

THE THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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About TPNHA

The Mission of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association is to educate the world about the life, legacy and works of Thomas Paine.

TPNHA was founded in 1884 to correct the record on Thomas Paine by refuting negative propaganda and slanders perpetrated against him by most historians in the 19th century. We've since become the most reliable and accurate source of information about Paine worldwide. We assist scholars, authors, journalists, readers and anyone interested in Paine's life and work.

TPNHA is managing the international project to complete the Collected Vorks of Thomas Paine. which may double the corpus of known writings.

We operate the 100-year-old Paine Memorial Museum in New Rochelle, NY, where we hold educational programs. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, we're grateful for member support sustaining our efforts. ▲

The Beacon

March 2024 • Vol 18, No. 2

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
Founded in 1884 • New Rochelle, New York • ThomasPaine.org



The Beacon is a bi-monthly publication for members of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association

The Beacon from the TPNHA extends the volumes of Gilbert Vale's influential *The Beacon* in the mid-19th century, both restoring the legacy of Thomas Paine.

The Beacon – Editorial Committee:

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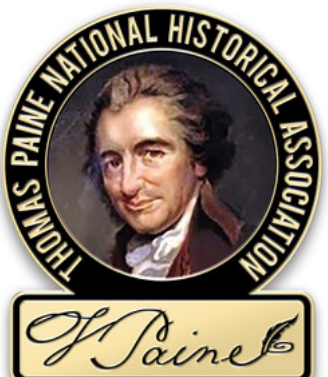
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The Beacon

January 2024 • Vol 18, No. 1

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Thomas Paine on the Reign of Terror in America

By Thomas Paine

'A Letter to the Citizens of the United States'

No. 3, 1802 [An excerpt]

Since the establishment of Independence no period has arrived that so decidedly proves the excellence of the representative system of Government, and its superiority over every other, as the time we now live in. Had America been cursed with John Adams's hereditary Monarchy, or Alexander Hamilton's Senate for life, she must have sought, in the doubtful contest of civil War, what she now obtains by the expression of public will. An appeal to elections decides better than an appeal to the sword.

'The reign of terror that raged in America during the latter time of the Washington Administration, and the whole of that of Adams, is enveloped in mystery to me.'

The reign of terror that raged in America during the latter time of the Washington Administration, and the whole of that of Adams, is enveloped in mystery to me. That there were men in the government hostile to the representative system, was once their



"Mad Tom in a Rage"

An 1801 Federalist political cartoon depicts "Thomas Jefferson [the Devil] and Thomas Paine Working To Undo The Pillar of Federalism." Jefferson says, "Pull away. Pull away my son. Don't fear! I'll give you all my assistance." Paine says, "I fear it is stronger rooted than I expected but with the assistance of my old friend and a little more brandy I will bring it down."

Colored Engraving from 1801 original in The Virginia Magazine. Source: FineArtAmerica

Continued on pg. 2

Thomas Paine on The Reign of Terror in America — Continued from Pg. 1

boast, though it is now their overthrow, and therefore the fact is established against them. But that so large a mass of the people should become the dupes of those who were loading them with taxes in order to load them with chains and deprive them of the right of elec-

‘There is a general and striking difference between the genuine effects of truth itself, and the effects of falsehood believed to be truth.’

tion, can be ascribed only to that species of wildfire rage, lighted up by falsehood, that not only acts without reflection, but is too impetuous to make any. There is a general and striking difference between the genuine effects of truth itself, and the effects of falsehood believed to be truth. Truth is naturally benign; but falsehood believed to be truth is always furious. The former delights in serenity, is mild and persuasive, and seeks not the auxiliary aid of invention. The latter sticks at nothing. It has naturally no morals. Every lie is welcome that suits its purpose. It is the innate character of the thing to act in this manner, and the criterion by which it may be known, whether in politics or religion. When anything is attempted to be supported by lying it is presumptive evidence that the thing so supported is a lie also. The stock on which a lie can be grafted must be of the same species as the graft.

What is become of the mighty clamor of French invasions, and the cry that our country is in danger, and taxes and armies must be raised to defend it? The danger is fled with the faction that created it, and what is worst of all, the money is fled too. It is I only that have committed the hostility of invasion, and all the artillery of pop-guns are prepared for action. Poor fellows, how they foam! They set half their own partizans in laughter; for among ridiculous things nothing is more ridiculous than ridiculous rage. But I hope they will not leave off. I shall lose half my greatness when they cease to lie.

