

Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution

Robin Blackburn

IN the sequence of revolutions that remade the Atlantic world from 1776 to 1825, the Haitian Revolution is rarely given its due, yet without it there is much that cannot be accounted for. The revolutions—American, French, Haitian, and Spanish-American—should be seen as interconnected, with each helping to radicalize the next. The American Revolution launched an idea of popular sovereignty that, together with the cost of the war, helped to provoke the downfall of the French monarchy. The French Revolution, dramatic as was its influence on the Old World, also became a fundamental event in the New World because it was eventually to challenge slavery as well as royal power. This challenge did not come from the French National Constituent Assembly's resounding "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens 1789," since neither the assembly nor its successor, the National Convention, moved on its own initiative to confront slavery in the French plantation colonies. Indeed the issue was not to be addressed for another five years, by which time the French Caribbean colonies were engulfed in slave revolts and threatened by British occupation.

The first major breach in the hugely important systems of slavery in the Americas was opened not by English or American abolitionists but by Jacobin revolutionaries and the black peasantry of Saint Domingue (later Haiti). This fact has not been a comfortable one for the traditional

Robin Blackburn teaches at the University of Essex in the United Kingdom and the New School for Social Research in New York. The present article grew from participation in a conference on the bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution organized by the Africana Studies Center and History Department at Cornell University in April 2004, a conference on the same topic organized by the John Carter Brown Library in June 2004, and the Byrne Lecture and Seminar at the History Department of Vanderbilt University in October 2004. He thanks the organizers of and participants in these events for stimulating discussions that helped to shape these reflections. He is grateful to Adam Shatz of *The Nation* for requesting a review of two new books on Haiti and the French Caribbean by Laurent Dubois. He would also like to thank Laurent Dubois, Eric Foner, Oz Frankel, François Furstenberg, Claudio Lomnitz, Ashli White, and anonymous readers for the *William and Mary Quarterly* for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

national historiography in the United States or Britain and has become awkward even in France as the Jacobin period has been viewed with increasing distaste and embarrassment. In 1959 R. R. Palmer published a brilliant and influential study of the age of the democratic revolution, giving detailed attention to the American and French revolutions and lesser upheavals in the Low Countries, Switzerland, and elsewhere yet entirely neglecting the struggles that led to the proclamation of the Haitian republic.¹ The notion of an age of the democratic revolution was problematic because it imparted a ready-made, seemingly predestined character to political acts that sought to exclude some while freeing others and that were often contradictory, provoking counterrevolution as well as democracy. Ignoring the Haitian Revolution made matters much worse, eliminating an event that pitted momentous progressive and reactionary impulses against one another. To ignore Haiti was also to diminish all the other revolutions.

Outside the world of academe, C. L. R. James, the Trinidadian political activist and journalist, had already made the case for the importance of the Haitian Revolution in his vigorous and well-researched book, *The Black Jacobins*, first published in 1938. Decolonization in Africa and elsewhere helped to attract some attention to the Haitian Revolution in the 1960s, and historians have begun to study the revolution as an event in the history of the moral imagination as well as a dramatic political episode with a wide influence. Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued that the events leading to the foundation of Haiti have suffered from either “erasure” or “banalization” in general histories of the Americas and the West because they were seen as

¹ R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1959, 1964). Classical historians of the French Revolution such as Jean Jaurès and Georges Lefebvre included substantial discussions of the momentous events in the Caribbean, but François Furet had little to say on this topic. Simon Schama’s best-selling *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York, 1989) also omitted reference to events in Saint Domingue. Yet the appearance of a U.S. paperback edition of C. L. R. James’s, *The Black Jacobins* (New York, 1963), and the retreat of European colonialism rekindled interest in Haiti in the English-speaking world. The publication of Eugene D. Genovese’s *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History (Baton Rouge, La., 1979), and Eric Foner’s *Nothing but Freedom: Emancipation and Its Legacy*, Walter Lynwood Fleming Lectures in Southern History (Baton Rouge, La., 1983), were important attempts to integrate Haiti into the wider history of slavery and emancipation in the Americas. Garry Wills foregrounded Haiti’s influence on U.S. politics (Wills, *“Negro President”: Jefferson and the Slave Power* [Boston, 2003], 33–46), and David Brion Davis devotes a chapter to the French and Haitian revolutions in his new book, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford, Eng., 2006), 157–74.

lacking sufficient coherence and meaning. They were only a confused disorder that did not rise to the level of a national or social revolution. Just as Haiti was diplomatically shunned by the Great Powers—the United States did not recognize it until 1862—so scholars paid it little or no attention for at least another century. Spanish-American historiography acknowledged Haiti's assistance to Simón Bolívar, but general histories of the age of revolution often dealt briefly with these liberation struggles themselves. Yet the fate of Saint Domingue was a strategic stake in the statecraft of William Pitt, John Adams, Timothy Pickering, Thomas Jefferson, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Bolívar. The survival of Haiti had implications for the future of slavery in the Americas and tested and tempered the outlook of the abolition movement. Though faint-hearted abolitionists recoiled in horror at the bloody consequences of slave revolt, others saw no reason to tolerate a slave regime that was intrinsically violent. Certain intellectual and moral conclusions seemed to flow from these momentous and tragic events that captured the imagination of writers and artists from William Wordsworth, Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist, and Alphonse Marie Louise Prat de Lamartine to Alejo Carpentier and David Blake. Finally, whatever view is taken of Haiti's achievement, the revolution that established it is a vital piece of the jigsaw puzzle of Atlantic politics in this period without which no good picture can be produced, a fact known to Henry Adams yet neglected by his successors. Without that revolution scholars miss something essential in the Quasi War, the Louisiana Purchase, the trade embargo, the Monroe doctrine, antebellum U.S. politics, and the entire reshaping of the slave order in the early nineteenth century. Since the publication of Trouillot's book, historians have been far more ready to explore the issues he raised, yet there remains a lingering reserve. This reserve has been encouraged not only by the much-bruited skepticism about grand narratives but also by disappointment with decolonization and, in some quarters, a reborn belief in Anglo-American destiny.²

² C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London, 1938); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), 88–107 (quotations, 96). A survey by Joyce E. Chaplin finds that studies of the early U.S. Republic still generally fail to insert this topic in the wider Atlantic framework and display “tentativeness” in reaching outside the traditional bounds of national historiography. See Chaplin, “Expansion and Exceptionalism in Early American History,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1431–55 (“tentativeness,” 1445). E. J. Hobsbawm, in his masterful but avowedly Eurocentric work, excludes the American Revolution as well as the Haitian from detailed attention; however, his brief passages on Haiti and South America make several essential points (Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe, 1789–1848* [London, 1964], 69, 110). A late entrant to the age of revolution literature is Lester D. Langley, who takes the other approach, focusing on the New World and giving

In mid-1791 Saint Domingue, the richest slave colony of the Americas, was torn apart by struggles between supporters and opponents of extending citizenship to free-colored proprietors. This strife set the scene for a massive slave uprising in August 1791 in the colony's northern plain, involving about twenty thousand slaves and leading to the formation of large bands of rebels. Several of the main black commanders were subsequently enticed to join the Spanish army. Saint Domingue shared the island of Hispaniola with the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo, and relations between revolutionary France and royalist Spain were deteriorating. With other black chiefs retreating to the hills and mountains, French colonial authorities lost control of important areas. Influential planters invited the British to intervene. On August 29, 1793, rival decrees of emancipation were issued by the revolutionary commissioner in northern Saint Domingue and one of the black generals, Toussaint-Louverture. The National Convention in Paris was eventually brought to issue the decree of 16 Pluvôse An II (February 4, 1794), which abolished slavery throughout the French colonies. The National Convention was spurred to action by delegates from Saint Domingue who argued that, in the face of a British invasion of the colonies and the defection of many royalist planters, only such a radical step could save the republic by rallying more black insurgents to its side.

The National Convention struck down slave property at a time when the pressure of the sansculottes on that body was at its height. Perhaps only the Jacobins at their most radical could have embraced the policy but, following Maximilien de Robespierre's overthrow in Thermidor, it was sustained by the French Directory until the end of the 1790s. An expedition of fifteen hundred men led by Victor Hugues ejected the British from Guadeloupe with the help of several thousand local colored troops, including former slaves. Among those sent packing was Benedict Arnold, who had joined the British expedition as a war contractor. Hugues, the Robespierre of the islands, encouraged slave revolts in neighboring islands and converted Guadeloupe and its dependencies into a privateering base.

little attention to Europe (Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* [New Haven, Conn., 1996]). For Henry Adams's view on Haiti's contribution to Jefferson's Louisiana coup, see Adams, *The History of the United States of America during the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1889), 1: 377–98. The language used by Adams when writing about Toussaint-Louverture is patronizing and inaccurate ("the sensitiveness of a wild animal," "the unhappy negro found himself face to face with destruction," "he was like a rat defying a ferret" [ibid., 395, 390, 388], and so forth). For a critique of today's imperial revisionism, see Robin Blackburn, "Imperial Margarine," *New Left Review*, 2d ser., 35 (September–October 2005): 124–36.

