Documents

Considering the Evidence: Claiming Rights

In the discourse of the age of revolution, no idea had a more enduring resonance than that of "rights"—natural rights, political and civic rights, and "the rights of man" or, in a more recent expression, "human rights." However those rights were defined, they were understood as both natural and universal. They were considered inherent in the human condition rather than granted by some authority, and they were envisioned as being the same for everyone rather than depending on a person's birth, rank, or status in society. Growing out of the European Enlightenment (see pp. 742–44), this understanding of "rights" was genuinely revolutionary, challenging almost all notions of government and society prior to the late eighteenth century. But even among supporters, the idea of human rights was highly controversial. What precisely were these rights? Did they support or contradict one another? Did they really apply equally to all persons? How should they be established and maintained? Such questions were central to this age of revolution and have informed much of the world's political history ever since.[22]

Document 17.1

The French Revolution and the "Rights of Man"

The most prominent example of the language of rights found expression during the French Revolution in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. It was a document hammered out in the French National Assembly early in that revolutionary upheaval and adopted at the end of August 1789 (see pp. 784–87). Ever since, it has been viewed as the philosophical core of the French Revolution.

Clearly the French document bears similarities to the language of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, for both drew upon the ideas of the European Enlightenment. Furthermore, Thomas Jefferson, who largely wrote the U.S. Declaration, served as the ambassador to France at this time and was in close contact with Marquis de Lafayette, the principal author of the French

Declaration. And Lafayette in turn had earlier served with the American revolutionary forces seeking independence from England.

- What purposes did the writers of the Declaration expect it to fulfill?
- What specific rights are spelled out in this document? What rights does it omit?
- What was revolutionary about the Declaration? What grievances against the old regime did the declaration reflect?
- What grounds for debate or controversy can you indentify within the Declaration?

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

1789

The representatives of the French people, constituted as a National Assembly, and considering that ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption, have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable and sacred rights of man....

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility.

2. The purpose of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate expressly from the nation.

4. Liberty consists in the ability to do whatever does not harm another; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no other limits than those which assure to other members of society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by the law.

5. The law only has the right to prohibit those actions which are injurious to society. No hindrance should be put in the way of anything not prohibited by the law, nor may any one be forced to do what the law does not require.

6. The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for everyone whether it protects or penalizes. All citizens being equal in its eyes are equally admissible to all public dignities, offices, and employments, according to their ability, and with no other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.

7. No man may be indicted, arrested, or detained except in cases determined by the law and according to the forms which it has prescribed....

9. Every man being presumed innocent until judged guilty, if it is deemed indispensable to arrest him, all rigor unnecessary to securing his person should be severely repressed by the law.

10. No one should be disturbed for his opinions, even in religion, provided that their manifestation does not trouble public order as established by law.

11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may therefore speak, write, and print freely, if he accepts his own responsibility for any abuse of this liberty in the cases set by the law.

Source: Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1996), 77–79.

12. The safeguard of the rights of man and the citizen requires public powers. These powers are therefore instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the private benefit of those to whom they are entrusted.

13. For maintenance of public authority and for expenses of administration, common taxation is indispensable. It should be apportioned equally among all the citizens according to their capacity to pay....

17. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one may be deprived of it except when public necessity, certified by law, obviously requires it, and on the condition of a just compensation in advance.

Document 17.2

The Rights of Women

But did the "rights of man" include women? Although none of the legislative assemblies that arose during the French Revolution seriously considered granting women the right to vote or hold office, the question of women's rights was sharply debated. Just two years after the famous French Declaration, the French playwright and journalist Olympe de Gouges sought to apply those rights to women when she crafted her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*. "Woman, wake up," she wrote, "the tocsin [warning bell] of reason is being heard throughout the whole universe; discover your rights."[23] Most men, however, even ardent revolutionaries, agreed with the French lawyer Jean-Denis Lanjuinais that "the physique of women, their goal in life [marriage and motherhood], and their position distance them from the exercise of a great number of political rights and duties."[24]

Debates about the "rights of women" were hardly limited to France. During the nineteenth century, they echoed loudly throughout Europe, North America, and beyond and gave rise to the world's first women's rights movement. Among the earliest expressions of that debate was a treatise titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft, a British writer whose thinking about women's rights had been clearly stimulated by events in France. She wrote the book as a response to French diplomat Charles Talleyrand, who had recently advocated a very limited and domestic education for women.

