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A Single Finger Can't Eat Okra: The Importance of Remembering the Haitian Revolution in United States History

by

Ashleigh Shoecraft

Submitted to Scripps College in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Bachelors in Arts

Professor Aaron Silverman
Professor April Mayes
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April 20, 2012

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements…….. i

Foreward…….. ii

Introduction……...…….... 1

Chapter One—*A Leaky Roof may Fool the Sun, but not the Rain*: The…….. 11
Ideological Imprint of the Haitian Revolution on the United States

Chapter Two—*What the Eye Doesn't See Doesn't Move the Heart:* …… 32
[Un]Conscious Denial, Institutionalized Silence, Representative Recognition

Chapter Three—*Only When the Serpent Dies do you Know its True Length:*…… 54
Bringing the Haitian Revolution to the U.S. History Classroom

Conclusion……...…….... 72

Bibliography……...…… 76

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I have hated this thesis since the first ten source annotations were due in September. It has been a thorn in both my side and my schedule. I have cursed it countless times (and Scripps for making me write it), taken my aggression out on two laptops, both of which have broken during this process, and I have spent many an hour procrastinating, wishing it away, and praying it would write itself. Yet now that it's "finished," I must admit that I am grateful for both the experience, as well as for the collective body of mentors and friends who have helped me along the way. As the title says, "a single finger can't eat okra," and I have no pretensions that I could have done this alone. Thus, many thanks are in order…

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Foreword

I can distinctly recall my first encounter with Haiti— the events that led to my discovery of it, the emotions evinced as I listened to a native Haitian describe the first Black Republic. In the tenth grade, my world history teacher Mr. Haefer assigned a project for each student to interview an immigrant. Given that I attended a predominantly Asian school, my peers chattered amongst themselves as they listed the varying relatives, neighbors, and family friends they would ask, while I sat at my desk racking my brain for even one immigrant in my seemingly holistic Black community. None came to mind. I went home and told my mom about the project and how I was thoroughly screwed given the narrow cultural pool we had to draw from. It was then that she reminded me that Mr. Bruno, one of the deacons at our church, had immigrated to the United States from Haiti. It was here that my passion for Haiti began.

As an African American from a fairly politicized family, I wouldn't describe my attitude towards the United States in terms of nationalistic fervency, even as a young high school student. Thus, no words can fully encompass my reaction as I listened to the love, passion, excitement, joy, and yet sorrow, with which Deacon Bruno elucidated the history of his homeland. Sitting in that interview, I came to understand that Haiti's history was *my* history, a part of the history of all African diasporic peoples, a part of the history of the United States, and a part of the history of the world. There was an overflow of pride radiating out of him as he narrated the Haitian Revolution and its larger significance to the world as the first society to successfully uproot slavery, and as the pioneer in the universal application of human rights. Deacon Bruno discussed the subsequent struggle for diplomatic recognition with the same pride. It was as if the rest of the world's denial

of Haiti only further testified to its significance. It was silenced and hidden, but only because the Western world knew it was something *worth* hiding. He discussed the role of Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected president, with an expression of love and appreciation for a man who deeply cared for the poor and for the plight of the masses of struggling Haitians. And he discussed the United States' role in the 1994 coup with a mixture of resentment, confusion, and sorrow.

For the rest of my high school experience, I would try to satiate a hunger for understanding Haiti's history birthed during that short encounter with Bruno. I learned of the Revolutionary Leader, Toussaint L'Ouverture, of the United States' role in the slaughter of Haitian pigs, of the prevalence of the Haitian Revolution in Harlem Renaissance art and literature, and of the former Bishop, Jean Bertrand-Aristide. I developed a special affinity for the plight of children—restavek girls and homeless young boys with nowhere to turn in post-dictatorship Haiti. Yet no matter how much I consumed, there was always an emptiness that remained to be filled: there was nowhere that I could engage in conversations about Haiti. Though I nerdishly educated my friends on the Haitian Revolution, the aspect of Haitian history that enthralled me the most, ignorance plagued the subject and was the defining undercurrent in nearly every conversation. Few knew that Haiti was even a nation, let alone that it had undergone a revolution. Stereotypes of Haiti as racked by poverty, vodou, and political instability informed the way Haiti was viewed. Thus, though pride marked Bruno's response to the silencing of the Haitian Revolution, I came to the realization that there had yet to be a process of unsilencing, despite the span of over two centuries that had passed since the initial attempts to deny it.

In college, my passion for Haiti has often taken a backseat to my introduction and exploration of other silenced histories, yet for my capstone project, I return to this nation that first sparked my passion for history with a particular focus on the questions of relevance and restoration. The questions driving my thought process are: How was the Haitian Revolution relevant to the history of the United States? and how can the legacy of the Haitian Revolution be restored and the prevailing ignorance cease to exist? Next year, I will be attending the Stanford Teacher's Education Program in preparation for a life-long career as an educator. Thus, in this work I seek to meld theory and praxis by exploring the particular uses of the Haitian Revolution in the U.S. History classroom as a tool for both demystifying the historiographic process, and rectifying the prevailing ignorance surrounding Haiti.

Introduction

Yon sel dwet pa manje kalalon
"A single finger can't eat okra"
-Haitian Proverb

In Haiti, when someone says *yon sel dwet pa manje kalalon*, translated in English to mean "a single finger can't eat okra" they are speaking to the power, indeed the necessity of the collective in accomplishing a singular goal. As a Black woman, such sayings are not unfamiliar to me. They align quite nicely with "four hands are better than two," or "it takes a village." Yet, as an African *American*, one question has always lingered: How does one reconcile this cultural emphasis on the collective as it conflicts with the national emphasis on the individual? While African diasporic communities celebrate community and the beauty of dependence, the United States prides itself on being the "Self-Made Man," a self-constructed nation with individualism at the core of its national values. In the media, in schools, and frequently in the home, U.S. Americans are taught to celebrate this vision of the United States, and yet also to view the rest of the world through a similar lens of self-responsibility.[1] What often is not taught, however, is how to critique and deconstruct these images. Though debates have raged about the importance of multicultural education and critical pedagogy, little has been done to destabilize U.S. American exceptionalist narratives, which hinge on individualism. Such destabilization will be the focus of this paper. Though few are aware of the historical bearing for remembering Haiti within the larger scheme of United States history and the tale of American exceptionalism, this paper will re-situate Haiti, and more specifically

[1] During the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, for example, the media was rampant in tracing Haiti's current economic plight back to its dictatorial history. A systemic look at the role the United States played within that was offered by few. Haiti's problems were "self-made."

the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), within the larger United States historical narrative in order to ultimately advocate for its incorporation into classroom curriculum.

Given the relative ignorance of the average U.S. American on the Haitian Revolution, it is first necessary to briefly describe it. Yet, one cannot fully grasp its magnitude without first understanding the history of slavery in pre-revolutionary St. Domingue. Christopher Columbus's crossing of the Atlantic in 1492 initiated trade relations between Europe, America, and Africa and completely transformed the societies of each continent economically, socially, psychologically and ideologically. As indigenous populations were conquered, colonists established plantations. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Caribbean became one of the largest sources of sugar, coffee, and indigo, satisfying the high demands of European markets. This satisfaction came at the expense of millions of Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Caribbean to serve as the labor force needed to sustain the developing, but soon to be thriving system of merchant capitalism.[2] Between 1502 and 1853, over 10.4 million Africans were shipped to the New World. Between 1700 and 1790, nearly 700,000 Africans were enslaved and shipped to the French colony Saint Domingue, the western third of Hispaniola, and what we know of today as Haiti. These Africans served as the labor force needed to cut and harvest sugar cane.

At the start of the Haitian Revolution, the slave population in St. Domingue accounted for a third of the entire Atlantic slave trade. As such, St. Domingue was home of some of the largest, best organized, and most productive plantations in the Caribbean. One way this was maintained was through cruelty. Excessive violence paired with

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[2] Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: 2006), 8.

extreme conditions of agricultural production due to the harshness of the sugar crop caused St. Domingue to amass more enslaved Africans than any other colony in the New World after Brazil. It was cheaper to work a slave to death and purchase another than to supply a slave with livable conditions, thus making the system regenerative. Upon stepping foot on St. Dominguan soil, approximately half of all Africans would die within eight years of plantation life from malnutrition, disease, and overwork.[3] Despite, or perhaps because of this, by the eve of the Haitian Revolution, St. Domingue was the world's leading producer of both sugar and coffee, exporting as much sugar as Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil combined. Such productivity made it what John Garrigus called: "The centerpiece of the Atlantic system."[4] It produced over forty percent of Europe's sugar and over sixty percent of its coffee.[5] As the most lucrative West Indies colony, St. Domingue was considered indispensable to ensuring the stability of the European economy.

Just as the historical context of pre-revolutionary St. Domingue sets the stage for understanding the scale of the events in St. Domingue, it is also important to understand the way rebellion was conceived in the minds of the vast majority of Whites prior to its occurrence. Though today slavery and resistance seem to go hand in hand, if you were to ask eighteenth century slave owners to describe their plantation systems, they would undoubtedly agree on the security of the wretched system in place. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot and historian C.L.R. James agree that insurrection on the scale of the Haitian Revolution was "unthinkable."[6] In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Trouillot argues that the idea of large scale revolt was

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[3] Ibid.
[4] John Garrigus, "White Jacobins/Black Jacobins: Bringing the Haitian and French Revolutions Together in the Classroom." *The Society for French Historical Studies* (2000), 268.
[5] Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution,* 8.
[6] Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: 1995), 72.

"unthinkable in its time: it challenged the very framework within which proponents and opponents had examined race, colonialism, and slavery in the Americas."[7] The ideological discourse for slavery had been rationalized and justified. In the eyes of Whites, the slave regime had been successfully implemented and was secure.[8] Though slave revolt was a constant looming possibility, success was unfathomable. C.L.R. James in his foundational, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* articulates: "The science of history was not what it is to-day and no man living then could foresee as we can foresee to-day, the upcoming upheavals…How could anyone seriously fear for such a wonderful colony? Slavery seemed eternal..."[9] Yet colonial administrators were soon to be confronted with a situation not imagined even in their worst nightmares.

On August 14, 1791, with torches in one hand and daggers in the other, the spirit of slave resistance spread like a flood across the Northern Province of St. Domingue. Slaves set plantations on fire, sending them up in a blaze of flames and massacring any Whites who escaped. In the weeks following, they managed to consolidate their gains and transform themselves into a powerful insurgent army that held out against repeated assaults, attacks, and counterattacks by French troops. Acting out of retribution, hatred, and anger, those enslaved began a massively destructive campaign to burn down every plantation in St. Domingue. What would later become known as the "Haitian Revolution" had begun. Maroon bands, mulattoes, the formerly enslaved and free Blacks alike, all mobilized in order to secure the end of slavery and later, independence from French rule.

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[7] Ibid, 82.
[8] Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution,*15.
[9] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (Toronto: 1963), 55.

A little over twelve years later, on January 1, 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti a free and independent Republic, making it the first independent state in Latin America, the second independent American republic, and the third successful national Revolution in the world, after the United States and France. The former slaves rejected the name "St. Domingue" imposed upon them by their colonial oppressors and instead reclaimed that of the Arawak people native to the island: *Ayiti*.[10] Soon, Haitians confronted similar questions of nationalism and state identity that the United States had confronted not long before.

The impact of the Haitian Revolution was immeasurable. It was significant to the history of the Atlantic slave system, to the history of de-colonial and anti-imperial struggles, to the history of France, and to the history of the United States. To other slave societies, the Haitian Revolution became an example of what could be accomplished and a source of hope that figured prominently in the imaginations of enslaved peoples across the New World.[11] According to Yale Professor David Brion Davis, "Like the Hiroshima bomb, [the Haitian Revolution's] meaning could be rationalized or repressed but never really forgotten since it demonstrated the possible fate of every slave holding society in the New World."[12] According to historian Robin Blackburn, "Napoleon's defeat in Haiti was in fact a defeat for all the slave powers of the New World."[13] At the same time, however, the Haitian Revolution rapidly mobilized all pro-slavery forces. To those who defended slavery, the Haitian Revolution became an illustration of the detrimental effects

[10] Dubois, "History of the Revolution," 25.
[11] Ibid.
[12] David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions." *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. David Geggus, Ed. (Columbia: 2001), 4.
[13] Robin Blackburn, "The Force of Example." *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*. David Geggus, Ed. (Columbia: 2001), 17.

of emancipation. Meanwhile, "imagery of the great upheaval hovered over the antislavery debates like a bloodstained ghost" and abolitionists around the world held up St. Domingue as proof of the need for emancipation. While the Haitian Revolution began as a challenge to French colonial authority, it soon became a battle over racial inequality, and then over the existence of slavery itself. By creating a society in which all people irrespective of color were granted both freedom and citizenship, the Haitian Revolution shamed Western nations that claimed to be forerunners in advocating for human rights, and laid the foundation for continuing human rights struggles everywhere.[14]

Numerous works have been written on the impact of the Haitian Revolution on France, and throughout the Caribbean. However, relatively few works have explored the in-depth effects of the Haitian Revolution on the United States.[15] Yet the Haitian Revolution, having occurred a mere eight years after the American Revolution (1775-1783), a period during which the United States was still developing materially, economically, and ideologically, greatly impacted this development. According to Deborah Madsen, "American Exceptionalism," the belief that the formation of the United States was divinely inspired and thus that the United States is inherently superior to the rest of the world, permeates every period of U.S history, and has been "the most powerful agent in the construction of American identity."[16] This notion of exceptionalism united U.S. Americans after the American Revolution, and it was in dialogue with the events in

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14 Davis, "Impact," 5.

15 Notable works on this subject include Ashli White's *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (2010), Tim Matthewson's *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (2003), Alfred Hunt's *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America: Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (2006), Brenda Plummer's *Haiti: The Psychological Moment [Haiti and the United States]* (1992), and Ludwell lee Montague's *Haiti and the United States, 1714-1938* (1966).

16 Deborah Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: 1998), 1.

St. Domingue that this sense of exceptionalism was reinforced, challenged and ultimately secured.

As such, the Haitian Revolution is one of the earliest lenses through which the history of American Exceptionalism can be seen as a transnational one and thus undermine the self-made narrative of U.S. history. Such ideas will be explored in the first chapter of this paper. Chapter One, "*A Leaky Roof may Fool the Sun, but not the Rain*: The Ideological Imprint of the Haitian Revolution on the United States," will overview the effects of the Haitian Revolution on the United States, revealing the ways that the United States' interactions with St. Domingue during the revolutionary period simultaneously reinforced the United States' exceptionalistic construction of itself, primarily by facilitating the Louisiana Purchase, and thus expansionism, while at the same time calling American exceptionalism into question by putting an emphasis on slavery as a contradiction to the United States' professed republican values. Though previously established American Revolutionary values seemed secure at the surface, the Haitian Revolution revealed their instability and necessitated a patch job to reaffirm and resituate exceptionalism, the nationalistic glue that held the nation together.

