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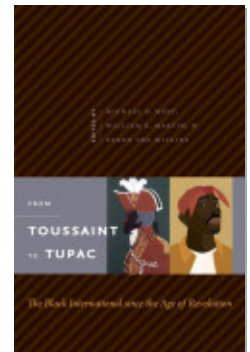
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Haiti, I'm Sorry

The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of the
Black International

MICHAEL O. WEST & WILLIAM G. MARTIN

Haiti I'm sorry we misunderstood you. But one day we'll turn around
and look inside you. Haiti I'm so sorry. But one day we'll turn our heads,
restore your glory.—DAVID RUDDER, "Haiti," calypso song, 1988

Revolution came to the French slaveholding colony of Saint Domingue in 1791. When the upheaval finally ran its course more than a decade later, in 1804, the landscape had been completely remade. In one fell swoop, the Haitian Revolution banished slavery, colonialism, and white supremacy, the three foundational institutions of the post-Columbian dispensation in the Americas. It was a historical novelty, including a novel shock to the rising consumer culture of the Western world, now deprived of its foremost sugar bowl and coffee pot. The thoroughgoing transformation in Saint Domingue ended slavery in an entire society, the first such act of general emancipation in the annals of the human experience. And although it did not eliminate human bondage, meaning concretely African bondage, from the hemisphere as a whole, the Haitian Revolution left a deep imprint on slavery in the Americas, for masters and slaves alike. Neither would be quite the same again. More broadly, the Haitian Revolution powerfully influenced major changes in the Atlantic political economy, and thereby in the course of world history. The slave revolt turned revolution in Saint Domingue was, quite simply, the single most cataclysmic and transfiguring event of its time, the Age of Revolution, a historical verity recklessly omitted from the literature on that era.

For the black international, the events in Saint Domingue were iconic. The Haitian Revolution represented a culmination of decades of armed struggle

by enslaved Africans in the Atlantic world, even as it heralded exciting new developments in the black quest for universal emancipation. Like no other event before or since, the Haitian Revolution electrified African-descended people all over the Americas, the enslaved majority along with the nominally free minority. Haiti became the bellwether of black freedom in the Atlantic world, albeit one that would not be replicated, although not for want of trying. Haiti's symbolic value to black internationalism was a primary reason for the hostility and isolation it faced from slaveholders and white powers everywhere. To its great shame, however, the dominant historical narrative of the black international has largely neglected the Haitian Revolution, effectively reproducing the scholarly silence of those who write about the Age of Revolution. Actually, the Haitian Revolution was a central moment in the evolution of the black international, forcefully demarcating the two major paradigms in black internationalism that emerged in the Age of Revolution: the revolutionary and revivalist traditions. The one tradition had its origins in the long series of slave revolts that reached its zenith in the Haitian Revolution, while the other derived from the evangelical revival movement of the latter part of the eighteenth century. In time, the two black international traditions, the revolutionary and the revivalist, often merged. On the terrain of black international theory and practice, the Haitian Revolution continued to reverberate into the twentieth century, becoming both a cultural trope and a spark for activist politics in various parts of global Africa following the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915.

The Haitian Revolution Outlined

The event that inaugurated the Haitian Revolution was but the latest example, and, it turned out, the most dramatic and successful one, of slaves seizing the moment. Enslaved Africans had a long history of taking advantage of the misfortunes of their enslavers to seek freedom. So it had been since the onset of racial bondage in the Americas, and so it was with the slave revolt in Saint Domingue in 1791. When the French Revolution began two years earlier, in 1789, another group in Saint Domingue saw the potential for advancing its corporate interests and acted accordingly. The free people of color, consisting mostly, although not exclusively, of mulattos—that is, persons of African and European ancestry—had long felt the sting of white supremacy. In the Caribbean, even in the wider Atlantic world, Saint Domingue's mulattos occupied a peculiar place. As a group, they were unusually wealthy, owning a fourth of the colony's slaves and an equal proportion of its land. Yet the mulattos remained

pariahs in the larger white-dominated society, their low social and political status belying their economic prowess. In the mulatto struggle for equality with the whites, the upheaval in France came as a godsend. The most fervent partisans of the French Revolution in Saint Domingue were mulattos, their ideological armor its touchstone document, the Rights of Man and Citizen. Most of the colony's whites, unmoved by revolutionary idealism and unconvinced of the mulattos' humanity, disdainfully rejected their demands for full citizenship rights. The ensuing confrontation worsened, and soon white and mulatto militias were at war.¹

