



## **Runaway: How a Slave Defied America's First President (Kindle Single)**

*Bill Donahue*

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In the mid-1790s, President George Washington had well over 200 black slaves toiling for him in his home and on his sprawling Virginia plantation. Runaway introduces us to the only one of those enchained people to escape and tell her story. Ona Judge was the young personal attendant to Martha Washington. On a spring evening in 1796, she slipped out of the president's home, throwing her master and mistress into a consternation that lingered for years. Why had Ona fled, and where had she gone? Join *Harper's* and *New York Times Magazine* contributor Bill Donahue as he traces the flight of America's most intriguing fugitive slave.

Journalist Bill Donahue has written for *Wired*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Playboy*, *The Atlantic*, *Runner's World*, *The New Yorker*, and *Harper's*. In reporting stories from over 20 countries, he has searched for fallen meteorites in the Sahara Desert, biked the streets of Shanghai, snuck into Manuel Noriega's abandoned beach house in Panama, and taste-tested moonshine in the snowy Caucasus mountains of Georgia. He is the author of *The Secret World of Saints*, an e-book about the Catholic Church and its saintmaking process, and his work has been reprinted in *Best American Sports Writing*, *Best American Travel Writing*, and many other anthologies. He lives in rural New Hampshire, where he runs the Scriven Arts Colony.

Cover Design by Kerry Ellis.

## Runaway: How a Slave Defied America's First President (Kindle Single) Details

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# **From Reader Review Runaway: How a Slave Defied America's First President (Kindle Single) for online ebook**

## **Happyreader says**

While Washington was allegedly conflicted about owning slaves, his actions spoke otherwise. When his wife's favorite slave Ona Judge escapes and claims her freedom, Washington is indignant about her ingratitude of the perks of being enslaved amid the glamour of presidential life and he persistently pursues what he views as his rightful property. When a family friend spots Judge in Portsmouth, NH, Washington plots to kidnap her in violation of his own 1793 Fugitive Slave Act. He wants his prize possession back but doesn't want the bad publicity of claiming ownership over her in open court. When that plot fails, his nephew actually goes to her Portsmouth home and requests that she and her baby daughter return to enslavement in Washington's home. She politely declines – and then smartly leaves town before he returns to violently stake Washington's claim. Ona Judge was not the only one of Washington's slaves to reject his ownership. Over 40 of Washington's slaves escaped from bondage during his lifetime, including Hercules, his prize chef, proving how at odds our founding father was with the ideals of liberty and justice for all.

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## **jennifer naatz says**

### **Quick but enjoyable read.**

Quick and enjoyable read. Definitely worth my time. Interesting side of President Washington and of that time period. History is always worth my time..

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## **Michelle Brown says**

### **Interesting information but that is about all**

The information in the book could've been interesting if the writing were a little better. In some places it felt like the author sat with a thesaurus in one hand while writing trying to find the longest word possible. Really the information could've been shared in about six pages

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## **Gloria Richards says**

### **Interesting Read**

An interesting read that left me wanting to know more about the life of this woman. Overall, a good read.

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## **cassandra coakley says**

## **Interesting**

So he didn't chop down that tree. I'm shock. Interesting look at slavery. Ona as a slave had a good life with Washington but freedom although she was very poor was better

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## **Teresa Miller says**

I thought it would be more than what it was.

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## **Vickie Clyburn-johnson says**

This was a short read, but I enjoyed the details given in the book. It was interesting to read about George Washington's secret search to find the slave and the opinions that he and his wife held regarding slavery. It took very little time to read.

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## **Amy:) says**

A great historical read.

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## **Glenn says**

This was a very short book (31 pages), so I won't belabor the review. Hard to think of President Washington as as slave owner. He was in many ways an inspirational leader. But, ethically, he must have been reprehensible. It is utterly unimaginable to me how any human being can find any sufficient justification in his or her mind to own another human being. Some apologists say that back in the 18th century white people did not consider the Africans stolen from their homeland to be human beings. That is bullshit. I believe the only justification any slave owner really felt was that slaves increased their wealth, worked without being paid, gave them sex on demand, and could not refuse for fear of being beaten, killed, or worse.

Ona Staines, Martha Washington's personal house-slave took matters into her own hands and slipped out of captivity in the night, making her way up north. I will not spoil the book by detailing her exploits or how things turned out. I will say that in my opinion reading about slavery in America should be required of all citizens. We must understand where we came from to understand where we are, and how we can improve.

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## **Cynthia T Cannon says**

### **Interesting historical vignette.**

Interesting to see this narrative regarding what it was like to be an enslaved person. This woman had concerned and attentive masters, unlike many others. Very few at the time however seemed to have much

respect for black people slave or free. Awful but it did allow the black people to sometimes outshine their supposed superiors by taking advantage of being underestimated. I can see why Ona preferred being poor but free over being even a well treated slave.

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### **Sam Motes says**

Runaway is a very short read but an important read that looks at the dark side of George Washington being a man of his times deeply tied of the slave trade and not the mythic figure near godliness he is made out to be in the classroom text books of our youth. Washington spoke against slavery and may have treated his slaves in a paternal manor better than some other slave owners however he skirted the law to ensure he kept his slave rights and even though he did free his slaves upon his death he couldn't imagine his life without their labor and devotion while he lived. Ona Judge and Hercules are least two of the slaves owned by Washington that regardless to how well they may have been treated under Washington they succumbed to the drive for freedom and escaped from Washington.

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### **Cheryl Swenson says**

#### **A different view of our first president**

I wish this was a longer book. Sadly, there's not much recorded about Ona Judge, so this is a very short story. I think that most Americans have an idealistic opinion of George Washington, and Donahue gives us a picture of him that reveals how flawed he was. Yes, he was a great man, but he also tried to circumvent the law when it came to getting back a runaway slave. He treated his slaves kindly, and he thought that the sale of human beings was wrong (so he would not sell his slaves), but neither would he free them.

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### **Taylor Kleineick says**

#### **Narrative was poorly supported**

While it's an interesting account of Ona Judge, the author invested more energy in condemnation of the Washington family than in covering Ona. He was condescending to her even at points. Not really worth the read.

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### **Debbie says**

Too much speculation and inconsistency, and not enough facts about Ona Judge. The information is fascinating, though, about George Washington's attitudes towards slavery and the human beings he held in bondage. Raises a lot of questions.

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## **Laura says**

Very light, lacks much substance.

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