In Saint Domingue the black army led by Toussaint-Louverture, a former slave, deserted its royal Spanish patron in April 1794 and joined the republican ranks. French commander General Laveaux supported the emancipation policy and promotion of Toussaint-Louverture. In 1796 Toussaint-Louverture was appointed lieutenant governor and in the following year commander in chief. With materiel sent from France, Toussaint-Louverture created a well-armed and disciplined force that drove the Spanish and the British from the colony by 1798. Overall the British, who had to fight hard to regain Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and Grenada, lost eighty thousand men in the Caribbean, with heavier losses in the eastern islands than in Saint Domingue and more in this theater than in Europe.

Toussaint-Louverture insisted that Saint Domingue remained French, yet he dealt with Britain and the United States as a sovereign power. His army included white and mulatto as well as black commanders. He invited émigré planters to return. In 1801 he drew up a constitution for the colony that declared in the first article that it was part of the French Empire but subject to "special laws." The third article declared: "In this territory slaves cannot exist; servitude is permanently abolished. All men within it are born, live, and die free and French." Another clause insisted that all residents, "no matter their color," could pursue any employment and that the only distinctions would be those based on "virtues and talents."³

In 1802 Napoleon, with British and U.S. encouragement, sought to reassert metropolitan power and to reestablish slavery and white supremacy in Saint Domingue. He sent a large expeditionary force under the command of General Charles-Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc, his brother-in-law, to accomplish this mission. Toussaint-Louverture resisted but was eventually captured and died in France. The expeditionary force encountered escalating resistance, however, and lost some fifty thousand men, including Leclerc himself.

In January 1804 the victorious black generals declared the new Republic of Haiti. A constitution adopted in the following year outlawed slavery and declared that all citizens were legally black, probably an attempt to forestall conflicts between black and mulatto groupings.⁴ The French Republic's antislavery stance had delayed the onset of national consciousness in Saint Domingue by tapping into the titanic forces of revolt in the most extreme and concentrated slave system that

³ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 240–46 ("special laws," 241; other quotations, 243).

⁴ For Haiti's 1805 constitution with a commentary, see Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham, N.C., 2004), 227–44, 275–81.

had ever existed. But with the overthrow of the French Directory and Napoleon's dispatch of a large and threatening expedition, the only way to defend the liberty of the former slaves and the social equality of all was to proclaim a new state. The name Haiti was an homage to the island's precolonial inhabitants, signaling the break with empire; the republic's flag was the tricolor with the white band removed. Color distinctions, especially between black and mulatto, continued to be important yet had no legal force, and citizenship extended to all, including some Poles and Germans who had defected from the French army. The term *blanc* (white), as employed in Haiti, does not describe people by reference to the color of their skin. Instead it became, as it remains to the present day, the vernacular term for any foreigners, even if they were Jamaicans or Brazilians of dark complexion.

In 1816 Haiti's President Alexandre Sabès Pétion helped Bolívar mount the invasion that ultimately defeated the Spanish Empire in the Americas by giving him arms and ammunition and allowing hundreds of Haitian fighters, known as "*franceses*," to sail with him. In return Bolívar promised to adopt measures to extinguish slavery in the lands he was to free. Bolívar had already freed his own slaves. He was only able to persuade the Congress of Angostura in 1819 of limited measures: an end to the slave trade and the release of male slaves who were enrolled in the liberation forces. Against continuing opposition from many of his fellow planters, Bolívar persuaded the Congress of Cúcuta in 1821 to go further and decree that all children born to slave mothers would be free when they reached eighteen years. Though the terms of this decree were no more radical than Pennsylvania's emancipation law of 1780, it applied to the whole of Great Colombia with estates and mines worked by around eighty thousand slaves. Former slaves and free men of color were to comprise a high proportion of the main liberation armies, usually between one-third and one-half. They were also strategically vital because they were more willing to serve outside their native regions. All the Spanish-American republics decreed an end to the slave trade, and all except Paraguay adopted a free-womb law. In 1829 Mexico, where there were no more than ten thousand slaves, became the second state in the Americas simply to free all slaves immediately. Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, which did not go beyond free-womb laws until the 1850s, all had significant slave-worked plantations or placer gold mines. But by 1853 all these states had peacefully abolished slavery, whereas the slave power still had the great northern republic in its grip.⁵

⁵ Núria Sales de Bohigas, *Sobre Esclavos, Reclutas y Mercaderes de Quintos* (Barcelona, Spain, 1974), 85 ("*franceses*"). I supply a far more detailed account of the

The American Declaration of Independence, one of the finest expressions of the patriot creed, famously described as “self-evident” truths the claims that “all men are created equal” and are “endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights,” among which are “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” This assertion was easier to reconcile with the enslavement of blacks than might be thought, since the rights it asserted could only be claimed by members of a people with their own properly organized government. Natural-rights doctrines had traditionally declared that all men were born free but qualified this notion immediately by insisting that liberty could only be realized in specific communities organized by the law of peoples (*jus gentium*). Slaves lacked a community that would recognize their freedom. There is here an echo of the idea that Christian freedom is open to all but can only be attained by becoming a servant of Christ and a faithful member of his church. Slaves of African descent were part of their owner’s household yet not members of the political community. The revolt of the thirteen colonies was the collective act of their assemblies and not the action of isolated individuals. Even Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* saw the New World as a haven for persecuted Europeans, not Native Americans or African Americans. The chief author of the American Declaration later concluded that neither the slaves nor their descendants could ever become part of the American people and that they would need to find their own liberty somewhere else, perhaps in Africa.⁶ In the more conservative postrevolutionary moment when the Constitution was drawn up, the presence of slaves and Indians was indirectly but explicitly acknowledged in the clauses that awarded slaveholding states representation in

sequence in Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London, 1988). Here I extend this account in the light of new research.

⁶ Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origins and Development* (Cambridge, 1979), 18, 34–35, 37, 42. A strand of republican thinking held that, since slaves lived and toiled under the direction of their owner, they displayed a degree of acquiescence in their condition. François Furstenberg argues that American patriots characteristically believed that their liberties were the product of their own virtuous resistance to tyranny and that any slave community not heaving with revolt could be deemed to have condoned the slave regime. The living slave could thus be seen, in this view, as having refused the test of the patriot cry of “liberty or death.” He argues that this line of thought furnished a justification of slavery that was internal to liberal-republican ideology, not, as standard references to paradoxes, ironies, and contradictions in the Founders’ standpoint suppose, in opposition to it. Furstenberg suggests that even those who deprecated or opposed slavery implicitly subscribed to this reasoning, as in a remark attributed to Samuel Adams by Benjamin Rush: “Nations were as free as they deserved to be.” See Furstenberg, “Beyond Freedom and Slavery: Autonomy, Virtue, and Resistance in Early American Political Discourse,” *Journal of American History* 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1295–1330 (Adams quotation, 1295).

proportion to their white population plus three-fifths of the number of their slaves, with untaxed Indians not counted at all.

As slavery became more entrenched, some prominent slaveholders still promised that, if left to their own devices, they would eventually find voluntary ways to redeem their bondsmen. Such sentiments led some French writers, such as the Abbé Mably, to mistakenly believe that Americans were embarking on an abolitionist path.⁷ Though some British observers shared this view, others believed that the colonists' concern for liberty had been very narrow and used antislavery themes to discredit the rebellion. Both reactions helped antislavery in Britain. Indeed the American Revolution, carried out in the name of defending English liberties, dealt a heavy blow to the legitimacy of the Hanoverian order and persuaded many Britons of the need for thoroughgoing national and imperial reform. British abolitionism was born of defeat in America. The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in Britain in 1787 and was soon able to demonstrate impressive popular and parliamentary support.

The French Revolution at first presented barriers to slave emancipation as strong as those present in North America. The discourse of 1789–92 made liberty conditional on public utility, property, and membership in the community. Only propertied French men could be “active” citizens (with a vote and the right to stand as a candidate); French women and children were “passive” citizens (with no vote or right to represent others). The enslaved were treated as both minors and aliens. The first clause of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man stated: “Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.” The last clause of the declaration reinforced public utility as a potential qualification of freedom by insisting: “The right to property being inviolable and sacred, no one ought to be deprived of it, except in cases of evident public necessity, legally ascertained, and on condition of a previous just indemnity.”⁸ Since slaves were indubitably a sort of property as well as arguably a prop of public utility, the qualification of natural liberty

⁷ See [Abbé Mably], *Observations on the Government and Laws of the United States of America, Translated from the French . . .* (Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1784).

⁸ “Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens 1789,” in Merryn Williams, ed., *Revolutions, 1775–1830* (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1971), 97–99 (quotations, 97, 99). The limits of the French revolutionary concept of citizenship so far as slavery is concerned are explored in Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en Révolution (1789–94)*, Recherches Politiques (Paris, France, 1992), esp. 191–237.

seemed robust enough to reassure the many colonial proprietors in the French assembly.

