

**Volume 19**

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**America's Revolution (23) – The Roots  
of American Exceptionalism – I**

**Lead: In the 1700s the United States broke from England. No colony in history had done that before. This series examines America's Revolution.**

***Intro: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts***

**Content: Since the 1700s, particularly during the revolutionary era, visitors to the British colonies of North America and later to the United States have remarked upon the high level of confidence expressed by the inhabitants in their unique**

**accomplishments and their anticipated rich and prosperous future. Over the decades this has been often been described as a sense of American exceptionalism, the idea that America was a special place with an exceptional destiny. Some observers admire this quality. Others are offended by its seemingly arrogance. Yet, those who notice this phenomenon often express curiosity about the roots of such distinctive audacity.**

**First of all, Americans believed that, against all odds, they had established a magnificent outpost of European civilization in a virgin wilderness. They felt they had created a brilliant commercial society with little or no direct help from the**

**outside, though candid Americans would have to admit that by the middle of the 1700s the armies and navy of the Crown had, at great expense, protected the Colonies and made possible vast expansion west into the continent and a rich and escalating colonial trade. In reality, however, for all its clear accomplishments, the settlement of North America was, of course, an invasion and within four centuries Anglo-Americans had supplanted native inhabitants and drove them and their culture to near extinction. And there can be no doubt that this opulent White society was built in part on the backs of an imported African slave class. Despite this, Americans were and are still are convinced that something very special**

**and unique happened on these shores.  
Next time: the theological roots of  
American exceptionalism.**

**At the University of Richmond's  
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Studies, I'm Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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