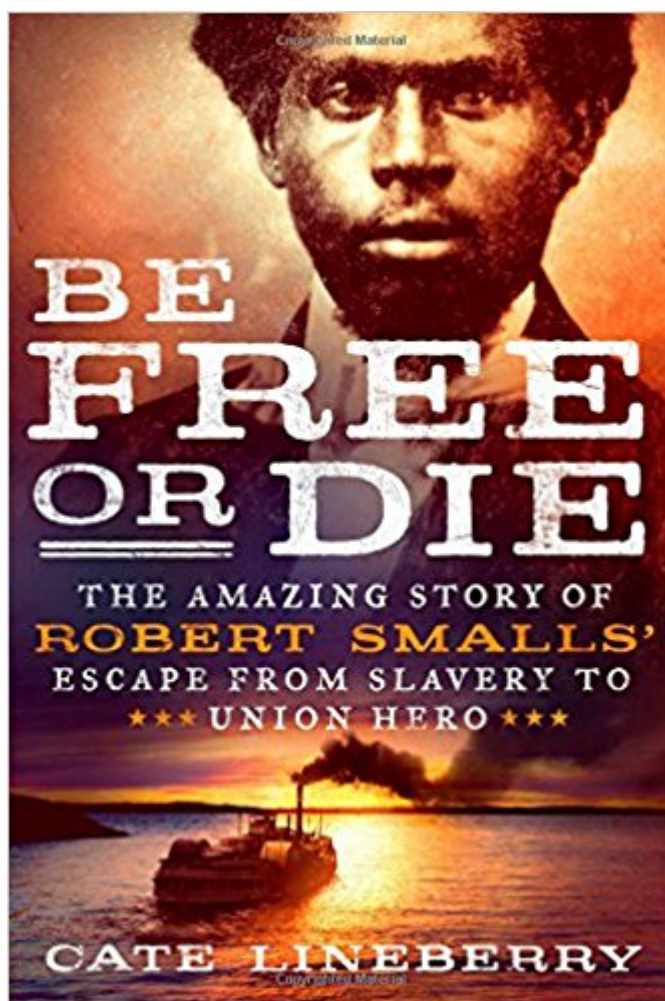


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# Be Free Or Die: The Amazing Story Of Robert Smalls' Escape From Slavery To Union Hero



## Synopsis

"A stunning tale of a little-known figure in history. Robert Smalls' astounding heroism during the Civil War helped convince Lincoln and the country that African Americans were extraordinarily capable of fighting for their freedom. Lineberry has produced a triumph in this heroic story that illuminates our country's ongoing struggles with race." —Henry Louis Gates, Jr, Professor in American History Harvard University and Executive Producer of Finding Your Roots

"Be Free or Die makes you want to stand up and cheer. Cate Lineberry has done us all a great service by telling this incredibly moving, thrilling, and important story about an American hero who deserves to be remembered, and admired."

—Candice Millard, author of Hero of the Empire

Facing death rather than enslavement a story of one man's triumphant choice and ultimate rise to national heroism

It was a mild May morning in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1862, the second year of the Civil War, when a twenty-three-year-old slave named Robert Smalls did the unthinkable and boldly seized a Confederate steamer. With his wife and two young children hidden on board, Smalls and a small crew ran a gauntlet of heavily armed fortifications in Charleston Harbor and delivered the valuable vessel and the massive guns it carried to nearby Union forces. To be unsuccessful was a death sentence for all. Smalls' courageous and ingenious act freed him and his family from slavery and immediately made him a Union hero while simultaneously challenging much of the country's view of what African Americans were willing to do to gain their freedom. After his escape, Smalls served in numerous naval campaigns off Charleston as a civilian boat pilot and eventually became the first black captain of an Army ship. In a particularly poignant moment Smalls even bought the home that he and his mother had once served in as house slaves. Be Free or Die is a compelling narrative that illuminates Robert Smalls' amazing journey from slave to Union hero and ultimately United States Congressman. This captivating tale of a valuable figure in American history gives fascinating insight into the country's first efforts to help newly freed slaves while also illustrating the many struggles and achievements of African Americans during the Civil War.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Reading Cate Lineberry's *Be Free or Die* is a little like recovering a national heirloom that was lost, stolen or buried through decades...maintains a tautly rendered perspective on the complex social dynamics of Civil War-era race relations...USA

"A neat piece of narrative history, told with exceptional brio. It flows with energy and bravado. Thanks to Lineberry for reminding us of the existence of such people as Smalls...."

"In writing *Be Free or Die*, journalist Cate Lineberry has done readers and history a good turn by chronicling the life of a man who led one of the most daring escapes from American slavery during the Civil War. *Dallas Morning News*" "An excellent read...provides fascinating insight into a little-known heroic incident of the Civil War and into race relationships in the Reconstruction South."

