

**The Haitian Revolution**  
**An essay by**

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The Haitian Revolution represents the most thorough case study of revolutionary change anywhere in the history of the modern world.<sup>1</sup> In ten years of sustained internal and international warfare, a colony populated predominantly by plantation slaves overthrew both its colonial status and its economic system and established a new political state of entirely free individuals—with some ex-slaves constituting the new political authority. As only the second state to declare its independence in the Americas, Haiti had no viable administrative models to follow. The British North Americans who declared their independence in 1776 left slavery intact, and theirs was more a political revolution than a social and economic one. The success of Haiti against all odds made social revolutions a sensitive issue among the leaders of political revolt elsewhere in the Americas during the final years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Yet the genesis of the Haitian Revolution cannot be separated from the wider concomitant events of the later eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Indeed, the period between 1750 and 1850 represented an age of spontaneous, interrelated revolutions, and events in Saint Domingue/Haiti constitute an integral—though often overlooked—part of the history of that larger sphere.<sup>3</sup> These multifaceted revolutions combined to alter the way individuals and groups saw themselves and their place in the world.<sup>4</sup> But, even more, the intellectual changes of the period instilled in some political leaders a confidence (not new in the eighteenth century, but far more generalized than before) that creation and creativity were not exclusively divine or accidental attributes, and that both general societies and individual conditions could be rationally engineered.<sup>5</sup>

Although the eighteenth century was experiencing a widespread revolutionary situation, not all of it ended in full-blown, convulsing revolutions.<sup>6</sup> But everywhere, the old order was being challenged. New ideas, new circumstances, and new peoples combined to create a portentously "turbulent time."<sup>7</sup> Bryan Edwards, a sensitive English planter in Jamaica and articulate member of the British Parliament, lamented in a speech to that body in 1798 that "a spirit of subversion had gone forth that set at naught the wisdom of our ancestors and the lessons of experience."<sup>8</sup> But if Edwards's lament was for the passing of his familiar, cruel, and constricted world of privileged planters and exploited slaves, it was certainly not the only view.

For the vast majority of workers on the far-flung plantations under the tropical sun of the Americas, the revolutionary situation presented an opportunity to change fundamentally their personal world, and maybe the world of others equally unfortunate.<sup>9</sup> Nowhere was the contrast sharper than in the productive and extremely valuable French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue between 1789 and 1804. The hundreds of thousands of African slaves and tens of thousands of legally defined free coloreds found the hallowed wisdom and experiential "lessons" of Bryan Edwards to be a despicably inconvenient barrier to their quest for individual and collective liberty. Their sentiments were motivated not only by a difference of geography and culture but also by a difference of race and condition.

Within fifteen turbulent years, a colony of coerced and exploited slaves successfully liberated themselves and radically and permanently transformed things. It was a unique case in the history of the Americas: a thorough revolution that resulted in a complete metamorphosis in the social, political, intellectual, and economic life of the colony. Socially, the lowest order of the society—slaves—became equal, free, and independent citizens. Politically, the new citizens created the second independent state in the Americas, the first independent non-European state to be carved out of the European universal empires anywhere. The Haitian model of state formation drove xenophobic fear into the hearts of all whites from Boston to Buenos Aires and shattered their complacency about the unquestioned superiority of their own political models.<sup>10</sup> To Simón Bolívar, himself of partial African ancestry, it was the Euro-American model of revolution that was to be avoided by the Spanish-American states seeking their independence after 1810, and he suggested the best way was to free all slaves.<sup>11</sup> Intellectually, the ex-colonists gave themselves a

new name—Haitians—and defined all Haitians as "black," thereby giving a psychological blow to the emerging intellectual traditions of an increasingly racist Europe and North America that saw a hierarchical world eternally dominated by types representative of their own somatic images. In Haiti, all citizens were legally equal, regardless of color, race, or condition. Equally important, the example of Haiti convincingly refuted the ridiculous notion that still endures among some social scientists at the end of the twentieth century that slavery produced "social death" among slaves and persons of African descent.<sup>12</sup> And in the economic sphere, the Haitians dramatically transformed their conventional tropical plantation agriculture, especially in the north, from a structure dominated by large estates (*latifundia*) into a society of minifundist, or small-scale, marginal self-sufficient producers, who reoriented away from export dependency toward an internal marketing system supplemented by a minor export sector.<sup>13</sup> These changes, however, were not accomplished without extremely painful dislocations and severe long-term repercussions for both the state and the society.<sup>14</sup>

