

A Brief Timeline of Racist Thought (Based on *Stamped From the Beginning* Chapters 7-12)

1730s-1750s: The Great Awakening promotes Christianity and converting slaves at the same time as the Enlightenment is promoting secular thought.

- *1735*: Linnaeus publishes *Systema Naturae*, which focuses on classifying living things
- *1743*: Thomas Jefferson is born to the family with the second most slaves in Albemarle County.
- *1749*: Buffon argues that all humans are the same species, but that there is a hierarchy. He also rehashes the theory that exposure to Whiteness will make Blacks look and act more White
- *1753*: David Hume writes that “there never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white” (95), though he opposes slavery
- *1754*: An essay by Quaker John Woolman argues against slavery, but states that Blacks should still be dependent upon Whites. This begins the Quaker shift towards abolitionism, though most Quaker slaveholders do not free their slaves.
- *1756*: Voltaire argues that “there was a permanent natural order of the species” and that Whites and Blacks had different origins (polygenesis) BUT he opposes slavery

1762: Woolman updates his essay to the antiracist stance that “the Colour of a Man avails nothing” (90)

1769: Jefferson briefly joins the Virginia House of Burgesses

1770: Jefferson represents the biracial man Samuel Howell in opposition to the law that “prescribed thirty years of servitude for first-generation biracial children of free parents,” arguing that “under the law of nature, all men are born free” (91)

1772: Lord Mansfield declares that “no one could be enslaved in England,” which sparked a fear that this ruling would apply to the colonies (97)

1773: Physician Benjamin Rush proposes the racist idea that slavery made Black people inferior and argues that “A Christian slave is a contradiction in terms.” His writing leads to the development of the first White antislavery organization (February)

- Phillis Wheatley’s poems are published, causing readers to criticize her owners until she is freed (September)
- The Boston Tea Party (December)

1774: Jefferson publishes *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, blaming the king for refusing to end slavery in the Americas

- Major philosopher Lord Kames supports the polygenesis theory that there are multiple species of humans, which had different origins

1775: Kant argues that whites are the apex of humanity (102)

- Benjamin Franklin makes the argument that Americans are enslaved to the British. This belief is criticized by prominent author Samuel Johnson

1776: Adam Smith publishes *The Wealth of Nations*, arguing for market-driven economies

- Jefferson is tasked with writing the Declaration of Independence. In it, he accuses the British of arming slaves to keep the Americans in a so-called slavery to England. Language criticizing slavery is cut by other southern delegates during the editing process.

1781: Thomas Jefferson writes *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he argues that freed slaves and Whites can never live together in harmony, and that Blacks should be sent to Africa. He also states that Blacks are inherently intellectually inferior to Whites. (It is published in French in 1786 and in English in 1787)

- The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union are ratified, naming the United States of America, and functioning as our initial Constitution

1783: The American Revolutionary War officially ends with the signing of the Treaty of Paris

1787: Samuel Stanhope Smith writes about both the climate and society theories of racism, and argues that whiteness is the standard of beauty and behavior, which Blacks can approach with proximity to Whites

- At the Constitutional Convention, delegates try not to discuss slavery. It comes up, however, during discussions of taxation and representation. The group votes that representation will be based “in proportion to the whole number of white & other free Citizens and inhabitants...and three-fifths of all other persons” (116)
- 14 year-old Sally Hemings accompanies Jefferson’s daughter Polly to Paris and is raped by him even though he argues against biracial relationships.

1789: The French Revolution begins. Jefferson helps Lafayette write the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

- The Constitution is ratified

1790: Jefferson becomes the first Secretary of State

- Benjamin Franklin argues for ending slavery (while maintaining racist beliefs)
- The Naturalization Act gives citizenship only to free White men (121)

1791: The Haitian Revolution begins

1793: The Fugitive Slave Act allows slaveholders to capture escaped slaves and the prosecution of anyone who assists escapees

- Prominent doctor Benjamin Rush organizes the first “Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery and Improving the Condition of the African Race” (124)

1794: Eli Whitney receives a patent for the cotton gin, which causes the economic prominence (and human costs) of cotton to skyrocket

1797: Benjamin Rush argues that all Black people have leprosy, which is caused by climate, behavior, and illness

1800: The Prosser attempt at a revolution, which would have been “the largest slave revolt in the history of North America, with as many as 50,000 rebels,” is foiled (143)

- Jefferson is elected President

1801-1809: The Jefferson presidency. At the same time, the polygenesis theory that the races are different species becomes increasingly popular

- *1802:* The news breaks the fact that Jefferson had at least 6 children with Sally Hemings
 - He tries to see if the U.S. can recolonize Virginia’s free Black population to Sierra Leone, but is rejected
- *1803:* The United States purchases the Louisiana Territory from France for \$15 million
- *1804:* Jefferson is reelected
 - The Haitian Revolution ends with Haiti’s independence
- *1805:* Joseph Jekyll coins the term “this extraordinary Negro” (96).
- *1807:* The Slave Trade Act makes the slave trade illegal, but does not create mechanisms to enforce the law
- *1809:* Jefferson writes that Black people are approaching “re-establishment of an equal footing with the colors of the human family” (137)

1810s:

- *1811:* 200-500 free Black people march on New Orleans. 100 are killed, and plantations are given reparations by the state
- *1814:* When asked by Madison’s secretary to speak against slavery, Jefferson refuses
- *1816:* The first meeting of the American Colonization Society is held in Washington, with the goal of sending free Black people to Africa
- *1817:* Black men in Philadelphia meet to discuss colonization and vote unanimously that they do not want to go to “the savage wilds of Africa” (147)

1820s: The Second Great Awakening expands, and there is a push to “create a strong, unified, Jesus-centered national identity.” (153) At the same time, northern states support colonization.

- *1820:* The Missouri Compromise is passed. Missouri is entered into the nation as a slaveholding state, while Main is designated a free state
- *1821:* The United States claims some land on the coast of West Africa. 154 people move to Liberia by 1830
 - In his autobiography, Jefferson writes that “the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government.” (page 152) and endorses colonization
- *1822:* Vesey’s Rebellion in South Carolina is foiled

1826: Jefferson’s last visitor is Robert E. Lee’s half-brother.

- Thomas Jefferson dies on July 4, 1826, after owning nearly 600 slaves in his lifetime