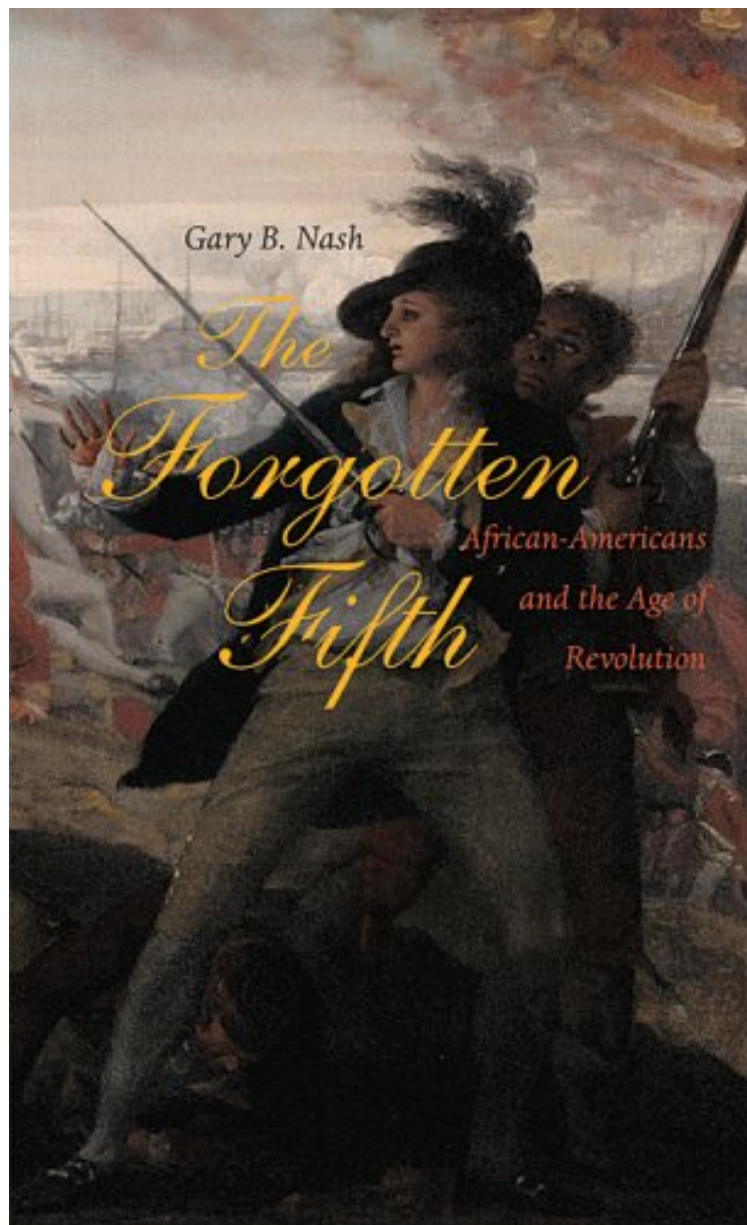


(Mobile library) The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures)

## The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures)

Gary B. Nash

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#806486 in Books Harvard University Press 2006-02-28 2006-03-30Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.36 x .97 x 4.76l, .65 #File Name: 0674021932235 pages | File size: 62.Mb

Gary B. Nash : The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The

## Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution (The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. African Americans in Early American History By The Bookworm

The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution is a book, written by Gary B. Nash, which brings to light the history of one-fifth of the early American population: African Americans, who have been for the most part marginalized in American history. Now with powerful words and historical data about African Americans, Nash explores what the world was like for these people during the time of the American Revolutionary War. The book is divided into three chapters, each chapter maintaining somewhat different theses than the other. However, the author's general thesis for the book is mentioned in the preface: "My goal in writing history has not been to destabilize history but rather to bring attention to those forgotten Americans who have inarguably been part of constructing our society and our nation." Evidently, Nash wanted his readers to see a part of American history that has been long neglected by most American historians, and why reexamining the forgotten history of African Americans roles in the American Revolutionary War is vital for our understanding of early American history. The title of the book, The Forgotten Fifth, reflects the thesis because it's about rediscovering the forgotten fifth of the American population, the African Americans. The subtitle African Americans in the Age of Revolution, too, reflects the thesis. This is because the thesis is about African Americans and their role in the American Revolutionary War; the title and subtitle fitting perfectly well with the author's general thesis.