If the origins of the revolution in Saint Domingue lie in the broader changes of the Atlantic world during the eighteenth century, the immediate precipitants must be found in the French Revolution.<sup>15</sup> The symbiotic relationship between the two were extremely strong and will be discussed later, but both resulted from the construction of a newly integrated Atlantic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The broader movements of empire building in the Atlantic world produced the dynamic catalyst for change that fomented political independence in the United States between 1776 and 1783. Even before that, ideas of the Enlightenment had agitated the political structures on both sides of the Atlantic, overtly challenging the traditional mercantilist notions of imperial administration and appropriating and legitimating the unorthodox free trading of previously defined interlopers and smugglers.<sup>16</sup> The Enlightenment proposed a rational basis for reorganizing state, society, and nation.<sup>17</sup> The leading thinkers promoted and popularized new ideas of individual and collective liberty, of political rights, and of class equality—and even, to a certain extent, of social democracy—that eventually included some unconventional thoughts about slavery.<sup>18</sup> But their concepts of the state remained rooted in the traditional western European social experience, which did not accommodate itself easily to the current reality of the tropical American world, as Peggy Liss shows in her insightful study *Atlantic Empires*.<sup>19</sup>

Questions about the moral, religious, and economic justifications for slavery and the slave society formed part of this range of innovative ideas. Eventually, these questions led to changes in jurisprudence, such as the reluctantly delivered judgment by British Chief Justice Lord William Mansfield in 1772 that the owner of the slave James Somerset could not return him to the West Indies, implying that, by being brought to England, Somerset had indeed become a free man. In 1778, the courts of Scotland declared that slavery was illegal in that part of the realm. Together with the Mansfield ruling in England, this meant that slavery could not be considered legal in the British Isles. These legal rulings encouraged the formation of associations and groups designed to promote amelioration in the condition of slaves, or even the eventual abolition of the slave trade and slavery.<sup>20</sup>

Even before the declaration of political independence on the part of the British North American colonies, slavery was under attack by a number of religious and political leaders from, for example, the Quakers and Evangelicals, such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833), Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), and Granville Sharp (1735–1813). Antislavery movements flourished both in the metropolis and in the colonies.<sup>21</sup> In 1787, Abbé Grégoire (1750–1831), Abbé Raynal (1713–1796), the marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834), and others formed an antislavery committee in France called the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, which took up the issue in the recently convened Estates General in 1789 and later pushed for broadening the basis of citizenship in the National Assembly.<sup>22</sup> Their benevolent proposals, however, were overtaken by events.

The intellectual changes throughout the region cannot be separated from changes in the Caribbean. During the eighteenth century, the Caribbean plantation slave societies reached their apogee. British and French (mostly) absentee sugar producers made headlines in their respective imperial capitals, drawing the attention of political economists and moral philosophers.<sup>23</sup> The most influential voice among the latter

was probably Adam Smith (1723–1790), whose *Wealth of Nations* appeared in the auspicious year of 1776. Basing his arguments on the comparative costs of production, Smith insisted that, "from the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by free men comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves."<sup>24</sup> Slavery, Smith further stated, was both uneconomical and irrational not only because the plantation system was a wasteful use of land but also because slaves cost more to maintain than free laborers.<sup>25</sup>

The plantation system had, by the middle of the eighteenth century, created some strange communities of production throughout the Caribbean—highly artificial constructs involving labor inputs from Africa and managerial direction from Europe producing largely imported staples for an overseas market. These were the plantation communities producing sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, I have referred to this unintended consequence of the sugar revolutions as the development of exploitation societies—a tiered system of interlocking castes and classes all determined by the necessities, structure, and rhythm of the plantations.<sup>27</sup>

