

Contours of the Haitian Past; Glimpses of the Future



**W. FRANK ROBINSON
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**

Haitian Revolution



Overview



“It was the first time in human history that enslaved people had destroyed a slave system, declared themselves rulers, and maintained that status in the face of open international hostility. The Haitians did this at a time when the entire hemisphere remained engulfed in slavery. They were the first in the modern period to declare the complete, simultaneous, abolition of African trading and slavery, and the universal right of man to be free of enslavement.”

Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd

“We should not forget that the freedom you and I enjoy today is largely due to the brave stand taken by the black sons of Haiti ninety years ago . . . striking for their freedom, they struck for the freedom of every black man in the world.”

Frederick Douglass

Haiti



The Haitian Revolution



Introduction: racial equality, abolition of slavery, decolonization, nationhood

1791-1803: largest and most successful slave revolt

profound consequences: inspiration and warning

Saint Domingue in the 1780s

“Pearl of the Antilles”

1. size
2. economic power

Three tier structure

1. white community
2. free colored sector
3. slave population: largest in Caribbean - diversity

Age of Atlantic Revolutions



American Revolution



French Revolution



Bois Caiman

Ulrick Jean -Pierre





Cap-Français is burning. The first uprising of the slaves burst forth on August 23, 1791, on the island of Saint-Domingue. The revolts, persisting until June 1792, unleashed widespread fire and devastation. Peace returned during the summer of 1792, when the French government recognized political equality between whites and the gens de couleur. Under pressure exerted by the new elites, represented by generals including Toussaint Louverture, the National Convention signed the decree for the abolition of slavery on February 4, 1794.



View of the 40 days of fire of the plain houses at Cap-Français. August 23rd, 1791

Haitian Revolution



Toussaint Louverture

1. creole who belonged to slave elite
 2. African roots
 3. manipulation and deception
 4. black self-liberation
 5. clash with Napoleon Bonaparte
- similarities
new constitution
annexation of Santo Domingo
invasion

Toussaint Louverture (1743–1803)

detail, artist unknown (New York Public Library)



Statues of Toussaint Louverture



Port-au-Prince

Miami



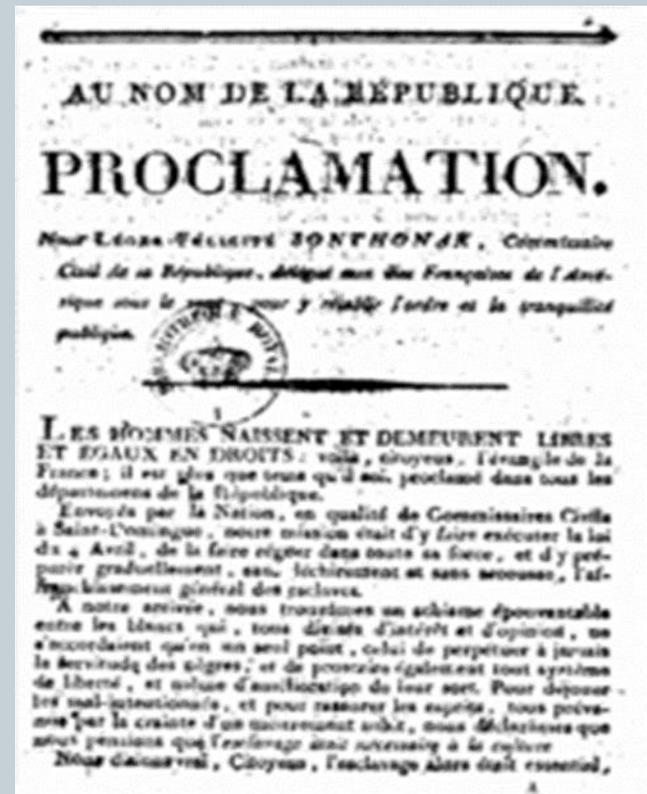
André Rigaud (1761–1811)
mulatto military leader



Abolition of Slavery 1793

Léger Félicité Sonthonax

Title page of a 1794 publication of Sonthonax's proclamation abolishing slavery





Portrait by
Anne-Louis Girodet Trioson

Jean-Baptiste Belley (c. July 1746 – August 1805) was a native of Senegal and former slave from Saint-Domingue in the French West Indies who during the period of the French Revolution became a member of the National Convention and the Council of Five Hundred of France.



