

Direct Instruction

British Policy on African Americans:

In November 1775, the Royal Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, issued a proclamation aimed at disrupting the American cause. His proclamation promised freedom to any enslaved Africans owned by Patriot masters who ran away to join Loyalist forces.

Direct Instruction

American Policy on African Americans:

The inclusion of African Americans on the Patriot side was not as cut and dried as Britain's policy. Early in the war, African Americans in New England rallied behind the Patriot cause and fought alongside whites in early battles. By 1775, General Washington barred the further recruitment of black soldiers in the Continental Army because he feared the prospect of armed slave revolts. Washington would not reconsider his decision until 1777, when, desperate for troops, he allowed Rhode Island to create the first all-black regiment.

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American colonists had to make a difficult choice when deciding which side of the war to support; however, for enslaved black colonists, what mattered most was freedom. African Americans fought for both sides, but an overwhelming majority joined the British.