- On what basis does Wollstonecraft argue for the rights of women? To what extent were her arguments based on the principles of the French Declaration?
- In what kind of rights does she seem most interested? What problems does the denial of those rights generate?
- Should Wollstonecraft be considered a feminist in the contemporary sense of insisting on the complete equality of women and men in every sphere of life? Keep in mind that the term "feminism" itself was not in use when she wrote in 1792.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

1792

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue;... but the education and situation of woman at present shuts her out from such investigations....

Consider, sir, dispassionately these observations, for a glimpse of this truth seemed to open before you when you observed, "that to see one-half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation of government was a political phenomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain." If so, on what does your constitution rest?...

Consider—I address you as a legislator—whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him of the gift of reason?

In this style argue tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason, yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part when you force all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark?... They may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent....

I have repeatedly asserted... that women cannot by force be confined to domestic concerns; for they will, however ignorant, intermeddle with more weighty affairs, neglecting private duties only to disturb, by cunning tricks, the orderly plans of reason which rise above their comprehension....

Let there be then no coercion established in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places. And now that more equitable laws are forming your citizens, marriage may become more sacred; your young men may choose wives from motives of affection, and your maidens allow love to root out vanity.

The father of a family will not then weaken his constitution and debase his sentiments by visiting the harlot, nor forget, in obeying the call of appetite, the purpose for which it was implanted. And the mother will not neglect her children to practise the arts of coquetry, when sense and modesty secure her the friendship of her husband.

But, till men become attentive to the duty of a father, it is vain to expect women to spend that time in their nursery which they,... choose to spend at their glass [mirror]; for this exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share; for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious to obtain illicit privileges.

I wish, sir, to set some investigations of this kind afloat in France; and should they lead to a confirmation of my principles when your constitution is revised, the Rights of Woman may be respected, if it be fully proved that reason calls for this respect, and loudly demands JUSTICE for one-half of the human race.

Source: Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), Dedication.

Document 17.3

Rights and National Independence

The "rights of man" could be mobilized not only in the struggles of women but also on behalf of colonial subjects, as the American Declaration of Independence illustrated. Some thirty-five years after the outbreak of the North American revolution, Spain's American colonies were likewise in revolt. Among the most prominent political and military leaders of that struggle was Simón Bolívar, often regarded as the George Washington of Latin America. Born in Caracas, Venezuela, Bolívar hailed from an old, wealthy, and aristocratic family. Although his struggles were successful in ending Spanish colonial rule, they manifestly failed to achieve his lifelong dream of a federation, like that of North America, among the various newly independent republics of Latin America. In a well-known letter, written in 1815, Bolívar made the case for the independence of his continent.

- What understanding of "rights" informed Bolívar's demand for independence?
- What were his chief objections to Spanish rule?
- What difficulties did Bolívar foresee in achieving the kind of stable and unified independence that he so much desired?
- What might you infer from Bolívar's statements, or his silences, about his willingness to apply human rights thinking to people of Native American, African, or mixed-race ancestry?

Simón Bolívar

The Jamaica Letter

1815

Success will crown our efforts because the destiny of [Latin] America is irrevocably fixed; the tie that bound her to Spain is severed.... The hatred we feel for the Peninsula is greater than the sea separating us from it; it would be easier to bring the two continents together than to reconcile the spirits and the minds of the two countries. The habit of obedience, a commerce of shared interests, knowledge, and religion; mutual goodwill; a tender concern for the birthland and glory of our ancestors; in brief everything that constituted our hopes came to us from Spain.... Today the opposite is true: death, dishonor, everything harmful threatens us and makes us fearful. That wicked stepmother is the source of all our sufferings.... The chains have been broken, we've been liberated, and now our enemies want to make us slaves. That is why America fights with such defiance, and it would be rare should such desperate intensity not bring victory in its wake....