By this time slaveholders were on the alert. In 1788 a French abolitionist society, the Société des Amis des Noirs, had formed; though its demands were moderate, it was patronized by prominent philosophers, financiers, and political leaders. In Britain, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which enjoyed cordial relations with the Société des Amis des Noirs, had aroused great controversy and collected hundreds of thousands of signatures in support of banning slave trafficking. The Société des Amis des Noirs also opposed the slave trade but came to focus mainly on defending the civic rights of free men of color. When the slaves of Saint Domingue launched their historic uprising in August 1791, the Société des Amis des Noirs had yet to propose the ending of slavery. Its energies had been concentrated on attacking racial exclusion within the free population. When Camille Desmoulins, summarizing Maximilien de Robespierre, declared: "Let the colonies perish rather than a principle," the National Convention was debating a decree that extended full civic rights to free-colored proprietors whose parents had both been born on French soil. It was believed that only four hundred qualified. Eventually, in April 1792, full recognition of the civic rights of free men of color was accepted by many Girondists—the political network that spread out from Bordeaux, France's premier colonial port—as well as Jacobins because it promised to attach the loyalties of the thirty thousand free blacks in Saint Domingue at a time when many colonial whites were leaning toward royalism and a flouting of all ties to the metropolis. The 1794 French decree of emancipation certainly reflected the pressure of slave revolt and war yet also demonstrated a surge of republican and national sentiment by imposing a new egalitarian order, denouncing privilege (including that of the "aristocracy of the skin"), and neutralizing the claims of property and of intermediary bodies such as colonial assemblies.⁹ The resulting French revolutionary emancipation

⁹ Yves Bénéot, *La révolution française et la fin des colonies*, Textes à l'appui (Paris, France, 1988), 57–88 (quotation, 76). For the evolution and wider significance of the French revolutionary debate on the colonies, see also Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution, 1789–1795–1802*, Pratiques Théoriques (Paris, France, 1992), 155–239; Lynn Hunt, "The Paradoxical Origins of Human Rights," in *Human Rights and Revolutions*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Hunt, and Marilyn B. Young (Lanham, Md., 2000), 3–17. The rejection of racial limits on citizenship in French republicanism can also be seen as echoing the French monarchy's universal claim to recognize and protect all subjects, including the free people of color. The radicalism of the Jacobins was thus much more profound than the radicalism of the American Revolution because, though affirming the family, it put other institutions of civil society in question. See William H. Sewell Jr., "The French Revolution and the Emergence of the Nation Form," in *Revolutionary Currents: Nation Building in*

of 1793–94 proved strong enough to survive Robespierre's downfall and endured until nearly the end of the decade.

Meanwhile the republic in North America distanced itself from what were seen as excesses of the French Revolution, and the British government, led by William Pitt, who had spoken in support of abolition, turned to seizing slave colonies in the Caribbean. Widespread slave revolt and revolutionary turmoil provoked such a panic after 1792 that it undercut British abolitionism. But eventually the consolidation of Toussaint-Louverture's regime and the emergence of a black state filled the gaps that yawned in the discourse of liberty and set the scene for a rebirth of abolitionist politics.

Haiti's bicentennial was marked by publication of works by Laurent Dubois, Sibylle Fischer, Frédéric Régent, and David Patrick Geggus that give scholars a richer knowledge of the French Caribbean during the revolutionary epoch. They also help readers grasp the contending notions of freedom at stake in the age of revolution and the ways in which they were eventually redeemed and pushed further by the former slaves of Saint Domingue. Dubois insists that the events in the former French colony mark a watershed. "They were," he writes in *Avengers of the New World*, "the most concrete expression of the idea that the rights proclaimed in France's 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man were indeed universal. They could not be quarantined in Europe or prevented from landing in the ports of the colonies, as many had argued they should be. The slave insurrection of Saint-Domingue led to the expansion of citizenship beyond racial barriers despite the massive political and economic investment in the slave system at the time." He sees the revolution in Haiti as an intellectual and cultural as well as a political event, holding out the ideal of a society in which, in principle, "all people, of all colors" were granted social freedom and citizenship. Though this ideal was difficult to live up to, the Haitian Revolution also had a very tangible success. It struck a mighty blow against slavery where it was strongest, in the plantation zone. "If we live in a world in which democracy is meant to exclude no one, it is in no small part because of the actions of those slaves in Saint Domingue who insisted that human rights were theirs too."¹⁰

the Transatlantic World, ed. Michael A. Morrison and Melinda Zook (Lanham, Md., 2004), 91–125. Sewell explores the racial fantasies at work in a key thinker's ideas in Sewell, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What Is the Third Estate?* (Durham, N.C., 1994). For "aristocracy of the skin," see Mimi Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery: Black Publics and Peasant Radicalism in Haiti and Jamaica* (Gainesville, Fla., 2000), 112.

¹⁰ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (quotations, 6, 3); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*,

These judgments challenge the exclusions of many traditional Western histories of liberty, including accounts of Anglo-American abolitionism that have little or no space for black antislavery and the effect of black resistance and witness on the maturing of the abolitionist movement. They also challenge the pessimistic conclusion that the Haitian Revolution, despite freeing half a million slaves, was a setback rather than a victory because its bloodshed and racial violence appeared to belie the claims of abolitionists.¹¹ Dubois' reflections also challenge British and American myths of national self-sufficiency: the idea that an original national virtue was bound to prevail over slavery with no need for foreign examples or help.

Though a pacific emancipation, whether in Saint Domingue or the United States, would undoubtedly have been desirable, it would have been formidably difficult to engineer. The slavery of this epoch was

1787–1804 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004); Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002); Frédéric Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté: La Révolution française en Guadeloupe, 1789–1802* (Paris, France, 2004). Dubois' salute to Haiti's achievement is the more deserved because of the limited and compromised character of French Enlightenment pronouncements on slavery. See the occasionally overwritten but still effective critique in Louis Sala-Morins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment*, trans. John Conteh-Morgan (Minneapolis, Minn., 2006).

¹¹ An extended and important exchange on abolitionism took place in the pages of the *American Historical Review* in the mid-1980s in articles that together must have referred to more than a thousand articles and books. Not one of them concerned slave revolt, black abolitionism, or the role of black testimony in the abolitionist movement. See Thomas Bender, ed., *The Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992). Curiously, this debate was initiated by a critique of a brilliant and innovative book, David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975), which was marked by no such exclusion. Seymour Drescher has argued that the Haitian Revolution was a setback for abolitionism and that its racial violence was a harbinger of twentieth-century genocide. See Drescher, "The Limits of Example," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus, Carolina Lowcountry and the Atlantic World (Columbia, S.C., 2001), 10–14. It is to the credit of the key abolitionist leaders—William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, William Lloyd Garrison, Victor Schoelcher—that atrocities committed by insurgent slaves in Saint Domingue or elsewhere did not lead them to lessen their hostility to slavery or to scorn the leaders of the Haitian Revolution. It would be a false antithesis to pit Haiti against abolitionism. A recent account, though paying tribute to Drescher's valuable studies, recognizes that the British abolitionist narrative becomes more intelligible if Saint Domingue and Haiti are firmly inserted within it, whether seen as a warning or as a source of encouragement or inspiration. See Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (New York, 2005), 280–308. And Drescher is too good a historian to have missed the link between Haiti and the emancipationist turn in British abolitionism in 1823 (to be discussed later).

buttressed by worship of private property and derogatory concepts of race. Planters were well represented in ruling institutions throughout the Atlantic world. Their power was based on racial fears and phobias, on patronage and appeals to national or imperial interest, on political alliances, and, last but not least, on whips, cutlasses, and guns. They were deaf to appeals to their better nature and unlikely to yield without a struggle. Wherever slavery was a pillar of national prosperity, a successful challenge to it invariably required a profound crisis usually triggered by war, revolution, and slave revolt. Such crises could neutralize the powerful supports of the slave system and lead to a redefinition of the national community.

The tendency to take British abolitionism as normative celebrates the largely peaceful emancipation in the British West Indies in 1834–38. But the British planters were absentees, received generous compensation, and had just been reminded by a large-scale slave revolt of the alternative. Moreover the triumphs of British abolition occurred at times of exceptional national crisis and danger, in 1807 and 1832–33. A similarly favorable conjuncture led to the freeing of the slaves in Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1848, with planters seeking compensation for what was really a *fait accompli*. These relatively peaceful emancipations were evidence of what Barrington Moore Jr. once called the contribution of revolution to gradual reform.¹² Quite simply, the events in Saint Domingue had shown that the slave order was highly vulnerable in plantation colonies where 80 percent of the population was enslaved. Where slaves were a minority—on the large island of Cuba and in the mainland slave territories of the United States and Brazil—the effect of Haiti was to show the slaveholders and their allies the need for better defenses.

The awesome scale of the events in Saint Domingue instilled a sort of permanent panic in the minds of New World slave owners, leading them to redouble their security and to fortify their links to potential allies. Plantation output in Saint Domingue plummeted after 1791 and never really recovered, raising prices and opening large opportunities to rival producers. *Émigrés* from Saint Domingue also brought their expertise to these rivals. The planters of the United States, Cuba, and Brazil were the main beneficiaries, partly because they had huge areas that could be brought into cultivation and because they proved capable of

¹² An argument I make in *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 293–330, 419–72, but see also Davis, *Slavery in the Age of Revolution*; Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York, 1989). For the revolutionary contribution to gradualism and democracy, see Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston, 1966).

maintaining slave subjection. The slaves were a large minority, not a majority. Slave owners needed to be sure of the support of the state and of the great majority of free citizens. In Brazil and Cuba, the big planters and merchants reduced the danger of conflict by cleaving loyally to the reigning monarchy while seeking to give the slave order a broader social basis and persuading the authorities to encourage the export economy. Small proprietors were given some recognition. Free people of color, a few of them slaveholders, had civil liberty but few privileges and no access to political power. In the United States, the southern slaveholders, who were a minority even in their own states, needed support in the North as well as the South from white, nonslaveholding, and nonpatrician fellow citizens. The formation of the Democratic-Republican party helped to achieve this vital goal.

