

# White Wigs & Fat Cats

by Kimberly Fletcher

*Whatever may be the judgment pronounced on the competency of the architects of the Constitution, or whatever may be the destiny of the edifice prepared by them, I feel it a duty to express my profound and solemn conviction ... that there never was an assembly of men, charged with a great and arduous trust, who were more pure in their motives, or more exclusively or anxiously devoted to the object committed to them.* – James Madison

A few years ago, while in the midst of reading the Federalist Papers, I taught a class to a group of high school students on the U.S. Constitution. As I began the class I asked the students what they knew about the Constitution. One of the boys in the class raised his hand and said, "It's just an old document written by a bunch of fat cats in white wigs."

My heart sank. How could such an amazing document written by those remarkable men be dismissed with such callous disrespect? As the discussion continued other students shared their feelings. One young woman said the Constitution was written by men for men and gave no rights to women. Another said the Constitution was old and out of date and should be rewritten to fit our current times.

As I sat there and listened to the students share their opinions I ached inside that the



youth of our nation were so horribly deceived. I determined right then and there that I would take the opportunity available to me to teach and enlighten the people of this nation about our heritage, our history and our Founding Fathers. I knew I couldn't change the world in one day, but that day I had the power to influence twenty-two youth in a small classroom in Dayton, Ohio and I was going to make the most of the opportunity.

When the forty minute class ended twenty-two of America's future leaders left the classroom wiser, eager to learn more and asking me to come back and teach again. It was an incredibly enlightening experience for both the students and me. I left the school that day feeling like I had done something great. I may not have saved the world but I had planted seeds in young hearts and I knew the power and potential of those seeds to grow. And grow they did... for just a few weeks after I taught the class I received an email from Katie, one of the female students.

Katie stated in her letter that she went home from class that day committed to read the Constitution. She said she had not only read the Constitution but she also read every one of the books I had suggested to the class that day and wondered if I had any more suggestions, which I gladly gave her. As she closed

her letter to me, Katie said, "I had no idea how amazing our Founding Fathers were. They aren't the people they teach us about in school. You should teach everyone what you taught us. It would change the world."

Changing the world may be an exaggeration from an excited teenager, but who knows, if there were more teenagers out there excited about our Founding Fathers and our nation's history maybe it *would* change the world. In any case, I decided Katie was right, I *should* teach everyone I can what I taught those students that day.

American schools do not teach about the great men of our past and they should because if they did, the people of this nation would know that our Founding Fathers were not fat cats in white wigs but great, incredibly knowledgeable and humble men who revered God, adored women, and cherished freedom. I have the greatest respect for them and I owe them a debt of gratitude I don't feel I could ever repay. But maybe by sharing their stories, by giving them back their sacred honor, I can in some small way repay the debt and show them how grateful I am for their sacrifices.

There were fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence. They have been labeled as exclusionists but the truth is they were the most inclusive group of men the world had ever seen. They believed with their very souls that freedom was an unalienable right to everyone, not just a few. Equality was not distinguished by color or gender in the Declaration of Independence and life was not determined by age or gestation. The world had never seen such a group of men before. Each one of them signed their own death sentence as their wives and families stood by their commitment and honored their courage.

These men pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to the revolution and the fight for freedom. Some of them lost their lives. Many of them lost their fortunes. But it wasn't until my generation that they lost their sacred honor.

I wonder if our founders and their wives knew this would happen. What a tragedy it would have been for them to see the future and know that the incredible sacrifices they were making would be forgotten, even ridiculed, by the very generations they fought to protect. They gave everything so we could live free, and what do we have to show for it? How do we honor them?

Today our Founding Fathers are ridiculed, mocked and maligned. Their biographies have been falsified, their histories rewritten, their contributions belittled. It is an absolute travesty that utterly breaks my heart and it all began with one small statement made by a group of women.

