



Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World

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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.

Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World Details

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Maya Jasanoff**

From Reader Review Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World for online ebook

Larry says

The American fight for independence from Britain will never look the same. Nor should it. This very interesting, extremely detailed history of the Loyalists who didn't support American independence demonstrates that the real picture of the American Revolution and its consequences is somewhat removed from the rosy, almost propagandistic view that Americans are taught in schools.

Many people opposed US independence, for personal, family, business, and ideological reasons. What's more, it turns out that the British government was prepared to give in to most of the demands from the American colonists, loosening the bonds and liberalizing economic ties, and granting much greater autonomy, short of independence. Tens of thousands of colonists were prepared to accept this rather than risk the mayhem of rebellion. Well, we know what happened. What we aren't usually taught is what happened to those "traitors" to the revolution.

Jasanoff packs an incredible amount of research into the fates of these people. Over 60,000 fled the new country. The author traces them as they headed in droves to the present-day Canadian Maritime Provinces, the Bahamas, Jamaica and elsewhere.

It's the elsewhere which is the most interesting aspect of the book. Several thousand black people left the newly-founded United States to find genuine liberty. These were a mix of free blacks, emancipated slaves, and runaways. Most ended up in Nova Scotia, where they were promised land and full rights in their own all-black settlements. But when things didn't turn out as promised, a substantial number were recruited to help found a new settlement called Freetown in Sierra Leone, on the west African coast. By many measures, this was the most successful of all the loyalist diasporas.

On a more sinister note, the author estimates that around 15,000 slaves were taken abroad against their will by their loyalist masters, to colonies where slavery still existed, like Jamaica.

My only problem with the book is actually one of its strong points. The author quotes genuine source material verbatim in just about every paragraph, which makes the prose leap and jerk from contemporary English to 18th century English and back again. While this keeps voices from the past alive, it also makes it at times a tough read.

Nevertheless, it's a unique and intriguing topic which I recommend to anyone interested in American history.

Mikey B. says

This is a book about those who remained loyal to Britain during the American Revolution of 1776. With all the euphoria and idealism associated with the War of Independence the impact of this group on history is often overlooked.

My main purpose of reading this book was to learn how these refugees from the newly formed United States, known as Loyalists (as opposed to Patriots who were for Independence), impacted Canada. There were up to 50,000 Loyalists who came to Canada; given the era the exact number cannot be determined. These refugees from the original 13 states sought protection in Canada and elsewhere. As the author points out the American

Revolution was also a Civil War with two sides (and many who remained neutral). The losing Loyalist side consisted of all classes of people – rich and poor, freed Blacks, Black slaves (with their owners), and Indians. If they had property it was confiscated. In the case of the Mohawk Indians their land was seized and destroyed – and then eventually used by newly arrived settlers. The Mohawks tribes, under their leader Joseph Brant, migrated from Upper New York State to Ontario and settled in what is now Brantford.

Even though the U.S. declared Independence in 1776 the war was finally ended in 1783 when thousands of Loyalists left New York City by British ships – many for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In fact New Brunswick was newly formed to accommodate these refugees.

This book tells their story and is very well written. It is not at all dry, as tends to be the case for books of a bygone era.

The British Empire played both sides of the slavery issue – freeing slaves who would fight for them – as well as appealing to slave owners to join their side. Many freed Blacks fled to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick where some were kept as slaves. Others were suppose to be free – but did not have the same rights as white Loyalists who were granted more land and better housing (key to surviving the harsh winters). Many of these Blacks boarded British ships with an offer to settle in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

So the Loyalist migration, in many cases, involved moving repeatedly to many different parts of the world – some ended up in Australia and India. The author brings up the migrations to the Bahamas and Jamaica, as well as returning to England

The author also discusses how the Loyalists were not that different in attitude from Patriot Americans. They demanded representation, less taxation, and compensation from England for the land and property they lost. They could be rabble rousers who did not take well to authoritarianism.

The author considers the time period as well. The French Revolution had repercussions on both the British Empire and the U.S. The loss of the U.S. colonies was not the demise of the British Empire; in fact it kept expanding to India and Australia. And the U.S. also started its own Empire building – seizing land from Indians in the West.

This book deals very well with how the American Revolution changed the landscape and culture outside the U.S.