Thomas Jefferson's anti-Federalist campaign of the 1790s expressed his deep republican convictions and his concern that the Jay Treaty with Britain had been far too accommodating. But it also furnished a bold response to the plumes of smoke rising from the plantations in Saint Domingue, the effect being to prevent a repetition of such events by extending support for the planters among the most radicalized sections of the population. Democratic-Republicanism offered enhanced rights and status to white citizens and in so doing helped to adapt the colonial patronage complex linking American slavery and American freedom to the new formula of a "white republic."¹³

As Secretary of State, Jefferson at first had little sympathy for the planters of the French Caribbean and opposed their plots to secede with British help. The event that "upset all calculations" and necessitated "an entirely new policy" was neither the uprising of August 1791 nor the emancipation decree of 1794. It was instead the rallying of insurgent blacks in July 1793 to defend Léger Félicité Sonthonax, the commissioner in Saint Domingue, from a white colonists' revolt that marked a new revolutionary type of threat to the slave order.¹⁴

As a Jacobin and member of the Société des Amis des Noirs, Sonthonax had been appointed as someone likely to vigorously promote

¹³ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, Haymarket Series (London, 1990).

¹⁴ Michael Zuckerman, "The Color of Counterrevolution: Thomas Jefferson and the Rebellion in San Domingo," in *The Languages of Revolution*, ed. Loretta Valtz Mannucci, Quaderno Series (Milan, Italy, 1989), 83–107 (quotations, 91). Winthrop D. Jordan also draws attention to Saint Domingue's effect on Jefferson but does not pinpoint this particular event (Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* [Chapel Hill, N.C., 1968], 375).

the revolutionary National Convention's strategy of allying with the free people of color against the treachery of white colonists who were conspiring with the British. Sonthonax formed new colored battalions and cracked down on counterrevolutionary conspiracies. Nevertheless the white colonists managed to win over General François Galbaud, the newly appointed governor-general of Saint Domingue, and in June 1793 he ordered the arrest of the commissioner. Sonthonax only escaped from Galbaud's clutches thanks to the initiative of black republican troops commanded by Jean-Baptiste Belley. Later elected to the National Convention, this man has become the iconic black Jacobin, attired in his French deputy's uniform and proudly gazing out from Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson's 1797 painting. The commissioner turned on his assailants by taking three fateful steps. He promoted black Jacobins, including Belley and Colonel Pierre Michel, to key commands in Cap Haitien, the port of the northern plain. He formed an alliance with Louis Pierrot, one of the chiefs of the black insurgency who had not rallied to the Spanish forces but maintained an independent column in the hills and mountains beyond the northern plain. And when a mass assembly of fifteen thousand new and old citizens in Cap Haitien called for general emancipation on August 24, 1793, Sonthonax responded five days later with a decree of general emancipation throughout the north.¹⁵

At a desperate moment for the republic, Sonthonax was going beyond his instructions and powers. The Girondists who had sent him were rather moderate abolitionists; the Atlantic merchants wanted to save the colonies from slave revolt as well as treason and free trade. Indeed the Girondists conferred full citizenship on all free colonial men in an April 1792 decree in response to the emergency created by slave revolt and the doubtful loyalty of many colonial whites. It was hoped that the free people of color, who included many slave owners, would be a source of stability as well as loyalty.¹⁶ But when Galbaud's revolt obliged Sonthonax to choose, he decided the best way to save Saint Domingue for France was to call on the black rebels and commit the republic to emancipation. Jefferson was still close enough to the spirit of revolution to grasp what was happening.

Jefferson distrusted the first refugees from Saint Domingue and privately opined that if these royalists and aristocrats were sent to live among the Indians, they might learn something about liberty and equal-

¹⁵ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 156–63; Florence Gauthier, "Conclusion—Richebourg: Comment abolir l'esclavage à Saint Domingue? 1793," in *Périssent les colonies plutôt qu'un principe! Contributions à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage, 1789–1804* (Paris, France, 2002), 108.

¹⁶ A point made by Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté*, 436.

ity. In 1792 and the first months of 1793, it also seemed that the rebellious blacks had become instruments of the royalist cause. Yet everything changed in July 1793 with the defeat of Galbaud. About six thousand colonists together with several thousand of their colored servants or slaves set sail from Saint Domingue and sought haven in North American ports. They brought stories of atrocities and of narrow escapes from rampaging blacks. Like other white North Americans, Jefferson was affected by the plight of the refugees, many of whom, being destitute, threw themselves on the charity of American authorities. Jefferson did not see how the federal government could help, but he urged the governor of Virginia to do what he could to offer succour.¹⁷

The events of the summer of 1793 in Saint Domingue prompted Jefferson to take the measure of new threats and new opportunities. The juncture between black revolt, colored rights, and the policy of a major power greatly alarmed the Virginian without leading him to abandon his public stance in favor of the French Republic. He had justified slavery by insisting that the slaves were too wild and unruly to ever be good citizens. The uprising of August 1791 and the subsequent decision of many black chiefs to enlist under the banner of the Spanish Bourbon king did not challenge this view. But July 1793, when black Jacobins foiled a royalist plot, was the beginning of a powerful challenge to Jefferson's line of argument. With the rise of Toussaint-Louverture, who became lieutenant governor of the French colony in 1795, it became clear that, so long as the republican power based itself on the former slaves' aversion to bondage, it could count on the support and discipline of most blacks. Indeed the good order of Toussaint-Louverture's demibrigades was noted by many observers. Jefferson evidently found the discipline and republicanism of free blacks more disturbing than the unruliness of slaves. Whatever his high-minded protestations about republican liberty and some future emancipation of slaves, Jefferson's determinate allegiance was to the slave order.¹⁸

On July 14, 1793, Jefferson wrote to James Monroe: "I become daily more and more convinced that all the West India islands will remain in the hands of the people of colour, and a total expulsion of the whites

¹⁷ The effect of the refugees is brought out vividly in Ashli White, "A Flood of Impure Lava': Saint Dominguan Refugees in the United States, 1791-1820" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2003).

¹⁸ Wills, "Negro President," gives many examples. Haiti and Louisiana furnished critical tests of the sincerity of Jefferson's claim that he would act against slavery if the right opportunity presented itself. For the major role of the French and Haitian revolutions in shaping the outlook of Southern planters, see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *The Mind of the Master Class: History and Faith in the Southern Slaveholders' Worldview* (Cambridge, 2005), 11-68.

sooner or later take place. It is high time we should foresee the bloody scenes which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves (South of Patowmac) have to wade through, and try to avert them.”¹⁹ Jefferson was now writing about the people of color as protagonists of history and identifying a need for a counterstrategy. Unlike President John Adams and the Federalists, Jefferson did not think that the answer was a rapprochement with Britain. Rather Jefferson believed that France must certainly be persuaded to abandon its unworthy representatives—Toussaint-Louverture as well as the inept and provocative envoy Edmond-Charles-Edouard Genet—and to give up its emancipationist policy. But joining the former colonial power in fighting the French Republic, as President Adams was to do during the Quasi War of 1797–1801, Jefferson thought a great betrayal and a great error, whatever the provocations offered.

The two U.S. parties had somewhat different positions on slavery. The northern Federalist leaders patronized manumission societies and were more likely to support “free womb” laws in the North. The Adams administration favored business with the new leader of Saint Domingue so long as he welcomed U.S. traders and abandoned French attempts to export slave insurrection. Toussaint-Louverture, alarmed by signs that the *colons* were regaining influence in Paris, was happy to accept American help. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering sent a secret envoy to the black general in 1798 offering support. Subsequently, U.S. warships helped Toussaint-Louverture to overpower an opponent, mulatto general André Rigaud, who was closer politically to France. Toussaint-Louverture, for his part, undertook to end attempts to export slave insurrection, though he could not speak for the remaining French commissioners. The significant help extended to Toussaint-Louverture by the Adams administration could have been a source of national pride, either then or later, but, as David Brion Davis observes, it has instead usually gone unnoticed.²⁰

When Jefferson became president in 1801, he offered Napoleon Bonaparte every assistance in isolating Saint Domingue and promised, as the French envoy reported, to “reduce Toussaint to starvation.” This stance was quite consistent with Jefferson’s willingness to describe

¹⁹ “To James Monroe,” July 14, 1793, in John Catanzariti, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), 26: 503.

²⁰ Sometimes the Federalists’ moderate antislavery initiatives served to unmask or divide the Republicans. The tentative nationalism of the Federalists was less comfortable with slaveholding than the fierce patriotism of the Republicans. Foreign policy differences were to dramatize this different emphasis. See Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *The Nationalist Ferment: The Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789–1812*, trans. Lillian A. Parrott (Columbus, Ohio, 2004), 25–44. Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, 7. See, however, David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York, 2001), 519–21.