French Saint Domingue prided itself, with considerable justification, on being the richest colony in the world. According to David Geggus, Saint Domingue in the 1780s accounted for "some 40 percent of France's foreign trade, its 7,000 or so plantations were absorbing by the 1790s also 10–15 percent of United States exports and had important commercial links with the British and Spanish West Indies as well. On the coastal plains of this colony little larger than Wales was grown about two-fifths of the world's sugar, while from its mountainous interior came over half the world's coffee."<sup>28</sup> The population was structured like a typical slave plantation exploitation society in tropical America. Approximately 25,000 white colonists, whom we might call psychological transients, dominated the social pyramid, which included an intermediate subordinate stratum of approximately the same number of free, miscegenated persons referred to throughout the French Caribbean colonies as *gens de couleur*, and a depressed, denigrated, servile, and exploited majority of some 500,000 workers from Africa or of African descent.<sup>29</sup> These demographic proportions would have been familiar to Jamaica, Barbados, or Cuba during the acme of their slave plantation regimes.<sup>30</sup> The centripetal cohesive force remained the plantations of sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo and the subsidiary activities associated with them. The plantations, therefore, joined the local society and the local economy with a human umbilical cord—the transatlantic slave trade—that attached the colony to Africa. Economic viability depended on the continuous replenishing of the labor force by importing African slaves.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the system was both sophisticated and complex, with commercial marketing operations that extended to several continents.<sup>32</sup>

If whites, free colored, and slaves formed the three distinct castes in the French Caribbean colony, these caste divisions overshadowed a complex system of class and corresponding internal class antagonisms, across all sectors of the society. Among the whites, the class antagonism was between the successful so-called *grands blancs*, with their associated hirelings—plantation overseers, artisans, and supervisors—and the so-called *petits blancs*—small merchants' representatives, small proprietors, and various types of hangers-on. The antagonism was palpable. At the same time, all whites shared varying degrees of fear and mistrust of the intermediate group of *gens de couleur*, but especially the economically upwardly mobile representatives of wealth, education, and polished French culture.<sup>33</sup> For their own part, the free non-whites had seen their political and social abilities increasingly circumscribed during the two or so decades before the outbreak of revolution. Their wealth and education certainly placed them socially above the *petits blancs*. Yet theirs was also an internally divided group, with a division based as much on skin color as on genealogy. As for the slaves, all were distinguished—if that is the proper terminology—by their legal condition as the lifetime property of their masters, and were occasionally subject to extraordinary degrees of daily control and coercion. Within the slave sector, status divisions derived from a bewildering number of factors applied in an equally bewildering number of ways: skills, gender, occupation, location (urban or rural, household or field), relationship to production, or simply the arbitrary whim of the master.<sup>34</sup>

The slave society was an extremely explosive society, although the tensions could be, and were, carefully and constantly negotiated between and across the various castes.<sup>35</sup> While the common fact of owning

slaves might have produced some mutual interest across caste lines, that occurrence was not frequent enough or strong enough to establish a manifest class solidarity. White and free colored slaveowners were often insensitive to the basic humanity and civil rights of the slaves, but they were forced nevertheless to negotiate continuously the way in which they operated with their slaves in order to prevent the collapse of their world. Nor did similar race and color facilitate an affinity between free non-whites and slaves. Slaves never accepted their legal condemnation, but perpetual military resistance to the system of plantation slavery was inherent neither to Saint Domingue in particular nor to the Caribbean in general.<sup>36</sup> So when and where the system broke down resulted more from a combination of circumstances than from the inherent revolutionary disposition of the individual artificial commercial construct.

Without the outbreak of the French Revolution, it is unlikely that the system in Saint Domingue would have broken down in 1789. And while Haiti precipitated the collapse of the system regionally, it seems fair to say that a system such as the Caribbean slave system bore within itself the seeds of its own destruction and therefore could not last indefinitely. As David Geggus points out,

More than twenty [slave revolts] occurred in the years 1789–1832, most of them in the Greater Caribbean. Coeval with the heyday of the abolitionist movement in Europe and chiefly associated with Creole slaves, the phenomenon emerged well before the French abolition of slavery or the Saint-Domingue uprising, even before the declaration of the Rights of Man. A few comparable examples occurred earlier in the century, but the series in question began with an attempted rebellion in Martinique in August 1789. Slaves claimed that the government in Europe had abolished slavery but that local slaveowners were preventing the island governor from implementing the new law. The pattern would be repeated again and again across the region for the next forty years and would culminate in the three large-scale insurrections in Barbados, 1816, Demerara, 1823, and Jamaica, 1831. Together with the Saint-Domingue insurrection of 1791, these were the biggest slave rebellions in the history of the Americas.<sup>37</sup>

In the case of Saint Domingue—as later in the cases of Cuba and Puerto Rico—abolition came from an economically weakened and politically isolated metropolis.