Louise says

The "other side" of the American Revolution's story is almost never mentioned in the US. As a reader of history, I was aware of the exodus from NYC and as a native of Western NY, I knew about land grants in Canada to loyalists; however, I had never heard of the "Spirit of 1783", or considered the rights and liberties that might be available through the British model at the time, nor knew that the burning for the US capitol in the War of 1812 was in response to US looting and the burning Upper Canada's parliament. This is the very short list of facts and sentiments that were new to me.

Maya Jasanoff begins by describing the plight of the Loyalists during the Revolution. US literature covers the treatment of settlers, POWs and patriots at the hands of the British, but this was my first encounter with what would be considered today as war crimes committed by the US patriots. Jasanoff also writes how families were passionately divided, including the famous rift in the Benjamin Franklin family. Through these descriptions, you see the trauma of the Loyalists before their exodus ordeal even began.

Jasanoff presents England's surrender as a strategic retreat. England had more lucrative and enticing ventures than the American colonies (India, Australia and the Caribbean to name a few). England expected that when independent, the American colonies would eventually have to fight France rather than continue its military alliance against England. England expected, in the long run, the colonies would see the advantages of re-uniting with the growing Empire with which they shared a culture and language. Caught in this withdrawal were those who remained loyal to Britain.

This book, while heavily reliant on dry crusty records, is full of compelling human interest stories. The Loyalists were shown to be from all walks of life and represented in all social groups. For many Loyalists, there was no choice, they had to emigrate. Their future in the US was bleak. The threat of violence was everywhere. Many had their property confiscated.

The author tells the story through the exiles themselves such as Elizabeth Johnson (exiled back to Britain, to Jamaica and finally Nova Scotia); David George (a slave who joined the British Army for the promise of service for freedom); the Beverly Robinson Family (whose connections helped them obtain positions in the growing British Empire); the colorful saga of William Bowles (who attempted to create a British-Cherokee state); Thomas Brown (tortured by the Patriots and went to British Florida only to be exiled again as Britain ceded it to Spain); Joseph and Elizabeth Brandt (who led the Mohawk tribes to Canada); and John Clarkson, (the abolitionist who led Black Loyalists from their Nova Scotia exile to a new exile in Sierra Leone.) to name a few. There are cameos for the family of Benedict Arnold, a former slave of George Washington, the Loyalists in the Benjamin Franklin family and many others.

This is not just a recount of personal ordeals. It is a story of ideals as well. Both sides had the rhetoric of rights for all. The Loyalists felt that theirs was the more humanitarian system, the one that best guaranteed individual rights. The narrative shows that both sides easily compromised away minority rights in policies, treaties and lack of protection.

This book presents from a tremendous amount of research from an informed perspective. I highly recommend it to those interested in this period.

Karen says

All of what was said in previous comments. One particular point of interest for me was learning that so many American blacks, freed and enslaved, evacuated to Jamaica - which puts a real twist on what one thinks about the history/origins of black people in the West Indies. Also, gives pause to consider what impact or role this emigration had on what would later be the slave revolts and eventual abolition of slavery across the British Empire. Jasanoff hints, according to a fellow Goodreads reviewer Anastasia Fitzgerald-Beaumont that, "The presence of these men, the yeast of liberty, paradoxically made the condition of the island's large slave population even worse than it was before, just to ensure that the idea of freedom was contained." Much to think about there.

Lisa says

History books often make wars sound so nice and neat. There was a cause, there was a war, and then it was over. Nowhere is this tendency more evident than in many treatments of the American Revolution. Many history books entirely overlook the messy aftermath of the war, when the official fighting was over but the diplomatic wrangling dragged on for several years. I have rarely encountered any that mention the fate of the

'losing side'- the American loyalists who found themselves in a country that was no longer their own. This book examines the fate of the evacuees- those who left. They scattered to all corners of the British Empire, and found that in many cases, what they could salvage or rebuild did not equal what they lost. Interestingly, it seems that for many, their conception of what it meant to be British was far closer to the American patriots than it was to the British back 'home' in England.

Vic says

Although an avid history book reader I usually avoid histories of the War of Independence for the same reason that I avoid programmes about World War II on the History Channel..how many times can you tell this story. However I was intrigued by this account of the Loyalists. I think perhaps the author overstates the contribution the Loyalists made to the Empire. Some of the developments she attributes to Loyalist influence I suspect were really the lessons Britain learnt from the war. i.e. it had been provoked by 'too heavy a hand'influenced the governance of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. No mention of the military lessons Britain learnt. e.g. from Yorktown defeat..Never let the French get command of any stretch of sea at any time! British also impressed by the American sharpshooters and Loyalists formed the first Rifle/Sharpshooter units in the British Army. Uniformed in green rather than in red and employed as skirmishers they were the forerunners of the Light Infantry regiments.