The whole entire premise that our Founding Fathers were exclusionists comes from one small sentence from one short letter written by Abigail Adams to her husband John in the spring of 1776. This short correspondence between husband and wife has become the very basis for the National Organization for Women's (NOW) platform and the root of their "Man-Hating" agenda. NOW states on their website: "The exclusion of women from the U.S. Constitution was not accidental. Equality has been deliberately denied. For more than two centuries since this country was founded, men have refused constitutional recognition of women's legal and civil rights."<sup>1</sup>

Women were not excluded from the constitution. That is an outright lie. Is it true that the

word "woman" is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution? Yes, it is true. But there is also no mention of the word "man" in the United States Constitution. The Constitution is gender neutral. It is also race neutral. There is no mention of color anywhere in the United States Constitution. These men were not exclusionists. They bent over backwards to stand against British law, customs, and tradition to include every citizen of this nation regardless of color, gender, income or creed. And that was revolutionary. But that is not what some women want you to know. They want you to believe that our Founding Fathers were exclusionists because it makes women look weak and gives them power to "save" you from your plight and they back up their claims with the following statement.

In 1776, Founding Father John Adams denied his wife Abigail's demand that the constitution of the new nation "put it out of the power of the vicious and lawless to use [women] with cruelty and indignity and impunity," as English law allowed. His response? "Depend upon it," he wrote, "We know better than to repeal our masculine systems."<sup>2</sup>

The more I read these quotes from John and Abigail, the more suspicious I became. There was obviously more to their letters than this brief excerpt and I wanted to know more. So, I began searching in earnest trying to find the complete text of the letters. Finally, I did. And just as I suspected, there was so much more to this correspondence than the minuscule part that feminists quote from—so much more.

I would like to share a portion of their letters for you. The letters were written in March and April, 1776 in the heat of the Revolutionary movement. Abigail was in absolute support of this movement. She was completely aware of

the British oppression and stood behind her husband at great sacrifice to herself and her family. Abigail was also keenly aware of the injustices of British law and tradition on women. Abigail saw this freedom movement as an opportunity to benefit women. With this in mind Abigail wrote to her husband:

*I long to hear that you have declared an independence. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.*

*Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.*

*That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up – the harsh tide of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend.*

*Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity?*

*Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the (servants) of your sex; regard us then as being placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness.<sup>3</sup>*

When you read the complete text of these letters as well as other correspondences

between John and Abigail you get a sense of their relationship. Both John and Abigail were greatly concerned for the fate of America. They were both devoted to the cause of freedom and were willing to sacrifice everything to ensure it. They were also both courageous patriots and completely devoted to one another.

Abigail had a respect for her husband and John in turn had a great admiration and respect for his wife. John also had a sense of humor that, from reading their letters, I believe was probably both a great comfort to Abigail and an aggravation at the same time. This, as well as the fact that John did not seem to be a letter writer, helps a person better understand John's answer to his wife's plea. He addressed his wife's concerns in the final part of his letter to her:

*As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our Struggle has loosened the bands of Government every where. That Children and Apprentices were disobedient – that schools and Colleges were grown turbulent – that Indians slighted their Guardians and Negroes grew insolent to their Masters. But your Letter was the first Intimation that another Tribe more numerous and powerful than all the rest were grown discontented. – This is rather too coarse a Compliment but you are so saucy, I wont blot it out.*

*Depend upon it, We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems. Altho they are in full Force, you know they are little more than Theory. We dare not exert our Power in its full Latitude. We are obliged to go fair, and softly, and in Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters, and rather than give up this, which would compleatly subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticoat, I*

*hope General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight. I am sure every good Politician would plot, as long as he would against Despotism, Empire, Monarchy, Aristocracy, Oligarchy, or Ochlocracy. – A fine Story indeed. I begin to think the Ministry as deep as they are wicked. After stirring up Tories, Landjobbers, Trimmers, Bigots, Canadians, Indians, Negroes, Hanoverians, Hessians, Russians, Irish Roman Catholicks, Scotch Renegadoes, at last they have stimulated the [women] to demand new Priviledges and threaten to rebell.* <sup>4</sup>

When I finished reading John's letter to his wife I didn't feel oppressed. I felt like giving a big YEE HAW! John Adams recognized the power of women and basically declared the rebellion a done deal now that the women were taking a stand and joining the fight. As if to say, "Look out King George, the women of America have just engaged!"