Source: David Bushnell, ed., *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, translated by Frederick H. Fornoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13–14, 18–20, 27–28, 30.

[W]e are moreover neither Indians nor Europeans, but a race halfway between the legitimate owners of the land and the Spanish usurpers—in short, being Americans by birth and endowed with rights from Europe—find ourselves forced to defend these rights against the natives while maintaining our position in the land against the intrusion of the invaders. Thus we find ourselves in the most extraordinary and complicated situation....

The posture of those who dwell in the American hemisphere has been over the centuries purely passive. We are at a level even lower than servitude, and by that very reason hindered from elevating ourselves to the enjoyment of freedom.... From the beginning we were plagued by a practice that in addition to depriving us of the rights to which we were entitled left us in a kind of permanent infancy with respect to public affairs....

The Americans... occupy no other place in society than that of servants suited for work or, at best, that of simple consumers, and even this is limited by appalling restrictions: for instance the prohibition against the cultivation of European crops or the sale of products monopolized by the king, the restriction against the construction of factories that don't even exist on the peninsula, exclusive privileges for engaging in commerce even of items that are basic necessities, the barrier between American provinces, preventing them from establishing contact, or communicating, or doing business with one another. In short, would you like to know the extent of our destiny? Fields for the cultivation of indigo, grain, coffee, sugar cane, cacao, and cotton, empty prairies for raising cattle, wilderness for hunting ferocious beasts, the bowels of the earth for excavating gold that will never satisfy the lusts of that greedy nation.... Is this not an outrage and a violation of the rights of humanity?

We were... absent from the universe in all things relative to the science of government and the administration of the state. We were never viceroys, never governors, except in extraordinary circumstances; hardly ever bishops or archbishops; never diplomats; soldiers only in lower ranks; nobles, but without royal privileges. In short, we were never leaders, never financiers, hardly ever merchants....

From the foregoing, we can deduce certain consequences: The American provinces are involved in a struggle for emancipation, which will eventually succeed.... The idea of merging the entire New World into a single nation with a single unifying principle to provide coherence to the parts and to the whole is both grandiose and impractical. Because it has a common origin, a common language, similar customs, and one religion, we might conclude that it should be possible for a single government to oversee a federation of different states eventually to emerge. However, this is not possible, because America is divided by remote climates, diverse geographies, conflicting interests, and dissimilar characteristics.... Such a corporation might conceivably emerge at some felicitous moment in our regeneration....

When we are at last strong, under the auspices of a liberal nation that lends us its protection, then we will cultivate in harmony the virtues and talents that lead to glory; then we will follow the majestic path toward abundant prosperity marked out by destiny for South America; then the arts and sciences that were born in the Orient and that brought enlightenment to Europe will fly to a free Columbia, which will nourish and shelter them.

Document 17.4

Rights and Slavery

The language of "rights" resonated not only with women seeking equality and colonial subjects seeking independence but also with slaves demanding freedom. Clearly, the ideas and events of the French Revolution had sparked the massive slave uprising in Haiti in 1791 (see pp. 787–90). In the United States the language of the Declaration of Independence with its affirmation that "all

men are created equal" stood in glaring contrast to the brutal realities of slavery. That great contradiction in the new American nation was forcefully highlighted in a famous speech by Frederick Douglass. Born a slave in 1818, Douglass had escaped from bondage to become a leading abolitionist, writer, newspaper publisher, and African American spokesperson. He was invited to address an antislavery meeting in Rochester, New York, on July 4, 1852.

- On what basis does Douglass demand the end of slavery? How do his arguments relate to the ideology of the American Revolution?
- How would you describe the rhetorical strategy of his speech?
- What does Douglass mean when he says "it is not light that is needed, but fire"?
- In what ways does he argue that slavery has poisoned American life?
- Why, in the end, can Douglass claim "I do not despair of this country"? How would you evaluate the following assertion in the last paragraph: "There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery"? What forces was he referring to?

Frederick Douglass

What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?

1852

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us?

Would to God, both for your sakes and ours, that an affirmative answer could be truthfully returned to these questions!...

But, such is not the state of the case. I say it with a sad sense of the disparity between us. I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us.... The sunlight that brought life and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak to-day?...

