



# { THE BEACON }

Whenever politics are applied to debauch mankind from their integrity, and dissolve the virtue of human nature, they become detestable; and to be a statesman on this plan, is to be a commissioned villain.

Thomas Paine



*T. Paine*

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

thomaspaine.org

July 1, 2023

NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

Issue #12

## Thomas Paine on Immigrants and America as an "Asylum for Mankind"

Immigration to America was a major impetus for the American Revolution, both physically and intellectually. Thomas Paine welcomed immigrants who were escaping tyranny. In 1776, he wrote in *Common Sense*, the manifesto of the American Revolution:

"O! ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, 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."

*Common Sense* turned a tax revolt into a social and political revolution.

Other than the indigenous people who originally occupied this continent, the people who were transitioning to becoming American in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Americans of today, are immigrants or descended from immigrants, including kidnapped slaves. And in fact, capital accumulation in America primarily came from three sources: the land stolen from the indigenous nations, the stolen labor power of slavery, and the underpaid labor of the immigrants and their descendants.

Paine was the first American to demand reparations for the crimes of slavery, in his letter to Jefferson in 1808.\* He believed that the indigenous nations would live peacefully beside peoples from other parts of the world. He was wrong about that: the commitment to English colonialism infected the minds of too many. In part, the perpetuation of colonialism was due to the failure of democratic structures to take hold. In addition, the ethic of greed came to dominate as the wealthiest people remained in charge of governmental structures. The descendants of the indigenous nations also deserve reparations.

In every era, immigrants have added to the vibrancy and progress of the nation, bringing not only their talents and energy and cultures, but the possibility and hope of realizing democracy in America. This era is no different. Our Association stands with the principles advanced by Paine; it is why we exist: to educate the world about the most important figure of the age of revolutions, which is still unfolding. Although some historians have attempted to repress him and his ideas, he still influences the choices we have as Americans.

\* The letter to Jefferson signed "A Slave" on November 30, 1808 was attributed to Paine in an article to appear in "Identifying 'A Slave': The Iona College Text Analysis Project Explores a Mystifying Letter to Thomas Jefferson", Gary Berton, Smiljana Petrovic, Michael Crowder, Lubomir Ivanov, in Mark Boonshoft, Nora Slonimsky, and Ben Wright, eds., *American Revolutions in the Digital Age*, University of Cornell Press 2024.

## **An Historian Reveals his Soul**

In 1965, a noted historian, Forest MacDonald, wrote a textbook on the creation of the Republic, *E Pluribus Unum*. He is known for his rationalizing of slavery, ultra-conservatism, and apologist for all things Southern. But he got one thing right:

“Sometimes in the course of human events, as the Declaration of Independence had proclaimed, it becomes necessary for people to dissolve political bonds....The American Revolution was only the beginning in teaching men the process, but once it was done – once the vulgar overstepped the bounds of propriety and got away with it – there was no logical stopping place. *Common Sense* led unerringly to Valmy, and Valmy to Napoleon, and Napoleon to the Revolution of 1830, and that to the Revolutions of 1848, and those to the Paris Commune of 1871, and that to the Bolshevik Revolution, and that to the African and Asian Revolutions in Expectations, and those to eternity.”

What he got right was that Thomas Paine started the age of Revolutions, by introducing that hated process of democracy. To MacDonald, democratizing the world (“overstep the bounds of propriety” by the “vulgar”) led to the listed upheavals starting with the American Revolution. He ignores the history of brutal oppression which created the need for revolutions, known as “propriety”. It was the reaction against the movement towards the rights and equality of people that caused the atrocities and squelched the “Expectations” of peoples. But the “process” is in place, thanks to Paine, and the world can evolve.

The hatred of Paine by some historians can be well-documented, and this is why many historians are propagandists ahead of documenting all history. As E. H. Carr (an objective historian) said: “Study the historian before you begin to study the facts.” And “By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants.”

## **Computer Text Analysis:**

Using computer methods of analyzing text to determine authorship is not a matter of opinion. Calculations are objective, there is no room to introduce prejudices.

Such a methodology to analyze text was developed by the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies: to make use of proven methods of comparing author features, they took these methods and combined them for use by historians to determine authorships. This process of analysis began in the early 1960's with Mosteller and Wallace, using function word use (“and”, “but”, “as”, etc.), they achieved 50% accuracy. The “authorships” of the Federalist Papers that you read on the Internet were based on them, and thus only half correct. By deploying the new features (17 of them now, compared to the one above) ITPS was able to achieve 90%. The Java Graphic Author Attribution, JGAAP, is a tool to allow nonexperts to use cutting edge machine learning techniques on text attribution problems. Our methodology used all 17 together for the first time to produce a high degree of certainty. Similar versions using a few features are used in court cases to prove authorships, and the FBI uses it to identify certain bloggers (bad always comes with the good).

This ITPS methodology is being employed in the Collected Works Project managed by this Association. It can identify likely Paine works that otherwise would never be able to be uncovered, and we would remain in ignorance of them. This shines a light on more works and a full biography.

Remarks in letters are often lies, or misunderstandings. Computers don't lie. Take Benjamin Rush for example: after Paine's death Rush claimed Paine wrote an essay against slavery, and the only such essay at the time Rush designated was “African Slavery in America”. To this day most

people think Paine wrote it solely based on Rush's claim. He didn't – the religious references exhibit a Christian wrote it, and in fact Samuel Hopkins, a Christian preacher, did. And text analysis confirms it. One example of many, which old fashioned historical methods are very inaccurate, but they still are repeated endlessly because they were in a book!

