store the gold. He took more Indian prisoners and put them aboard his two remaining ships. At one part of the island he got into a fight with Indians who refused to trade as many bows and arrows as he and his men wanted. Two were run through with swords and bled to death. Then the Nina and the Pinta set sail for the Azores and Spain. When the weather turned cold, the Indian prisoners began to the.

Columbus's report to the Court in Madrid was extravagant. He insisted he had reached Asia (it was Cuba) and an island off the coast of China (Hispaniola). His descriptions were part fact, part fiction:

Hispaniola is a miracle. Mountains and hills, plains and pastures, are both fertile and beautiful ... the harbors are unbelievably good and there are many wide rivers of which the majority contain gold. ... There are many spices, and great mines of gold and other metals....

The Indians, Columbus reported, "are so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone..." He concluded his report by asking for a little help from their Majesties, and in return he would bring them from his next voyage "as much gold as they need ... and as many slaves as they ask." He was full of religious talk: "Thus the eternal God, our Lord, gives victory to those who follow His way over apparent impossibilities." Because of Columbus's exaggerated report and promises, his second expedition was given seventeen ships and more than twelve hundred men. The aim was clear: slaves and gold. They went from island to island in the Caribbean, taking Indians as captives. But as word spread of the Europeans' intent they found more and more empty villages. On Haiti, they found that the sailors left behind at Fort Navidad had been killed in a battle with the Indians, after they had roamed the island in gangs looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves for sex and labor.

Now, from his base on Haiti, Columbus sent expedition after expedition into the interior. They found no gold fields, but had to fill up the ships returning to Spain with some kind of dividend. In the year 1495, they went on a great slave raid, rounded up fifteen hundred Arawak men, women, and children, put them in pens guarded by Spaniards and dogs, then picked the five hundred best specimens to load onto ships. Of those five hundred, two hundred died en route. The rest arrived alive in Spain and were put up for sale by the archdeacon of the town, who reported that, although the slaves were "naked as the day they were born," they showed "no more embarrassment than animals." Columbus later wrote: "Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold."

But too many of the slaves died in captivity. And so Columbus, desperate to pay back dividends to those who had invested, had to make good his promise to fill the ships with gold. In the province of Cicao on Haiti, where he and his men imagined huge gold fields to exist, they ordered all persons fourteen years or
older to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. When they brought it, they were given copper tokens to hang around their necks. Indians found without a copper token had their hands cut off and bled to death.

The Indians had been given an impossible task. The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So they fled, were hunted down with dogs, and were killed.

Trying to put together an army of resistance, the Arawaks faced Spaniards who had armor, muskets, swords, horses. When the Spaniards took prisoners they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began, with cassava poison. Infants were killed to save them from the Spaniards. In two years, through murder, mutilation, or suicide, half of the 250,000 Indians on Haiti were dead.

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates, known later as encomiendas. They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands. By the year 1515, there were perhaps fifty thousand Indians left. By 1550, there were five hundred. A report of the year 1650 shows none of the original Arawaks or their descendants left on the island.

The chief source—and, on many matters the only source—of information about what happened on the islands after Columbus came is Bartolome de las Casas, who, as a young priest, participated in the conquest of Cuba. For a time he owned a plantation on which Indian slaves worked, but he gave that up and became a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty. Las Casas transcribed Columbus’s journal and, in his fifties, began a multi-volume History of the Indies. In it, he describes the Indians. They are agile, he says, and can swim long distances, especially the women. They are not completely peaceful, because they do battle from time to time with other tribes, but their casualties seem small, and they fight when they are individually moved to do so because of some grievance, not on the orders of captains or kings.

Women in Indian society were treated so well as to startle the Spaniards. Las Casas describes sex relations:

Marriage laws are non-existent: men and women alike choose their mates and leave them as they please, without offense, jealousy or anger. They multiply in great abundance; pregnant women work to the last minute and give birth almost painlessly; up the next day, they bathe in the river and are as clean and healthy as before giving birth. If they tire of their men, they give themselves abortions with herbs that force stillbirths, covering their shameful parts with leaves or cotton cloth; although on the whole, Indian men and women look upon total nakedness with as much casualness as we look upon a man’s head or at his hands.

The Indians, Las Casas says, have no religion, at least no temples. They live in large communal bell-shaped buildings, housing up to 600 people at one time ... made of very strong wood and roofed with palm leaves.... They prize bird feathers of various colors, beads made of fishbones, and green and white stones with which they adorn their ears and lips, but they put no value on gold and other precious things. They lack all manner of commerce, neither buying nor selling, and rely exclusively on their natural environment for maintenance. They are extremely generous with their possessions and by the same token covet the possessions of their friends and expect the same degree of liberality. ...

In Book Two of his History of the Indies, Las Casas (who at first urged replacing Indians by black slaves, thinking they were stronger and would survive, but later relented when he saw the effects on blacks) tells about the treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards. It is a unique account and deserves to be quoted at length:

Endless testimonies ... prove the mild and pacific temperament of the natives.... But our work was to exasperate, ravage, kill, mangle and destroy; small wonder, then, if they tried to kill one of us now and then.... The admiral, it is true, was blind as those who came after him, and he was so anxious to please the King that he committed irreparable crimes against the Indians.... Las Casas tells how the Spaniards "grew more conceited every day" and after a while refused to walk any distance. They "rode the backs of
Indians if they were in a hurry" or were carried on hammocks by Indians running in relays. "In this case they also had Indians carry large leaves to shade them from the sun and others to fan them with goose wings."

Total control led to total cruelty. The Spaniards "thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades." Las Casas tells how "two of these so-called Christians met two Indian boys one day, each carrying a parrot; they took the parrots and for fun beheaded the boys."

The Indians' attempts to defend themselves failed. And when they ran off into the hills they were found and killed. So, Las Casas reports, "they suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could turn for help." He describes their work in the mines:

... mountains are stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top a thousand times; they dig, split rocks, move stones, and carry dirt on then: backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it breaks them; and when water invades the mines, the most arduous task of all is to dry the mines by scooping up pansful of water and throwing it up outside....

After each six or eight months' work in the mines, which was the time required of each crew to dig enough gold for melting, up to a third of the men died.

While the men were sent many miles away to the mines, the wives remained to work the soil, forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants.

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides ... they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation.... hi this way, husbands died in the mines, wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk ... and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile ... was depopulated. ... My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write. ...

When he arrived on Hispaniola in 1508, Las Casas says, "there were 60,000 people living on this island, including the Indians; so that from 1494 to 1508, over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines. Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it...."

Thus began the history, five hundred years ago, of the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas. That beginning, when you read Las Casas—even if his figures are exaggerations (were there 3 million Indians to begin with, as he says, or less than a million, as some historians have calculated, or 8 million as others now believe?)—is conquest, slavery, death. When we read the history books given to children in the United States, it all starts with heroic adventure—there is no bloodshed—and Columbus Day is a celebration.

Past the elementary and high schools, there are only occasional hints of something else. Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian, was the most distinguished writer on Columbus, the author of a multivolume biography, and was himself a sailor who retraced Columbus's route across the Atlantic. In his popular book Christopher Columbus, Mariner, written in 1954, he tells about the enslavement and the killing: "The cruel policy initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide."

That is on one page, buried halfway into the telling of a grand romance. In the book's last paragraph, Morison sums up his view of Columbus:
He had his faults and his defects, but they were largely the defects of the qualities that made him great—his indomitable will, his superb faith in God and in his own mission as the Christ-bearer to lands beyond the seas, his stubborn persistence despite neglect, poverty and discouragement. But there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities—his seamanship.

One can lie outright about the past. Or one can omit facts which might lead to unacceptable conclusions. Morison does neither. He refuses to lie about Columbus. He does not omit the story of mass murder; indeed he describes it with the harshest word one can use: genocide.

But he does something else—he mentions the truth quickly and goes on to other things more important to him. Outright lying or quiet omission takes the risk of discovery which, when made, might arouse the reader to rebel against the writer. To state the facts, however, and then to bury them in a mass of other information is to say to the reader with a certain infectious calm: yes, mass murder took place, but it’s not that important—it should weigh very little in our final judgments; it should affect very little what we do in the world. It is not that the historian can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural to him as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map.

My argument cannot be against selection, simplification, emphasis, which are inevitable for both cartographers and historians. But the map-maker's distortion is a technical necessity for a common purpose shared by all people who need maps. The historian's distortion is more than technical, it is ideological; it is released into a world of contending interests, where any chosen emphasis supports (whether the historian means to or not) some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual.

Furthermore, this ideological interest is not openly expressed in the way a mapmaker's technical interest is obvious ("This is a Mercator projection for long-range navigation—for short-range, you’d better use a different projection"). No, it is presented as if all readers of history had a common interest which historians serve to the best of their ability. This is not intentional deception; the historian has been trained in a society in which education and knowledge are put forward as technical problems of excellence and not as tools for contending social classes, races, nations.

To emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his successors as navigators and discoverers, and to de-emphasize their genocide, is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves-unwittingly—to justify what was done.

My point is not that we must, in telling history, accuse, judge, condemn Columbus in absentia. It is too late for that; it would be a useless scholarly exercise in morality. But the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress (Hiroshima and Vietnam, to save Western civilization; Kronstadt and Hungary, to save socialism; nuclear proliferation, to save us all)—that is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth. We have learned to give them exactly the same proportion of attention that teachers and writers often give them in the most respectable of classrooms and textbooks. This learned sense of moral proportion, coming from the apparent objectivity of the scholar, is accepted more easily than when it comes from politicians at press conferences. It is therefore more deadly.

The treatment of heroes (Columbus) and their victims (the Arawaks)—the quiet acceptance of conquest and murder in the name of progress—is only one aspect of a certain approach to history, in which the past is told from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders. It is as if they, like Columbus, deserve universal acceptance, as if they—the Founding Fathers, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy, the leading members of Congress, the famous Justices of the Supreme Court—represent the nation as a whole. The pretense is that there really is such a thing as "the United States,"
subject to occasional conflicts and quarrels, but fundamentally a community of people with common interests. It is as if there really is a "national interest" represented in the Constitution, in territorial expansion, in the laws passed by Congress, the decisions of the courts, the development of capitalism, the culture of education and the mass media.

"History is the memory of states," wrote Henry Kissinger in his first book, A World Restored in which he proceeded to tell the history of nineteenth-century Europe from the viewpoint of the leaders of Austria and England, ignoring the millions who suffered from those statesmen's policies. From his standpoint, the "peace" that Europe had before the French Revolution was "restored" by the diplomacy of a few national leaders. But for factory workers in England, farmers in France, colored people in Asia and Africa, women and children everywhere except in the upper classes, it was a world of conquest, violence, hunger, exploitation—a world not restored but disintegrated.

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been, The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott's army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. And so on, to the limited extent that any one person, however he or she strains, can "see" history from the standpoint of others.

My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present. And the lines are not always clear. In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims. Still, understanding the complexities, this book will be skeptical of governments and their attempts, through politics and culture, to ensnare ordinary people in a giant web of nationhood pretending to a common interest. I will try not to overlook the cruelties that victims inflict on one another as they are jammed together in the boxcars of the system. I don't want to romanticize them. But I do remember (in rough paraphrase) a statement I once read: "The cry of the poor is not always just, but if you don't listen to it, you will never know what justice is."

I don't want to invent victories for people's movements. But to think that history-writing must aim simply to recapitulate the failures that dominate the past is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat. If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.

That, being as blunt as I can, is my approach to the history of the United States. The reader may as well know that before going on.
What Columbus did to the Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortes did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots.

The Aztec civilization of Mexico came out of the heritage of Mayan, Zapotec, and Toltec cultures. It built enormous constructions from stone tools and human labor, developed a writing system and a priesthood. It also engaged in (let us not overlook this) the ritual killing of thousands of people as sacrifices to the gods. The cruelty of the Aztecs, however, did not erase a certain innocence, and when a Spanish armada appeared at Vera Cruz, and a bearded white man came ashore, with strange beasts (horses), clad in iron, it was thought that he was the legendary Aztec man-god who had died three hundred years before, with the promise to return-the mysterious Quetzalcoatl. And so they welcomed him, with munificent hospitality.

That was Hernando Cortes, come from Spain with an expedition financed by merchants and landowners and blessed by the deputies of God, with one obsessive goal: to find gold. In the mind of Montezuma, the king of the Aztecs, there must have been a certain doubt about whether Cortes was indeed Quetzalcoatl, because he sent a hundred runners to Cortes, bearing enormous treasures, gold and silver wrought into objects of fantastic beauty, but at the same time begging him to go back. (The painter Durer a few years later described what he saw just arrived in Spain from that expedition-a sun of gold, a moon of silver, worth a fortune.) Cortes then began his march of death from town to town, using deception, turning Aztec against Aztec, killing with the kind of deliberateness that accompanies a strategy-to paralyze the will of the population by a sudden frightful deed. And so, in Cholulu, he invited the headmen of the Cholula nation to the square. And when they came, with thousands of unarmed retainers, Cortes's small army of Spaniards, posted around the square with cannon, armed with crossbows, mounted on horses, massacred them, down to the last man. Then they looted the city and moved on. When their cavalcade of murder was over they were in Mexico City, Montezuma was dead, and the Aztec civilization, shattered, was in the hands of the Spaniards.

All this is told in the Spaniards’ own accounts.

In Peru, that other Spanish conquistador Pizarro, used the same tactics, and for the same reasons-the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expeditions, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy rising out of feudalism, to participate in what Karl Marx would later call "the primitive accumulation of capital." These were the violent beginnings of an intricate system of technology, business, politics, and culture that would dominate the world for the next five centuries.

In the North American English colonies, the pattern was set early, as Columbus had set it in the islands of the Bahamas. In 1585, before there was any permanent English settlement in Virginia, Richard Grenville landed there with seven ships. The Indians he met were hospitable, but when one of them stole a small silver cup, Grenville sacked and burned the whole Indian village. Jamestown itself was set up inside the territory of an Indian confederacy, led by the chief, Powhatan. Powhatan watched the English settle on his people’s land, but did not attack, maintaining a posture of coolness. When the English were going through their "starving time" in the winter of 1610, some of them ran off to join the Indians, where they would at least be fed. When the summer came, the governor of the colony sent a messenger to ask Powhatan to return the runaways, whereupon Powhatan, according to the English account, replied with "noe other than prowde and disdaynefull Answers." Some soldiers were therefore sent out "to take Revenge." They fell upon an Indian settlement, killed fifteen or sixteen Indians, burned the houses, cut down the corn growing around the village, took the queen of the tribe and her children into boats, then ended up throwing the children overboard "and shoteinge owit their Braynes in the water." The queen was later taken off and stabbed to death.
Twelve years later, the Indians, alarmed as the English settlements kept growing in numbers, apparently decided to try to wipe them out for good. They went on a rampage and massacred 347 men, women, and children. From then on it was total war. Not able to enslave the Indians, and not able to live with them, the English decided to exterminate them. Edmund Morgan writes, in his history of early Virginia, American Slavery, American Freedom:

Since the Indians were better woodsmen than the English and virtually impossible to track down, the method was to feign peaceful intentions, let them settle down and plant their corn wherever they chose, and then, just before harvest, fall upon them, killing as many as possible and burning the corn... Within two or three years of the massacre the English had avenged the deaths of that day many times over.

In that first year of the white man in Virginia, 1607, Powhatan had addressed a plea to John Smith that turned out prophetic. How authentic it is may be in doubt, but it is so much like so many Indian statements that it may be taken as, if not the rough letter of that first plea, the exact spirit of it:

I have seen two generations of my people the.... I know the difference between peace and war better than any man in my country. I am now grown old, and must the soon; my authority must descend to my brothers, Opitehapan, Opechancanough and Catatough-then to my two sisters, and then to my two daughters-I wish them to know as much as I do, and that your love to them may be like mine to you. Why will you take by force what you may have quietly by love? Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What can you get by war? We can hide our provisions and run into the woods; then you will starve for wronging your friends. Why are you jealous of us? We are unarmed, and willing to give you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner, and not so simple as not to know that it is much better to eat good meat, sleep comfortably, live quietly with my wives and children, laugh and be merry with the English, and trade for their copper and hatchets, than to run away from them, and to lie cold in the woods, feed on acorns, roots and such trash, and be so hunted that I can neither eat nor sleep. In these wars, my men must sit up watching, and if a twig break, diey all cry out "Here comes Captain Smith!" So I must end my miserable life. Take away your guns and swords, the cause of all our jealousy, or you may all the in the same manner.