Toussaint-Louverture and his supporters as “Cannibals of the terrible republic” in a letter to Aaron Burr in 1799. When writing to James Monroe in November 1801, however, he made a significant admission during a discussion about where it would be best to deport unruly blacks: “The most promising . . . is the island of St. Domingo, where the blacks are established into a sovereignty *de facto* & have organized themselves under regular laws & government.”²¹ Notwithstanding this judgment Jefferson was happy to deny Toussaint-Louverture any recognition and to support a return to slavery and French rule.

Napoleon was drawn into his attempt to restore slavery by Britain and the United States. Dubois cites a note from Henry Addington, the British prime minister, on peace negotiations with France, in which he explains: “The interest of the two governments [the British and the French] is absolutely the same: the destruction of Jacobinism and above all that of the Blacks.” It is easy to see why Britain, the United States, and Spain, with their valuable slave plantations, would welcome the destruction of the new black power yet more difficult to see why Napoleon allowed himself to be led into this disastrous enterprise. The revolutionary policy in the Caribbean had inflicted huge losses on his main enemy, the British. Some, such as Mississippi’s territorial governor Winthrop Sargent, feared that Napoleon would ally himself with Toussaint-Louverture and use Saint Domingue as a base from which to launch a new antislavery offensive in the Caribbean with the help of colored troops. Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, the French foreign minister, reported to the French ambassador in London in November 1801 that Napoleon was of two minds. If the British did not allow a large French expedition to sail for the Caribbean unmolested, then it might be necessary to “recognize Toussaint” and the new “black Frenchmen,” since this recognition would create “a formidable base for the Republic in the New World.”²² Talleyrand

²¹ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President, First Term, 1801–1805* (Boston, 1970), 4: 252–53; Charles Callan Tansill, *The United States and Santo Domingo, 1798–1873: A Chapter in Caribbean Diplomacy* (Baltimore, 1938), 87. For Jefferson’s evolving policy toward Toussaint-Louverture and Napoleon, see Tim Matthewson, “Jefferson and Haiti,” *Journal of Southern History* 61, no. 2 (May 1995): 209–48; Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport, Conn., 2003). Matthewson generously credits Jefferson with distaste for slavery, but his own research demonstrates the hollowness of the Virginia planter’s occasional wistful expressions of a commitment to emancipation. See also Thomas Jefferson to Aaron Burr, Feb. 11, 1799, in Mary-Jo Kline and Joanne Wood Ryan, eds., *Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 1: 390 (“Cannibals”); Jefferson to James Monroe, Nov. 24, 1801, published as an appendix to Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York, 1999), 276–79 (quotation, 278).

²² Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 366–67 (quotation, 367). For the metropolitan context following Napoleon’s seizure of power, see the contributions by Yves B  not,

counted on the French envoy's using this threat to bring the British to accede to French demands.

The First Consul actually was loath to recognize black leaders he thought of as "gilded negroes." Instead of simultaneously alienating the rulers of Britain, Spain, and the United States, he counted on pleasing them all. Since "the Spanish, the English, and the Americans also are dismayed by the existence of this black Republic," he noted, they would see the "common advantage" to the "Europeans" of "destroying this rebellion of the blacks."²³ The attempt to restore slavery was bound to make it far more difficult to regain control in Saint Domingue. The British had protected and maintained slavery following their occupation of the French island of Martinique in 1794, so their 1801 offer to return the island to France was as compromising as it was tempting. Jefferson was happy to encourage Napoleon in a course of action that would yield advantage whatever the outcome—weakening or destroying either Toussaint-Louverture or Napoleon, or both—and perhaps facilitate a deal for Louisiana.

Given the French undertaking to destroy black government in Saint Domingue, neither the British nor the Americans objected to the dispatch of the Charles-Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc expedition. Napoleon later complained that émigré colonists and merchants and their suborning of his ministers led him into the trap. But to him the plantations of the New World were a glittering prize, and he saw the vulnerability of Spain and Portugal with their valuable colonies. The secret treaty with Spain for the retrocession of Louisiana was part of this grand vision, and in 1802 he gave orders for a large French force to sail for New Orleans. At this point he clearly meant Louisiana to again become a French colony, but events conspired to frustrate him. Freak weather prevented the expedition from sailing. Even more ominously, Leclerc, after an encouraging start, came up against mounting resistance and needed all the troops that could be spared. In these difficult circumstances, the option instead of selling Louisiana came under consideration. From his recent sojourn in Philadelphia, Talleyrand was well aware that members of the American elite—his own friends—took an acute interest in Western lands.²⁴

Marcel Dorigny, Bernard Gainot, Thomas Pronier, and Sabine Manigat in Bénét and Dorigny, eds., *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802: Ruptures et continuités de la politique coloniale française (1800-1830)* (Paris, France, 2003), 7–28, 51–68, 109–28. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 260 ("recognize Toussaint").

²³ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 255 ("gilded negroes"), 256 ("this black Republic").

²⁴ See Robert L. Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue in the Making of Territorial Louisiana," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater*

Jefferson, who distrusted Napoleon, had been concerned about the size of the Leclerc expedition and worried that Louisiana might be its real aim. Even if it restored slavery, this expedition was an alarming prospect. Preventing France from taking possession of Saint Domingue by military means would have been extraordinarily hazardous.²⁵ So U.S. policy tilted back to black resistance. The American authorities denied French forces the supplies they had been expecting and allowed their merchants to supply the insurgents. Later, as Leclerc became bogged down in an increasingly hopeless struggle, Jefferson was made aware that he might acquire Louisiana if he offered a large sum to the cash-strapped Consul along with the hope of U.S. support in the likely event of renewed conflict with Britain. Napoleon accepted the deal. Though apparently a huge sacrifice of territory, Louisiana, the French knew, would be difficult to defend from British attack. Moreover such a handsome bargain would earn American goodwill and give French commanders in Saint Domingue a last hope of retrieving the situation.

The United States thus acquired vast new territories suitable for plantations. Congress and President Jefferson ratified the treaty, and the Louisiana Territory was to be permitted to import slaves from other states, thus boosting demand for and prices of slaves from Virginia. Given a buoyant slave population, Virginia planters did not need Atlantic slave imports, and the transatlantic slave trade's ending helped to increase the value of slaveholdings.²⁶

The more reckless planters and merchants of South Carolina worried those outside their state by reopening international slave traffic in 1803, thus unintentionally assisting the case for banning it. Jefferson had nearly doubled the land area of the United States thanks to the tenacious resistance of the freedom fighters of Haiti. Yet the black state remained the target of unremitting hostility. It not only was denied recognition but also became the object of a proposed embargo. Jefferson was alarmed at reports that Britain was helping Haiti. He proposed to the British

Caribbean, ed. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington, Ind., 2003), 204–25. François Furstenberg supplies a fascinating account of the French émigré milieu in Philadelphia in an unpublished seminar paper.

²⁵ Gordon S. Brown, *Toussaint's Clause: The Founding Fathers and the Haitian Revolution* (Jackson, Miss., 2005), 210–12, 221–22.

²⁶ I discuss the reasons for the rapid increase in Virginia's slave population in Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London, 1997), 465–71, and the motives that prompted most planters to support the ending of the Atlantic slave trade in Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 286–87. As famously argued by Adams, *History of the United States* (see footnote 2), Alexander Hamilton made essentially the same point. See Paquette, "Revolutionary Saint Domingue," 211.

minister in March 1804 that “the Governments who have Colonies in the West Indies” should negotiate “an Agreement not to suffer the former [slaves] to have any Kind of Navigation whatsoever or to furnish them with any Species of Arms and or Ammunition.” Jefferson’s move to quarantine Haiti elicited a remarkable letter of protest from Pickering, the former secretary of State, now a senator from Massachusetts: “The wretched Haitians (‘guilty’ indeed of skin not colored like our own), emancipated by a great national act and declared *free*—are they, after enjoying freedom many years, having maintained it in arms, resolved to *live free or die*, are these men not merely to be abandoned to their own efforts but to be deprived of those necessary supplies which for a series of years, they have been accustomed to receive from the United States, and without which they cannot subsist?”²⁷ The U.S. embargo of the black republic was formally adopted in 1807, shortly before similar measures were applied to Britain.

The Haitian resistance to Napoleon encouraged abolitionist sentiment in Britain and the northern United States. In Britain the campaign against the Atlantic slave trade revived after 1804, helped by events in the French Caribbean. On hearing of Toussaint-Louverture’s death, William Wordsworth published an eloquent tribute in the London *Morning Post*. James Stephen, shortly to become a member of Parliament, urged an alliance with Saint Domingue against the French dictator and devised a strategy that successfully persuaded Parliament to accept a partial slave trade ban. Lord Henry Brougham, another abolition strategist, composed an influential pamphlet urging that it was folly to import large numbers of captive Africans to the British plantation colonies at a time when revolt was flaming nearby. Following the British victory at Trafalgar in 1805, he saw abolition of the Atlantic slave traffic as a fitting symbol of the *Pax Britannica*. In 1807 Britain and the United States ended legal participation in the Atlantic slave trade. So far as the United States was concerned, the formula of the white man’s republic was quite compatible with setting limits on slavery and ending the slave trade, just as it was with establishing a *cordon sanitaire* (quarantine) around Haiti. A few thousand more slaves arrived in New Orleans and were allowed to stay when their masters were forced to flee Cuba in 1808.²⁸

²⁷ Matthewson, *Journal of Southern History* 61: 233. Jefferson quoted in Wills, “*Negro President*,” 44. See also Donald R. Hickey, “Timothy Pickering and the Haitian Slave Revolt: A Letter to Thomas Jefferson in 1806,” *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 120, no. 3 (July 1984): 149–63.

