



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue.3.,2016 (July-Sept. )

ISSN  
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

HEROES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AND THE CIVIL WAR. REAL AND PERSONIFIED :  
CHARACTER PORTRAITS OF GIDEON JACKSON AND THOMAS PAINE (1736-1809) IN THE  
WORKS OF HOWARD FAST

Dr. RACHAKONDA SIVADITHYA

A Life member of Osmania University Centre for International Programs. ID no 13534.



ABSTRACT

This article concerns itself to the protagonists of the novels *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943) and *Freedom Road* (1944). *Citizen Tom Paine* by Howard Fast depicts the conditions during The American Revolutionary War and its aftermath (1765-83). *Freedom Road* depicts the conditions of the former African slaves after The Civil War (1861-65). Thomas Paine is a political philosopher and thinker who has strived for the liberation of the Americans and African slaves since the time of American Revolutionary War. He is named as Tom Paine and is the protagonist of the novel *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943). Thomas Paine is termed as "The Great Rabble Rouser and Revolutionary" (Mc Donald 50). He has come up to become a great philosopher and political thinker from a stay maker who was very poor as his father also could not support him. He travels from England to America in search of his fortune. "The great rabble rouser and revolutionary" achieves many milestones till he meets Napoleon Bonaparte(1769-1821). His enthusiasm and activities during his travels from England to America are very fine examples to show that he achieved success during the American Revolutionary War. The flair of success started in the Revolutionary War continued up to The Civil War for the nation. Gideon Jackson is the personification of the important persons of the Civil War. He is the protagonist of the novel *Freedom Road* (1944). He is in constant motion, stress and strain from the beginning of the novel. This novel begins with the emancipated slaves living at the Carwell plantation. The emancipated slaves are quite confused about "Voting" in the year 1868, when they were called by The Convention to cast their vote. They have selected Gideon Jackson because they had faith in him and his capabilities. He is very considerate calm and he develops the abilities to convince the people around him. He displays these qualities at the Convention at Charleston to set the former slave owners thinking about the constructive energy of the Emancipated slaves. This article aims to analyze the contributions of the protagonists of *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943) and *Freedom Road* (1944) and to show how the struggle of the protagonists leads to the success of the nation.

**Key Words:** The American Civil War, Thomas Paine, Gideon Jackson, The Convention of South Carolina in the year 1868. Howard Fast.

©KY PUBLICATIONS

**INTRODUCTION**

The introduction details the situations in America during its Revolutionary War which was the outcome of The American Revolution. In this war thirteen colonies in America defied the power of the British Parliament over them. The important acts of resistance which remade the history of America are The Boston Tea Party (1773). In the late 1774, the patriots who were "Americans" set up their own government while the other colonists remained loyal to the British Crown. Lexington and Concord are the places devastated by the Revolutionary War in April 1775 as the conflict between America and Britain reached its peak. The British could only control a few cities in America towards the end of the Revolutionary War. George Washington (1732-99) is an aristocrat and one of the main leaders of the Revolution. Fast has depicted George Washington as the protagonist in his *The Unvanquished* (1942). He has depicted Thomas Paine as a common man who could influence great revolutionaries like Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) through his writings. Bonaparte promised financial assistance to the Revolutionary War.

The Revolutionary War is discussed as a background to the famous revolutionist Thomas Paine (1737-1809). He is termed as "The Founding Father of America and The Lost Founder of America." He is named Tom Paine and is the hero of *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943)

The introduction to this paper also gives details of the situations in America during The American Civil War (1861-65) as a social background to Gideon Jackson who is attributed with all the qualities of the great leaders in America during the Civil War. He is the personified protagonist of the novel *Freedom Road* (1944).

The Civil War (1861-65) is a war between the Northern and Southern states. It began when seven southern states decided to separate from The American Union. Chattel slavery was the core issue over which the war was fought. The Southern states strongly supported the institution, as they had already got the advantages of keeping the chattel slaves. This practice was not prevalent to the same extent in the North. This was the main reason for the "Anti Slavery Society (1833-70)" to emerge. It is an abolitionist society founded by William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan, which was headquartered in New York city. The society's "Anti Slavery Sermons" and speeches to abolish slavery were most common in Southern churches. These initiatives helped to enlighten the slaves and many of them tried to flee from their masters. The "Abolitionists" in the South played an active role in containing slave practices. Slavery was one of the big issues between The North and South. The Southern states were hostile to abolitionism because the southerners feared that the speeches would encourage the slaves to demand their rights. When the war began in 1861, the expectations of the slaves about their emancipation were very high. The Republican Party had a clear agenda and President Abraham Lincoln was going ahead with the plan of Emancipation. "He hoped to achieve emancipation by compensating the slave owners for their human property." (Franklin 212)

