

# Not the Reason for the Revolution

[I Helped Fact Check the 1619 Project. The Times Ignored Me](#)

By **LESLIE M. HARRIS**, 03/06/2020 05:10 AM EST in Politico

“On August 19 of last year I listened in stunned silence as Nikole Hannah-Jones, a reporter for the *New York Times*, repeated ***an idea that I had vigorously argued against with her fact-checker:*** that the patriots fought the American Revolution in large part to preserve slavery in North America.”

“Hannah-Jones and I were on Georgia Public Radio to discuss the path-breaking *New York Times* 1619 Project, a major feature about the impact of slavery on American history, which she had spearheaded. The *Times* had just published the special 1619 edition of its magazine, which took its name from the year 20 Africans arrived in the colony of Virginia—a group believed to be the first enslaved Africans to arrive in British North America.”

“Weeks before, I had received an email from a *New York Times* research editor. Because I’m an historian of African American life and slavery, in New York, specifically, and the pre-Civil War era more generally, she wanted me to verify some statements for the project. At one point, she sent me this assertion: **“One critical reason that the colonists declared their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery in the colonies, which had produced tremendous wealth. At the time there were growing calls to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire, which would have badly damaged the economies of colonies in both North and South.”**”

“I vigorously disputed the claim. Although slavery was certainly an issue in the American Revolution, the protection of slavery was not one of the main reasons the 13 Colonies went to war.”

Leslie M. Harris (continued ... )

“It’s true that in 1772, the famous Somerset case ended slavery in England and Wales, but it had no impact on Britain’s Caribbean colonies, where the vast majority of black people enslaved by the British labored and died, or in the North American Colonies. It took 60 more years for the British government to finally end slavery in its Caribbean colonies, and when it happened, it was in part because a series of slave rebellions in the British Caribbean in the early 19th century made protecting slavery there an increasingly expensive proposition.”

“Far from being fought to preserve slavery, the Revolutionary War became a primary disrupter of slavery in the North American Colonies. Lord Dunmore’s Proclamation, a British military strategy designed to unsettle the Southern Colonies by inviting enslaved people to flee to British lines, propelled hundreds of enslaved people off plantations and turned some Southerners to the patriot side. It also led most of the 13 Colonies to arm and employ free and enslaved black people, with the promise of freedom to those who served in their armies. While neither side fully kept its promises, thousands of enslaved people were freed as a result of these policies.”

-- Leslie M. Harris

*My NOTE: Dunmore was himself a slave owner and never freed or offered to free his slaves. He issued the proclamation from a barge offshore, after he had fled the shore. It was a measure of desperation, not a British strategy which ever threatened the colonies.*

*Also, Britain became, in the 1700s, after the War of Spanish Succession, the primary slave trading nation. She was still in that mode when in 1774 the colonists produced Article 2 of the Articles of Association: a total ban on slave trading. This FROM the colonies, not Great Britain. So the NY Times argument is just inside-out wrong.*

<https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/thomas-sowell-on-slavery-and-this-fact-there-are-more-slaves-today-than-were-seized-from-africa-in-four-centuries/>

## Thomas Sowell on Slavery and This Fact — There Are More Slaves Today Than Were Seized from Africa in Four Centuries

By Mark J. Perry, October 18, 2017

In his excellent book [The Thomas Sowell Reader](#), which I recommend very highly, Thomas Sowell provides some insightful commentary about slavery in the chapter titled “Twisted History”:

Of all the tragic facts about the history of slavery, the most astonishing to an American today is that, although slavery was a worldwide institution for thousands of years, nowhere in the world was slavery a controversial issue prior to the 18th century. People of every race and color were enslaved – and enslaved others. White people were still being bought and sold as slaves in the Ottoman Empire, decades after American blacks were freed.

Everyone hated the idea of being a slave but few had any qualms about enslaving others. Slavery was just not an issue, not even among intellectuals, much less among political leaders, until the 18th century – and then it was an issue only in Western civilization. Among those who turned against slavery in the 18th century were George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and other American leaders. **You could research all of the 18th century Africa or Asia or the Middle East without finding any comparable rejection of slavery there. But who is singled out for scathing criticism today? American leaders of the 18th century.**

# THE FIRST EFFORTS TO LIMIT THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE ARISE IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2020/09/the-first-efforts-to-limit-the-african-slave-trade-arise-in-the-american-revolution-part-1-of-3-the-new-england-colonies/>

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2020/09/the-first-efforts-to-limit-the-african-slave-trade-arise-in-the-american-revolution-part-2-of-3-the-middle-and-southern-colonies/>

<https://allthingsliberty.com/2020/09/the-first-efforts-to-limit-the-african-slave-trade-arise-in-the-american-revolution-part-3-of-3-congress-bans-the-african-slave-trade/>

by *Christian McBurney*, September 14, 14 & 15, 2020:

**“In October 1774, in a stunning and radical move, delegates of the First Continental Congress signed a pledge for the thirteen mainland colonies not to participate in the African slave trade. Perhaps equally astounding, Americans largely complied, turning the pledge into an outright ban.”**

1772 – Somerset court case in England frees a slave who was brought from the colonies to England by his owner. Has no effect or notice in the colonies.