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions!... I shall see, this day... from the slave's point of view.... I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July!... Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will... dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything

Source: Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" http://www.trinicenter.com/historicalviews/4thjuly.htm.

that serves to perpetuate slavery—the great sin and shame of America!

For the present, it is enough to affirm the equal manhood of the Negro race. Is it not astonishing that... while we are engaged in all manner of enterprises common to other men..., we are called upon to prove that we are men!

Would you have me argue that man is entitled to liberty? that he is the rightful owner of his own body? You have already declared it. Must I argue the wrongfulness of slavery? Is that a question for Republicans?...

At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed.... For it is not light that is needed, but fire.... [T]he conscience of the nation must be roused;... the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade, and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices, more shocking and bloody, than are the people of these United States, at this very hour....

Fellow-citizens! I will not enlarge further on your national inconsistencies. The existence of slavery in this country brands your republicanism as a sham, your humanity as a base pretence, and your Christianity as a lie. It destroys your moral power abroad; it corrupts your politicians at home. It saps the foundation of religion; it makes your name a hissing, and a byword to a mocking earth. It is the antagonistic force in your government, the only thing that seriously disturbs and endangers your Union. It fetters your progress; it is the enemy of improvement, the deadly foe of education; it fosters pride; it breeds insolence; it promotes vice; it shelters crime; it is a curse to the earth that supports it; and yet, you cling to it, as if it were the sheet anchor of all your hopes. Oh! be warned! be warned! a horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic; for the love of God, tear away, and fling from you the hideous monster, and let the weight of twenty millions crush and destroy it forever!...

Allow me to say, in conclusion..., I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery.... While drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions, my spirit is also cheered by the obvious tendencies of the age. Nations do not now stand in the same relation to each other that they did ages ago. No nation can now shut itself up from the surrounding world, and trot round in the same old path of its fathers without interference.... But a change has now come over the affairs of mankind. Walled cities and empires have become unfashionable. The arm of commerce has borne away the gates of the strong city. Intelligence is penetrating the darkest corners of the globe. It makes its pathway over and under the sea, as well as on the earth. Wind, steam, and lightning are its chartered agents. Oceans no longer divide, but link nations together. From Boston to London is now a holiday excursion. Space is comparatively annihilated. Thoughts expressed on one side of the Atlantic are distinctly heard on the other. The far off and almost fabulous Pacific rolls in grandeur at our feet. The Celestial Empire, the mystery of ages, is being solved. The fiat of the Almighty, "Let there be Light," has not yet spent its force.

Document 17.5

Rights in the Colonial World

The idea of rights did not long remain limited to the Atlantic world of Europe and the Americas. Much as that idea proved revolutionary in the colonial world of the Americas, so too did it have an impact in the new European colonial empires that took shape during the nineteenth century. As Western colonialism embraced much of Asia and Africa, such ideas gradually became familiar to at least a few people in those colonial societies. One example was Raden Adjeng Kartini, a young Javanese woman from an aristocratic family who had become fluent in Dutch, the language of the Netherlands, the colonial power that ruled her country. In 1899, at the age of twenty, she wrote a letter to a Dutch friend, describing the impact of European thinking on her own outlook and her own life.

- Although Kartini did not directly use the language of "rights," what evidence in the letter suggests that she might have been influenced by the idea of human rights?
- What elements of European thinking are most compelling to Kartini?
- In what ways does her encounter with European thinking generate conflict or dissatisfaction with her own society? What else provokes her desire for change?
- Some Indonesians have celebrated Kartini as a pioneer of both feminism and nationalism. To what extent does this letter support that view?
- How would you compare Kartini's thinking about women's emancipation with that of Wollstonecraft?

Raden Adjeng Kartini

Letter to a Friend

1899

I have longed to make the acquaintance of a "modern girl," that proud, independent girl who has all my sympathy!... I do not belong to the Indian world, but to that of my pale sisters who are struggling forward in the distant West.

