

**DR. KACY DOWD TILLMAN ON HER BOOK,
*STRIPPED AND SCRIPT: LOYALIST WOMEN WRITERS OF THE
AMERICAN REVOLUTION***

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TRICIA PEONE: Good afternoon. My name is Tricia Peone, and I'm the Project Director for New England's Hidden Histories here at the Congregational Library & Archives.

Welcome to today's virtual program, "Stripped and Script: Loyalist Women Writers of the American Revolution," with Dr. Kacy Dowd Tillman.

To begin, I want to acknowledge that the Congregational Library & Archives resides in what is now known as Boston, which is in the Place of the Blue Hills, the homeland of the Massachusetts people, whose relationships and connections with the land continue to this day and into the future.

For those of you joining us for the first time, the Congregational Library & Archives is an independent research library. Established in 1853, the CLA's mission is to foster a deeper understanding of the spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and civic dimensions of the Congregational story and its ongoing relevance in the 21st century.

We do this through free access to our research library of 225,000 books, pamphlets, periodicals, and manuscripts, and our digital archive with more than 100,000 images, mostly drawn from our New England's Hidden Histories project.

Throughout the year, we also offer educational programs and research fellowships for students, scholars, churches, and anyone interested in Congregationalism's influence on the American story.

Please check our website, congregationallibrary.org, to learn more about what we do and for news about upcoming events.

New England's Hidden Histories is a digital project of the Congregational Library that digitizes and provides access to early New England Congregational church records. The project comprises an online collection of manuscript Congregational records from approximately 1620-1850, including letters, sermons, diaries, relations of faith, disciplinary cases, account books, as well as lists of baptisms, marriages, memberships, and deaths.

New England's Hidden Histories works in partnership with libraries, archives, and churches to digitize these records. And so far there are over 110,000 pages of material that have been digitized and over 20,000 pages of transcribed records, all available on our website.

So please allow me to introduce today's speaker. Dr. Kacy Dowd Tillman is Director of Honors and Professor of English and Writing at the University of Tampa.

She writes about Revolutionary-era letters and diaries and 18th century sentimental fiction. Her manuscript, *Stripped and Script: Loyalist Women Writers of the American Revolution*, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press in August of 2019. Her new work concerns Black loyalist rhetoric, fake news and illness in early American sentimental fiction, and the American Revolution in the popular imagination.

Thank you for joining us today, Professor Tillman.

KACY DOWD TILLMAN: All right. So thank you very much to Tricia and Kyle for inviting me to be here today. And thanks to all of you who decided to come.

So it's always an honor when someone besides my editor shows any kind of interest in my project that I worked on for about ten years. I think the only one more excited than I was about my book finally coming out was my four-legged friend Harley Quinn, who upon its arrival in the mail, ate it. So at least Harley thought that it was food for thought.

I write about loyalists. What does that even mean?

Scholars usually define loyalists as people who could vote, fight, or legislate. There's this assumption that we can't talk about loyalist women because those two words, loyalist and women, aren't compatible under our current working definitions.

So if loyalism is defined by voting, fighting, and legislating, and historically, that's how it has been defined, then loyalist women by that definition cannot exist.

But of course, loyalist women existed. We just have to know how to talk about them when we find them.

So, Abigail Adams helped me rethink this possibility in her letter to John Adams, which many of you probably know, where she asked him, in your new code of laws, "I desire that you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them... Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could."

So, Abigail had access to John at the time that he was making policy decisions. Although when she sent him this letter, he laughed in her face at this request, which is a fact that made

me wonder, could letters be a vehicle for political engagement when women were denied access to political spaces like battlefields, or courthouses, or Congress?

If letters could go where women could not go, could they also say what women could not say?

Under coverture, women and enslaved people were considered dependents. They were almost like children, were incapable of independent political thought, it was assumed. Most people know that coverture is why women used to, and some still do, take a man's name when they married.

He was covering her legal right to exist as a separate entity from him, and that meant he was to vote on her behalf, or transact business deals for her, even serve jail time for her if she committed a murder. At least that was the law on paper.

My book concerns, then, those women who used letters to become politically visible. Essentially, I argue that women used letters and diaries as a space through which they could fashion their own political identity, and protest, and sometimes regain, that which was taken from them.

The women that I write about weren't just writing letters and keeping diaries for themselves or really close family members. They're actually sending their manuscripts to Congress, state legislators, war generals, other good loyalists, people in power in order to voice the violent abuse that was done to them, resist oppressive political structures, and to name the rape and sexual assault that their society insisted that they keep quiet.

So in the multiple archives that I visited all over the US, what I noticed was that loyalist women discursively returned time and again to the image of being stripped of all kinds of things: of words, clothes, possessions, families, friends, land rights, and privacy.

Because rebels publicly outed a loyalist by stripping the so-called traitors naked and putting their bodies on display for the town to see. So it was metaphorical, but it was also literal.

There's a pretty famous letter of a loyalist woman that was quite advanced in her pregnancy, stripped and tossed out into the snow. And people paraded by her to mark her for her family's loyalty.

But if asked, many of the writers in my book would not self-identify as loyalists at all. Rebels assumed they were loyalists. They punished and abused them for their loyalism because they were married to loyalists, or related to other loyalists by blood, or because they refused to sign loyalty oaths or non-importation agreements, or because they insisted on pacifism or neutrality.