The letters shared between John and Abigail were touching, sincere, and completely inspiring. Of all the letters written, all the journals recorded, all the documents penned by these men and women of the revolution, feminists could only find one tiny snippet of one correspondence—that had to be taken out of context—to make a bold statement that our founders were male chauvinist oppressors. NOW's entire "Women's Rights" platform begins with this lie.

NOW's claim that "The exclusion of women from the U. S. Constitution was not accidental" is preposterous. Not only was it not on purpose, it DIDN'T happen! I defy you to find one place in the Constitution where it states only a man may vote, or that only a man may run for Senate, Congress or even President of the United States. It isn't there. It doesn't exist.

The Constitution doesn't deny anyone the right to vote. It isn't even implied. The Constitution didn't declare women couldn't vote or hold property. It was British tradition that assumed it. Our Founding Fathers realized it was a bad system and Abigail figured if they were going to make new laws and a set up new government this would be the perfect time to get rid of those archaic and barbaric British customs once and for all.

The Constitution doesn't segregate races either. It specifically mentions age, place of birth and residence but there is no reference to gender or race. Look for yourself. I have included the Constitution in the Appendix. I assure you, you will not find one reference that supports NOW's claim. And you won't find it in the Bill of Rights either.

Our Founding Fathers weren't oppressors of women. On the contrary, they had the greatest respect and admiration for them. If blame needs placed for women's vote being denied it should be directed to the individual states not our Founding Fathers. The 14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> amendments exist because British customs and tradition were bigoted not because our Founders were. We were not intentionally denied anything our Founders saw to it when they formed the government for "We the People" and not "We the White Male Land-owners." Their goal was freedom and equality for all not a few and they hoped that someday we would achieve it.

Unfortunately, that truth is not told and the feminists' statement has been accepted by society as truth and recognized as fact. This is in large part because the majority of citizens in this country have never looked at the Constitution let alone read it, and if we don't know what it says, if we don't know the history of

our people, then we can be easily deceived into believing women were purposefully left out of the Constitution and that our Founding Fathers were self-serving exclusionists who just wanted to protect their investments and keep women in their place.

The success of this feminist strategy is evidenced in a documentary on George Washington that aired on the History Channel. Don't be fooled by the name. Not everything aired on the History Channel is historically accurate. The documentary on George Washington is a good example. The so-called "documentary" portrayed George Washington, our most revered and respected Founding Father as an insecure child who was oppressed by his mother, coveted his neighbor's wife and accidentally assassinated a French official, causing the French and Indian War. And that was all within the first ten minutes.

The documentary went on to say that Washington was an opportunist gold digger who went after a rich young woman in town like a werewolf and only married Martha on the rebound because of her money.

According to the "documentary" Washington lobbied for the position of Commander of the Continental army by wearing his uniform to every session of congress. The "documentary" also stated that had Washington applied for such a high position today, he wouldn't even be considered because he had no real war record (except of course for single handedly causing the French and Indian War). This is what is being portrayed on the History Channel for crying out loud!

When David McCullough's book 1776 was released, Newsweek Magazine ran a spread on George Washington and made the following

statement about our first president. "He enjoyed parties and particularly the company of attractive women...[Washington was] prone to self-doubt and flashes of self-pity, Washington was insecure, hated New Englanders, obsessed over the smallest details of decoration of Mt. Vernon and was hungry for fame."<sup>5</sup>

I can't even tell you just how preposterous this is. I'd like to tell you who the real George Washington was. Not the one you hear about in school, in the media or on the History Channel, but the one who actually lived over two hundred years ago. I will tell you about the George Washington who loved his wife, adored his children and cherished liberty—the humble man who would lead a nation to freedom. The History Channel documentary did get a few things right. George Washington did marry Martha. He did fight in the French and Indian War, he did lead the Continental Army and his name was George Washington. That's pretty much where reality and fantasy part ways, however.