"An immersive, well-crafted history." *Bowling Green Daily News*" "A valuable narrative history that will benefit readers interested in African-American, Civil War, or naval history." *Library Journal*" "Lineberry ably provides context for Smalls' saga: slavery's horrors, the story of blacks in the Union fighting force...in this compelling story."

"Succinct and powerful prose...Lineberry elevates Smalls to America's pantheon of black leaders, showing him to have been as courageous and inspirational as Harriet Tubman...and Booker T. Washington." *Publishers Weekly*" "Unquestionably a remarkable story...A worthwhile Civil War biography cogently presented and ready for the big screen."

"Skillfully told and thoroughly researched."

"A stunning tale of a little-known figure in history. Robert Smalls' astounding heroism during the Civil War helped convince Lincoln and the country that African Americans were extraordinarily capable of fighting for their freedom. Lineberry has produced a triumph in this heroic story that illuminates our country's ongoing struggles with race."

Henry Louis Gates, Jr, Professor in American History Harvard University and Executive

Producer of Finding Your Roots

“When the Charleston slave Robert Smalls appropriated the Confederate steam vessel Planter and daringly piloted it out of the harbor to the Union blockade fleet in 1862, winning freedom for himself and fifteen others including his family, he became a Union hero and launched his own career as a black leader. Cate Lineberry tells this riveting and important story with great skill and verve.”

James McPherson, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Battle Cry of Freedom and Professor Emeritus of United States History at Princeton University

“Be Free or Die makes you want to stand up and cheer. Cate Lineberry has done us all a great service by telling this incredibly moving, thrilling, and important story about an American hero who deserves to be remembered, and admired.”

Candice Millard, New York Times bestselling author of Hero of the Empire: The Boer War, a Daring Escape, and the Making of Winston Churchill

“One of the great tales of heroism to come out of the Civil War now has the book it deserves. Be Free or Die brings us for the first time a complete picture of Robert Smalls, the slave who stole a Confederate ship, liberated his family and friends, and went on to be a member of Congress. Thank you, Cate Lineberry, for telling so well the extraordinary story of this extraordinary man.”

Christopher Dickey, New York Times bestselling author of Our Man in Charleston: Britain’s Secret Agent in the Civil War South

“The astonishing saga of Robert Smalls, from escaped slave to Union hero, springs to life in Cate Lineberry’s remarkable account. Beautifully researched and movingly told, Be Free or Die is a timeless story of courage, determination and triumph.”

Daniel Stashower, award-winning author of The Hour of Peril: The Secret Plot to Murder Lincoln Before the Civil War

“The story of Robert Smalls is one of the most remarkable and inspiring of the Civil War, and Cate Lineberry tells it here with great sensitivity, keen insight, and careful scholarship. Be Free or Die is a revelatory and page-turning tribute to a legitimate American hero.”

Gary Krist, award-winning author of Empire of Sin: A Story of Sex, Jazz, Murder, and the Battle for Modern New Orleans

“Robert Smalls’ daring, determined effort to free himself and his family from slavery stands as a thrilling representative of the thousands of unknown acts of self-liberation performed by slaves during the war. In Be Free or Die, Cate Lineberry brings to life the exciting story of this modest man whose dash for freedom under the guns of Charleston harbor led to service in the union navy, a successful business career, and election to the US House of Representatives.”

Jamie Malanowski, author of Commander Will Cushing: Daredevil Hero of the Civil War and lead writer of the New York Times’ award-winning

“Disunion” series

“The life story of Robert Smalls has few equals in the annals of American history. He is the archetype of the American Dream. In Be Free or Die Cate

Lineberry has brought diligent research, compelling descriptions and high drama to this all-American story. — Lawrence S. Rowland, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of South Carolina-Beaufort — “A fast-paced, well crafted work that properly and accurately portrays the incredible feats of Robert Smalls during the Civil War. His actions proved to doubters that blacks could and would serve the United States in the pursuit for victory. Robert Smalls inspired and still inspires people of all races and is truly an American hero. — Stephen R. Wise, Ph.D. Historian and author of Gate of Hell: The Campaign for Charleston 1863 and with Lawrence Rowland, Rebellion, Reconstruction and Redemption: The History of Beaufort County Volume 2, 1861-1893

CATE LINEBERRY is a journalist and the author of The Secret Rescue, a #1 Wall Street Journal e-book bestseller and a finalist for the Edgar and Anthony Awards. Lineberry was previously a staff writer and editor for National Geographic Magazine and the web editor for Smithsonian Magazine. Her work has also appeared in the New York Times. Lineberry lives in Raleigh, NC.