It was then that the slaves made their move, determined to extract freedom from chaos. The chief obstacle to this attempt at self-liberation was the French Revolution. Mindful that Saint Domingue's slave-produced sugar and coffee accounted for the greater part of their country's foreign trade, the French revolutionaries concluded that the Rights of Man and Citizen did not apply to enslaved Africans. High-sounding rhetoric about the universality of liberty could scarcely be allowed to trump the business of the nation. After all, the French revolutionaries, no less than the monarch they had replaced, were duty bound to protect the national interests. Accordingly, the French revolutionaries declared war on their putative ideological equivalents in Saint Domingue, the revolting slaves. Eager to bring the insurgent bondsmen and bondswomen to heel, the French revolutionaries struck on two fronts, military and political. In addition to sending troops to Saint Domingue, they moved to impose a class alliance on the colony's warring white and mulatto slaveholders, acting on the theory that the whites' love of property exceeded their hatred of mulattos. Thus did the French Revolution grant the mulattos their long-sought wish: equality with the whites, which is not to be confused with full racial equality, since the shift left slavery intact; indeed, its whole purpose was to protect African bondage. Legalized racism, insofar as it applied to mulattos, would be sacrificed on the altar of slavery, now designated by the French revolutionaries as a nonracial gathering point for Saint Domingue's diverse men of property.²

As a strategy for defeating the slave revolt, the granting of equality to the mulattos failed. Despite serious setbacks, the black servile revolution continued, now supported by the Spanish in the neighboring colony of Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic). Appalled by the overthrow of a fellow monarch in France, the king of Spain, like his counterparts everywhere in Europe, pledged implacable enmity to the French Revolution. Supporting the slave rebellion in Saint Domingue was part of that policy. Subsequently Spain and

Britain, at war with revolutionary France and coveting the rebellious colony, prepared to invade Saint Domingue.

For the second time, the French revolutionaries faced a momentous colonial crisis. On the first occasion, they had officially abandoned racism against the mulattos in order to save slavery, to no avail. Indeed, the failure to check the slave rebellion had created an opening for France's enemies, Spain and Britain, to invade Saint Domingue, causing a second colonial crisis. This time around, it was not just slavery but also colonialism—French rule over Saint Domingue—that was at stake. The French obviously could not have slavery without colonialism, and yet they could not have both. Having already disavowed racism, partly, in a futile attempt to safeguard slavery, France was now being forced to forsake slavery to preserve colonialism. Emancipation thus became a French political and military imperative, and suppressing the slave revolt was not just impossible but in the new circumstances also undesirable. The rulers of haughty France were reduced to supplicants before erstwhile chattels. To hold Saint Domingue, the French would have to persuade the black revolutionaries to renounce their alliance with Spain and, what is more, turn their guns on the foreign invaders, the Spanish and the British alike. Official acknowledgment of the freedom the blacks had seized by force of arms was the price for winning them over to the French side. Notably the Spanish, who continued to practice slavery, had made no such abolitionist commitment, having backed the Saint Domingue rising out of sheer expediency, as part of the campaign against the French Revolution. France, realizing it would have to make the black revolutionaries a better offer, countered by abolishing slavery, or, to be precise, by ratifying the self-liberation of the enslaved.³

France having made an about-face and committed itself to emancipation, the black revolutionaries responded in kind. Now commanded by the ex-slave and brilliant strategist Toussaint Louverture, they too reversed course, coolly abandoned Spain, and declared for French liberty, equality, and fraternity. It was an independent black revolutionary movement that allied with the French Revolution. The black revolutionaries, although receiving French support, were no more beholden to France than they had been to Spain, their late underwriter. As if to underscore the point, Toussaint, in his new role as the undisputed strongman of Saint Domingue, expelled a number of meddling French representatives, even as his army drove out the Spanish and British invaders.⁴