Ed says

The years between the end of the American war in 1783 and the outbreak of Britain's war with France in 1793 were a decade plus of worldwide instability and change. Some loyalists were able to exploit this to the full while others became part of a forced migration to a "homeland" they had never known, to crowded, fever ridden-tropical islands or to cold, inhospitable seacoasts. They went to England, to Jamaica and Nova Scotia. Freed slaves created Freetown in Sierra Leone. Convicts from North America were among the first prisoners to settle Botany Bay.

The losing side in the American revolutionary war was still the world's largest and most powerful empire. So while loyalists could no longer hope to live as faithful subjects of the English monarch in the former 13 colonies, those who didn't want to return to (or encounter for the first time) England could remain British subjects in colonies on every continent of the globe. Some had been born in the colonies and wanted the comparative freedom that living across oceans or continents from the homeland would give. Others had left England to pursue religious freedom or pursued by creditors.

Maya Jasanoff's elegantly written, exhaustively researched and impeccably documented book is the story of what happened to those who remained loyal to the crown after the American Revolution. She describes how the movement of people that remained Loyalists fit in with the larger migrations including slave traffic from Africa to the West Indies and America, colonists to India and the South Seas and Protestant refugees from France and the rest of Europe conquered by Napoleon to England.

Loyalists from the south carried off over 5,000 black slaves as their property to the British West Indies but thousands of slaves were freed when the governor of Virginia offered freedom to any bondsman who crossed the lines to serve with the British. Over 20,000 slaves took the risk of death to continued forced servitude, including those owned by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, whose slogan might be amended to "Give me liberty or give me death, but allow me to keep my slaves". Guy Carleton, British

governor of New York, granted papers showing that escaped slaves were actually freed men, much to the displeasure of colonial grandees including Washington who was outraged when Carleton told him that the first former slave on a ship to Nova Scotia was a man formerly owned by Washington.

On the ground in America what is now called the Revolutionary War in the United States was a civil war and as with most civil wars the conflict was often arbitrary, bloody and extremely cruel. But also there was far more uniting than dividing the combatants--both sides used irregular tactics and deployed guerilla bands against the other, both sides co-opted Indians to fight for them and then betrayed them. At least one prominent loyalist, Isaac Low, had been a member of the First Continental Congress that appealed to the king against onerous taxation and for other relief. There were slaveholders and abolitionists among the loyalists; the same was true among the patriots.

This is a very readable and interesting book, recommended to anyone interested in the American Revolution and the Atlantic world in the latter, turbulent part of the 18th century.

Caroline says

American legends would have you believe the American Revolution was a relatively civilised affair, a unanimous uprising from the oppressed and downtrodden colonists against a tyrannical king and unrepresentative parliament. The truth, as with anything, is very different. It was more akin to a civil war; indeed, at the time it was described as such, rather than revolution, with families split asunder, neighbours turning against one another, this man a revolutionary, that man a loyalist.

This book explores the stories of those who did not 'fight for freedom', who remained loyal to King and Country and paid for it by losing everything but their lives, evacuating from America with the departing troops in fear of 'patriot' reprisals. The British government of the time offered free land grants and compensation for losses to any who chose to leave America, a fairly radical and humanitarian offer for the time, especially since it extended to those other, often-neglected participants of the Revolution, the British' Mohawk and Creek allies, and the free blacks and ex-slaves who had been offered freedom in exchange for fighting for the Crown.

The loss of the American colonies had a remarkable effect on the British Empire itself, setting it on a path of empire-building in Asia, Africa and Australia to compensate for the loss, aided in no small part by those same loyalists. They spread out in a diaspora across the British Empire, from Nova Scotia in what was then known as British North America, to Jamaica and the Bahamas, to the new black colony of Freetown in Sierra Leone, and eventually to the British Empire's newest jewel in the Crown, India. There they had a remarkable influence on the evolution of those colonies, often setting the tone for the countries we know today. They brought with them a legacy from the Revolution of protest and a desire for reform - just because they had remained loyal to the Crown did mean they did not earnestly desire and agitate for reform and for their rights as British citizens, just as had the American revolutionaries before they decided to fight for independence.

