



# Liberty's Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire

*Maya Jasanoff*

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## **Liberty's Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire** Maya Jasanoff

'More than just a work of first-class scholarship, Liberty's Exile's is a deeply moving masterpiece that fulfil's the historian's most challenging ambition: to revivify past experience.' Niall Fergusson On a November day in 1783, the last British troops pulled out of New York City, bringing British rule in the United States to an end. It was the greatest British imperial defeat in generations. None felt the loss more immediately than the hundreds of thousands of Americans who had remained loyal to Britain. What would happen to them in the new United States? Would they and their families be safe? Facing grave doubts, some sixty thousand loyalists decided to leave their homes and become refugees, to rebuild their shattered lives elsewhere in the British Empire. They sailed for Britain, for Canada, for Jamaica and 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. 'Liberty's Exiles' tells, for the first time, the story of this extraordinary global diaspora - the most wide-ranging refugee crisis Britain had ever faced. Through painstaking archival research and vivid story-telling, award-winning historian Maya Jasanoff recreates the astonishing journeys of ordinary individuals whose lives were overturned by extraordinary events. She tells of loyalists like Elizabeth Johnston, a young mother from Georgia, who spent nearly thirty years as a migrant, questing for a home in Britain, Jamaica, and Canada. David George, a black preacher born into slavery, found freedom and faith in the British Empire, and eventually led his followers to seek a new Jerusalem in Sierra Leone. Mohawk Indian leader Joseph Brant resettled his people under British protection in Ontario; while adventurer William Augustus Bowles tried to shape a loyal Cree Indian state in Florida. For all these figures and more it was the British Empire -not the United States - that held out the promise of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'. An exhilarating, personality-filled book, 'Liberty's Exiles' is history at its finest.

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