

Lesson 6: Committees of Correspondence

Content Question

What were specific events and factors that led to the beginning of armed resistance by the American colonists against the British?

Topical Essential Questions

Why was the rhetoric of “enslavement” so important to the colonial leaders and how does it exemplify irony in relation to enslaving Africans in America?

Overarching Essential Questions:

What are the causes of the American Revolution?

Learning Objectives

Students will summarize the specific events and factors that led to the beginning of armed resistance by the Americas.

Students will explore alternatives to armed resistance by the American colonists.

Students will recognize the irony and contradictions of how the American patriots used the symbol of enslavement to Britain as a rallying cry for their cause, while also enslaving Africans in America themselves.

Do Now:

If you lived in a time with no cell phones, televisions, internet, cars, or electricity, how would you communicate with people? How would you find out what was happening in the world? Where would you get your information from?

Who were the Committees of Correspondence?

Where were the Committees of Correspondence formed?

How did the Committees of Correspondence connect to the Sons of Liberty?

What was the driving force behind the Committees of Correspondence?

Committee of Correspondence Location:

BOSTON, September, 27, 1774-

GENTLEMEN,

THE committees of correspondence of this and several of the neighbouring towns, having taken into consideration the vast importance of withholding from the troops now here, labour, straw, timber, flintwork, boards, and in short every article excepting provisions necessary for their subsistence; and being under a necessity from their conduct of considering them as real enemies, we are fully satisfied that it is our bounden duty to withhold from them every thing but what meer humanity requires; and therefore we must beg your close and serious attention to the inclosed resolves which were passed unanimously; and as unanimity in all our measures in this day of severe trial, is of the utmost consequence, we do earnestly recommend your co-operation in this measure, as conducive to the good of the whole.

We are,

Your Friends and Fellow Countrymen,

Signed by Order of the joint Committee,

William Cooper Clerk.

St—p! St—p! St—p! No!

Tuesday-Morning, December 17, 1765.

THE True-born Sons of Liberty, are desired to meet under LIBERTY-TREE, at XII o'Clock, THIS DAY, to hear the the public Resignation, under Oath, of ANDREW OLIVER, Esq; Distributor of Stamps for the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay*.

A Resignation ? YES.

Boston Novr. 4 1772

My dear Sir

I have not at present time or Inclination to take up your thots in complain- ing of Tyrants and Tyranny. It is more than Time that this Country was rid of both. Your Colleague & the Newspapers will inform you of the Transactions of this Town at a late Meet- ing, and your opinion of Hutchinson, if it is necessary, may be confirmd. The Town thought it proper to take, what the Tories apprehend to be, leading Steps. We have long had it thrown in our faces, that the Country in general is under no such fears of Slavery, but are well pleasd with the Measures of Administration, That the Independency of the Governor & Judges is a mighty harmless & even a desirable Manoeuvre. In order to ascertain the Sense of the People of the province a Committee is appointed, of which our Patriot Otis is Chairman, to open a free Communication with every town. A State of Rights with the violation of them is to be reported by this Committee, and transmitted to each Town. I wish our Mother Plym would see her way clear to have a Meeting and

second Boston by appointing a Committee for of Communication & Correspondence. The soon this is done, I think the better. I have receivd Letters from Marble head, Newbury port, &c fraught with manly Resentment. Whenever the friends of the Country shall be assured of each others Sentiments, that Spirit which is necessary will not be wanting. I have scribled in great haste & am without Ceremony

Your friend,

Saml Adams

My dear Sir

Boston Novr. 4 1772

I have not at present time or Inclination to take up your ~~Writ~~ in complain- ing of Tyrants and Tyranny. It is more than Time that this Country was rid of both. Your Colleague & the Newspapers will inform you of the Transactions of this Town at a late Meet- ing, and your opinion of Hutchinson, if it is necessary, may be confirmd. The Town thought it proper to take, what the Tories apprehend to be, leading Steps. We have long had it thrown in our faces, that the Country in general is under no such fears of Slavery, but are well pleasd with the Measures of Administration, That the Independency of the Governor & Judges is a mighty harmless & even a desirable Manoeuvre. In order to ascertain the Sense of the People of the province a Committee is appointed, of which our Patriot Otis is Chairman, to open a free Communication with every town. A State of Rights with the violation of them is to be reported by this Committee, and transmitted to each Town. I wish our Mother Plym would see her way clear to have a Meeting (and)