So far as respects myself I have reason to believe and a right to say that the leaders of the reign of terror

in America, and the leaders of the reign of terror in France, during the time of Robespierre,* were in character the same sort of men, or how is it to be accounted for, that I was persecuted by both at the same time — When I was voted out of the French Convention the reason assigned for it was, that I was a foreigner. When Robespierre had me seized in the night and imprisoned in the Luxemburg (where I remained eleven months) he assigned no reason for it. But when he proposed bringing me to the tribunal, which was like sending me at once to the scaffold, he then assigned a reason, and

Continued on pg. 3

Say Thomas Paine, not ‘Tom’

by Gary Berton, TPNHA President

Thomas Paine in life never used “Tom” as his name, neither did friends and acquaintances. His signature was “T Paine.”

Public use of “Tom” started in the slanderous 1790s disinformation campaign of the British government. American political enemies picked it up, chiefly the Federalists and the churches. “Tom” was meant to demean the man and throw mud at his politics of democracy and rational thought.

There is no common usage of “Tom Jefferson.” The name was rarely used for him, and only in the same context. The Federalist oligarchy attacked Jefferson for befriending Paine, who wrote in strong support of Jefferson (despite his slaves). To oppose the democratic politics of Jefferson and Paine, the Federalist press used the epithet of “the two Toms” to deride them together.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association views calling him “Tom” as an insult. True, people call him “Tom” in friendly circumstances, like as a term of endearment in song. “Tom Paine’s Bones” by Graham Moore in 1995 (popularized by Dick Gaughan in 2001) pays proper respect to the positive impact of the revolutionary, so such usage earns an exemption. But sloppy historians have no license to use “Tom.” His name is Thomas. ▲

Slave Letter to Jefferson — From Pg. 3

duct? O! merciful God, is this humanity? is this constant with thy holy law, and agreeable to thy divine will? “But hold my impious tongue, its only Christian Charity.” Its quite good enough for Negroes, who the sainted pilgrims say, are only a black beast of the Manilla class, with a flat nose, thick lips, woolly head, ivory teeth; and with a face somewhat resembling the human, but clearly not a human being. To prove our human-nature, sir, and our rights as citizens of these states, we have only to appeal to the Declaration of Independence, which says, We hold these truths self-evident; that all men, (not all white men) are created equal; that they are endued by their Creator with inherent & unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty & the pursuit of happiness. What think you now sir, are we men, or are we beasts? If this is not sufficient to prove our human-nature; our right and our citizenship, take another section from the original draft of the same authority: In speaking of the oughtrages committed by the king of england you say, He has

‘The monarchies & aristocracies which have been so often decryd by politicians, as oppressive and violent, are states of independence in comparison of that state of bondage in which the American black-man is kept.’

waiged cruel war against human-nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captuating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or incur miserable death in their transportation thither: this piratical warfare, the approbrium of infidal powers, in the warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain — Determined to keep open a market where MAN shall be bought and sold. This is sufficient one would suppose, to convince any unprejudiced mind; but it seem that it has not carried conviction into the flinty hearts of the sainted pilgrims in America, & I fear nothing will but the sword.

Whatever may be the mode of any government, either civil or religious, says the friend of justice & mercy, if it cannot exist and prosper without affecting the peace & harmony of a neighbouring nation, is unjust: Much more must that government be unjust, which aggrandizes one half, or less, of a community, at the expence of the other. The monarchies & aristocracies which have been so often decryd by polititions, as oppressive and violent, are states of independence in comparison of that state of bondage in which the American black-man is kept. — A Slave. ▲

TPNHA Membership Rates and Benefits

- Individual - \$25 yearly (Beacon subscription)
- Family - \$40 yearly (Beacon subscription)
- Supporter - \$100 yearly (Beacon, Paine lapel pin)
- Benefactor - \$500 for 1 year (Beacon, lapel pin, personal plaque)
- Benefactor - \$500 yearly (All the above & Memorial building plaque)
- Patron - \$1500 yearly (All the above and more)



The Thomas Paine National Historical Association congratulates our “sister” publication on their 150th Anniversary!

The Truth Seeker has been the world’s foundational source of freethought information continuously since 1873, longer than TPNHA has existed. The Truth Seeker was the main force behind our formation in 1884.



Paine’s 2024 Birthday — From Pg. 4

U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD, 8th District)
Teddy Reeves (Curator at Smithsonian Museum)
U.S. Rep. Victoria Spartz (R-IN, 5th District)
Additional commentators may be announced.
Cynthia McDonald (freethinking musical artist) will perform to open and close the event.
A post-event **social hour** will allow audience participation and interaction.