So before I get started with the stories that I wanted to tell you today and most of today is stories, you need to be aware that there were active and passive loyalists.

So there were those who actively opposed independence from the Crown. And there were those who assumed, who were assumed to hold such opinions, and they were treated accordingly. And it could be a sliding scale.

Most of the women that I write about wanted to occupy a grey space or a neutral space. They really just wanted to be left alone. So their story is not the story of "the loyalists," because no such story exists. It's the story of the ideological gray spaces that we often overlook in our nation's founding narrative.

Another thing to keep in mind about terminology is, as I talk, I'm not going to be calling the patriots, "patriots," because they're not referred to as patriots in these letters or diaries. They are referred to as rebels because that's what they are considered to be.

We've since called them patriots. That was a linguistic shift that was necessary to get people behind the war because no one really wants to be considered treasonous. But loyalists didn't think of them as loyal to the father, which is what a patriot is, because they thought of them as disloyal to the King. So I used the terms that they used because that's most historically accurate.

And then I don't use the term Tory because it was pejorative in a lot of these diaries.

No one in my project really has more of a mastery over this kind of rhetoric and this image of what it means to be a female loyalist than Grace Growden Galloway.

So when I went to visit the local historical society near her house, I had quite the experience, which you can read about in the book. But here's an excerpt from it about the time that I met Grace Galloway's ghost.

So I traveled over 1000 miles to reach the mansion of loyalist Grace Growden Galloway in Bensalem Township, Pennsylvania. One research grant, two car rides, one airplane, one train, and multiple sleepless nights later, I stand at the front door of the Growden mansion with my tour guide, Sally, a volunteer for the Bensalem Historical Society.

There's only one problem The tenant who lives in the mansion will not let us in. She has, in fact, already slammed the door in our faces, reluctantly inching it back open only when Sally reminds her that allowing guests inside is part of her lease agreement.

"Go away," the occupant shouts. "This house is full of dead raccoons, and it reeks. My husband is naked and he refuses to put on pants. You cannot come in."

I begin to speak, but the tenant ignores me, and she focuses on my guide and points a finger in her face.

"The last time you were here, you brought those paranormal investigators. We can't have that. They stir up all the ghosts." And she punctuates this last accusation by slamming the door a second time.

I turned to Sally for an explanation, but she refused to meet my eyes.

"I may have evicted her last night," she mumbles by way of explanation, which explains both the U-Haul and the tenant's terrible mood. Great timing, I think.

And I put both palms to the door. I lose any shred of dignity I may have once had and begin pleading for the woman to let me in.

"Do you know about Grace Galloway?" I shout through the wood. "She's fascinating, and I want to tell her story."

Nothing happens for several beats. I turn to leave, but I pause when the door hinge creaks. The tenant stands there smiling, and this time she is looking at me.

She crosses her arms, leans on the doorframe, and kind of sizes me up.

I surreptitiously wedge my foot between the door and the frame, aware this might be the last opportunity I have to convince her to let me see the place where Galloway wrote her letters and journals.

I can barely make out the hallway behind her, which is long, dark, and raccoon free.

"Oh, yeah, I know her," the tenant says, putting her shoulders up to stand up taller. "I was Galloway in our school play."

And with that, she kicks my foot away and slams the door shut one final time. She does not open it again. And I never get inside.

So I'm gonna tell you a little bit of why I think these people might be related.

All right. So Galloway was a wealthy woman from Bensalem Township, as I said, Pennsylvania. She had the misfortune of being married to Joseph Galloway. So because of Joseph's wealth and political status, the rebel militia thought it would be expedient to choose to hang him first.

So the mob barreled down on his house, only to find that the Galloways had fled moments before they arrived. They shot up the house. They were so angry to have missed the Galloways, which you can still see the bullet holes if you visit.

Joseph took his daughter Betsy with him to England, where they would be safe. But he left his wife, Grace, to guard their considerable estate, which was over 10,000 acres.

We might think that's kind of strange that he would leave his wife to guard their estate, but he assumed that the confiscation committee would leave her alone because she was apolitical.

And she assumed he was right, but for a completely different reason.

She'd inherited this property from her father, who'd recently died, and she forced Joseph to sign an anti-nuptial agreement that kept her name on the property. The only problem was that Joseph never did it. He changed all of that very expensive property into his name. So he betrayed her.

And the punishment for loyalism was property confiscation. So that's bad.

To add insult to injury, the confiscation committee quickly realized that Joseph would never be coming back home. So to get to him, they stripped Grace. Galloway kept a journal for her family, then insisted that in the beginning she refused to give in to the rebels.

She remained staunchly loyal, if not to the loyalist cause, then at least her family.

When the confiscation committee came to her house to take it from her, they found that she had boarded all of the windows shut. And she blocked all of the doors. When they pried the door open, they were shocked to find Galloway standing in the dark.

I always imagine her here gripping the sides of the doorway, bracing herself against forced removal.

Here's how she framed that scene. She said. I said, pray take notice. I do not leave my house of my own according or by my own inclination, but by force. And nothing but force should have made me give up possession.

The confiscation committee said, sure, you can have your house back, but you publicly have to declare your loyalty to the rebels.

Grace is a rich woman who is forced with homelessness, so she considers it definitely for a second at least.

But ultimately she decides, I would turn rebel rather than hold such a wretch to be my king. There is no justice in the English court more than the Americans. I hate the King and all his court, and I renounce the nations. She said, I don't like any of you.

