

The use of diversified perspectives allows historians to offer stronger interpretations of the American Revolution. It has often been found that one common narrative, that of the white patriots, is used to develop an illusionary interpretation that there were only two sides of the conflict. Perspectives of the founding fathers, liberty-loving colonists, and the oppressive British are often prioritized over other groups of people that were also intertwined with the war. This can greatly limit the public's view on who participated in the Revolution and who was affected by it. Whereas in reality, several non-white communities contributed and were impacted by the war effort, including Native Americans and Black Loyalists. This essay addresses the significance of differing viewpoints of the people, motives, and experiences that contributed to the revolution. This will create a fuller understanding of the global impacts of the war, clarity on the motives behind the revolution, and insight on experiences that represent how the effects of the war were not universal. These varying perspectives offer a stronger interpretation because they provide more accurate and realistic information that debunks common myths told surrounding the American Revolution.

It is misrepresented that the Native peoples in America chose the 'wrong side' of the war and lost. However, as the Iroquois sold Shawnees' land to the British, there was a lot of resentment and resistance.¹ There was internal fracturing within the Shawnee society along with the external tensions with colonizers. Natives experienced aggression from both the British Loyalists and American Patriots, placing them in an impossible cycle of vicious destruction, retreat, and devastation. The war divided the Native peoples and loss would be experienced no matter what 'side' they chose. It is important for an interpretation to include their perspective because that was the reality. It was not just the British fighting on American land.

¹ Calloway, "We Have Always Been the Frontier," 40.

Another perspective that opposes traditional privileged thinking of the American Revolution being just Loyalists against Colonists is that of Black Loyalists who neither settled in Britain nor the American colonies. Looking at the viewpoints of non-White Loyalists represents how the revolution was a civil war that had vast impacts on the wider British world. Thousands of Black Loyalists did not feel accepted to settle in Britain or the colonies, and fled to be refugees in India, Canada, the Caribbean and more. There were negative aspects of republican chauvinism and non-White Loyalists were victims of harassment, imprisonment, loss of land and property, and division of families.² The Loyalist diaspora is a reminder that the movement of American independence was not universal. This diverse perspective represents how even though the revolution was a civil war, it also had global effects among the wider British empire. It emphasizes the shift the British had in no longer viewing colonial subjects as an extension of their own nation, and the internal issue of what it actually meant to be British. Studying these diverse perspectives recognizes the more global effects of the American Revolution, such as how it shifted the British Empire and disrupted the Native communities in America. Knowing this can provide a more accurate depiction of who was involved in the war and creates a more realistic narrative over just the actions of White Colonists and Loyalists.

It is also misconstrued that the American Revolution was a uniform and universal movement. This unrealistically suggests that everyone involved was unilaterally dedicated to either the Loyalist or Colonialist sides, where more accurately, the revolutionary movement was not supported by everyone and often involved messy justifications as to why the colonies shouldn't go to war with Great Britain. One example of a motive of anti-revolution is seen with James Chalmers, a criticizer of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. Chalmers argued for the reconciliation of British and American relations, and claimed that an American Revolution

² Jasanoff, "The Other Side of Revolution," 208-10.

would limit trading and political connections to Europe, effectively diminishing the constitutional power of Britain that they could be taking advantage of.³ His viewpoint tells the justifications of loyalty to the British crown, besides the common narrative of the beliefs in monarchy and moral obligation to the King. Thomas Peters, a Black Loyalist, also opposed the revolution but for different reasons. He believed in a better place of settlement besides the thirteen colonies, in order to escape slavery and earn ownership of land. He fled to Nova Scotia along with other Black and White Loyalists and later became a leader for petitions of settlement in Sierra Leone.⁴ His account represents how anti-revolutionary motives varied, particularly due to the fact that there was also a freedom battle against slavery while Patriots fought for their freedom from Britain. Recognizing these differing motives develops a fuller context to the narrative of the war, clarifying who supported anti-revolutionary movements, and why. This builds a more realistic and accurate interpretation that can be used to expand upon just the familiar Loyalist or Colonialist motives.

There is also an illusion conveyed about the American Revolution that everyone reaped the same benefits, and that all who participated in the war wanted to do so. However, this is a very limited perception. This inaccurate interpretation neglects how not everyone was able to enjoy rewards from the American Revolution, and that both Native American communities and Colonist soldiers did not want to continue with war. The reality is that the revolution resulted in different experiences for various groups of people. Native communities, enslaved peoples, and soldiers in battle were all affected by the war in contrasting ways that are often left unfamiliar to the general public. For example, enslaved people were still fighting for their own freedom while they fought for American independence. Native communities were manipulated out of neutrality

³ Primary Document Packet, 4, Chalmers, "Plain Truth."

⁴ Primary Document Packet, 14, Peters, "Black Loyalist Petitions for a Better Place of Settlement."

and had their entire villages and crops destroyed. In addition, many soldiers didn't want to remain in battle due to the brutal conditions they were put under.

Many Native communities wanted and did remain neutral during the American Revolution. No matter what side they fought on, they would experience casualties and have their land taken from them. In the account of a Seneca woman, Mary Jemison, the Native group had signed an agreement of neutrality with the American colonists but were then approached by British troops, persuading them to join their side in the war for exchanged rewards and little damage done to their people.⁵ When they returned to their village, their crops and belongings had been destroyed, along with many of their own people dead in battle. The American Revolution was not seen as liberating or successful for many of the Native population due to the rampage of their lands and people, but this is often not a popular talking point for education surrounding the event.

In the case of Black Loyalists and Patriots involved in the American Revolution, many did not reap the same freedoms of their fellow White soldiers. Jehu Grant, a once escaped slave of a Loyalist Rhode Islander, served in the Continental Army only to have been returned back to his owner.⁶ Even though there was a revolution between the colonies and Britain, Black people had different experiences as they participated in the war effort but did not obtain freedom like others.

As for the White soldiers, it was not a unanimous experience of proudly and successfully fighting for their cause. Many of Washington's troops in the winter of 1779-80 opposed continuing with battle because of the severe and distressing weather conditions.⁷ However, this is not often expressed and those who had differing views other than 100% loyal or 100%

⁵ Primary Document Packet, 8, Jemison, "View of the Revolution."

⁶ Primary Document Packet, 7, Grant, "Pension Application."

⁷ Primary Document Packet, 12, Thatcher, "A Winter Encampment."

revolutionary are dismissed. Their experiences need to be recognized in order for more accurate interpretations that will correctly educate the public.

Revolutions and war are not simple matters, and acknowledging these experiences gives further importance to those who have not had their stories represented in education about the American Revolution. Understanding these intricate implications of the war offers a stronger interpretation because more information is brought to light to accurately portray the reality of different peoples' experiences. Not everyone gained the same rewards in fighting in the war, and many non-Loyalists opposed the revolution because of its overall devastation.

The diverse narratives included within this essay can all be used to develop a stronger comprehension of the American Revolution. There is great significance among the differing viewpoints of the people, motives, and experiences that contributed to the revolution. The perspectives of Native communities, Black Loyalists, anti-revolutionary motives, enslaved peoples, and soldiers all need to be considered. This will create a fuller understanding of the global impacts of the revolution, clarity on the motives behind the different movements, and insight on experiences that represent how the effects of the war were not universal. These varying perspectives offer a stronger interpretation because they provide more accurate and realistic information that debunks common myths told surrounding the American Revolution.