It's a fascinating story, tracing a really neglected area of history. The American Revolution was by no means unanimous; studies estimate that between a fifth and one third of all colonists at the time were loyalists, and over 60,000 fled after Yorktown and the signing of peace terms, some one fortieth of the entire population of the time. It's just a shame that it has taken so long for such a book as this to reach a mainstream, non-academic audience, to serve as an important counterpoint to all the myth that has built up around the American Revolution.

Chris says

If you're into non-traditional histories this will be your cup of tea. Absolutely fascinating and very different perspective of the Revolutionary War and the first generation afterwards. Reminded me of Bush's dictum "you are either for us or against us." The takeaway from this book is that the Revolutionary War really was our first civil war. It doesn't quite trumpet that directly but it's an easy inference. Some amazing personal stories of endurance, perseverance, and flexibility. The diaspora of the loyalists was quite unique and filled with paradox or irony. The loyalists had a reputation within some of the elites of the Empire as being complainers and rebel rousers just like their American contemporaries who had "seceded." Yet they were the ones loyal to the crown. Diversity is a strength in this narrative too: we hear not just the stories of whites but also blacks and indians. Some truly fascinating and eccentric men and women who made the best of a bad situation. Last 100 pages got a little tedious.

Jason Walker says

It struck me that growing up I thought that everyone who sided with Britain in the Revolutionary War went to Canada and somehow that made sense to me. The truth couldn't be further from that. Loyalists went anywhere they wanted in the enormous empire. This book includes collections of some very interesting and amazing stories about people that just didn't get the republican experiment.

Matthew Linton says

American Loyalism has become one of the hottest trends in Early American historical scholarship. Numerous monographs have sought to understand why certain Americans stayed loyal to the British and how that loyalty became the new foundation of the British Empire after the loss of the United States. One of the most fascinating examination of American Loyalists is Harvard historian Maya Jasanoff's *Liberty's Exiles*, which traces the Loyalist diaspora after the American Revolution and examines how they influenced and represented the reformed British Empire that would rebound from 1776 to become the world's super power. Jasanoff contrasts the stability of British subject-hood to the chaos of American citizenship as the most significant unifying factor across the spectrum of Loyalists which ranged from escaped slaves and Creek Indians to wealthy colonial officials and powerful Southern plantation owners. The strengths of this book are numerous and profound. Jasanoff does a fantastic job probing the contradictions of the new British Empire, which pushed for slavery's abolition and accommodated Loyalist former slaves who fought against the Americans while integrating Loyalist slave owners and their slaves into Caribbean colonies like Jamaica. Another strength of the book is how Jasanoff situates the Loyalists within the fabric of a changing British Empire. Loyalists come to represent the "spirit of 1783" whereby British subject-hood was expanded to include new racial groups and white British colonial subjects were granted rights to representation and self-rule unseen before 1776. Finally, Jasanoff contributes new research while effectively synthesizing a global corpus of secondary sources into a cogent, and at times thrilling, narrative of dislocation and diaspora. Her work across four continents including archives in far-flung Sierra Leone and India give historians a more complete glimpse into the interactions between colonists, natives, and the apparatus of empire as the British expanded into Africa and Asia. Also, her work on Loyalist attempts to secure reparations for property lost during the American Revolution is original and presents historians with a new set of documents through which to understand the primary concerns of the Loyalists.

My one minor complaint about Liberty's Exiles is Jasanoff's tendency to overdramatize events by lapsing into flowery language. Her descriptions of the forests of Jamaica and barrenness of the Bahamas are simply too much and distract the reader from the characters that populate those locales. I would have liked a more tight, scholarly use of language where description was used to give the reader a sense of the terrain and not a tool to heighten the drama as Loyalists struggled to find a place in the British Empire.

Overall, a tremendous read that successfully attaches itself to current trends in scholarship, while building upon it and adding new perspectives to what it meant to be a Loyalist and how Loyalists came to represent the newly constituted British Empire after 1776.

Czarny Pies says

As an undergraduate, it was explained to me that the proper course for an historian was to choose a topic of interest and then conduct research by investigating the relevant sources. In "Liberty's Exiles", Maya Jasanoff appears instead to have taken sources that interested her and attempted to find a topic for them. The result is a book strewn with errors yet possessing brilliant insight to the Zeitgeist of Revolutionary America. She ultimately succeeds in her audacious effort to demonstrate that the Loyalists fleeing the 13 Colonies were under the sway of the "Spirit of 1783" in their belief in the constitutional rights of English as much as were the Patriots who fought for independence.