By 1798, peace had returned to the colony. The new order could not have

been more different from the one obtained on the eve of the revolution seven years earlier. Slavery had ended, the plantations lay in ruins, most of the whites had fled, and blacks were in charge. The world of Saint Domingue had been turned upside down. It was independent in all but name; Toussaint refrained from making an official declaration of sovereign nationhood, apparently because he thought the French connection useful, politically and economically. However, as he turned to the issue of reconstruction, in the wake of the ruinous years of war, Toussaint paid scant attention to France. Ever the authoritarian, he ordered a constitution that designated him ruler for life, and even beyond, since the constitution also allowed him to name a successor. On the economic front, Toussaint proposed a longer tenure still for the plantation system. Instead of redistributing the land to the freed people, as they evidently desired, he resurrected the plantations. The workers, although now paid, were bound to the worksite, as in the days of slavery. This was hardly the freedom the ex-slaves envisioned, and they resisted the new regime, as they had the old one, including violent resistance. Toussaint put down such uprisings. For good measure, he executed the official most closely associated with the opposition to the plantation model of reconstruction, the military commander Moise, who was also his adopted nephew.⁵ Toussaint the liberator, it now seemed, was metastasizing into Toussaint the liquidator.

Toussaint could ill afford to alienate the masses of the freed people at this historical juncture, for a mortal threat to the revolution in Saint Domingue was brewing. Back in France, Napoleon Bonaparte had staged a military takeover, unofficially ending the French Revolution. Napoleon believed one dictator was enough for the whole French empire, if not the world, and could find no more suitable candidate for the post than himself. He certainly had no intention of sharing the stage with an upstart ex-slave in Saint Domingue. His hatred of black folk every bit the equal of his vainglory, Napoleon intended to reestablish the old regime in the colonies, beginning with Saint Domingue, where the freed people would be put back in chains and the mulattos returned to social and political helotry. As for the black consul, Toussaint, he would be retired, to a cold prison cell in the French Alps.

So important was suppressing the Saint Domingue revolution to Napoleon that he entrusted the task to his brother-in-law, dispatching him to the colony with an appropriate army in tow. On arrival, the French concealed their true intention. Nonetheless Toussaint, unconvinced they were on a fact-finding mission, attempted to mobilize against them. He failed. His base of support had fallen away. In opting for the plantation model, he had given the masses

nothing to fight for. After initially resisting the invaders, Toussaint's army also seemed to lose the will to fight. One by one his military commanders, lulled by French reassurance of the safety of their positions and perquisites, defected to France. Increasingly isolated, Toussaint's government fell. He retired to his plantations, but not for long. The French soon put him in chains and bundled him off to the alternate retirement home they had prepared.⁶ There he would die a cruel death. This was, perhaps, the nadir of the Haitian Revolution. Whatever his flaws and failings, and they were numerous and serious, Toussaint had guided the struggle from near collapse to its greatest triumphs. With his strong and determined hand, he became the great helmsman of the revolution. Now he was gone. No single person, however, was indispensable, not even Toussaint Louverture. There was more leadership material where he came from, as he avowed in a parting note of revolutionary humility. In taking him, he assured his French captors, they had cut down "only the trunk of the tree of the liberty of the blacks; it will grow back from the roots, because they are deep and numerous."⁷

With Toussaint out of the way, the French revealed their mailed fist and ferociously set out to re-create the old order. Concluding that the freed people, hardened in battle, were no longer fit for slavery, the French determined on a genocidal solution to the Saint Domingue problem. Sparing only those who had not yet reached their teenage years, they would exterminate the population and restock the colony with fresh supplies of human cargo from Africa. It was an astonishing blueprint for mass murder, even by the dastardly standards of European colonialism in the Americas, and the French began actually to implement it. Their weapons included live burnings, crucifixions, and imported killer dogs specially trained to tear black people apart.⁸

The people of Saint Domingue now had something to fight for: their liberty, indeed, their very lives. Urgently recalled to revolutionary struggle, they proved equal to the atrocious French challenge.⁹ Their new leader was Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who had a reputation as the most fearsome officer in the revolutionary army. Dessalines's background was notably different from that of Toussaint, his former commander in chief. Toussaint had obtained his freedom before the revolution began; even as a slave, however, he was relatively privileged, serving as a coachman. Dessalines, by contrast, never became more than a field hand in his career as a slave and only tasted freedom with the revolt of 1791. Perhaps more than any other top official, he was a product of the revolution. On joining the struggle, he rose rapidly through the military ranks to become Toussaint's top deputy. As a commander, Dessalines was partial to

scorched earth and left little in his wake. Toussaint, always fond of the arborist metaphor, once reprimanded him for overzealousness, noting he had been ordered to prune the tree, not to chop it down. Dessalines, with his blunt ax and avid demeanor, was ill-suited for the precision of pruning, demolition being his forte. The slaveholder's lash still vivid in his memory, reputedly even engraved on his body, he vowed never again. For ruthlessness and cunning, Napoleon had nothing on him. The French had met their match.