What Galloway is doing with her journal was creating her own political identity, apart from Joseph's, and that is the disaffected. So she's using her journal to cut ties with both the British Empire and the Americans, opting in the end to abandon her family's loyalty.

Galloway goes on to start a letter writing campaign where she used her letters to symbolically divorce her husband and cut ties with his loyalism, and gain access to lawmakers who had the right to restore her house to her.

But she didn't have an easy time of that goal, partly because people didn't like her. And part of the reason they didn't like her, is she stood up at parties and she gave speeches like this.

She said, "I got my spirits at command and laughed at the whole Wig party. I told them I was the happiest woman in town, for I had been stripped and turned out of doors yet I was still the same. I am Joseph Galloway's wife and Lawrence Growden's daughter, and I shall be Grace Growden Galloway to the last."

I just love her sass.

So what's remarkable about this is that she maps out her three identities, two as a covered woman, a "femme covert," covered by her husband and father, and one where she names herself her own woman, stripped and turned out of doors, but with her spirit intact.

So Galloway ends up reclusive. So forced to pick a side, rebel, loyalist, she ultimately chooses isolation.

She continued to use her letters to insist her political ideology should be treated separately from her husband's. But she lost everything. She never regained her home in her lifetime, and she never saw her daughter or her husband again.

Margaret Morris had quite a bit in common with Grace Galloway, but her story takes place in New Jersey, and I went to her house as I did Galloway's. And here's what happened there.

I'd like to tell you that I traveled thousands of miles to Margaret Hill Morris' home in Burlington, New Jersey, to learn more about war in the Delaware Valley. But really, I'm here to learn about a secret attic in her house.

I'd been studying Morris' diary for years, and one part dogged me. Morris, a Quaker, broke her vow to adhere to pacifism by hiding a loyalist spy in the attic. Technically, it was William

Franklin's attic. He'd built the Green Bank House overlooking the Delaware River several years before the American Revolution.

And Franklin's blueprints apparently included the construction of a mysterious hiding place accessible only by prying off the back of a trick bookshelf.

The room boasted a large sandbox, which, for some reason, is the detail that has always and still continues to disturb me the most. And some kind of alarm. A person standing at the door downstairs triggered the bell with a secret switch to let the occupant in the auger hole know to hide.

I have so many questions. Why did Franklin build a secret room? Where's the room now? Why did a pacifist decide to hide the loyalist inside of it?

What I find when I arrive in Burlington leaves me with more questions than answers. Green Bank's been replaced with a one story brick building that now serves as a meeting place for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. A large American flag whips in the breeze coming off the Delaware. A stone marker outside the home commemorates the founding of Burlington in 1677. An eagle statue as tall as a horse perches on the other side of the road. Its head is swiveled toward the place where Morris' house once stood.

Despite rebels and loyalists alike docking their boats just a few feet away, and despite Morris' journal giving her readers a front row seat of the war, despite Morris being a prominent healer doctor, there's no sign that Margaret Morris ever lived here.

It's simultaneously fitting and insulting that a VFW has replaced her memory. She too survived a war. She, too, served her country: mending soldiers, tending armies, healing sickness. She, like the veterans who gather here, lived with trauma.

Morris would neither recognize this flag nor like it. If she were alive today, she'd be a 21st century Rip Van Winkle who'd awakened to find all the signs in town swapped from pro-crown to pro-colonies.

The VFW Hall is locked as tightly as Galloway's house, and twice as dark. As I was at Trevoze, I am once again denied entry.

Elsewhere in the book, I promise I do get into some of the houses. And I visit all the houses.

Margaret Morris, if she had her way, would have been a neutralist. She once wrote, "there's a great deal of talk in the neighborhood about a neutral island, and I wish with great earnestness it may be allowed."

But because she was a Quaker, she wasn't really allowed such a space. Many, of course not all, Quakers were pacifists. So they were against the war because they believed that war violated the inner light of God.

But in the “with us or against us mentality,” rebels didn't really know what to do with Quakers, so they targeted them to make them pick a side.

In 1776, Morris looked out her window one morning, and this would have been her view, to see a big group of troops pulling into the harbor. And she could see that they were rebels. Rumor had had it that Americans were doing a house to house sweep, looking for people who hid Tories.

So Morris' teenage sons were caught up in the excitement, and they picked up a spyglass to get a better view of the soldiers. The soldiers caught them and mistook them for, of course, British spies.

So soon the men were at the door, ready to raid her house. The soldiers demanded that Margaret Morris deliver the damn Tory spy, meaning one of her sons.

So neither John nor Richard were spies, at least not that we know of. But their mother was hiding one: a poet and an Anglican minister named Jonathan Odell. Odell wrote a series of poems satirizing Congress, and he was in hot water for it. He'd been hopping house to house ever since, trying to evade arrest.

And when the soldiers came to Morris' house, he was hiding in that attic, in that secret room, behind that trick bookshelf.

Morris says that when she went to open the door for the Tory hunters, she kept, she writes, “I kept locking and unlocking the door so I might have time to get my ruffled face a little composed and think of a plan. I then rang the bell violently, the signal agreed upon if they came to search,” and she bought time by stalling with the inquisitors.

She opened the door, and she says, “I put on a very simple look,” meaning she pretended to be stupid. And she cried out, “bless me! I hope you are not Hessians! Say good men, are you Hessians?”

And the men replied, “Do we look like Hessians?”