²⁸ Abolitionism was weaker in the United States than Great Britain in the 1780s but recovered a little around the turn of the century. In the 1780s emancipation measures had been voted down in New York and New Jersey. A gradual emancipation measure passed in New York in 1799; it was sponsored by a Federalist yet

It is not possible here to furnish a proper account of the Haitian Revolution itself or to supply the missing chapter from *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, but its originality and interdependence on other links in the revolutionary sequence can be signaled. The waves of revolt that swept Saint Domingue after August 1791 wrought great damage on slave owners, yet their emancipationist outcome was not preordained. The Haitian Revolution appealed to the romantic imagination but cannot be understood by reference to the seductive and romantic idea that slaves were bound to rebel, bound to champion a general emancipation, and bound to triumph or fail. Resistance has been ubiquitous in slave systems but has usually been particularistic, seeking freedom for a given person or group, and frustrated. In fact the Haitian Revolution is the only successful large-scale and generalized slave revolt known in history.

The slavery encountered in Saint Domingue and throughout the New World had been invented by planters and colonial officials using European legal notions. Rather than dispute a legal concept, slaves often sought to extend concessions they had already won. Much slave resistance in Saint Domingue in the early 1790s took the form of demands for land and for three free days a week instead of one. Though the slaves on some plantations freed themselves simply by running away, those on others remained, unwilling to leave provision grounds that they saw as rightfully theirs. David Patrick Geggus has observed that the decision to abandon a plantation was usually taken collectively, with the disposition of the slave elite playing a key role.²⁹ The phrase slave community had a reality notwithstanding the hierarchy and heterogeneity between Creole and African-born slaves or between those from a variety of African nations. The racialized structure of exploitation fostered a countervailing solidarity, since only those of African descent were enslaved. This racial logic was complicated because free-colored masters owned about a

attracted Democratic-Republican support as well. In 1804 New Jersey followed suit. These measures freed the sons of slave mothers when they reached twenty-eight years of age in New York and twenty-five in New Jersey, with their daughters freed at age twenty-one. To those with no stake in the slave system, such a moderate approach agreed with the spirit of the times and would remove a source of conflict. For the role of Haiti and renewed war with France in the resurgence of British abolitionism in 1804 and after, see Chester W. New, *The Life of Henry Brougham to 1830* (Oxford, Eng., 1961), 21–31; Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810* (London, 1975), 344–46; Davis, *Slavery in the Age of Revolution*; Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, 300–316. For the introduction of slaves in Louisiana, see White, “Flood of Impure Lava,” chap. 6. In an earlier chapter, she explains that “French negroes” (210) were widely regarded as unreliable and subversive.

²⁹ David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793–1798* (Oxford, Eng., 1982), 311.

fifth of the slaves in the colony. The colored proprietors, unlike the whites, lived in the colony. Though some threw in their lot with the white proprietors, most of the *ancien libres* came to oppose slavery. Toussaint-Louverture himself had been a freedman and his wife a slave owner.

To take the measure of the Haitian achievement, scholars must dig beneath ready-made notions—whether of purely heroic rebels or of implacable caste hatreds—to bring to light the forging of new identities and new ideals in a colony where they already spoke a new language (*Kréyol*) and practiced a new religion (voodoo). The title of C. L. R. James's classic study, *The Black Jacobins*, challenged the ideas that emancipation had been a gift bestowed by the republic and that slave revolt was its own program. The black Jacobins found something in the ideology of the French Revolution that helped them to elevate and generalize their struggle. Yet at the same time they brought experiences in a slave society and memories from Africa that radicalized the ideas they appropriated from and eventually defended against France itself. The travail of Africa's sons and daughters in the New World gave a new scope and meaning to the freedom they claimed. Enumerating the diversity of black revolutionary inspiration, Laurent Dubois cites the example of one captured and killed insurgent who was found in possession of pamphlets about the rights of man, a packet of tinder, phosphate, and lime, and a sack of herbs, bone, and hair (a fetish in the Haitian voodoo religion). Dubois comments: "The law of liberty, ingredients for firing a gun, and a powerful amulet to call on the help of the gods: clearly, a potent combination."³⁰

Whereas the well-known leaders of the revolution in Saint Domingue, whether *nouveaux* or *ancien libres*, were mainly born in the Americas, the same was not true of the mass of soldiers and midlevel leaders. Because of heavy imports in the 1770s and 1780s, more than half the slaves in the French colonies were African born by 1789. They brought with them African ideas and methods of struggle. The slave rebels often employed guerrilla tactics that they may well have practiced as soldiers in Africa prior to capture. The failure of well-armed British, French, and Spanish forces in Saint Domingue testified to the deep aver-

³⁰ For Laurent Dubois' comment, see *Avengers of the New World*, 102–3. Dubois' new studies are a great help here. Whereas *Avengers of the New World* concentrates on the tangle of events that ended in the founding of Haiti, sifting reality from myth yet allowing myth its due as well, *Colony of Citizens* focuses on the Atlantic sweep of revolution in France and the French Caribbean, with special attention to the role of the less well-known but crucial events in Guadeloupe. Another historian focuses more exclusively on Guadeloupe itself. See Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté*.

sion of the former African and Creole slaves to slavery, whatever the disappointments of freedom.

But at what point did the mass of rebels adopt the ideal of a generalized liberty? In November 1791 the main black leaders negotiated a deal with the republican commissioners that would have freed only themselves and four hundred followers. C. L. R. James branded this deal an abominable betrayal. Maroon leaders had often reached similar agreements and even helped to suppress other revolts, so this judgment is harsh. Yet perhaps a new standard was being established and James was right to judge the leaders by it: French documents quoted by French historian Pierre Pluchon report the black leaders as demanding “liberty” as early as September 1791. Carolyn Fick has drawn attention to a widespread revolt around Les Platons in the south, animated by comprehensive hostility to the planters, that preceded the rising on the northern plain by nearly eight months. She conveys the rebel attitude by quoting a soldier’s letter: “They come and treat us as if we were the brigands and tell us: ‘*nous après tandé zaute,*’ which is to say, ‘we had expected you, and we will cut off your heads to the last man; this land is not for you; it is for us.’”³¹

Not until two years later, on August 29, 1793, did rival leaders Léger Félicité Sonthonax, the republican commissioner, and Toussaint-Louverture, still a Spanish general, issue unambiguous decrees freeing all slaves within their jurisdiction, their timing no doubt explained by the August 24 call for such a general emancipation by the gathering at Cap Haïtien. Sonthonax’s decision to issue official decrees not only in French but also in *Kréyol*, the language spoken by the great mass of the slaves, was a highly significant mark of his seriousness. Scholars do not know whether Toussaint-Louverture knew of the emancipation decree of Pluiose (February 1794) when he deserted the Spanish and joined the French republicans at the end of April 1794. He was near the port of Gonaïves, so he may have heard about it. Whether he had firm news of

³¹ Dubois explains that the first written account of the Bois-Caïman ceremony that launched the 1791 revolt dates from 1814 and the now generally received version stems from an account published in 1824 by Herard Dumesle, a Haitian writer steeped in classical authorities. Herodotus put suitable eve-of-battle speeches into the mouths of barbarian chiefs—“let us die fighting rather than live on our knees”—just as he did with Roman generals. So was the commitment to liberty cited by Pluchon a faithful record of the oral tradition or a classical trope? Historians cannot know for sure, but Dubois argues that the widespread adoption of the Bois-Caïman legend in Haitian voodoo is itself historically significant. See Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 432–33. For the invocation of “liberty” by a rebel chief, see Pierre Pluchon, *Toussaint Louverture de l’esclavage au pouvoir* (Paris, France, 1979), 26. For the quotation from a soldier’s letter, see Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1990), 156.

the emancipation decree, he knew the strength of Spanish resistance to such a move and would have had a tangible hope that the French Republic would be more welcoming to him and the cause of emancipation.³²

The former slaves of Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe abandoned plantation toil wherever they could, instead devoting themselves to subsistence cultivation. They appreciated the luxury of free time, the convenience of meeting their own needs through their own efforts, and, in many cases, the security of a parcel of land they were prepared to defend. Saint Domingue had been the richest New World colony in part because of the elaborate irrigation works and roadworks built by French engineers with slave labor. This infrastructure had fallen into ruin, and finding the labor, skills, and materials to maintain it was another critical challenge. Without proper irrigation little more than subsistence cultivation was possible, which severely constrained the possibilities of revolutionary Saint Domingue and later Haiti. But only force, not unreliable offers of pay, kept some of the former slaves at work.³³

Toussaint-Louverture in Saint Domingue and Victor Hugues in Guadeloupe sought to impose heavy labor obligations on the former slaves with uneven success. When Toussaint-Louverture's troops annexed Spanish Santo Domingo in 1801, he did not immediately free the slaves. His draconian attempt to restore plantation labor in the same year met with widespread resistance. In Saint Domingue the new peasants preferred to clear some space in the forest than to return to the harsh and ill-paid work of the plantations. Guadeloupe's small size and the special role of Hugues' expedition in bringing emancipation made it easier for the authorities to keep the former slaves working and later to return many of them to slavery. The 1802 reimposition of slavery in Guadeloupe by the French authorities, however, was only

³² The issue is discussed by David Patrick Geggus in an informative collection, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. During two decades Geggus has made a huge contribution to researching the revolution in Saint Domingue; the introduction to this collection supplies a valuable overview.