Cate Lineberry has done this amazing story true justice with her account of the life and escape of Robert Smalls. I first learned of this about twenty years ago and there wasn't much in modern print one could find on Smalls then. I started giving talks at Civil War Round Tables and historical societies in 2002. No other subject matter I have spoken on gets as much positive feedback than the story of Robert Smalls. Lineberry has provided a first-rate account of Robert Smalls and the escape aboard the Planter. Her research is superb. She leaves no stone unturned. As one who knows the story intimately myself I can say confidently that Lineberry's book on Smalls is the single best volume available today. It will likely never be surpassed.

A very informative story of a man who should have received way more recognition for his heroism and bravery during the Civil War. Ms. Lineberry brought to light many facts that I was never aware of and her historical investigations are well told and fascinating. This would make a great movie or documentary. I also loved reading how Mr. Smalls descendants all became successful in their lives. Education being the key to their success, and a lot of tenacity was certainly passed down in this blood line. Amazing true story and well told!

Excellent read

Any reader who isn't fascinated and inspired by this book has to be on life support. Robert Smalls' achievements alone, especially given his enslaved status, are more than enough to carry such a compelling story of courage and determination successfully. Lineberry's skillful and well-researched narration, however, brings Smalls' character, as well as all the others, to life in a dynamic and personal way. For me, a lover of Civil War history, I was stunned that I had known so little about this important and influential gentleman until now. Kudos to the talented author for bringing a previously unsung American hero to our attention. In addition, *Be Free or Die* also serves as more than an exciting and enlightening portrayal of the heights to which the human spirit can rise (especially against tremendous odds). It is also a well-timed reminder, in these current days of unrest and negativity, of the incredible sacrifices made by so many, and specifically Robert Smalls, to preserve our Union and our democracy, and to gain freedom and equality for all our citizens,

I pre-ordered Lineberry's newest book and was so excited to receive it last week. I started it immediately and could not put it down. This is an amazing story about Robert Smalls' heroic feats during the Civil War (and after) and his astounding courage and determination. Author Cate Lineberry has done a phenomenal job of bringing this hero to life in a riveting story that is well researched and beautifully written! I am so surprised that I had never heard of Robert Smalls given his impact on history. This book is a must read for those who like reading about Civil War history and American heroes...even more special that it is about an African American hero. But I think the appeal of the book extends far beyond readers who just like war history - I think it should be a must read in every middle school as the younger generation should learn about Robert Smalls when they learn about all the other American heroes that have been so important to our nation's history.

Pre-ordered this after reading the author's last book. I really enjoyed reading it and found the story inspiring as well as remarkable, for Robert Smalls to do what he did is simply incredible. He was a true hero and one that I had never heard of before reading this book. I enjoy reading about our country's history and this book sets itself apart as it is extremely well written and you can tell the author did a lot of research, trying to make the book as historically accurate as possible.

An amazing and inspirational true story, beautifully told. Robert Smalls daring tale of escape from slavery should be required reading.

Individual courage and initiative are highlighted by Cate Lineberry's *Be Free Or Die*, whose

thoughtful portrait of Robert Smalls springs significantly from source materials from the Civil War era -- newspapers, government documents, diaries -- and from current interviews with Smalls' descendants. Smalls was born a slave and made his escape in a life-or-death dash out of Charleston's Harbor on a Confederate paddle-wheel in the Civil War. The Union received Smalls and his passengers (including Smalls' family), vessel, and arms. He was then free and he fought on the Union's behalf. Lineberry's book is devoted largely to Smalls' Civil War era story. Smalls' bravery puts weight behind an observation of John Quincy Adams, who notably fought against slavery in the US House: "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." Lineberry tells that story well. Lineberry's writing belies an enthusiasm for the Civil War. She feels an attachment. In interviews she's said she has "ancestors who fought on both sides at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863." (WIS-TV, 7/6/17) She carefully balances Smalls' story with facts and concurrent events the reader needs to know just enough for context. Lineberry has focus, and threads the path of Smalls' Civil War life through what could have been too-massive a backgrounder about the era. Aside from being a good story, *Be Free Or Die* can serve another need, too. In business, leadership traits such as strategy, execution, relationship-building, and even personal brand are among qualities to enhance. Educators and corporate trainers found smart lessons from Doris Kearns Goodwin's history book, *Team of Rivals*, about Lincoln's artful management of his cabinet. I believe people in the leadership development discipline have a new resource in Lineberry's book. An aside: I have interviewed a number of CEOs and ask what they read. Many preferred history rather than business books for life and business lessons. Add this book to the list. A creative trainer could make good use of this history. Lineberry has been in writing or editing capacities with National Geographic and Smithsonian. That quality craftsmanship shows. She has said about *Be Free Or Die*: "I hope readers are inspired by Smalls' courage and determination as well as his refusal to allow others to define his path in life." Done. Readers of this book will be inspired. \*NOTE: I bought the book on my own through .com, though does not designate that in the filter.

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