The local bases of the society and the organization of political power could not have been more different in France and its overseas colonies. In France in 1789, the political estates had a long tradition, and the social hierarchy was closely related to genealogy and antiquity. In Saint Domingue, the political system was relatively new, and the hierarchy was determined arbitrarily by race and the occupational relationship to the plantation. Yet the novelty of the colonial situation did not produce a separate and particular language to describe its reality, and the limitations of a common language (that of the metropolis) created a pathetic confusion with tragic consequences for metropolis and colony.

The basic divisions of French society derived from socioeconomic class distinctions. The popular slogans generated by the revolution—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and the Rights of Man—did not express sentiments equally applicable in both metropolis and colony.<sup>38</sup> What is more, the Estates General, and later the National Assembly, simply could not understand how the French could be divided by a common language. And yet they hopelessly were.

The confusion sprung from two foundations. In the first place, the reports of grievances (*cahiers de doléances*) of the colonies represented overwhelmingly not the views of a cross-section of the population but merely those of wealthy plantation owners and merchants, especially the absentee residents in France. Moreover, as the French were to find out eventually, the colony was quite complex geographically. The wealthy, expatriate planters of the Plain du Nord were a distinct numerical minority. The interests and preoccupations of the middling sorts of West Province and South Province were vastly different. In the second place, each segment of the free population accepted the slogans of the revolution to win acceptance in France, but they then particularized and emphasized only such portions as applied to their individual causes. The *grands blancs* saw the Rights of Man as the rights and privileges of bourgeois man, much as the framers of North American independence in Philadelphia in 1776. Moreover, *grands blancs* saw liberty not as a private affair but rather as greater colonial autonomy, especially in

economic matters. They also hoped that the metropolis would authorize more free trade, thereby weakening the restrictive effects of the mercantilist commerce exclusif with the mother country. Petits blancs wanted equality, that is, active citizenship for all white persons, not just the wealthy property owners, and less bureaucratic control over the colonies. But they stressed a fraternity based on a whiteness of skin color that they equated with being genuinely French. Gens de couleur also wanted equality and fraternity, but they based their claim on an equality of all free regardless of skin color, since they fulfilled all other qualifications for active citizenship. Slaves were not part of the initial discussion and sloganeering, but from their subsequent actions they clearly supported liberty. It was not the liberty of the whites, however. Theirs was a personal freedom that undermined their relationship to their masters and the plantation, and jeopardized the wealth of a considerable number of those who were already free.<sup>39</sup>

In both France and its Caribbean colonies, the course of the revolution took strangely parallel paths. The revolution truly began in both with the calling of the Estates General to Versailles in the fateful year of 1789.<sup>40</sup> Immediately, conflict over form and representation developed, although it affected metropolis and colonies in different ways. In the metropolis, the Estates General, despite not having met for 175 years, had an ancient history and tradition, albeit almost forgotten. The various overseas colonists who assumed they were or aspired to be Frenchmen and to participate in the deliberations and the unfolding course of events did not really share that history and that tradition. In many ways, they were new men created by a new type of society—the plantation slave society. Their experience was quite distinct from that of the planters and slaveowners in the British Caribbean. In Jamaica, Edward Long was an influential and wealthy member of British society as well as an established Jamaican planter. Bryan Edwards was a long-serving member of the Jamaica Legislature and after 1796 a legitimate member of the British Parliament, representing simultaneously a metropolitan constituency and overseas colonial interests.<sup>41</sup>

At first, things seemed to be going well for the French colonial representatives, as the Estates General declared itself a National Assembly in 1789 and the National Assembly proclaimed France to be a republic in August 1792. In France, as James Billington puts it, "the subsequent history of armed rebellion reveals a seemingly irresistible drive toward a strong, central executive. Robespierre's twelve-man Committee of Public Safety (1793–94), gave way to a five-man Directorate (1795–99), to a three-man Consulate, to the designation of Napoleon as First Consul in 1799, and finally to Napoleon's coronation as emperor in 1804."<sup>42</sup> In the colonies, the same movement is discernible with a major difference—at least in Saint Domingue. The consolidation of power during the period of armed rebellion gravitated toward non-whites and ended up in the hands of slaves and ex-slaves or their descendants.

With the colonial situation far too confusing for the metropolitan legislators to resolve easily, the armed revolt in the colonies started with an attempted coup by the grands blancs in the north who resented the petits blancs—controlled Colonial Assembly of St. Marc (in West Province) writing a constitution for the entire colony in 1790. Both white groups armed their slaves and prepared for war in the name of the revolution.<sup>43</sup> When, however, the National Assembly passed the May Decree enfranchising propertied mulattos, they temporarily forgot their class differences and forged an uneasy alliance to forestall the revolutionary threat of racial equality. The determined desire of the free non-whites to make a stand for their rights—also arming their slaves for war—made the impending civil war an inevitable racial war.

