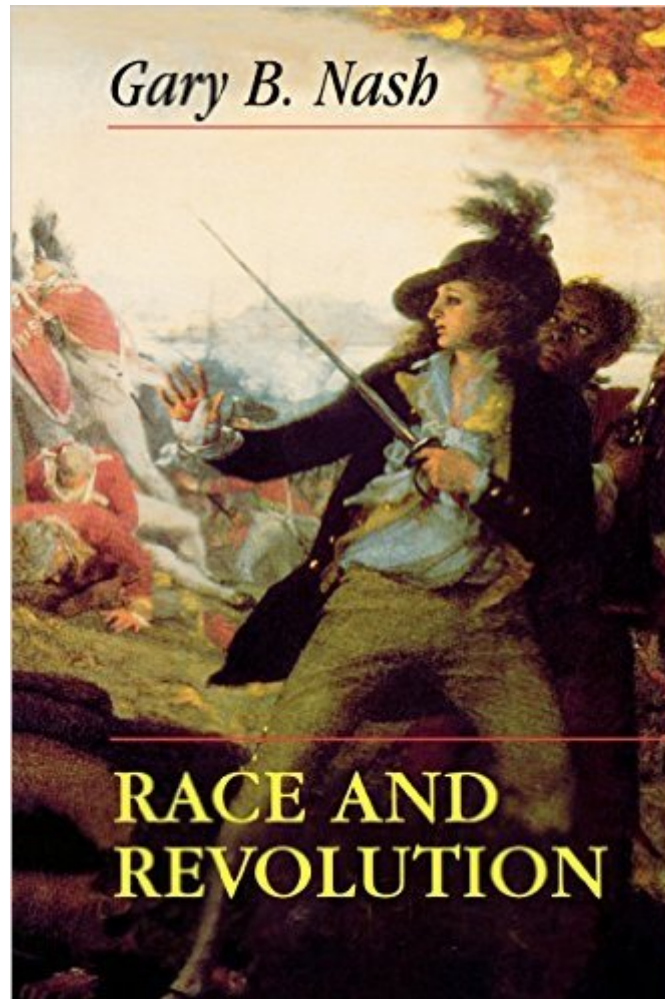


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# Race And Revolution (Merrill Jenson Lectures In Constitutional Studies)



## Synopsis

The most profound crisis of conscience for white Americans at the end of the eighteenth century became their most tragic failure. *Race and Revolution* is a trenchant study of the revolutionary generation's early efforts to right the apparent contradiction of slavery and of their ultimate compromises that not only left the institution intact but provided it with the protection of a vastly strengthened government after 1788. Reversing the conventional view that blames slavery on the South's social and economic structures, Nash stresses the role of the northern states in the failure to abolish slavery. It was northern racism and hypocrisy as much as southern intransigence that buttressed "the peculiar institution." Nash also shows how economic and cultural factors intertwined to result not in an apparently judicious decision of the new American nation but rather its most significant lost opportunity. *Race and Revolution* describes the free black community's response to this failure of the revolution's promise, its vigorous and articulate pleas for justice, and the community's successes in building its own African-American institutions within the hostile environment of early nineteenth-century America. Included with the text of *Race and Revolution* are nineteen rare and crucial documents—letters, pamphlets, sermons, and speeches—which provide evidence for Nash's controversial and persuasive claims. From the words of Anthony Benezet and Luther Martin to those of Absalom Jones and Caesar Sarter, readers may judge the historical record for themselves. "In reality," argues Nash, "the American Revolution represents the largest slave uprising in our history." *Race and Revolution* is the compelling story of that failed quest for the promise of freedom.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Despite other comments about him on-line, Gary B. Nash is an exceptional historian who has made path-breaking contributions to the understanding of the American Revolution. "Race and Revolution" is one such contribution among many others. This is a book based on three lectures names for Merrill Jensen at the University of Wisconsin in 1988. It makes the case that at no time between the establishment of slavery in the British colonies in North America the U.S. Civil War was the time more opportune for Americans to abolish slavery than the revolutionary era during the 1770s and 1780s. It represented a unique occasion to end the "peculiar institution" but for five related reasons, according to Nash, the revolutionary leaders of the nation failed to seize this possibility. For Nash the five reasons are: "First, it was the era when the sentiment for ridding American society of the peculiar institution was the strongest. Second, it was the moment when the most resistant part of the new nation, the lower South, was most precariously situated and thus manifestly ill-prepared to break away from the rest of the states. Third, it was a period when the system of thought called environmentalism was in full sway, suggesting that the degraded condition of slaves was a matter of social conditioning, not innate inferiority. Fourth, it was a time when the opening of the vast trans-Appalachian West provided the wherewithal for a compensated emancipation.

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