When the Pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a "vacuum." The Indians, he said, had not "subdued" the land, and therefore had only a "natural" right to it, but not a "civil right." A "natural right" did not have legal standing.

The Puritans also appealed to the Bible, Psalms 2:8: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee, the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." And to justify their use of force to take the land, they cited Romans 13:2: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

The Puritans lived in uneasy truce with the Pequot Indians, who occupied what is now southern Connecticut and Rhode Island. But they wanted them out of the way; they wanted their land. And they seemed to want also to establish their rule firmly over Connecticut settlers in that area. The murder of a white trader, Indian-kidnaper, and troublemaker became an excuse to make war on the Pequots in 1636.

A punitive expedition left Boston to attack the Narragansett Indians on Block Island, who were lumped with the Pequots. As Governor Winthrop wrote:

They had commission to pat to death the men of Block Island, but to spare the women and children, and to bring them away, and to take possession of the island; and from thence to go to the Pequods to demand the murderers of Captain Stone and other English, and one thousand fathom of wampum for damages, etc. and some of their children as hostages, which if they should refuse, they were to obtain it by force.

The English landed and killed some Indians, but the rest hid in the thick forests of the island and the English went from one deserted village to the next, destroying crops. Then they sailed back to the
mainland and raided Pequot villages along the coast, destroying crops again. One of the officers of that expedition, in his account, gives some insight into the Pequots they encountered: "The Indians spying of us came running in multitudes along the water side, crying, What cheer, Englishmen, what cheer, what do you come for? They not thinking we intended war, went on cheerfully... -"

So, the war with the Pequots began. Massacres took place on both sides. The English developed a tactic of warfare used earlier by Cortes and later, in the twentieth century, even more systematically: deliberate attacks on noncombatants for the purpose of terrorizing the enemy. This is ethno historian Francis Jennings’s interpretation of Captain John Mason’s attack on a Pequot village on the Mystic River near Long Island Sound: "Mason proposed to avoid attacking Pequot warriors, which would have overtaxed his unseasoned, unreliable troops. Battle, as such, was not his purpose. Battle is only one of the ways to destroy an enemy’s will to fight. Massacre can accomplish the same end with less risk, and Mason had determined that massacre would be his objective."

So the English set fire to the wigwams of the village. By their own account: "The Captain also said, We must Burn Them; and immediately stepping into the Wigwam ... brought out a Fire Brand, and putting it into the Malts with which they were covered, set the Wigwams on Fire." William Bradford, in his History of the Plymouth Plantation written at the time, describes John Mason’s raid on the Pequot village:

_Those that scaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stinke and sente there of, but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enemise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enimie._

As Dr. Cotton Mather, Puritan theologian, put it: "It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day."

The war continued. Indian tribes were used against one another, and never seemed able to join together in fighting the English. Jennings sums up:

The terror was very real among the Indians, but in time they came to meditate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen’s most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage; (2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart.

A footnote in Virgil Vogel’s book This Land Was Ours (1972) says: "The official figure on the number of Pequots now in Connecticut is twenty-one persons."

Forty years after the Pequot War, Puritans and Indians fought again. This time it was the Wampanoags, occupying the south shore of Massachusetts Bay, who were in the way and also beginning to trade some of their land to people outside the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their chief, Massasoit, was dead. His son Wamsulta had been killed by Englishmen, and Wamsultas brother Metacom (later to be called King Philip by the English) became chief. The English found their excuse, a murder which they attributed to Metacom, and they began a war of conquest against the Wampanoags, a war to take their land. They were clearly the aggressors, but claimed they attacked for preventive purposes. As Roger Williams, more friendly to the Indians than most, put it: "All men of conscience or prudence ply to windward, to maintain their wars to be defensive." Jennings says the elite of the Puritans wanted the war; the ordinary white Englishman did not want it and often refused to fight. The Indians certainly did not want war, but they matched atrocity with atrocity. When it was over, in 1676, the English had won, but their resources were drained; they had lost six hundred men. Three thousand Indians were dead, including Metacom himself. Yet the Indian raids did not stop.
For a while, the English tried softer tactics. But ultimately, it was back to annihilation. The Indian population of 10 million that lived north of Mexico when Columbus came would ultimately be reduced to less than a million. Huge numbers of Indians would die from diseases introduced by the whites. A Dutch traveler in New Netherland wrote in 1656 that "the Indians ... affirm, that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the smallpox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they now are, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died." When the English first settled Martha's Vineyard in 1642, the Wampanoags there numbered perhaps three thousand. There were no wars on that island, but by 1764, only 313 Indians were left there. Similarly, Block Island Indians numbered perhaps 1,200 to 1,500 in 1662, and by 1774 were reduced to fifty-one.

Behind the English invasion of North America, behind their massacre of Indians, their deception, their brutality, was that special powerful drive born in civilizations based on private property. It was a morally ambiguous drive; the need for space, for land, was a real human need. But in conditions of scarcity, in a barbarous epoch of history ruled by competition, this human need was transformed into the murder of whole peoples. Roger Williams said it was a depraved appetite after the great vanities, dreams and shadows of this vanishing life, great portions of land, land in this wilderness, as if men were in as great necessity and danger for want of great portions of land, as poor, hungry, thirsty seamen have, after a sick and stormy, a long and starving passage. This is one of the gods of New England, which the living and most high Eternal will destroy and famish.

Was all this bloodshed and deceit-from Columbus to Cortes, Pizarro, the Puritans-a necessity for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization? Was Morison right in burying the story of genocide inside a more important story of human progress? Perhaps a persuasive argument can be made-as it was made by Stalin when he killed peasants for industrial progress in the Soviet Union, as it was made by Churchill explaining the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg, and Truman explaining Hiroshima. But how can the judgment be made if the benefits and losses cannot be balanced because the losses are either unmentioned or mentioned quickly?

That quick disposal might be acceptable ("Unfortunate, yes, but it had to be done") to the middle and upper classes of the conquering and "advanced" countries. But is it acceptable to the poor of Asia, Africa, Latin America, or to the prisoners in Soviet labor camps, or the blacks in urban ghettos, or the Indians on reservations-to the victims of that progress which benefits a privileged minority in the world? Was it acceptable (or just inescapable?) to the miners and railroaders of America, the factory hands, the men and women who died by the hundreds of thousands from accidents or sickness, where they worked or where they lived-casualties of progress? And even the privileged minority-must it not reconsider, with that practicality which even privilege cannot abolish, the value of its privileges, when they become threatened by the anger of the sacrificed, whether in organized rebellion, unorganized riot, or simply those brutal individual acts of desperation labeled crimes by law and the state?

If there are necessary sacrifices to be made for human progress, is it not essential to hold to the principle that those to be sacrificed must make the decision themselves? We can all decide to give up something of ours, but do we have the right to throw into the pyre the children of others, or even our own children, for a progress which is not nearly as clear or present as sickness or health, life or death?

What did people in Spain get out of all that death and brutality visited on the Indians of the Americas? For a brief period in history, there was the glory of a Spanish Empire in the Western Hemisphere. As Hans Koning sums it up in his book Columbus: His Enterprise:

For all the gold and silver stolen and shipped to Spain did not make the Spanish people richer. It gave their kings an edge in the balance of power for a time, a chance to hire more mercenary soldiers for their wars. They ended up losing those wars anyway, and all that was left was a deadly inflation, a starving population, the rich richer, the poor poorer, and a ruined peasant class.
Beyond all that, how certain are we that what was destroyed was inferior? Who were these people who came out on the beach and swam to bring presents to Columbus and his crew, who watched Cortes and Pizarro ride through their countryside, who peered out of the forests at the first white settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts?

Columbus called them Indians, because he miscalculated the size of the earth. In this book we too call them Indians, with some reluctance, because it happens too often that people are saddled with names given them by their conquerors.

And yet, there is some reason to call them Indians, because they did come, perhaps 25,000 years ago, from Asia, across the land bridge of the Bering Straits (later to disappear under water) to Alaska. Then they moved southward, seeking warmth and land, in a trek lasting thousands of years that took them into North America, then Central and South America. In Nicaragua, Brazil, and Ecuador their petrified footprints can still be seen, along with the print of bison, who disappeared about five thousand years ago, so they must have reached South America at least that far back. Widely dispersed over the great land mass of the Americas, they numbered approximately 75 million people by the time Columbus came, perhaps 25 million in North America. Responding to the different environments of soil and climate, they developed hundreds of different tribal cultures, perhaps two thousand different languages. They perfected the art of agriculture, and figured out how to grow maize (corn), which cannot grow by itself and must be planted, cultivated, fertilized, harvested, husked, shelled. They ingeniously developed a variety of other vegetables and fruits, as well as peanuts and chocolate and tobacco and rubber. On their own, the Indians were engaged in the great agricultural revolution that other peoples in Asia, Europe, Africa were going through about the same time.

While many of the tribes remained nomadic hunters and food gatherers in wandering, egalitarian communes, others began to live in more settled communities where there was more food, larger populations, more divisions of labor among men and women, more surplus to feed chiefs and priests, more leisure time for artistic and social work, for building houses. About a thousand years before Christ, while comparable constructions were going on in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the Zuni and Hopi Indians of what is now New Mexico had begun to build villages consisting of large terraced buildings, nestled in among cliffs and mountains for protection from enemies, with hundreds of rooms in each village. Before the arrival of the European explorers, they were using irrigation canals, dams, were doing ceramics, weaving baskets, making cloth out of cotton.

By the time of Christ and Julius Caesar, there had developed in the Ohio River Valley a culture of so-called Moundbuilders, Indians who constructed thousands of enormous sculptures out of earth, sometimes in the shapes of huge humans, birds, or serpents, sometimes as burial sites, sometimes as fortifications. One of them was miles long, enclosing 100 acres. These Moundbuilders seem to have been part of a complex trading system of ornaments and weapons from as far off as the Great Lakes, the Far West, and the Gulf of Mexico.

About A.D. 500, as this Moundbuilder culture of the Ohio Valley was beginning to decline, another culture was developing westward, in the valley of the Mississippi, centered on what is now St. Louis. It had an advanced agriculture, included thousands of villages, and also built huge earthen mounds as burial and ceremonial places near a vast Indian metropolis that may have had thirty thousand people. The largest mound was 100 feet high, with a rectangular base larger than that of the Great Pyramid of Egypt. In the city, known as Cahokia, were toolmakers, hide dressers, potters, jewelry makers, weavers, salt makers, copper engravers, and magnificent ceramists. One funeral blanket was made of twelve thousand shell beads.

From the Adirondacks to the Great Lakes, in what is now Pennsylvania and upper New York, lived the most powerful of the northeastern tribes, the League of the Iroquois, which included the Mohawks (People of the Flint), Oneidas (People of the Stone), Onondagas (People of the Mountain), Cayugas
(People at the Landing), and Senecas (Great Hill People), thousands of people bound together by a common Iroquois language.

In the vision of the Mohawk chief Iliawatha, the legendary Dekaniwidah spoke to the Iroquois: "We bind ourselves together by taking hold of each other's hands so firmly and forming a circle so strong that if a tree should fall upon it, it could not shake nor break it, so that our people and grandchildren shall remain in the circle in security, peace and happiness."

In the villages of the Iroquois, land was owned in common and worked in common. Hunting was done together, and the catch was divided among the members of the village. Houses were considered common property and were shared by several families. The concept of private ownership of land and homes was foreign to the Iroquois. A French Jesuit priest who encountered them in the 1650s wrote: "No poorhouses are needed among them, because they are neither mendicants nor paupers... Their kindness, humanity and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common."

Women were important and respected in Iroquois society. Families were matrilineal. That is, the family line went down through the female members, whose husbands joined the family, while sons who married then joined their wives' families. Each extended family lived in a "long house." When a woman wanted a divorce, she set her husband's things outside the door.

Families were grouped in clans, and a dozen or more clans might make up a village. The senior women in the village named the men who represented the clans at village and tribal councils. They also named the forty-nine chiefs who were the ruling council for the Five Nation confederacy of the Iroquois. The women attended clan meetings, stood behind the circle of men who spoke and voted, and removed the men from office if they strayed too far from the wishes of the women.

The women tended the crops and took general charge of village affairs while the men were always hunting or fishing. And since they supplied the moccasins and food for warring expeditions, they had some control over military matters. As Gary B. Nash notes in his fascinating study of early America, Red, White, and Black: "Thus power was shared between the sexes and the European idea of male dominancy and female subordination in all things was conspicuously absent in Iroquois society." Children in Iroquois society, while taught the cultural heritage of their people and solidarity with the tribe, were also taught to be independent, not to submit to overbearing authority. They were taught equality in status and the sharing of possessions. The Iroquois did not use harsh punishment on children; they did not insist on early weaning or early toilet training, but gradually allowed the child to learn self-care.

All of this was in sharp contrast to European values as brought over by the first colonists, a society of rich and poor, controlled by priests, by governors, by male heads of families. For example, the pastor of the Pilgrim colony, John Robinson, thus advised his parishioners how to deal with their children: "And surely there is in all children... a stubbornness, and stoutness of mind arising from natural pride, which must, in the first place, be broken and beaten down; that so the foundation of their education being laid in humility and tractableness, other virtues may, in their time, be built thereon." Gary Nash describes Iroquois culture:

No laws and ordinances, sheriffs and constables, judges and juries, or courts or jails-the apparatus of authority in European societies-were to be found in the northeast woodlands prior to European arrival. Yet boundaries of acceptable behavior were firmly set. Though priding themselves on the autonomous individual, the Iroquois maintained a strict sense of right and wrong.... He who stole another's food or acted invaluously in war was "shamed" by his people and ostracized from their company until he had atoned for his actions and demonstrated to their satisfaction that he had morally purified himself.

Not only the Iroquois but other Indian tribes behaved the same way. In 1635, Maryland Indians responded to the governor's demand that if any of them lolled an Englishman, the guilty one should be delivered up for punishment according to English law. The Indians said:
It is the manner amongst us Indians, that if any such accident happen, wee doe redeeme the life of a man that is so slaine, with a 100 armes length of Beades and since that you are heere strangers, and come into our Countrey, you should rather conform yourselves to the Customes of our Countrey, than impose yours upon us....

So, Columbus and his successors were not coming into an empty wilderness, but into a world which in some places was as densely populated as Europe itself, where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations among men, women, children, and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps any place in the world. They were people without a written language, but with their own laws, their poetry, their history kept in memory and passed on, in an oral vocabulary more complex than Europe's, accompanied by song, dance, and ceremonial drama. They paid careful attention to the development of personality, intensity of will, independence and flexibility, passion and potency, to their partnership with one another and with nature.

John Collier, an American scholar who lived among Indians in the 1920s and 1930s in the American Southwest, said of their spirit: "Could we make it our own, there would be an eternally inexhaustible earth and a forever lasting peace."

Perhaps there is some romantic mythology in that. But the evidence from European travelers in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, put together recently by an American specialist on Indian life, William Brandon, is overwhelmingly supportive of much of that "myth." Even allowing for the imperfection of myths, it is enough to make us question, for that time and ours, the excuse of progress in the annihilation of races, and the telling of history from the standpoint of the conquerors and leaders of Western civilization.

2. Drawing the Color Line

A black American writer, J. Saunders Redding, describes the arrival of a ship in North America in the year 1619:

Sails furled, flag drooping at her rounded stern, she rode the tide in from the sea. She was a strange ship, indeed, by all accounts, a frightening ship, a ship of mystery. Whether she was trader, privateer, or man-of-war no one knows. Through her bulwarks black-mouthed cannon yawned. The flag she flew was Dutch; her crew a motley. Her port of call, an English settlement, Jamestown, in the colony of Virginia. She came, she traded, and shortly afterwards was gone. Probably no ship in modern history has carried a more portentous freight. Her cargo? Twenty slaves.