Moreover, as a symbol of the abolition of slavery, the Haitian Revolution profoundly impacted the psychology of Whites in the United States, striking terror in the hearts of the vast majority irrespective of one's position on slavery. White Americans viewed the events in St. Domingue as potentially prophetic for their own situation, which precipitated widespread and institutional silencing of the Haitian Revolution in an attempt to shield U.S. American slaves from the subversion of the Haitian Revolution. This is discussed in greater detail in the second chapter, "*What the Eye Doesn't See*

Doesn't Move the Heart: [Un]Conscious Denial, Institutionalized Silence, Representative Recognition." This situates mainstream newspapers, then, tools of political parties, as having played a prime role in orienting public perceptions of St. Domingue. While these newspapers attempted to make the unthinkable thinkable over the course of the nineteenth century through faulty depictions of the Haitian Revolution that completely delegitimized slave agency, African American newspapers were active in alerting their audiences to the reality that a certain representation of Haiti was being inscribed within the national memory. Despite their cries, however, by the time the United States officially recognizes Haiti, "St. Domingue" as a symbol in the United States psyche had been transplanted from its historical reality, and thus well into the 1890s, figures such as Frederick Douglass were still attempting to separate the reality of Haiti from its symbolic presence in the United States and the stereotypes that engulfed it. In this sense, as an event that U.S. Americans were enamored with and then that completely fell out of the United States consciousness, the Haitian Revolution can shed insight into the historiographic and socio-historical process of silencing and the power the United States had in preserving their self-proscribed image of exceptionalism through appropriating and propagating a particular vision of Haiti which persists today.

Given the prevailing ignorance surrounding Haiti and the persisting prejudices, the focus of the final chapter, "*Only When the Serpent Dies do you Know its True Length:* Bringing the Haitian Revolution to the U.S. History Classroom," is restoration. Amidst ongoing debates on the uses of history education in an increasingly multicultural society, the critical pedagogy approach to the Haitian Revolution in the classroom can provide students with a critical framework through which to assess much of what is taught as

United States history. The traditional narrative of the United States is that of manifest self-formation. Likewise, there is a tendency to project this same self-responsibility onto other nations, even those that have fallen victim to the imperial influences of world powers, such as Haiti. The main goal of this work is to disrupt these "self-made" narratives, especially that of United States history and reveal the historical continuity and intersectionality between Haiti and the United States. Just as "a single finger can't eat okra," the United States did not divinely rise up as the powerful nation it is today by itself. Rather, it relied on Other nations to construct and preserve its identity in binary relation to them. In the case of this thesis, "them" is Haiti. At the same time, it is my hope that the incorporation of Haiti can serve as a springboard into analyzing other United States- foreign relations.

The moment of the Haitian Revolution was foundational. It was the first case of United States foreign aid and an early opportunity to navigate exceptionalist values, yet it was by no means the last. United States interactions with Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, and many other countries also facilitated the development of Americanism and had an indelible impact on the way U.S. Americans perceive themselves today. This chapter will offer an analysis of existing works on incorporating Haiti in the classroom, and offer lessons plans for even more insight into classroom application, using Haiti as a catalyst for exploring the history of the United States through the lens of the Other.

Lastly, it is important to note that despite Haiti's rich history, often when people mention it, it is rarely because of its own historical merit, but rather as a footnote in the history of some other dominant nation. This is not what I am attempting to do here. I

firmly believe that Haitian history can stand alone and need not be taught within a larger historical narrative of Western nations. However, for the sake of this paper, my attempt is to find a way to integrate it into the mold of history courses already in place in U.S. society. Of the few works out there, arguments have been put forth on its importance to world history or European history. What is taken for granted in arguments by U.S. American authors advocating for its viability in United States classrooms is that the importance of Haiti is more direct than many can see due to the way it has been inscribed. According to one of the leading scholars in history education reform, Howard Zinn, "students should be encouraged to go into history in order to come out of it, and should be discouraged from going into history and getting lost in it."[17] Though the first history lessons do not occur in the classroom, the classroom should be a place that helps students "come out" of history, wherever learned, and to use those lessons learned from history as a tool to better understand and assess the world.

[17] Barbara Miner, "Why Students Should Study History: An Interview with Howard Zinn." *A People's History for the Classroom* (1994), 8.

Chapter One—
The Leaky House Fools the Sun, but not the Rain: The Ideological Imprint of the Haitian Revolution on the United States

Kay koule tronpe soléy men li pa tronpe lapli
"The leaky house fools the sun, but not the rain"
-Haitian Proverb

The Age of Revolutions began in 1776 with American Revolutionaries rejecting the distant and nonrepresentational authority of British Parliament, expelling all royal officials, and drafting the United States Declaration of Independence. After seven years of conflict and war, by 1783 with the Treaty of Paris, the British formally abandoned any claims to the United States.[18] Not long after, in 1789, French Revolutionaries building upon the enlightened ideals of the American Revolution, rejected the absolute monarchy that had ruled France for centuries. Within three years, that absolute monarchy had collapsed. Soon, French society endured a complete transformation as feudal, aristocratic, and religious privileges dissolved due to a persistent attack from the masses that did not end until the conclusion of the Revolution in 1799. Values of tradition and hierarchy were replaced by secular principles of egalitarianism, citizenship, and inalienable rights.[19]

With the storming of the Bastille in France and the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, colonials in St. Domingue re-appropriated the ideals of their colonial possessors. The large class of wealthy free people of Color pounced at the opportunity to seek citizenship and rights. They fought relentlessly for representation in the National Assembly, repeatedly appealing to the republican principles of the French

[18] Charles Toth, *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite: The American Revolution and the European Response* (Toth: 1989), 26.
[19] William Doyle, ed. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution.* 2nd edition (Oxford: 2003), 73-74.

Revolution amidst a rising terror against them to suppress such efforts.[20] At the same time, the weakness of the St. Domingue government loosened the rivalries between petit and grand blancs,[21] the White lower and upper classes. Around slogans of liberty and equality, Whites fought for supremacy—the French Revolution had upset the delicate social hierarchy in St. Domingue that had held colonial society together.[22] As the universalist ideals of the French Revolution created deep rifts in St. Domingue, slaves seized upon these values. C.L.R. James, in his classic text on the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins,* writes: "They had heard of the revolution and had construed it in their own image: the White slaves in France had risen and killed their masters, and were now enjoying the fruits of the earth…they had caught the spirit of the thing. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."[23] The slaves had been watching and listening. "Is it surprising that in such circumstances, the negroes tried to take advantage of the division of the Whites, and even to increase it as much as they could in order to diminish the strength of their enemies?" asked Laurent Dubois, in *The Story of the Haitian Revolution: Avengers of the New World.*[24] The answer that goes unstated is a resounding 'no.' James sums up the entrance of slaves into the political scene: "Neglected and ignored by all the politicians of every brand and persuasion, [the slaves] had organised on their own and struck for freedom at

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[20] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: 1938), 67.

[21] In Saint Domingue, those enslaved were quite observant and had an astute sense of the divisions among their oppressors. Thus, they developed their own vocabulary to describe it. They used the term *petit Blancs* as a connotation for little Whites, or those who did not own land. Small Whites were generally known to be small lawyers, notaries, clerks, artisans, grocers, and city vagabonds. Contrasted with *petit Blancs*, were *grand Blancs* (also called *Blanc Blancs*—"White Whites", whose ownership of property made them true Whites). The *grand Blancs* were known to be the big Whites: great merchants, wealthy agents of the maritime bourgeois, and planters. In Haiti, the majority of planters were absentee owners, so the plantation managers and stewards who served as the eyes and ears of the planters, were also considered to be *grand Blancs*. Ibid*, 33.*

[22] Ibid, 84.

[23] Ibid, 60-61.

[24] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: 2004), 107.

last."[25] The values of the French Revolution converged with a militant, African-born slave majority that outnumbered Whites ten to one, motivated by rage, inspired and organized by indigenous religious practices. A high percentage of slaves were trained in warfare in their home countries, others were trained in subversive resistance during plantation life, and not-so-subversive guerilla maroon bands were already in place. These components collided with external nations, namely the United States, Spain, and Britain, who took advantage of an opportunity to hinder French New World efforts, and a racist White population that would refuse to unite with a "natural ally" in Mulattoes until it was too late. Thus, what was formed was the perfect means to bring about the desired ends.[26] In August of 1791, sugar and coffee plantations went up in flames as those enslaved launched their attack. After thirteen years of war, on January 1, 1804, former slave and prominent Haitian Revolutionary leader, Jean Jacques Dessalines, declared St. Domingue free and independent.[27]

If you were to look in the average United States history textbook at any level, you would think that the Haitian Revolution came and went with little notice. Yet the forced entrance of slaves onto the political scene demanded attention. The Haitian Revolution both enamored and horrified U.S. Americans. Throughout the 1790s, the press would satiate the curiosity and demand for news surrounding the events in St. Domingue. At the same time, administrators enacted a wave of laws against West Indian slaves as they sought to repress the spread of such news to U.S. American slaves and thus curb the likelihood of a replication of the Haitian Revolution on United States territory. As much

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[25] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 84.
[26] Carolyn Fick, *Making Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: 1990), 67-69.
[27] David Geggus, "Introduction." *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: 2001), ix.

as the average U.S. citizen viewed the Haitian Revolution as horrific, even more so did the Founding Fathers. The Haitian Revolution occurred merely eight years after the American Revolution and disrupted nationalist efforts by raising questions of the viability of an American exceptionalist worldview for a republic invested in maintaining the institution of slavery. Though the Haitian Revolution is most often remembered in conjunction with United States history for facilitating the Louisiana Purchase, in achieving universal emancipation, the Haitian Revolution was also a direct challenge to the United States' notion of itself as exceptional given its complicity with the institution of slavery, thus causing the United States to re-evaluate their notion of exceptionalism. As the saying goes, "a leaky house can fool the sun, but not the roof" and while the United States value system seemed secure, the Haitian Revolution revealed the cracks, qualifiers, and ambiguities inherent in that system. Thus, contrary to the mainstream notion of individualistic national identity formation, the Haitian Revolution left an enduring imprint on the ideological formation of the United States. American exceptionalism, the cornerstone of United States nationalism, was developed in dialogue with the events in St. Domingue. United States' notion of exceptionalism was developed and reinforced in dialogue with the events in St. Domingue.

American Exceptionalism

In order to understand the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the United States, it is first necessary to understand the state of the United States at the moment of its execution. The Haitian Revolution occurred a mere eight years after the American Revolution. Prior to the American Revolution, within the previously divided thirteen colonies, people more commonly referred to themselves as Pennsylvanians, Virginians or

New Englanders than as "Americans." Thus, after the American Revolution, those who arose as leaders during the war were confronted with the question of how to unite these divided sects into a cohesive nation.[28] In order to understand the extremity of this task, one must first understand just what a "nation" is. French philosopher and writer, Ernst Renan in "What is a Nation?" (1882) argued that nations are a fairly new entity in history. In antiquity, they were nonexistent. Renan notes: "Classical antiquity had republics, municipal kingdoms, confederations of local republics and empires, yet it can hardly be said to have had nations in our understanding of the term."[29] Then, where did this idea of nation originate? Renan places its origins in the Germanic invasions of Gaul. These invasions introduced the world to "the principle, which, later, was to serve as a basis for the existence of nationalities."[30] From fifth century AD through the tenth century, the German peoples imposed dynasties and a military aristocracy upon factions of the old west, which outlined divisions, and irreparably shattered western unity. From then on, France, Germany, Netherlands, England, Italy, and Spain made their way "to their full national existence" through fusion of their respective populations.[31] In spite of the extreme violence of the customs of the German invaders, the oppressive German mould would become the mould of the nation. Benedict Anderson's celebrated *Imagined Communities* (1983) provides further insight into the construction of a nation. According to Anderson, the nation is nothing more than "an imagined political community,"[32] or as philosopher Ernest Gellner summarizes in *Thought and Change* (1964), "Nationalism is

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[28] Michael Ignatieff, *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights* (Princeton: 2005), 12.
[29] Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?" http://ig.cs.tuberlin.de/oldstatic/w2001/eu1/dokumente/Basistexte/Renan1882EN-Nation.pdf, (1882).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: 1991), 6.

not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist."[33] This "invention" was the task of the United States' founding fathers.

U.S. American leaders had to construct a national identity into which they could usher and unite former colonists. One way the United States undertook this task was by championing an exceptional narrative of manifest destiny originally forged by Christopher Columbus after his accidental encounter with the New World, and then taken up by Puritan settlers. On November 11, 1620, the original settlers of Virginia pronounced in the Mayflower Compact: "In the Name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord King *James*, by the Grace of God, of *Great Britain, France* and *Ireland*, King, *Defender of the faith*, &c. Having Undertaken for the Glory of God and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern Parts of Virginia;"[34]Colonists believed that they were charged with a special spiritual and political destiny— to create in the New World a church and a society that would provide the model for all of Europe to emulate while in the process of self-reformation. America was a model for the world, a "city upon a hill" upon which the favor of God was bestowed. [35] The success of the American Revolution only validated this sense of exceptionalism, providing "the American people a powerful, overt sign that Providence had indeed marked them for great deeds."[36] Thus it was this ideal that the founding fathers latched on to, forging a United States that was grounded in its belief in itself as

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[33] Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago and London: 1964), 168.
[34] John Alden, et al. "The Mayflower Compact". 11 Nov 1620. *Foundation of America* (Sundance Press: New York 1938), 3.
[35] John Winthrop, *City upon a Hill* (1630). < http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/winthrop.htm>.
[36] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: 1981), 84-85.

materially, morally, and ultimately politically exceptional. "They had, they firmly believed, risen against tyranny, avoiding sanguinary excesses and created a republic—such was God's path for the world."[37]

Contested Terrain: Republicanism and Whiteness

Such beliefs birthed a strong commitment to republicanism in the early Republic.[38] The American Revolution initiated the age of democratic revolutions, and U.S. Americans welcomed and endorsed them. Indeed, according to Paul Kahn, one way of understanding American exceptionalism "is to say that America remains bound to the Age of Revolution."[39] Yet according to Bradford Perkins in his essay "Interest and Values: American Foreign Policy in the Early Republic," "the American reaction to revolutions abroad was essentially a projection of their vision of their own."[40] Thomas Jefferson, one of the most influential architects of the United States' ideological formation affirmed such an outlook. In a letter to political economist Tench Coxe commenting on the French Revolution he predicted, "this ball of liberty, I believe most piously, is now so well in motion that it will roll round the globe, at least the enlightened part of it, for light and liberty go together. It is our glory that we first put the ball in motion."[41] Likewise, in 1796, President Washington expressed a national outlook when

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[37] Johnathan Earle and Sean Wilenz ed. *Major Problems in the Early Republic, 1787-1848* (Boston: 2008), 22.
[38] Earle, "Major Problems," 23
[39] Kahn, "Popular Sovereignty," 202.
[40] Earle, "Major Problems," 23.
[41] Thomas Jefferson, "To Tench Coxe- 6/1/1795" *Library of Congress Exhibition*, http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/181.

he espoused that his "best wishes were irresistibly excited whenever, in any country, he saw an oppressed nation unfurl the banners of freedom."[42]

Despite this notion of revolutionary superiority and fervency, the Haitian Revolution proved to be a crucible for testing this belief in the right of revolution. Indeed, when the French Revolution in St. Domingue manifested itself in class conflict, with lower class Whites threatening to revolt, the United States was quite supportive. In the minds of George Washington and John Adams, ideas of sovereignty expressed through the American Revolution, having been influential in the French Revolution, now rippled into the lives of White St. Dominguans.[43] Likewise, the U.S. government did not hesitate to provide aid to French colonials in St. Domingue in their efforts to maintain liberty and freedom from the threat of slave overthrow. In 1793, when French colonials beseeched the United States for rations and weapons to resist their revolting slaves, the United States seized the opportunity to assist French colonial subjects.[44] In doing so, they were able to repay the French for their support during the American Revolution while simultaneously demonstrating that the United States was in support of their struggle in St. Domingue.