³³ See Blackburn, *Making of New World Slavery*, 434–37. In my view Sibylle Fischer goes too far in denying the heavy weight of such economic factors in constraining the outcome of the Haitian Revolution in her valuable study, *Modernity Disavowed*. Some of Haiti's new rulers later tried to use militarized labor to work the plantations. Henry Christophe, ruler of the short-lived northern kingdom, had some limited success, but after his overthrow in 1820 such efforts were deemed unrealistic. The peasants of Haiti simply refused to be dragooned, and armed irregulars sometimes came to their aid. The revolution persisted, thanks to their tenacity in the struggle for the control of time, land, and movement, through several changes of formal jurisdiction, whatever the stance of the famous leaders.

achieved after a bitter struggle. In 1802 the heroic stand of Guadeloupe's colored commanders and soldiers at Matouba helped to raise the alarm in Saint Domingue as to Napoleon Bonaparte's true intentions. Dubois notes that several whites took part in what became a protracted war of resistance.³⁴

Napoleon's attempt to reintroduce slavery in Saint Domingue should not be allowed to obscure the earlier contribution to emancipation made by Maximilien de Robespierre and the French Directory. Revolutionary France would not have embarked on the emancipation policy without the pressure of the slave revolt, as Fick and others have rightly argued. Equally, however, the emancipationist regime in Saint Domingue would probably not have survived without the French Republic's backing during the years from 1794 to 1799. In 1792 the revolutionary authorities had sent a man of known radical antislavery convictions to be its commissioner. His actions ensured that emancipation would become the policy of a major power. The February 1794 decree was backed up by the arrival of large quantities of weapons and ammunition and the fostering of several dozen slave revolts, the most formidable being those in the eastern Caribbean in Saint Lucia, Grenada, and Saint Vincent. Heavy British losses in the eastern Caribbean had helped persuade them to negotiate with Toussaint-Louverture in 1798. In a study of the *Guerre des Bois*, or Brigand's War, which inflicted such heavy casualties on the British, David Barry Gaspar quotes celebrated commander General John Moore, directing operations in Saint Lucia, as declaring: "The Negroes in the island are to a man attached to the French cause; neither hanging, threats or money would obtain for me any intelligence from them. Those upon the estates are in league with and connected with those in the woods." He later added: "Their attachment and fidelity to the cause is great; they go to death with indifference. One man the other day denied, and persevered in doing so, that he had ever been with them or knew anything of them. The instant before he was shot he called out 'Vive la république!'"³⁵ This antislavery

³⁴ Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 415–16. For some reason the planters never succeeded in restoring night work in the sugar mills on Guadeloupe. See Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté*, 347.

³⁵ Carolyn E. Fick, "The French Revolution in Saint Domingue: A Triumph or a Failure?" in Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*, 51–77. Sonthonax's antislavery convictions are well documented in Robert Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (Cranbury, N.J., 1965). But see also Bénot, *La Révolution française*. General Moore is quoted in David Barry Gaspar, "La Guerre des Bois: Revolution, War, and Slavery in Saint Lucia, 1793–1838," in Gaspar and Geggus, *Turbulent Time*, 102–30, esp. 115–17.

république may have lasted barely a half dozen years and the considerations that animated it may often have been opportunistic or even sordid, but without it and the breathing space it allowed to the emancipation regime in Saint Domingue, Haiti might never have come into existence.

Victor Hugues as commissioner in Guadeloupe in the years 1794–98 fostered slave revolt and sent out more than thirty privateering vessels to prey on enemy shipping. The effectiveness of his privateering policy and the stream of prize goods he sent back to France may help to explain why the Thermidorian regime pursued such a bold policy in the Caribbean. The Société des Amis des Noirs was reconstituted, and support for slave emancipation throughout the Caribbean signaled the influence of a neo-Jacobin movement to which Sonthonax, the former commissioner, and Laveaux, the general who had welcomed and supported Toussaint-Louverture, both belonged.³⁶ But with Napoleon's rise, all these men were removed from official posts with the exception of Hugues, who helped to restore slavery as governor of Guienne.

At one moment or another, the American and British authorities found it convenient to side with Toussaint-Louverture against France. The help given by Robespierre, the French Directory, and the neo-Jacobins was less tactical, being intended to weaken slavery. When France sought to regain control of Saint Domingue, a moment came when all the famous leaders had capitulated or been defeated. At this moment, as James emphasizes in *The Black Jacobins*, the fate of the revolution was sustained by myriad largely anonymous black freedom fighters. Though African and French revolutionary ideas no doubt helped to inspire them, so did their common experience of the New World's intense, oppressive, and racialized system of slavery.

The revolution that founded the Haitian state was marked by great loss of life, much destruction, and many violations of the rules of war. Slave uprisings, war to the death against the British, Spanish, and French, and the struggle for power between black and mulatto leaders led to

³⁶ Bernard Gainot, "La Société des Amis des Noirs et des colonies, 1796–1799," in *La Société des Amis des Noirs, 1788–1799*, ed. Marcel Dorigny and Bernard Gainot, La Route de l'esclave (Paris, France, 1998), 299–396. Admiral Laurent Jean François Truguet, the colonial minister, was also linked to this neo-Jacobin group. He fostered an alliance with the colored peoples of the Caribbean against the various slave orders. Laurent Dubois quotes him as writing to Bonaparte in 1799, defending the emancipation policy and denouncing those who "dared call themselves French" while supporting slavery (Dubois, *Colony of Citizens*, 352).

atrocities and bloodshed. New World slavery was a violent, arbitrary, and racialized institution imposed on a diverse population of captives. Attempts to escape, overthrow, or restore it thawed the frozen race war that it represented. Slave owners and their henchmen fought to keep their slaves in subjection, and their actions were backed by the strongest Atlantic states.

Toussaint-Louverture's rise reflected not only his prowess as a commander but also his awareness of the political and moral factors at stake in the conflicts engulfing Saint Domingue. As a black general, he was known sometimes to urge a policy of clemency toward prisoners, and his staff numbered several key white and mulatto aides. He was said to have conducted his former owner and his family to safety in August 1791 before joining the rebels. On one occasion he addressed a magisterial rebuke to a British officer, General John White, whose troops had executed prisoners: "I feel that though I am a Negro, though I have not received as fine an education as you and the officers of His Britannic Majesty, I feel, I say, that such infamy on my part would reflect on my country and tarnish its glory."³⁷

Toussaint-Louverture's willingness to join forces with the French Republic was also consistent with this approach. He explained his conduct to the French Directory in terms of a stern new moral order: "Whatever their color, only one distinction must exist between men, that of good and evil. When blacks, men of color, and whites are under the same laws, they must be equally protected and they must be equally repressed when they deviate from them." With some exceptions (mainly the war against André Rigaud), Toussaint-Louverture generally sought to frame broad alliances, to abstain from race war, to concentrate overwhelming force, and to reduce violence not needed to prevail. Other leaders were less deliberate and strategic. The wives of Henri Christophe and Jean-Jacques Dessalines appealed for clemency, yet their husbands routinely practiced extraordinary violence, often racially targeted. The first declaration of independence issued by these generals acknowledged and apologized for "the cruelty of a few soldiers or cultivators, too much blinded by the remembrance of their past sufferings."³⁸ Allowing that it was not just a few, any such admission and apology is nevertheless

³⁷ James, *Black Jacobins* [1938 ed.], 201.

³⁸ Toussaint L'Ouverture to the French Directory, "Letter to the Directory, 28 October 1797," in George F. Tyson Jr., *Toussaint L'Ouverture, Great Lives Observed* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1973), 43; "Declaration of the Independence of the Blacks of St. Domingo," Nov. 29, 1803, repr. in Malick W. Ghachem, ed., *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804: An Exhibition at the John Carter Brown Library (May to September 2004)* (Providence, R.I., 2004), 26-27 (quotation, 26).

highly unusual in documents of this type. Colonial wars and civil wars have been notoriously pitiless, and the fighting in Saint Domingue partook of both types of conflict. Dessalines was killed in 1806, Christophe ruled a northern kingdom until overthrown in 1820, and Alexandre Sabès Pétion ruled the Republic of Haiti in the south from 1806 to 1818, when he was succeeded by Jean Pierre Boyer. Pétion and Boyer were mulattoes, but their republican ideology sought to assert the unity and equality of all Haitians. Though military action determined these successions, they were not characterized by generalized killing and racial war.