Dessalines may have been at its head, but the final campaign of the Haitian Revolution was not of his making. The bloody path to his ascendance, rather, was the handiwork of others. Indeed, he was complicit in the shedding of some of that blood. Dessalines, it turned out, was among the commanders who went over to the side of the French invaders, even if his defection was tactical and temporary. As he contemplated defecting, Dessalines, speaking in the third person, told soldiers under his command, "If Dessalines surrenders to them [the French] a hundred times, he will betray them a hundred times. . . . Then I will make you independent. There will be no more whites amongst us."¹⁰ He would prove to be as good as his word, but only because of the steadfastness of various guerrilla groups, which kept up the resistance, even as Dessalines, in the service of France, deployed his fierce military skills against them.¹¹ Yet it was that very resistance that made it possible for Dessalines to fulfill his promise to betray France and to return to the revolutionary fold. Rallying under a single banner the whole nation, the freed blacks and the mulattos alike, Dessalines ultimately proved his mettle, presiding over the fiercest struggles of the Haitian Revolution. In victory, he made good on the rest of his promise, declaring independence and getting rid of the whites, expelling or killing the ones who remained. "I have given the French cannibals blood for blood," he exulted triumphantly.¹²

The Haitian Revolution, of course, was far bigger than the colony of Saint Domingue. It was not just imperial powers and slaveholders, however, who staked out claims on revolutionary Haiti. Enslaved and oppressed people throughout the Atlantic world also became stakeholders, political and emotional, in the unfolding drama. By its very nature and its impact on world history, the Haitian Revolution had major black internationalist implications, among others. Independent Haiti's first constitution, commissioned by Dessalines in his capacity as head of state, acknowledged as much. It defined Haiti as a "black" nation and offered citizenship to anyone of African or Native American descent. Symbolically as well as substantively, the Haitian Revolution reshaped the Age of Revolution in ways European and North American policymakers

and image-shapers would not understand or appreciate, and indeed still refuse to do.

The World-Historical Impact of the Haitian Revolution

In the grand narrative of Western scholarship, the Age of Revolution ushered in the modern world. From the United States and France, it is said, came modern democracy, while an industrial revolution in Britain changed the world of work forever. If, however, revolutions are defined by mass participation and social and political transformation, then the most substantial revolution of the Age of Revolution did not take place in Europe or North America. Rather, that revolution, forged in a black internationalist cauldron, happened in Saint Domingue.

Haiti's pride of place in the Age of Revolution is absent from the historical accounts of that era, which stress the achievements and continuing legacy of the U.S., French, and British revolutions. None of the classic works on either the period or revolutions generally—such as those by Crane Brinton, Eric Hobsbawm, Barrington Moore, and Theda Skocpol—makes more than passing mention of Haiti, if that.¹³ With few exceptions,¹⁴ more recent work equally fails to address the Haitian Revolution, whether the subject is the past and future of revolutions¹⁵ or specific studies on the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.¹⁶ Yet by comparison to the revolutions of the white Atlantic, the revolution in Saint Domingue effected far greater political, social, and economic change. In Britain an industrial revolution proceeded during a period of political stability, while in the United States and France radical political changes brought little transformation in either the world of work or class and racial hierarchies. Haiti, by contrast, would experience not only the violent overthrow of an old political regime, but the thoroughgoing destruction of the ruling class (the white slaveholders) and the economic system (plantation slavery). Indeed the drive to replace Haiti's slave plantations, which had produced half the coffee and sugar consumed in Europe and the Americas,¹⁷ led to the expansion of slavery elsewhere, most notably in the United States, Cuba, and Brazil.¹⁸ Attempts to circumvent the implications of the Haitian Revolution over the long run would also lead to innovative forms of labor, race, and empire, as the world economy extended from the Americas to Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.

In the Americas, there is much evidence of Haiti's contribution to the demise of colonial empires and, more broadly, in shaping the balance of

power among the great powers of Europe. British, Spanish, and French forces suffered staggering losses in defending their colonies and in invading Saint Domingue. Britain's attempt to secure its Caribbean colonies and defeat the Saint Domingue rebels cost the lives of tens of thousands of British troops and untold millions of pounds. Spain would eventually lose its American colonies, with direct Haitian support. Haiti assisted movements to overthrow Spanish rule in Venezuela (1806) and Mexico (1816) and, most notably, Simon Bolivar's expeditions in Venezuela (1816).