Yet, despite the professed commitment to revolution, the Haitian Revolution illuminated a less propagated unifying factor in the conception of Americanism. It was this factor that would prevent the extension of the same courtesy received by the French to the revolting slaves—race. According to historian Maldwyn Jones, during the

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[42] Thomas Paine, "Letter to Washington—7/30/1796," *The Correspondence of Thomas of Thomas Paine,* http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/paine_letter_to_washington_02.htm.
[43] Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus, "Introduction" *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: 2006), 35.
[44] Thomas Jefferson. "To Governeur Morris—8/16/1793." *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington DC: Taylor and Maury, 1854). Vol. 4, pp. 49.

Revolutionary era, race was as much of a unifying force as republicanism within the United States. The need to stress national unity induced U.S. Americans to become forgetful of their diverse ethnic origins and to overlook cultural differences.[45] In the Federalists Papers, for example, John Jay congratulated his countrymen on the fact that "Providence [had] been please to give this one connected country to one united people—a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs."[46] Thus, Whiteness as an inextricable part of being U.S. American was an undercurrent implicit in the construction of the nation. The Haitian Revolution brought this racial conception of American nationhood to the fore. Citizenship was delineated along racial lines—to be a U.S. American was to be White.

As such, despite the positive sentiments that were expressed toward the French, once the struggle shifted to a mass of Black slaves struggling against their slaveholders, the United States alliance remained with White colonials. The United States perception of the events in St. Domingue was framed in binary conceptions of race. Thus, the Haitian Revolution as a republican struggle was couched in dismissive terms and type-casted as a race war in which hostile and bloodthirsty slaves exacted revenge on a helpless White population.[47] The republican values passionately proclaimed by American revolutionaries, were seen in a very different light when streaming from the mouths of Blacks. What Jefferson had once viewed as a "ball of liberty" rolling "round the globe" was now a "revolutionary storm" that brought dismay to the United States. He remarked:

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[45] Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Chicago: 1960), 33.

[46] John Jay, "Concerning Dangers from Foreign Force and Influence, For the Independent Journal," *The Federalist Papers No. 2,* http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed02.asp.

[47] Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution,* 35.

"The revolutionary storm now sweeping the globe, will be upon us, and happy if we can make timely provision to give it an easy passage over our land."[48] Ultimately, the Haitian Revolution added fire to the already flourishing belief that the manifest destiny of the United States was one of White purity. It became evident that the right of revolution did not extend beyond Whites.

Strengthening Exceptionalism: The Louisiana Purchase

As with the question of the right of revolution, the Haitian Revolution proved to be a matrix during which exceptionalistic values were tested. This was especially the case in the struggle over the acquisition of the Louisiana territory. Over the course of the American Revolution, the belief that expansion was an integral part of the destiny of the United States permeated U.S. American thinking. French possession of the Louisiana territory proved to be a thorn in the United States' side and a hindrance to this. Increasing conflict over trade and Napoleon Bonaparte's plan to revitalize France's American empire only exacerbated tensions.[49] Thomas Jefferson, however, understood the role St. Domingue played within this scheme. He remarked in a letter to James Monroe: "St. Domingo delays their taking possession of Louisiana."[50] Thus, in 1803, the United States government secretly supplied food rations and ammunition to the formerly enslaved armed forces in St. Domingue to weaken France as it struggled to maintain its New World Empire and expedite the process of French ruin.[51] Ultimately, despite tensions

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[48] Thomas Jefferson, "To St. George Tucker—8/28/1797," *The Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson,* http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/jefferson_s_01.html.
[49] Thomas Jefferson, "To James Monroe—1/13/1803" *A Revolutionary World,* www.loc.gov/jefferson/jeffworld.html.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid. The reacquisition of the Louisiana Territory from the Spanish in 1800 was a part of Bonaparte's plan. The French colony of Louisiana was to support the reconstructed sugar economies of the Caribbean. In 1801, successful peace negotiations with Britain advanced Bonaparte's New World projects. Little did Bonaparte know, but revolt was brewing in his prized possession, and as a result of the Haitian Revolution,

over race, the view of the insurrection in St. Domingue as race war took second place to United States desires to weaken France and live out the vision of itself as expansional birthed during the American Revolution.

The acquisition of the Louisiana territory would have much meaning and significance for American nationhood. According to Jefferson, the conflict over Louisiana was "the most important the United States have ever met since their independence, and which is to decide their future character and career."[52] In Jefferson's eyes, the destiny of the developing United States hinged on a vision of national expansion and thus the acquisition of Louisiana, which he doubted the United States would be able to acquire by either monetary or peaceful means.[53] Indeed, for almost a year prior to the acquisition the U.S. Minister to France, Robert R. Livingston had tried to no avail to negotiate a deal with France to cede New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.[54] Yet, the Haitian Revolution both weakened and diverted the attention of the French, eventually facilitating the purchase of the Louisiana territory through both cheap and diplomatic means.[55] In an 1803 letter to future President, James Monroe, Jefferson remarked: "On the event of this mission depend the future destinies of this republic. If we cannot by a purchase of the

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rather than expanding the French empire, Bonaparte was not only forced to relinquish his crown jewel, St. Domingue, but also Louisiana. A colony to fuel New World possessions was no longer necessary without the profitable St. Domingue. Bonaparte understood that without Saint Domingue, Louisiana would be worthless to him. In choosing to forfeit Louisiana, he was simultaneously surrendering his dreams of a New World empire. Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution*, 33.

[52] Thomas Jefferson. "To Mr. Dupont—2/1/1803." *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington DC: Taylor and Maury, 1854). Vol. 4, 457.

[53]Thomas Jefferson. "To Chancellor Livingston—2/3/1803." *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington DC: Taylor and Maury, 1854). Vol. 4, 461.

[54] Peter Kastor, "The Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803" *America's Struggle with Empire: A Documentary History (Washington, DC: 2010),* 23.

[55] Jefferson, "To Mr. Dupont—2/1/1803", 458. The territory of Louisiana was acquired for a mere $15 million—less than four cents per acre, or the equivalent of two dollars per acre in modern currency value. As a developing nation, the United States had acquired much debt during the war. Thus, to the question of outright paying for the territory, in a letter to Dupont, Jefferson wrote: "It may be said, if this object be so all-important to us, why do we not offer such a sum as to insure its purchase? The answer is simple. We are an agricultural people, poor in money, and owing great debts."

country, insure to ourselves a course of perpetual peace and friendship with all nations, then as war cannot be distant, it behooves us to be preparing for that course."[56] The acquisition of Louisiana would give the United States unrestricted access to the Port of New Orleans—thus facilitating trade and independent economic development. It would also double the new nation's size while giving it control of the Mississippi River—thus making the United States formidable enough to withstand almost any outside threat. [57]

The United States acquired Louisiana on April 30, 1803, this Purchase was a turning point for the United States, giving strength to American exceptionalist ideology and sense of mission. Despite St. Domingue's former status as the "Pearl of the Antilles," the Haitian Revolution virtually erased what France had created.[58] St. Domingue had once produced more sugar than all British West Indies possessions combined, and more than any individual Spanish possession, and also upon the Haitian Revolution resulted in a reconfiguration of imperial power in the New World.[59] Napoleon remarked: "This accession of territory affirms forever the power of the United States, and I have given England a maritime rival who sooner or later will humble her pride."[60] According to historian James Barry, the Louisiana Purchase ranked "next to the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution" primarily because it re-oriented the

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[56] Thomas Jefferson. "To Governor Monroe—1/13/1803." *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. (Washington DC: Taylor and Maury, 1854). Vol. 4, pp. 454.

[57] Kastor, *The Louisiana,* 23. The Louisiana Purchase encompassed all or part of 15 current U.S. states, as well as two Canadian provinces. These included present day Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado.

[58] Tim Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy: Haitian-American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport and London: 2003), 3.

[59] John Garrigus, "White Jacobins/Black Jacobins: Bringing the Haitian and French Revolutions Together in the Classroom," *Journal of French Studies* (2000), 262. The benefits of a weakened France were not only poured upon Spain and Britain as Cuba and Jamaica rose as the most lucrative entities in the Caribbean, but also upon the United States through its facilitation of the Louisiana Purchase.

[60] Tom Holmberg, "Thomas Jefferson on Napoleon." *Research Subjects: The Napoleon Series,* http://www.napoleon-series.org/research/napoleon/jefferson/c_jefferson3.html.

way that Americans thought about themselves.[61] Having drawn in European immigrants with the new availability of land, the character of the nation was in a process of transformation with the increasing social diversity. At the same time, people were united by a reinforced sense of the United States' greatness as the Louisiana Purchase was seen as a testament to the exceptionality of the United States.[62] Pamphlets praising the American government as superior for this acquisition were published from the summer of 1803 through the spring of 1804. Pamphleteer Samuel Brazer wrote in one such pamphlet,

> Never had a cause nobler inducements to offer; —never had a cause better or more brilliant prospects. The *Sun of Republicanism* has grown brighter and brighter, almost unto a perfect day…Soon, may that glorious political Millennium arrive, when every knee shall bow to the MAJESTY of the PEOPLE, and every tongue confess their SOVEREIGNTY!![63]

Thus, the Louisiana Purchase helped to bolster and further a sense of nationalism by reaffirming American exceptionalist sentiments. Moreover, the push to settle the new Louisiana territory shifted the eyes of the country westward, making further expansion almost inevitable and reinforcing notions of "manifest destiny." In the eyes of many U.S. Americans, the United States had both a right and a duty to settle the continent in its entirety. Prior to the Louisiana annexation, Americans still had a colonial attitude, and looked to England and France for guidance and support. However, with the acquisition of the Louisiana territory the focus of U.S. Americans shifted to their own continent and furthered their sense of self and mission. As concluded by James Barry in *The Louisiana*

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[61] James Barry, *The Louisiana Purchase, April 30, 1803: Thomas Jefferson doubles the area of the United States* (1793), 80.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Peter Kastor, ed. *The Louisiana Purchase: Emergence of an American Nation* (Washington D.C.: 2002), 201.

Purchase, "For the first time, Americans became Americans as we know them, people with a continental view." [64]

Threatening U.S. Exceptionalism: The Question of Slavery

While through the Louisiana Purchase the Haitian Revolution bolstered the nationalistic sense of Americanism, it also led to the expansion of slavery within the United States as Louisiana became slave territory. At the same time, however, it forced U.S. Americans to re-evaluate their stance on the peculiar institution. The Declaration of Independence was framed by the words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness,"[65] yet what of the contradictory institution of slavery? Though the Enlightenment brought scientific proof against the humanity of African descended peoples, Quaker and Evangelical religious leaders pleaded with U.S. Americans to consider how the U.S. could call itself a God-ordained and directed nation with a government based in the equality of mankind whilst slavery was tolerated.[66] Though anti-slavery movements flourished as people questioned the moral, religious, and economic justifications for slavery, the issue of slavery was easily compartmentalized and displaced from public consciousness in the interest of sectional unity. To the question of contradiction echoed responses that there was no contradiction. Slaves were property, subhuman. Thus, their rights were no more than that of livestock. Reginald Horsman's describes this reaction well: "the necessity of justifying the institution in what was now regarded as the freest of country in the world…

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[64] Barry, *The Louisiana,* 81.
[65] "The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," *Charters of Freedom: The World is at Hand* (1776), http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html.
[66] Franklin Knight, "The Haitian Revolution and the Notion of Human Rights," *Journal of the Historical Society*. Vol. 5, Issue 3 (2005), 396.

helped produce a specific, intellectual condemnation of the Negro race as separate and inferior. If slavery was to continue, then it became essential to demonstrate that the fault lay with the blacks, not with the whites."[67]

Despite this compartmentalization and rationalization, according to historian Ashli White in *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic,* in the 1790s and 1800s, "no event more clearly laid bare the contradiction between republican principles and slavery than the Haitian Revolution."[68]The Haitian Revolution wedded political independence with abolition. Since the impact of republican values on slaves in St. Domingue was the rejection of slavery, the elephant in the room within the United States was the unaddressed reality of slavery. Slaves and free people of Color in Saint Domingue were pushing those republican ideals espoused in France and revered in the United States to the ultimate conclusion that all men, regardless of race, should be free, equal, and entitled to the rights of citizens.[69] While many U.S. Americans justified their type of slavery as more humane than that of their French counterparts, nothing could sufficiently veil the reality of slavery as the glaring contradiction to the United States' professed moral and political superiority. Horseman writes:

> In the 17th and 18th centuries the blacks were merely a useful form of labor—a form of labor which caused embarrassment and unease only by stirring in whites atavistic fears of blackness and bestiality. In an age of natural rights and Revolution, America's black slaves became a far greater embarrassment, for they marred the republican perfection of the new nation.[70]

In this vein, as an event that further exacerbated the stain of slavery as a source of shame, the Haitian Revolution disrupted United States endeavors to assert its newfound

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[67] Horseman, *Race*, 101.
[68] Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic,* (Baltimore: 2010), 4.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Horseman, *Race,* 103.

nationhood while ignoring the issue of slavery. The Haitian Revolution brought the question of slavery to the center of American politics. In holding up a light to the contradiction of slavery, the issues revealed by the Haitian Revolution threatened to delegitimize American exceptionalism. As a latent core of republicanism, though denied by the United States, the Haitian Revolution made manifest the incompatibility of republicanism and slavery. In turn, it precipitated a re-evaluation of United States' values to determine whether or not the United States really was exceptional.