To which Morris replied, “Indeed, I don't know. But they are men. And you are men.”

Morris capitalizes upon her political fluidity in this passage, which has a lot of layered meanings. So she cleverly plays upon the performative nature of political identity by insisting she can't distinguish rebels from loyalists because they are men, and you're men.

She refuses to identify their political affiliation, just as they fail to identify hers.

And when she says the Hessians are men as the soldiers are men, Morris reverses what the soldiers have done to her, and really all women in war. She identifies them by their sex rather than by their loyalties.

So she's definitely using this maneuver to buy Odell time to better secure his hiding spot. But it's also allowing Morris a chance to fashion her own definition of loyalty, while simultaneously questioning the soldiers.

Knowing a little bit about the Hessians adds layers to Morris' question to the rebel soldiers. You probably know the British hired the Hessians, men from Hesse-Cassel, as auxiliary troops to aid them in the war.

But what's important here is their reputation.

They possessed a reputation for being violent, cruel warmongers and villainous, licentious plunderers. And they were also considered to be undiscerning. So they violated, robbed, and injured allies and enemies alike.

So Morris' question, "bless me, are you Hessians," purposefully holds up a mirror to the rebels and informs them in no uncertain terms that they resemble the enemies that they seek.

So I'm gonna make the argument that she thought of herself as a neutralist. But you might be thinking she had a loyalist in her attic and pretended to be stupid to a group of soldiers. Could that possibly really make her a neutralist?

Not by itself, absolutely not. But the rest of the journal suggested that she believed neutrality was possible, as long as she got to define it the way she wanted to.

So at one point in the journal, those same soldiers that threatened to kill her children, came back to her house. They'd heard that she was a healer, and that, and she, and they hoped that she would heal them of camp fever, which she did.

And she did it, she said, because she wanted to remain neutral in the war so she could remain true to her Quaker faith.

She wasn't quite a pacifist. She was, after all, willing to hide a war criminal in her house. And she gave provisions to various groups of soldiers, which were both actions that the Quakers decreed violated the peace principle.

So her definition of neutrality isn't to remain uninvolved, it's rather to embrace everyone.

So after she helped the soldiers heal from camp fever, they gave her salt and bread, which she then turned around and gave to everyone she knew in the community who needed it. And the action made her think of the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus stretches out the two fishes and five loaves of bread to feed the multitude.

She writes, "being now so rich, we thought it our duty to hand out a little to the poor around us, who were mourning for want of salt. So we divided the bushel, and gave a pint to every poor person that came for it, and had a great plenty for our own use. Indeed, it seemed as if our little store increased by distributing it, like the bread broken by our Saviour to the multitude, which, when he had blessed it, was so marvelously multiplied."

For Morris, her letter journal, which was written back and forth to her sister and friends, was the space where she could reframe what the rebels thought of as treason into a faith-inspired neutral zone, one where she was a Christian first and foremost, linked to what she called citizens of Zion by their common humanity.

Quick recap then.

Galloway is stripped of her property and family and used her letters to voice her disaffection and request the return of her house.

Morris tries to make her letter journal a neutral island where she gets to be a Quaker first and foremost.

That brings me to Anna Rawle. Anna Rawle used her letters to protest being stripped of her parents, who were exiled in New York after caught being spies, and her security.

Rawle's father was the British mayor of Philadelphia at the outset of the war. And he and his wife were run out of town when it was discovered they were involved in a spy ring conducted through letters.

When Cornwallis surrendered to George Washington after the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, crowds across America surged into the streets to both celebrate with neighbors and to punish those who refused to join them in their revelry.

Anna Rawle had seen such celebrations before, and she dreaded them. She lived with her grandmother at the time, and they all lacked the protection of their older, their larger family and her siblings.

So Rawle knew that if you supported the Revolution, you lit a candle in the window to signal what side you were on. The light indicated your loyalties. Lit windows were passed by. Dark windows were smashed, the home's occupants punished.

And that night in 1781, Anna Rawle's windows were dark. Rawle told her mother that to punish her dissent, a mob broke the shutters and the glass of the windows and were coming in, though none but forlorned women lived inside.

Rawle emphasized that, even though the people threatened her, she never lit that candle.

And instead, she said, "we huddled in fear and trembling, till finding them grow more loud and violent, not knowing what to do, we ran into the yard."

So she, her servants, and her family, she said, had not been there many minutes before, "we were drove back by the sight of two men climbing the fence."

So for a moment, Rawle and her family believed the crowd was coming in the front of the house, but also coming in the back over the fence.

But just then, the light illuminates the face of two neighbors who help beat back the crowds. Just as the crowd began to wreak havoc, smashing windows, tearing doors off of hinges, the neighbors lit the wick.

The crowd seeing the dark window ablaze, drew up short, and stopped.

And the rioters then gave three "huzzah's," and moved on to the next dark house.

Rawle writes that she and friends nailed boards over the broken panels because it would not have been safe to have gone to bed.

Men, she recounts, "broke into the neighbors' houses to find all of the sons were out. And so they acted as they pleased," which is a phrase that implies, being deliberately unspecific, about sexual violence.

In short, she writes, "it was the most alarming scene I could ever remember."

By stripping her house of its windows, the crowd stripped her of security. The gaping holes meant anyone could and would breach the barriers of the house or the bodies in it.

Rawle's portrait of the Sons of Liberty as violent rapists who targeted women challenges the rhetoric popular at the time, and frankly popular today, which said that the patriots were waging the war in the name of virtue, and freedom, and liberty.

