



Speak Out Now

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July 4th: We Need Our Own Independence!

This week is the Fourth of July, which celebrates the founding of the United States after the American Revolution. For those of us fortunate enough to have the day off, we might watch fireworks or spend time with family. Regardless of what we end up doing, our society will be filled with events celebrating the history of the U.S. and making calls for patriotism. But what was the American Revolution truly about?

To expand its empire and amass wealth, Great Britain had conquered various parts of the world, including in North America, where they seized the land that was home to millions of indigenous people. In the North American colonies, the economy was growing, but its development was tightly controlled by the British to export the colonies' natural resources back to Britain.

The wealthy class of individuals that administered the North American colonies grew frustrated with British control. Many of these colonial leaders are now known as the "Founding Fathers" of the U.S. They were a small group of very wealthy white men who either owned slave plantations or were merchants and bankers profiting from slavery — men like Benjamin Franklin, who had a vast fortune from various businesses; James Madison, who owned large slave plantations; and George Washington, a major landowner. This wealthy class wanted more control of the wealth being generated, instead of having to send most of it back to the King in England in the form of taxes and exports.

But the wealthy were not the majority of the people in the colonies, and they were not the ones that generated the colonies' immense wealth. Most people living in the colonies were small farmers, workers, slaves, and indentured servants, who were poor Europeans who paid for their trip to North America by working off their debt over several years.

Many of these people from the lower classes were also frustrated with British control. And by the 1770s, they began engaging in aggressive acts of resistance against Britain's occupying army and its colonial government. And it was this resistance from below that became the main

impulse for the revolution, which the "Founding Fathers" eventually took over the political leadership of. But it was from the lower ranks of colonial society that people sacrificed and shed the most blood in winning America's independence from Britain.

From the very beginning of the American Revolution, there were actually two revolutions taking place — one by the ruling class, and another by the majority of the colonial population. The wealthy wanted independence so they could be the ones to control the wealth in the colonies, not the British. The lower classes wanted independence from Britain in order to better their own lives, and to have a say in the new government.

Ultimately, however, only one was successful. On the backs of the lower classes fighting in the war, the ruling class of what became the United States won their revolution and got what they wanted — their own control over the wealth of society, and a government that would defend their interests over the interests of the majority. Or as James Madison put it: a government "to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority."

Fast forward to today, and it couldn't be any clearer that the wealthy elite still are in power, with a government to defend their interests. Real decision-making about how to run society is not in our hands, even though we do the work that makes it function. Working people may cast a vote for this or that president, but ultimately these are politicians that will defend the interests of the wealthy, regardless of which party they belong to. This was on full display during the recent presidential debate — a ridiculous spectacle that not only showed the bankruptcy of both Trump and Biden, but of the whole system they defend.

July 4th may celebrate Independence Day for the ruling class in the United States, but workers here in the U.S. and all over the world are still fighting for our independence from the rule of the bosses and capitalism. To achieve real independence, we'll need to fight for our own revolution, one that finally empowers working and poor people around the world to take control and run society to meet our needs. This is a revolution that is long overdue.