Sculptor **Zenos Frudakis** will join from his Pennsylvania studio to show progress on his clay statue for the Thomas Paine monument. **Gary Berton**, President for the Thomas Paine National Historical Association, will attend to answer questions. **Margaret Downey**, president of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association and TPMA board member **Christopher Cameron** are the Paine Birthday event planners and hosts. ▲
For Info: Margaret Downey, Thomas Paine Memorial Association, ThomasPaineMemorial.org.

In Memoriam
On Martha Spiegelman

by Frances Chiu

Few people deserve the moniker of “renaissance woman,” but Martha Spiegelman embodied it to a T.
Born in New York City, Martha Spiegelman was trained and educated as a scientist. She received her PhD in biology at Columbia University, where she met her husband, Irwin Spiegelman. She then researched microbiology at Cornell University and taught biology at Smith College.
Martha had a voracious appetite for reading — especially history and literary classics. She joined the Thomas Paine National Historical Association 1990s and became an active member, serving as a trustee. She was also a correspondent for the Thomas Paine Readers Newsletter and its membership chair.
A few years later, she and Irwin founded Thomas Paine Friends. During her tenure as a TPF officer, Martha did her utmost to lift Paine’s profile from the shadows.
She spearheaded a campaign to establish a Thomas Paine day in all fifty states. In 2009, she organized a weekend commemoration of the bicentenary of Paine’s death. In 2014, she organized a week-long tour of historical sites associated with Paine in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Both events were extremely well-attended.
TPF attracted several hundred members over the course of its 20-year existence. Martha worked

steadfastly on the quarterly TPF bulletin until the spring of 2023, months before being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.
Martha was an activist and highly involved with the Amherst branch of Amnesty International, believing like Paine, “Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.” She regularly attended protests, demonstrations and sit-ins through her Seventies and Eighties.



Martha Spiegelman
Thomas Paine Friend

Courtesy of Fanny Rothschild
Source: Daily Hampshire Gazette

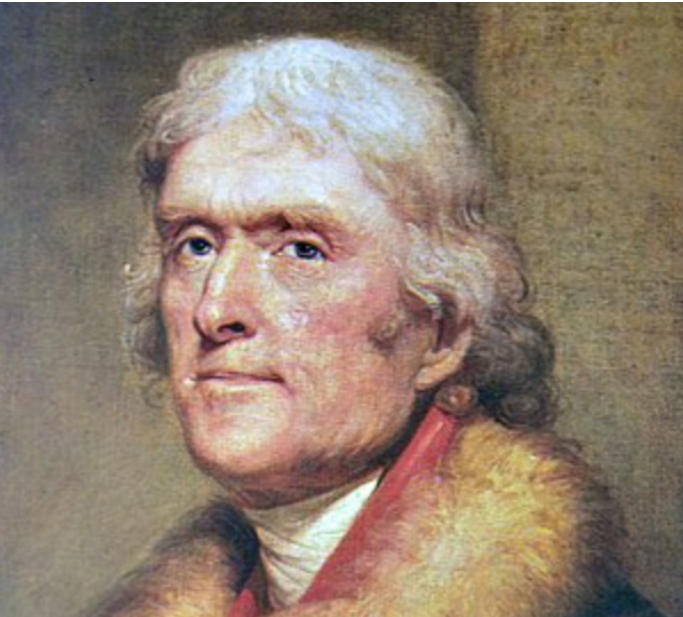
My own friendship with Martha did not begin until 2008 when I began to organize a symposium on Paine at the New School. Little did I anticipate this first acquaintance would lead to a warm 15-year friendship, plus board service for TPF.
Over the years, I grew increasingly amazed not only by her energy and erudition but her empathy. She was generous in thought and deed. So, with the deepest sorrow, I learned of her recent passing on November 10, 2023. I know I will miss her insight and wit on our phone chats.
Martha Spiegelman was a Paineite, through and through. A higher accolade cannot be given. ▲
Frances Chiu, PhD serves on the TPNHA board.