Nash effectively reveals to his readers what many do not know about the American Revolutionary War. First, African Americans played an important part in the war-effort due to the fact that the American Revolutionary War was a "poor man's war." The majority of the men who fought were men from the bottom of the social ladder. These were poor farmers, urban poor, landless laborers. Among them--and many Americans do not know this--were blacks and slaves. For this very reason, the first chapter in this book is titled "The Black Americans' Revolution," secondary to the fact that many blacks fought for both the British and the Americans. The American Revolution War created the perfect spark to what became known as the largest slave rebellion in American history. However, while there were many blacks fighting for the Americans, Nash brings up that there were many African Americans fighting for the British too. As the book quotes, "[T]hey secretly wished that the British army might win, for then all Negro slaves will gain their freedom,' a belief that is almost universal among the Negroes in America." Secondly, after the war, slavery could have been abolished, as argued by Nash. However, South Carolina and Georgia threatened to leave the union if slavery was abolished. However, "[b]y the late 1780s most southerners admitted privately that even the entire South could not make it on its own." Third, after Thomas Jefferson was elected, his racist ideology prevented the nation from going forward and becoming an equal society, and avoiding a future civil war. Therefore, by raising these three main points, Nash develops and elaborates his argument for his thesis.

Nash used both primary and secondary sources to support his thesis. He tended to use more secondary sources like scholarly journals. The primary sources Nash used were diaries and pamphlets produced by abolitionists. By using many sources to reinforce his statements this book allows the reader to see the important part African Americans, though many of them were slaves, played in early American history. Consequently, it isn't a surprise that this book is a great book on American slavery.

The Forgotten Fifth unquestionably does what not every book can do for the reader: it shows us a history that many have forgotten. Having read this eye-opening story has, without question, persuaded me that the author's thesis is correct. Nash's argument is to write history and not to destabilize history; he brings attention to those forgotten Americans who have inarguably been part of constructing our society and our nation (which is commendable). Overall, Nash accomplished writing a phenomenal book on American slavery that many people have forgotten.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good course material for the early national period in American history.

By Laura McLemore

I used this in my course on the Early National Period (American history). Students really responded to it well.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Unending History

By NJGreat

abbreviated history that is especially relevant in the rise of a new contemptuous racism and white supremacy epidemic in U.S. of America, since its inception.

As the United States gained independence, a full fifth of the country's population was African American. The experiences of these men and women have been largely ignored in the accounts of the colonies' glorious quest for freedom. In this compact volume, Gary B. Nash reorients our understanding of early America, and reveals the perilous choices of the founding fathers that shaped the nation's future. Nash tells of revolutionary fervor arousing a struggle for freedom that spiraled into the largest slave rebellion in American history, as blacks fled servitude to fight for the British, who promised freedom in exchange for military service. The Revolutionary Army never matched the British offer, and most histories of the period have ignored this remarkable story. The conventional wisdom says that abolition was impossible in the fragile new republic. Nash, however, argues that an unusual convergence of factors immediately after the war created a unique opportunity to dismantle slavery. The founding fathers' failure to commit to freedom led to the waning of abolitionism just as it had reached its peak. In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, as Nash demonstrates, their decision enabled the ideology of white supremacy to take root, and with it the beginnings of an irreparable national fissure. The moral failure of the Revolution was paid for in the 1860s with the lives of the 600,000

Americans killed in the Civil War. *The Forgotten Fifth* is a powerful story of the nation's multiple, and painful, paths to freedom.