There is not a country in world history in which racism has been more important, for so long a time, as the United States. And the problem of "the color line," as W. E. B. Du Bois put it, is still with us. So it is more than a purely historical question to ask: How does it start?-and an even more urgent question: How might it end? Or, to put it differently: Is it possible for whites and blacks to live together without hatred?

If history can help answer these questions, then the beginnings of slavery in North America—a continent where we can trace the coming of the first whites and the first blacks—might supply at least a few clues.

Some historians think those first blacks in Virginia were considered as servants, like the white indentured servants brought from Europe. But the strong probability is that, even if they were listed as "servants" (a more familiar category to the English), they were viewed as being different from white servants, were treated differently, and in fact were slaves.

In any case, slavery developed quickly into a regular institution, into the normal labor relation of blacks to whites in the New World. With it developed that special racial feeling—whether hatred, or contempt, or pity, or patronization—that accompanied the inferior position of blacks in America for the next 350 years—that combination of inferior status and derogatory thought we call racism.
Everything in the experience of the first white settlers acted as a pressure for the enslavement of blacks. The Virginians of 1619 were desperate for labor, to grow enough food to stay alive. Among them were survivors from the winter of 1609-1610, the "starving time," when, crazed for want of food, they roamed the woods for nuts and berries, dug up graves to eat the corpses, and died in batches until five hundred colonists were reduced to sixty.

In the Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia is a document of 1619 which tells of the first twelve years of the Jamestown colony. The first settlement had a hundred persons, who had one small ladle of barley per meal. When more people arrived, there was even less food. Many of the people lived in cavelike holes dug into the ground, and in the winter of 1609-1610, they were driven thru insufferable hunger to eat those things which nature most abhorred, the flesh and excrements of man as well of our own nation as of an Indian, digged by some out of his grave after he had lain buried three days and wholly devoured him; others, envying the better state of body of any whom hunger has not yet so much wasted as their own, lay wait and threatened to kill and eat them; one among them slew his wife as she slept in his bosom, cut her in pieces, salted her and fed upon her till he had clean devoured all parts saving her head...

A petition by thirty colonists to the House of Burgesses, complaining against the twelve-year governorship of Sir Thomas Smith, said:

In those 12 years of Sir Thomas Smidi, his government, we aver that the colony for the most part remained in great want and misery under most severe and cruel laws... The allowance in those times for a man was only eight ounces of meale and half a pint of peas for a day ... mouldy, rotten, full of cobwebs and maggots, loathsome to man and not fit for beasts, which forced many to flee for relief to the savage enemy, who being taken again were put to sundry deaths as by hanging, shooting and breaking upon the wheel ... of whom one for stealing two or three pints of oatmeal had a bodkin thrust through his tongue and was tied with a chain to a tree until he starved....

The Virginians needed labor, to grow corn for subsistence, to grow tobacco for export. They had just figured out how to grow tobacco, and in 1617 they sent off the first cargo to England. Finding that, like all pleasurable drugs tainted with moral disapproval, it brought a high price, the planters, despite their high religious talk, were not going to ask questions about something so profitable.

They couldn't force Indians to work for them, as Columbus had done. They were outnumbereed, and while, with superior firearms, they could massacre Indians, they would face massacre in return. They could not capture them and keep them enslaved; the Indians were tough, resourceful, defiant, and at home in these woods, as the transplanted Englishmen were not. White servants had not yet been brought over in sufficient quantity. Besides, they did not come out of slavery, and did not have to do more than contract their labor for a few years to get their passage and a start in the New World. As for the free white settlers, many of them were skilled craftsmen, or even men of leisure back in England, who were so little inclined to work the land that John Smith, in those early years, had to declare a kind of martial law, organize them into work gangs, and force them into the fields for survival.

There may have been a kind of frustrated rage at their own ineptitude, at the Indian superiority at taking care of themselves, that made the Virginians especially ready to become the masters of slaves. Edmund Morgan imagines their mood as he writes in his book American Slavery, American Freedom:

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indians'. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages... But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract anything. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did... And when your own people started deserting in order to live with them, it was too much... So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned their villages, burned their cornfields. It proved your superiority, in spite of your failures. And you gave similar treatment to any of your own people who succumbed to their savage ways of life. But you still did not
grow much Black slaves were the answer. And it was natural to consider imported blacks as slaves, even if the institution of slavery would not be regularized and legalized for several decades. Because, by 1619, a million blacks had already been brought from Africa to South America and the Caribbean, to the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, to work as slaves. Fifty years before Columbus, the Portuguese took ten African blacks to Lisbon—this was the start of a regular trade in slaves. African blacks had been stamped as slave labor for a hundred years. So it would have been strange if those twenty blacks, forcibly transported to Jamestown, and sold as objects to settlers anxious for a steadfast source of labor, were considered as anything but slaves.

Their helplessness made enslavement easier. The Indians were on their own land. The whites were in their own European culture. The blacks had been torn from their land and culture, forced into a situation where the heritage of language, dress, custom, family relations, was bit by bit obliterated except for the remnants that blacks could hold on to by sheer, extraordinary persistence.

Was their culture inferior—and so subject to easy destruction? Inferior in military capability, yes—vulnerable to whites with guns and ships. But in no other way—except that cultures that are different are often taken as inferior, especially when such a judgment is practical and profitable. Even militarily, while the Westerners could secure forts on the African coast, they were unable to subdue the interior and had to come to terms with its chiefs. The African civilization was as advanced in its own way as that of Europe. In certain ways, it was more admirable; but it also included cruelties, hierarchical privilege, and the readiness to sacrifice human lives for religion or profit. It was a civilization of 100 million people, using iron implements and skilled in farming. It had large urban centers and remarkable achievements in weaving, ceramics, sculpture.

European travelers in the sixteenth century were impressed with the African kingdoms of Timbuktu and Mali, already stable and organized at a time when European states were just beginning to develop into the modern nation. In 1563, Ramusio, secretary to the rulers in Venice, wrote to the Italian merchants: "Let them go and do business with the King of Timbuktu and Mali and there is no doubt that they will be well-received there with their ships and their goods and treated well, and granted the favours that they ask..."

A Dutch report, around 1602, on the West African kingdom of Benin, said: "The Towne seemeth to be very great, when you enter it. You go into a great broad street, not paved, which seemeth to be seven or eight times broader than the Warmoes Street in Amsterdam.... The Houses in this Towne stand in good order, one close and even with the other, as the Houses in Holland stand."

The inhabitants of the Guinea Coast were described by one traveler around 1680 as "very civil and good-natured people, easy to be dealt with, condescending to what Europeans require of them in a civil way, and very ready to return double the presents we make them."

Africa had a kind of feudalism, like Europe based on agriculture, and with hierarchies of lords and vassals. But African feudalism did not come, as did Europe's, out of the slave societies of Greece and Rome, which had destroyed ancient tribal life. In Africa, tribal life was still powerful, and some of its better features—a communal spirit, more kindness in law and punishment—still existed. And because the lords did not have the weapons that European lords had, they could not command obedience as easily.

In his book The African Slave Trade, Basil Davidson contrasts law in the Congo in the early sixteenth century with law in Portugal and England. In those European countries, where the idea of private property was becoming powerful, theft was punished brutally. In England, even as late as 1740, a child could be hanged for stealing a rag of cotton. But in the Congo, communal life persisted, the idea of private property was a strange one, and thefts were punished with fines or various degrees of servitude. A Congolese leader, told of the Portuguese legal codes, asked a Portuguese once, teasingly: "What is the penalty in Portugal for anyone who puts his feet on the ground?" Slavery existed in the African states, and it was sometimes used by Europeans to justify their own slave trade. But, as Davidson points out, the
"slaves" of Africa were more like the serfs of Europe—in other words, like most of the population of Europe. It was a harsh servitude, but they had rights which slaves brought to America did not have, and they were "altogether different from the human cattle of the slave ships and the American plantations." In the Ashanti Kingdom of West Africa, one observer noted that "a slave might marry; own property; himself own a slave; swear an oath; be a competent witness and ultimately become heir to his master.... An Ashanti slave, nine cases out of ten, possibly became an adopted member of the family, and in time his descendants so merged and intermarried with the owner's kinsmen that only a few would know their origin."

One slave trader, John Newton (who later became an antislavery leader), wrote about the people of what is now Sierra Leone:

The state of slavery, among these wild barbarous people, as we esteem them, is much milder than in our colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our West India plantations, and therefore no call for that excessive, uninterrrupted labour, which exhausts our slaves: so, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood even from a slave.

African slavery is hardly to be praised. But it was far different from plantation or mining slavery in the Americas, which was lifelong, morally crippling, destructive of family ties, without hope of any future. African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form of slavery in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with that relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave.

In fact, it was because they came from a settled culture, of tribal customs and family ties, of communal life and traditional ritual, that African blacks found themselves especially helpless when removed from this. They were captured in the interior (frequently by blacks caught up in the slave trade themselves), sold on the coast, then shoved into pens with blacks of other tribes, often speaking different languages.

The conditions of capture and sale were crushing affirmations to the black African of his helplessness in the face of superior force. The marches to the coast, sometimes for 1,000 miles, with people shackled around the neck, under whip and gun, were death marches, in which two of every five blacks died. On the coast, they were kept in cages until they were picked and sold. One John Barbot, at the end of the seventeenth century, described these cages on the Gold Coast: As the slaves come down to Fida from the inland country, they are put into a booth or prison .... near the beach, and when the Europeans are to receive them, they are brought out unto a large plain, where the ship's surgeons examine every part of everyone of them, to the smallest member, men and women being stark naked.... Such as are allowed good and sound are set on one side ... marked on the breast with a red-hot iron, imprinting the mark of the French, English, or Dutch companies.... The branded slaves after this are returned to their former booths where they await shipment, sometimes 10-15 days....

Then they were packed aboard the slave ships, in spaces not much bigger than coffins, chained together in the dark, wet slime of the ship's bottom, choking in the stench of their own excrement. Documents of the time describe the conditions:

The height, sometimes, between decks, was only eighteen inches; so that the unfortunate human beings could not turn around, or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs. In such a place the sense of misery and suffocation is so great, that the Negroes ... are driven to frenzy.

On one occasion, hearing a great noise from belowdecks where the blacks were chained together, the sailors opened the hatches and found the slaves in different stages of suffocation, many dead, some having killed others in desperate attempts to breathe. Slaves often jumped overboard to drown rather than continue their suffering. To one observer a slave-deck was "so covered with blood and mucus that it resembled a slaughter house."
Under these conditions, perhaps one of every three blacks transported overseas died, but the huge profits (often double the investment on one trip) made it worthwhile for the slave trader, and so the blacks were packed into the holds like fish.

First the Dutch, then the English, dominated the slave trade. (By 1795 Liverpool had more than a hundred ships carrying slaves and accounted for half of all the European slave trade.) Some Americans in New England entered the business, and in 1637 the first American slave ship, the Desire, sailed from Marblehead. Its holds were partitioned into racks, 2 feet by 6 feet, with leg irons and bars.

By 1800, 10 to 15 million blacks had been transported as slaves to the Americas, representing perhaps one-third of those originally seized in Africa. It is roughly estimated that Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world.

In the year 1610, a Catholic priest in the Americas named Father Sandoval wrote back to a church functionary in Europe to ask if the capture, transport, and enslavement of African blacks was legal by church doctrine. A letter dated March 12, 1610, from Brother Luis Brandon to Father Sandoval gives the answer:

Your Reverence writes me that you would like to know whether the Negroes who are sent to your parts have been legally captured. To this I reply that I think your Reverence should have no scruples on this point, because this is a matter which has been questioned by the Board of Conscience in Lisbon, and all its members are learned and conscientious men. Nor did the bishops who were in Sao Thome, Cape Verde, and here in Loando—all learned and virtuous men—find fault with it. We have been here ourselves for forty years and there have been among us very learned Fathers... never did they consider the trade as illicit. Therefore we and the Fathers of Brazil buy these slaves for our service without any scruple....

With all of this—the desperation of the Jamestown settlers for labor, the impossibility of using Indians and the difficulty of using whites, the availability of blacks offered in greater and greater numbers by profit-seeking dealers in human flesh, and with such blacks possible to control because they had just gone through an ordeal which if it did not kill them must have left them in a state of psychic and physical helplessness—is it any wonder that such blacks were ripe for enslavement?

And under these conditions, even if some blacks might have been considered servants, would blacks be treated the same as white servants?

The evidence, from the court records of colonial Virginia, shows that in 1630 a white man named Hugh Davis was ordered "to be soundly whipt ... for abusing himself ... by defiling his body in lying with a Negro." Ten years later, six servants and "a negro of Mr. Reynolds" started to run away. While the whites received lighter sentences, "Emanuel the Negro to receive thirty stripes and to be burnt in the cheek with the letter R, and to work in shackle one year or more as his master shall see cause."

Although slavery was not yet regularized or legalized in those first years, the lists of servants show blacks listed separately. A law passed in 1639 decreed that "all persons except Negroes" were to get arms and ammunition—probably to fight off Indians. When in 1640 three servants tried to run away, the two whites were punished with a lengthening of their service. But, as the court put it, "the third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his master or his assigns for the time of his natural life." Also in 1640, we have the case of a Negro woman servant who begot a child by Robert Sweat, a white man. The court ruled "that the said negro woman shall be whipt at the whipping post and the said Sweat shall tomorrow in the forenoon do public penance for his offense at James city church... ."

This unequal treatment, this developing combination of contempt and oppression, feeling and action, which we call "racism"—was this the result of a "natural" antipathy of white against black? The question is important, not just as a matter of historical accuracy, but because any emphasis on "natural" racism
lightens the responsibility of the social system. If racism can’t be shown to be natural, then it is the result of certain conditions, and we are impelled to eliminate those conditions.

We have no way of testing the behavior of whites and blacks toward one another under favorable conditions-with no history of subordination, no money incentive for exploitation and enslavement, no desperation for survival requiring forced labor. All the conditions for black and white in seventeenth-century America were the opposite of that, all powerfully directed toward antagonism and mistreatment. Under such conditions even the slightest display of humanity between the races might be considered evidence of a basic human drive toward community.

Sometimes it is noted that, even before 1600, when the slave trade had just begun, before Africans were stamped by it-literally and symbolically-the color black was distasteful. In England, before 1600, it meant, according to the Oxford English Dictionary: "Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul. Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister. Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horribly wicked. Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc." And Elizabethan poetry often used the color white in connection with beauty.

It may be that, in the absence of any other overriding factor, darkness and blackness, associated with night and unknown, would take on those meanings. But the presence of another human being is a powerful fact, and the conditions of that presence are crucial in determining whether an initial prejudice, against a mere color, divorced from humankind, is turned into brutality and hatred.

In spite of such preconceptions about blackness, in spite of special subordination of blacks in the Americas in the seventeenth century, there is evidence that where whites and blacks found themselves with common problems, common work, common enemy in their master, they behaved toward one another as equals. As one scholar of slavery, Kenneth Stampp, has put it, Negro and white servants of the seventeenth century were "remarkably unconcerned about the visible physical differences." Black and white worked together, fraternized together. The very fact that laws had to be passed after a while to forbid such relations indicates the strength of that tendency. In 1661 a law was passed in Virginia that "in case any English servant shall run away in company of any Negroes" he would have to give special service for extra years to the master of the runaway Negro. In 1691, Virginia provided for the banishment of any "white man or woman being free who shall intermarry with a negro, mulattoo, or Indian man or woman bond or free."

There is an enormous difference between a feeling of racial strangeness, perhaps fear, and the mass enslavement of millions of black people that took place in the Americas. The transition from one to the other cannot be explained easily by "natural" tendencies. It is not hard to understand as the outcome of historical conditions.

Slavery grew as the plantation system grew. The reason is easily traceable to something other than natural racial repugnance: the number of arriving whites, whether free or indentured servants (under four to seven years contract), was not enough to meet the need of the plantations. By 1700, in Virginia, there were 6,000 slaves, one-twelfth of the population. By 1763, there were 170,000 slaves, about half the population.

