Inside the Vault

Thomas Paine’s Common Sense with Professor Eric Slauter

Thursday, July 7, 2022

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
How to Participate

- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.

For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.
Deputy Dean of Humanities and of the College, Director of the Karla Scherer Center for the Study of American Culture, and Associate Professor of English at the University of Chicago.


He will be leading a GLI course on the Declaration in Autumn 2022!
Thomas Paine
1736/37 - 1809

- Arrived in Philadelphia from England in 1774
- Recommended by Benjamin Franklin, calling him "ingenious" and "worthy"
- Edited *Pennsylvania Magazine* (ca. 1775) and is best known for his work *Common Sense* (1776)
- Other works include *Rights of Man* (1791) and *The Age of Reason* (1794)
Common Sense
By Thomas Paine

- Originally published January 10, 1776
- The Gilder Lehrman Institute’s copy was published in 1793

Thomas Paine, Common Sense addressed to the Inhabitants of America on the following interesting Subjects... London, 1793  
(The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08643)
The Boston Massacre
March 5, 1770

The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King-Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Reg., by Paul Revere, 1770.

(The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01868)
In Congress, March 23, 1776.

Whereas the Petitions of these United Colonies to the King, for the Redress of great and manifest Grievances, have not only been rejected, but treated with scorn and contempt, and the Opposition to them evidently formed to reduce them to a State of servile Submission, and their necessary Defence against hostile Forces actually employed to subdue them, declared them

Men on board, and two thirds of the Use of the United Colonies.

Resolved, That all Ships or Vessels with their Tackles, Apparel and Furniture, Goods, Wares and Merchandizes belonging to any Inhabitants of Great Britain, on which, which shall be taken by any Vessel of War fitted out by and at the expense of any of the United Colonies shall be deemed forfeited, and divided, after deducting and paying the Wages of Seamen and Mariners as farmers with their families.

Remember the bribing agree slaves to all contrary their masters.

Remember the burning of Norfolk.

Remember their obliging you to pay treble duties, when you came to trade with the countries you had helped to conquer.

Remember their depriving you of all trade in the fisheries, you had equally with them spent your blood and treasure to acquire.
COMMON SENSE.
TOMORROW will be published and sold by
J. Gill, and T. and J. Fleet, in Boston, and
B. Edes in Watertown,
A NEW Edition of COMMON SENSE,
addressed to the inhabitants of America.
With several additions in the body of the work:
To which is added an Appendix, and an Address
to the representatives of the people called Quakers.
N. B. This edition contains upwards of one
third more than any former one.
Thomas Paine, *Common Sense Addressed to the Inhabitants of America on the following interesting Subjects...*, London, 1792. (Private Collection).
O ye that love mankind; yet that dare oppose, not only the tyranny stand forth; every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her, Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O receive the fugitive! and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

Thomas Paine, Common Sense advertised to the Inhabitants of America on the following interesting Subjects., Page 21, London, 1793. (Gilder Lehman Institute, GLC08643)
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But where, say some, is the King of America? I will tell you, friend, he reigns above, and does not make havoc of mankind.

Yet that we may not appear to be defective even in earthly honours, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the charter; let it be brought forth, placed on the divine law, the word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the world may know that so far we approve of monarchy, that in America, THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the King is law, so in free countries the Law ought to be the King; and there ought to be no other. But left any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown, at the conclusion of the ceremony, be demolished, and scattered among the people whose right it is.

But where, say some, is the King of America? I will tell you, friend, he reigns above, and does not make havoc of mankind.
a nation of the continent, or any ways equal to the expense of blood and treasure we have already been put to. The object contended for ought always to bear some just proportion to the expense. The removal of —— or the whole defensible junos, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience which would have sufficiently balanced the loss of all the acts complained of, had such acts been offences; but if the whole continent must take arms, if every man must be a soldier, it is farely worth our while to fight against a contemptible military only. Deily, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for in just estimation, it is as great a folly to pay a Banker’s Hill price for law as for land. As I have always considered the independency of this continent, as an event which must center or inter- nalise, so from the late rapid progress of the continent to maturity, the event could not be far off. Whereas, on the breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth while to have disputed a matter which time would have finally resolved, unless we meant so to: in earnest; otherwise it is like running an issue on a bill at law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer advocate for reconciliation than myself before the fatal nineteenth of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known,

But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the continent —— And that for several reasons.