Reinforcing Exceptionalism: The Case of St. Dominguan exiles

This self-examination was further necessitated by the presence of French colonial exiles within United States borders. The Haitian Revolution sent a shiver down the spine of the average U.S. American, but at the same time, the U.S. government saw it as their duty to accept "to our best abilities the wretched fugitives from the catastrophe of the principal town of [St. Domingue] who, escaping from the swords and flames of civil war, threw themselves on us naked and houseless, without food or friends, money or other means, their faculties lost and absorbed in the depth of their distresses."[71] Thus, even after Franco-American relations were on the decline the United States continued to welcome French colonial exiles into their borders. According to Professor of American Studies and author of *American Exceptionalism*, Deborah Madsen, a part of developing American exceptionalism ideology was that "America must be as 'a city upon a hill' exposed to the eyes of the world." Such narratives re-surfaced in regards to the acceptance of exiles. French colonial exiles could take a lesson in liberty and equality from U.S. Americans. The United States model was one to emulate. As such, starting in

[71] Thomas Jefferson. "To Governor Morris—8/6/1793." *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Washington DC: Taylor and Maury, 1854). Vol. 4, 49.

1791 and in successive waves in 1793, 1803, 1809-1810[72] thousands of refugees from the French Caribbean inundated U.S. ports.[73] Each wave prompted heated discussions about the Haitian Revolution.

Little did the U.S. government know, but in accepting St. Domingue exiles they were bringing U.S. Americans face to face with the Haitian Revolution. "Americans could see with their own eyes the colonists, slaves, and free people of color they had read and heard so much about."[74] Prior to the tangible presence and realities of the exiles within United States borders, U.S. Americans could couch, dismiss, or ignore the Haitian Revolution without faltering in their exceptionalist rationalities for maintaining the racial hierarchy that seemed to be fundamental to their society. Yet the presence of exiles inspired intense discussion over what the Haitian Revolution meant for the United States. St. Dominguan exiles were not merely White victims. Rather, slaves and many people of Color made their way to the United States. Thus, at all levels exiles were living examples of the repercussions of the assertion of autonomy in Haiti; "their very presence in American cities compelled residents—Black and White, northern and southern, Federalist and Democratic, Republican, pro- and anti-slavery—to ponder the implications of the Haitian Revolution for the viability of their nation." [75] The presence of exiles *forced* U.S. Americans to confront the paradox of being a slaveholding "republic" and the potential consequences in store for their society.

U.S. Americans evoked the case of the exiles in order to consider whether the United States version of republicanism might actually make them exceptional, given their

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[72] This last wave was precipiated by the expulsion of Saint-Dominguans from Cuba. They then fled to Louisiana.
[73] Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution,* 35.
[74] White, *Encountering,* 5.
[75] White, *Encountering,* 2.

complicity with the institution of slavery. Through the exiles, U.S. Americans discovered that the Haitian Revolution shook their credentials to the core. It unveiled a myriad of ambiguities left in the wake of the American Revolution and the ratification of the Constitution.[76] The presence of the St. Dominguan exiles challenged U.S. Americans irrespective of political affiliation or their stance on slavery to reconsider the apparent successes and shortcomings of their nation and truly question what it meant to be exceptional.[77]

At the same time, however, U.S. Americans relied on the presence of the exiles in order to reinforce their vision of themselves as exceptional. This process can best be understood when contextualized within the framework of Fernando Coronil's theory of Occidentalism. According to Coronil, Western representations of and interactions with "Otherness" are underwritten by implicit constructions of "Selfhood." He refers to this as "Occidentalism." Occidentalism mobilizes stereotypical representations of non-Western societies, highlighting the ethnocentric hierachalization of cultural difference while simultaneously revealing the way that Western privilege is connected to the deployment of global power. It is through the deployment of this power that one arrives at the consciousness of the self—by recognition of, interaction with, and domination of the Other. Through the experience of dominating others, those in power learn about themselves and their dialogical self-identities are constantly transformed frequently in a binary to those casted as the Other. Such a perspective reveals the hidden reciprocity, in unequal interactions that are frequently obscured in traditional orientalist discussions of

[76] Ibid, 204.
[77] Ibid, 5.

imperial dichotomies. [78]

In the case of the St. Dominguan exiles, U.S. Americans relied on the cultural exoticism of the refugees to reinforce ethnocentric distinctions between the French and the "superior" U.S. Americans. U.S. Americans thus relied on the exiles, as "naked and houseless, without food or friends, money or other means," in order to construct a romantic version of the United States as a place of generosity, hospitality, and asylum.[79] Given this opportunity to reinforce exceptionalist sentiments, the acceptance and treatment of St. Dominguan exiles during the revolutionary period was a crucial moment in United States' nation building. Despite the many contradictions unearthed by the Haitian Revolution, White U.S. Americans used fabricated exile narratives as support in arguing for their nation's exceptionalism.

Conclusion

The Haitian Revolution impacted the United States culturally, materially, and ideologically. The Louisiana Purchase, the acceptance of exiles, and the ideological bond of republicanism forever linked the United States and Haiti. At the start of the Haitian Revolution, the question of slavery was dodged by all but a few within the United States. The Republican Party, for example, presented itself as the party of American revolutionary values, while distancing itself from the issue of slavery. Yet the Haitian Revolution had struck a resounding blow against the institution of slavery and the racial ideologies used to rationalize and justify it. Slavery had survived the American Revolution, and appeared to be on the path to surviving the French Revolution, yet to this

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[78] Fernando Coronil, "Beyond Occidentalism: Toward Nonimperial Geohistorical Categories," *Cultural Anthropology* (1996), 57-68.

[79] Jefferson, "To Governor Morris—8/6/1793", 49.

pattern of maintaining the racial and social status quo, St. Domingue presented a challenge and a threat to the U.S. social order, threatening the national project and bringing to bear the main conflict that stood in the way of uniting the nation. In this sense, the Haitian Revolution was a direct challenge to U.S. exceptionality at a moment of increased necessitation of belief in this image. While U.S. Americans would defend and reinforce their vision of the United States as exceptional, the deep chasm revealed between the absolute ideals the United States professed and their subjective presence in practice could not be closed, and the case of St. Domingue as an example of the reality of this would be evoked innumerable times leading up to the Civil War, and ultimately put the United States in a state of defensiveness to preserve its exceptionalism.[80]

Ultimately, the impact of the Haitian Revolution was paradoxical in nature, which was manifested through the United States' contradictory responses to the Revolution. Not only did the Haitian Revolution facilitate the Louisiana Purchase which would bolster Americans' sense of Manifest Destiny, but at the same time, it forced the United States to reevaluate its commitment to republicanism and to confront its contradictory perception of itself as exceptional given its commitment to sustaining the institution of slavery. Through the acceptance of exiles, the United States would propagate a narrative intended to reinforce its view of itself as exceptional regardless of the intrinsic ideals of the Haitian Revolution that undermined this viewpoint. Taken together, the Haitian Revolution left a lasting ideological imprint as the United States' vision of itself was being constructed in dialogue with the occurrences in St. Domingue.

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[80] Jim Thomson, "The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of America," *The History Teacher*. Vol. 34, Issue 1. http://www.historycooperative,org/cgi-bin/printpage.cgi.

Chapter 2—

What the Eye Doesn't See Doesn't Move the Heart: [Un]Conscious Denial, Institutionalized Silence, Representative Recognition

Sa je wé ké pa tounen
"What the eye doesn't see doesn't move the heart"
-Haitian Proverb

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the Haitian Revolution had a profound impact upon the ideological, material and national development of the United States. Amidst attempts to unite United States citizens around notions of cultural, political, and moral superiority rooted in a sense of exceptionalism, the revolution in Haiti challenged the American exceptionalist worldview and contradicted what the United States had told both itself and others about itself. The Haitian Revolution arose as a direct challenge to the racist ideologies that underwrote what it meant to be an American and what it meant to be an exceptional nation that protected and preserved the institution of slavery.

As a struggle for self-determination, the Haitian Revolution was a testament to the humanity and capabilities of the enslaved, which, if confronted and acknowledged in the United States, would have completely shattered the established justifications for the enslavement of Blacks as objectified beings. With the recognition of this reality, the United States had two options in its dealing with the Haitian Revolution: it could modify its ontology, and relinquish the notion of Black inferiority, or, it could suppress and trivialize the facts of the Haitian Revolution in the United States borders.[81] The United States opted for the latter, setting in place a cycle of silences around the event that would shape public opinion on Haiti for the next century. In some cases, the Haitian Revolution

[81] Thomas Reinhardt, "200 years of Forgetting: Hushing up the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of Black Studies* (March 2005), 251.

was completely ignored. In others, the significance of the Haitian Revolution was downplayed with aspects that fit into Western ontology overemphasized. In this manner, through the denial of the significance of the Haitian Revolution, the imposed obscurity on certain aspects of it, the institutionalized efforts to silence it, and the symbolization of it, a particular vision of St. Domingue was inscribed on the memories of United States citizens. At the same time, the United States was able to maintain an idealized vision of itself as exceptional. Though abolitionist tracts and African American newspapers offered a persistent cry against mainstream depictions of Haiti, as Frederick Douglass' speech at the Chicago Pavilion demonstrated, well into the 1890s, the idea of "St. Domingue" was still engulfed in the initial symbolism and stereotypes that shaped United States public opinion on the insurrection in St. Domingue. These stereotypes situated Haiti's relevance in relation to race and slavery. Thus, after the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) "Haiti" as a nation was historically insignificant and far removed from the minds of U.S. Americans as anything other than commercially beneficial.

[Un]Conscious Denial; Imposed Obscurity

Western society was built on the backs of slaves and many were uncompromisingly convinced of the security of the system in place. Slavery in the Atlantic world had prevailed for nearly three centuries prior to the insurrection in St. Domingue. When insurrections had occurred in the past, they were quickly quelled and slaves paid for their agency with their lives. The Western worldview of Blacks was that they were barbarous, lazy, incapable of agency, and destined to be laborers. Thus, in slaves fighting for rights as human beings in St. Domingue, they were doing what Michel-Rolph Trouillot refers to as the "unthinkable." The deeds of slave revolution were

incompatible with the major tenets of the prevailing Western ideology. As such, most Whites in the United States, Europe, and its New World territories, lacked the conceptual framework with which to assess the occurrences in St. Domingue. The vast majority refused to reconcile their view of Blacks as chattel with the seeming testament to their humanity in their struggle for autonomy in St. Domingue. In turn, they processed it in a way that fit within their confines of the possible. Internal drive, for example, was not reconcilable with the existing perceptions of Blacks, or the reality of large-scale rebellion.[82] As such, there was an avid search for external causes behind the mobilization of slaves in St. Domingue in order to make it justifiable within their conceptual framework. In emphasizing external influences, the Haitian Revolution was transformed from a revolt in which the enslaved threw off their shackles in a moment of self-actualization, to an event created not by the slaves, but by the instigation of outsiders.

United States newspapers played an important role in this orientation. Early on in the revolt, newspapers were one of the main suppliers of information on the events in St. Domingue and, along with exiles, they played a primary role in shaping early United States conceptions of St. Domingue. In order to understand the role they played, it is first necessary to understand the developments occurring at the moment of the Haitian Revolution. Newspapers had existed in the American colonies since the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1800, the United States had over 200 newspapers. By 1820, this number shot up to over 500 newspapers. In general, however, these publications were not independent, but rather served as "revolutionary propaganda machine[s]," outlets for voicing northern and southern interests.[83] Unlike today, truth was not a central tenet of

[82] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: 1995), 95-96.
[83] John Tebbel. *The Compact History of the American Newspaper* (New York: 1963), 89.

reporting. Thus, from the 1784 to 1830, the focus of the average newspaper was its political reporting, which was often composed of harsh, sardonic, and even false accusations against their political or geographical opponents. In regards to St. Domingue, the majority of newspapers relied heavily on letters from the very individuals who had formerly held the chains of those enslaved on the island—White French colonials. These individuals suffered from the same Western mentality of the unthinkability of the Revolution and thus framed it in a way that did not contradict their pre-oriented conceptions of Blacks. Thus, the information disseminated in the United States was often exaggerated, one sided and skewed, yet it was this information that largely affected the way the events in St. Domingue were perceived by Whites within the United States. Compounded with the distortions caused by inaccurate information were the effects of color prejudice and economic interest. Taken together, the average U.S . American was forming opinions on Haiti with little knowledge from viable sources, less than credible information, and little consideration for the complexity of the situation.[84] This had serious implications for the history of the Haitian Revolution in the United States. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, long before citizens read the works of historians, they access history through the media, celebrations, museum visits, movies, and national holidays. There are multiple historical narrators, each of whom views a particular theme, subject, event, or historical fact a different way, causing them to inscribe varying meanings. Thus, history must be taken as the sum of both "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened."[85] The latter, laced with racial bias, formed the foundations of public opinion on Haiti.

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[84] Ludwell Lee Montague, *Haiti and the United States 1714-1938* (Durham:1940), 24.
[85] Trouillot, *Silencing,* 21-26.