When Abraham Lincoln assumed office in 1860, South Carolina decided to separate from The Union. Pressure was mounting on him to resolve the issue of chattel slavery, and in his inaugural address he expressed the view that peace would be restored in America by setting "The African Americans" free. From 1862 onwards there was a rapid progress in the war and also in the emancipation of slaves. Laws prohibiting slave trade were enacted in the recognized slave states and many of the former slave owners felt that the war was not to save the "Union" but to emancipate the slaves. The slaves were certain of being emancipated and were rejoicing over the decision of Lincoln to emancipate them from slavery. "During the war years the Negroes had moved significantly towards freedom. Many of them were among the first, however to realize that it had not been achieved." (Franklin 215). Lincoln therefore justified the decision to abolish slavery in America declaring that "The Emancipation Proclamation was essentially a war measure." (Franklin 215)

After detailing the American Revolutionary War (1765-83) and The Civil War (1861-65) this article discusses the protagonists of *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943) and *Freedom Road* (1944) and their contributions to America.

**Discussion**

Thomas Paine is a political philosopher, thinker and a revolutionary hero who had spread the message of American Independence from The British since the time of The American Revolutionary War (1765-83). He

was born in England to a very poor family. His father was a tailor and tried his level best to settle Paine in tailoring. Paine had always dreamt of America as "The Promised Land". He is finally recommended to Benjamin Franklin(1706-1790 ). Benjamin Franklin is a leader of The American Revolution. Paine begins his travel to America on a ship where no one cares for him. Paine lands in America finally and begins to stay there. He is firm on his ideas of freedom. Those were the times after the Revolutionary War, when slave trade was practiced by every slave owner. After witnessing the situation in America, Paine decides to become a free lance writer. He begins his career with a justification of the Revolution after a detailed discussion on the Revolution with John Hope Franklin and George Washington. He had arrived in America during the time of the Revolutionary War and continued to author several works depicting the plight of America. He always felt that his place was with the common man. Paine was successful as a writer who could inspire American people for a change. He declares that he would author a book like *Common Sense* (1776) which argues for America's independence from British. He has also written *Rights of Man* (1791) which justifies popular political revolution when a government does not safe guard the natural rights of people. His *Age of Reason* (1794) challenges institutionalized religion and advocates free thinking. The British government prosecuted the book sellers who tried to publish or circulate such works.

The second protagonist to be discussed in this paper is Gideon Jackson, a slave who fought for the Union Army during The Civil War. He returns from The War to Carwell Plantation as that is the only home he knows. He is respected by the former slaves at The Carwell Plantation and is elected to The Constitutional Convention at Charleston that would set up a new course for the government in South Carolina. He sets off to Charleston with an honest desire to represent the sufferings of his people. He is ridiculed by the people at Charleston but he puts a brave face against all the initial difficulties for the cause of his people. He is forced to support himself before he could attend the Convention. He meets many delegates at the Convention who have common ambition of achieving the civil, political and economic rights for the former slaves. Gideon Jackson undergoes a personal transformation as he learns to read and write. His reading of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Stowe makes him realize that the hardships faced by the African Slaves were a result of the preaching by the former slave owners that slavery was for the upliftment of the slaves.

Stephen Holms, a delegate at the Convention wants to introduce the constructive energy of the African Americans with Gideon Jackson as a representative. He invites Gideon Jackson to a dinner where the former slave owners are given an idea of the potential of the emancipated slaves. Gideon Jackson enters into a conversation with the former slave owners.

"I imagine Jackson that you find law making a diversion. As a change from other things?"

"It is more profitable than picking cotton." Gideon answered "We are paid three dollars a day." "More than an honest man lays his hands on these days. What can a Nigra do with that much money?" Jane Dupre wondered. ( *Fast Freedom Road* 85)

The novel *Freedom Road* has a second plot where Gideon Jackson returns to the Carwell plantation and explains to his fellow men that they have to slog to purchase a part of the plantation. The auction of the land is the event that sets the pulse of Gideon to increase. The money that Gideon raises through the bank loan at Boston is the most memorable event concerning Gideon Jackson.

To speak of the other achievements of Gideon Jackson, he realizes the power of unity and urges that the emancipated slaves should be united with the other members who were mainly land less farmers and who have purchased their freedom during the Civil War. The unrest among the former slave owners begins to rise and they plan for their attack. Gideon learns that the "Federal Troops" are going to be withdrawn from Columbia. It is the sign to show that the emancipated slaves would face danger from the former slave owners. He goes to Columbia and gives a telegram in a post office addressed to The President in the White House of America.

