

Women in the struggle for america's independence

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When one thinks of the Revolutionary War, images of brave men fighting for the liberty of themselves and their country come to mind. What is less commonly recognized is the courageous, and equally important, action of American women in the struggle for independence. *Revolutionary Mothers*, by Carol Berkin, highlights the significance of the role of women and the women's bravery that helped secure independence from Britain. The countless women that aided in the fight for independence truly embodied the American spirit of the late 1700s, possessed traits that say a great deal about American ideals, and easily fulfill the definition of a hero. As the late 1700s approached, so did an era of rebellion; and as the men of American society grew wilder and more ambitious, so did the women. Before the Revolutionary period, in the 17th century, women's role in American society was to maintain a successful home. In the early and mid 18th century, women were now expected to be well mannered "gentle women" in addition to maintaining their homes and families. In the late 18th century, however, women's role changed from simple housewifery to being a surrogate husband, protector, and often, a war hero. As the American Revolution spread through America, the spirit of the people grew strong, fierce, and patriotic. The actions and ideas of American women, as illustrated in *Revolutionary Mothers*, truly encompasses this fiery spirit. For example, a few of the many brave women with the passion of Americans at the time include a thirteen year old girl named Anna Green Winslow that identified herself as a Daughter of Liberty, Two women named Sarah Franklin Bache and Ester Reed that organized the biggest fundraiser ever to support colonial troops, and Sally Saint Claire, that posed as a man and fought, undetected,

next to her husband in the war until her death in 1782. These courageous women, along with innumerable others, were able to overcome American societies previous stereotypes of a woman's role and included themselves in America's new free spirit. The women discussed by Berkin in *Revolutionary Mothers* all possess many similar traits and attributes. For example, due to the quickly intensifying war for independence, women were forced to become both physically and emotionally stronger than they previously were. They were physically strong because they now needed to tend to the family farms and labor while their husbands were fighting in the war, and emotionally strong because they faced the perils of a home-front war every day and did not crumble under the pressure. For example, Abigail Adams, the wife of a member of Continental Congress, John Adams, took pride in her strength during her husband's absence, and Martha Bratton, who blew up her own house so the approaching Loyalists would not acquire the ammunition hidden there. The women of the Revolution were also extremely brave and appeared to be undaunted by the dangers of the war, which revealed a great deal about American ideals and values at the time. The seemingly fearless behavior of women and the acceptance of their new roles in society showed the American desire for unity and the appreciation of bravery and strength during the fight for independence. In the dictionary, a hero is defined as a " person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his or her life. " The women of the Revolution unquestionably suit this definition. With a war being fought on many of the American's front lawns, courageous and surprising acts were inevitable. Women exhibited a great deal of bravery;

They defended their homes, destroyed property to prevent the enemy from obtaining it, harbored fugitives, killed or wounded invaders, impersonated men to fight in battles, and faced desperate choices in the home-front war. These women that traded every thing they once knew to fight for the cause of independence were certainly heroes. For example, Sarah Osbourne, who did not let the perils of battle stop her from carrying much needed food and drinks to soldiers; Martha Washington, who made frequent long trips to her husband's troops to raise morale; Lydia Darragh, who saved George Washington's life by spying on a British meeting; and Mammy Kate, a slave that saved her master from Loyalists' captivity by carrying him out of a building hidden in a laundry basket. These few heroes are not even a fraction of the immense number of women that helped win the war. In conclusion, women in the time of America's Revolutionary War played a huge part in the victory of America over Britain. Despite the numerous women who remained loyal to Britain, who were still brave for standing up for what they believe in, the female Patriots aided in the fight for independence every day. Daring, spirited, fearless, and valiant, these women were forced to overcome their former roles of housewives and mothers to become impromptu husbands and fathers. Many women were carried out heroic acts, like being successful spies, saboteurs, messengers, and even soldiers that helped win the Revolution. However, even the women that did not do such drastic things were still heroic in the eyes of the Revolutionaries. For example, the women that simply stayed at home to maintain their houses, families, and family businesses while their husbands were away fighting the war were still heroic. Despite the fact that women, at the time, were only considered to be "

fulfilling their obligations to their husbands, " women played a significant role in the struggle for independence to preserve their own freedom, as well as the well-being of their country, America.