1775/6 – Dunmore flees hostilities, to barge on river, offers to free any slaves willing to fight the patriots. He keeps his slaves with him and doesn't offer to free them. Later he takes his slaves to the West Indies.

2019 – Nikole Hannah Jones in the New York Times claims these two events show that the revolution was started because Britain was going to free their slaves.

**Not even remotely the history.**

COUNTER

# 1<sup>st</sup> Continental Congress

and the Articles of Association

October 1774 – banned imports, including slave imports, of any kind.



# Articles of Association

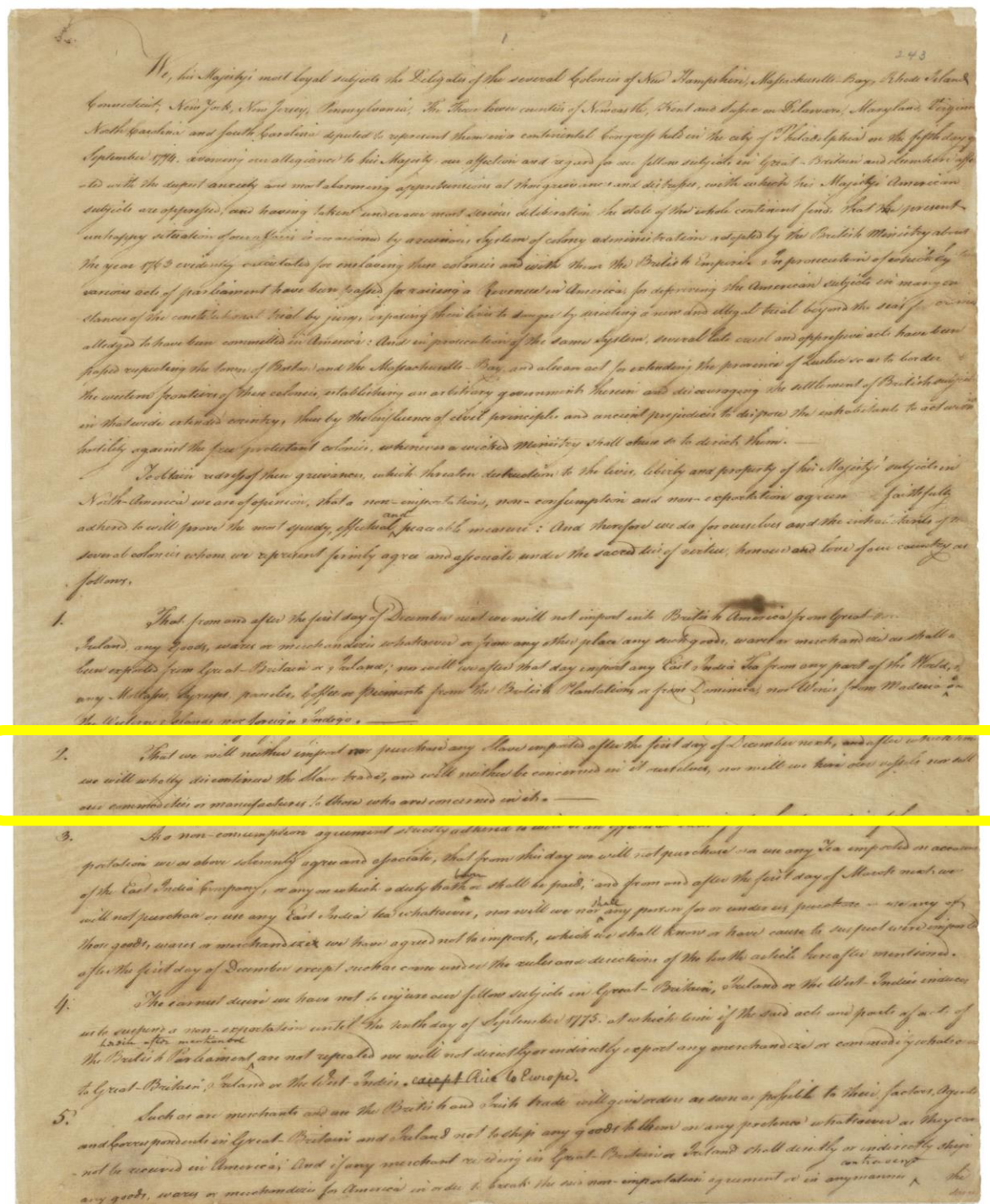
## October 20, 1774

### Handwritten 1<sup>st</sup> Page

(Of three pages)

The second article is a pledge to neither import nor purchase any slave after Dec 1, 1774.