By Thomas Paine
A Letter: ‘To President Jefferson from a Slave’

November 30, 1808 [A verbatim excerpt]

Among men, you see the ninty and nine toylng to git a heap of superfluties for One; gitting nothing for themselves all this while, but a little of the cursests of the provisions which their own labour produces; and this One too, oftentimes is the worst of the whole set; a child, a woman, a madman or a fool; looking quietly on while they see the fruits of all their labours spent on spoiled; and if one of them take a single particle of it, the others join against, and hang him for the theft. What say you sir, to this? can you plead ignorance in these vices and follies; and in this inhuman slavery? If not, what can be your reasons (since you have been rais’d to the highest office in the government) for suffering us to be used in this brutal manner? Can any man who is not over-aw’d by a tyrant, sway’d by prejudice, in love with slavery & oppression, or who lives him self in idleness, drunkenness & debauchery, say, that there is either, honour, honesty, humanity, piety, charity, virtue, or religion in such con-

Continued on pg. 7



President Thomas Jefferson
Portrait by Rembrandt Peale (1805)

Courtesy of the New York Historical Society. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Reign of Terror in America — From Pg. 2

the reason was for the interests of America as well as of France. “— *Pour les interets de l’Amerique autant que de la France*” The words are in his own hand-writing and reported to the Convention by the committee appointed to examine his papers, and are printed in their report, with this reflection added to them, “Why Thomas Paine more than another? because he contributed to the liberty of both worlds.”
There must have been a coalition in sentiment, if not in fact, between the terrorists of America and the terrorists of France, and Robespierre must have known it, or he could not have had the idea of putting America into the bill of accusation against me.* Yet these men, these terrorists of the new world, who were waiting in the devotion of their hearts for the joyful news of my destruction, are the same banditti who are now bellowing in all the hackneyed language of hackneyed hypocrisy about humanity and piety, and often about

something they call infidelity, and they finish with the chorus of crucify him, crucify him. I am become so famous among them, they cannot eat or drink without me. I serve them as a standing dish, and they cannot make up a bill of fare if I am not in it.
But there is one dish, and that the choicest of all, that they have not presented on the table, and it is time they should. They have not yet accused providence of infidelity. Yet, according to their outrageous piety, she [providence] must be as bad as Thomas Paine; she has protected him in all his dangers, patronized him in all his undertaking, encouraged him in all his ways, and rewarded him at last by bringing him in safety and in health to the promised land. ▲
* **FYI:** During the French “Reign of Terror,” Robespierre made a deal with Gouverneur Morris, U.S. ambassador, to kill imprisoned Paine and keep it a secret. Robespierre fell, and Morris was replaced in 1794 by James Monroe. Initially unaware of Paine’s plight, Monroe rescued him.

About Thomas Paine

2024 Thomas Paine Birthday Celebration to Explore His Anti-Slavery Efforts and Effects

Mark Your Calendar

Thomas Paine’s Birthday Celebration — FREE
• Monday January 29, 2024 — on Zoom
• 7 -10 p.m. EST (6-9 CST, 5-8 MST, 4-7 PST)

Pre-registration at Zoom is required .
CLICK: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82980534952>
Registration generates an email with login details.

The official birthdate of Thomas Paine is recognized and celebrated worldwide every January 29th. The observation theme for 2024 is “The Anti-Slavery Efforts of Thomas Paine.”

The free Monday video call will start at 7 p.m. EST. Pre-registration is required to receive login details (see the above box). The end-of-January event prepares for Black History Month in February by focusing upon Paine’s abolitionist work.

Organized by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA), the event is sponsored by the Secular Coalition for America, Black Nonbelievers, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, Center for Inquiry, and the Freethought Society.

Actor **Ian Ruskin** will recite a letter Thomas Paine, posing as a slave, wrote to Thomas Jefferson in 1808, urging an end to slavery. Paine likely used a slave persona to preserve his friendship with Jefferson.

The letter voices Paine’s insight into the immorality of slavery, and his empathy for the enslaved people. He voices his frustration about Jefferson doing nothing to end slavery while still President. Paine felt Jefferson should do something — anything — to stop the slave trade. By posing as a slave, he took the President to task for continuing to be the owner of human beings.

Written seven months before his death, Paine’s “Slave Letter” to Jefferson reveals him to be a disappointed and angry abolitionist who’s lost patience with those participating in the debauchery. Jefferson

learned Paine wrote the “slave” letter, and he severed contact after their decades as allies.