George Washington was not only the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army; he was also a surveyor, a planter, a soldier and a statesman. He served as the Chairman of the Constitutional Convention and was an active Episcopalian. Despite what you hear from feminists, media, and educators today, George Washington was considered the most popular man in the Colonies. In speaking of General Washington, Henry "Light Horse Harry" Lee made the now famous statement, "First in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen." Does this sound like a man who was obsessed with power and was bigoted toward women and blacks? Do you really think the colonists would so highly respect a gold-digging werewolf? I guarantee you, after reading about the women of George Wash-

ington's time, they wouldn't have stood for such nonsense. And they certainly wouldn't have revered a man who would treat women with such wanton disrespect.

Surely the story was accurate when it claimed George Washington's mother was verbally abusive and oppressive to George right? Wrong! When George left home to begin what would be a lifetime of civil service, his mother Mary, told her son, "Remember that God is our only sure trust. To Him I commend you my son, neglect not the duty of secret prayer." Does this sound like the words of an abusive mother? I guess, in today's world, putting God first in your life is considered pretty oppressive.

What about the claim that the young George Washington was on the prowl—after anything in a dress with money; or his so-called "affair with his neighbor's wife?" When George Washington was 15 he wrote in his own handwriting, *110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*. Among them were:

**108) When you speak of God, or His attributes, let it be seriously and with reverence. Honor and obey your natural parents although they be poor.**

**109) Let your recreations be manful not sinful.**

**110) Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.**

Call me crazy but this doesn't sound like the words of a gold-digging werewolf on the prowl. If you studied the real history of George Washington you would be absolutely appalled at what educators are calling history today.

One of the best books available on the subject is *The Real George Washington* by Jay A. Parry. If you want to know who George Washington really was, I recommend that book but here are just a few things you should know about the person who was known throughout the colonies as America's most indispensable man.

George Washington was the son of Augustine Washington and his second wife Mary. He was a descendant of King John of England and a descendant of nine of the twenty-five Surety Barons of the Magna Carta. George Washington grew up in and around Fredericksburg, Virginia. Our family lived in Fredericksburg, for four years and I absolutely loved it. The history there is just astounding.

When you visit George Washington's birthplace and boyhood home it gives you chills. I found it more inspiring than even Mt. Vernon. I don't know how to explain it. There's just such a humbling atmosphere there. And the small shop they have at George Washington's boyhood home in Fredericksburg is full of books about the *real* George Washington.

Just a few decades ago these stories could be found in our school textbooks. Now, you have to search for them. For instance, the account of George Washington at the Battle of Monongahela was included in student textbooks in America until 1934. The story is absolutely inspiring.

During the French & Indian War (you know, the one George Washington caused), he fought alongside British General Edward Braddock. On July 9, 1755, the British were on the way to Fort Duquesne, when the French surprised them in an ambush attack.

The British, who were not used to fighting except in an open field, were being massacred. Washington spent the entire battle riding back and forth across the battlefield delivering General Braddock's orders. As the battle raged, every other officer on horseback, except Washington, was shot down. Even General Braddock was killed causing his troops to flee in confusion.

A few days after the battle, on July 18, 1755, Washington wrote to his brother, John:

*But by the all powerful dispensions of providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was leveling my companions on every side of me!*<sup>6</sup>

Fifteen years later, Washington was traveling with a friend through the very woods where the battle had taken place. They met an old Indian Chief who spoke with Washington through an interpreter. He said:

*I am a chief and ruler over my tribes. My influence extends to the waters of the great lakes and to the far blue mountains. I have traveled a long and weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. It was on the day when the white man's blood mixed with the streams of our forests that I first beheld this chief (Washington).*

*I called to young men and said, mark yon tall and daring warrior? He is not of the red-coat tribe- he hath an Indian's wisdom, and his warriors fight as we do himself alone exposed.*

*Quick, let your aim be certain, and he dies. Our rifles were leveled, rifles which, but for you, knew not how to miss- 'twas all in vain, a power mightier than we, shielded you.*

*Seeing you were under the special guardianship of the Great Spirit, we immediately ceased to fire at you. I am old and soon shall be gathered to the great council fire of my fathers in the land of shades, but ere I go, there is something bids me speak in the voice of prophecy:*

*Listen! The Great Spirit protects that man (pointing at Washington), and guides his destinies—he will become the chief of nations, and a people yet unborn will hail him as the founder of a mighty empire. I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favorite of Heaven, and who can never die in battle.*<sup>7</sup>

The Indian Warrior later said, "Washington was never born to be killed by a bullet! I had seventeen fair fires at him with my rifle, and after all could not bring him to the ground!"<sup>8</sup>

George Washington was a man of great character. During the Revolution, he was riding by a group of soldiers who did not know who he was. They were in the process of trying to lift a very large, heavy beam. As General Washington neared he noticed a young Corporal standing by yelling commands at the men. "Now you have it," he shouted, "All ready. Pull!"