For "Liberty's Exiles", Jasanoff uses private diaries and collections of letters to tell the stories of Loyalists who departed for Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Florida, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Sierra Leone. Somehow Jasanoff effectively weaves this highly anecdotal material into a single, cogent narrative. She points out that at every new destination the Loyalists requested jobs, financial assistance and land grants using the same terms of "constitutional rights" as the Patriots had prior to the Revolution in opposing new Royal taxes. It is this consistency in the political discourse that Jasanoff feels demonstrate that both Patriots and Loyalists shared a common "spirit of 1783".

Jasanoff contends that the profiles of the Loyalist and Patriotic communities were virtually identical in terms of economic and professional status. Moreover, both groups included abolitionists and slave-owners. Finally the Loyalists and Patriots believed with equal vehemence that they possessed constitutional rights as British subjects that the colonial administrators needed to respect. The difference was that when the fighting started, the Loyalist chose to fight in defense of the authority of the king.

I for one am not convinced. I still hold the traditional view that the Patriots were led by the large Southern planters and the dominant merchants in the Northeast. Similarly, there is solid evidence to showing that the Loyalists who fled were overwhelmingly Anglicans. Nonetheless, Jasanoff's fundamental thesis that both Loyalists and Patriots believed they possessed rights that the Royal Government needed to respect stands up fairly well.

The faux-pas in the book that caused me the most amusement was the caption accompanying the photo of the Anglican chapel built by the Mohawk loyalists in Brantford, Ontario indicating that the chapel was in Quebec some 650 kilometres to the east of Brantford. "Ce n'est qu'un détail," as we say in Quebec. Jasanoff is correct in her basic point that the Mohawks took the side of the British during the American War of Independence and had to flee to a territory that is now part of Canada.

As a French-speaker I was struck by the fact that Jasanoff does not include any Canadian books in the French language in her bibliography. In particular, I think it would have been appropriate for to have consulted: Nicolas Landry et Nicole Lang, "Histoire de l'Acadie", Sillery, Septentrion, 2001. The single largest group of Loyalists (roughly 14,000) went to what is now New Brunswick which at the time had a population of less

than 10,000 of whom the vast majority were French-speaking Acadians. However, while Jasanoff's understanding of how the Acadians felt about being swamped by the influx of English-speakers is meager, it is good enough given that her focus is on the relations between the Loyalists and the British officials responsible for their resettlement. Jasanoff rightly observes that after the expulsion of 10,000 Acadians between 1755 and 1763, those that remained were highly intimidated.

Jasanoff's chapter on Jamaica has similar problems to her chapter on Atlantic Canada (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI). She gives a garbled version of the Maroon War waged by free blacks living in the mountains Jamaica against the British. Nonetheless, her conclusion that the Jamaican white community was very nervous at the time of the arrival of the Loyalists from the thirteen colonies appears highly reasonable.

In her chapter on the Bahamas, Jasanoff gives a vivid account of the argument between the Loyalist refugees and the colonial officials over their constitutional rights blithely unaware that Britain did not at that time have a constitution at the time of the American War of Independence and does not to this day.

Simply put, Jasanoff displays more verve than rigour in "*Liberty's Exiles*". Despite my many quibbles, her conclusions stand up remarkably well.

Patrick Sprunger says

Most of the history dedicated to the American Revolution devotes a great deal of space to the speculative definition of the revolutionary generation. Less space is given to defining the loyalists. For the most part, loyalists are described passively as the vague inverse of the patriots* - people Maya Jasanoff calls "republicans" (with a small "r").** In *Liberty's Exiles*, the author proffers a much more affirmative definition of American loyalists as basically conservative British subjects who, for various reasons, preferred the security of the status quo to the insecurity of economic and political experimentation.

The point that struck me most is how similar the 18th century definitions of freedom are to their 21st century counterparts. One side defined freedom as a state of liberation from any government interference. The other calculated equality and security heavily into the concept. The difference is that in the 18th century those who favored equality and security were the conservatives (whereas today they would be the progressives) and those who favored liberty were the liberals (today they would be the conservatives - a neat reversal in polarity).