### **An excerpt from Paine's Letter to Kitty Few, January 6, 1789**

A thousand years hence (for I must indulge in a few thoughts), perhaps in less, America may be what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

When we contemplate the fall of empires and the extinction of nations of the ancient world, we see but little to excite our regret than the mouldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent monuments, lofty pyramids, and walls and towers of the most costly workmanship. But when the empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass or marble can inspire. It will not then be said, here stood a temple of vast antiquity, – here rose a Babel of invisible height, or there a palace of sumptuous extravagance; but here, ah painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of freedom rose and fell!

---

# THE TRUTH SEEKER.

---

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT.

E. M. MACDONALD, - - - Editor.  
C. P. SOMERBY, - - - Business Manager.

PUBLISHED BY

**THE TRUTH SEEKER COMPANY.**

33 Clinton Place, New York.

---

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY AT \$3.00 PER YEAR.

---

*Address all Communications to THE TRUTH SEEKER COMPANY. Make all Drafts, Checks, and Postal Orders payable to CHARLES P. SOMERBY.*

---

SATURDAY, - - - JANUARY 26, 1884.

---

### **Paine's Birthday**

Will be observed by the Freethinkers of New York city on Tuesday evening, the 29th inst., at German Masonic Temple, 220 E. 15th street, under the auspices of the Bennett Liberal League. There will be speaking by S. P. Andrews, Mr. Adams, S. P. Putnam, and T. B. Wakeman if he returns from Boston in season to attend. Music will be furnished by Miss Leona Leonard and others. It is also proposed to found a Paine Historical Society, and the initiatory steps will be taken on this evening.

The expenses of this meeting are defrayed by contribution. Heretofore it has happened that a few have borne almost the whole burden. Those who feel like helping may remit such sums as they can spare to the treasurer of the Bennett League, G. E. Macdonald, in care of THE TRUTH SEEKER.

It should need no urging to bring out a full house on occasions of this kind, and it is hoped that every friend of Paine who can will attend. The Bennett League proposes to celebrate Washington's birthday with a sociable, and we should all get acquainted so as to enjoy that event. The evening of the 29th will be a fitting time to do it.

---

## Benefactors

Nimick Forbesway Foundation

J.H. Johnson Charitable  
Educational Trust

World Union of Deists, Inc.

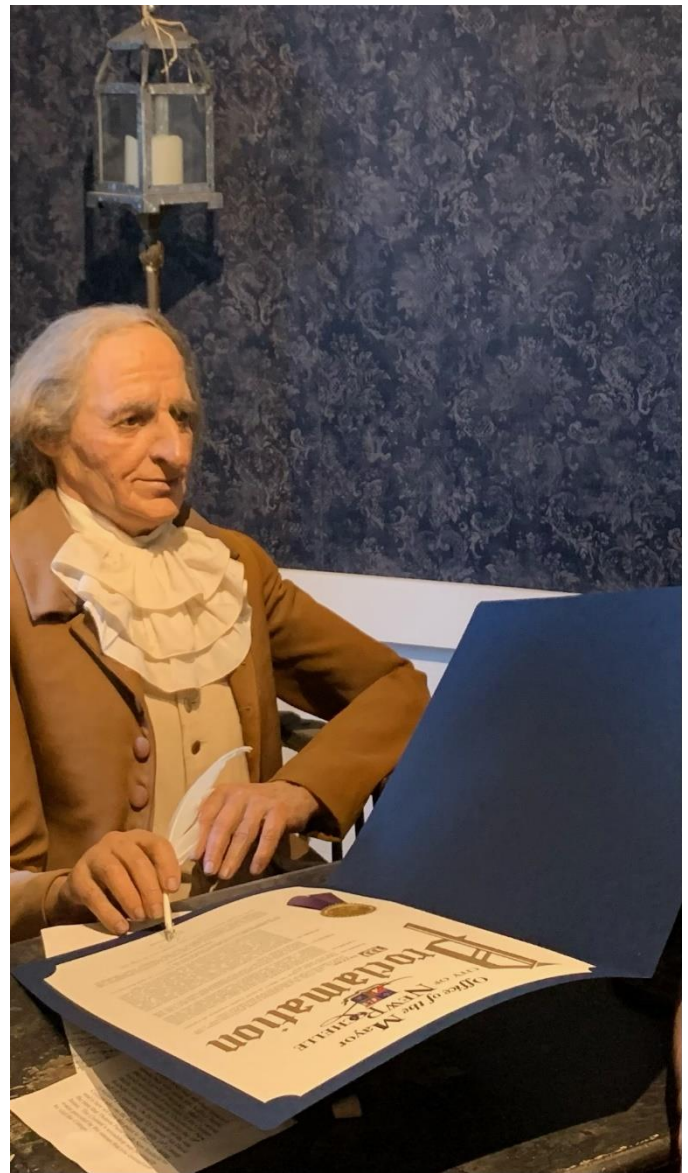
Joy Masoff

Todd Stiefel Foundation

Matt & Luann Jacobs

Barbara Crane

Julia Holofcener



## June 8<sup>th</sup> Thomas Paine Day

Two noteworthy events: first an announcement that the Harvard Declarations Project has accepted the Sherman copy as authentic, revealing Paine in a position of authority in the Declaration Committee of Five.

Secondly, the City of New Rochelle has started the process to make Paine Day a permanent annual commemoration.