Blacks were easier to enslave than whites or Indians. But they were still not easy to enslave. From the beginning, the imported black men and women resisted their enslavement. Ultimately their resistance was controlled, and slavery was established for 3 million blacks in the South. Still, under the most difficult conditions, under pain of mutilation and death, throughout their two hundred years of enslavement in North America, these Afro-Americans continued to rebel. Only occasionally was there an organized insurrection. More often they showed then-refusal to submit by running away. Even more often, they engaged in sabotage, slowdowns, and subtle forms of resistance which asserted, if only to themselves and their brothers and sisters, their dignity as human beings.
The refusal began in Africa. One slave trader reported that Negroes were "so wilful and loth to leave their own country, that they have often leap'd out of the canoes, boat and ship into the sea, and kept under water till they were drowned."

When the very first black slaves were brought into Hispaniola in 1503, the Spanish governor of Hispaniola complained to the Spanish court that fugitive Negro slaves were teaching disobedience to the Indians. In the 1520s and 1530s, there were slave revolts in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Santa Marta, and what is now Panama. Shortly after those rebellions, the Spanish established a special police for chasing fugitive slaves. A Virginia statute of 1669 referred to "the obstinacy of many of them," and in 1680 the Assembly took note of slave meetings "under the pretense of casts and brawls" which they considered of "dangerous consequence." In 1687, in the colony's Northern Neck, a plot was discovered in which slaves planned to kill all the whites in the area and escape during a mass funeral.

Gerald Mullin, who studied slave resistance in eighteenth-century Virginia in his work Flight and Rebellion, reports:

The available sources on slavery in 18th-century Virginia-plantation and county records, the newspaper advertisements for runaways-describe rebellious slaves and few others. The slaves described were lazy and thieving; they feigned illnesses, destroyed crops, stores, tools, and sometimes attacked or killed overseers. They operated blackmarkets in stolen goods. Runaways were defined as various types, they were truants (who usually returned voluntarily), "outlaws"... and slaves who were actually fugitives: men who visited relatives, went to town to pass as free, or tried to escape slavery completely, either by boarding ships and leaving the colony, or banding together in cooperative efforts to establish villages or hide-outs in the frontier. The commitment of another type of rebellious slave was total; these men became killers, arsonists, and insurrectionists.

Slaves recently from Africa, still holding on to the heritage of their communal society, would run away in groups and try to establish villages of runaways out in the wilderness, on the frontier. Slaves born in America, on the other hand, were more likely to run off alone, and, with the skills they had learned on the plantation, try to pass as free men.

In the colonial papers of England, a 1729 report from the lieutenant governor of Virginia to the British Board of Trade tells how "a number of Negroes, about fifteen .. . formed a design to withdraw from their Master and to fix themselves in the fastnesses of the neighboring Mountains. They had found means to get into their possession some Arms and Ammunition, and they took along with them some Provisions, their Cloths, bedding and working Tools.... Tho' this attempt has happily been defeated, it ought nevertheless to awaken us into some effectual measures...."

Slavery was immensely profitable to some masters. James Madison told a British visitor shortly after the American Revolution that he could make $257 on every Negro in a year, and spend only $12 or $13 on his keep. Another viewpoint was of slaveowner Landon Carter, writing about fifty years earlier, complaining that his slaves so neglected their work and were so uncooperative ("either cannot or will not work") that he began to wonder if keeping them was worthwhile. Some historians have painted a picture-based on the infrequency of organized rebellions and the ability of the South to maintain slavery for two hundred years-of a slave population made submissive by their condition; with their African heritage destroyed, they were, as Stanley Elkins said, made into "Sambos," "a society of helpless dependents." Or as another historian, Ulrich Phillips, said, "by racial quality submissive." But looking at the totality of slave behavior, at the resistance of everyday life, from quiet noncooperation in work to running away, the picture becomes different.

In 1710, warning the Virginia Assembly, Governor Alexander Spotswood said:

... freedom wears a cap which can without a tongue, call together all those who long to shake off the fetters of slavery and as such an Insurrection would surely be attended with most dreadful consequences
so I think we cannot be too early in providing against it, both by putting ourselves in a better posture of defense and by making a law to prevent the consultations of those Negroes.

Indeed, considering the harshness of punishment for running away, that so many blacks did run away must be a sign of a powerful rebelliousness. All through the 1700s, the Virginia slave code read:

Whereas many times slaves run away and He hid and lurking in swamps, woods, and other obscure places, killing hogs, and committing other injuries to the inhabitants ... if the slave does not immediately return, anyone whatsoever may kill or destroy such slaves by such ways and means as he ... shall think fit. ... If the slave is apprehended ... it shall ... be lawful for the county court, to order such punishment for the said slave, either by dismembering, or in any other way ... as they in their discretion shall think fit, for the reclaiming any such incorrigible slave, and terrifying others from the like practices. ... Mullin found newspaper advertisements between 1736 and 1801 for 1,138 men runaways, and 141 women. One consistent reason for running away was to find members of one’s family-showing that despite the attempts of the slave system to destroy family ties by not allowing marriages and by separating families, slaves would face death and mutilation to get together.

In Maryland, where slaves were about one-third of the population in 1750, slavery had been written into law since the 1660s, and statutes for controlling rebellious slaves were passed. There were cases where slave women killed their masters, sometimes by poisoning them, sometimes by burning tobacco houses and homes. Punishments ranged from whipping and branding to execution, but the trouble continued. In 1742, seven slaves were put to death for murdering their master. Fear of slave revolt seems to have been a permanent fact of plantation life. William Byrd, a wealthy Virginia slaveowner, wrote in 1736:

We have already at least 10,000 men of these descendants of Ham, fit to bear arms, and these numbers increase every day, as well by birth as by importation. And in case there should arise a man of desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a servile war ... and tinge our rivers wide as they are with blood.

It was an intricate and powerful system of control that the slaveowners developed to maintain their labor supply and their way of life, a system both subtle and crude, involving every device that social orders employ for keeping power and wealth where it is. As Kenneth Stampp puts it:

A wise master did not take seriously the belief that Negroes were natural-born slaves. He knew better. He knew that Negroes freshly imported from Africa had to be broken into bondage; that each succeeding generation had to be carefully trained. This was no easy task, for the bondsman rarely submitted willingly. Moreover, he rarely submitted completely. In most cases there was no end to the need for control—at least not until old age reduced the slave to a condition of helplessness.

The system was psychological and physical at the same time. The slaves were taught discipline, were impressed again and again with the idea of their own inferiority to "know their place," to see blackness as a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power of the master, to merge their interest with the master's, destroying their own individual needs. To accomplish this there was the discipline of hard labor, the breakup of the slave family, the lulling effects of religion (which sometimes led to "great mischief," as one slaveholder reported), the creation of disunity among slaves by separating them into field slaves and more privileged house slaves, and finally the power of law and the immediate power of the overseer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and death. Dismemberment was provided for in the Virginia Code of 1705. Maryland passed a law in 1723 providing for cutting off the ears of blacks who struck whites, and that for certain serious crimes, slaves should be hanged and the body quartered and exposed.

Still, rebellions took place—not many, but enough to create constant fear among white planters. The first large-scale revolt in the North American colonies took place in New York in 1712. In New York, slaves were 10 percent of the population, the highest proportion in the northern states, where economic conditions usually did not require large numbers of field slaves. About twenty-five blacks and two Indians set fire to a building, then killed nine whites who came on the scene. They were captured by
soldiers, put on trial, and twenty-one were executed. The governor’s report to England said: "Some were burnt, others were hanged, one broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in the town...." One had been burned over a slow fire for eight to ten hours—all this to serve notice to other slaves. Alerter to London from South Carolina in 1720 reports:

*I am now to acquaint you that very lately we have had a very wicked and barbarous plot of the designe of the negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the country and then to take Charles Town in full body but it pleased God it was discovered and many of them taken prisoners and some burnt and some hang’d and some banish’d.*

Around this time there were a number of fires in Boston and New Haven, suspected to be the work of Negro slaves. As a result, one Negro was executed in Boston, and the Boston Council ruled that any slaves who on their own gathered in groups of two or more were to be punished by whipping.

At Stono, South Carolina, in 1739, about twenty slaves rebelled, killed two warehouse guards, stole guns and gunpowder, and headed south, killing people in their way, and burning buildings. They were joined by others, until there were perhaps eighty slaves in all and, according to one account of the time, "they called out Liberty, marched on with Colours displayed, and two Drums beating." The militia found and attacked them. In the ensuing battle perhaps fifty slaves and twenty-five whites were killed before the uprising was crushed.

Herbert Aptheker, who did detailed research on slave resistance in North America for his book *American Negro Slave Revolts*, found about 250 instances where a minimum often slaves joined in a revolt or conspiracy.

From time to time, whites were involved in the slave resistance. As early as 1663, indentured white servants and black slaves in Gloucester County, Virginia, formed a conspiracy to rebel and gain their freedom. The plot was betrayed, and ended with executions. Mullin reports that the newspaper notices of runaways in Virginia often warned "ill-disposed" whites about harboring fugitives. Sometimes slaves and free men ran off together, or cooperated in crimes together. Sometimes, black male slaves ran off and joined white women. From time to time, white ship captains and watermen dealt with runaways, perhaps making the slave a part of the crew.

In New York in 1741, there were ten thousand whites in the city and two thousand black slaves. It had been a hard winter and the poor-slave and free-had suffered greatly. When mysterious fires broke out, blacks and whites were accused of conspiring together. Mass hysteria developed against the accused. After a trial full of lurid accusations by informers, and forced confessions, two white men and two white women were executed, eighteen slaves were hanged, and thirteen slaves were burned alive.

Only one fear was greater than the fear of black rebellion in the new American colonies. That was the fear that discontented whites would join black slaves to overthrow the existing order. In the early years of slavery, especially, before racism as a way of thinking was firmly ingrained, while white indentured servants were often treated as badly as black slaves, there was a possibility of cooperation. As Edmund Morgan sees it:

There are hints that the two despised groups initially saw each other as sharing the same predicament. It was common, for example, for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together. In Bacon’s Rebellion, one of the last groups to surrender was a mixed band of eighty negroes and twenty English servants.

As Morgan says, masters, "initially at least, perceived slaves in much the same way they had always perceived servants ... shiftless, irresponsible, unfaithful, ungrateful, dishonest... " And "if freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done."
And so, measures were taken. About the same time that slave codes, involving discipline and punishment, were passed by the Virginia Assembly, Virginia’s ruling class, having proclaimed that all white men were superior to black, went on to offer their social (but white) inferiors a number of benefits previously denied them. In 1705 a law was passed requiring masters to provide white servants whose indenture time was up with ten bushels of corn, thirty shillings, and a gun, while women servants were to get 15 bushels of corn and forty shillings. Also, the newly freed servants were to get 50 acres of land.

Morgan concludes: "Once the small planter felt less exploited by taxation and began to prosper a little, he became less turbulent, less dangerous, more respectable. He could begin to see his big neighbor not as an extortionist but as a powerful protector of their common interests."

We see now a complex web of historical threads to ensnare blacks for slavery in America: the desperation of starving settlers, the special helplessness of the displaced African, the powerful incentive of profit for slave trader and planter, the temptation of superior status for poor whites, the elaborate controls against escape and rebellion, the legal and social punishment of black and white collaboration. The point is that the elements of this web are historical, not "natural." This does not mean that they are easily disentangled, dismantled. It means only that there is a possibility for something else, under historical conditions not yet realized. And one of these conditions would be the elimination of that class exploitation which has made poor whites desperate for small gifts of status, and has prevented that unity of black and white necessary for joint rebellion and reconstruction.

Around 1700, the Virginia House of Burgesses declared:

_The Christian Servants in this country for the most part consists of the Worser Sort of the people of Europe. And since .. such numbers of Irish and other Nations have been brought in of which a great many have been soldiers in the late wars that according to our present Circumstances we can hardly governe them and if they were fitted with Armes and had the Oportunity of meeting together by Musters we have just reason to fears they may rise upon us._

It was a kind of class consciousness, a class fear. There were things happening in early Virginia, and in the other colonies, to warrant it.

### 3. Persons of Mean and Vile Condition

In 1676, seventy years after Virginia was founded, a hundred years before it supplied leadership for the American Revolution, that colony faced a rebellion of white frontiersmen, joined by slaves and servants, a rebellion so threatening that the governor had to flee the burning capital of Jamestown, and England decided to send a thousand soldiers across the Atlantic, hoping to maintain order among forty thousand colonists. This was Bacon’s Rebellion. After the uprising was suppressed, its leader, Nathaniel Bacon, dead, and his associates hanged, Bacon was described in a Royal Commission report:

_He was said to be about four or five and thirty years of age, indifferent tall but slender, black-hair'd and of an ominous, pensive, melancholy Aspect, of a pestilent and prevalent Logical discourse tending to atheisme...

He seduced the Vulgar and most ignorant people to believe (two thirds of each county being of that Sort) Soc that their whole hearts and hopes were set now upon Bacon. Next he charges the Governour as negligent and wicked, treacherous and incapable, the Lawes and Taxes as unjust and oppressive and cries up absolute necessity of redress._

Thus Bacon encouraged the Tumult and as the unquiet crowd follow and adhere to him, he listeth them as they come in upon a large paper, writing their name circular wise, that their Ringleaders might not be found out. Having conjured them into this circle, given them Brandy to wind up the charm, and enjoined them by an oath to stick fast together and to him and the oath being administered, he went and infected New Kent County ripe for Rebellion.
Bacon's Rebellion began with conflict over how to deal with the Indians, who were close by, on the western frontier, constantly threatening. Whites who had been ignored when huge land grants around Jamestown were given away had gone west to find land, and there they encountered Indians. Were those frontier Virginians resentful that the politicos and landed aristocrats who controlled the colony's government in Jamestown first pushed them westward into Indian territory, and then seemed indecisive in fighting the Indians? That might explain the character of their rebellion, not easily classifiable as either anti-aristocratic or anti-Indian, because it was both.

And the governor, William Berkeley, and his Jamestown crowd—were they more conciliatory to the Indians (they wooed certain of them as spies and allies) now that they had monopolized the land in the East, could use frontier whites as a buffer, and needed peace? The desperation of the government in suppressing the rebellion seemed to have a double motive: developing an Indian policy which would divide Indians in order to control them (in New England at this very time, Massasoit's son Metacom was threatening to unite Indian tribes, and had done frightening damage to Puritan settlements in "King Philip's War"); and teaching the poor whites of Virginia that rebellion did not pay by a show of superior force, by calling for troops from England itself, by mass hanging.

Violence had escalated on the frontier before the rebellion. Some Doeg Indians took a few hogs to redress a debt, and whites, retrieving the hogs, murdered two Indians. The Doegs then sent out a war party to kill a white herdsman, after which a white militia company killed twenty-four Indians. This led to a series of Indian raids, with the Indians, outnumbered, turning to guerrilla warfare. The House of Burgesses in Jamestown declared war on the Indians, but proposed to exempt those Indians who cooperated. This seemed to anger the frontiers people, who wanted total war but also resented the high taxes assessed to pay for the war.

Times were hard in 1676. "There was genuine distress, genuine poverty.... All contemporary sources speak of the great mass of people as living in severe economic straits," writes Wilcomb Washburn, who, using British colonial records, has done an exhaustive study of Bacon's Rebellion. It was a dry summer, ruining the corn crop, which was needed for food, and the tobacco crop, needed for export. Governor Berkeley, in his seventies, tired of holding office, wrote wearily about his situation: "How miserable that man is that Governs a People where six parts of seaven at least are Poore Endebted Discontented and Armed."

His phrase "six parts of seaven" suggests the existence of an upper class not so impoverished. In fact, there was such a class already developed in Virginia. Bacon himself came from this class, had a good bit of land, and was probably more enthusiastic about killing Indians than about redressing the grievances of the poor. But he became a symbol of mass resentment against the Virginia establishment, and was elected in the spring of 1676 to the House of Burgesses. When he insisted on organizing armed detachments to fight the Indians, outside official control, Berkeley proclaimed him a rebel and had him captured, whereupon two thousand Virginians marched into Jamestown to support him. Berkeley let Bacon go, in return for an apology, but Bacon went off, gathered his militia, and began raiding the Indians.

