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History

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Reading Response #3

According to Davidson and Lytle, the threat of enslaved peoples' insurrection as well as the **back and forth** between British authority and colonists regarding restriction of colonists' rights shaped the trajectory of British North American colonies. ~~The interaction between enslaved people, British authority, and the colonists was one aspect that pushed the British colonies towards independence.~~ Davidson and Lytle argue that while the British "remained reluctant to encourage a full-scale rebellion, nevertheless saw that the mere possibility of insurrection might be used as an effective psychological threat."¹ They argue that this "psychological threat" could be used for British advantage. Fear of this possibility incentivized separation from the British for the colonists—if they gained their independence, they would not have to worry that the British might enable enslaved people to rebel against them. The fear of possible insurrection was the factor that pushed the colonists to the edge, as they relied on slave labor for much of their economy. ~~Another interaction that shaped the trajectory of British colonies was the constant back and forth between the colonists and British authority. Davidson and Lytle state "What threatens Americans most, the Declaration proclaims, is not the individual measures, but the existence of a deliberate plot by the king to deprive a 'free people' of their liberties"~~² The colonists' discontent over British limiting their rights and liberties was another

¹ James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection* (New York: McGraw Hill 2020), 93.

² Davidson and Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, 84.

constituent that furthered the colonists' need for separation from the British. The list of grievances detailed in the Declaration of Independence are evidence of how many of the acts/laws that British authority passed angered the colonists. These included grievances about the enforcement of Stamp Acts, Quartering Acts, and the encouragement of insurrection amongst enslaved people. Their inclusion in the Declaration signifies that the restrictions put in place were a major reason that the colonists separated from the British. The colonists organized different responses to these new restrictions, including the Boston Tea Party and Stamp Act Congress. Even when colonists made more attempts to retaliate, the British continued to add restrictions, limitations, and taxes, furthering angering colonists. In sum, the interactions between enslaved people, the patriots, and the British, as well as interactions solely between the colonists and the British shaped the trajectory of the colonies by continuously pushing the British colonies towards their fight for independence.