The precedent set by the superordinate free groups was not lost on the slaves, who comprised the overwhelming majority of the population. If they could fight in separate causes for the antagonistic free sectors of the population, they could fight on their own behalf. And so they did. Violence, first employed by the whites, became the common currency of political change. Finally, in August 1791, after fighting for nearly two years on one or another side of free persons who claimed they were fighting for liberty, the slaves of the Plain du Nord applied their fighting to their own cause. And once they had started, they refused to settle for anything less than full freedom for themselves. When it became clear that their emancipation could not be sustained within the colonial political system, they created an independent state in 1804 to secure it. It was the logical extension of the collective slave revolt that began in 1791.

But before that could happen, Saint Domingue experienced a period of chaos between 1792 and 1802. At one time, as many as six warring factions were in the field simultaneously: slaves, free persons of color,

petits blancs, grands blancs, and invading Spanish and English troops, as well as the French vainly trying to restore order and control. Alliances were made and dissolved in opportunistic succession. As the killing increased, power slowly gravitated to the overwhelming majority of the population—the former slaves no longer willing to continue their servility. After 1793, under the control of Pierre-Dominique Toussaint Louverture, ex-slave and ex-slaveowner, the tide of war turned inexorably, assuring the victory of the concept of liberty held by the slaves.<sup>44</sup> It was duly, if temporarily, ratified by the National Assembly. But that was neither the end of the fighting nor the end of slavery.

The victory of the slaves in 1793 was, ironically, a victory for colonialism and the revolution in France. The leftward drift of the revolution and the implacable zeal of its colonial administrators, especially the Jacobin commissioner Léger Félicité Sonthonax, to eradicate all traces of counterrevolution and royalism—which he identified with the whites—in Saint Domingue facilitated the ultimate victory of the blacks over the whites.<sup>45</sup> Sonthonax's role, however, does not detract from the brilliant military leadership and political astuteness provided by Toussaint Louverture. In 1797, he became governor general of the colony and in the next four years expelled all invading forces (including the French) and gave it a remarkably modern and democratic constitution. He also suppressed (but failed to eradicate) the revolt of the free coloreds led by André Rigaud and Alexander Pétion in the south, captured the neighboring Spanish colony of Santo Domingo, and freed its small number of slaves. Saint Domingue was a new society with a new political structure. As a reward, Toussaint Louverture made himself governor general for life, much to the displeasure of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Why did the revolution follow such a unique course in Saint Domingue and eventually culminate in the abolition of slavery? Carolyn Fick presents a plausible explanation:

It can be argued therefore that the abolition of slavery in Saint Domingue resulted from a combination of mutually reinforcing factors that fell into place at a particular historical juncture. No single factor or even combination of factors—including the beginning of the French Revolution with its catalytic ideology of equality and liberty, the colonial revolt of the planters and the free coloreds, the context of imperial warfare, and the obtrusive role of a revolutionary abolitionist as civil commissioner—warranted the termination of slavery in Saint Domingue in the absence of independent, militarily organized slave rebellion . . .

From the vantage point of revolutionary France the abolition of slavery seems almost to have been a by-product of the revolution and hardly an issue of pressing concerns to the nation. It was Sonthonax who initiated the abolition of slavery in Saint Domingue, not the Convention. In fact, France only learned that slavery had been abolished in Saint Domingue when the colony's three deputies, Dufay, Mills, and Jean-Baptiste Mars Bellay (respectively a white, a mulatto, and a former free black), arrived in France in January, 1794 to take their seats and asked on February 3 that the Convention officially abolish slavery throughout the colonies . . .

The crucial link then, between the metropolitan revolution and the black revolution in Saint Domingue seems to reside in the conjunctural and complementary elements of a self-determined, massive slave rebellion, on the one hand, and the presence in the colony of a practical abolitionist in the person of Sonthonax, on the other.<sup>46</sup>

Such "conjunctural and complementary elements" did not appear elsewhere in the Americas—not even in the neighboring French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe.