If the laws of my land permitted it, there is nothing that I had rather do than give myself wholly to the working and striving of the new woman in Europe; but age-long traditions that cannot be broken hold us fast cloistered in their unyielding arms. Some day those arms will loosen and let us go, but that time lies as yet far from us, infinitely far. It will come, that I know; it may be three, four generations after us. Oh, you do not know what it is to love this young, this new age with heart and soul, and yet to

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Source: Raden Adjeng Kartini, *Letters of a Javanese Princess*, translated by Agnes Louise Symmers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 3–7.

be bound hand and foot, chained by all the laws, customs, and conventions of one's land. All our institutions are directly opposed to the progress for which I so long for the sake of our people. Day and night I wonder by what means our ancient traditions could be overcome. For myself, I could find a way to shake them off, to break them, were it not that another bond, stronger than any age-old tradition could ever be, binds me to my world; and that is the love which I bear for those to whom I owe my life, and whom I must thank for everything. Have I the right to break the hearts of those who have given me nothing but love and kindness my whole life long, and who have surrounded me with the tenderest care?

But it was not the voices alone which reached me from that distant, that bright, that new-born Europe, which made me long for a change in existing conditions. Even in my childhood, the word "emancipation" enchanted my ears; it had a significance that nothing else had, a meaning that was far beyond my comprehension, and awakened in me an evergrowing longing for freedom and independence—a longing to stand alone. Conditions both in my own surroundings and in those of others around me broke my heart, and made me long with a nameless sorrow for the awakening of my country.

Then the voices which penetrated from distant lands grew clearer and clearer, till they reached me, and to the satisfaction of some who loved me, but to the deep grief of others, brought seed which entered my heart, took root, and grew strong and vigorous.

And now I must tell you something of myself so that you can make my acquaintance.

I am the eldest of the three unmarried daughters of the Regent of Japara, and have six brothers and sisters. What a world, eh? My grandfather... was a great leader in the progressive movement of his day, and the first regent of middle Java to unlatch his door to that guest from over the sea—Western civilization. All of his children had European educations.... We girls, so far as education goes, fettered by our ancient traditions and conventions, have profited but little by these advantages. It was a great crime against the customs of our land that we should be taught at all, and especially that we should leave the house every day to go to school. For the customs of our country forbade girls in the strongest manner ever to go outside of the house. We were never allowed to go anywhere, however, save to the school, and the only place of instruction of which our city could boast, which was open to us, was a free grammar school for Europeans.

When I reached the age of twelve, I was kept at home—I must go into the "box." I was locked up, and cut off from all communication with the outside world, toward which I might never turn again save at the side of a bridegroom, a stranger, an unknown man whom my parents would choose for me, and to whom I should be betrothed without my own knowledge.... I went into my prison. Four long years I spent between thick walls, without once seeing the outside world.

How I passed through that time, I do not know.... But there was one great happiness left me: the reading of Dutch books and correspondence with Dutch friends was not forbidden. This—the only gleam of light in that empty, sombre time, was my all....

At last in my sixteenth year, I saw the outside world again. Thank God! Thank God! I could leave my prison as a free human being and not chained to an unwelcome bridegroom....

In the following year, at the time of the investiture of our young Princess [Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands], our parents presented us "officially" with our freedom. For the first time in our lives we were allowed to leave our native town, and to go to the city where the festivities were held in honour of the occasion. What a great and priceless victory it was! That young girls of our position should show themselves in public was here an unheard-of occurrence. The "world" stood aghast; tongues were set wagging at the unprecedented crime. Our European friends rejoiced, and as for ourselves, no queen was so rich as we. But I am far from satisfied. I would go still further, always further. I do not desire to go out to feasts, and little frivolous amusements. That has never been the cause of my longing for freedom. I long to be free, to be able to stand alone, to study, not to be subject to any one, and, above all, *never, never* to be obliged to marry.

But we *must* marry, must, must. Not to marry is the greatest sin which the [Muslim] woman can commit; it is the greatest disgrace which a native girl can bring to her family.

And marriage among us—Miserable is too feeble an expression for it. How can it be otherwise, when the laws have made everything for the man and nothing for the woman? When law and convention both are for the man; when everything is allowed to him?

Love! what do we know here of love? How can we love a man whom we have never known? And how could he love us? That in itself would not be possible. Young girls and men must be kept rigidly apart, and are never allowed to meet.