Papers from both the North and the South successfully ignored any evidence of internal motivations of slaves and instead placed a heavy emphasis on the impact of the French Revolution, the instigation of abolitionists, Spanish involvement, and Francophone brutality. Six months after the start of the rebellion, the Northern paper *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser* of Philadelphia professed that the insurrection was "the natural fruits of what has been said and done by the Society of the Amis des Noirs in France, and of Mr. Wilberforce's wild visions respecting the emancipation of the Negroes, or at least the abolition of slavery henceforth in England."[86] Others, such as *The Independent Gazetteer* directed blame at "the tyranny of some of the Overseers" for sparking resistance, or on yellow fever and the harsh tropical climate as the main decimators of French troops.[87] The Southern paper, the *State Gazette of South Carolina* situated the Spanish as "the chief instrument of the mischief of St. Domingo" out of attempts to weaken the French.[88]

Moreover, newspapers depicted Blacks in St. Domingue not as active agents in their resistance, but rather as passive receivers. In denying internal actors, newspapers deflected origins of the revolt in St. Domingue from the direct actions of slaves. In attempting to avert attention from slaves themselves as human beings capable of autonomous resistance, the insurrection in St. Domingue was being depoliticized and stripped of its significance as an autonomous and anti-colonial struggle. In addition, it trivialized the slaves' independent sense of their condition, and their right to achieve freedom through whatever necessary means. In this manner, newspapers emptied the

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[86] "Late Disturbances," *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser*, 13 Feb 1792, Issue 221. The Society of Amis des Noirs was a French abolitionist group of which William Wilberforce was a prominent member.
[87]"From a letter received on the disturbances of St. Domingo from Cape-François," *The Independent Gazetteer,* 08 October 1791, Vol. IX, Issue 1361.
[88] "London, Nov. 19," State Gazette of South Carolina, 16 February 1792, Vol. LIV.

events in St. Domingue of their revolutionary content and obscured their historical relevance. In locating the causes of the insurrection as external, newspapers were able to erase the reality of revolution and locate the events in St. Domingue as a trivial string of facts, thus de-legitimizing them and fitting them into the existing United States American ontology. This ontology was situated on the belief that the uprising must have been incited, motivated, or provoked by something other than slaves themselves.[89]

In addition to denial of slave agency and thus humanity, demonization of slaves further helped to validate established misconceptions of Blacks. The occurrences in St. Domingue helped unveil the intense xenophobic fear that ran through the nation's veins. Rather than accepting the large-scale rebellion and re-appropriation of republican values as evidence of the humanity of slaves, newspapers placed a heavy emphasis on the seeming barbarity that characterized slave resistance in St. Domingue to further validate stereotypes of the inhumanity of slaves. According to CLR James, the violence of slaves in St. Domingue was not nearly as harsh in comparison with the violence they faced on slave plantations.[90] Yet, one month into the insurrection, on September 24, 1791, the *New York Daily Gazette* labeled slave insurrectionists in St. Domingue as the "most ferocious of savages."[91] One month later Philadelphia's *Independent Gazetteer* referred to insurgents as "infernal devils."[92] The author of an article on "Authentic Particulars" in St. Domingue, remarked: "If the infernal devils were content with this destruction, it would be happy for the Colonists; but they add cruelty of savages to their incendiary conduct,

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[89] Reinhardt, "200 years," 252.
[90] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (Toronto: 1963), 89.
[91] "Abridgement of the State of Politics for the Week Ending Dec. 10," *New York Daily Gazette,* 24 December 1791, Issue 858.
[92] "Authentic Particulars," *The Independent Gazetteer,* 08 October 1791*,* Volume IX, Issue 1361.

inhumanly murdering all Whites they catch, sparing neither age nor sex."[93] Six months later, there was still a heavy emphasis on slave barbarity. *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser* summed up the general sentiments expressed in the media when it reported: "Humanity must shudder by anticipating the probable effects of this dreadful insurrection."[94] Through such emphases, what would come to be known as the Haitian Revolution entered the United States consciousness in a way that reinforced, rather than challenged the existing order, and bolstered preexisting misconceptions of Blacks as less than human.

Institutionalized Silence

Early on, Thomas Jefferson foresaw the seemingly inevitable result of the Haitian Revolution and the potential ramifications for the United States. In a letter to Governor Monroe, he remarked:

> I become daily more convinced that all the West India Island will remain in the hands of the people of colour, and a total expulsion of the whites will sooner or later take place. It is high time we should foresee the bloody scenes, which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves (south of the Potomac), have to wade through and try to avert them.[95]

In the United States, the Revolution in St. Domingue was viewed as prophetic. It was as if people in the United States were peering into a looking glass when assessing the Haitian Revolution. They were able to see their ultimate fate if the issues of slavery and race conflict were not resolved. Such a realization struck fear in the hearts of Whites across the nation. Despite efforts to deflect the origins of the insurrection in St.

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[93] Ibid.
[94] "Abridgement of the State of Politics," *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser,* 13 February 1792, Issue 221.
[95] Thomas Jefferson, "To James Monroe—6/14/1793" *St. Domingue (Haiti)- Thomas Jefferson's Monticello,* http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/st-domingue-haiti.

Domingue onto outsiders and to deny the autonomy of slave resistance, no one wanted U.S. Blacks to replicate the events in St. Domingue. Generally, every U.S. citizen saw an independent Black nation as a threat to the established order and to the security and privileged positionality of the White majority. President John Adams summarized the general sentiments when he remarked: "Independence is the worst and most dangerous condition they can be in for the United States."[96] As such, most White Americans joined in efforts to avoid a replication of the Haitian Revolution in the United States. The Revolution in St. Domingue threatened a plantation system profitable for both merchants and slave masters. As such, even the North had a stake in the preservation of the status quo. Southern planters, apprehensive that slaves in the United States would gain inspiration from St. Domingue, took particular alarm at the events in St. Domingue. This fear manifested itself in repressive measures to suppress spread of news of the revolt, and minimize contact with the United States in order to avoid slave empowerment.

Though American Marxist historian and political activist, Herbert Aptheker in *American Negro Slave Revolts* remarks, "The years from 1792 to 1804 are rather arbitrarily selected as comprising the period of prolific law making," there was nothing arbitrary about these laws produced spanning the Haitian Revolutionary period almost in its entirety: they were birthed as a direct result of the incidents in St. Domingue out of a strong desire across the United States to silence news of them.[97] Beginning in 1792, South Carolina, Kentucky, North Carolina, Georgia, and Maryland, passed laws restricting the slave trade as a means of preventing the news on the events in St.

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[96] John Quincy Adams, "To T. Pickering—4/17/1793." *Presidents from Washington through Monroe, 1789-1825: Debating the Issues in Pro and Con Primary Documents,* Amy Sturgis, ed. (Westport: 2002), 74.
[97] Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* I (New York: 1993), 73-74.

Domingue from poisoning the United States and corrupting United States slaves. South Carolina's statute prohibited any one person from importing more than two slaves to the United States. That this was a result of the events in St. Domingue is evidenced in a subsequent modification to the law to retain a comprehensive ban only of slaves from the West Indies or South America, though this ban was later repealed in 1803. Moreover, all imported slaves had to be accompanied by a statement signed by two magistrates confirming that the slaves intended for importation had not been involved in any revolts.[98] By 1793, the Southern states of the Union had closed their ports to Blacks from the Caribbean.[99] In 1795, North Carolina prohibited Black immigration from the West Indies. In 1797, Baltimore, Maryland passed an ordinance declaring all slaves imported from the West Indies between 1792 and 1797 to be "dangerous to the peace and welfare of the city" and ordered their masters to expel them.[100] South Carolina followed Virginia's 1778 example in 1803, and suspended the transatlantic slave trade for two years.[101] While this suspension of the slave trade is often considered a victory for abolitionists, greater evidence shows that this ban was exacted out of a desire to preserve the institution of slavery within the United States rather than to debilitate it. Moreover, in 1806, Louisiana acted specifically "to prevent the introduction of free people of color from Hispaniola and other French islands."[102]

Compounded with such laws to quarantine the United States from the possible contagion of the effects of the events in St. Domingue, the United States partnered with the other world powers, France, Spain, and Britain, to further quarantine Haiti through

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid, 45.
[100] Ibid, 74.
[101] Montague, *Haiti*, 16.
[102] Aptheker, *American,* 76.

diplomatic isolation. France had just suffered a huge blow with the loss of its most economically viable territory. Spain still had slave based colonial empires in the Caribbean and Latin America. Great Britain, the predominant world power at the time, was worried about the ideological bonds revolution could have on its slaves throughout the Caribbean, but especially in Jamaica, located a mere 75 miles from Haitian borders. Thus, in 1806, legal trade between the United States and Haiti was formally shut down through an embargo that would be reenacted in 1807 and 1808.[103]

Despite these active efforts to restrict the flow of news from St. Dominguan Blacks into the United States, communication and transnational movement between the United States and the West Indies was constant and widespread due to trade relations, so news travelled quickly regardless of restrictions. While in a slave society like the United States administrators attempted to censor and suppress such information, the news was irrepressible. In addition to newspapers, letters were also a significant source of information on St. Domingue within the United States. Leonora Sansay, the wife of a Saint Domingue planter, travelled to the United States at the outbreak of the Revolution and then returned to the island after French troops arrived in St. Domingue in hopes of regaining her property. Upon her return, she continued to correspond with the former United States Vice President, Aaron Burr. Not long after, she published a book in Philadelphia called, *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo* under the pseudonym Mary Hassal in the form of a series of letters that described the last days of the

[103] The war of 1812 and the subsequent closing of British ports revitalized Haitian trade with the United States. By the 1820s, U.S.-Haitian trade surpassed that conducted between the United States and Scandinavia, South America, and the Middle East. Montague, *Haiti,* 24.

Revolution.[104] While sources were inaccessible to the vast majority of the illiterate slave population, many White St. Dominguans who fled to the United States at the outbreak of the Revolution brought their slaves with them. As such, slaves from St. Domingue were prime actors in disseminating information on the Revolution in St. Domingue to slaves in the United States. Thus Blacks were well aware of the slave rebellion in St. Domingue and, as the subsequent revolt of Gabriel Prosser demonstrates, many sought to imitate the actions of those in St. Domingue.[105] In 1800, Gabriel Prosser, for example, drew inspiration from the Haitian Revolution in executing his own slave revolt in Richmond, Virginia. Prosser rallied the slaves of Richmond and plotted to enter the city at night, and to take control of the city's armory, much like was done in Saint Domingue. After acquiring weapons and gathering wider support, rebel slaves would force whites into pronouncing emancipation.[106] Though ultimately Prosser's plot failed, it confirmed fears that the events in St. Domingue had indeed reached and impacted slaves in the United States.[107]

"St. Domingue" Symbolization and Representative Recognition

In addition to the institutionalized silencing of the Haitian Revolution through repressive laws and diplomatic isolation, the refusal to recognize Haiti as free and independent was yet another method deployed to repress the reality and scale of it. The doctrine of recognition as a principle of international law appeared in specific form at near the end of the American Revolution. New states arose and successful revolutions

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[104] Mary Hassal "From *Secret History; or the Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808)*" Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: 2006), 180.
[105] Aptheker, *American,* 30.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Aptheker, *American,* 42-46.

gave birth to new states. In Washington's Neutrality Proclamation of 1793, the French Republic was recognized and the neutral position of America was announced, and these principles, developed later by Adams and Jefferson through application to the South American colonies, which had declared their independence of Spain, marked the beginning of the well-defined international principle of recognition.[108] Yet despite this established doctrine of recognition, at the point of 1804, no country would recognize Haiti's independence. Indeed, South Carolina Senator Hayne summarized the United States' policy towards Haiti in 1820 when he remarked:

> With nothing connected with slavery can we consent to treat with other nations, and least of all, ought we to touch the question of the independence of Haiti, in conjunction with revolutionary governments [...] You find men of color at the head of their armies, in their legislative halls, and in their executive departments. They are looking to Hayti, even now, with feelings of the strongest fraternity and show, by the very documents before us, that they acknowledge her to be independent.[109]

As Hayne's statement elucidates, the refusal to recognize Haiti was symbolic. Over the course of the nineteenth century, southerners capitalized on the fears of Whites collectively by deploying rhetoric of the need for national self-preservation. "The horrors of St. Domingue," they argued, were prophetic for the crisis of slavery in the United States and revealed the necessity of slavery. Emancipation, they argued, would incite a race war to their dismay. "St. Domingue" revealed the "true" character and desires of Blacks. It testified to their inability to assimilate within society and to their inability to rule. Through the deployment of such rhetoric, Southerners transformed slavery, which was once held as a necessary evil into a positive good, the foundation of southern

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[108] Charles Wesley, "The Struggle for the Recognition of Haiti and Liberia as Independent Republics", *The Journal of Negro History,* 369.
[109] Senate, "Of Debates in Congress on the Panama Mission—March 1826" *Register of Debates in Congress: Comprising the Leading Debates and Incidents of the 1st Session of the 19th Congress, Volume 2 (*Washington: 1826), 166.

prosperity, and the only guarantee of order in the United States.[110] "St. Domingue" was transplanted from its own material reality into a symbol of the character and capabilities of the Black race within the imaginations of U.S. Americans. As Hayne's quote demonstrates, Haiti embodied emancipation and Black equality. As such, the mere mention of "St. Domingue" was not about the island, but race terror and the threat of mutiny looming at every moment and made all the more likely by emancipation. The most ambitious work testifying to this was Jonathan Brown's two volume *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo* published in 1837. In this work, Brown argued that consideration of the events in St. Domingue should convince all U.S. Americans that the existing order should be left undisturbed in the interest of the national prosperity.[111] Indeed, by playing off of White fears and prejudices, slave owners, arguably the people with the greatest investment in silencing the Haitian Revolution and keeping any knowledge of it out of the United States, were given authority in shaping United States interactions with and perceptions of Haiti. This power was secured through the strategic transformation of the relevance of Haiti as entirely ideological. According to Ludwell Lee Montague, from 1806 to 1860 the United States policy in regards to Haiti was determined by Southern influences, and was founded upon the anxiety concerning the security of White privilege, the institution of slavery and the social order based upon it.[112] Freedom, it was argued, would undermine this security.

Through such strategic symbolization, at the moment of the Haitian Revolution, even abolitionists were anxious at the emergence of an independent Black nation. Yet

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[110] Montague, *Haiti,* 72.
[111] Jonathan Brown, "From *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo* (1837)*" Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York: 2006), 126.
[112] Montague, *Haiti,* 66.

while the Southern fear of "another Haiti" manifested itself through repressive measures, abolitionists used their fear of "another Haiti" as a justification for emancipation. Abolitionists such as Thomas Branagan played on White fears in order to construct a pro-abolitionary argument. In Branagan's *Serious Remonstrances* (1805), he argued that the replication of the Haitian Revolution in the United States was inevitable as long as the system of slavery prevailed: "As long as [slavery] exists, so long may these insurrections be expected […] The blacks are jealous of their liberties, and would wade through seas of blood, when an opportunity would offer, to vindicate their rights, and revenge past injuries."[113] According to Branagan, not only were slaves a threat, but free Blacks as well. Indeed, all "sons of Africa in America" were "the inveterate enemies of Americans" and "at perpetual war with them."[114] Insurrection was thus looming at every moment, whether slavery was preserved or not, as free Blacks in particular could receive the torch passed by Haitian Revolutionaries and carry on the fight for freedom on United States soil. The problem was one of colonization and exportation, not emancipation. That was the only way to preserve White privilege and safety. In this sense the Haitian Revolution reinforced conceptions of the impossibility of a free bi-racial society, and also provided insight into the mode of emancipation that should take place. While discussions of Black colonization existed before the Haitian Revolution, Jefferson had primarily looked to Liberia as the location to deposit United States Blacks at the moment of emancipation. However, with the Haitian Revolution, the Caribbean became the focus on U.S.