According to the author, loyalists fell into one of two basic categories: (A) White middle class subjects doing well under the British economic system or government bureaucracy and (B) non-white minorities who felt British law provided more protection than any nascent American system. Both categories deliver a negative referendum on the state of American society - which is probably why the loyalist cause is not deeply explored in more patriotic histories.

North American colonists had a higher per capita income than their fellow subjects living in the British isles.*** Those who ran a simple risk analysis understood that their cost of living would rise with American independence.**** As if that were not enough, the threat of runaway inflation soured business interests against the dollar. Then there was the imbalance of military and political power among the American colonies and European superpowers. If the prospect for going republican versus staying British were underwritten, the best rates would go to those who stayed loyal. It isn't hard to see why certain people would find the revolutionary cause counter to their personal interests, all ideology aside.

The reasoning of native Americans and Africans is much less complex. In their risk analysis, both groups

overwhelmingly perceived the greater benefit under British alliance/protection. The British were already on record as defending native American territorial rights - the restriction on westward expansion was the ultimate catalyst for the tea party, and thus a contributing factor to the war itself - while the colonists were relentless in their demand for Indian land. It's true that most African slaves escaped to British liberators for promises of freedom rather than political ideology (emancipation was an executive war power and not a constitutional concept). But it's also true that free blacks overwhelmingly favored the British as protectors of liberty. Again, the facts return a negative referendum on the integrity of American republicanism. Thomas Jefferson accused his British rulers of infidel crimes against humanity by introducing the institution of slavery to America,**** but it was Americans who totally *owned* it. By 1775, the original importers of human chattel slaves were perceived as less brutal than the generation who currently managed the institution.

Liberty's Exiles is not an anti-American propaganda piece. Nor does it propose that the loyalists' expectations under the British system proved true. In fact, the bulk of the book laments retracted promises and lack of political will to protect the loyal subjects of the realm. But this doesn't invalidate the motives of the loyalists either. The fact is that life in the 18th century was fucking *hard*. The idea of a politically fair deal had not fully been developed. Neither the American nor British models delivered the body politic to any promised lands. There were legions of disenchanting on both sides. Jasanoff's thesis is that 18th century North Americans made decisions according to their own sets of motives - which, it turns out, is not that different than our own in that the ultimate division among us is the way we define "freedom."

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*In Wayne Bodle's *The Valley Forge Winter: Civilians And Soldiers In War*, for example, Pennsylvania loyalists are not so much *loyal* to British colonial policy as *unmotivated* by the rousing language of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson.

**I've never liked the word "patriot," both for its ambiguity and propensity for expropriation by special interest groups (see: Tea Party Patriots). "Revolutionary" is much more precise. Even "rebel" - negative connotations and all - is an acceptable label, since the American colonists were in active rebellion against Great Britain.

***citation

****There was no reason to believe that Britain would continue to back the American currency, protect American trade, and provide physical security after a forceful, contemptuous schism. Each of these institutions - and more - would have to be replaced, with all costs up front, and rebuilt from the ground up. The cost of empire under the British system distributed the cost across a large pool of subjects. Fewer newly-minted American citizens would be available to shoulder the cost of a radical start up. Thus, the burden per capita was expected to be greater after independence than as British subjects. This proved true immediately.

******(From Jefferson's original, rejected, draft of the Declaration of Independence): "[King George III] has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another."*

Dave says

There are two sides to every story. This book tells the side of the American Revolution that doesn't get told very often in the U.S. It's the tale of those American colonists who would rather have worked things out with the crown rather than seceding and going to war. Many suffered violence at the hands of the patriots even before the war began. Many lost everything and dispersed to other parts of the British empire: Nova Scotia, Bahamas, Jamaica, Great Britain, Sierra Leone, India. And before you think that those who fled to the Caribbean were much more fortunate than those who fled north, remember that these were the days before yellow fever and malaria had been conquered. The death toll was staggering.

In addition to the white British subjects, Jasanoff covers the blacks who escaped to the British side for the promise of freedom from slavery - a promise not very well kept for many. She also includes the Mohawks and Creek Indians who felt their future was brighter with the British than with the Americans. After all, one of the reasons for the revolution was the fact that the British wouldn't allow American settlers free rein to take Indian land and settle the west.

Most of us have probably heard some of the story, but the big picture is fascinating.

Anastasia Fitzgerald-Beaumont says

The American War of Independence conjures up so many heroic images and so many myths, anything from Paul Revere's Ride to the winter at Valley Forge; from the gallant Minute Men to the ferocious 'Hessians', the mercenary army of a 'tyrant' king.