As Washington looked on he quietly asked the Corporal why he didn't help the men. The man angrily replied, "Sir, do you realize that I am the Corporal?!" Washington politely raised his hat and said, "I did not realize it. Beg pardon Mr. Corporal."

Then General Washington dismounted from his horse, went toward the men and helped them, giving all his strength until the beam was raised. Before leaving General Washington turned to the Corporal, while wiping the

perspiration from his face and said, "If ever you need assistance like this again, call upon Washington, your Commander-in-Chief, and I will come."<sup>9</sup>

The confused Corporal turned white when he realized who he had been talking to. And that, my fellow Americans, is who George Washington was. That is why he was well loved and respected. He not only had character. He had principle, integrity, and backbone; all characteristics which are seriously lacking in our elected leaders today.

Another character trait Washington had that is seriously lacking today is a genuine respect and trust in God. He petitioned Him often. One such occasion was so powerful it inspired artist, Arnold Friberg to make a painting of it. We know it as *The Prayer at Valley Forge*. And a copy of it is proudly displayed atop the fireplace mantel in our home. The story behind the dramatically stirring painting is even more extraordinary.

In the freezing winter of 1777, General George Washington suffered from a severe lack of supplies for his troops camped at Valley Forge. Soldiers died at the rate of twelve per day. While the British army slept in tents and ate warm meals, Washington's troops were starving and many even lacked the simple necessities such as blankets, shirts and shoes. General Washington recorded their desperate state in his own words.

*No history now extant can furnish an instance of an army's suffering such uncommon hardships as ours has done, and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lie on, without shoes (for the want of which their marches*

might be traced by the blood from their feet)...and submitting without a murmur, is a proof of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled.<sup>10</sup>

A committee from Congress reported that "feet and legs froze till they became black, and it was often necessary to amputate them."<sup>10</sup> Bloody footprints in the snow and the sight of his men starving and exposed to the harsh elements, caused General Washington to seek divine assistance. Isaac Potts, who was General Washington's temporary landlord at Valley Forge, witnessed and recorded the epic event. The story is found in the book, *America's God and Country*.

In 1777 while the American army lay at Valley Forge, a good old Quaker by the name of Potts had occasion to pass through a thick woods near headquarters. As he traversed the dark brown forest, he heard, at a distance before him, a voice which as he advanced became more fervid and interested.

Approaching with slowness and circumspection, whom should he behold in a dark bower, apparently formed for the purpose, but the Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the United Colonies on his knees in the act of devotion to the Ruler of the Universe!

At the moment when friend Potts, concealed by the trees, came up, Washington was interceding for his beloved country. With tones of gratitude that labored for adequate expression he adored that exuberant goodness which, from the depth of obscurity, had exalted him to the head of a great nation, and that nation fighting at fearful odds for all the world holds dear...

Soon as the General had finished his devo-

tions and had retired, Friend Potts returned to his house, and threw himself into a chair by the side of his wife. 'Heigh! Isaac!' said she with tenderness, 'thee seems agitated; what's the matter?'

'Indeed, my dear' quoth he, 'if I appear agitated 'tis no more than thought that a Christian and a soldier were characters incompatible; but if George Washington be not a man of God, I am mistaken, and still more shall I be disappointed if God does not through him perform some great thing for this country.'<sup>11</sup>

The most telling thing about President Washington's character is found in his resignations. While most of us today focus on what a president does while in office the most remarkable thing about George Washington is that he left office. The world had never seen anything like that before. Just think about other great military commanders and revolutionary leaders before and after Washington such as Caesar, Santa Anna, Napoleon, Lenin, Hitler. They all seized the power they won in war and they didn't give up that power until they either died or were defeated by someone else. None of them willingly walked away from their power, but George Washington did—twice. First, at the end of the Revolutionary War when he resigned his military commission and returned to Mount Vernon to once again be a farmer, and the second time at the end of his second term of office when he refused, despite all the pleadings of the people, to run for a third term.