Patriots said that if they won the war, women would be safer, the whole country would be less corrupt. So when Rawle zooms in on these men's virtues, she is making a political statement.

Where did it go? Where did this statement go?

She sends these letters to her parents in New York, who then share the letter with other loyalists in the city. And that publicizes her political critique.

A well-ordered society was predicated on the control of emotions and the rule of reason, according to revolutionary rhetoric. Rawle is suggesting that this society was unable to control itself. And thus she's saying the Republic is doomed before it began.

Rawle eventually ends up being a spy for the loyalists. She used letters to deliver information to her father in New York. And the family adopted a code about troop movement and supplies.

But Rawle was known for having the worst code that any of us could decode.

In fact, one of her cousins wrote her and said, I don't want to write you letters anymore because your Sses, your Samuel Shoemakers, your code, is known throughout all Jersey. You're going to get me in trouble.

Bizarrely, she's one of the only women in the book to regain her property after the war, despite that both she and her mother were caught delivering spy letters across enemy lines.

But to hear how she did that, you should read the book.

And the last loyalist I'll feature today is Sarah Logan Fisher, though she's not the last in my book, for sure.

So Fisher was also a Quaker like Rawle, and soldiers targeted her as a loyalist because she refused to allow them to stay in her home. And she refused to grant them provisions because she said doing so would violate her pacifism.

Fisher was caught up in something called the Spanktown Controversy.

Congress published a spy letter in 1777, written by Quakers from the Spanktown Yearly Meeting. And used it as an excuse to round up 30 people and interrogate them, citing them as a security threat.

The Spanktown Yearly Meeting, however, did not exist. It was fake news.

Congress fabricated the hoax to justify arresting the most powerful men from the most prominent Quaker families in the Philadelphia area, in part because they'd refused to accept continental currency. And also because they were notoriously disaffected.

The missive allegedly broached intelligence about George Washington's army.

After the letter's release, rebel general, rebel general John Sullivan issued a statement saying that Quakers were inclined to communicate intelligence to the enemy. And the rebels labeled the Friends the most dangerous enemies America knows, hiding behind that hypocritical cloak of religion.

He then rounded up 22 Quakers and exiled them to prison in Virginia, miles away without trial.

Whoever wrote the Spanktown letter did not account for the Quaker wives.

So while waiting on their families to return, these women suffered physically and spiritually as proxies for their imprisoned spouses and fellow Quakers. But they refused to suffer silently.

They wrote letters, journals, letter journals in response to the Spanktown missive to launch an epistolary campaign all their own. They wrote and published a series of letters that challenged the viability of the fledgling American government.

And they demanded the right to religious pacifism.

When Fisher's husband was arrested, she wrote in her letter journal, which she later sent to the Quaker exiles, "this evening, a paper came out from the Committee of Safety unlike anything I ever before heard of, except the Spanish Inquisition, declaring that every person who refused continental money should be banished from the state. A most extraordinary instance of arbitrary power and of the liberty we shall enjoy should their government ever be established, a tyrannical government it will prove from weak and wicked men."

Fisher then writes a series of letters that paints the rebels also as rapists, thereby questioning the legitimacy of their campaign. She returns often to the rebels virtue, much like Anna Rawle did in her letters about the sons who acted as they pleased.

Congress issued a decree that said rebels in Pennsylvania should target the Quaker exiles' houses to get them to confess to a plot and make them suffer for their treason. They wanted to force them to grant food and supplies to house the soldiers while they were on campaign, and Fisher was one of the first on the list.

When a group of men came to her door demanding blankets from her home, she temporarily blocked their entry by emphasizing her status as a covered woman.

She told the men, "you have robbed me of what was far dearer than any property I had in the world: my husband. And I could by no means encourage war of any kind."

The soldiers pushed past her anyway and made two demands. First, they said we want you to give us access to everything upstairs. And second, we want you to give us some person to help search those rooms.

This is the 18th century, right? So women are not supposed to be alone with people with whom they are not married, especially not upstairs in their bedroom.

So Fisher interpreted this latter request to mean she was either being asked to sacrifice herself or one of her female servants, and she refused to do either one.

So the men then decided neither to harm nor to rob her, and when faced with her resolve, they turned around and left the family unmolested.

“Though there was a carpet on every floor,” Fisher writes, “and a blanket on every bed, they came down in the complicit manner, told me they had the pleasure of viewing my rooms, but saw nothing that suited them. This I looked upon as a singular favor and an encouragement to trust still further in that hand that hitherto mercifully supported me.”

My research suggests that this would have been a very unusual situation if it happened the way that she says. Women who were refused requisitions were often beaten and frequently raped. But Fisher escaped unmolested.

The framing to me is what's most interesting about this letter. When Fisher gets to write her story, she frames it as a testament to her pacifism.

She stays true to her faith. And she's rewarded by being able to rewrite herself as a pacifist instead of a loyalist, who's the most dangerous enemy anyone knows.

Fisher and the other exiles take their letters to George Washington, and they plead their case. He was moved by what they said, and he freed the prisoners.

So Fisher had reframed her loyalism into pacifism in such a way that it helped earn her husband and his friends their liberty.

So I've alluded to some of the material analysis that's in my book, but I did want to show you a page from one of Fisher's diaries. The letters and diaries are often expressive in ways beyond words, which is why it's so important for researchers to go to archives if they're able.

