

Black Americans in the Revolutionary Era: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Series in History & Culture)

By Woody Holton

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In this fresh look at liberty and freedom in the Revolutionary era from the perspective of black Americans, Woody Holton recounts the experiences of slaves who seized freedom by joining the British as well as those — slave and free — who served in Patriot military forces. Holton's introduction examines the conditions of black American life on the eve of colonial independence and the ways in which Revolutionary rhetoric about liberty provided African Americans with the language and inspiration for advancing their cause. Despite the rhetoric, however, most black Americans remained enslaved after the Revolution. The introduction outlines ways African Americans influenced the course of the Revolution and continued to be affected by its aftermath. Amplifying these themes are nearly forty documents — including personal narratives, petitions, letters, poems, advertisements, pension applications, and images — that testify to the diverse goals and actions of African Americans during the Revolutionary era. Document headnotes and annotations, a chronology, questions for consideration, a selected bibliography, and index offer additional pedagogical support.

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Editorial Review

Review

'This is a superb collection. Its splendid introduction will help students see the key issues of the era. The documents introduce students to patterns of slave life before and after the Revolution and take them through the tumultuous years of the Revolution, from the first white protests to its uneven conclusion for slaves and free African Americans.' - Allan Kulikoff, University of Georgia, USA

About the Author

Woody Holton (Ph.D., Duke University) is an associate professor at the University of Richmond in Virginia, where he teaches classes on African Americans, Native America, early American women, the origins of the Constitution, Abigail Adams, and the era of the American Revolution. He is especially interested in studying the impact of ordinary citizens on grand political events. He is the author of *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (1999), which won the Organization of American Historians Merle Curti Social History Award, and *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (2007), which was a finalist for the National Book Award.

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