From Publishers Weekly Nash's reminder that African-Americans made up a fifth of the population during the Revolutionary era exemplifies the purpose of this lively, accessible "corrective to historical amnesia," comprising three discrete chapters based on lectures he delivered at Harvard in 2004. The wide-ranging first chapter, "The Black Americans' Revolution," illustrates how the War for Independence whetted slaves' thirst for freedom. Nash chronicles slave defection to the British (for whom many more blacks fought than for the Americans) and sketches vivid portraits of individuals who sued for their freedom in the courts. The impassioned second chapter asks, "Could Slavery Have Been Abolished?" and argues the affirmative that ending slavery during the postrevolutionary period was not only possible but would have unified rather than split the nation. Nash traces broad political and economic conditions (e.g., widespread abolitionist sentiment) to support his argument, and blames the nation's leaders and founding fathers for their lack of political courage. The concluding essay explores questions of citizenship and national identity through the early 19th-century writings of two contemporary Philadelphians, the African-American businessman James Forten and Tench Coxe, a white political economist. Nash (*The Unknown American Revolution*) exhibits gracefully assertive scholarship in this brief but meaty synthesis. (Mar.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From School Library Journal Adult/High School This well-written, compact book by a master historian presents the appalling story of the denial of political and human rights for black Americans after they had fought during the Revolutionary War. More infuriating, this rejection came despite the era's grand rhetoric, all men are created equal. In three chapters, readers learn of the heroism and tenacity of black patriots, and also of blacks who fought for the British; the near success of efforts to abolish slavery following the war; and the sad story of the first decades of the 19th century, when blacks in the North and South were deprived of civil liberties. In the process, Thomas Jefferson's hypocrisy in racial matters is delineated. Readers are also shown that, going back many generations, commercial interests of many politicians have trumped ideals. Nash supplies accessible accounts of important American black leaders too often left out of textbooks, such as businessman and pamphleteer James Forten, surveyor Benjamin Banneker, poet Phillis Wheatley, and others. A must-buy. Alan Gropman, National Defense University, Washington, DC Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In this wonderfully detailed narrative, Gary Nash tells the dramatic and engaging story of African American people and the issues of race and slavery at a critical moment in American history. Marshaling compelling evidence, he illuminates the post-Revolutionary debates over slavery and abolition. Had the founders' actions matched their ideals of freedom, we might well have avoided a Civil War. An important book that offers profound insights into the foundations of the history of all Americans. (James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, co-authors of *Slavery and the Making of America*) Gary Nash is one of America's most distinguished historians and he has done as much as anyone to bring 'The Forgotten Fifth' to life. With this incisive and engaging book, he compels Americans to learn more about a remarkable generation of black founders--men and women who helped shape the meaning of liberty and justice for all as surely as their better known counterparts, Jefferson, Washington and Madison. A fine book. (Richard S. Newman, author of *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic*) Gary Nash has long inspired all those still laboring to bring a missing portion of American history to light. In *The Forgotten Fifth*, Nash sketches a complex and gripping tale of a road not taken toward true equality at the time of our nation's founding. This veteran historian has placed squarely on the table the largest missing piece in the puzzle of our extraordinary revolution. Now the soul-searching debate about what this complex story means for all Americans can begin. (Peter Wood, Duke University) Nash's reminder that African-Americans made up a fifth of the population during the Revolutionary era exemplifies the purpose of this lively, accessible 'corrective to historical amnesia,' comprising three discrete chapters based on lectures he delivered at Harvard in 2004. The wide-ranging first chapter, 'The Black Americans' Revolution,' illustrates how the War for Independence whetted slaves' thirst for freedom. Nash chronicles slave defection to the British (for whom many more blacks fought than for the Americans) and sketches vivid portraits of individuals who sued for their freedom in the courts. The impassioned second chapter asks, 'Could Slavery Have Been Abolished?' and argues the affirmative--that ending slavery during the postrevolutionary period was not only possible but would have unified rather than split the nation. Nash traces broad political and economic conditions (e.g., widespread abolitionist sentiment) to support his argument, and blames the nation's leaders and founding fathers for their lack of political courage. The concluding essay explores questions of citizenship and national identity through the early 19th-century writings of two contemporary Philadelphians, the African-American businessman James Forten and Tench Coxe, a white political economist. Nash exhibits gracefully assertive scholarship in this brief but meaty synthesis. (Publishers Weekly 2006-01-23) During the American Revolution, one in every five Americans was black. The British offered freedom in return for joining the fight against the rebels. The Continental Army did not. In a slim but well-researched narrative, historian Nash questions the idea that slavery was an issue best deferred in the early days of the Republic. (Bob Minzesheimer USA Today 2006-02-02) A book to stimulate robust debate, this one is well worth the read. (Frank Lampert American Historical 2007-04-01) This short book features three

provocative essays based on the author's 2004 Nathan Huggins Lectures at Harvard. In characteristic style, Nash challenges historical assumptions about African Americans during the revolutionary period...Well researched, engaging, and thought-provoking. (Robert Flatley Library Journal 2006-03-01) Gary Nash shows that the African slaves hardly stood by impassively as Revolution approached and that at least part of their plight when their fate was considered at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 was that so many of them had made a daring political choice--but a disastrous one as it turned out...Nash illuminates a largely overlooked chapter in black history, the flight of thousands of slaves to the side of the British during the War for Independence...Required reading for anyone who ponders the impact of slavery on our lives today. (James Srodes Washington Times 2006-06-11) Thoughtful...The modest but forceful reassessment by Nash...evoke[s] colonial and post-colonial greed as fully as the arbitrary and unforgiving boundaries on the map of contemporary Africa. No matter which side won in America, the black population lost. (Stanley Weintraub Washington Post Book World 2006-05-28) Historians have generally assumed that the postwar flurry of antislavery sentiment and action was superficial and doomed to failure. Nash boldly suggests otherwise, arguing that the movement came very close to success and failed only because of a lack of astute and effective leadership on the part of those who were in a position to make a difference, namely the Founding Fathers...Nash's argument is original and suggestive. (George M. Fredrickson New York of Books 2006-08-10) The Revolutionary generation in America did not end slavery that is a fact...Moreover, enslaved black Americans were not idle bystanders; they launched a resistance movement, which the author claims identifies them as black founding fathers. But this is not the lesson school children learn; they are taught what the slaveholding minority believed: that ending slavery meant disunion. This is the story eloquently told by Gary B. Nash in this book. Nash does not intend to destabilize history; rather, he wants to portray a more diverse picture of the United States (vii)...This skillful historian provides many examples of how African-Americans and their supporters engaged the fight for liberty to include all the people...His elegant prose makes the book accessible virtually to anyone interested in historical literature. (Stephen Middleton The Historian 2008-06-01)