Have you ever considered what happened to the losers, those who fought on the 'wrong side'? I'm not thinking here of those dreaded Hessians! No, the people I have in mind were the colonists who remained loyal to the crown, loosely grouped by the Patriots as 'Tories'.

Their story is told in *Liberty's Exiles: the Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire* by Maja Jasanoff. The book contains some intriguing snippets of information on the social and demographic composition of those who supported the crown in the struggle. They were not all conservative by any means, not all the upper echelons of colonial society.

There were the slaves, some 20,000 of them, who agreed to fight for the British in return for freedom. These included some two dozen men who had belonged to Thomas Jefferson, the leading author of the Declaration of Independence, and one Henry Washington, once the property of...well; I don't think I really need to tell you, do I?

Imagine the scramble at the end of the war in Indochina in the 1970s, as those who had sided with the Americans in Vietnam and Cambodia tried to get out by whatever means possible. Imagine a similar scramble in 1783 with the loyalist cause lost. Uncertain of their future in the new United States, some 60,000 people made for the borders, some to Canada, some to the Bahamas, some to Britain, some to the West Indies, some even going as far as India and Australia. The oddest of all is those who sought refuge in Sierra Leone in Africa, there setting up a Utopian community in one of the most unpromising environments on earth.

There were also the Indians, the native allies of the British. Here special mention should be made of Thayendanegea, also known as Colonel Joseph Brant, chief of the Mohawks, who had fought for the crown both in the Seven Years War (the French and Indian War) and the War of Independence. He came to London, creating a sensation at a costume ball by appearing in full Mohawk dress, his face covered in scarlet war paint. Doubtless seeing an Indian for the first time in his life, an Ottoman diplomat, probably oiled with drink, got it into his head that Brant's painted face was really a mask. He took him by the nose and made efforts to pull it off, whereupon the mortified Mohawk took out his tomahawk and swung at the head of the offender. Exit Turk pursued by an Indian!

Although some black Loyalists also ended up in London, where they were reduced to beggary, far more took refuge in Jamaica, not at all welcome by a slave-owning society. The presence of these men, the yeast of liberty, paradoxically made the condition of the island's large slave population even worse than it was before, just to ensure that the idea of freedom was contained.

Jasanoff gives some idea of what conditions were like by drawing on the diary of one Thomas Thistlewood, a plantation overseer. Runaways had their heads cut off and stuck on poles as a warning to the others. Those guilty of minor offences had their cheeks sliced and their ears cut off. Of one slave caught eating sugar cane Thistlewood notes "I had him flogged and pickled, and then made Hector shit in his mouth."

Some of the impoverished blacks who ended up in London were aided by an organisation called the Committee for the Black Poor, who mounted what must count as the first 'back to Africa' movement in history. Ships were chartered to carry some two hundred people to Sierra Leone, where they landed and set up home in 1787 on land bought from the local Temme tribe, anticipating later developments in Liberia by some decades.

The whole thing, the story of the white and black diaspora from the United States across the globe, to every corner of what was soon to emerge as the second British Empire, is quite fascinating. It was the first great refugee crisis in British history, the story of whole groups of people as well as unique individuals. It's the story of Elizabeth Johnston, a young mother from Georgia who spent thirty years looking for a new home, a pilgrimage that took her from Britain, to Jamaica and to Canada. It's the story of any number of others like her, white, black or red.

There is another important aspect to this story. The émigrés played an important part in the building of the second British Empire, that's certainly true; but they did something even more important – they helped determine its evolution and its character, at least in the Anglo-Saxon parts. Though they had remained loyal during the American Revolution, they carried into exile many of the democratic ideals of the Thirteen Colonies. Having enjoyed a high degree of liberty in their old homes they did not readily adapt to distant and paternalist rule. The British authorities themselves, learning from the American experience, and anxious to avoid further uprisings, were later to hand out responsible government to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

What happened to Joseph Brant, you may wonder? Well, after failing to catch and scalp his Turk he managed to set up home with his people under British protection in Ontario, a particular group of 'Tories' who were to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that would almost certainly have been denied them in the land of the free.

This is an important book on a neglected subject. Exhaustively researched, it is virtually guaranteed to be the standard text in this area for some time to come. I only have one minor quibble over the author's unfortunate tendency to slip at points into a slightly infelicitous use of jargon, which is why I am giving it four stars rather than five.