Using the Evidence: Claiming Rights

1. **Making comparisons:** In what different ways does the idea of "rights" find expression in these five documents? Which documents speak more about individual rights and which focus attention on collective rights? What common understandings can you identify?
2. **Considering ideas and circumstances:** Historians frequently debate the relative importance of ideas in shaping historical events. What impact do you think the ideas about rights expressed in these documents had on the historical development of the Atlantic world and beyond? And what specific historical contexts or conditions shaped each writer's understanding of "rights"?
3. **Connecting past and present:** Read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948 (http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html). To what extent does this document reflect the thinking about rights spelled out in the French declaration of 1789? What additional rights have been added to the more recent document? How might you account for the changes?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: Representing the French Revolution

The era of the French Revolution, generally reckoned to have lasted from 1789 to 1815, unfolded as a complex and varied process. Its first several years were relatively moderate, but by 1792 it had become far more radical and violent. After 1795 a reaction set in against the chaos and upheaval that it had generated, culminating in the seizure of power in 1799 by the successful general Napoleon Bonaparte. Nor was the revolution a purely French affair. Conservative opposition in the rest of Europe prompted prolonged warfare, and French efforts under Napoleon to spread the revolution led to a huge French empire in Europe and much resistance to it (see pp. 784–87).

All of this provoked enormous controversy, which found visual expression in paintings, cartoons, drawings, and portraits. The five visual sources that follow suggest something of the changing nature of the revolution and the varied reactions it elicited.

Like all major social upheavals, the French Revolution unleashed both enormous hopes and great fears, largely depending on an individual's position in French society. That society was divided into three legal orders, or estates—the clergy, the nobility, and the commoners. The first two of these estates, the most highly privileged groups of French society, together represented only about 2 percent of the population and were exempt from major forms of taxation in addition to holding much of the country's landed wealth. This generated considerable resentment among the commoners (the third estate) and was a critical motor of the revolution. Nonetheless, in the early stages of the revolution (1789–1791), many people hoped that France could become a constitutional monarchy with a far more limited role for the king and that the three estates could work together in harmony. The high point of this hope for social and national unity occurred during the Festival of the Federation, a massive military pageant featuring troops from all over the country. Watched by close to a million spectators, the festival took place on July 14, 1790, exactly one year after the storming of the Bastille, a large fortress, prison, and armory that had come to symbolize the oppressive old regime. Soldiers swore an oath of allegiance to the king and the National Assembly. Speakers gave public thanks for "this inseparable bond between all the French, regardless of sex, age, station in life or occupation."[25]

Visual Source 17.1 The Early Years of the French Revolution: "The Joyous Accord" (The Bridgeman Art Library)

Visual Source 17.1, entitled "The Joyous Accord," represents this phase of the revolution as it depicts the interaction of members of the three estates. The text reads: "Then Messieur we drink to the health of our good King and the Fatherland, that we may be in agreement, at least this for life. And that virtue may be our guide and we will taste together the true pleasures of life."

- What changes during the first year of the French Revolution does this image reveal? Consider the activity portrayed in the painting and the posture of the three figures. What continuities with the past does it also suggest?
- How does it portray the ideal of national unity?
- How are the representatives of the three estates distinguished from one another?
- Notice the peasants hunting in the background. Keep in mind that before the revolution peasants who hunted on the estates of the nobility were subject to harsh punishment or even death. Why do you suppose the artist chose to include them in the painting?

Despite the hope for harmony, many soon came to see the revolution as a sharp reversal of class roles. Visual Source 17.2, which depicts the three estates of old France as female characters, illustrates this perception of the revolution. The woman on the far right represents the clergy, the one in the middle portrays the nobility, and the figure holding the baby stands for the commoners.

- What different impressions of the revolution are conveyed by Visual Sources 17.1 and 17.2?
- How might you interpret the meaning of the caption, which reads: "I really knew we would have our turn."

