CHAPTER SEVEN

Slaves

Escaping to the British (1775)

Introduction
Boston King's excerpted memoir shows how the guerrilla war in the South translated into a transatlantic journey for some black loyalists. Slave to a Mr. Richard Waring of South Carolina, King fled his master to enter British lines in the hope of freedom. Like many other southern slaves, King found refuge in British-held New York City. He established life as a free man, got married, and obtained employment as a boatman. In the summer of 1783, he, along with three thousand other free blacks, embarked for Nova Scotia. In 1792, disillusioned by the treatment from white loyalists and the British government, King joined an expedition of free blacks who hoped for a better life in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Curiously, his name, Boston King, may have been a name he gave himself; an amalgamation of patriot city and British loyalty. His spiritual visions and connection to Christianity shaped his life and his memoir.

It is by no means an agreeable task to write an account of my life, yet my gratitude to Almighty God, who delivered me from the bond of the oppressor, and established me free, impels me to acknowledge his goodness. And the impenetrability of many respectable friends, whom I highly esteem, have induced me to set down, as they occurred to my memory, a few of the most striking incidents I have met with in my pilgrimage. I am well aware of my inability
for such an undertaking, having only a slight acquaintance with the language in which I write, and being obliged to snatch a few hours, now and then, from pursuits, which to me, perhaps are more profitable. However, such as it is, I present it to the Friends of Religion and Humanity, hoping that will be of some use to mankind.

... My master being apprehensive that Charles-Town was in danger on account of the war, removed into the country, about 35 miles off. Here we built a large house for Mr. Waters, during which time the English took Charles-Town. Having obtained leave one day to see my parents, who had lived about 12 miles off, and it being late before I could go, I was obliged to borrow one of Mr. Waters' horses, but a servant of my master's, took the horse from me to go a little journey, and stayed two or three days longer than he ought. This involved me in the greatest perplexity, and I expected the severest punishment, because the gentleman to whom the horse belonged was a very bad man, and knew not how to use mercy. To escape his cruelty, I determined to go Charles-Town, and throw myself into the hands of the English. They received me readily, and I began to feel the happiness of liberty, of which I knew nothing before, although I was much grieved at first, to be obliged to leave my friends, and reside among strangers. In this situation I was seized with the small-pox, and suffered great hardships; for all the Blacks afflicted with that disease, were ordered to be carried a mile from the town, lest the soldiers should be infected, and disabled from marching. This was a grievous circumstance to me and many others. We lay sometimes a whole day without any thing to eat or drink; but Providence sent a man, who belonged to the York volunteers whom I was acquainted with, to my relief. He brought me such things as I stood in need of; and by the blessing of the Lord I began to recover....

By this time, the English left the place, but as I was unable to match with the army, I expected to be taken by the enemy. However when they came, and understood that we were ill of the small-pox, they precipitately left us for fear of the infection. Two days after, the wagons were sent to convey us to the English Army, and we were put into a little cottage, (being 25 in number) about a quarter of a mile from the Hospital.

... Soon after I went to Charles-Town, and entered on board a man of war. As we were going to Chesapeake-bay, we were at the taking of a rich prize. We stayed in the bay two days, and then sailed for New-York, where I went on board. Here I endeavored to follow my trade, but for want of work was obliged to relinquish it, and enter into service. But the wages were so low that I was not able to keep myself in clothes, so that I was under the necessity of leaving my master and going to another. I stayed with him four months, but he never paid me, and I was obliged to leave him also, and work about the town until I was married. A year after I was taken very ill, but the Lord raised me up again in about five weeks. I then went out in a pilot-boat. We were at sea eight days, and had only provisions for five, so that we were in danger of starving. On the

9th day we were taken by an American whale-boat. I went on board them with a cheerful countenance, and asked for bread and water, and made very free with them. They carried me to Brunswick, and sold me well. Notwithstanding which, my mind was sorely distressed at the thought of being again reduced to slavery, and separated from my wife and family; and at the same time it was exceeding difficult to escape from my bondage, because the river at Annapolis was only a mile over, and likewise another to cross at Starnes island. I called to remembrance the many great deliverances the Lord had wrought for me, and brought him to serve me this once, and I would serve him all the days of my life. While my mind was thus exercised, I went into the jail to see a bid whom I was acquainted with at New-York. He had been taken prisoner, and attempted to make his escape, but was caught 12 miles off. They tied him to the tail of a horse, and in this manner brought him back to Brunswick. When I saw him, his feet were fastened in the stocks, and at night both his hands. This was a terrifying sight to me, as I expected to meet with the same kind of treatment, if taken in the act of attempting to regain my liberty. I was thankful that I was not confined in a jail, and my mind turned me as well as I could expect; and indeed the slaves about Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New-York, have as good victuals as many of the English; for they have meat once a day, and milk for breakfast and supper; and what is better than all, many of the masters send their slaves to school at night, that they may learn to read the Scriptures. This is a privilege indeed....

**Competition among the King's Subjects (1779)**

**Introduction**

Thousands of refugees swarmed into the British headquarters of New York City. The population of the city increased from five thousand in 1776 to more than thirty-five thousand by 1783. This unusual petition from Judas Moore to the British commander in chief shows the rivalry between white and black loyalist refugees.

Judas Moore [here] a seller kitchen from Mr. Baxier and I pay him 8 pounds a year and the gentlemen is willing for me to stay in the seller while I do pay my rent and none the same John Harrisone wants to get the sellers from me and he offered to pay 15 pounds to the landlord to get me out. But the landlord is willing for me to stay in the place while I do pay and Sir Grizzwald I was at the Mayor's office and he told me that it was a pity that all we black folks that came from VA was not sent home to our master's which is if I do think it very hard that I can't have satisfaction and sir it is very hard for me to stay and be abused so by this man and his journeymen and sir if you please to give me some satisfaction I shall be ever obliged to you....