The reality of a semi-politically free Saint-Domingue with a free black population ran counter to the grandiose dreams of Napoleon to reestablish a viable French-American empire. It also created what Anthony Maingot has called a "terrified consciousness" among the rest of the slave masters in the Americas.<sup>47</sup> Driven by his desire to restore slavery and disregarding the local population and its leaders, Napoleon sent his brother-in-law General Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc with about 10,000 of the

finest French troops in 1802 to accomplish his aim. It was a disastrously futile effort. Napoleon ultimately lost the colony, his brother-in-law, and most of the 44,000 troops eventually sent out to conduct the savage and bitter campaign of reconquest. Although Touissant was treacherously spirited away to exile and premature death in France, the independence of Haiti was declared by his former lieutenant, now the new governor general, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, on January 1, 1804. Haiti, the Caribbean, and the Americas would never be the same as before the slave uprising of 1791.

The impact of the Haitian Revolution was both immediate and widespread. The antislavery fighting immediately spawned unrest throughout the region, especially in communities of Maroons in Jamaica, and among slaves in St. Kitts. It sent a wave of immigrants flooding outward to the neighboring islands, and to the United States and Europe. It revitalized agricultural production in Cuba and Puerto Rico. As Alfred Hunt has shown, Haitian emigrants also profoundly affected American language, religion, politics, culture, cuisine, architecture, medicine, and the conflict over slavery, especially in Louisiana.<sup>48</sup> Most of all, the revolution deeply affected the psychology of the whites throughout the Atlantic world. The Haitian Revolution undoubtedly accentuated the sensitivity to race, color, and status across the Caribbean.

Among the political and economic elites of the neighboring Caribbean states, the example of a black independent state as a viable alternative to the Maroon complicated their domestic relations. The predominantly non-white lower orders of society might have admired the achievement in Haiti, but they were conscious that it could not be easily duplicated. "Haiti represented the living proof of the consequences of not just black freedom," wrote Maingot, "but, indeed, black rule. It was the latter which was feared; therefore, the former had to be curtailed if not totally prohibited."<sup>49</sup> The favorable coincidence of time, place, and circumstances that produced a Haiti failed to materialize again. For the rest of white America, the cry of "Remember Haiti" proved an effective way to restrain exuberant local desires for political liberty, especially in slave societies. Indeed, the long delay in achieving Cuban political independence can largely be attributed to astute Spanish metropolitan use of the "terrified consciousness" of the Cuban Creoles to a scenario like that in Saint Domingue between 1789 and 1804.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, after 1804, it would be difficult for the local political and economic elites to continue the complacent status quo of the mid-eighteenth century. Haiti cast an inevitable shadow over all slave societies. Antislavery movements grew stronger and bolder, especially in Great Britain, and the colonial slaves themselves became increasingly more restless. Most important, in the Caribbean, whites lost the confidence that they had before 1789 to maintain the slave system indefinitely. In 1808, the British abolished their transatlantic slave trade, and they dismantled the slave system between 1834 and 1838. During that time, free non-whites (and Jews) were given political equality with whites in many colonies. The French abolished their slave trade in 1818, although their slave system, reconstituted by 1803 in Martinique and Guadeloupe, limped on until 1848. Both British and French imperial slave systems—as well as the Dutch and the Danish—were dismantled administratively. The same could be said for the mainland Spanish-American states and Brazil. In the United States, slavery ended abruptly in a disastrous civil war. Spain abolished slavery in Puerto Rico (where it was not important) in 1873. The Cuban case, where slavery was extremely important, proved far more difficult and also resulted in a long, destructive civil war before emancipation was finally accomplished in 1886. By then, it was not the Haitian Revolution but Haiti itself that evoked negative reactions among its neighbors.

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Rise of American Nationalism. This article is based on a panel presentation at the Latin American Studies Association Congress in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1997.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography on the Haitian Revolution is large and growing. For a sample, see Colin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988); Philip D. Curtin, "The Declaration of the Rights of Man in Saint-Domingue, 1788–1791," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 30 (May 1950): 157–75; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975), 27–179; Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment since 1700* (Boulder, Colo., 1989); Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1990); John Garrigus, "A Struggle for Respect: The Free Coloreds in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue, 1760–69" (PhD dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1988); David Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793–1798* (London, 1982); Geggus, "The Haitian Revolution," in *The Modern Caribbean*, Franklin W. Knight and Colin A. Palmer, eds. (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989), 21–50; Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, La., 1979); François Girod, *De la société Creole: Saint-Domingue au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1972); Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492–1971* (Boston, 1978); Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, 1988); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938; New York, 1963); David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge, 1979); Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789–1804* (Knoxville, 1973); George Tyson, Jr., ed., *Toussaint L'Ouverture* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1973); M. L. E. Moreau de Saint Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civil, politique et historique de la partie Française de l'isle de Saint Domingue* (Philadelphia, 1796); P, *My Odyssey: Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions*, Althéa de Peuch Parham, ed. and trans. (Baton Rouge, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> See especially Jorge I. Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty: The Breakdown of the Spanish American Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 146–69; Lester D. Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* (New Haven, Conn., 1996), 159–77.