The British and French leaders bear full responsibility for the violence that stemmed from their own attempts to return Haitians to slavery, for which they never apologized. The racial strife and communal bloodletting that attended the collapse of the old order in Saint Domingue were not accompanied by the racial myths and ideology that were to disfigure the colonialism and wars of the next two centuries.³⁹ The constitution of 1805 was prefaced by its signatories' declaration that they stood "in the presence of the Supreme Being, before whom all mor-

³⁹ Seymour Drescher's verdict is harsh: "In . . . late twentieth-century retrospective, the age of the democratic revolution was also recognized as an age of racial and genocidal conflict. In that respect . . . the Haitian Revolution anticipated more of the world's future than Frederick Douglass could have imagined a century ago" (Drescher, "Limits of Example," 10–14 [quotation, 13]). Drescher's observation would be on the mark as an observation aimed at attempts to suppress the revolution but, as formulated, it is too generalized. Though it is entirely right to face up to the often-bloody record of the democratic revolutions, the old order also bears responsibility. The prior existence of a flourishing system of racial and colonial slavery set the scene for racial conflict. Napoleon's attempt to reimpose slavery, like other colonial wars, did indeed acquire a genocidal quality, and Haitian leaders, who were resisting a system of white supremacy, often portrayed their struggle in racial terms and were responsible for terrible acts (though some tropes of counterrevolutionary propaganda, such as the famous dead white baby impaled on a pike supposedly used by the rebels as a standard, lack credible authentication). But these facts should be balanced by recognition that, in their better moments, the French and Haitians of the revolutionary epoch had written indispensable and innovative indictments of slavery and racial oppression. The language that modern societies use to reject racism has its roots in such indictments. Without Condorcet, Jean-Baptiste Belley, Toussaint-Louverture, Louis Pierrot, Magloire Pelage, Admiral Truguet, Alexandre Pétion, and so many anonymous black *picquets*, the work of William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Simón Bolívar, Vicente Guerrero, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Victor Schoelcher, and Joaquin Nabuco would have had a quite different and even more daunting starting point. In writing about the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation, historians certainly should not forget the carnage of the Civil War or that slavery was soon replaced by Jim Crowism, but ignoring or discounting these momentous words on that account would surely be wrong.

tals are equal, and who has scattered so many species of beings over the surface of the earth, with the sole goal of manifesting his glory and his might through the diversity of his works." While forswearing wars against their neighbors, the leaders of Haiti later offered their territory as a haven to the oppressed. In 1816 Pétion issued a constitution that included an article proclaiming: "All Africans and Indians, and those of their blood, born in the colonies or in foreign countries, who come to reside in the Republic will be recognized as Haitians, but will not enjoy the right of citizenship until after one year of residence."⁴⁰

Christophe and Pétion eventually established rival concepts of a new order based on the suppression of slavery and mayhem. African and Creole, *ancien libres* and *nouveaux libres*, black and mulatto could all unite against projects to reimpose slavery and could also discover that they needed one another. As a Haitian saying explains, *Chak nwa gen mulat li, chack mulat gen nwa li* (Each black has his mulatto and each mulatto has his black).⁴¹ As a result of the revolution, Haitians had a species of citizenship as well as social freedom, and from 1821 this citizenship was rooted in a unified state. The relative ineffectiveness of the Haitian state was not a matter of great concern to many peasants and town dwellers who used their new freedom to elaborate a rich folk culture. The weakness of the Haitian state limited civic participation, but it also limited the state's capacity to interfere in the lives of the peasantry. Whereas the population of Saint Domingue had only been maintained by huge annual imports of captive Africans, Haiti's population roughly doubled by 1830.

British abolitionists corresponded with Haitian leaders and were gratified when the Haitian warship *William Wilberforce* apprehended a Spanish slave-trading vessel in 1819. Seymour Drescher points out that

⁴⁰ "Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805," in Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 275–81 (quotation, 275). Article 12 declared that whites would not be able to own land, Article 13 that this stipulation did not apply to already-naturalized white women or to naturalized Germans and Poles, and Article 14 that "all distinctions of color will by necessity disappear . . . Haitians shall be known from now on by the generic denomination of blacks" (*ibid.*, 276). Though Haiti was an empire, succession was to be "elective and non-hereditary." Any ruler who departed from the constitution was to "be considered to be in a state of war against society" and the Council of State was to remove him (*ibid.*, 277, 238). This constitution limited white access to citizenship to those whites already covered in the 1805 clauses, but since this coverage encompassed all the whites in the country, it should not be equated with the restrictions on black citizenship in the United States. See David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti* (Cambridge, 1979).

⁴¹ It is beyond the scope of this article to give an account of postindependence Haiti, but see Sheller, *Democracy after Slavery*.

Haiti's achievement and survival were saluted by British abolitionists in 1823 when Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and others announced the campaign for slave emancipation. Awareness of Toussaint-Louverture's epic struggle grew slowly but steadily until it became a major abolitionist theme, inspiring the work of Victor Schoelcher and Alphonse Marie Louise Prat de Lamartine in France as well as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips in the United States. The governments of Pétion and Boyer offered a haven to people of color, something appreciated by African American sailors and vexing to U.S. officials. The very existence of Haiti emboldened African Americans to reach for freedom, as Denmark Vesey, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass testified.⁴² For their part Southern slaveholders eventually became so alarmed that in 1861 they opted for the huge gamble of secession. The fear of slave violence had always been a fundamental ingredient of the slave order, helping to cement solidarity among those not enslaved. Yet with the Haitian Revolution came a new fear of emancipation as a state policy, which slaveholders found much more difficult to live with.

Haiti had saved the honor of the New World revolutions. Americans declared a new ideal of popular sovereignty but only succeeded in founding a white man's republic, according power and honor to white slaveholders, none to enslaved African Americans, and precious little to free blacks. The French Revolution first ignored slavery, then accorded civic rights to colored proprietors. Only in 1793–94, at a time when the wealth and patriotism of the planters was suspect, did it forge an alliance with insurgent blacks and strike down what remained of slavery in the colonies it still controlled. The slaves had taken advantage of the turmoil to reach for freedom by myriad revolts, escapes, and demands for the control of land and time. A small group of black and white military and political leaders committed themselves to an emancipationist policy in mid-1793 and eventually, under the leadership of Toussaint-Louverture, defeated the British. When France under Napoleon changed its mind, the new citizens fought tenaciously to defeat him, eventually establishing the first state in the world to be founded on the rejection of

⁴² James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1770–1860* (New York, 1997), 262–63; W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge, La., 1988); Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford, Eng., 2002), 100–105. Hunt's work gives many examples of Haiti's double influence, as warning to some and inspiration to others.

slavery and citizenship for all. This protracted and bloody struggle set off a wave of alarm in all those parts of the Americas where slavery was to be found, prompting slaveholders and public authorities to look to extra guarantees and new political alignments. The failure of all attempts to crush the new black power also encouraged opponents of slavery and supplied an urgent reason for Britain and the United States to finally achieve the long-contemplated ending of the Atlantic slave trade in 1807. In 1816 the president of the Haitian republic helped Simón Bolívar to radicalize the Spanish-American revolutionary struggle and to ensure that none of the new Spanish-American republics would be based, as were colonial Cuba, imperial Brazil, and the antebellum United States, on a slave economy. The Haitian revolt showed the great vulnerability of slave colonies where slaves comprised more than four-fifths of the population and encouraged American, Cuban, and Brazilian planters to establish a broader social basis. On many occasions, not just in 1803, U.S. foreign policy was shaped by Haiti or what it was believed to stand for.

A pan-American and transatlantic perspective is required to really make sense of these events or what they portended, whether one considers attempts to shore up the slave systems, reactions against the new slave power, or the outlook of the now-more-numerous free people of color. The blinkers of national historiography are always a problem but never more so than in an epoch where nations were still in formation or unstable, and there was a many-sided intercourse between them. This instability is perhaps obvious enough in South and Central America or on the island of Santo Domingo. It also applies to the fluctuating and uncertain borders, indeed the fluctuating and uncertain identity, of "these United States," which some preferred to think of as "Columbia" at this time.

Though new expedients had secured an extra term for slavery in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil, the institution was still haunted by what had happened in Saint Domingue. The sequence of revolutions meant that there were narrower limits to the New World slave system in North and South America and a growing free-colored population that was to agitate for equal rights and against slavery. Antislavery laws in Mexico and South America encouraged abolitionist movements in Europe. These movements only achieved major breakthroughs at times of great crisis: in the British West Indies in 1833 after the 1831–32 slave uprising in Jamaica and the Reform Act of 1832 and in the French Caribbean in the early weeks of the revolution of 1848, coinciding with a mass desertion of plantations. In turn these events helped to encourage the embattled ranks of abolitionists, white and black, male and female,

in the United States. The torch of freedom and citizenship in this way crisscrossed the Atlantic no less vigorously than the trade in slave produce, sustaining new communities and new values and eventually vanquishing slavery in the New World.