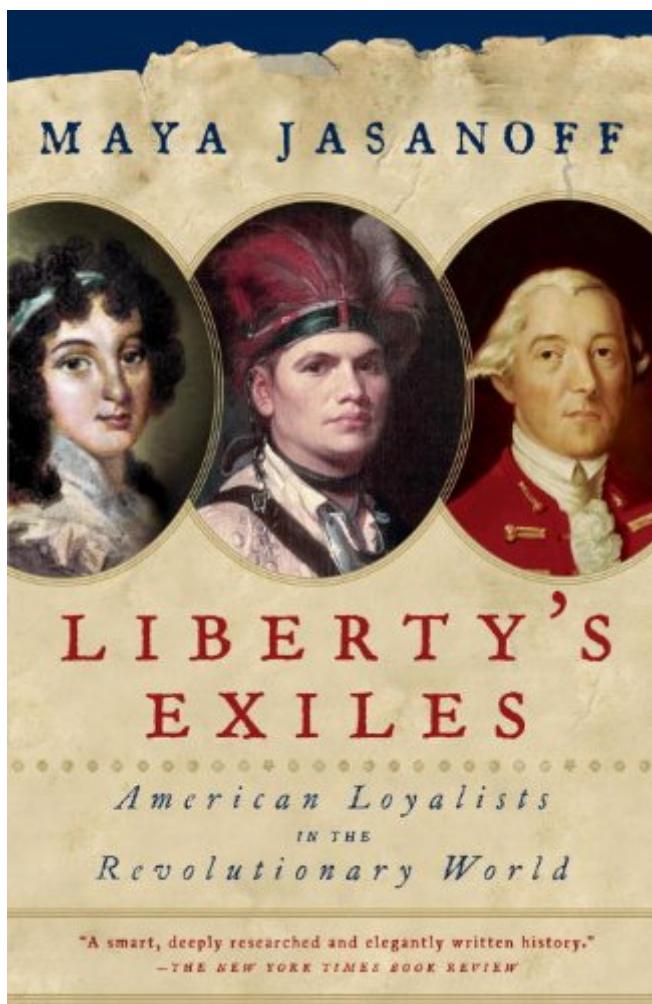


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Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists In The Revolutionary World



Synopsis

On November 25, 1783, the last British troops pulled out of New York City, bringing the American Revolution to an end. Patriots celebrated their departure and the confirmation of U.S. independence. But for tens of thousands of American loyalists, the British evacuation spelled worry, not jubilation. What would happen to them in the new United States? Would they and their families be safe? Facing grave doubts about their futures, some sixty thousand loyalists—“one in forty members of the American population”—decided to leave their homes and become refugees elsewhere in the British Empire. They sailed for Britain, for Canada, for Jamaica, and for the Bahamas; some ventured as far as Sierra Leone and India. Wherever they went, the voyage out of America was a fresh beginning, and it carried them into a dynamic if uncertain new world. A groundbreaking history of the revolutionary era, *Liberty’s Exiles* tells the story of this remarkable global diaspora. Through painstaking archival research and vivid storytelling, award-winning historian Maya Jasanoff re-creates the journeys of ordinary individuals whose lives were overturned by extraordinary events. She tells of refugees like Elizabeth Johnston, a young mother from Georgia, who spent nearly thirty years as a migrant, searching for a home in Britain, Jamaica, and Canada. And of David George, a black preacher born into slavery, who found freedom and faith in the British Empire, and eventually led his followers to seek a new Jerusalem in Sierra Leone. Mohawk leader Joseph Brant resettled his people under British protection in Ontario, while the adventurer William Augustus Bowles tried to shape a loyalist Creek state in Florida. For all these people and more, it was the British Empire—not the United States—that held the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. • Yet as they dispersed across the empire, the loyalists also carried things from their former homes, revealing an enduring American influence on the wider British world. Ambitious, original, and personality-filled, *Liberty’s Exiles* is at once an intimate narrative history and a provocative new analysis—a book that explores an unknown dimension of America’s founding to illuminate the meanings of liberty itself. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Well-researched and accessible work for anyone looking to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the aftermath of the American Revolution. The author correctly points out that it was in fact the first American Civil War and while the vast majority of former loyalists and ' neutrals' made their peace with and within the new Republic, others could not. The reasons seem as varied as the causes of the war itself; some rose to be outspoken Loyalist leaders, while others could not bear the break with the Mother country, even several who'd served in the first Continental Congress. Then there were those who found themselves in irreconcilable circumstances, such as runaway slaves or accused of questionable conduct as combatants. The author meticulously charts the unexpected peregrinations of the exiles and the unintended reforming influence they exerted on the post-war British Empire. It also highlights the extraordinary efforts at reconciliation, championed by patriots John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, whose efforts facilitated the return of many exiles back to their former abodes. The author writes in an easy and fluid style and when able, elegantly evokes the places referenced and mood of the time. Learned a lot from her effort; highly recommended.