<https://www.archivesfoundation.org/documents/1774-articles-association/>





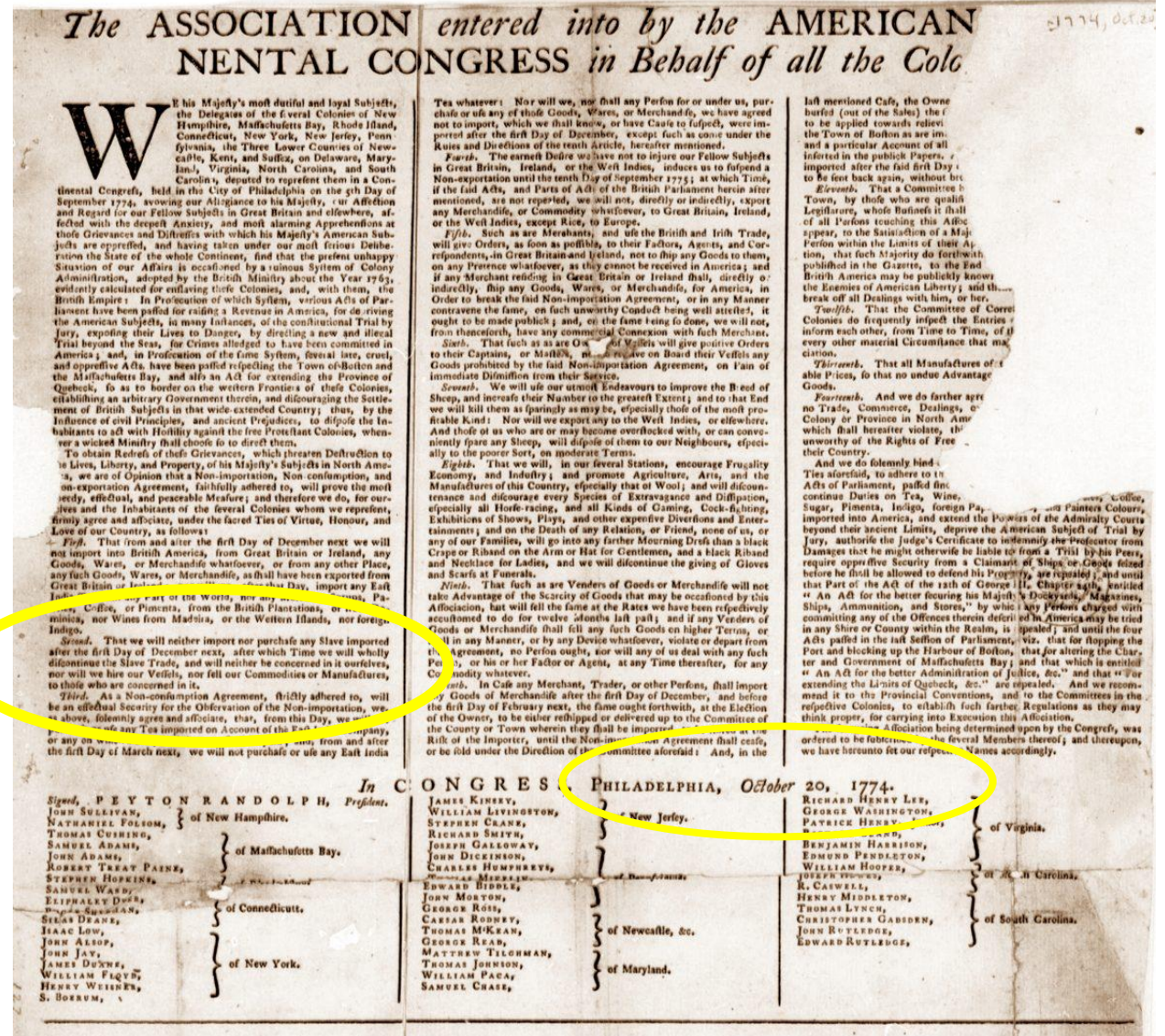
# Articles of Association October 20, 1774 Printed version

This tells us that the colonists themselves wanted an end to slavery. Most of them. This is where most of *the colonists* were headed.

This is yet another counter to the Nikole Hannah Jones claim that the revolution was fought because England was going to abolish slavery.

On the contrary, England was the leading slave trader in the 1700's and would not end their own slave trade until 1807. Slavery itself, in the British colonies in the Americas, was not criminalized by Britain until 1833, nearly 60 years later.

Question: where the hell were the "researchers" on the New York Times "project?"



# October 20, 1774: Articles of Association

## The second article (detail from printed version):

*Second.* That we will neither import nor purchase any Slave imported after the first Day of December next, after which Time we will wholly discontinue the Slave Trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our Vessels, nor sell our Commodities or Manufactures, to those who are concerned in it.

*“Second.* That we will neither import nor purchase any Slave imported after the first Day of December next, after which Time, we will wholly discontinue the Slave Trade, and will neither be concerned in it ourselves, nor will we hire our Vessels, nor sell our Commodities or Manufactures to those who are concerned in it.”