Visual Source 17.2 A Reversal of Roles: The Three Estates of the Old Regime (Réunion des musées nationaux/Art Resource, NY)

Visual Source 17.3 Revolution and Religion: "Patience, Monsignor, your turn will come." (Musée de la Révolution française, Vizille, France, mfr 89.186)

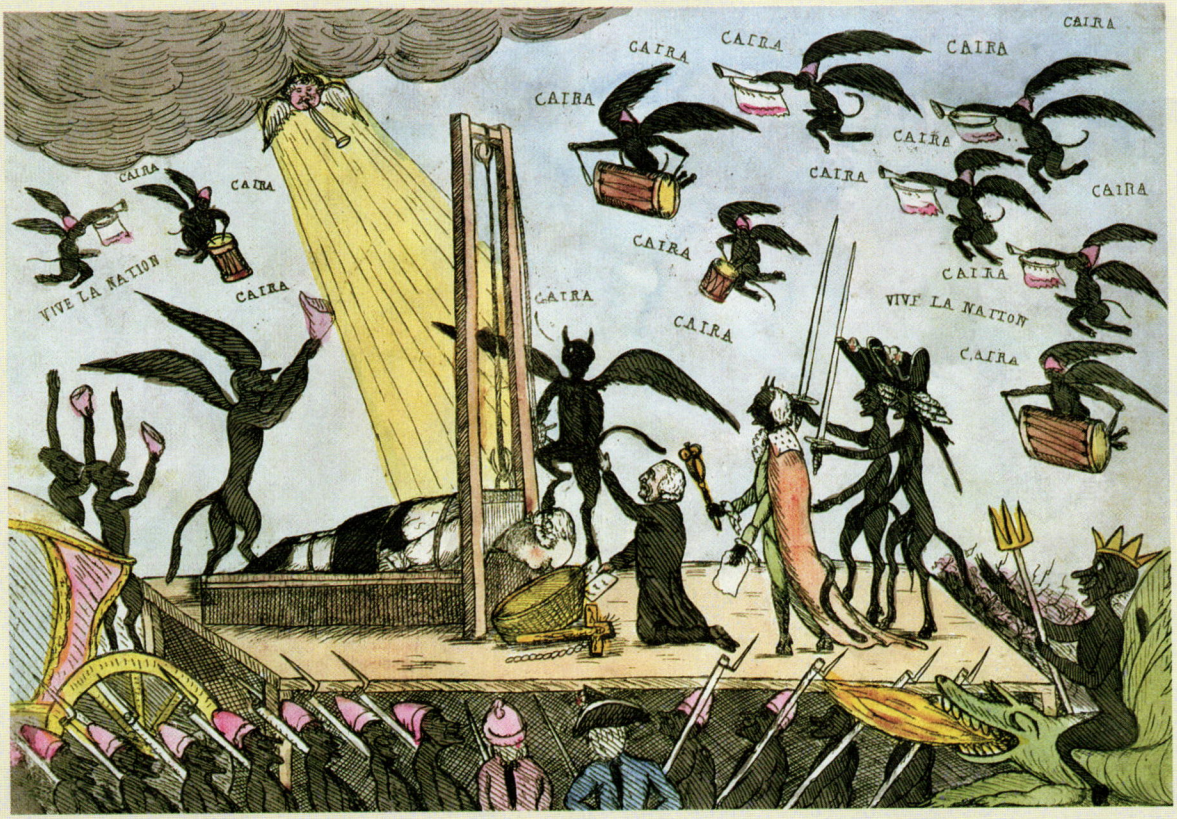
- Compare this image with the opening picture of Chapter 17 on page 778. What changes had occurred in the relationship of the classes? How does the woman representing the third estate in Visual Source 17.2 differ from her counterpart in the earlier image?
- Notice that the woman representing the third estate in this image holds a distaff, a tool used for spinning, as well as a child. What does this suggest about the roles of women in the new order? How might Mary Wollstonecraft (Document 17.2, pp. 808–09) respond to this image?

In its more radical phase, the French Revolution witnessed not only serious class conflict but also a vigorous attack on the Catholic Church and on Christianity itself. The Church was brought under state control, and members of the clergy were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the revolution. The revolutionary government closed many church buildings or sold them to the highest bidder. The government also seized church property to finance France's wars. For a time, revolutionaries tried to establish a Cult of Reason to replace the Christian faith. This de-Christianization policy also involved the closure of monasteries and efforts to force priests to abandon their vocation and even to marry. Visual Source 17.3 suggests some of the reasons why ardent revolutionaries were so opposed to the supernatural religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular.

