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## **One Life: Thomas Paine, the Radical Founding Father**

### **Exhibition**

“One Life: Thomas Paine, the Radical Founding Father”

Aug. 7 through Nov. 29

### **Description**

This “One Life” exhibition will be located in a single gallery devoted to Thomas Paine (1737–1809). Two hundred years ago, on June 8, 1809, Paine, scorned by his old associates and fallen from popularity, died in poverty. However, 33 years earlier, Paine’s pamphlet, “Common Sense,” had inspired Americans to declare independence. His exhortation, “These are the times that try men’s souls,” invigorated General George Washington’s dispirited troops in December 1776. This exhibition tells the tumultuous life story of Paine through paintings, engravings, documents and caricatures and includes the Portrait Gallery’s recently acquired portrait of Paine by the French artist Laurent Dabos. Other images illustrate how prominent caricaturists of the period depicted Paine, while copies of his most important publications, the inexpensive pamphlets that were passed hand to hand, demonstrate how the documents influenced American culture at the time. These items are on loan from the American Antiquarian Society, the American Philosophical Society and the Library of Congress.

The story in the exhibition begins when Paine arrived in Philadelphia in 1774; continues through his years in England, where his anti-monarchy diatribe, the “Rights of Man,” brought charges of seditious libel; and continues to revolutionary France, where he barely escaped the guillotine and penned “The Age of Reason,” a bold attack on organized religion. His story ends in New York with a painting by John Wesley Jarvis depicting a defiant-looking Paine. Even though 2009 marks the 200th year since his death, Paine’s writings continue to influence American culture and politics. His words were evoked by Ronald Reagan as he accepted the Republican presidential nomination in 1980 and by Barack Obama in his 2009 inaugural address.

### **Sponsor**

The Guenther and Siewchin Yong Sommer Endowment Fund presents focused exhibitions on the life of an individual represented in the National Portrait Gallery.

### **Curator**

Margaret Christman, historian

### **National Portrait Gallery**

The National Portrait Gallery is a part of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture at Eighth and F streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. Smithsonian information: (202) 633-1000; TTY (202) 633-5285. Web site: [npg.si.edu](http://npg.si.edu); [reynoldscenter.org](http://reynoldscenter.org).

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