Bacon's "Declaration of the People" of July 1676 shows a mixture of populist resentment against the rich and frontier hatred of the Indians. It indicted the Berkeley administration for unjust taxes, for putting favorites in high positions, for monopolizing the beaver trade, and for not protecting the western formers from the Indians. Then Bacon went out to attack the friendly Pamunkey Indians, killing eight, taking others prisoner, plundering their possessions.

There is evidence that the rank and file of both Bacon's rebel army and Berkeley's official army were not as enthusiastic as their leaders. There were mass desertions on both sides, according to Washburn. In the fall, Bacon, aged twenty-nine, fell sick and died, because of, as a contemporary put it, "swarmes of Vermyn that bred in his body." A minister, apparently not a sympathizer, wrote this epitaph:

Bacon is Dead I am sorry at my heart,
That lice and flux should take the hangman's part. The rebellion didn't last long after that. A ship armed with thirty guns, cruising the York River, became the base for securing order, and its captain, Thomas Grantham, used force and deception to disarm the last rebel forces. Coming upon the chief garrison of the rebellion, he found four hundred armed Englishmen and Negroes, a mixture of free men, servants, and slaves. He promised to pardon everyone, to give freedom to slaves and servants, whereupon they surrendered their arms and dispersed, except for eighty Negroes and twenty English who insisted on keeping their arms. Grantham promised to take them to a garrison down the river, but when they got into the boat, he trained his big guns on them, disarmed them, and eventually delivered the slaves and servants to their masters. The remaining garrisons were overcome one by one. Twenty-three rebel leaders were hanged.

It was a complex chain of oppression in Virginia. The Indians were plundered by white frontiersmen, who were taxed and controlled by the Jamestown elite. And the whole colony was being exploited by England, which bought the colonists' tobacco at prices it dictated and made 100,000 pounds a year for the King. Berkeley himself, returning to England years earlier to protest the English Navigation Acts, which gave English merchants a monopoly of the colonial trade, had said:

... we cannot but resent, that forty thousand people should be impoverish'd to enrich little more than forty Merchants, who being the only buyers of our Tobacco, give us what they please for it, and after it is here, sell it how they please; and indeed have forty thousand servants in us at cheaper rates, than any other men have slaves....

From the testimony of the governor himself, the rebellion against him had the overwhelming support of the Virginia population. A member of his Council reported that the defection was "almost general" and laid it to "the Lewd dispositions of some Persons of desperate Fortunes" who had "the Vaine hopes of taking the Countrype wholley out of his Majestye's handes into their owne." Another member of the Governor's Council, Richard Lee, noted that Bacon's Rebellion had started over Indian policy. But the "zealous inclination of the multitude" to support Bacon was due, he said, to "hopes of levelling."

"Levelling" meant equalizing the wealth. Levelling was to be behind countless actions of poor whites against the rich in all the English colonies, in the century and a half before the Revolution.

The servants who joined Bacon's Rebellion were part of a large underclass of miserably poor whites who came to the North American colonies from European cities whose governments were anxious to be rid of them. In England, the development of commerce and capitalism in the 1500s and 1600s, the enclosing of land for the production of wool, filled the cities with vagrant poor, and from the reign of Elizabeth on, laws were passed to punish them, imprison them in workhouses, or exile them. The Elizabethan definition of "rogues and vagabonds" included:

... All persons calling themselves Schollers going about begging, all Seafaring men pretendings losses of their Shippes or goods on the sea going about the Country begging, all idle persons going about in any Country either begging or using any subtile crafte or unlawful Games ... comon Players of Interludes and Minstrells wandring abroade ... all wandering persons and comon Labourers being persons able in bodye using loyertering and refusing to worke for such reasonable wages as is taxed or commonly given....

Such persons found begging could be stripped to the waist and whipped bloody, could be sent out of the city, sent to workhouses, or transported out of the country.

In the 1600s and 1700s, by forced exile, by lures, promises, and lies, by kidnapping, by their urgent need to escape the living conditions of the home country, poor people wanting to go to America became commodities of profit for merchants, traders, ship captains, and eventually their masters in America. Abbot Smith, in his study of indentured servitude, Colonists in Bondage, writes: "From the complex pattern of forces producing emigration to the American colonies one stands out clearly as most powerful in causing the movement of servants. This was the pecuniary profit to be made by shipping them."
After signing the indenture, in which the immigrants agreed to pay their cost of passage by working for a master for five or seven years, they were often imprisoned until the ship sailed, to make sure they did not run away. In the year 1619, the Virginia House of Burgesses, born that year as the first representative assembly in America (it was also the year of the first importation of black slaves), provided for the recording and enforcing of contracts between servants and masters. As in any contract between unequal powers, the parties appeared on paper as equals, but enforcement was far easier for master than for servant.

The voyage to America lasted eight, ten, or twelve weeks, and the servants were packed into ships with the same fanatic concern for profits that marked the slave ships. If the weather was bad, and the trip took too long, they ran out of food. The sloop Sea-Flower, leaving Belfast in 1741, was at sea sixteen weeks, and when it arrived in Boston, forty-six of its 106 passengers were dead of starvation, six of them eaten by the survivors. On another trip, thirty-two children died of hunger and disease and were thrown into the ocean. Gottlieb Mittelberger, a musician, traveling from Germany to America around 1750, wrote about his voyage: During the journey the ship is full of pitiful signs of distress-smells, fumes, horrors, vomiting, various kinds of sea sickness, fever, dysentery, headaches, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot, and similar afflictions, all of them caused by the age and the high salted state of the food, especially of the meat, as well as by the very bad and filthy water... Add to all that shortage of food, hunger, thirst, frost, heat, dampness, fear, misery, vexation, and lamentation as well as other troubles.... On board our ship, on a day on which we had a great storm, a woman about to give birth and unable to deliver under the circumstances, was pushed through one of the portholes into the sea....

Indentured servants were bought and sold like slaves. An announcement in the Virginia Gazette, March 28, 1771, read:

Just arrived at Leedstown, the Ship Justitia, with about one Hundred Healthy Servants, Men Women & Boys.... The Sale will commence on Tuesday the 2nd of April.

Against the rosy accounts of better living standards in the Americas one must place many others, like one immigrant's letter from America: "Whoever is well off in Europe better remain there. Here is misery and distress, same as everywhere, and for certain persons and conditions incomparably more than in Europe."

Beatings and whippings were common. Servant women were raped. One observer testified: "I have seen an Overseer beat a Servant with a cane about the head till the blood has followed, for a fault that is not worth the speaking of...." The Maryland court records showed many servant suicides. In 1671, Governor Berkeley of Virginia reported that in previous years four of five servants died of disease after their arrival. Many were poor children, gathered up by the hundreds on the streets of English cities and sent to Virginia to work.

The master tried to control completely the sexual lives of the servants. It was in his economic interest to keep women servants from marrying or from having sexual relations, because childbearing would interfere with work. Benjamin Franklin, writing as "Poor Richard" in 1736, gave advice to his readers: "Let thy maidservant be faithful, strong and homely."

Servants could not marry without permission, could be separated from their families, could be whipped for various offenses. Pennsylvania law in the seventeenth century said that marriage of servants "without the consent of the Masters... shall be proceeded against as for Adultery, or fornication, and Children to be reputed as Bastards." Although colonial laws existed to stop excesses against servants, they were not very well enforced, we learn from Richard Morris's comprehensive study of early court records in Government and Labor in Early America. Servants did not participate in juries. Masters did. (And being propertyless, servants did not vote.) In 1666, a New England court accused a couple of the death of a servant after the mistress had cut off the servant's toes. The jury voted acquittal. In Virginia in the 1660s, a master was convicted of raping two women servants. He also was known to heat his own wife and children; he had
whipped and chained another servant until he died. The master was berated by the court, but specifically cleared on the rape charge, despite overwhelming evidence.

Sometimes servants organized rebellions, but one did not find on the mainland the kind of large-scale conspiracies of servants that existed, for instance, on Barbados in the West Indies. (Abbot Smith suggests this was because there was more chance of success on a small island.) However, in York County, Virginia, in 1661, a servant named Isaac Friend proposed to another, after much dissatisfaction with the food, that they "get a matter of Forty of them together, and get Gunnes & hee would be the first & lead them and cry as they went along, 'who would be for Liberty, and free from bondage', & that there would enough come to them and they would goe through the Countrey and kill those that made any opposition and that they would either be free or dye for it." The scheme was never carried out, but two years later, in Gloucester County, servants again planned a general uprising. One of them gave the plot away, and four were executed. The informer was given his freedom and 5,000 pounds of tobacco. Despite the rarity of servants' rebellions, the threat was always diere, and masters were fearful.

Finding their situation intolerable, and rebellion impractical in an increasingly organized society, servants reacted in individual ways. The files of the county courts in New England show that one servant struck at his master with a pitchfork. An apprentice servant was accused of "laying violent hands upon his ... master, and throwing him downe twice and feching bloud of him, threatening to breake his nekke, running at his face with a chayre..." One maidservant was brought into court for being "bad, unruly, sulen, careles, destructive, and disobedient."

After the participation of servants in Bacon’s Rebellion, the Virginia legislature passed laws to punish servants who rebelled. The preamble to the act said:

Whereas many evil disposed servants in these late tymes of horrid rebellion taking advantage of the loosnes and liberty of the tyme, did depart from their service, and followed the rebells in rebellion, wholy neglecting their masters imploymcnt whereby the said masters have suffered great damage and injury....

Two companies of English soldiers remained in Virginia to guard against future trouble, and their presence was defended in a report to the Lords of Trade and Plantation saying: "Virginia is at present poor and more populous than ever. There is great apprehension of a rising among the servants, owing to their great necessities and want of clothes; they may plunder the storehouses and ships."

Escape was easier than rebellion. "Numerous instances of mass desertions by white servants took place in the Southern colonies," reports Richard Morris, on the basis of an inspection of colonial newspapers in the 1700s. "The atmosphere of seventeenth-century Virginia," he says, "was charged with plots and rumors of combinations of servants to run away." The Maryland court records show, in the 1650s, a conspiracy of a dozen servants to seize a boat and to resist with arms if intercepted. They were captured and whipped.

The mechanism of control was formidable. Strangers had to show passports or certificates to prove they were free men. Agreements among the colonies provided for the extradition of fugitive servants - these became the basis of the clause in the U.S. Constitution that persons "held to Service or Labor in one Stat ... escaping into another ... shall be delivered up...."

Sometimes, servants went on strike. One Maryland master complained to the Provincial Court in 1663 that his servants did "peremptorily and positively refuse to goe and doe their ordinary labor." The servants responded that they were fed only "Beanes and Bread" and they were "soe weake, wee are not able to perform the imploym'ts hee puts us uppon." They were given thirty lashes by the court.

More than half the colonists who came to the North American shores in the colonial period came as servants. They were mostly English in the seventeenth century, Irish and German in the eighteenth century. More and more, slaves replaced them, as they ran away to freedom or finished their time, but as late as 1755, white servants made up 10 percent of the population of Maryland.
What happened to these servants after they became free? There are cheerful accounts in which they rise to prosperity, becoming landowners and important figures. But Abbot Smith, after a careful study, concludes that colonial society "was not democratic and certainly not equalitarian; it was dominated by men who had money enough to make others work for them." And: "Few of these men were descended from indentured servants, and practically none had themselves been of that class."

After we make our way through Abbot Smith's disdain for the servants, as "men and women who were dirty and lazy, rough, ignorant, lewd, and often criminal," who "thieved and wandered, had bastard children, and corrupted society with loathsome diseases," we find that "about one in ten was a sound and solid individual, who would if fortunate survive his 'seasoning,' work out his time, take up land, and wax decently prosperous." Perhaps another one in ten would become an artisan or an overseer. The rest, 80 percent, who were "certainly ... shiftless, hopeless, ruined individuals," either "died during their servitude, returned to England after it was over, or became 'poor whites.'" Smith's conclusion is supported by a more recent study of servants in seventeenth-century Maryland, where it was found that the first batches of servants became landowners and politically active in the colony, but by the second half of the century more than half the servants, even after ten years of freedom, remained landless. Servants became tenants, providing cheap labor for the large planters both during and after their servitude.

It seems quite clear that class lines hardened through the colonial period; the distinction between rich and poor became sharper. By 1700 there were fifty rich families in Virginia, with wealth equivalent to 50,000 pounds (a huge sum those days), who lived off the labor of black slaves and white servants, owned the plantations, sat on the governor's council, served as local magistrates. In Maryland, the settlers were ruled by a proprietor whose right of total control over the colony had been granted by the English King. Between 1650 and 1689 there were five revolts against the proprietor.

In the Carolinas, the Fundamental Constitutions were written in the 1660s by John Locke, who is often considered the philosophical father of the Founding Fathers and the American system. Locke's constitution set up a feudal-type aristocracy, in which eight barons would own 40 percent of the colony's land, and only a baron could be governor. When the crown took direct control of North Carolina, after a rebellion against the land arrangements, rich speculators seized half a million acres for themselves, monopolizing the good farming land near the coast Poor people, desperate for land, squatted on bits of farmland and fought all through the pre-Revolutionary period against the landlords' attempts to collect rent.

Carl Bridenbaugh's study of colonial cities, Cities in the Wilderness, reveals a clear-cut class system. He finds:

The leaders of early Boston were gentlemen of considerable wealth who, in association with the clergy, eagerly sought to preserve in America the social arrangements of the Mother Country. By means of their control of trade and commerce, by their political domination of the inhabitants through church and Town Meeting, and by careful marriage alliances among themselves, members of this little oligarchy laid the foundations for an aristocratic class in seventeenth century Boston.

At the very start of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, the governor, John Winthrop, had declared the philosophy of the rulers: "... in all times some must be rich, some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjection." Rich merchants erected mansions; persons "of Qualitie" traveled in coaches or sedan chairs, had their portraits painted, wore periwigs, and filled themselves with rich food and Madeira. A petition came from the town of Deerfield in 1678 to the Massachusetts General Court: "You may be pleased to know that the very principle and best of the land; the best for soile; the best for situation; as laying in ye center and midle of the town: and as to quantity, nere half, belongs unto eight or nine proprietors. ..."
In Newport, Rhode Island, Bridenbaugh found, as in Boston, that "the town meetings, while ostensibly democratic, were in reality controlled year after year by the same group of merchant aristocrats, who secured most of the important offices...." A contemporary described the Newport merchants as "... men in flaming scarlet coats and waistcoats, laced and fringed with brightest glaring yellow. The Sly Quakers, not venturing on these charming coats and waistcoats, yet loving finery, figured away with plate on their sideboards."

The New York aristocracy was the most ostentatious of all, Bridenbaugh tells of "window hangings of camlet, japanned tables, gold-framed looking glasses, spinets and massive eight-day clocks ... richly carved furniture, jewels and silverplate. ... Black house servants."

New York in the colonial period was like a feudal kingdom. The Dutch had set up a patronship system along the Hudson River, with enormous landed estates, where the barons controlled completely the lives of their tenants. By 1689, many of the grievances of the poor were mixed up in the farmers’ revolt of Jacob Leisler and his group. Leisler was hanged, and the parceling out of huge estates continued. Under Governor Benjamin Fletcher, three-fourths of the land in New York was granted to about thirty people. He gave a friend a half million acres for a token annual payment of 30 shillings. Under Lord Cornbury in the early 1700s, one grant to a group of speculators was for 2 million acres. In 1700, New York City church wardens had asked for funds from the common council because "the Crys of the poor and Impotent for want of Relief are Extreamly Grevious." In the 1730s, demand began to grow for institutions to contain the "many Beggarly people daily suffered to wander about the Streets." A city council resolution read:

Whereas the Necessity, Number and Continual Increase of the Poor within this City is very Great and ... frequently Commit divers misdemeanors within the Said City, who living Idly and unemployed, become debauched and Instructed in the Practice of Thievery and Debauchery. For Remedy Whereof... Resolved that there be forthwith built... A good, Strong and Convenient House and Tenement.

The two-story brick structure was called "Poor House, Work House, and House of Correction." A letter to Peter Zenger's New York Journal in 1737 described the poor street urchin of New York as "an Object in Human Shape, half starv’d with Cold, with Cloathes out at the Elbows, Knees through the Breeches, Hair standing on end.... From the age about four to Fourteen they spend their Days in the Streets ... then they are put out as Apprentices, perhaps four, five, or six years...."