<sup>3</sup> See R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1959); Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution*; James H. Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of Revolutionary Faith* (New York, 1980).

<sup>4</sup> For an example, see Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, "Regenerating France, Regenerating the World: The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution, 1750–1831" (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Franklin W. Knight, "The Disintegration of the Slave Systems, 1772–1886," in *General History of the Caribbean*, Vol. 3: *The Slave Societies of the Caribbean*, Knight, ed. (London, 1997), 322–45.

<sup>6</sup> A case in point is England, where the revolutionary situation was diffused through reformist politics.

<sup>7</sup> The phrase is taken from the title of *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds. (Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in J. H. Parry, Philip Sherlock, and Anthony Maingot, *A Short History of the West Indies*, 4th edn. (New York, 1987), 136.

<sup>9</sup> The quest for individual and collective freedom was widespread among all slaves, and occasionally new views of society and social relations embraced both slave and free, but rarely did these revolts involve the establishment of a state as in the case of Haiti. In Coro in western Venezuela in 1795, a free republic was

declared that would have fundamentally altered the social status quo, but it had a very short existence. See Domínguez, *Insurrection or Loyalty*, 55–56, 151–60.

<sup>10</sup> See John Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions, 1808–1826* (New York, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution*, 196–200.

<sup>12</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). The idea may also be found in Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 27: "To assure the submission of slaves and the mastership of the owners, slaves were introduced into the colony and eventually integrated into the plantation labor system within an overall context of social alienation and psychological, as well as physical violence. Parental and kinship ties were broken; their names were changed; their bodies were branded with red-hot irons to designate their new owners; and the slave who was once a socially integrated member of a structured community in Africa had, in a matter of months, become what has been termed a 'socially dead person.'" It is hard to accept such a totally nullifying experience for Africans in the Americas for two reasons. The first is that Africans constructed the new American communities along with their non-African colonists, and permanently endowed the new creations with a wide array of influences from speech to cuisine to music to new technology. The various bodies of slave laws were a patent recognition that although slaves were property, they were also people requiring severe police control measures. Non-Africans established social contacts with them, and their mating produced a melange of demographic hybridity throughout the Americas. In the second place, Africans produced offspring in the Americas, and these formed viable communities everywhere—communities that were duly recognized in law and custom. The development of viable Afro-American communities throughout the Americas does not in any way negate the fact that slavery was a dehumanizing experience permeated with violence and exploitation. Nevertheless, the image of "social death" is greatly exaggerated.

<sup>13</sup> Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*, 55–57.

<sup>14</sup> Franklin W. Knight, *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism*, 2d edn. (New York, 1990), 196–219.

<sup>15</sup> See Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*.

<sup>16</sup> These changes have been examined more thoroughly in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850*, Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds. (Knoxville, Tenn., 1991).

<sup>17</sup> While there is a wide range of opinion on exactly when the Enlightenment started, there is better consensus on what it was: a major demarcation in the emergence of the modern age and the French Revolution. See Franco Venturi, *The End of the Old Regime in Europe, 1768–1776: The First Crisis*, R. Burr Litchfield, trans. (Princeton, N.J., 1989); Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York, 1967–69).

<sup>18</sup> See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1966), esp. 391–445.

<sup>19</sup> Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713–1826* (Baltimore, Md., 1983), 105–26.

<sup>20</sup> Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 99–100.

<sup>21</sup> Duncan J. MacLeod, *Slavery, Race and the American Revolution* (London, 1974).

<sup>22</sup> Ruth F. Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire, 1787–1831: The Odyssey of an Egalitarian* (Westport, Conn., 1971), 71–90.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1944); Robert Louis Stein, *The French Sugar Business in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, La., 1988); and Patrick Villiers, "The Slave and Colonial Trade in France Just before the Revolution," in *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, Barbara L. Solow, ed. (Cambridge, 1991), 210–36.

<sup>24</sup> Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), abbrev. edn. (New York, 1974), 184.