A VIEW of the OBELISK erected under LIBERTY-TREE in BOSTON on the Rejoicings for the Repeal of the Stamp-Act 1766



To every Lover of LIBERTY, this Plate is humbly dedicated, by her true born SONS, in BOSTON New England. *Printed & sold by J. Green, at the Sign of the Crown, in the Strand.*

American almost approaching the total loss of LIBERTY & she implors the aid of her PATRIOTS & she endures the Conflict for a short Season.

Sons of Liberty:

Sam Adams formed the Sons of Liberty in Boston in protest to the Stamp Act of 1763. Mostly young artisans and laborers, the Sons of Liberty organized protests against Parliamentary actions. Those protests sometimes turned into vigilante violence. The handbill below describes a protest organized by the Sons of Liberty in reaction to the Port Bill of 1774.

[Source: "A Public Execution by the Sons of Liberty" (1774) Reprinted at PBS Video (<http://videoindex.pbs.org/resources/liberty/primary/doc8.html>)]

A Public Execution by the Sons of Liberty

The Sons of Liberty in all the colonies participated in a number of activities. Their major purpose was to work cooperatively to make sure that their rights, as they perceived them, were being protected against those who they believed threatened them. The execution described here in Farmington, Connecticut, took place on or about May 19, 1774. Such actions were not unusual for these men.

Early in the morning was found the following handbill, posted up in various parts of the town:

To pass through the fire at six o'clock this evening, in honour to the immortal goddess of Liberty, the late infamous [Boston Port] Act of the British Parliament for farther distressing the American Colonies; the place of execution [of this act] will be the public parade, where all Sons of Liberty are desired to attend.

Accordingly, a very numerous and respectable body [of people] were assembled of near one thousand people, when a huge pole, just forty-five feet high, was erected and consecrated to the shrine of liberty; after which the Act of Parliament for blocking up the Boston harbor was read aloud, sentenced to the flames and executed by the hands of the common hangman; then the following resolves were passed nem. con. [nemine contradicente, unanimous]:

- 1st. That it is with the greatest dignity, interest and happiness of every American to be united with our parent State, while our liberties are duly secured, maintained and supported by our rightful Sovereign, whose person we greatly revere; whose government, while duly administered, we are ready with our lives and properties to support.
- 2d. That the present ministry, being instigated by the devil and led on by their wicked and corrupt hearts, have a design to take away our liberties and properties and to enslave us forever.
- 3d. That the late Act which their malice hath caused to be passed in Parliament, for blocking up the port of Boston, is unjust, illegal and oppressive; and that we and every American are sharers in the insults offered to the town of Boston.
- 4th. That those pimps and parasites who dared to advise their master to such detestable measures be held in utter abhorrence by us and every American, and their names loaded with the curses of all succeeding generations.
- 5th. That we scorn the chains of slavery; we despise every attempt to rivet them upon us; we are the sons of freedom and resolved that, till time shall be no more, godlike virtue shall blazon our hemisphere.

Class Discussion Questions

What were specific events that led to the start of armed resistance against the British by the colonists?

Were there alternatives to resistance other than armed resistance and violence?

Were the Committees of Correspondence an efficient and effective way to communicate radical ideas amongst colonist leaders?

Explain the symbol of “enslavement” stated by the colonists against the British. Why is this symbol hypocritical? Using the sources as evidence, what impact did enslaved people have in the colonies leading up to the American Revolution?

Exit slip: Why do you think the Committees of Correspondence were such a significant predecessor for the start of the American Revolution?