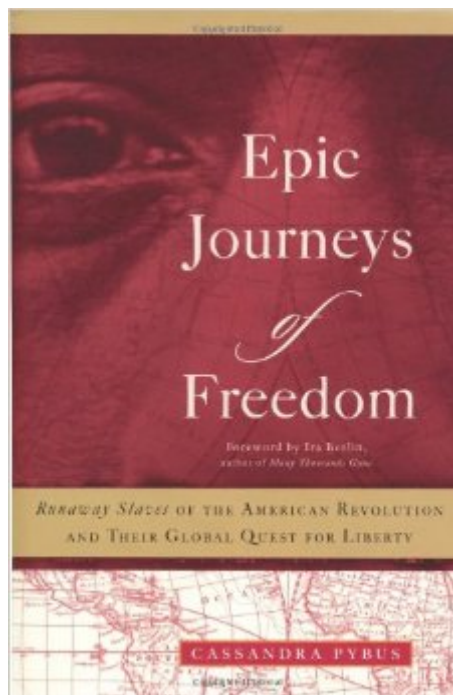


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# Epic Journeys Of Freedom: Runaway Slaves Of The American Revolution And Their Global Quest For Liberty



## Synopsis

During the American Revolution, thousands of slaves fled from their masters to find freedom with the British. Having emancipated themselves--and with rhetoric about the inalienable rights of free men ringing in their ears--these men and women struggled tenaciously to make liberty a reality in their lives. This alternative narrative includes the stories of dozens of individuals--including Harry, one of George Washington's slaves--who left America and forged difficult new lives in far-flung corners of the British Empire. Written in the best tradition of history from the bottom up, this pathbreaking work will alter the way we think about the American Revolution.

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## Customer Reviews

During the Revolutionary War, thousands of black slaves served with, and sought refuge from, the British forces in hope of attaining freedom—among them escapees from the plantations of George Washington and Patrick Henry. Australian historian Pybus follows the path some of these former slaves took to London and then "into two bizarre colonial experiments that began in 1787: the Province of Freedom in Sierra Leone on the west coast of Africa, and the penal settlement of Botany Bay on the east coast of Australia." Readers familiar with the American perspective (the escape North, the Liberian settlement) will experience a kaleidoscopic shift through the lens of British history. Pybus's prose is weighted by her "diligent excavation in vast Revolutionary-era archival materials, both American and British." But the ships' logs, muster lists and parish records as well as the newspapers, memoirs and journals she's ploughed through in her successful attempt "to

recover the lives of individuals" constitute a significant contribution to contemporary studies of the Black Atlantic. Dauntingly full of minutiae, Pybus's text is made more accessible to the ordinary reader through a biographical appendix that provides brief sketches of the "significant black refugees." (Feb.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In the midst of the American Revolution when the nation's powerful were considering the fate of the fledgling U.S., scores of those who were their slaves were also taking action to guarantee their freedom. The choice they made to side with the British set many former slaves on an eventual diaspora to Britain, Canada, Australia, and West Africa. Historian Pybus traces the paths of several former slaves, including those of George Washington, as they fled America for freedom, and she profiles famous and lesser-known figures who fought for freedom for enslaved blacks during the American Revolution. Pybus also offers a rare look at how the former slaves were received in London and how they fared in the two colonies set aside by the British for them in Sierra Leone, Africa, and Botany Bay, Australia. Along with detailing the personal challenges facing these former slaves and showing how they managed, while enslaved, to forge ideals of individual freedom, Pybus demonstrates that the Civil War and the civil rights movement have roots in the American Revolution. Vanessa Bush Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I was looking for links to an ancestor of mine who came to Australia via joining British troops in America, then going with them to U.K and finally deported on 1st fleet. Found many references in this book and have filled a big gap in family history.