<sup>25</sup> The debate over relative labor costs of free and enslaved workers has not ended. See *Did Slavery Pay?* Hugh G. J. Aitken, ed. (Boston, 1971); Robert Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (Boston, 1974).

<sup>26</sup> Except tobacco, the primary export crops were all introduced into the Americas by Europeans. Sugar cane came from India via the Mediterranean and the African Atlantic Islands. Coffee was Arabian in origin. Cotton was Egyptian.

<sup>27</sup> Knight, *Caribbean*, 74–82

<sup>28</sup> Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> The demographic proportions varied considerably throughout the Caribbean. For figures, see Knight, *Caribbean*, 366–67.

<sup>30</sup> Knight, *Caribbean*, 120–58.

<sup>31</sup> See Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Wis., 1969); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Formation of the Atlantic World, 1450–1680* (Cambridge, 1992); Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700–1739* (Urbana, Ill., 1981); Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York, 1986); Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History* 23, no. 4 (1982): 473–501; David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> See Solow, *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*; *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economics, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe*, Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, eds. (Durham, N.C., 1992); *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn, eds. (New York, 1979).

<sup>33</sup> Garrigus, "Struggle for Respect."

<sup>34</sup> Regardless of the extreme degree of coercion, it is fatuous to insist that slavery obliterated from Africans and their descendants the ability to be creative, socially active, and even to establish some modicum of self-respect and economic status. See Roderick A. McDonald, *The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, La., 1993), especially its excellent bibliography.

<sup>35</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (New York, 1990), 103–10, 160–69.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982).

<sup>37</sup> David Patrick Geggus, "Slavery, War and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean," in Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*, 7–8.

<sup>38</sup> Curtin, "Declaration of the Rights of Man," 157–75.

<sup>39</sup> Curtin, "Declaration of the Rights of Man"; Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, 28–75.

<sup>40</sup> The French Revolution may be followed in, among others, Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York, 1989); Leo Gershoy, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (New York, 1960); Albert Soboul, *The French Revolution, 1787–1799: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon*, Alan Forest and Colin Jones, trans. (London, 1989); Gaetano Salvemini, *The French Revolution, 1788–1792*, I. M. Rawson, trans. (New York, 1954).

<sup>41</sup> On Long and Edwards, see Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820* (Oxford, 1971), 73–79; Elsa Goveia, *A Study on the Historiography of the British West Indies to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Mexico City, 1956), 53–63.

<sup>42</sup> Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Carolyn Fick, "The French Revolution in Saint-Domingue: A Triumph or a Failure?" in Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*, 53–55.

<sup>44</sup> Toussaint Louverture always wrote his name without an apostrophe, although many French and non-French writers have, for reasons unknown, used L'Ouverture.

<sup>45</sup> Robert L. Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (Rutherford, N.J., 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Fick, "French Revolution," 67–69.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony P. Maingot, "Haiti and the Terrified Consciousness of the Caribbean," in *Ethnicity in the Caribbean*, Gert Oostindie, ed. (London, 1996), 53–80.

<sup>48</sup> Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America*.

<sup>49</sup> Maingot, "Haiti," 56–57.

<sup>50</sup> For the "Africanization of Cuba scare," see Philip S. Foner, *A History of Cuba and Its Relation with the United States*, 2 vols. (New York, 1963), 2: 45–85; Arthur F. Corwin, *Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817–1886* (Austin, Tex., 1967), 115–21; Luis Martínez-Fernández, *Torn between Empires: Economy, Society, and Patterns of Political Thought in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1840–1878* (Athens, Ga., 1994), 33–40; Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, Conn., 1988), 184–86, 265–66; Gerald E. Poyo, "With All and for the Good of All": *The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1899* (Durham, N.C., 1989), 6–7, 86. For the impact of the Haitian Revolution elsewhere in the Caribbean, see Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830–1865* (1952; New York, 1970); H. P. Jacobs, *Sixty Years of Change, 1806–1866: Progress and Reaction in Kingston and the Countryside* (Kingston, 1973), 12–37; Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783–1962* (Kingston, 1981), 25–51; Hilary Beckles, *A History of Barbados* (Cambridge, 1990), 78–79; Edward L. Cox, *Free Coloreds in the Slave Societies of St. Kitts and Grenada, 1763–1833* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1984), 76–100; Frank Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic: A National History* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1995), 91–164; Valentin Peguero and Danilo de los Santos, *Visión general de la historia dominicana* (Santo Domingo, 1978),