

The Declaration of Independence

A few more comments

Writing the Declaration of Independence

- John Adams explained to Jefferson why he should write the draft instead of Adams:
 - “Reason first – You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second – I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third – You can write ten times better than I can”
- What Adams thought of the first draft:
 - “I was delighted with its high tone and the flights of oratory with which it abounded, especially that concerning negro slavery, which, though I knew his Southern brethren would never suffer to pass in Congress, I certainly never would oppose.”
 - Source: David Colbert, editor, *Eyewitness to America* (New York: Pantheon, 1997)



References to indigenous peoples

- The Declaration refers to “the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.”
- And yet, it was an open secret that many Europeans preferred living with the indigenous.
 - Ben Franklin wrote, “No European who has tasted Savage Life can afterward bear to live in our societies” (Bregman 2020, 109).
 - Hundreds of white Europeans fled to live with Native peoples (and Blacks fled slavery), while very few Indians chose to live with white.
 - In a prisoner exchange after a defeat in battle in 1763, most white captives had to be forced to leave the Ohio Indians, while the Indian captives “went back to their defeated relations with great signs of joy” (Loewen 1995, 102).
 - Women who were “captives” reported that they would rather remain with the Indians: “We could work as leisurely as we pleased” and “Here, I have no master...Is there a single woman as independent as I in your cities?” (Bregman 2020, 109).