"Rutherford B Hayes the white house Washington DC. Mr. President i beseech you to delay your action withdrawing federal troops from Columbia stop abolition of negro and poor white militia leaves pro reconstruction forces dependant on federal protection stop fear. Rioting and terror stop loyal republicans here

cannot comprehend abandonment of all union elements in south. We plead your help and sympathy. Gideon Jackson representative for south Carolina.” (Fast *Freedom Road*, 213)

The telegram is however not sent to Washington DC by the telegraph office and the former slave owners plan the attack. The emancipated slaves assemble at the Carwell plantation and start cleaning the dilapidated building. They come together to resist the attack. They are over powered by the former slave owners and thus this novel ends with all the emancipated slaves being killed. This incident leaves the former slaves terrified. This novel ends with The Federal Troops winning over the emancipated slaves and the freedom they enjoy is only a momentary victory against the former slave owners.

As the title suggests this novel can be termed as “The Road to Freedom” because The Emancipation Proclamation only liberated the former slaves from Chattel Slavery but did not give them the freedom they desired.

### Conclusion

#### The Achievements of the protagonists.

Howard Fast is a very prolific writer mainly known for his revolutionary works. Fast wanted to present the American society in the two revolutionary wars, The American War of Independence (1765-83) and The American Civil War (1861-65). He has selected Thomas Paine because Paine was actively spreading the message of the national freedom of America from the British. The novel *Citizen Tom Paine* narrates the personal experiences of Thomas Paine and the political situation in England and America respectively. Thomas Paine gained popularity and fame as a writer who authored works that could raise the political conscience of the settlers who have different cultures and origins and were termed as “Americans.” Paine lived during (1736-1809), his message was well received and accepted by Americans for their own independence. The most important contribution of Thomas Paine is that he could influence the French Revolutionary leader, Napoleon Bonaparte( 1769-1821 ) who was very much influenced by Paine’s works. Bonaparte understood the situation during the Revolutionary War and promised financial assistance for the American Revolution. The important conscience raising works of Thomas Paine are *Common Sense* (1776), *The American Crisis* (1776) and *The Age of Reason* (1794,1795 and 1807). These works are very important for the Americans to understand their own situation and to collectively fight against the British. These works mainly contained the reasons why America should be a free nation and have its own governance.

The second protagonist of Howard Fast is Gideon Jackson. In the words of Howard Fast mentioned in the after word of the novel *Freedom Road* ,“As for Gideon Jackson, he is a combination of several Negro statesmen of the time. All the things attributed to him were shared in good part by one or several of these men.” ( Fast *Freedom Road* 262). His achievements can be classified into 3 or 4 main achievements

- 1) Gideon Jackson could voice the opinions of the emancipated slaves in the Convention.
- 2) He could convince the people around him about the power of unity on the Carwell plantation.
- 3) He could understand that “The Convention and The Union Forces” could protect the emancipated slaves for a time.

This article thus discussed two protagonists: Thomas Paine representing The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and Gideon Jackson representing The American Civil War (1861-65). Independence is the basic quest of these heroes. The need for National Independence of America was necessitated as the people termed as “Americans” were under the control of British. The Americans promised liberation to the African slaves after the American War of Independence. This promise was not kept up for 80 long years. The sufferings of African slaves resulted in the Civil War.

The conclusion compares these two leaders in their respective time periods and asserts the contribution of Citizen Paine and Gideon Jackson. Citizen Paine as a famous writer energized the American Revolution there by making the settlers achieve their independence. Similarly Gideon Jackson is an illiterate till he went to the Convention. He could mobilize many of the former slaves to realize the realities concerning them.

Gideon Jackson is an illiterate in the year 1868 when the incidents of the novel *Freedom Road* are depicted by Howard Fast. He begins his journey to literacy in that year and struggles very hard to get the abilities to read, write and understand the society around him. Once he makes an effort to gain the basic abilities, he reads many political books which elucidate the society surrounding him. He understands that land and literacy are the two basic tenets on which the future of the Emancipated slaves rests. His efforts to mobilize the bank loan for purchasing a part of the land at Carwell plantation is one of the most important achievement aimed towards the self reliance of the emancipated slaves.

The second achievement of Jackson is that he persuades James Allenby a former slave, who is educated to teach the emancipated slaves at Carwell plantation and finally sends his son Jeff to become a medical doctor.

This article concludes that Howard Fast has represented two protagonists who were common in their spirit to achieve independence but face various difficulties due to the difference in the time periods of the two revolutions The American Revolution and The American Civil War.

**Works Cited**

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed New York: Alfred A Knopf INC, 1980 Print.

Fast, Howard. *Freedom Road*. New York: Duell Sloan and Pierce, 1944 Print.

Mc.Donald, Andrew. *Howard Fast A Critical Companion: Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers*. London: Greenwood Press, 1996. Print

**Bibliography**

Fast, Howard. *Citizen Tom Paine*. New York: Duell Sloan and Pierce, 1943 Print.

---