George Washington could have been king if he wanted. He could have taken power of all the colonies after the war. That was the custom. You kept the power and the lands you won in war. But George Washington didn't

want to be president let alone king. He served as president because the people loved him and asked him to. He had fought for liberty because he *believed* in it, and was dedicated to preserving it.

At the end of the war the American painter, Benjamin West was commissioned by King George III to do a painting. While in his service King George III asked the painter what Washington was going to do now that he had won independence? Benjamin replied, "They say he will return to his farm." **"If he does that," said the King, "he will be the greatest man in the world."**

George Washington was a remarkable man. He was a man of conviction, compassion and valor and he was surrounded by men like him. It was a *time* of patriots—a time of heroes. There are so many examples of courage, service, and faith. From homes to churches, to farms and store fronts America was filled with the lives and stories of great men. Patriots were found everywhere—even behind the pulpits of America's churches as witnessed in 1775 when Pastor John Peter Muhlenberg preached a message on Ecclesiastes 3:1, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the Heaven." He closed his message by saying, "In the language of the Holy Writ, there is a time for all things. There is a time to preach and time to fight." He then threw off his robes to reveal the uniform of an officer in the Revolutionary Army. That afternoon at the head of 300 men, he marched off to join General Washington's troops.<sup>12</sup>

Chaplain James Caldwell may not be a name you remember but I bet you'll recognize his words. In June of 1780, General Wilhelm of the British Army crossed to New Jersey from Staten Island with 5,000 troops. The Colonial

Army drove them back but not before the British shot and killed Reverend Caldwell's wife, and the mother of their nine children.

Two weeks later as the British troops once again made the advance, led this time by General Clinton, they again met with resistance from the Colonial Army. American General Nathaniel Greene's regiment were courageously firing from behind the church fence when they suddenly ran out of the paper wadding used to hold the gunpowder in place in their muskets.

Chaplain James Caldwell, remembering his wife, quickly ran past the British fire, entered the Presbyterian Church and collected all the copies he could carry of Isaac Watt's Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. He carried them back through enemy fire and distributed them to the American troops exclaiming, "Now put Watts into 'em boys! Give 'em Watts!"<sup>13</sup> The Americans held their ground and by the next day, the British withdrew.

Robert Morris who is known as the Financier of the Revolution, gave thousands of dollars of his own money to feed and clothe Washington's handful of half-naked, half starving militia. George Washington always knew he could come to Robert Morris for support. On one occasion General Washington sent word to Robert asking his friend for funds to support a vital campaign he was planning. Robert had spent his fortune paying for the revolution and did not have enough to meet the General's needs so he went to a Quaker friend and asked him for a loan to cover the requested costs.

The Quaker asked Robert what security he could offer for the loan. "My note and my honor," said Mr. Morris. The Quaker replied:

"Robert, thou shalt have it."<sup>14</sup> The money was sent to General Washington and because of Robert's sacrifice he crossed the Delaware and changed the entire direction of the War. Time after time Robert Morris gave of his own resources and raised money on his own credit to keep Washington and his men supplied with their needs. One record remarked: "If it were not [proven] by official records, posterity would hardly be made to believe that the campaign . . . which . . . closed the Revolutionary War, was sustained wholly on the credit of an individual merchant."<sup>15</sup>

When the War ended, this self-made millionaire spent three years in debtors prison after he lost everything—all for the sake of liberty.

Thomas Nelson, Jr. was another man of valor. When the Revolutionary War started, most of the farming in the colonies came to an abrupt halt when all the men left to fight the war. Without the men to farm the land many families were left destitute. General Nelson used his own money and resources to support the families of many of his poorest soldiers. More than a hundred families were spared from starvation and destitution because of Thomas Nelson's sacrifice and benevolence. In the battle of Yorktown General Cornwallis had taken the Nelson home as a headquarters. Knowing it was General Nelson's home the army refused to fire upon it. When Thomas Nelson found his home was not being fired upon he asked his men why. They said it was out of respect for him. Thomas Nelson then took the cannon himself and fired upon his own home. That home was the collateral he used to raise \$2 million for the Revolutionary cause. When the War was over and the loans came due Congress refused to honor them and Thomas Nelson lost his property and died without a cent to his name.