The colonies grew fast in the 1700s. English settlers were joined by Scotch-Irish and German immigrants. Black slaves were pouring in; they were 8 percent of the population in 1690; 21 percent in 1770. The population of the colonies was 250,000 in 1700; 1,600,000 by 1760. Agriculture was growing. Small manufacturing was developing. Shipping and trading were expanding. The big cities-Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston—were doubling and tripling in size.

Through all that growth, the upper class was getting most of the benefits and monopolized political power. A historian who studied Boston tax lists in 1687 and 1771 found that in 1687 there were, out of a population of six thousand, about one thousand property owners, and that the top 5 percent-1 percent of the population-consisted of fifty rich individuals who had 25 percent of the wealth. By 1770, the top 1 percent of property owners owned 44 percent of the wealth.

As Boston grew, from 1687 to 1770, the percentage of adult males who were poor, perhaps rented a room, or slept in the back of a tavern, owned no property, doubled from 14 percent of the adult males to 29 percent. And loss of property meant loss of voting rights.

Everywhere the poor were struggling to stay alive, simply to keep from freezing in cold weather. All the cities built poorhouses in the 1730s, not just for old people, widows, crippled, and orphans, but for unemployed, war veterans, new immigrants. In New York, at midcentury, the city almshouse, built for one hundred poor, was housing over four hundred. A Philadelphia citizen wrote in 1748: "It is remarkable what an increase of the number of Beggars there is about this town this winter." In 1757, Boston officials
spoke of "a great Number of Poor ... who can scarcely procure from day to day daily Bread for themselves & Families."

Kenneth Lockridge, in a study of colonial New England, found that vagabonds and paupers kept increasing and "the wandering poor" were a distinct fact of New England life in the middle 1700s. James T. Lemon and Gary Nash found a similar concentration of wealth, a widening of the gap between rich and poor, in their study of Chester County, Pennsylvania, in the 1700s. The colonies, it seems, were societies of contending classes—a fact obscured by the emphasis, in traditional histories, on the external struggle against England, the unity of colonists in the Revolution. The country therefore was not "born free" but born slave and free, servant and master, tenant and landlord, poor and rich. As a result, the political authorities were opposed "frequently, vociferously, and sometimes violently," according to Nash. "Outbreaks of disorder punctuated the last quarter of the seventeenth century, toppling established governments in Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina."

Free white workers were better off than slaves or servants, but they still resented unfair treatment by the wealthier classes. As early as 1636, an employer off the coast of Maine reported that his workmen and fishermen "fell into a mutiny" because he had withheld their wages. They deserted en masse. Five years later, carpenters in Maine, protesting against inadequate food, engaged in a slowdown. At the Gloucester shipyards in the 1640s, what Richard Morris calls the "first lockout in American labor history" took place when the authorities told a group of troublesome shipwrights they could not "worke a stroke of worke more."

There were early strikes of coopers, butchers, bakers, protesting against government control of the fees they charged. Porters in the 1650s in New York refused to carry salt, and carters (truckers, teamsters, carriers) who went out on strike were prosecuted in New York City "for not obeying the Command and Doing their Utuyes as becomes them in their Places." In 1741, bakers combined to refuse to bake because they had to pay such high prices for wheat.

A severe food shortage in Boston in 1713 brought a warning from town selectmen to the General Assembly of Massachusetts saying the "threatening scarcity of provisions" had led to such "extravagant prices that the necessities of the poor in the approaching winter must needs be very pressing." Andrew Belcher, a wealthy merchant, was exporting grain to the Caribbean because the profit was greater there. On May 19, two hundred people rioted on the Boston Common. They attacked Belcher's ships, broke into his warehouses looking for corn, and shot the lieutenant governor when he tried to interfere.

Eight years after the bread riot on the Common, a pamphleteer protested against those who became rich "by grinding the poor," by studying "how to oppress, cheat, and overreach their neighbors." He denounced "The Rich, Great and Potent" who "with rapacious violence bear down all before them...."

In the 1730s, in Boston, people protesting the high prices established by merchants demolished the public market in Dock Square while (as a conservative writer complained) "murmuring against the Government & the rich people." No one was arrested, after the demonstrators warned that arrests would bring "Five Hundred Men in Solemn League and Covenant" who would destroy other markets set up for the benefit of rich merchants. Around the same time, in New York, an election pamphlet urged New York voters to join "Shuttle" the weaver, "Plane" the joiner, "Drive" the carter, "Mortar" the mason, "Tar" the mariner, "Snip" the tailor, "Smallrent" the fair-minded landlord, and "John Poor" the tenant, against "Gripe the Merchant, Squeeze the Shopkeeper, Sprintfext and Quible the Lawyer." The electorate was urged to vote out of office "people in Exalted Stations" who scorned "those they call the Vulgar, the Mob, the herd of Mechanicks."

In the 1730s, a committee of the Boston town meeting spoke out for Bostonians in debt, who wanted paper money issued to make it easier to pay off their debts to the merchant elite. They did not want, they declared, to "have our Bread and Water measured out to Us by those who Riot in Luxury & Wantonness on Our Sweat & Toil. ..."
Bostonians rioted also against impressment, in which men were drafted for naval service. They surrounded the house of the governor, beat up the sheriff, locked up a deputy sheriff, and stormed the town house where the General Court sat. The militia did not respond when called to put them down, and the governor fled. The crowd was condemned by a merchants’ group as a “Riotous Tumultuous Assembly of Foreign Seamen, Servants, Negroes, and Other Persons of Mean and Vile Condition.”

In New Jersey in the 1740s and 1750s, poor farmers occupying land, over which they and the landowners had rival claims, rioted when rents were demanded of them. In 1745, Samuel Baldwin, who had long lived on his land and who held an Indian tide to it, was arrested for nonpayment of rent to the proprietor and taken to the Newark jail. A contemporary described what happened then: “The People in general, supposing the Design of the Proprietors was to ruin them ... went to the Prison, opened the Door, took out Baldwin.”

When two men who freed Baldwin were arrested, hundreds of New Jersey citizens gathered around the jail. A report sent by the New Jersey government to the Lords of Trade in London described the scene:

Two of the new captains of the Newark Companies by the Sheriffs order went with their drumms, to the people, so met, and required all persons there, belong to their companies, to follow the drums and to defend the prison but none followed, tho many were there. . .. The multitude ... between tour and five of the clock in the afternoon lighted off their horses, and came towards the gaol, huzzaing and swinging their clubbs ... till they came within reach of the guard, struck them with their clubbs, and the guard (having no orders to fire) returned the blows with then- guns, and some were wounded on both sides, but none killed. The multitude broke the ranks of the soldiers, and pressed on the prison door, where the Sheriff stood with a sword, and kept them off, till they gave him several blows, and forced him out from thence. They then, with axes and other instruments, broke open the prison door, and took out the two prisoners. As also one other prisoner, that was confined for debt, and went away.

Through this period, England was fighting a series of wars (Queen Anne’s War in the early 1700s, King George’s War in the 1730s). Some merchants made fortunes from these wars, but for most people they meant higher taxes, unemployment, poverty. An anonymous pamphleteer in Massachusetts, writing angrily after King George’s War, described the situation: "Poverty and Discontent appear in every Face (except the Countenances of the Rich) and dwell upon every Tongue." He spoke of a few men, fed by "Lust of Power, Lust of Fame, Lust of Money," who got rich during the war. "No Wonder such Men can build Ships, Houses, buy Farms, set up their Coaches, Chariots, live very splendidly, purchase Fame, Posts of Honour." He called them "Birds of prey ... Enemies to all Communities-wherever diey live."

The forced service of seamen led to a riot against impressment in Boston in 1747. Then crowds turned against Thomas Hutchinson, a rich merchant and colonial official who had backed the governor in putting down the riot, and who also designed a currency plan for Massachusetts which seemed to discriminate against the poor. Hutchinson’s house burned down, mysteriously, and a crowd gathered in the street, cursing Hutchinson and shouting, "Let it burn!"

By the years of the Revolutionary crisis, the 1760s, the wealthy elite that controlled the British colonies on the American mainland had 150 years of experience, had learned certain things about how to rule. They had various fears, but also had developed tactics to deal with what diey feared.

The Indians, diey had found, were too unruly to keep as a labor force, and remained an obstacle to expansion. Black slaves were easier to control, and their profitability for southern plantations was bringing an enormous increase in the importation of slaves, who were becoming a majority in some colonies and constituted one-fifth of the entire colonial population. But the blacks were not totally submissive, and as their numbers grew, the prospect of slave rebellion grew.

With the problem of Indian hostility, and the danger of slave revolts, the colonial elite had to consider the class anger of poor whites-servants, tenants, the city poor, the propertyless, the taxpayer, the soldier and sailor. As the colonies passed their hundredth year and went into the middle of the 1700s, as the gap
between rich and poor widened, as violence and the threat of violence increased, the problem of control became more serious. What if these different despised groups—the Indians, the slaves, the poor whites—should combine? Even before there were so many blacks, in the seventeenth century, there was, as Abbot Smith puts it, "a lively fear that servants would join with Negroes or Indians to overcome the small number of masters."

There was little chance that whites and Indians would combine in North America as they were doing in South and Central America, where the shortage of women, and the use of Indians on the plantations, led to daily contact. Only in Georgia and South Carolina, where white women were scarce, was there some sexual mixing of white men and Indian women. In general, the Indian had been pushed out of sight, out of touch. One fact disturbed: whites would run off to join Indian tribes, or would be captured in battle and brought up among the Indians, and when this happened the whites, given a chance to leave, chose to stay in the Indian culture, Indians, having the choice, almost never decided to join the whites.

Hector St. Jean Crevecoeur, the Frenchman who lived in America for almost twenty years, told, in Letters from an American Farmer, how children captured during the Seven Years' War and found by their parents, grown up and living with Indians, would refuse to leave their new families. "There must be in their social bond," he said, "something singularly captivating, and far superior to anything to be boasted among us; for thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no examples of even one of those Aborigines having from choice become Europeans."

But this affected few people. In general, the Indian was kept at a distance. And the colonial officialdom had found a way of alleviating the danger: by monopolizing the good land on the eastern seaboard, they forced landless whites to move westward to the frontier, there to encounter the Indians and to be a buffer for the seaboard rich against Indian troubles, white becoming more dependent on the government for protection. Bacon's Rebellion was instructive: to conciliate a diminishing Indian population at the expense of infuriating a coalition of white frontiersmen was very risky. Better to make war on the Indian, gain the support of the white, divert possible class conflict by turning poor whites against Indians for the security of the elite.

Might blacks and Indians combine against the white enemy? In the northern colonies (except on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Rhode Island, where there was close contact and sexual mixing), there was not much opportunity for Africans and Indians to meet in large numbers. New York had the largest slave population in the North, and there was some contact between blacks and Indians, as in 1712 when Africans and Indians joined in an insurrection. But this was quickly suppressed.

In the Carolinas, however, whites were outnumbered by black slaves and nearby Indian tribes; in the 1750s, 25,000 whites faced 40,000 black slaves, with 60,000 Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indians in the area. Gary Nash writes: "Indian uprisings that punctuated the colonial period and a succession of slave uprisings and insurrectionary plots that were nipped in the bud kept South Carolinians sickeningly aware that only through the greatest vigilance and through policies designed to keep their enemies divided could they hope to remain in control of the situation."

The white rulers of the Carolinas seemed to be conscious of the need for a policy, as one of them put it, "to make Indians & Negros a checque upon each other lest by their Vastly Superior Numbers we should be crushed by one or the other." And so laws were passed prohibiting free blacks from traveling in Indian country. Treaties with Indian tribes contained clauses requiring the return of fugitive slaves. Governor Lyttleton of South Carolina wrote in 1738: "It has always been the policy of this government to create an aversion in them [Indians] to Negros."

Part of this policy involved using black slaves in the South Carolina militia to fight Indians. Still, the government was worried about black revolt, and during the Cherokee war in the 1760s, a motion to equip five hundred slaves to fight the Indians lost in the Carolina assembly by a single vote.
Blacks ran away to Indian villages, and the Creeks and Cherokees harbored runaway slaves by the hundreds. Many of these were amalgamated into the Indian tribes, married, produced children. But the combination of harsh slave codes and bribes to the Indians to help put down black rebels kept things under control.

It was the potential combination of poor whites and blacks that caused the most fear among the wealthy white planters. If there had been the natural racial repugnance that some theorists have assumed, control would have been easier. But sexual attraction was powerful, across racial lines. In 1743, a grand jury in Charleston, South Carolina, denounced "The Too Common Practice of Criminal Conversation with Negro and other Slave Wenches in this Province." Mixed offspring continued to be produced by white-black sex relations throughout the colonial period, in spite of laws prohibiting interracial marriage in Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, Georgia. By declaring the children illegitimate, they would keep them inside the black families, so that the white population could remain "pure" and in control.

What made Bacon's Rebellion especially fearsome for the rulers of Virginia was that black slaves and white servants joined forces. The final surrender was by "four hundred English and Negroes in Armes" at one garrison, and three hundred "freemen and African and English bondservants" in another garrison. The naval commander who subdued the four hundred wrote: "Most of them I persuaded to goe to their Homes, which accordingly they did, except about eighty Negroes and twenty English which would not deliver their Armes." All through those early years, black and white slaves and servants ran away together, as shown both by the laws passed to stop this and the records of the courts. In 1698, South Carolina passed a "deficiency law" requiring plantation owners to have at least one white servant for every six male adult Negroes. A letter from the southern colonies in 1682 complained of "no white men to superintend our negroes, or repress an insurrection of negroes. . . ." In 1691, the House of Commons received "a petition of divers merchants, masters of ships, planters and others, trading to foreign plantations . . . setting forth, that the plantations cannot be maintained without a considerable number of white servants, as well to keep the blacks in subjection, as to bear arms in case of invasion."

A report to the English government in 1721 said that in South Carolina "black slaves have lately attempted and were very near succeeding in a new revolution ... and therefore, it may be necessary ... to propose some new law for encouraging the entertainment of more white servants in the future. The militia of this province does not consist of above 2000 men." Apparently, two thousand were not considered sufficient to meet the threat.

This fear may help explain why Parliament, in 1717, made transportation to the New World a legal punishment for crime. After that, tens of thousands of convicts could be sent to Virginia, Maryland, and other colonies. It also makes understandable why the Virginia Assembly, after Bacon's Rebellion, gave amnesty to white servants who had rebelled, but not to blacks. Negroes were forbidden to carry any arms, while whites finishing their servitude would get muskets, along with corn and cash. The distinctions of status between white and black servants became more and more clear.

In the 1720s, with fear of slave rebellion growing, white servants were allowed in Virginia to join the militia as substitutes for white freemen. At the same time, slave patrols were established in Virginia to deal with the "great dangers that may ... happen by the insurrections of negroes...." Poor white men would make up the rank and file of these patrols, and get the monetary reward.

Racism was becoming more and more practical. Edmund Morgan, on the basis of his careful study of slavery in Virginia, sees racism not as "natural" to black-white difference, but something coming out of class scorn, a realistic device for control. "If freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done. The answer to the problem, obvious if unspoken and only gradually recognized, was racism, to separate dangerous free whites from dangerous black slaves by a screen of racial contempt."
There was still another control which became handy as the colonies grew, and which had crucial consequences for the continued rule of the elite throughout American history. Along with the very rich and the very poor, there developed a white middle class of small planters, independent farmers, city artisans, who, given small rewards for joining forces with merchants and planters, would be a solid buffer against black slaves, frontier Indians, and very poor whites.

The growing cities generated more skilled workers, and the governments cultivated the support of white mechanics by protecting them from the competition of both slaves and free Negroes. As early as 1686, the council in New York ordered that "noe Negro or Slave be suffered to work on the bridge as a Porter about any goods either imported or Exported from or into this City." In the southern towns too, white craftsmen and traders were protected from Negro competition. In 1764 the South Carolina legislature prohibited Charleston masters from employing Negroes or other slaves as mechanics or in handicraft trades.