Napoleon Bonaparte in the Coup d'état of 18 Brumaire

Francois Bouchot



The Coronation of Napoleon

Jacques-Louis David



War of Independence 1802-1803



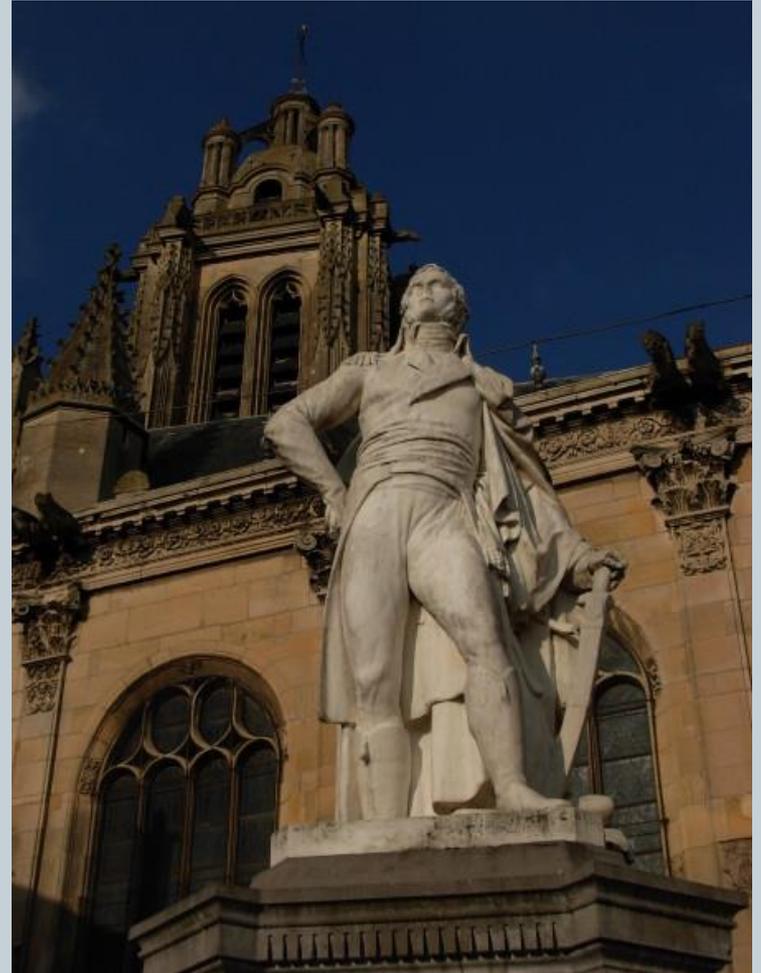
French Invasion

General Charles Leclerc

1. guerrilla tactics and disease
2. Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe
war of terror – “Burn houses and cut off heads”
3. hopeless venture

Charles Victoire Emmanuel Leclerc

(17 March 1772 – 2 November 1802)