So Fisher wrote every day as part of her spiritual practice to stay morally accountable and close to God.

And she does it, too, until one day when she loses her baby, Billy. He dies about three quarters of the way down the page on the screen there.

And she writes, "what can I say, but I'm greatly supported through this severe trial. Endeavored to keep my mind quiet, but alas, almost in vain."

She then returns to her diary every day to write, but she's unable to find words. And what she does instead is she marks a dark black line every single day until she can write again, speaking her grief without saying a word. So she holds presence right there on the page, which is some of the power of these letters and diaries.

I also alluded to discussing Elizabeth Graham Ferguson and Deborah Norris Logan. Those women are also super interesting.

Ferguson was accused of being a loyalist spy twice, and convinced the world and all historians thereafter that she was a patriot, just how she did so is fascinating.

And Logan revised other people's loyalism into patriotism in her history books after it became unpopular to affiliate with the loyalists in 1815, as people started to write histories of the American Revolution.

She's written here a 19th-century manicure, my absolute favorite archive find. It's a hand with a little ruffled sleeve, the equivalent of a 19th-century highlighter. And she writes it in the margins of her diary, which she used to write her own history of the war.

The diary was so public that she actually points to important parts of it for us, which speaks to just how clearly these writers assumed that you and I, or at least someone besides themselves, would be reading these texts today.

So, as I conclude, I'd like to reflect, like, who really cares about any of this, right? They lost.

So, studying the spaces that Revolutionary-era letters and journals created allow people to resist propagating a homogenous narrative of the American Revolution that privileges only the victors.

Their story suggests a number of possibilities for the ways in which early Americans interpreted patriotism, loyalty, treason, citizenship, nationalism, and rebellion. And it allows us to insert women into narratives when they've so often been left out.

The message to me is a hopeful one. These letters and the diaries evince a determination to create a space for dissent, even when the state threatens to eradicate it, which is a testament to the marginalized who faced the loss of their civil rights and yet persisted.

TRICIA: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Kacy.

So this was a very fascinating talk on the aspects of women's lives in the 18th century that we don't often get to hear as much about.

So, yeah, let's start, let's start there. Let's start with your, with the sources.

It was a really great to see that archival photo in that last slide on... I'm sorry, which?

KACY: That's Logan. Yeah, Logan is the... Logan's is the coolest in terms of visual, a visual document because she not only has the manicure, but she also has footnotes in her diary, which was not a diary.

She contains basically the history of Philadelphia in her attic. And so people would come to her house and use her attic as an archive. And would write their own historical documents by going to her home. So her diary is really great.

She also would mark out stuff that would later be considered embarrassing. Like if she would critique a patriot, and then that fell out of fashion, she would mark it out. And then she would sometimes footnote what she marked out.

She wouldn't tell you what she marked out, but she would say, I've changed my mind about the following, and I've been told that it's, you know, not good to keep this in print because other people are gonna read it.

So, yeah, my favorite archival find for sure.

TRICIA: That's amazing, yeah.

And I obviously also love manicures, but this idea of, kind of editing and re-editing one's diaries or letters, we know that people are doing that.

You talked a bit about, sort of what they're imagining their audience is for these. I wondered if you could talk a little bit more about who these women thought they were writing to. Obviously, when they're writing a letter to someone... and we've kind of lost that a bit now, or it may not be as familiar to us now.

But that idea of, even if you're writing a letter to your husband, there's a possibility that other people are reading it because of how you're delivering it, right, or sending it.

KACY: Yeah, so, in the book, this was really hard to explain, especially it's really hard to teach to my students this concept of publicity and privacy in the 18th century.

Because I asked them, like, what, you know, what would you do if I took your cell phone and read your text messages out loud? And all of them are completely horrified and turned themselves inside out.

And I, so I try to explain to them, like the, privacy did not exist in the same way then as it did today.

There are certain letters that are personal, but there is always the possibility that a letter, even if you didn't write it to a group of people, is going to be intercepted and read aloud, particularly if you're politically connected.

So, John Adams has a pretty famous situation where he called all of his coworkers like vain, capricious fidgets. And that gets, like, published in the newspaper.

And then thereafter, he has to write sort of in code and asks Abigail to write in code because he's afraid that they're going to be intercepted it again. So that when they're writing, even though it's just for each other, they're always writing with a secondary public audience in mind, especially during the war.

The other thing to keep in mind is that, and you already know this, my audience already knows this, that there's no Netflix, right? So what they were doing, is they would get their diaries. They would send each other their diary. They would send each other their letters. And they would read them out loud performatively.

And sometimes the weird, like periods and capitalizations and things like that are meant to be part of the performance. Sometimes it's just because we don't have standardization until the invention of the dictionary.

But, yet, everybody knew that when they wrote something, it was going to be read out loud to the family and friends. It was so pervasive that came across one letter where they had to write at the top in what today we would call bold, like they went over it time and again, do not read aloud.

And then they include like a fake letter that when they're opening it, they can read the fake letter out loud and be like, oh, Sally says, you know, the garden is growing well or whatever. But then the real letter, which was full of juicy gossip or something, was behind it.

So the, that's the long answer to your question.

The short answer to your question is they thought they were writing to their family. They knew that their family might share it with their friends. And then, kind of a tertiary audience would be if your letter was intercepted. And then it might go into Congress, or it might be published in the papers, which could be, you know, horrible for you if you were a loyalist.

