



# Taking Liberty: The Story of Oney Judge, George Washington's Runaway Slave

*Ann Rinaldi*

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*When I was four and my daddy left, I cried, but I understood. He had become part of the Gone.*

Oney Judge is a slave. But on the plantation of Mount Vernon, the beautiful home of George and Martha Washington, she is not called a slave. She is referred to as a servant, and a house servant at that -- a position of influence and respect. When she rises to the position of personal servant to Martha Washington, her status among the household staff -- black or white -- is second to none. She is Lady Washington's closest confidante and for all intents and purposes, a member of the family -- or so she thinks.

Slowly, Oney's perception of her life with the Washingtons begins to crack as she realizes the truth: No matter what it's called, it's still slavery and she's still a slave.

Oney must make a choice. Does she stay where she is -- comfortable, with this family that has loved her and nourished her and *owned* her since the day she was born? Or does she take her liberty -- her life -- into her own hands, and like her father, become one of the Gone?

Told with immense power and compassion, *Taking Liberty* is the extraordinary true story of one young woman's struggle to take what is rightfully hers.

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