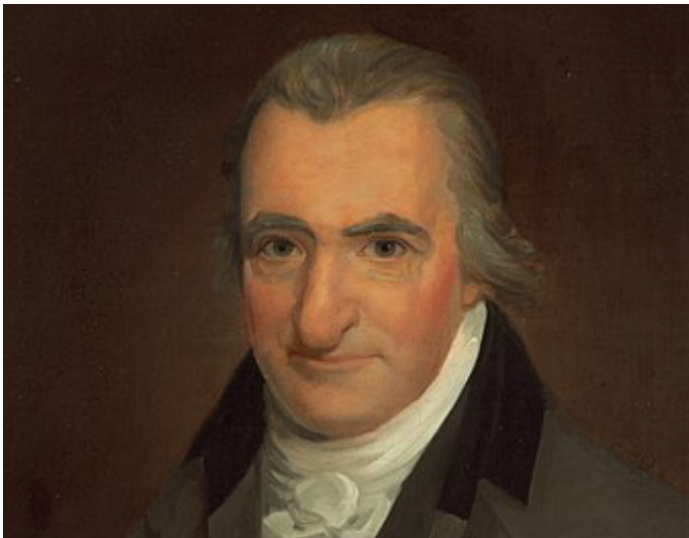
Ruskin will read Paine’s letter in four parts, pausing for conversation of Paine’s abolitionist efforts among Black cultural leaders, influencers, educators, politicians, celebrities and others impressed with Paine’s foresight, like his warnings of civil unrest to end slavery.

Paine stood for equality like no other Founder, and this letter is vital for knowing his legacy.

Below are some of the commentators scheduled to appear between the four Slave Letter segments:

- Ty Barnett** (Comedian, actor, writer, producer)
- U.S. Rep. Jamaal Bowman** (D-NY, 16th District)
- U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown** (D-OH, 11th District)
- Victor Harris** (Atheist/skeptical performance poet)
- Wil Jeudy, MD** (Primary/urgent care physician)
- Dom Jones** (California State Assembly candidate)
- Richard Newman** (Educator, author and historian)
- Dr. Anthony Pinn** (Professor at Rice University)

Continued on pg. 6



Thomas Paine

Portrait by John Wesley Jarvis (circa 1806–1807)

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Meet the TPNHA Board

Thomas Paine’s Political Influence on Me

by Barbara Crane

My interest in Thomas Paine began when I moved to New Rochelle in 2016 after retirement from decades advancing women’s reproductive health, rights and justice around the world. My earlier academic work had focused on international



Barbara Crane,
TPNHA Board

politics and development, with special attention to the role and influence of transnational networks and policy coalitions, later also designated by scholars as “epistemic communities” – all before the Internet made such networks a feature of the global landscape.

I found myself in New Rochelle living near the historic sites associated with Paine — the 18th century cottage he lived in briefly from the farm he was granted after the Revolution, the 1839 Monument and the 1925 memorial building constructed in his honor by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association.

Little did I know my curiosity about these historic sites, owned by two different associations, would draw me into volunteering and an ongoing quest for knowledge about Paine’s political thought and influences on the American and French revolutions.

As I learned more, I discovered things about Paine that resonated with my interests and experience.

He was a central figure in an early transnational network of revolutionaries and reformers influenced by thinkers of the Enlightenment, especially in America, France, and Britain — including Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Rush, Thomas Jefferson, the Marquis de Lafayette, the Marquis de Condorcet, Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Their impact eventually extended to those fighting oppression in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and beyond. Paine’s elaboration of the principles of democracy, human rights, equality, and social justice in *Common Sense* (1776), *The Rights of Man* (1791) and other works, reflected the reciprocal influences among members of this network at the time.

Paine was a friend of the early British feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft. They met in the late 1780s in London and moved in the same circles there and later in Paris. She published *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in 1790, a critique of Edmund Burke’s writing on the French Revolution. Paine’s published *Rights of Man*, also a critique of Burke, in 1791. In 1792, Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Like Paine, she was inspired by the French Revolution and went to France in 1792, where she remained during the worst of the Reign of Terror until 1795.

Paine’s work, *The Age of Reason*, initiated while he was imprisoned in France, was fundamental to the emergence of the 19th century Freethought movement in the United State that drew abolitionists, labor groups, women suffragists, birth control activists and those who stood for separation of church and state.

As one who has worked for reproductive freedom, I learned the role of the Freethought movement in resisting the Comstock Act, a draconian 1873 law that treated disseminating information and means to prevent pregnancy as obscene, including access to contraception and abortion methods. The fight against Comstock was critical to the 1884 founding of the TPNHA.

The Comstock Act is still on the books and never repealed, despite court decisions. It’s again being invoked in Texas and New Mexico by opponents of reproductive freedom to restrict access to safe abortion.

Paine’s radical thinking about democracy, human rights and equality put him at odds with more conservative Founding Fathers, leading to personal attacks on him, causing him to be discounted by many mainstream historians.

I am convinced we need to revive his fervor and his confidence in the power of Enlightenment ideas when understood by all citizens. TPNHA contributes to this goal for society. ▲

Barbara B. Crane, PhD is a political scientist and independent consultant, retired from a career in global women’s reproductive health. She serves as Vice President on the TPNHA board.