First. The power of governing still remaining in the hands of the King, he will have a negative over the whole legislation of this continent. And

hath he, or he is not, a proper man to try these cases? You feel no such but what I feel? And is there any inhabitant in America ignorant as to not to know, that according to what is called the legislative power, the King cannot make any laws, but what the King shall give leave to? and is there any man so unwise as to not to see, (that considering what has happened) he will suffer no law to be made here, but such as suits his purpose? We may be as effectually ensnared by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us in England. After matters are made up (as it is called) can there be any doubt, but the whole power of the crown will be exercised to keep this continent in law and as humble as possible? Instead of going forward, we shall go back, or be perpetually quarrelling and ridiculous petitioning.

To bring the matter to one point, is the power who is jealous of our prosperity a proper power to govern us? Whoever says so to this question, is an independant; for independency means no more, than whether we shall make our own laws, or

But the King, you will say, has a negative in England; the people, there can make no laws without his consent. In point of right and order, there is something very ridiculous that a youth of twenty-one (which hath often happened) shall lay to several millions of people, elder and wiser than himself, I forbid this or that act of yours to be ——

# Lexington

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# Lexington
Passages for Insertion in the Hiatuses.

No. 1. 
“by the King and Parliament they have” 2
No. 2. 
“reject the oppressed o’er either” —
No. 3. 
“nor a General as in England an man” 11
No. 4. 
“In England the king hath little” —
No. 5. 
“by the king and his” 13
No. 6. 
“made known, I rejected the hardened, full-temper’d 17
Pha as of England for ever; and disdained the worship 17
that with the pretended title of “FATHER OF HIS 17
People,” can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and com- 17
posed a step with their blood upon his soul! — Bu.” 17
No. 7. 
“— And as he hath sworn in his own such an inverte- 17
rate enemy to Liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbi- 17
trary power — Is he? or is he not a proper man” 17
No. 8. 
“petitioning.—We are already greater than the king 17
wishes us to be — and will he not endeavour hereby to 17
make us his? — To bring the”
No. 9. 
“laws, or whether the King, the greatest enemy we 17
have, or can have, shall tell us, “There shall be no laws 17
but such as I like? — But” 17
No. 10. “dangerous and fatal than it” 18
No. 11. “policy in the king at this” 18
No. 12. “reinforcing himself in the government of the Pro- 20
vinces in order that he may accomplish by fraud and 20
subtly in the long run, what he cannot do by force and 20
violence in the short one: Reconciliation and Ruin are 20
nearly related. Secondly.”
No. 13. “invasion of mankind, like the royal brute of Great- 20
Britain. — Yet that”
No. 14. “eternal tyranny, by keeping vacant the seat of Go- 20
vernment. — There is”
No. 15. “the tyranny but the Tyrant— Stand forth!” 21

Passages for Insertion in the Hiatuses (1792?)]
(Eighteenth Century Collections Online)
In reprinting the Declaration in London, the publishers have removed the word “King” (the history of the present ---- of Great Britain”) and left only the letter “t” in place of “tyranny” and “tryants.”
James Bowdoin to Catharine Macaulay

March 1777

...Our Cause is too just & our Countrymen too numerous & brave to be overcome. But however it is my wish & the Wish of us all. that the Justice & not the power of Brittain might disarm us. We say if you’ll acknowledge our Independance we’ll give you our trade, the advantages of it to you must be much greater than a Conquest. but why do I speak of conquest. It is chimerical. none I believe but the deluded ---- & ministry can even think of it. it is strange they refuse being taught by Experience every year seems really to add to their disgrace and puts conquest at a greater distance...

James Bowdoin to Catharine Macaulay. March 15, 1777.
(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01791.02)
Following the success of Paine’s Rights of Man in 1791 printers in Albany, New York issued proposals for printing a collection of The Writings of Thomas Paine by subscription.

Subscribers included 29 representatives to the Second Congress—including James Madison, who took two copies.

The representatives subscribed almost along party lines: of the 46 copies subscribed for by members of Congress, only 9 were for identifiable Federalists.
Common Sense
By Thomas Paine

Copy owned by Fanny Coolidge
(Private Collection)
**Inside the Vault:** August 4 at 7 pm ET (4 pm PT)

- We will be joined by Barbara Perry to discuss materials from FDR’s third presidential campaign.

**MA in American History:** Professor Eric Slauter will lead a graduate history course on the Declaration of Independence for the Gettysburg College—Gilder Lehrman MA in American History during the fall 2022 semester. Applications are open now. Registration for the fall semester begins on July 9 for all admitted students.