

## Module 03: A Revolution for Whom?

### Evidence 15: The Town of Lenox Responds to Massachusetts's Draft Constitution, 1778

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#### Introduction

Residents of the town of Lenox, in western Massachusetts, objected to Article V of the new constitution drafted between 1777 and 1778. Article V granted the right to vote throughout Massachusetts to every male inhabitant, except negroes, Indians, and mulattoes, of at least twenty-one years of age, provided he paid taxes (unless excused by law) and had resided in the town for at least one full year.

#### Questions to Consider

- Why did the residents of Lenox object to Article V?
- On what grounds did they base their objection?

#### Document

Objections against Article the 5th All Men were born equally free and independent, having certain natural and inherent and unalienable Rights, among which are the enjoying and defending Life and Liberty and acquiring, possessing and protecting Property of which Rights they cannot be deprived but by injustice, except they first forfeit them by committing Crimes against the Public. We conceive this Article declares Honest Poverty a Crime for which a large Number of the true and faithfull Subjects of the State, who perhaps have fought and bled in their Countrys Cause are deprived of the above mentioned Rights (which is Tyranny) for how can a Man be said to [be] free and independent, enjoying and defending Life and Liberty and protecting property, when he has not a voice allowed him in the choice of the most important officers in the Legislature, which can make laws to bind him and appoint Judges to try him in all cases as well of Life and Liberty as of Property — No Person ought to be allowed to vote for any Officer of the Community except he has taken an Oath of Allegiance to the said Community — An Oath is the bond of society and if ever necessary it is necessary in the present case.

Source:

Oscar and Mary Handlin, eds., *The Popular Sources of Political Authority: Documents on the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), 253-255.