I was only a casual student of American History. I took the college bound classes in High School, I read history for pleasure. I went through my "Civil War Phase" like a lot of Americans when Ken Burns' documentary came out. But there is so much more out there that most of us miss. This book, about the losing side in the American Revolution, is full of rich stories and insight into an event that

you might think you know and understand. And it gives clear insight into the gaps between the Revolution's enlightenment ideals and the realities of the common mobs on both sides. It was a much messier affair than most of us were taught. I'd like to give just one example of the kind of connection this book helped me to make. I was familiar with the Jacobite Rebellion in England (Bonny Prince Charlie). I had never thought about the fact that there were colonists in America who gone there after choosing the wrong side in that conflict who then faced making a similar choice between the crown and the colonies here. Many of these families lost everything twice. If nothing else, this book will give a new perspective on the American Revolution and the shape of "The Atlantic World."

Professor Jasanoff contends that what we have long believed about the American Loyalists (Tories) is wrong. They were not, by and large, ultraconservative members of the upper classes but represented a cross section of American society, and they shared many of the political ideas of the Patriots. When 75,000 of them left the United States after the Revolution, they took those ideas with them, and as they helped build the Second (post-1783) British Empire around the world, they infused it with liberal political ideas and concern for human rights. Although this argument is more persuasive for some parts of the empire than others, it is valuable in helping readers understand how the American Revolution's influence spread.

Jasanoff explains that her work is "the first global history of the loyalist diaspora" connected with the American Revolution (8). The book is made up of three parts, each containing a few chapters. Part I gives the reader a glimpse of how the Revolution was experienced by loyalists. Part II tells some of the stories of loyalists who fled to Britain and also north to what is now the eastern provinces of Canada. Instead of east and north, Part III goes east and south, where some loyalist refugees made new homes in the Bahamas and Jamaica, and in Sierra Leone along the west coast of Africa. The author relates all of these migrations to what she playfully calls "the spirit of 1783" (as opposed to "the spirit of 1776"). With that phrase she refers to the revolution within the British Empire that began at the end of the American Revolution. She emphasizes that although the Revolution is most always told as a story about the origins of the United States, there was another major part: that historic episode led to tremendous shifts in the wide-ranging British Empire. Jasanoff explains that the spirit of 1783 included three significant components: (a) British loyalists were both "agents and advocates of imperial growth." (b) They provoked and helped to clarify a sense of what both responsibility and entitlement in the Empire should entail. (c) At the same time, while the Empire

was developing a strong centralized government, loyalist refugees seemed a bit like their former neighbors, American patriots, in that they preferred a looser tie to the metropole than did typical British subjects. The loyalists were, after all, Americans among other things. This book features several maps (some very helpful, others more decorative), a few nice color plates, a "Cast of Characters" as the beginning, and a useful "Appendix: Measuring the Exodus" at the end, which provides specific information about the various destinations of the loyalists, and how many people immigrated to each place. Overall, this book is both an important contribution to the historiography of the American Revolution and a pleasurable read. The author deserves special credit for going out of her way to produce the kind of book that will engage and hold the attention of non-specialists. This is a masterful piece of work that deserves five stars.

The story of the people that lost and they have to endured is collected here in a collection of stories from loyalists, if you ever thought that everyone was in favor of independence you should take closer look with this book.

This is the sad tale of the Loyalists following the American Revolution which most histroy books ignore. Truly these 80,000 exiled souls were people without a country and all but discarded by England. It also describes the cultural problem with the Loyalist's slaves and their exportation experiment to Sierra Leone. A very revealing and somewhat disburbing tome.

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