The first three "official" reviews of this book fail to convey the sheer original, revealing, even emotional nature of this book. Many Americans now accept that their patriotic Revolutionary ancestors--including the Founding Fathers--owned slaves. Some Americans are aware that many of these slaves fled to the British controlled areas and cities under the promise of gaining freedom. A few Americans may then know of what happened to these former slaves--how many were take off to Nova Scotia with thousands of white Loyalists. What Cassandra Pybus reveals in this book opens all this up into dimensions undreamed of by all but perhaps a literal handful of historians. And in fact, what she presents is more like a nightmare than a dream. In an impeccably researched and footnoted narrative, she first investigates those three relatively "knowns" that I referred to above,

providing details that will astound most of us. And when she goes onto present the story of what happened to most of these former slaves as they moved on not only to Nova Scotia and London but then on to Sierra Leone and Australia--well, it is history as revelation. Although Pybus stays rooted in the strictest procedures of the historian, the end effect is to feel you are reading a novel. But a novel describing events of such unmitigated misery, of human suffering, of human cruelty, that no novelist would dare invent these happenings. I defy any reader to put the book down saying (a) "Oh, I had suspected all this might have happened" and (b) "In any case I can't see getting especially worked up over it." The end result is a book that both charges far more human beings than we have imagined with being cruel to African-Americans and at the same time informs us of how many of these same African-Americans endured these cruelties and ultimately prevailed. In a word, I found it spellbinding!

The book was a little confusing at first but never the less did its job in telling a bunch of great stories. I am sure that many did not know of these experiences during that time period. I glad my professor made us read it.

I am simply humbled and stunned at how mind-changing this book is. *Epic Journeys of Freedom* recounts the tribulations of Runaway Slaves during the American War of Independence. It opens the door to a whole movement of slaves who jumped at the chance at collaborating with the British "loyalists" in exchange for their freedom - and out of pure hatred at their American slave-holding revolutionaries. The likes of George Washington and Co. are portrayed for what they are: inspired ideologues with a sinister background of slave brutality. That they could talk about the rights of man while pleasantly looking at the suffering and torturing of their slaves (Washington personally saw to the punishment in quite sadistic ways of any slave attempting to flee) shows the inherent hypocrisy of the times. The journeys of these runaway slaves, nonetheless, was but a straight one. They were used and exploited in their quest for a self-made free life, and would end up shipped to the furthest corners of the Earth - to Nova Scotia in Canada, to Australia, to Sierra Leone. The experiences they all endured are touching, moving, gripping. I simply could not put the book down, and I must confess that my eyes were watering quite often.

While most American schoolchildren in the U.S. are taught of the American Revolution as a glorious struggle of backwoods colonials fighting for their freedom and independence against the world's most powerful empire, few, if any, are taught of the great tragedy experienced by

African-Americans, many of them former slaves, who fought with or sided with the British in the hopes that they would secure their individual freedoms. I was one of those many schoolchildren inculcated in the myth of the Revolution, but I have since expanded my knowledge of the Revolution beyond the history texts. Despite this, I was not aware of the globe-circling stories of former slaves of the American Revolution as carefully documented and researched by Cassandra Pybus in "Epic Journeys of Freedom". But now that I am, I hope these stories become more widely known as examples of not only the failure of the American Revolution to live up to its ideals, but more important, as examples of the unquenchable human desire for freedom and the extent to which brave men and women will go to find it. I cannot do justice to any of the individual stories in "Epic Journeys of Freedom" in this or any review, and much of the immediacy and drama of the stories come from the first-hand sources of the era that Pybus has collected and orchestrated into compelling narratives. By retelling the history of individual lives set within the context of the American Revolution and its aftermath, Pybus reduces a mythic, seminal event in America's founding to a personal level. The eyes through which we see the Revolution, however, belong not to the victors, but to the disenfranchised and dehumanized; America's victory meant their enslavement, so they fled the land of liberty to seek their own freedom across distant borders and oceans. Some may ask why bring up more stories of America's past injustices when we have come so far in addressing them. We read these stories and remember their lives because they remind us why men and women have risked all and died for their freedom. They remind us of both our worse and better natures, and offer hope for a more just and free world.

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