- How does this visual source reflect the outlook of the Enlightenment? (See pp. 742–44.)

- What criticisms of the Church are suggested by this image? Why is the bishop on the left portrayed as a fat, even bloated, figure? What is the significance of efforts to "squeeze" the priests? Based on their dress, what class do you think the pressmen represent?
- The caption reads: "Patience, Monsignor, your turn will come." What do you imagine was the reaction of devout Catholics to such images and to the policies of de-Christianization?
- In what ways do Visual Sources 17.1, 17.2, and 17.3 reflect the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Document 17.1, pp. 806–08)?

Attacks on the church and religion in general were among the actions of the Revolution that prompted fear, outrage, and revulsion, both within France and in the more conservative societies of Europe. So too was the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, as well as the widespread violence of the Terror. Visual Source 17.4, a British political cartoon, conveys this highly critical, indeed horrified, outlook on the French Revolution. Captioned "Hell Broke



Visual Source 17.4 An English Response to Revolution: "Hell Broke Loose or The Murder of Louis" (Musée de la Révolution française, Vizille, France/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Loose," it depicts the execution of Louis XVI and was printed shortly after his death in January 1793. The flying demonic figures in the image are repeating popular slogans of the revolution: "Vive la nation" ("Long live the nation") and "Ca ira" ("That will go well," or more loosely, "We will win").[26]

- What is the significance of the demons and dragons in the cartoon? Notice how the soldiers at the bottom of the image are portrayed.
- What meaning would you attribute to the caption, "Hell Broke Loose"? What disasters might critics of the revolution have imagined coming in its wake?
- How do you understand the beam of light from heaven that falls on Louis XVI?
- Why was regicide regarded with such horror in England in the 1790s?

After ten years of upheaval, the French Revolution brought to power in 1799 the much-acclaimed general Napoleon Bonaparte (see p. 787). In the fifteen years that followed, Napoleon launched France into a series of wars that brought the ideas of the revolution, and French control, to much of Europe.

Visual Source 17.5 Revolution, War, and Resistance: A German View of Napoleon (Bridgeman-Giraudon/Art Resource, NY)

Those conquests also aroused much resentment and resistance, which by 1815 brought an end to both Napoleon and the European empire he had created. Visual Source 17.5, a German caricature of Napoleon, illustrates that resistance in visual form. It was created in late 1813 by the German artist J. M. Voltz to mark a major defeat of Napoleon's forces at Leipzig in October of that year. The caption reads: "Triumph of the Year 1813. To the Germans for the New Year 1814." This image was widely reproduced throughout French-occupied Europe in an effort to stimulate further resistance.

- What do the figures embedded in Napoleon's gnarled face represent?
- Notice the Russian-style fur hat with bear claws extending into Napoleon's head. Given the recent Russian military defeats of Napoleon's forces, what do you think this represents?
- How do you understand the hand extending from Napoleon's neck as an epaulet (military insignia worn on the shoulder)?
- What is the meaning of the map depicted on his uniform? The crosses show the location of other defeats for Napoleon's forces. Notice also the red collar, said to represent the blood of Napoleon's many victims.
- How does this German critique of the French Revolution, created in 1813, differ from the British criticism in Visual Source 17.4, which is dated to 1793?

Using the Evidence: Representing the French Revolution

1. **Considering political art as evidence:** Based on these five visual sources, together with those in the text itself, what are the advantages and limitations of political or satirical art in understanding a complex phenomenon such as the French Revolution?
2. **Making comparisons:** In what different ways was the French Revolution portrayed in these visual sources? How might you account for those differences? Consider issues of class, nationality, religious commitment, time period, and gender.
3. **Defining the French Revolution:** Based on these visual sources, what was revolutionary about the French Revolution? And what earlier patterns of French life persisted?
4. **Identifying opponents of the revolution:** Based on these visual sources and the text narrative, which groups of people likely opposed the revolution? Why?