



Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons

By Sylviane A. Diouf



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Over more than two centuries men, women, and children escaped from slavery to make the Southern wilderness their home. They hid in the mountains of Virginia and the low swamps of South Carolina; they stayed in the neighborhood or paddled their way to secluded places; they buried themselves underground or built comfortable settlements. Known as maroons, they lived on their own or set up communities in swamps or other areas where they were not likely to be discovered.

Although well-known, feared, celebrated or demonized at the time, the maroons whose stories are the subject of this book have been forgotten, overlooked by academic research that has focused on the Caribbean and Latin America. Who the American maroons were, what led them to choose this way of life over alternatives, what forms of marronage they created, what their individual and collective lives were like, how they organized themselves to survive, and how their particular story fits into the larger narrative of slave resistance are questions that this book seeks to answer. To survive, the American maroons reinvented themselves, defied slave society, enforced their own definition of freedom and dared create their own alternative to what the country had delineated as being black men and women's proper place. Audacious, self-confident, autonomous, sometimes self-sufficient, always self-governing; their very existence was a repudiation of the basic tenets of slavery.



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Editorial Review

Review

"A curator at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture reconstructs the lives of blacks who sought freedom and self-determination on the margins of an American slave society. Whether newly arrived from Africa or already acculturated to the demands of servitude, whether they fled to the hinterlands to live in secluded swamps or in the mountains, or to the borderlands, close to farms, plantations or towns, the maroons ran away intending to stay away, seeking autonomy even at the price of unspeakable danger. Most were captured and suffered barbaric whippings or brandings, some died of exposure or hunger, some were killed by the militia, the slave patrols and dogs—a memorable passage here details the various repellents that slaves devised to throw bloodhounds off the track—set after them. But many survived for weeks, months and even years, offering hope to their enslaved companions and a powerful rebuke to the white power structure. From the colonial era to the 1860s, Diouf (*Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and The Story of the Last Africans Brought to America*, 2007, etc.) explains how the maroons lived, the skills and protective strategies they developed, how they sheltered themselves and traded in the underground economy, how they hunted, gathered, and even raised crops, how they stole necessary clothing, tools and livestock, and how they depended on the complicity of their enslaved companions for survival. She tells the story of a few large communities, most notably that of the Great Dismal Swamp, and briefly examines the marronage subgroups of bandits and insurrectionists, but the triumph here is the author's portrait of the day-to-day precariousness of maroon lives, the courage and resourcefulness required for survival, and the terrible price they paid for trying to recover their freedom. A neglected chapter of the American slave experience brought sensitively and vividly to life."-*Kirkus*

"With impressive research and vivid prose, Diouf directs our attention to maroons within the United States. From the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia to the frontier regions of Louisiana, she shows, fugitive slaves managed to survive without fleeing to the North. An important addition to our understanding of slave society and black resistance."-Eric Foner,author of *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*

"Diouf persuasively captures the quiet heroism of North American maroons. Less dramatic and long-lived than many of the maroon communities in Suriname, Jamaica, or Brazil, those in the southern United States were nonetheless ever present. Diouf demonstrates how much freedom mattered to the enslaved and how, within the limited possibilities open to them, those that set off into the inhospitable swamps and forests managed to forge a new life beyond the authority of whitefolks."-Richard Price,author of *Maroon Societies*

"Diouf has scoured archives across the United States, examining accounts of fugitives throughout the Slave South to uncover the hidden history of American maroons, and produced a highly readable, original study that deserves a broad scholarly and popular audience."-*Journal of the Civil War Era*

"In writing that is deeply informative, with vivid anecdotes when available, including horrors of punishment enacted when maroons were captured, this book is recommended to those wishing to pursue the study of American slavery beyond more general texts."-Sonnet Ireland,*Library Journal*

"In contrast to the study of slavery elsewhere, six decades of research in the United States has systematically bypassed the issue of marronage. Sylviane Diouf's exhaustive research has not only brought the subject to center stage, it offers a framework for recasting the study of runaway slaves throughout the Americas. This is one of those rare books that is at once of scholarly significance and will engage a wide readership."-David

Eltis, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of History, Emory University

"[T]he stories are riveting. Readers will become familiar with colorful characters like Captain Cudjoe of Jamaica or the man nicknamed 'Forest' for his skill at hiding, and they will learn surprising facts about maroons' participation in trade and defense, along with horrific details of punishments . . . [I]t's a notable document for its treatment of the subject." -*Publishers Weekly*

"Sylviane A. Diouf has made an enormous contribution to our understanding of enslaved people's lives with her study of the maroons in the American South. *Slavery's Exiles* dispels the myth that maroon communities only existed in places such as the Caribbean and Brazil, firmly placing the maroons of mainland North America within larger discussions of slave resistance." -*The North Carolina Historical Review*

"*Slavery's Exiles* covers an interesting and important topic that few people are aware existed. It is filled with fascinating individuals and remarkable acts of bravery. Hopefully *Slavery's Exiles* will spur more interest in the subject of American maroons." -*Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*

"This extensively and thoroughly researched study brings to light a little-known aspect of slavery in the United States . . . a fascinating read. Diouf has done a brilliant job of illuminating a complicated, multifaceted, important, yet little-known piece of black American history." -*Annette Madden, The Baobab Tree*

About the Author

Sylviane A. Diouf is an award-winning historian of the African Diaspora. She is the author of *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* and *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*—named *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book in 1999—both with NYU Press. Her book *Dreams of Africa in Alabama: The Slave Ship Clotilda and the Story of the Last Africans Brought to America* received the 2007 Wesley-Logan Prize of the American Historical Association, the 2009 Sulzby Award of the Alabama Historical Association and was a finalist for the 2008 Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. She is the editor of *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies* and the co-editor of *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*. A recipient of the Rosa Parks Award, the Dr. Betty Shabazz Achievement Award, and the Pen and Brush Achievement Award, Diouf is a Curator at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Harold Graham:

This *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* book is simply not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is definitely information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper you actually read a lot of information you will get. That *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* without we recognize teach the one who looking at it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't possibly be worry *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* can bring when you are and not make your case space or bookshelves' turn into full because you can have it within your lovely laptop even phone. This *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* having great arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not truly feel uninterested in reading.

Andre Rosier:

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Patricia Glover:

Reading a publication tends to be a new life style within this era of globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information that will give you benefit in your life. Having books everyone in this world could share their idea. Ebooks can also inspire a lot of people. A great deal of authors can inspire their readers with their stories as well as their experiences. Not only the storylines that are shared in the ebooks, but also they write about advantages about something that you need, for example, how to get a good score on TOEFL, or how to teach your kids, there are many kinds of books that exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also do some study before they write their books. One of them is this Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons.

Larry Gregg:

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