Louverture Died in Fort-de-Joux on 7 April 1803



Jean-Jacques Dessalines



Henri Christophe



Destruction of the North Coast



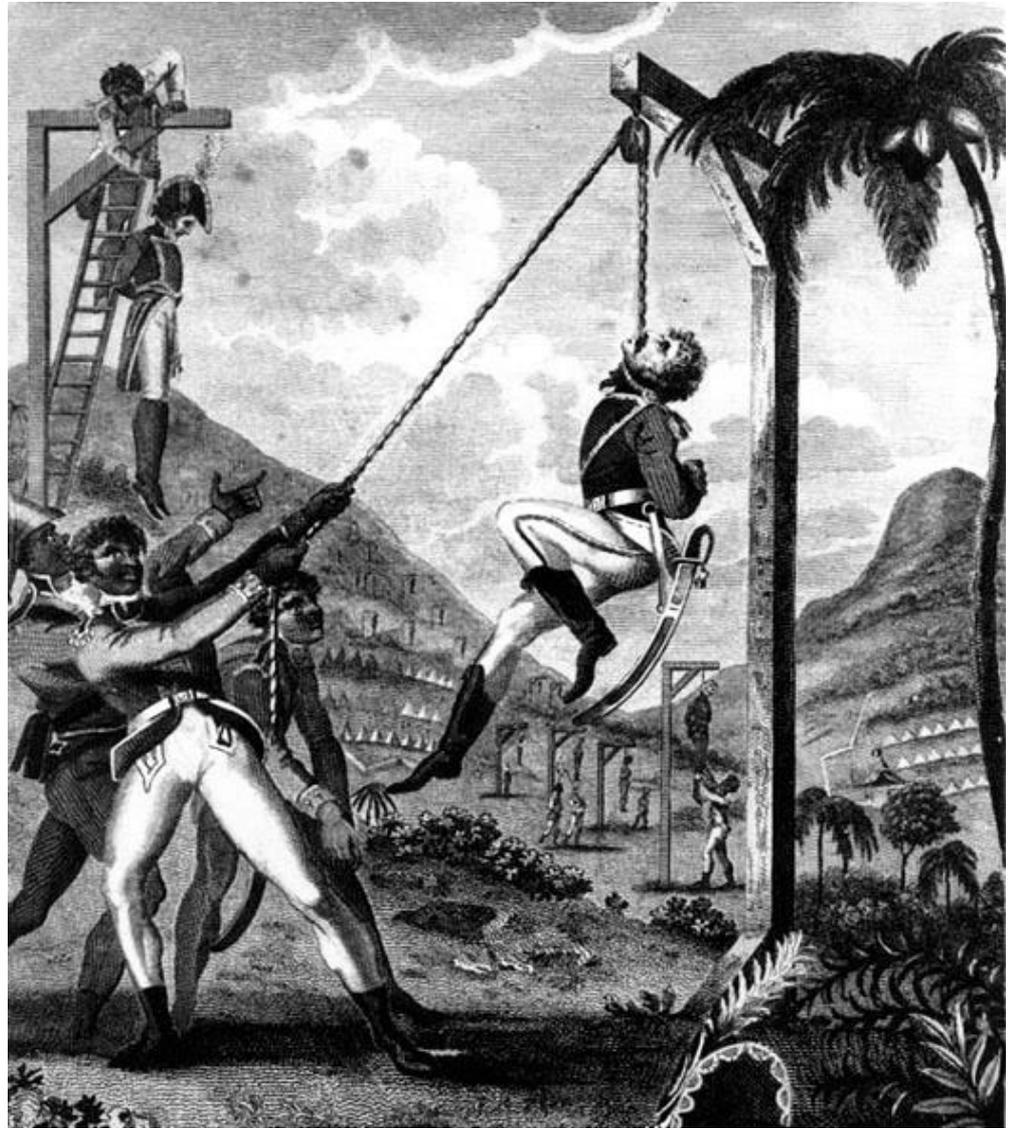
Battle of Palm Tree Hill

January Suchodolski. (1845)



Battle of Vertieres

Jean Jacques Dessalines won the last major battle of the Haitian revolution, the Battle of Vertieres in November 1803, against Napoleon's troops, then the most powerful army on earth, and strung up a few of the French officers



Vertieres Cap Haitian



Repercussions and Legacy



Independence

1. “Haiti”
 - a. symbolic break
 - b. black freedom and accomplishments
2. difficulties and obstacles
3. Dessalines acclaimed Emperor Jacques I
4. split – Christophe in North; Pétion in South
5. Jean-Pierre Boyer
 - a. unity of north and south
 - b. Hispaniola ruled from Port-au-Prince