[113] Thomas Branagan, *Serious Remonstrances* (Kessinger: 1805), 54.
[114] Ibid, 43.

colonization plans. Jefferson came to believe that "nature seems to have formed these islands to become the receptacles of the Blacks."[115]

Though abolitionists, too, fell victim to believing Southern representations of Haiti, others challenged the strategic uses of St. Domingue in Southern rhetoric. Abolitionist Lydia Marie Childs pointed out what she perceived as the symbolic usage in "An appeal in favor of that class of Americans called Africans." "The grand argument of the slave holder," she contended, "was that sudden freedom occasioned the horrible massacres of St. Domingo.—If a word is said in favor of abolition, he shakes his head and points a warning finger to St. Domingo! But it is a remarkable fact that this same vilified island furnishes a strong argument *against* the lamentable necessity of slavery."[116] A few years later, in 1835, William Jay published "An inquiry into the character and tendency of the American colonization and American anti-slavery societies" and argued for a new symbolic presence of the name St. Domingue contextualized by care for historical accuracy. He exclaimed:

> But St. Domingo—ah, what recollections are awakened by that name! With that name are associated the most irrefragable proofs of the safety and wisdom of immediate emancipation and of the ability of the African race, to value, defend and enjoy the blessings of freedom. The apologists of slavery are constantly reminding Abolitionists of the 'Scenes in St. Domingo.' Were the public familiar with the origin and history of those scenes, none but Abolitionists would dare to refer to them.[117]

Thus, abolitionists were active in their efforts to destabilize the Southern symbolic usage of Haiti. Despite this, the view of St. Domingue as a symbol of race violence and of

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[115] Thomas Jefferson, "To James Monroe—11/24/1801," *The Jefferson Monticello,* http//:www.monticello.org/site/Jefferson-slaver-and-emancipation

[116] Lydia Marie Childs, "An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans" (Boston: 1833).

[117] William Jay, "An Inquiry into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Slave Societies" Second Edition (New York: 1835).

emancipation was reiterated time and time again over the course of the nineteenth century, as a testament to the necessity of slavery. "St. Domingue" was a household name that encompassed a bundle of arguments on the necessity of slavery or the threat of Black terror.

Deconstructing the United States' Vision of St. Domingue

Despite the symbolic inscription of St. Domingue onto the minds of the vast majority of White Americans, African Americans gave different meanings and symbolizations to the Haitian Revolution. They were active in contesting inaccurate depictions of it through the moment of recognition, finally granted by the United States in 1862. African American papers challenged pro-slavery advocates not to hide behind "the Revolution in St. Domingo, the old and thread-bare falsehood under which democratic tyrants have sought refuge for the last forty years,[118]" but to "read the history of St. Domingo, and tremble," [119] while simultaneously challenging their subscribers not to fall victim to the false depictions of Haiti being inscribed through the popular media.

When France granted official recognition to Haiti in 1838, 34 years after the country's independence and thirteen years after Britain's extension of the same courtesy, African American papers rallied in an attempt to get the United States' government to follow suit, asking: "Why should we cherish, to our own hurt, a grudge which FRANCE HERSELF HAS GIVEN UP? …"[120] On November 10, 1838, *The Colored American*, for example, published an article in reaction to French recognition questioning the United States' refusal to recognize Haiti and appealing to its readers to help combat the lack of

[118] "Letter to Henry Clay", *The North Star,* 3 December 1847.
[119] "Immediate Emancipation. An extract," *The Colored American* 10 February 1838, 168.
[120] Ibid.

recognition. The author argued that refusal of recognition was reflective of the United States' "meanness and guilt," of the "weak and wicked" nature of the American people, and of the United States' hypocrisy for refusing to recognize a nation that "gained their nationality and independence in the same way that our own fathers did?"[121] In the minds of many African Americans, the success of the Haitian Revolution gave them their own sense of manifest destiny that the White population of the United States could not just ignore, no matter how hard they tried. Just as the success of the American Revolution was viewed as a testament to God's divine will for an independent America, African Americans viewed the Haitian Revolution as a testament to God's divine will for freedom for the Black race to overcome their bondage and transcend societal perceptions of them. This served as the backbone for many arguments for the recognition of Haiti. The author remarked:

> He who closes his eyes, hardens his heart, and raises his hands, against the manifest *movements of Jehovah,* in all these glorious measures, for the elevation of the deeply injured and long suppressed colored man, will only exhibit the consummation of weakness and despotism…The civilized world has already shown itself the greater savage, in comparison with *Haiti*.[122]

Christianity served as the foundation of American exceptionalism. Judeo-Christian values were at the basis of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. Thus, in interpreting the Haitian Revolution as a testament to God's will for Blacks, African Americans depicted the United States as rejecting the move of God, once again bringing the profession of American exceptionalism into question, much as the Haitian Revolution itself had over 30 years earlier.

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[121] "Haiti," *The Colored American,* 10 November 1838.
[122] Ibid.

Moreover, just as a wave of articles around the issue of recognition came with the extension of it by other nations, the independence of Liberia (1848) precipitated another wave. African Americans understood that race prejudice was inextricably linked to the debate on recognition. The refusal to extend recognition to Liberia, hailed as the second independent Black republic after Haiti, only validated this sentiment. This sparked another wave of criticism, and once again, African American papers rallied for recognition. On January 5, 1849, *The North Star* published an article summing the typical sentiments that the United States government "under the influence of the violent slaveholders, has stubbornly refused to recognize Haiti, and thus severely injured the flourishing commerce we once carried on with that Republic."[123] The article continued: "Under the same influence, it seems, it refuses to recognize the Republic of Liberia…paying rather too much to gratify the colorphobia of a few fanatics…"[124] According to the author, the racism that underwrote the United States' refusal to recognize Haiti was insufficient justification given the furtive ideological bond that united Haiti with the United States since the insurrection—republicanism. The author exclaims:

> …but do you reply that the American faith was ever pledged to either Haiti or Liberia, and therefore it cannot have been broken? It was most solemnly plighted before High Heaven and universal humanity, on the 4th day of July, 1776, while Haiti was in chains which she has since broken […] for America than declared "*All men free,"* and made *equal* justice the basis of her defense and of her rights […] Yet, though Haiti sundered the chains which bound her, only some few years later, America refused and still refuses to recognize her as a sister Republic. And now mark the still more glaring dishonor and breach of plighted faith in her late refusal to acknowledge the independence of Liberia.[125]

[123] "Selections. Recognition of the Liberian Republic," *The North Star,* 05 January 1849.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.

Thus, the author calls out the contradiction between the commitment to republicanism and equality forged as a happy consequence of the American Revolution, whilst the United States partook in the "glaring dishonor" of refusing to extend recognition to Haiti and Liberia.

In addition to contesting the lack of recognition of Haiti, African American newspapers also expressed a general dissatisfaction and distrust of media depictions of Haiti as a whole. On August 4, 1848, for example, *The North Star* published two articles espousing distrust of popular depictions, remarking:

> We call the attention of our readers to our Haitian correspondence, and assure them, as we have oft repeated, that we shall place no reliance on any news purporting to be from that country, until we receive it from our own correspondent – a gentleman upon whose statements we can confidently rely. He refutes the miserable reports which, from time to time of late, have filled the columns of newspapers about the 'horrible massacres in Haiti.'[126]

That same day, a letter from their Haitian Correspondence was featured, in which the correspondent validated the need for such distrust. He remarked: "I have just seen a Philadelphia paper, containing an article purporting to be "further intelligence from Haiti" and which, from beginning to end, is one entire tissue of misrepresentations…."[127] Later that month, on August 21, *The North Star* reminded its readers to be cautious, remarking: "Newspapers are misled in matters respecting [Haiti]. Intelligence respecting Haiti, usually emanating from New Orleans, from whence the truth could not be expected. Those men […] are the principal channels through which these foul slanders flow."[128] Two months later, on October 27, they published an article remarking: "We are

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[126] "Haiti," *The North Star,* 04 August 1848.
[127] "Communications—Haitian Correspondence- No. III Port-Au-Prince 7/2/1484," *The North Star,* 04/ August 1848.
[128] "Haiti," *The North Star,* 21 August 1848.

glad, in the midst of lies daily propagated by the Southern told of the slaveocracy, to receive, and to furnish our readers with reliable intelligence from the Black republic."[129] Again, the following week, frustrations against mainstream representations were propagated, this time against Northerners. The author vents: "It is amazing with what voracity our Northern papers devour every lie to the prejudice of the colored race that finds its way into these latitudes. They give the most bloody details of executions and say that clothe their cruelty with power and freedom."[130] Thus, even as there were efforts to shape public opinion on Haiti through inaccurate exaggerations, African American papers were active in resisting such representations and educating their readership to do the same. They made the attempts at silencing the Haitian Revolution visible, and were determined not to let the mainstream inscription inform their perceptions of Haiti.

Conclusion

As the articles and other works assessed above exemplify, abolitionists and African Americans alike tried to strip away the layers of symbols and stereotypes that engulfed perceptions of St. Domingue. Yet, even up to the moment of recognition, Whites appealed to the racist sentiments of other officials, argued forcefully against the acceptance of this Black nation. On February 4, 1862, Charles Sumner from the Committee on Foreign Relations, introduced a bill seeking authorization from the President to appoint Diplomatic Representatives to both Haiti and Liberia. Yet, following his speech, Saulsbury of Maryland sarcastically contested: "How fine it will look after emancipating the slaves in this District to welcome here at the White House an African,

[129] "Haiti," *The North Star,* 27 October 1848.
[130] "An Abominable Slander," *The North Star,* 11 November 1848.

full-blooded all gilded and belaced, dressed in court style […] if that is agreeable to the tastes and feelings of the people of this country, it is not to mine."[131] Though Lincoln's beliefs prevailed that with emancipation on the nation's heals, there was no discernable reason to withhold recognition, yet "important commercial advantages might be secured by favorable treaties with them," a particular vision of St. Domingue had already been inscribed on the memory of the majority of U.S. Americans.[132]

The inscription of Haiti defined its relevancy in terms of its uses in debates around abolition and race. "St. Domingue" embodied the complex symbolization of the slavery-abolition debate and it was not until this was resolved that Haiti was recognized and the United States was able to confront a black-conscious state. Indeed, by the time recognition was extended, two years into the Civil War and one year prior to the Emancipation Proclamation, the relevance of Haiti as a tool for preserving or undermining slavery was all but lost, yet the stereotypes surrounding it were not. On January 2, 1893, 89 years after the Haitian Revolution concluded, ex- U.S. Minister to Haiti, Frederick Douglass delivered a Speech at the Chicago World Fair, in honor of the erection and dedication of the Haitian Pavilion. He notes:

> Much has been said of the savage and sanguinary character of the warfare waged by the Haitians […]; but impartial history records the fact, that every act of blood and torture committed by the Haitians during that war was more than duplicated by the French. The revolutionists did only what was essential to success in gaining their freedom and independence and what any other people assailed by such an enemy for such a purpose would have done.[133]

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[131] Samuel Cox, "Foreign Affairs," *Eight Years in Congress, from 1857-1865: Memoir and Speeches,* (Washington DC: 1865), 161.
[132] Abraham Lincoln, "First Annual Message" *The American Presidency Project/ Abraham Lincoln: XVI President of the United States: 1861-1865,* www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29502#ax221sgbkbmfp.
[133] Frederick Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti" (1893), http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm.

Much as this short excerpt does, the largest part of his speech was spent providing historical context and de-lousing Haiti of the stereotypes that continued to stain the memory and perception of it as a nation of lazy, barbarous, savage, and violent Blacks.

The title of this chapter is "What the Eye Doesn't See Doesn't Move the Heart" and indeed, the United States' media and administration spent much effort trying to keep the overarching significance of the Haitian Revolution off the radar. Though African Americans recognized the manipulative treatment of the way St. Domingue was being memorialized, ultimately through denial, institutionalized silencing, and representative recognition, the mainstream inscription prevailed.

Chapter 3—
Only When the Serpent Dies do you Know its True Length: Bringing the Haitian Revolution to the U.S. History Classroom

Sé lé koulév mouri, ou konn longé il
"Only when the serpent dies do you know its true length"
-Haitian Proverb

A cycle of silences warped the Haitian Revolution from the moment of its inception and through its symbolization until it ultimately faded into the realm of historical irrelevancy, especially within the United States. But "only when the serpent dies can you see its true length, and the legacy of the initial inscription in the minds of U.S. Americans still lingers today. Perceptions of Haiti are the result of the original stereotypes that continue to engulf it. Despite this, on January 12, 2010, when a catastrophic earthquake hit Haiti claiming upwards of 300,000 lives, "the whole world focused on Haiti."[134] The news was taken over by reports of the progress that was being made in Haiti due to the earthquake. Death rates were continuously being projected and updated. Prayer vigils were held, and news of benefit concerts, collections, and mission trips flooded email inboxes with one goal in mind: "Help Haiti." Teachers, such as Marie Cerat, a Haitian American woman, found the perfect opportunity to introduce Haiti within the classroom in order to systematically uncloud its history. Cerat proclaimed:

> Haitians and their descendants all over the world are grieving and mourning the terrible disaster and loss of lives that befell our homeland. For a brief moment this winter, the whole world focused on Haiti. Educators at all levels—elementary, middle school, high school, and college—can take this opportunity to teach about Haiti: its past, present, and future. In the midst of this tragedy, I would like teachers to bring into classroom discussions, the reasons why Haiti, once the richest colony in the Antilles, the most prosperous French colony, became so poor.[135]

[134] Marie Lily Cerat, "Plea from a Haitian American Teacher". *Rethinking Schools,* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring 2010).
[135] Ibid.

Ten days after the earthquake, Teachinghistory.org, a resource website for history educators, published a list of resources on the history of Haiti in relation to the United States. The earthquake in Haiti presented a "teaching moment."[136] Yet few stopped to ask why they were just hearing about this half of an island, or why it had to take a "teaching moment" for them to learn about a nation so close to home. Ludwell Lee Montague pinpoints this paradox well in his *Haiti and the United States 1714-1938*. According to Montague, considering that Haiti lies only six hundred miles from Florida and its coast forms the only direct route from the Atlantic seaboard of the United States to the Panama Canal, a channel of immense significance to American naval strategy, it is remarkable that it is so little known to U.S. Americans. He writes: "Although Haitian history has been closely related to that of the United States for more than two centuries, to the American mind, Haiti remains a land of foreboding and mystery."[137] Though Montague wrote this in 1940, it still holds true over 70 years later—ignorance plagues U.S. perceptions of Haiti.

Despite this, as demonstrated in the first chapter, the Haitian Revolution left an imprint on the way U.S. Americans perceive of themselves as it encouraged a re-evaluation and re-securing of American exceptionalist sentiments. The study of these interactions between the United States and Haiti not only reveals the transnational nature of American exceptionalism, but also provides numerous insights into the historiographic process, the reciprocal nature of national identity formation, and the relationship between racism and U.S. foreign policy. Despite, or perhaps because of this, few efforts have been

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[136] Lee Ann Ghajar, "Teaching About Haiti," *Teachinghistory.org,* 22 Jan 2010, http://teachinghistory.org/nhec-blog/23787.
[137] Ludwell Lee Montague, *Haiti and the United States 1714-1938* (Durham: 1940), 3.

made to incorporate the Haitian Revolution within the classroom, especially within the context of teaching it in juxtaposition to U.S. history, but this is very necessary. A discussion of this necessity is the purpose of this chapter.

