

# Sources from the Past

## Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

While developing their program of reform, members of the National Assembly consulted closely with Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence, who was the U.S. ambassador to France in 1789. Thus it is not surprising that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen reflects the influence of American revolutionary ideas.

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

Article 2. The goal of every political association is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

Article 3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body and no individual can exercise authority that does not flow directly from the nation.

Article 4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do anything that does not harm another. The exercise of natural rights of each man thus has no limits except those that assure other members of society their enjoyment of the same rights. These limits may be determined only by law.

Article 6. Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to participate either personally or through their representatives in the making of law. The law must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. Being equal in the eyes of the law, all citizens are equally eligible for all public honors, offices, and occupations, according to their abilities, without any distinction other than that of their virtues and talents.

Article 7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any

citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.

Article 9. As all persons are held innocent until they have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensible, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner shall be severely repressed by law.

Article 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen thus speak, write, and publish freely, but will be responsible for abuse of this freedom in cases decided by the law.

Article 13. For the maintenance of public military force and for the expenses of administration, common taxation is necessary: it must be equally divided among all citizens according to their means.

Article 15. Society has the right to require from every official an accounting of his administration.

Article 16. Any society in which guarantees of rights are not assured and separation of powers is not defined has no constitution at all.

Article 17. Property is an inviolable and sacred right. No man may be deprived of property except when public need, legally determined, clearly requires it, and on condition of immediate and prearranged compensation.

### For Further Reflection

- In what ways do the principles established in the Declaration reflect the political transformations taking place throughout the age of Atlantic revolutions?

Source: *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. Translated by Jerry H. Bentley.

of American revolutionary ideas, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* proclaimed the equality of all men, declared that sovereignty resided in the people, and asserted individual rights to liberty, property, and security.

**Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity** Between 1789 and 1791 the National Assembly reconfigured French society. Taking “liberty, equality, and fraternity” as its goals, the Assembly abolished the old social order along with the many fees and labor services that peasants owed to their landlords. It dramatically altered the role of the church in French society by seizing church lands, abolishing the first estate, defining clergy as civilians, and requiring clergy to take an oath of loyalty to the state. It also promulgated a constitution that made the king the

chief executive official but deprived him of legislative authority. France became a constitutional monarchy in which no property—about half the adult male population—had the right to vote in elections to choose legislators. Thus far the French revolution represented an effort to put Enlightenment political thought into practice.

**The Convention** The revolution soon took a radical turn. Efforts by the French nobility to mobilize foreign powers in support of the king and the restoration of the ancien régime gave the Assembly the pretext to declare war against Austria and Prussia in April 1792. Adding to the military burden on France, revolutionary leaders declared war in the following year on Spain, Britain, and the Netherlands. Fearing military

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## Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen

In 1791 Olympe de Gouges, a butcher's daughter and playwright of some note, wrote and published the **Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen**. She directly challenged the inferiority presumed of women by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which limited citizenship to males. By publicly asserting the equality of women, Gouges breached barriers that most revolutionary leaders wanted to perpetuate. Charged with treason during the rule of the National Convention, Gouges went to the guillotine on 3 November 1793.

**Article 1:** Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common utility.

Article 2. The purpose of any political association is the conservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of woman and man; these rights are liberty, property, security, and especially resistance to oppression.

Article 3. The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially with the nation, which is nothing but the union of woman and man; no body and no individual can exercise any authority which does not come expressly from it (the nation).

Article 4. Liberty and justice consist of restoring all that belongs to others; thus, the only limits on the exercise of the natural rights of woman are perpetual male tyranny; these limits are to be reformed by the laws of nature and reason.

Article 6. The law must be the expression of the general will; all female and male citizens must contribute either personally or through their representatives to its formation; it must be the same for all: male and female citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, must be equally admitted to all honors, positions, and public employment according to their capacity and without other distinctions besides those of their virtues and talents.

Article 7. No woman is an exception; she is accused, arrested, and detained in cases determined by law. Women, like men, obey this rigorous law.

Article 11. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of woman, so that liberty assures recognition of children by their father. Any female citizen thus may say freely, I am the mother of a child which belongs to you, without being forced by a barbarous prejudice to hide the truth; (an exception may be made to respond to the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by law.

Article 13. For the support of the public force and the expenses of administration, the contributions of woman and man are equal; she shares all the duties and all the painful tasks; therefore, we must have the same share in the distribution of positions, employment, offices, honors, and jobs.

Article 14. Female and male citizens have the right to verify, either by themselves or through their representatives, the necessity of the public contribution. This can only apply to women if they are granted an equal share, not only of wealth but also of public administration, and in the determination of the proportion, the base, the collection, and the duration of the tax.

Article 17. Property belongs to both sexes whether united or separate; for each it is an inviolable and sacred right; no one can be deprived of it, since it is the true patrimony of nature, unless the legally determined public need obviously dictates it, and then only with a just and prior indemnity.

### For Further Reflection

- How does Olympe de Gouges's feminist restatement of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* intensify its radical precepts?

Source: Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson. *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979, pp. 90–92.

to vote. Yet, by seeking to extend the promises of Enlightenment political thought to blacks and women as well as white men, social reformers of the nineteenth century laid a foundation that would lead to large-scale social change in the twentieth century.

## THE CONSOLIDATION OF NATIONAL STATES IN EUROPE

The Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty inspired political revolutions in much of the Atlantic Ocean basin, and the revolutions in turn helped,

spread Enlightenment values. The wars of the French revolution and the Napoleonic era also inspired the development of a particular type of community identity that had little to do with Enlightenment values—**nationalism**. Revolutionary wars involved millions of French citizens in the defense of their country against foreign armies and the extension of French influence to neighboring states. Wartime experiences encouraged peoples throughout Europe to think of themselves as members of distinctive national communities. Throughout the nineteenth century, European nationalist leaders worked in various fashion states based on national identities and mobilized citizens to work in the interests of their own national communities, sometimes by fostering jealousy and suspicion of other