TRICIA: Thank you. I've got some great questions in the Q&A. So I'm gonna ask you some of these now.

First one, how does class shape women's ability to exist in the gray area that they sought? Was it easier or more difficult if they came from wealth?

KACY: That's... I think that question needs an entire book. But, so, it definitely does shape it.

So the loyalist women who were the most visible were the ones who had the most to lose.

I think when I first started this, I assumed that people were just sort of blanketly targeting anyone who was public about their loyalty.

No. It was way more practical than that. Like they needed to finance the war.

So to do that, they needed to take from the richest loyalists so that they could live in their houses, sell off their property, sell off the materials inside, and then, and finance the war.

So in some ways, being rich made you potentially more visible because you had more to be taken.

And then, you know, but you... Whether or not you signed a loyalty agreement then mattered.

But on the other hand, like, Margaret Morris was poor when she's writing the story. If you remember, Margaret Morris is the one with the attic and the, "bless me, are you Hessians?"

She is slightly invisible because she is a widow. So she doesn't have a lot of money. She doesn't have anyone to whom she's tied. And so, as a result, like, you know, people aren't watching her all the time. Which I think is why she thought she could risk hiding Odell in the attic. But it's also more difficult because she had very little.

She had this weird section that doesn't relate to this, so I couldn't put it in this presentation, about, like, rats falling through the ceiling. Like, her house was so decrepit, and she couldn't keep it up, that it was literally rats were falling from the ceiling like rain, which was disgusting. And that made life really hard.

So you could fly under the radar, yes. But if you're poor, you also, in a time of war were doubly strapped, right? Because you didn't have other forms of income when so many things were restricted.

So thanks for that question.

TRICIA: Great. Another question here. This is a good one on memory.

How has the memory of women loyalists shaped the sources we have to recover their experience? Do published sources or historic house museums, for example, obscure or edit their experience?

KACY: I don't want to call anybody out. So no particular answers to that question. That's a great question.

First of all, if anybody is interested in loyalism, or really any facet of history, going to the local historical society is just completely invaluable as an experience. Like the people there have so much local knowledge. My book absolutely would not be possible without them. And several of them are very forthcoming about the loyalties.

But it very much depended, writer by writer.

My favorite example was going to Elizabeth Graham Ferguson's house. Ferguson's the most controversial loyalist in the book, because if you go talk to anybody in early American studies, they're like, why is she in there? We all... she's a patriot.

But her letters suggest otherwise.

So when I went to that house, the docent actually said, why are you here? Like I heard what your book is about. Like, I don't, I don't know why you're here, why you're here.

And kind of ironically, the, her whole identity is wrapped up in this house, which she is gonna lose because her husband is a loyalist and fled, and then impregnated a servant on his way out of the country, and then sort of like shamed her in all the possible ways.

So she's trying to use her letters to, sort of, get out of being affiliated with that guy.

And at that house, they don't really embrace her loyalism because she tried very hard to erase it. So I wouldn't really blame them for that.

So, yeah, a lot of the historic house museums, I wouldn't, I wouldn't know if they're editing it. I just don't know... It's really difficult to sometimes express these grey areas at these historic houses because, you know, they don't... the tourists don't really have time for a three hour dissertation on the complexities of loyalty when you pass through the home.

I think they're doing absolutely the best that they can. I got a lot of great info from them.

TRICIA: Yeah. I, as someone who has also worked in historic houses, I could say that's absolutely true. And a lot of, a lot of them in New England are constantly trying to update those scripts, updating the tours that they give.

There is a really lovely, for those of you who are joining us today and are local to northern New England, the Sayward-Wheeler House in York, Maine is the house of a loyalist. And it is remarkable. So if you're up in this area, I highly recommend a visit to hear some of those stories.

Next question is from Robert Wong, who asks, are there any loyalist women, such as Grace Galloway, who influenced political thought of their husbands?

KACY: That's a great... I work a lot on loyalist women who influence the political thought of men in power. A lot of my book covers that, and so that's... But their husbands, I, none in my book.

That doesn't mean they didn't exist.

And mainly that's because they become loyalists because of their trials after their husbands have been outed as loyalists, and they've left them in England... they've left them for England.

I'm trying to think if there are any examples.

Mainly what comes to mind are the people in the Spantown Controversy who essentially marched to Congress, showed them all of their letters, all their petitions and their diaries, and said, you have to rethink this process that you've completely overlooked, which caused the release of the political prisoners.

But I don't... short of Abigail, who I think does have sort of an influence on her husband. But she's not a loyalist.

That's really the only person that comes to mind. So no.

And then Robert had another question, too. Peggy Shippen is actually Margaret Morris' neighbor. So I walk to her house because I really wanted her to be in the book. But Peggy ends up leaving, right?

I'm a little rusty on her backstory, but there is a whole area of research on the loyalists who left, like that, if anyone writes about loyalists at all, they all write about the loyalists who left... Maya Jasanoff, everybody who wrote about any of the Canadian loyalists.

And so I excluded her from my research because she didn't stay. So I don't know as much about her as I'd like, but...

TRICIA: A couple of questions here along the same lines, about how difficult was it to find these sources?

How and where did you discover them in the first place? And sort of what got you interested in these women?

KACY: Okay. Sure, so I, by accident, I found these stories by accident initially.

So I was writing a dissertation on patriot women and their letters, and I went to the Massachusetts Historical Society. And while I was there, I thought, I thought I knew what my project was about.