Review of Existing Literature

In order to understand why such a discussion is necessary, it is crucial to understand how it overlaps with and diverges from the existing scholarship on bringing Haiti to the classroom. As such, the following will be an evaluation of some of the only works on the topic: Valentina Peguero's "Teaching the Haitian Revolution: Its Place in Western and Modern World History," John Garrigus' "White Jacobins/Black Jacobins: Bringing the Haitian and French Revolutions Together in the Classroom," Deborah Mankart and Catherine Sunshine's *Teaching About Haiti*, and Madison Bell Smartt's "Haitian Revolution and American history."

Non-U.S. historians have been forerunners in advocating for the introduction of the Haitian Revolution into history classrooms. Valentina Peguero, a Professor of Modern European history and Western Civilization, for example, argues for the relevance of the Haitian Revolution to teaching the modern history of the Western hemisphere. In Peguero's view, as "the first successful slave revolt in modern times," the Haitian Revolution ought to find a place in every world history classroom, not at the expense or exclusion of other important topics, but as a way to better understand them.[138] Drawing from her own teaching experience as a college professor, Peguero argues that the Haitian Revolution provides an opportunity to engage students in a broad comparative analysis of

[138] Valentina Peguero, "Teaching the Haitian Revolution: Its Place in Western and Modern World History." *Society for History Education*/ *The History Teacher*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Nov. 1998), 33.

colonial rule and the reaction to the forced entrance of Haiti into the politics of the modern world. She further argues that in order to sufficiently comprehend the forces that have shaped the Western hemisphere, students should understand how the Haitian Revolution gave strength to the revolutionary concept, its transatlantic repercussions, as well as the impact of its slave emancipation.[139]

French colonial historian John Garrigus, is another of the few authors who has advocated for the incorporation of Haiti into classroom curriculum, though in the context of European history. Garrigus argues for incorporating the narratives of colonial territories into the larger narratives of the possessor nation, more specifically, for the inclusion of Haiti within the French narrative. According to Garrigus, as the first successful attempt by a non-European population to reject colonial rule, Haiti pioneered what nationalism might mean for the rest of the world. Yet despite this, he notes that the struggles of French subjects are frequently separated from those of their Caribbean slaves. For example, the Haitian Revolution is frequently relegated to the margins of French history, if included at all, thus contributing to its absence in the classroom. According to Garrigus, however, students can learn a lot from the presence of Haiti within the classroom. For example, it can expose students to the interaction of racial and national identities, or it can be assessed as a question of human rights. Haiti may also be used in prompting a discussion on the impact of imperialism, because the case of Haiti demonstrates that simply expelling the French could not eliminate the imperial legacy.[140] Without a doubt, Garrigus and Peguero's articles are rare and insightful. Yet, though these are two of the only articles of their type, given their non-United States scholarly

[139] Ibid, 33-41.
[140] John Garrigus, "White Jacobins/Black Jacobins: Bringing the Haitian and French Revolutions Together in the Classroom," *Journal of French Studies,* (2000) 261-273.

background, neither work argues for any incorporation of the Haitian Revolution specifically within course work on United States history.[141] Its relevancy is only addressed as it relates to their fields.

Unlike the other two works, *Teaching About Haiti* by Deborah Mankart and Catherine Sunshine, argues for the historical relevance of Haiti to the history of the United States. Precipitated by the 1994 United States occupation of Haiti, Mankart and Sunshine critique media representations of U.S. involvement in Haiti, arguing that they suffer from the same biases that have persisted in textbooks for years and yet serve as the foundation on which students form their opinions. The authors argued that media portrayals of the coup failed to provide any historical background of the role of the United States in Haitian history, included little or no use of Haitian sources, and that coverage was generally of events that confirmed a pre-existing bias or political sympathy. Given these shortcomings, Mankart and Sunshine posited that in order for students to form informed opinions and participate in public policy debate on Haiti, it was essential that they learn to be critical readers of the press and to be able to deconstruct the "deficit" picture of the Haitian people and the good, powerful picture of the United States as "the white-knight in shining armor."[142] As such, designed to help students fill in the gaps in both the news and textbooks representations, *Teaching About Haiti* is a pamphlet that historicizes Haiti's history from Columbus' encounter with Ayiti (1492) through the

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[141] Another problem with Garrigus' article is that in attributing the Haitian Revolution solely to the French Revolution, he is replicating the deflection of slave agency enacted at the moment of its occurrence and thus delegitimizing it. While the French Revolution undoubtedly played a role in the Haitian Revolution, such a singular focus reduces Haitian autonomy by making slaves in St. Domingue the passive receivers of French revolutionary values.

[142] Deborah Mankart and Catherine Sunshine, *Teaching About Haiti (*Caribbean Connection Series: 1994), 3.

United States' second occupation of Haiti (1994-1995).[143] Yet while Mankart and Sunshine situate the historical relationship between the United States and Haiti, advocating for a more critical lens, they effectively exclude any relevance of the Haitian Revolution from their discussion, thus dismissing it as a part of the long history of interactions between the United States and Haiti.

Author of a trilogy of novels on the Haitian Revolution, Madison Smartt Bell is one of the only voices advocating for the inclusion of the Haitian Revolution in U.S. American history. In a brief article published for *Teaching for Change*, he argued:

> The Haitian Revolution, though seldom studied in proper detail outside Haiti, ought to be found near the center of any basic curriculum of American History […] For although the Haitian Revolution was of a smaller scale than ours, ideas are ultimately more important than number, and it was in the Haitian Revolution and nowhere else that the revolutionary ideology of the close of the eighteenth century first found its true consummation.[144]

Through such a statement, he asserts the importance of the Haitian Revolution to U.S. history coursework. Yet, unlike the preceding three works, Smartt Bell fails to assert how such an incorporation can be made. As such, the question of incorporation will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter. Drawing on the content developed in the previous chapters, I have developed two lesson plans that incorporate the Haitian Revolution into United States history with the goal of melding theory and praxis, inserting the Haitian Revolution into the U.S. History classroom as a means of both demystifying the historiographic process, while simultaneously counteracting the prevailing ignorance surrounding Haiti and its Revolution.

Theoretical Framework

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[143] Ibid, 48.
[144] Madison Smartt Bell, "Haitian Revolution and American History," *Teaching for Change,* http://teachingforchange.org/publications/haiti/revolution.

In order for the designed curriculum to address the shortcomings of history teaching in the past, the objective, format, and practice of both lesson plans align with the expectations laid out in the National Council for the Social Studies' *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (1994). Based on a careful examination of these standards, I have come to the conclusion that the Haitian Revolution in the classroom will prove most effective within a secondary context. Thus, both lesson plans have been designed with the intention that they would be integrated into high school coursework.[145]

Moreover, history teaching has recently come under much critique as debates rage as to how best to equip students to be active historical agents in an increasingly multicultural, yet inequitable society. As such, both lessons align with critical pedagogical theory, diverging from what Paulo Freire refers to as the "Banking Model of Teaching."[146] According to Freire, in traditional education, there is a narrator (the teacher) and a listening object (the students), which objectifies students and minimizes their creative power, thus facilitating the banking model of teaching which turns students into "receptacles" to be "filled" by teachers, as if they were making a deposit at a bank. The teacher deposits; students are the depositories, receiving, memorizing, and repeating. According to Freire, this model tries to control thinking and action, inhibiting creative powers, and situating students as spectators, rather than as re-creators. Yet according to Freire, students need to discover that history is a *process* that undergoes constant transformation. Such an outlook requires abandoning the deposit-making model and replacing it with posing the problems of human beings in their relations with the world,

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[145] "Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies," *National Council for the Social Studies,* (1994) http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary.
[146] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York and London: 1970), 56-69.

inviting students to be critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.[147] This is the goal of both lesson plans.

Lesson Plan Descriptions

As discussed in Chapter One, American Exceptionalism was the cornerstone of American nationalism at the moment of the American Revolution. Yet such an individualistic narrative in schools is increasingly artificial. In elementary school, students learn the Pledge of Allegiance as an overt induction into American patriotism. In middle school, students learn the Preamble to the Constitution as a reaffirmation of those values, and in high school, students are taught the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. This in itself is not a problem. What is, however, is that while students are learning of an America that values freedom, and liberty, the development of these ideals and the methods through which they were sustained are largely ignored. Thus, the objective of the first lesson plan is for students to understand the history of American exceptionalism as a transnational one developed in dialogue with and as a result of interactions with other nations, while simultaneously being exposed to the dilemma between slavery and democracy during the nineteenth century. The Haitian Revolution provides a lens through which to reveal this dialogue.

In order for students to understand why the United States reacted to the Haitian Revolution with fear, obsession, and denial, they must first understand both the centrality of American Exceptionalism as well as the United States' professed commitment to republicanism immediately following the American Revolution. Only after this foundation has been laid through previous lectures and coursework can students then

[147] Ibid.

begin to explore the reactions of United States citizens to the Haitian Revolution. In order to do this, the first lesson plan incorporates role-play. Drama in education as a tool to teach about various topics in literature, social studies, history, has been proven to enhance learning experiences and motivate further study, and has been proven especially effective in helping students develop a critical lens in understanding a subject's complexity.[148] Thus, through putting themselves in the shoes of African American slaves, slaveholders, Northern merchants, abolitionists, and the United States government in order to understand the varying interests and their manifestations, students can interactively gauge the responses of different communities and understand their perceptions in relation to the Haitian Revolution and the way exceptionalism was being shaped in the process. At the same time, this method engages students as active participants, thus diverging from Freire's banking model, and empowering students to take an active role in recreating history while developing a greater understanding of the material. Moreover, it exposes them to the richness and complexity of U.S. American history, the complicated array of interactions, and the intricate processes involved in the construction of a modern nation.

The second lesson plan shifts to helping students better understand the historiographic process by learning to recognize what Henry Giroux, one of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy within the United States, refers to as "null curriculum," messages that are omitted, silenced, ignored, and/or marginalized in curriculum. According to Giroux, it is necessary to expose students to the hidden messages that are

[148] Adam Blatner, "Role Playing in Education" (2009), http://www.blatner.com/adam/pantbk/rlplayedu.htm.

present in their absence in mainstream curriculum.[149] As such, the second lesson gives students an opportunity to deconstruct textbook depictions, specifically of the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the Louisiana Purchase, in order to introduce them to the role of power and silencing in history. The conclusions drawn will likely be in line with those found in a previous analysis of textbooks on this subject which revealed that history textbooks, the transmitters of historical narratives to generations of youth in United States schools, mimic some of the original pitfalls in their portrayals of the Haitian Revolution. "Haiti, Napoleon, and the Louisiana Purchase," examined sixteen textbook depictions of the Haitian Revolution in relation to the Louisiana Purchase. The author's conclusion was that while every U.S. American history textbook devotes at least a paragraph to the Louisiana Purchase, the Haitian Revolution, a prime factor in the success of the acquisition, is hardly discussed. When the Haitian Revolution is discussed, the author found that it was viewed ethnocentrically, discussed in isolation from its impact, and downplayed through an emphasis on external factors, thus carrying on the legacy of faulty depictions inscribed over the course of the nineteenth century. For example, *America: The People and the Dream* (1991), mentions the Haitian Revolution, but emphasizes the decimation of French troops by yellow fever. In this reference, the authors' language brushes everything together, detracting from the significance of the Haitian Revolution, thus delegitimizing it as the prime motivation for the sale. [150]

Before this lesson, students should already have been introduced to the Louisiana Purchase and they should have an understanding of the significance of this acquisition to

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[149] Fulya Damla Kentli, "Comparison of Hidden Curriculum Theories," *European Journal of Educational Studies* (2009), http://www.ozelacademy.com/EJES_v1n2_Kentli.pdf, 86. Hidden curriculum can include messages that promote racism, sexism, Eurocentrism, heterosexism, classicism, and patriarchism.
[150] "Haiti, Napoleon, and the Louisiana Purchase," http://pdfuri.com/iv.-haiti-napoleon-and-the-louisiana-purchase, 65-70.

American nationhood. It is against this backdrop that the Haitian Revolution should be introduced as one of the leading motivators for the sale, and that students should be challenged to consider the ways textbooks acknowledge or attempt to deny its significance. As a follow-up to this activity, students have the opportunity to choose another United States historical event or encounter and, drawing from knowledge gleaned both in class and from individual research, assess potential biases, silences, or marginalization in the way events surrounding their topic are portrayed in their textbook. In this manner, the Haitian Revolution in relation to the Louisiana Purchase is not treated as an isolated incident, but rather as one example of silencing that can provide students with tools to recognize and question other representations of historical events that their textbooks encourage them to accept as fact.

In addition to these lessons, the Haitian Revolution also provides a lens through which to comprehend both White fears and black aspirations during the nineteenth century, as well as to analyze the pitfalls of the media and the historical ramifications of media bias and inaccuracy. A review of the prevalence of representations of the Haitian Revolution in Harlem Renaissance art and literature can be another place of incorporation, testifying to its impact on the African American psyche and the resilience of that impact. Talking about the lack of knowledge of the Haitian Revolution and historicizing that silence with the content from chapter two, can help students see the way the present is always in constant dialogue with the past.

Lesson 1: Republicanism, American "Exceptionalism", and the Question of Slavery

Objective/ Purpose: The broad objective of this lesson is for students to understand the history of American exceptionalism as a transnational one developed in dialogue with and as a result of interactions with other nations. At the same time, this lesson should expose students to the dilemma between slavery and democracy during the nineteenth century, and the way the Haitian Revolution highlighted this dilemma in the United States.

Duration: 2- 50 minute class periods.

Assignment Introduction: This lesson should be positioned within the context of United States nationalism and identity development. In previous class lessons, students should have been exposed to the notion of "American Exceptionalism" as a unifying force within the United States and the prime medium of bringing together the previously divided thirteen colonies ideologically. They should also have some background in constitutional values and the centrality of slavery to the United States. It is within this context that the Haitian Revolution should be introduced in order to help students confront the question of slavery and the justifications for it. Teachers can begin by literally identifying Haiti on the map given the general lack of knowledge on it. Teachers should provide students with a brief summary of the Haitian Revolution, and introduce some of the questions it posed in regards to human rights, republicanism, nationalism, and slavery. Students should also be familiar with the terms revolution, colonialism, liberty, and rebellion. Students should then be called upon to draw upon their knowledge of the varying groups in the United States and to step into their shoes and mindsets in order to assess and respond to the Haitian Revolution through the eyes of different groups within the United States.