Christophe's Vision



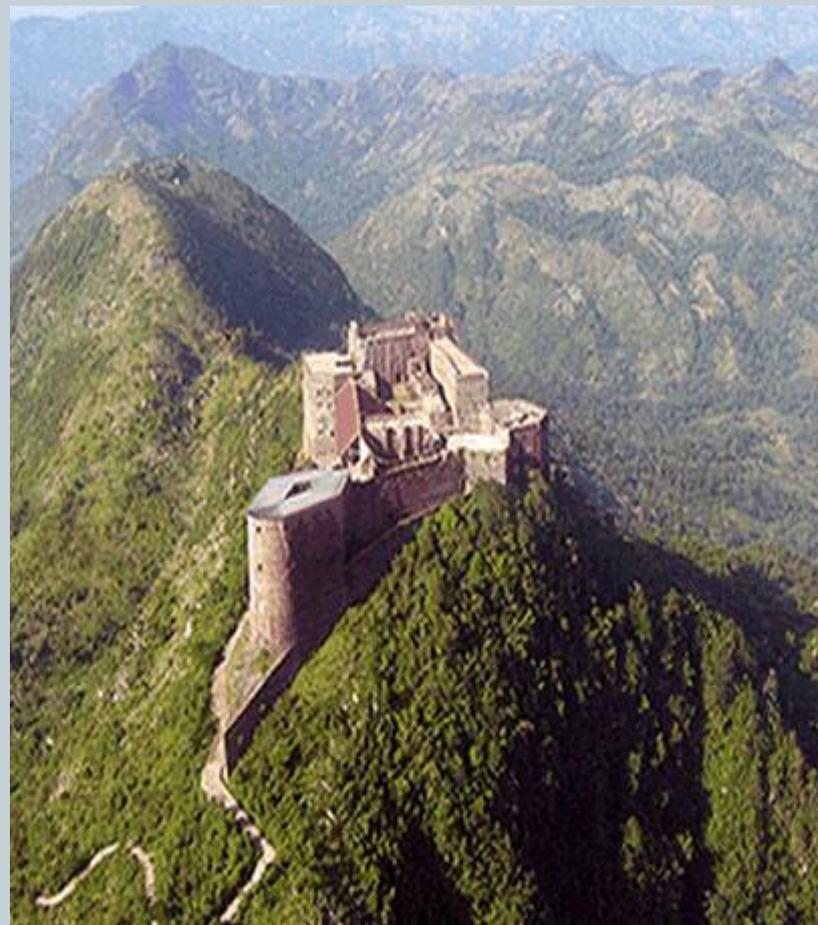
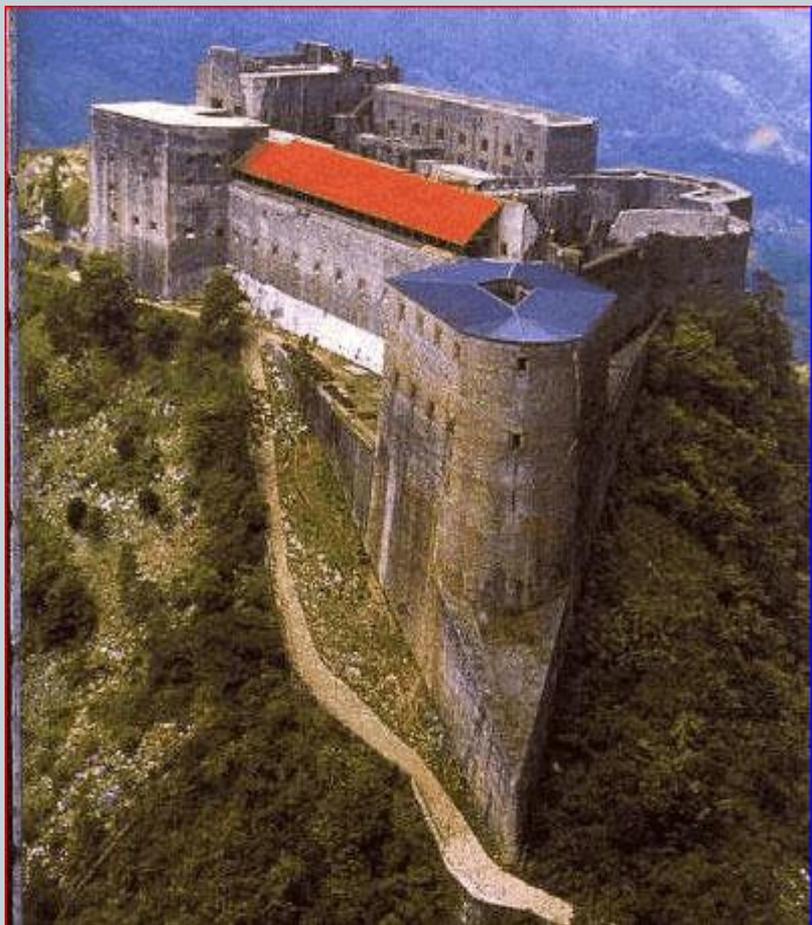
Palace of Sans-Souci



Citadelle Henri Christophe



Citadel Laferrière



Citadel



Jean Pierre Boyer

