

Violence-Born Independence Day



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“One Voluntarist’s Perspective” is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

As a voluntarist, my primary *modus operandi*, even in the case of self-defense, is nonviolence. As such, I have a hard time finding justification for the violence of others, now and in the past. In a few days, the United States will be celebrating it’s independence from Great Britain, which occurred in 1776, followed by eight years of violent warfare. That Great Britain used violence to govern the American colonies is indisputable, as all states govern with violence, but was the violence-based revolution by the colonists justified on libertarian grounds?

Who Desired Independence?

That the American colonists eventually resented and rejected rule by Great Britain is not so clear cut. “American colonists” really only meant American property-holding men. It didn’t include women and children, nor their chattel slaves. And further, not all of them rejected rule by Great Britain. In other words, the only thing we can be sure of is that “40-45%” of American property-holding men favored independence from the Crown. As I’m sure women nearly numbered men, and we don’t know what they favored as their opinion was either uninvited or forced to align with their husbands, we can reformulate our percentage and say that only 20%~ of white adults favored independence. And further, as the population in 1776 consisted of 18% slaves, our percentage of those favoring independence thus falls to 16.5%~.

What Independence Meant

That only a sixth of the actual inhabitants of the American colonies wanted independence while the rest remained either neutral or loyal to Great Britain is a very interesting statistic. I am in no way justifying Great Britain’s governing of the American colonies. As a voluntarist I reject all violence-based governance, but that only a sixth of the actual inhabitants assumed the power to decide the fate of the colonies, thereby starting a nine year war which ended in the deaths of tens of thousands of people and vast amounts of

property destruction, including the violent expulsion of British loyalists from their homes and businesses, hardly seems justifiable as an argument for self-defense.

No, what it seems like is that a certain number of wealthy, slave-owning (ie. *mala en se* criminals), white American men had little regard for what their rejection of British taxation (as they were the most affected by it) would cost the American colonists. Had everyone had an equal voice in accepting those costs, the war (the violence, the bloodshed, the deaths of thousands and the destruction of property) may never have happened. What would that have meant for the future of the colonies? I don't know, but everything and everyone that was destroyed would not have been. That surely counts for something.

Final Thoughts

I have written before that Independence Day should be used to educate others on the concepts of secession and nullification. These are important, but even more important is understanding that violence begets violence. More effective strategies for securing our liberty exist, and should be explored and experimented with. Violence is destructive and corrupting, and its use should be rarely, if ever, used. And further, the few haven't the right to decide for the many that violence is justified. If the many want independence, then nonviolence has been shown to be a less costly alternative to war. Let's never forget that.