And, bless archivists, but this woman put a box on my desk. It was probably Margaret, Mary... the Hutchinson family, the whole Hutchinson family's archive on my desk.

And she said, I want you to read this. And I said, I didn't ask for that.

And she said, you didn't ask for it, but you need it.

And so I said, well, why?

And she said, these are these are loyalists, and you need that perspective if you're studying the American Revolution.

And I was like, they lost. Nobody, nobody talks about them.

She said, exactly.

And then she walked off, and she refused to take that box off my desk.

And so what ended up happening was I started reading about the loyalists who left, the ones that went to Canada. And they were just infuriated that they had to leave behind everything, their family.

I still remember she talks about leaving her family bible and how it devastates her, like the things that she can't take with her, like her family's... her baby's blanket. And that people died along the way. And she was like, and all of this was because of nothing that I did. Like, I didn't get to vote. I never, no one ever asked me what I thought. This is all because of what my husband decided to say publicly, and how unjust is this?

And so, yeah, because of that, I was able to find archival work at the... I got a fellowship, the Library Company of Philadelphia, a Historical Society, and then I also went to several Quaker archives, a Quaker archive in Haverford.

And I hear there's a lot of really good work in the archive in, the New York Public Library. I also went to London to the National Archives in Kew.

And basically I just ended up following trails of footnotes in historical accounts of loyalists where they weren't really reading or talking about the women, but they would mention them in passing, like breadcrumbs to sources.

So, I found it because of that, because the archivists were awesome and helpful. And because the local historical societies also pointed me in the right direction. Without any of them, none of this work would be possible.

TRICIA: Thank you for your pitch for archives and coming to visit archives and libraries. We always love to hear it.

Another question in the chat asks about, are there any southern women in your book? From Carole Troxler, and she loved your presentation.

KACY: Thank you. Thanks for that question.

So no, no. And I talk about that in the intro that I admit that this is really about loyalism in this particular area.

But, my first article ever was about Eliza Lucas Pinckney. And I definitely think if anybody's interested in that question, they should check out her letters, which are published. I feel like she's, she's southern, right?

And then I also wrote about, there's a writer who, all of her letters were lost in an archive in Mississippi. I think that's Murray.

There are several women that, if they were southern, their works weren't as well preserved as others. So that's why I don't have as much work about them.

But Eliza Lucas Pinckney would be great in there, although she was writing around 1740. And then when the war came around, she sort of goes silent. And her family ends up being loyalist politicians.

And then my friend Rebecca Brannon writes about loyalists in the, in the south, particularly in the Carolinas. So if that's of interest to anybody here, you should definitely check out her work.

TRICIA: I also just want to tell you that we've had a comment from someone who works at MHS, just, [Laughter] in the Q&A.

KACY: Thank you, Lauren. Please tell all your colleagues that I greatly appreciate how they made my book come into being through sheer force of will.

TRICIA: So we're, as we're sort of running out of time a little bit here.

And if there, we could take one or two more questions, if anyone has any other burning ones, pop them into the Q&A please, if you, if you can.

But meanwhile, I wanted to ask you, because your new work sounds really interesting, too, can you tell us about what you're working on, your research now that you're working on?

KACY: Oh, yeah. Thank you.

I just published an article on Black loyalism and an article on information and disease in early American novels in *Early American Studies* and *American Literature*. And those are coming out within the year.

And then in 2026 is the one on Black loyalists. It's gonna be for the 250th for the American Revolution.

And my current research is not anything related to loyalist writers.

My sub-specialty is sentimental fiction, so essentially 18th century romance novels. And I'm really interested in BookTok, which is the subculture in TikTok that is making reading popular amongst people from 19 to 28 in a way that people had assumed it had sort of fallen out of favor.

So my new research is about, it's called the evolution of smut to spice. And it's about how young readers are making erotic fiction publicly palatable and are reading more than ever. And how they're using TikTok to do so.

So yeah, hopefully Congress doesn't shut down TikTok before I'm able to conduct that research.

TRICIA: That's fascinating and sounds like we'll all be interested to see that when it comes out. And good luck with that research.

KACY: Thank you. Thank you.

TRICIA: Completely different source base for you. Completely.

KACY: Yes, it was Murray. Irene answered. I knew it was Judith Sargent Murray, and I just didn't trust myself. Because my work, my PhD was from the University of Mississippi. So I kept thinking I could find her work, which is where it ended up.

So she's the other one I was considering maybe possibly a southerner. But she would never have identified as a southerner in her life. So she would count, but she wouldn't count herself as a southern loyalist.

TRICIA: So, in the, in the chat, there's someone...

KACY: In the chat.

TRICIA: Judith Sargent Murray from Gloucester.

KACY: Yeah, it was, it was Murray from Gloucester and then ended up in Mississippi. But when she ended up in Mississippi, she really stopped writing.

And then they, and then all of her letters were damaged in mold, with mold. So anything she would have thought was really difficult to recover. A lot of it was damaged by mold.

TRICIA: Well, thank you very much for this fascinating conversation. And we look forward to seeing more of your work in the future.

So thank you, everyone, for joining us today. Thank you to Dr. Tillman.

And thank you to the loyalist women who made these, this talk today possible with their really lovely stories that you brought to life so well.

So thank you, everyone, and we look forward to seeing you at the next talk in our *Revolutionary Stories* series.