

Patrick Henry's Battle Cry for Liberty

Patrick Henry (1736-1799) was a Founding Father of the United States, a gifted orator, and a major figure in the American Revolution. He was a leader of the colonial opposition to British policies, and he is best known for his declaration, "give me liberty or give me death," during a speech to the Virginia Convention on March 23, 1775, which became a war cry for the revolution.

At the convention, Patrick Henry offered amendments to raise a militia independent of royal authority in terms that explicitly recognized that war with the British Empire was inevitable, sparking the opposition of convention moderates. Henry defended his amendments and purportedly concluded with his famous words. As he concluded, Henry plunged an ivory paper knife towards his chest in imitation of the Roman patriot Cato the Younger.

Henry also served as a member of the First Continental Congress and as the first governor of Virginia. During the War for Independence, he led the Virginia militia against the British after they seized gunpowder in Williamsburg.

Henry was also an early opponent of the U.S. Constitution, along with other Anti-Federalists. He believed that the Constitution threatened states' rights and individual rights, and that it didn't fully support popular rule. His opposition helped convince Federalists to support a bill of rights, which paved the way for the Constitution's adoption in 1788.

Source: Kukla, Jon (2017). *Patrick Henry: Champion of Liberty*. New York: Simon & Schuster.



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