Procedure:

First Class

- The teacher should introduce this lesson as discussed above
- Students should be divided into five groups: abolitionists, slaveholders, northern merchants, the United States government, and slaves
- Students should be given a list of the questions listed in the materials/resources section and work together as a group drawing from their knowledge of the United States' racial climate, American exceptionalism, and the United States' commitment to republicanism in order to gauge how different groups would view the Haitian Revolution and want/expect the United States to respond.

Second Class

- Students should present their conclusions as a group to the class. They should be sure to answer each question and address how they drew upon their historical knowledge in order to arrive at the established conclusions.
- Students from other groups as well as teachers should be encouraged to challenge group conclusions by asking questions in order for students to delve deeper.

Materials/ Resources:
Student groups should be provided with the following questions either in printed form, or on the class board, and be encouraged to record their answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- Review the status of your group in the United States at the moment of the Haitian Revolution: What was their social position and what were their interests? How (if at all) were these interests secured?
- How did the Haitian Revolution threaten or stimulate these interests?
- Given what you know already of your group, predict the initial reaction of your group to the Haitian Revolution at the moment of the insurrection in St. Domingue?
- Given what you know already of your group, predict their reaction to Haiti's independence?
- How would your group respond to the Haitian Revolution in the United States? What actions would you take to secure your interests?
- Consider the response of your group if it had the power to control the collective response of the United States as a nation. How does this fit in with your understanding of American exceptionalism?

Assessment: Though there are obviously right and wrong answers, students should be assessed, not based upon their conclusions, but on their ability to think critically and the process they took to arrive at their conclusions. Students in the United States government group, for example, should not be penalized for concluding that given the values embodied in the United States Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence, and given the professed commitment to republicanism, the U.S. government would react positively to the Haitian Revolution, even though this was not the case. At the same time, the instructor should be sure to address why certain conclusions were reached, and the shortcomings of those conclusions as a way of highlighting the many contradictions in American exceptionalism.

Debriefing: Though student groups are not penalized for historically inaccurate conclusions with sound logic, during the debriefing stage, teachers should be sure to counteract these conclusions, pointing out contradictions between professed values and the practice of them and also affirming correct conclusions. Teachers should conclude this lesson by highlighting the varying ways groups perceived and responded to the Haitian Revolution, as well as trends and responses. Teachers should ultimately clearly pinpoint the way the Haitian Revolution challenged the notion of American exceptionalism by highlighting the tension between slavery and democracy, and also discuss the ways the United States responded to the Haitian Revolution in a manner that veiled the contradictions it highlighted, thus defending its exceptional narrative in dialogue with the events in St. Domingue.

Teacher's note: While the students are working in independent groups, the teacher should guide students in the right direction, challenging them to use their knowledge of their group in order to make calculated informed hypotheses as to their responses to the

Haitian Revolution without giving them the answer, thus aiding the development of their critical analysis skills.

Standard Adherence

NCSS Benchmarks for Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective

4.1 Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history

4.2 Analyzes the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history and specifies how events might have been different in the absence of those ideas and beliefs

4.3 Analyzes the effects that specific "chance events" had on history and specifies how things might have been different in the absence of those events

4.4 Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions

4.11 Knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy

Standard 6: Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary moment, and the reasons for the American victory

4.2 Understands how the principles of the Declaration of Independence justified American independence

4.8 Understands the arguments of advocates and opponents of slavery from different regions of the country

Standard 7: Understands the impact of the American Revolution of politics, economy, and society

4.3 Understands the goals of different groups of people after the Revolution

NCSS General Standards

NCSS Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1801-1861)

Civics Standards: What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?

1.8 Understands the central ideas of American constitutional government and how this form of government has shaped the character of American society

1.9 Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy

1.11 Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society

1.13 Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity

1.14 Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life

1.19 Understands what is meant by "the public agenda," how it is set, and how it is influenced by public opinion and the media

1.21 Understands the formation and implementation of public policy

1.22 Understands how the world is organized politically into nation states, how

nation-states interact with one another, and issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy
1.23 Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations

Working with Others Standards

1.1 Contributes to the overall effort of a group
1.2 Uses conflict resolution techniques
1.4 Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

Thinking and Reasoning Standards

1.1 Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument
1.2 Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
1.3 Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences
1.4 Understands and applies basic principles of hypothesis testing and scientific inquiry
1.5 Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques
1.6 Applies decision-making techniques

Lesson Plan 2: What is "History"?

Objective/ Purpose: The broad objective of this lesson is for students to develop a greater understanding of the role of power and subjectivity in the historiographic process and come to understand textbooks as a result of this process and thus subject to critique. The should also develop skills to be able to identify what Henry Giroux refers to as "null curriculum." Moreover, students should develop an understanding of the way the Haitian Revolution has been silenced and de-emphasized in narratives surrounding one of its primary contributions to United States history: the Louisiana Purchase.

Duration: 1- 50 minute class period

Assignment Introduction:
This lesson should be positioned early on in the context of United States expansion. Students should have already learned about American exceptionalism and understand the importance of the Louisiana Purchase and the factors that facilitated it, including the Haitian Revolution.

Instructors can introduce this lesson by asking what their students already know about Haiti. Students should be asked to pinpoint the adjectives used to describe Haiti. Then the teacher should briefly describe the ways that these labels are frequently the result of the stereotypes that engulfed Haiti in the United States during its earliest interaction with the United States—the Haitian Revolution. Teachers should provide a brief overview of the Haitian Revolution, highlighting its historical significance and the questions it raised for the United States in regards to the relation between slavery and republicanism. The teacher should discuss the significance of these questions to the United States and American exceptionalism and reveal the ways this affected the way the Haitian Revolution entered the United States consciousness in a particular way which affects the enduring legacy of it today. The Haitian Revolution and the skewing of it in the United States should be used as a springboard off of which teachers can then expose their students to the process of history making, as one that is subjective and controlled by the powerful. Teachers should then introduce textbooks, depositories of history, as products of a flawed historiographic process and the Louisiana Purchase in relation to depictions of Haiti as exemplary of this.

Procedure:
Students should be instructed to read their textbook summary of the Louisiana Purchase independently, and then to work in pairs to analyze their textbook depiction of the Haitian Revolution in relation to the Louisiana Purchase with the questions listed in the materials section.

Materials/ Resources:
Student groups should be provided with the following questions either in printed form, or on the class board, and be encouraged to record their answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- What is depicted as the main cause of the Louisiana Purchase? How does this challenge or reaffirm your understanding given what you have learned in class?
- How (if at all) is the Haitian Revolution portrayed?
  -What are the main factors contributing to its success?
- How is the United States portrayed in relation to the Louisiana Purchase and bringing it about?
- How is Haiti portrayed in relation to the Louisiana Purchase and bringing it about?
- How does this depiction conflict or affirm what you know about the Louisiana Purchase?

United States History Textbooks (one for every student; this assignment will prove more effective if the instructor distributes varying textbooks to different pairs so that students can get a more diverse sense of the representations)

Debriefing: As a collective, the class should have a discussion about the shortcomings of how Haiti is portrayed. After coming to the consensus that there are historical problems, teachers should be sure to highlight that Haiti is just one example. This activity should encourage students to be critical readers of their textbooks and other historical documents and should challenge them to search for bias when reading. In debriefing, teachers may introduce the 5 Ws of historical analysis.

Who- Who is speaking? Whose voice is included? Whose voice is left out?
What- Don't take it as "what happened," but as what someone said happened. What are possible biases? What may be left out? What are the author's interests? What's at stake?
When- When did the event take place? When was the source written? [possible disparities?]
Where- Where did the event take place? Where is the author from (North or South, for example)?
Why- Why is what is included included? Why is this narrative important? Why might the author have left things out?

Independent Work: Students should then be required to assess another nation the United States has interacted with which affected its history and the historical depictions of it in their textbook. Teachers may provide a set list of nations for students to choose from (i.e. Vietnam, Korea, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Panama, Liberia, The Philippines, Iraq, Afghanistan) or students may be encouraged to choose independently. Students should research their chosen interaction, and then write a two page analysis of the shortcomings or benefits of the textbook depictions (or media depictions if they choose) in accordance with the questions they were previously asked.

Standard Adherence
NCSS Benchmarks for Historical Understanding
Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective
4.1 Analyzes the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history

4.4 Analyzes the effects specific decisions had on history and studies how things might have been different in the absence of those decisions
4.5 Understands that the consequences of human intentions are influenced by the means of carrying them out
4.9 Analyzes how specific historical events would be interpreted differently based on newly uncovered records and/or information
4.10 Understands how past events affect our private lives and society in general
4.12 Knows how to evaluate the credibility and authenticity of historical sources
4.13 Evaluates the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations

<u>NCSS General Standards</u>
Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
Civics Standards: What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?
1.9 Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy
1.11 Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society
1.23 Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations

Geography Standards
1.14 Understands how human actions modify the physical environment
1.15 Understands how physical systems affect human systems
1.16 Understands the changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution and importance of resources

Working with Others Standards
1.1 Contributes to the overall effort of a group
1.4 Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

Thinking and Reasoning Standards
1.1 Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument
1.2 Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning
1.3 Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences
1.6 Applies decision-making techniques

Conclusion

In a 2005 article by Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Cincinnati, Jana Evans Braziel, titled, *Re-membering Défilée: Dédée Bazile as Revolutionary Lieu de Mémoire,* Braziel reveals the extreme violence that has been inflicted upon Haiti, and subsequently Haitian historical narratives. She writes:

> One of the most devastating effects and consequences of dominant forms of cultural experience in the Americas has been the political subordination and cultural erasures experienced by African diasporic subjects in the so-called New World. The Americas still suffer from historical amnesia, a deep unwillingness to face and confront the inflicted wounds of the past.[151]

Despite this, according to Braziel, twentieth-century scholars have not only continued to celebrate, but have also begun to revitalize and unearth the Haitian revolutionary historical moment and its heroes. Despite this, though scholarship has begun to assess the Haitian Revolution, the memory of it, its legacy, its leaders, and even, to a small degree, its relation to the United States, such excavation has largely been relegated to academia. This is problematic.

The Haitian Revolution contributed in unexpected ways to the emerging nationalistic culture of the United States, as U.S. Americans formulated, disputed, and reinforced their notion of exceptionalism in dialogue with the events in St. Domingue and their conceptions of racial and cultural difference. Just as "the leaky house can fool the sun, but not the rain," the Haitian Revolution highlighted that American Revolutionary values were not a fixed, monolithic body of ideas, they only appeared so. In reality, they were shaky, like a leaky roof, in need of re-evaluation and fixing, especially given the

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[151] Jana Evans Braziel, "Re-membering Defilee: Dedee Bazile as Revolutionary Lieu de Memoire," *Small Axe- No. 18,* Vol. 9, No. 2 (September 2005), 73.

contradiction the maintenance of slavery posed to their values.

The United States' enduring response to the Haitian Revolution was one of denial, a denial that testified to their acknowledgement of it as inspirational to the very slaves whose humanity they heartily denied. But "what the eye doesn't see, doesn't move the heart," and through repressive laws, the South worked hard to keep U.S. slaves from "seeing" the insurrection in St. Domingue. Though they ultimately failed, and African Americans would be active in counteracting the attempts to manipulate the memorialization of the events in St. Domingue, the legacy of the denial and the silencing of the Haitian Revolution persisted.

"Only when the serpent dies can you see its true length," and the true length of that initial inscription is ignorance. Such ignorance highlights problems with relegating the processes of unearthing history to scholarship. Through such relegation, the masses are effectively excluded from the effects of rectifying previous silencing and remain the victims of persisting misconceptions and inaccuracies. Yet, as a defining experience of the indoctrination into values of U.S. nationalism, the classroom is a prime location for the dissemination of such knowledge so that students can have a critical framework with which to deconstruct and critique learned histories and look for potential biases.

It is important to note that while this paper has advocated for the inclusion of Haiti, I am not saying by any means that Haiti is the only nation that the U.S. has silenced in order to serve its nationalist goals. Indeed, one can pick nearly any U.S. imperial encounter and find similar trends. What I am saying is that Haiti was the foundational moment, setting the stage for many more replications of the U.S. executing its power to re-direct, re-write, and re-situate the history it wants to be told. As such, Haiti can

provide a good starting place for reincorporating such narratives in order to bring to light the reality that "a single finger can't eat okra," and that the cultural history of the United States is intertwined in that of Others, not only one dimensionally through the impact of the United States on Others, but also through the impact of Others on the United States. According to Michel Rolph-Trouillot, "the ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots."[152] Through the incorporation of Haiti into the classroom, students can be gain a deeper understanding of the Haitian Revolution by being active participants in the exposition and eradication of the continuous prejudice that shrouds the memory of the the Haitian Revolution and has been crystallized in the thinking of many U.S. Americans.

It is also important to note that the United States was not only affected during the Haitian Revolution, but also in the two subsequent occupations of Haiti in 1915 and 1994. Though a broader discussion of this impact is outside of the scope of this paper, Mary Renda in *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism* contends that the 1915 military occupation of Haiti was one of several arenas in which the U.S. was remade through overseas imperial ventures in the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Renda, "U.S. Americans who presided over, visited, or read about Haiti found opportunities to re-imagine their own nation and lives as they appeared to be reflected by and refracted through Haitian history and culture."[153] In order to comprehend the occupation as an integral part of U.S. history, then, we must understand how it engaged these varied audiences, and how it attempted to position them. Renda also notes

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[152] Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: 1995), xix.
[153] Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Greensboro: 2001).

that while this unmitigated breach of Haitian rule constitutes an infamous and significant chapter in Haitian history, in contrast, it has earned little more than a footnote in traditional accounts of U.S history. Indeed, it has been silenced much as the Haitian Revolution.[154]

In conclusion, according to Ernest Renan, "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality,"[155] but at the same time, "a nation that forgets its past can function no better than an individual with amnesia."[156] Though public opinion on the Haitian Revolution in the United States largely disavowed it as a revolution, an analysis of the cultural dialogue between St. Domingue and the United States reveals that the history of the United States is embedded in a complex history that has redefined what it means to be exceptional, what it means to be a champion of human rights, and the true definition of freedom. This part of the United States history should be incorporated into mainstream curriculum. Such incorporation can equip students to better understand the historiographic process and give them a critical lens through which to view the world.

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[154] Ibid.
[155] Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?" http://ig.cs.tuberlin.de/oldstatic/w2001/eu1/dokumente/Basistexte/Renan1882EN-Nation.pdf, (1882).

[156] "Introduction to American History," 11 November 2011, http://www.academicamerican.com/colonial/topics/amhistintro.htm.

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