Middle-class Americans might be invited to join a new elite by attacks against the corruption of the established rich. The New Yorker Cadwallader Golden, in his Address to the Freeholders in 1747, attacked the wealthy as tax dodgers unconcerned with the welfare of others (although he himself was wealthy) and spoke for the honesty and dependability of "the midling rank of mankind" in whom citizens could best trust "our liberty & Property." This was to become a critically important rhetorical device for the rule of the few, who would speak to the many of "our" liberty, "our" property, "our" country.

Similarly, in Boston, the rich James Otis could appeal to the Boston middle class by attacking the Tory Thomas Hutchinson. James Henretta has shown that while it was the rich who ruled Boston, there were political jobs available for the moderately well-off, as "cullers of staves," "measurer of Coal Baskets," "Fence Viewer." Aubrey Land found in Maryland a class of small planters who were not "the beneficiary" of the planting society as the rich were, but who had the distinction of being called planters, and who were "respectable citizens with community obligations to act as overseers of roads, appraisers of estates and similar duties." It helped the alliance to accept the middle class socially in "a round of activities that included local politics ... dances, horseracing, and cockfights, occasionally punctuated with drinking brawls..."

The Pennsylvania Journal wrote in 1756: "The people of this province are generally of the middling sort, and at present pretty much upon a level. They are chiefly industrious fanners, artificers or men in trade; they enjoy and are fond of freedom, and the meanest among them thinks he has a right to civility from the greatest." Indeed, there was a substantial middle class fitting that description. To call them "the people" was to omit black slaves, white servants, displaced Indians. And the term "middle class" concealed a fact long true about this country, that, as Richard Hofstadter said: "It was ... a middle-class society governed for the most part by its upper classes."

Those upper classes, to rule, needed to make concessions to the middle class, without damage to their own wealth or power, at the expense of slaves, Indians, and poor whites. This bought loyalty. And to bind that loyalty with something more powerful even than material advantage, the ruling group found, in the 1760s and 1770s, a wonderfully useful device. That device was the language of liberty and equality, which could unite just enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality.

4. Tyranny is Tyranny

Around 1776, certain important people in the English colonies made a discovery that would prove enormously useful for the next two hundred years. They found that by creating a nation, a symbol, a legal unity called the United States, they could take over land, profits, and political power from favorites of the British Empire. In the process, they could hold back a number of potential rebellions and create a consensus of popular support for the rule of a new, privileged leadership.
When we look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command.

Starting with Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, by 1760, there had been eighteen uprisings aimed at overthrowing colonial governments. There had also been six black rebellions, from South Carolina to New York, and forty riots of various origins.

By this time also, there emerged, according to Jack Greene, "stable, coherent, effective and acknowledged local political and social elites." And by the 1760s, this local leadership saw the possibility of directing much of the rebellious energy against England and her local officials. It was not a conscious conspiracy, but an accumulation of tactical responses.

After 1763, with England victorious over France in the Seven Years' War (known in America as the French and Indian War), expelling them from North America, ambitious colonial leaders were no longer threatened by the French. They now had only two rivals left: the English and the Indians. The British, wooing the Indians, had declared Indian lands beyond the Appalachians out of bounds to whites (the Proclamation of 1763). Perhaps once the British were out of the way, the Indians could be dealt with. Again, no conscious forethought strategy by the colonial elite, but a growing awareness as events developed.

With the French defeated, the British government could turn its attention to tightening control over the colonies. It needed revenues to pay for the war, and looked to the colonies for that. Also, the colonial trade had become more and more important to the British economy, and more profitable: it had amounted to about 500,000 pounds in 1700 but by 1770 was worth 2,800,000 pounds.

So, the American leadership was less in need of English rule, the English more in need of the colonists' wealth. The elements were there for conflict. The war had brought glory for the generals, death to the privates, wealth for the merchants, unemployment for the poor. There were 25,000 people living in New York (there had been 7,000 in 1720) when the French and Indian War ended. A newspaper editor wrote about the growing "Number of Beggars and wandering Poor" in the streets of the city. Letters in the papers questioned the distribution of wealth: "How often have our Streets been covered with Thousands of Barrels of Flour for trade, while our near Neighbors can hardly procure enough to make a Dumplin to satisfy hunger?"

Gary Nash's study of city tax lists shows that by the early 1770s, the top 5 percent of Boston's taxpayers controlled 49% of the city's taxable assets. In Philadelphia and New York too, wealth was more and more concentrated. Court-recorded wills showed that by 1750 the wealthiest people in the cities were leaving 20,00Q pounds (equivalent to about $5 million today).

In Boston, the lower classes began to use the town meeting to vent their grievances. The governor of Massachusetts had written that in these town meetings "the meanest Inhabitants ... by their constant Attendance there generally are the majority and outvote the Gendemen, Merchants, Substantial Traders and all the better part of the Inhabitants."

What seems to have happened in Boston is that certain lawyers, editors, and merchants of the upper classes, but excluded from the ruling circles close to England-men like James Otis and Samuel Adams-organized a "Boston Caucus" and through their oratory and their writing "molded laboring-class opinion, called the 'mob' into action, and shaped its behaviour." This is Gary Nash's description of Otis, who, he says, "keenly aware of the declining fortunes and the resentment of ordinary townspeople, was mirroring as well as molding popular opinion."

We have here a forecast of the long history of American politics, the mobilization of lower-class energy by upper-class politicians, for their own purposes. This was not purely deception; it involved, in part, a
genuine recognition of lower-class grievances, which helps to account for its effectiveness as a tactic over the centuries. As Nash puts it:

James Otis, Samuel Adams, Royall Lyler, Oxenbridge Thacher, and a host of other Bostonians, linked to the artisans and laborers through a network of neighborhood taverns, fire companies, and the Caucus, espoused a vision of politics that gave credence to laboring-class views and regarded as entirely legitimate the participation of artisans and even laborers in the political process. In 1762, Otis, speaking against the conservative rulers of the Massachusetts colony represented by Thomas Hutchinson, gave an example of the kind of rhetoric that a lawyer could use in mobilizing city mechanics and artisans:

I am forced to get my living by the labour of my hand; and the sweat of my brow, as most of you are and obliged to go thro' good report and evil report, for bitter bread, earned under the frowns of some who have no natural or divine right to be above me, and entirely owe their grandeur and honor to grinding the faces of the poor...

Boston seems to have been full of class anger in those days. In 1763, in the Boston Gazette, someone wrote that "a few persons in power" were promoting political projects "for keeping the people poor in order to make them humble."

This accumulated sense of grievance against the rich in Boston may account for the explosiveness of mob action after the Stamp Act of 1765. Through this Act, the British were taxing the colonial population to pay for the French war, in which colonists had suffered to expand the British Empire. That summer, a shoemaker named Ebenezer Macintosh led a mob in destroying the house of a rich Boston merchant named Andrew Oliver. Two weeks later, the crowd turned to the home of Thomas Hutchinson, symbol of the rich elite who ruled the colonies in the name of England. They smashed up his house with axes, drank the wine in his wine cellar, and looted the house of its furniture and other objects. A report by colony officials to England said that this was part of a larger scheme in which the houses of fifteen rich people were to be destroyed, as pan of "a War of Plunder, of general levelling and taking away the Distinction of rich and poor."

It was one of those moments in which fury against the rich went further than leaders like Otis wanted. Could class hatred be focused against the pro-British elite, and deflected from the nationalist elite? In New York, that same year of the Boston house attacks, someone wrote to the New York Gazette, "Is it equitable that 99, rather 999, should suffer for the Extravagance or Grandeur of one, especially when it is considered that men frequently owe their Wealth to the impoverishment of their Neighbors?" The leaders of the Revolution would worry about keeping such sentiments within limits.

Mechanics were demanding political democracy in the colonial cities: open meetings of representative assemblies, public galleries in the legislative halls, and the publishing of roll-call votes, so that constituents could check on representatives. They wanted open-air meetings where the population could participate in making policy, more equitable taxes, price controls, and the election of mechanics and other ordinary people to government posts. Especially in Philadelphia, according to Nash, the consciousness of the lower middle classes grew to the point where it must have caused some hard thinking, not just among the conservative Loyalists sympathetic to England, but even among leaders of the Revolution. "By mid-1776, laborers, artisans, and small tradesmen, employing extralegal measures when electoral politics failed, were in clear command in Philadelphia." Helped by some middle-class leaders (Thomas Paine, Thomas Young, and others), they "launched a full-scale attack on wealth and even on the right to acquire unlimited private property."

During elections for the 1776 convention to frame a constitution for Pennsylvania, a Privates Committee urged voters to oppose "great and overgrown rich men . . . they will be too apt to be framing distinctions in society." The Privates Committee drew up a bill of rights for the convention, including the statement that "an enormous proportion of property vested in a few individuals is dangerous to the rights, and
destructive of the common happiness, of mankind; and therefore every free state hath a right by its laws to discourage the possession of such property."

In the countryside, where most people lived, there was a similar conflict of poor against rich, one which political leaders would use to mobilize the population against England, granting some benefits for the rebellious poor, and many more for themselves in the process. The tenant riots in New Jersey in the 1740s, the New York tenant uprisings of the 1750s and 1760s in the Hudson Valley, and the rebellion in northeastern New York that led to the carving of Vermont out of New York State were all more than sporadic rioting. They were long-lasting social movements, highly organized, involving the creation of counter governments. They were aimed at a handful of rich landlords, but with the landlords far away, they often had to direct their anger against farmers who had leased the disputed land from the owners. (See Edward Countryman's pioneering work on rural rebellion.) Just as the Jersey rebels had broken into jails to free their friends, rioters in the Hudson Valley rescued prisoners from the sheriff and one time took the sheriff himself as prisoner. The tenants were seen as "chiefly the dregs of the People," and the posse that the sheriff of Albany County led to Bennington in 1771 included the privileged top of the local power structure.

The land rioters saw their battle as poor against rich. A witness at a rebel leader's trial in New York in 1766 said that the farmers evicted by the landlords "had an equitable Title but could not be defended in a Course of Law because they were poor and... poor men were always oppressed by the rich." Ethan Alien's Green Mountain rebels in Vermont described themselves as "a poor people...fatigued in settling a wilderness country," and their opponents as "a number of Attorneys and other gentlemen, with all their tackle of ornaments, and compliments, and French finesse."

Land-hungry farmers in the Hudson Valley turned to the British for support against the American landlords; the Green Mountain rebels did the same. But as the conflict with Britain intensified, the colonial leaders of the movement for independence, aware of the tendency of poor tenants to side with the British in their anger against the rich, adopted policies to win over people in the countryside.

In North Carolina, a powerful movement of white farmers was organized against wealthy and corrupt officials in the period from 1766 to 1771, exactly those years when, in the cities of the Northeast, agitation was growing against the British, crowding out class issues. The movement in North Carolina was called the Regulator movement, and it consisted, says Marvin L. Michael Kay, a specialist in the history of that movement, of "class-conscious white farmers in the west who attempted to democratize local government in their respective counties." The Regulators referred to themselves as "poor Industrious peasants," as "labourers," "the wretched poor," "oppressed" by "rich and powerful...designing Monsters."

The Regulators saw that a combination of wealth and political power ruled North Carolina, and denounced those officials "whose highest Study is the promotion of their wealth." They resented the tax system, which was especially burdensome on the poor, and the combination of merchants and lawyers who worked in the courts to collect debts from the harassed farmers. In the western counties where the movement developed, only a small percentage of the households had slaves, and 41 percent of these were concentrated, to take one sample western county, in less than 2 percent of the households. The Regulators did not represent servants or slaves, but they did speak for small owners, squatters, and tenants.

A contemporary account of the Regulator movement in Orange County describes the situation:

Thus were the people of Orange insulted by The sheriff, robbed and plundered...neglected and condemned by the Representatives and abused by the Magistracy; obliged to pay Fees regulated only by the Avarice of the officer; obliged to pay a TAX which they believed went to enrich and aggrandize a few, who lorded it over them continually; and from all these Evils they saw no way to escape; for the Men in Power, and Legislation, were the Men whose interest it was to oppress, and make gain of the Labourer.
In that county in the 1760s, the Regulators organized to prevent the collection of taxes, or the confiscation of the property of tax delinquents. Officials said "an absolute Insurrection of a dangerous tendency has broke out in Orange County," and made military plans to suppress it. At one point seven hundred armed farmers forced the release of two arrested Regulator leaders. The Regulators petitioned the government on their grievances in 1768, citing "the unequal chances the poor and the weak have in contentions with the rich and powerful." In another county, Anson, a local militia colonel complained of "the unparalleled tumults, Insurrections, and Commotions which at present distract this County." At one point a hundred men broke up the proceedings at a county court. But they also tried to elect farmers to the assembly, asserting "that a majority of our assembly is composed of Lawyers, Clerks, and others in Connection with them...." In 1770 there was a large-scale riot in Hillsborough, North Carolina, in which they disrupted a court, forced the judge to flee, beat three lawyers and two merchants, and looted stores.

The result of all this was that the assembly passed some mild reform legislation, but also an act "to prevent riots and tumults," and the governor prepared to crush them militarily. In May of 1771 there was a decisive battle in which several thousand Regulators were defeated by a disciplined army using cannon. Six Regulators were hanged. Kay says that in the three western counties of Orange, Anson, and Rowan, where the Regulator movement was concentrated, it had the support of six thousand to seven thousand men out of a total white taxable population of about eight thousand.

One consequence of this bitter conflict is that only a minority of the people in the Regulator counties seem to have participated as patriots in the Revolutionary War. Most of them probably remained neutral.

Fortunately for the Revolutionary movement, the key battles were being fought in the North, and here, in the cities, the colonial leaders had a divided white population; they could win over the mechanics, who were a kind of middle class, who had a stake in the fight against England, who faced competition from English manufacturers. The biggest problem was to keep the propertyless people, who were unemployed and hungry in the crisis following the French war, under control.

In Boston, the economic grievances of the lowest classes mingled with anger against the British and exploded in mob violence. The leaders of the Independence movement wanted to use that mob energy against England, but also to contain it so that it would not demand too much from them.

When riots against the Stamp Act swept Boston in 1767, they were analyzed by the commander of the British forces in North America, General Thomas Gage, as follows:

The Boston Mob, raised first by the Instigation of Many of the Principal Inhabitants, Allured by Plunder, rose shordy after of their own Accord, attacked, robbed, and destroyed several Houses, and amongst others, mat of the Lieutenant Governor.... People then began to be terrified at the Spirit they had raised, to perceive that popular Fury was not to be guided, and each individual feared he might be the next Victim to their Rapacity. The same Fears spread thro’ the other Provinces, and there has been as much Pains taken since, to prevent Insurrections, of the People, as before to excite them.

Gage’s comment suggests that leaders of the movement against the Stamp Act had instigated crowd action, but then became frightened by the thought that it might be directed against their wealth, too. At this time, the top 10 percent of Boston’s taxpayers held about 66 percent of Boston’s taxable wealth, while the lowest 30 percent of the taxing population had no taxable property at all. The propertyless could not vote and so (like blacks, women, Indians) could not participate in town meetings. This include sailors, journeymen, apprentices, servants.

Dirk Hoerder, a student of Boston mob actions in the Revolutionary period, calls the Revolutionary leadership "the Sons of Liberty type drawn from the middling interest and well-to-do merchants ... a hesitant leadership," wanting to spur action against Great Britain, yet worrying about maintaining control over the crowds at home.

It took the Stamp Act crisis to make this leadership aware of its dilemma. A political group in Boston called the Loyal Nine—merchants, distillers, shipowners, and master craftsmen who opposed the Stamp
Act-organized a procession in August 1765 to protest it. They put fifty master craftsmen at the head, but needed to mobilize shipworkers from the North End and mechanics and apprentices from the South End. Two or three thousand were in the procession (Negroes were excluded). They marched to the home of the stampmaster and burned his effigy. But after the "gentlemen" who organized the demonstration left, the crowd went further and destroyed some of the stampmaster's property. These were, as one of the Loyal Nine said, "amazingly inflamed people." The Loyal Nine seemed taken aback by the direct assault on the wealthy furnishings of the stampmaster.