Thomas Jefferson lost his wife and baby. Samuel Adams lived in near poverty his whole life. John Hart was hounded and hunted as a criminal while his wife lay dying. Richard Stockton was thrown in prison, his lands were destroyed, and he ended up literally begging for food and money to keep his family alive. John Martin died a broken man when his neighbors, friends and some of his own family disowned him after signing the Declaration of Independence. His last words to his family and friends before he died in 1777 were, "Tell them that they will live to see the hour when they shall acknowledge it [the signing] to have been the most glorious service that I have ever rendered to my country."

Our Founding Fathers were not just a bunch of men in white wigs. They were the best and brightest the world had to offer. They were not fat cats out to secure their financial estates. Most of them lost everything and they all knew they had everything to lose but they stood by their principles in spite of all the threats and oppositions launched against them. They were everything we look for in elected leaders today—men of principle and integrity who respected God, cherished their families and put their country above their own self interests. They believed in a cause greater than themselves and they were willing to sacrifice everything for that cause. For them, it truly was liberty or death. Many of our Founding Fathers lost everything. All of them gave everything. And yet, we honor them for nothing.

John Adams spoke to us in our day as if he knew this would happen...

*"Posterity, you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that*

*ever I took half the pains to preserve it."*

We cannot allow the dedicated sacrifices of these great men and their families to be forgotten. We cannot allow these honorable men to continue to be maligned, ridiculed and disrespected. We must read the stories of their lives, we must teach our children about them for if we do not their memories and their sacrifices will be lost forever.

Those men that signed the Declaration of Independence, those that fought in the war for independence and those that were part of the Constitutional Convention were all men of valor not just in their day, but in ours as well. They weren't perfect men, but they were men who were able to overcome their imperfections in order to accomplish great things. They were some of the greatest men that ever lived. We need more like them.

It is my earnest prayer that someday we as a people will come to understand and reverence the lives of these remarkable men and that we will acknowledge that their commitment to freedom was the most glorious service they ever could have rendered to their country—and to the world.

<sup>1</sup> NOW Website, Introduction, [www.now.org](http://www.now.org)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Abigail Adams, letter to John Adams, March 31, 1776

<sup>4</sup> John Adams, letter to Abigail Adams, April 14, 1776

<sup>5</sup> Newsweek, May 23, 2005, p. 38 & 43

<sup>6</sup> America's God and Country, William Federer, p. 636

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> America's God and Country, William Federer, 636, 637

<sup>9</sup> American History Stories, Mara Louise Pratt, p. 89

<sup>10</sup> America's God and Country p. 640

<sup>11</sup> America's God and Country p. 640

<sup>12</sup> America's God and Country p. 641

<sup>13</sup> America's God and Country p. 644

<sup>14</sup> Lives of the Signers, Wallbuilder Press, p. 96

<sup>15</sup> Lives of the Signers p. 97, reprint of 1848 publication by Wallbuilder Press 1995)

## Discussion Questions

- ★ *What are your thoughts on the experience Kimberly shares of taking the opportunity to teach the 22 misinformed high school students?*
- ★ *What does this interaction teach about the power of reaching even one young person?*
- ★ *Have you ever taken an opportunity to correct misinformation about the founders? If so, how did it go?*
- ★ *This article outlines several founding fathers and mothers who made deep sacrifices for America. Who are examples in your life that have sacrificed selflessly?*
- ★ *We haven't been asked to sacrifice the same things as the founders in most cases, but what can we sacrifice in our day to advance liberty and heal our nation?*
- ★ *What are your thoughts on the depth of the sacrifices the founders made, with often no compensation?*
- ★ *How does it change us and our families when we know the stories of our nation's founding and their willingness to give of their lives, their fortunes, and their honor? What can we do to honor them?*