

# Primary Source

Thomas Paine, "African Slavery in America," 1775



How did the principles of the Declaration of Independence contribute to the quest to end slavery from colonial times to the outbreak of the Civil War?

- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice from the colonial era to the outbreak of the Civil War.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest to end slavery.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

## Essential Vocabulary

Providence	Divine intervention and the protection of God
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## Building Context

Thomas Paine, an English-American writer, emigrated to Philadelphia in 1774, when the conflict between Great Britain and the North American colonies was intensifying. Once in Philadelphia, he helped found and edit the Pennsylvania Magazine. Paine also wrote articles and poetry for the publication, including the following article, "African Slavery in America," which he signed, "Justice and Humanity." Paine went on to use his pen to advocate on behalf of the American and French Revolutions. He died in New York in 1809.

## “African Slavery in America”

Source: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/paine-the-writings-of-thomas-paine-vol-i-1774-1779>

<p>But the chief design of this paper is not to disprove it, which many have sufficiently done; but to entreat Americans to consider.</p> <p>1. With what consistency, or decency they complain so loudly of attempts to enslave them, while they hold so many hundred thousands in slavery; and annually enslave many thousands more, without any pretense of authority, or claim upon them?</p> <p>2. How just, how suitable to our crime is the punishment with which <b>Providence</b> [divine intervention] threatens us? We have enslaved multitudes, and shed much innocent blood in doing it; and now are threatened with the same. And while other evils are confessed, and bewailed, why not this especially, and publicly; than which no other vice, if all others, has brought so much guilt on the land?</p>	<p>Notes</p>
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### Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What does Paine refer to when he writes of attempts to “enslave them” (colonists)? Consider the context of escalating tensions between the colonists and the British.

2. What hypocrisy does Paine point out in his second argument?