The rich set up armed patrols. Now a town meeting was called and the same leaders who had planned the demonstration denounced the violence and disavowed the actions of the crowd. As more demonstrations were planned for November 1, 1765, when the Stamp Act was to go into effect, and for Pope's Day, November 5, steps were taken to keep things under control; a dinner was given for certain leaders of the rioters to win them over. And when the Stamp Act was repealed, due to overwhelming resistance, the conservative leaders severed their connections with the rioters. They held annual celebrations of the first anti-Stamp Act demonstration, to which they invited, according to Hoerder, not the rioters but "mainly upper and middle-class Bostonians, who traveled in coaches and carriages to Roxbury or Dorchester for opulent feasts."

When the British Parliament turned to its next attempt to tax the colonies, this time by a set of taxes which it hoped would not excite as much opposition, the colonial leaders organized boycotts. But, they stressed, "No Mobs or Tumults, let the Persons and Properties of your most inveterate Enemies be safe." Samuel Adams advised: "No Mobs- No Confusions-No Tumult." And James Otis said that "no possible circumstances, though ever so oppressive, could be supposed sufficient to justify private tumults and disorders...."

Impressment and the quartering of troops by the British were directly hurtful to the sailors and other working people. After 1768, two thousand soldiers were quartered in Boston, and friction grew between the crowds and the soldiers. The soldiers began to take the jobs of working people when jobs were scarce. Mechanics and shopkeepers lost work or business because of the colonists' boycott of British goods. In 1769, Boston set up a committee "to Consider of some Suitable Methods of employing the Poor of the Town, whose Numbers and distresses are daily increasing by the loss of its Trade and Commerce."

On March 5, 1770, grievances of ropemakers against British soldiers taking their jobs led to a fight. A crowd gathered in front of the customhouse and began provoking the soldiers, who fired and killed first Crispus Attucks, a mulatto worker, then others. This became known as the Boston Massacre. Feelings against the British mounted quickly. There was anger at the acquittal of six of the British soldiers (two were punished by having their thumbs branded and were discharged from the army). The crowd at the Massacre was described by John Adams, defense attorney for the British soldiers, as "a motley rabble of saucy boys, negroes, and mulattoes, Irish teagues and outlandish jack tarrs." Perhaps ten thousand people marched in the funeral procession for the victims of the Massacre, out of a total Boston population of sixteen thousand. This led England to remove the troops from Boston and try to quiet the situation.

Impressment was the background of the Massacre. There had been impressment riots through the 1760s in New York and in Newport, Rhode Island, where five hundred seamen, boys, and Negroes rioted after five weeks of impressment by the British. Six weeks before the Boston Massacre, there was a battle in New York of seamen against British soldiers taking their jobs, and one seaman was killed.

In the Boston Tea Party of December 1773, the Boston Committee of Correspondence, formed a year before to organize anti-British actions, "controlled crowd action against the tea from the start," Dirk Hoerder says. The Tea Party led to the Coercive Acts by Parliament, virtually establishing martial law in Massachusetts, dissolving the colonial government, closing the port in Boston, and sending in troops. Still, town meetings and mass meetings rose in opposition. The seizure of a powder store by the British led four thousand men from all around Boston to assemble in Cambridge, where some of the wealthy officials had their sumptuous homes. The crowd forced the officials to resign. The Committees of Correspondence
of Boston and other towns welcomed this gathering, but warned against destroying private property. Pauline Maier, who studied the development of opposition to Britain in the decade before 1776 in her book From Resistance to Revolution, emphasizes the moderation of the leadership and, despite their desire for resistance, their "emphasis on order and restraint." She notes: "The officers and committee members of the Sons of Liberty were drawn almost entirely from the middle and upper classes of colonial society." In Newport, Rhode Island, for instance, the Sons of Liberty, according to a contemporary writer, "contained some Gentlemen of the First Figure in 'Town for Opulence, Sense and Politeness." In North Carolina "one of the wealthiest of the gentlemen and freeholders" led the Sons of Liberty. Similarly in Virginia and South Carolina. And "New York's leaders, too, were involved in small but respectable independent business ventures." Their aim, however, was to broaden their organization, to develop a mass base of wage earners.

Many of the Sons of Liberty groups declared, as in Milford, Connecticut, their "greatest abhorrence" of lawlessness, or as in Annapolis, opposed "all riots or unlawful assemblies tending to the disturbance of the public tranquility." John Adams expressed the same fears: "These tarrings and featherings, this breaking open Houses by rude and insolent Rabble, in Resentment for private Wrongs or in pursuing of private Prejudices and Passions, must be discountenanced.11 In Virginia, it seemed clear to the educated gentry that something needed to be done to persuade the lower orders to join the revolutionary cause, to deflect their anger against England. One Virginian wrote in his diary in the spring of 1774: "The lower Class of People here are in tumult on account of Reports from Boston, many of them expect to he press'd & compell'd to go and fight the Britains!" Around the time of the Stamp Act, a Virginia orator addressed the poor: "Are not the gentlemen made of the same materials as the lowest and poorest among you? . . . Listen to no doctrines which may tend to divide us, but let us go hand in hand, as brothers...."

It was a problem for which the rhetorical talents of Patrick Henry were superbly fitted. He was, as Rhys Isaac puts it, "firmly attached to the world of the gentry," but he spoke in words that the poorer whites of Virginia could understand. Henry's fellow Virginian Edmund Randolph recalled his style as "simplicity and even carelessness. . . . His pauses, which for their length might sometimes be feared to dispel the attention, riveted it the more by raising the expectation."

Patrick Henry's oratory in Virginia pointed a way to relieve class tension between upper and lower classes and form a bond against the British. This was to find language inspiring to all classes, specific enough in its listing of grievances to charge people with anger against the British, vague enough to avoid class conflict among the rebels, and stirring enough to build patriotic feeling for the resistance movement.

Tom Paine's Common Sense, which appeared in early 1776 and became the most popular pamphlet in the American colonies, did this. It made the first bold argument for independence, in words that any fairly literate person could understand: "Society in every state is a blessing, but Government even in its best state is but a necessary evil. . . ." Paine disposed of the idea of the divine right of kings by a pungent history of the British monarchy, going back to the Norman conquest of 1066, when William the Conqueror came over from France to set himself on the British throne: "A French bastard landing with an armed Bandits and establishing himself king of England against the consent of the natives, is in plain terms a very paltry rascally original. It certainly hath no divinity in it."

Paine dealt with the practical advantages of sticking to England or being separated; he knew the importance of economics:

I challenge the wannest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge; not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for by them where we will....

As for the bad effects of the connection with England, Paine appealed to the colonists' memory of all the wars in which England had involved them, wars costly in lives and money:
But the injuries and disadvantages which we sustain by that connection are without number... any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this Continent in European wars and quarrels, and set us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship...

He built slowly to an emotional pitch:

Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART.

Common Sense went through twenty-five editions in 1776 and sold hundreds of thousands of copies. It is probable that almost every literate colonist either read it or knew about its contents. Pamphleteering had become by this time the chief theater of debate about relations with England. From 1750 to 1776 four hundred pamphlets had appeared arguing one or another side of the Stamp Act or the Boston Massacre or The Tea Party or the general questions of disobedience to law, loyalty to government, rights and obligations. Paine's pamphlet appealed to a wide range of colonial opinion angered by England. But it caused some tremors in aristocrats like John Adams, who were with the patriot cause but wanted to make sure it didn't go too far in the direction of democracy. Paine had denounced the so-called balanced government of Lords and Commons as a deception, and called for single-chamber representative bodies where the people could be represented. Adams denounced Paine's plan as "so democratical, without any restraint or even an attempt at any equilibrium or counter-poise, that it must produce confusion and every evil work." Popular assemblies needed to be checked, Adams thought, because they were "productive of hasty results and absurd judgments."

Paine himself came out of "the lower orders" of England-a stay-maker, tax official, teacher, poor emigrant to America. He arrived in Philadelphia in 1774, when agitation against England was already strong in the colonies. The artisan mechanics of Philadelphia, along with journeymen, apprentices, and ordinary laborers, were forming into a politically conscious militia, "in general damn'd riff-raff-dirty, mutinous, and disaffected," as local aristocrats described them. By speaking plainly and strongly, he could represent those politically conscious lower-class people (he opposed property qualifications for voting in Pennsylvania). But his great concern seems to have been to speak for a middle group. "There is an extent of riches, as well as an extreme of poverty, which, by harrowing the circles of a man's acquaintance, lessens his opportunities of general knowledge."

Once the Revolution was under way, Paine more and more made it clear that he was not for the crowd action of lower-class people-like those militia who in 1779 attacked the house of James Wilson. Wilson was a Revolutionary leader who opposed price controls and wanted a more conservative government than was given by the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776. Paine became an associate of one of the wealthiest men in Pennsylvania, Robert Morris, and a supporter of Morris's creation, the Bank of North America.

Later, during the controversy over adopting the Constitution, Paine would once again represent urban artisans, who favored a strong central government. He seemed to believe that such a government could represent some great common interest, hi this sense, he lent himself perfectly to the myth of the Revolution-that it was on behalf of a united people.

The Declaration of Independence brought that myth to its peak of eloquence. Each harsher measure of British control-the Proclamation of 1763 not allowing colonists to settle beyond the Appalachians, the Stamp Tax, the Townshend taxes, including the one on tea, the stationing of troops and the Boston Massacre, the closing of the port of Boston and the dissolution of the Massachusetts legislature-escalated colonial rebellion to the point of revolution. The colonists had responded with the Stamp Act Congress, the Sons of Liberty, the Committees of Correspondence, the Boston Tea Party, and finally, in 1774, the setting up of a Continental Congress-an illegal body, forerunner of a future independent government. It was after the military clash at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, between colonial Minutemen and British troops, that the Continental Congress decided on separation. They organized a small committee to
draw up the Declaration of Independence, which Thomas Jefferson wrote. It was adopted by the Congress on July 2, and officially proclaimed July 4, 1776.

By this time there was already a powerful sentiment for independence. Resolutions adopted in North Carolina in May of 1776, and sent to the Continental Congress, declared independence of England, asserted that all British law was null and void, and urged military preparations. About the same time, the town of Maiden, Massachusetts, responding to a request from the Massachusetts House of Representatives that all towns in the state declare their views on independence, had met in town meeting and unanimously called for independence: "... we therefore renounce with disdain our connexion with a kingdom of slaves; we bid a final adieu to Britain."

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands... they should declare the causes..." This was the opening of the Declaration of Independence. Then, in its second paragraph, came the powerful philosophical statement:

We hold these truths to he self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government....

It then went on to list grievances against the king, "a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States." The list accused the king of dissolving colonial governments, controlling judges, sending "swarms of Officers to harass our people," sending in armies of occupation, cutting off colonial trade with other parts of the world, taxing the colonists without their consent, and waging war against them, "transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny."

All this, the language of popular control over governments, the right of rebellion and revolution, indignation at political tyranny, economic burdens, and military attacks, was language well suited to unite large numbers of colonists, and persuade even those who had grievances against one another to turn against England.

Some Americans were clearly omitted from this circle of united interest drawn by the Declaration of Independence: Indians, black slaves, women. Indeed, one paragraph of the Declaration charged the King with inciting slave rebellions and Indian attacks: He has excited domestic insurrections amongst as, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

Twenty years before the Declaration, a proclamation of the legislature of Massachusetts of November 3, 1755, declared the Penobscot Indians "rebels, enemies and traitors" and provided a bounty: "For every scalp of a male Indian brought in... forty pounds. For every scalp of such female Indian or male Indian under the age of twelve years that shall be killed... twenty pounds... ."

Thomas Jefferson had written a paragraph of the Declaration accusing the King of transporting slaves from Africa to the colonies and "suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce." This seemed to express moral indignation against slavery and the slave trade (Jefferson's personal distaste for slavery must be put alongside the fact that he owned hundreds of slaves to the day he died). Behind it was the growing fear among Virginians and some other southerners about the growing number of black slaves in the colonies (20 percent of the total population) and the threat of slave revolts as the number of slaves increased. Jefferson's paragraph was removed by the Continental Congress, because slaveholders themselves disagreed about the desirability of ending the slave trade. So even that gesture toward the black slave was omitted in the great manifesto of freedom of the American Revolution.
The use of the phrase "all men are created equal" was probably not a deliberate attempt to make a statement about women. It was just that women were beyond consideration as worthy of inclusion. They were politically invisible. Though practical needs gave women a certain authority in the home, on the farm, or in occupations like midwifery, they were simply overlooked in any consideration of political rights, any notions of civic equality.

To say that the Declaration of Independence, even by its own language, was limited to life, liberty, and happiness for white males is not to denounce the makers and signers of the Declaration for holding the ideas expected of privileged males of the eighteenth century. Reformers and radicals, looking discontentedly at history, are often accused of expecting too much from a past political epoch—and sometimes they do. But the point of noting those outside the arc of human rights in the Declaration is not, centuries late and pointlessly, to lay impossible moral burdens on that time. It is to try to understand the way in which the Declaration functioned to mobilize certain groups of Americans, ignoring others. Surely, inspirational language to create a secure consensus is still used, in our time, to cover up serious conflicts of interest in that consensus, and to cover up, also, the omission of large parts of the human race. The philosophy of the Declaration, that government is set up by the people to secure their life, liberty, and happiness, and is to be overthrown when it no longer does that, is often traced to the ideas of John Locke, in his Second Treatise on Government. That was published in England in 1689, when the English were rebelling against tyrannical kings and setting up parliamentary government. The Declaration, like Locke's Second Treatise, talked about government and political rights, but ignored the existing inequalities in property. And how could people truly have equal rights, with stark differences in wealth?

Locke himself was a wealthy man, with investments in the silk trade and slave trade, income from loans and mortgages. He invested heavily in the first issue of the stock of the Bank of England, just a few years after he had written his Second Treatise as the classic statement of liberal democracy. As adviser to the Carolinas, he had suggested a government of slaveowners run by wealthy land barons. Locke's statement of people's government was in support of a revolution in England for the free development of mercantile capitalism at home and abroad. Locke himself regretted that the labor of poor children "is generally lost to the public till they are twelve or fourteen years old" and suggested that all children over three, of families on relief, should attend "working schools1" so they would be "from infancy . . . inured to work."

The English revolutions of the seventeenth century brought representative government and opened up discussions of democracy. But, as the English historian Christopher Hill wrote in The Puritan Revolution: "The establishment of parliamentary supremacy, of the rule of law, no doubt mainly benefited the men of property." The kind of arbitrary taxation that threatened the security of property was overthrown, monopolies were ended to give more free reign to business, and sea power began to be used for an imperial policy abroad, including the conquest of Ireland. The Levellers and the Diggers, two political movements which wanted to carry equality into the economic sphere, were put down by the Revolution. One can see the reality of Locke's nice phrases about representative government in the class divisions and conflicts in England that followed the Revolution that Locke supported. At the very time the American scene was becoming tense, in 1768, England was racked by riots and strikes—of coal heavers, saw mill workers, halters, weavers, sailors—because of the high price of bread and the miserable wages. The Annual Register reviewed the events of the spring and summer of 1768:

A general dissatisfaction unhappily prevailed among several of the lower orders of the people. This ill temper, which was partlyoccasioned by the high price of provisions, and partly proceeded from other causes, too frequently manifested itself in acts of tumult and riot, which were productive of the most melancholy consequences. "The people" who were, supposedly, at the heart of Locke's theory of people's sovereignty were defined by a British member of Parliament: "I don't mean the mob. ... I mean the middling people of England, the manufacturer, the yeoman, the merchant, the country gentleman. . . ."
In America, too, the reality behind the words of the Declaration of Independence (issued in the same year as Adam Smith’s capitalist manifesto, The Wealth of Nations) was that a rising class of important people needed to enlist on their side enough Americans to defeat England, without disturbing too much the relations of wealth and power that had developed over 150 years of colonial history. Indeed, 69 percent of the signers of the Declaration of Independence had held colonial office under England.

When the Declaration of Independence was read, with all its flaming radical language, from the town hall balcony in Boston, it was read by Thomas Crafts, a member of the Loyal Nine group, conservatives who had opposed militant action against the British. Four days after the reading, the Boston Committee of Correspondence ordered the townsmen to show up on the Common for a military draft. The rich, it turned out, could avoid the draft by paying for substitutes; the poor had to serve. This led to rioting, and shouting: “Tyranny is Tyranny let it come from whom it may.”