For France, the Haitian Revolution meant the loss of its greatest source of colonial products, trade, and profits; Saint Domingue alone had accounted for two-fifths of France's overseas trade.¹⁹ Millions of jobs in port cities like Bordeaux depended on the slave trade, of which Saint Domingue was the center, while state revenues were highly dependent on the slave and colonial trades. Napoleon's attempt to reconquer Saint Domingue and reimpose slavery—with the blessing this time of the United States and Britain—led to the greatest losses of all, almost the entire French expeditionary force of 80,000. In the continuing war between France and Britain for global hegemony, the French struggled with fewer and fewer colonial resources after being defeated in Haiti. In desperation, France pulled out of the North American mainland altogether, selling those colonial possessions to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.²⁰

In the realm of human consciousness, the Haitian Revolution was the single most important event in bringing about that epoch-making shift of the Age of Revolution: the demise of the legitimacy of slavery in the Western world.²¹ This did not translate into equality: freedom for slaves over the course of the nineteenth century moved hand in hand with the rise of new ideologies of domination, most notably scientific racism.²² At the same time, the major European powers set out to create a new international division of labor that would be less dependent on chattel slavery and less vulnerable to slave revolts. Accordingly, vast new pools of coerced labor were opened up, with Asia coming to replace Africa. By the mid-nineteenth century, coerced labor from China and South Asia was flowing into the Americas, other parts of Asia, the Pacific, and even Africa.²³ Furthermore, the obstacles to colonial accumulation imposed by the abolition of slavery and decolonization in the Americas, of which Haiti remained the most dreaded example, led the Europeans to turn to Asia and Africa for raw materials and precious metals.²⁴ In this sense, the Haitian Revolution sealed off the history of Atlantic slavery:

the new British-dominated world economy that emerged in the nineteenth century was explicitly constructed to be less vulnerable to black revolt.

The Haitian revolutionaries were not unmindful of the world-historical drama they had wrought. Dessalines, at the moment of final victory, paid homage to the past: he dedicated the Haitian Revolution to the vanquished Native Americans, in whose honor the country was also named, Haiti reputedly meaning “rugged, mountainous” in the Taino Arawak language. Personalizing the tribute at that foundational and inebriating moment of nationhood, Dessalines famously asserted, “I have avenged America.”²⁵ This was the autobiographical rendition of the Haitian Revolution, a transgression for which the remarkable field slave turned head of state may be forgiven. Of course, Dessalines had many coauthors. In fact, it was the Haitian masses who paid dearest of all for victory; half of Haiti’s population, some 250,000 souls, died during the course of the revolutionary upheavals. The imperial “we” would have better served the emperor, a title Dessalines assumed at the time of independence in 1804.

The Haitian Revolution, Black Struggle, and Black Internationalism

The violent course of the Haitian Revolution, as charted in C. L. R. James’s magisterial *The Black Jacobins* and subsequent monographs, involved shifting alliances among competing world powers, local white colonists, free people of color, and slaves.²⁶ Most accounts tightly contain the revolution within the boundaries of Saint Domingue, admitting only the determinant influence of the French Revolution. Few scholars dare to broach the broader lessons of the Haitian Revolution and its potential for replay in other slave societies. Noted slavery historian Seymour Dresner is typical. Citing David Geggus, the most widely published current chronicler of the Haitian Revolution, Dresner pronounced, “The one successful slave revolution was the outcome of a unique combination of circumstances. Haiti was both unforgettable and unrepeatable.”²⁷

That the Haitian Revolution was unforgettable is beyond doubt. It was not, however, the unique and isolated event that Dresner’s assertion of unrepeatability implies. Whatever the *ex post facto* judgment of modern historians, it was not at all self-evident to the ruling and governing classes of the day that Saint Domingue–like events could not happen elsewhere. How else to explain the vast expansion in the regime of control instituted in the other slave societ-

ies of the Americas in the wake of the Saint Domingue rising, or the severe repression visited on anything smacking of attempts at another Haiti? Further, the unrelenting hostility to the Haitian Revolution, including major military campaigns against it by the three leading Atlantic powers—France, Spain, and Britain—was driven by more than just a desire to return Saint Domingue to its former status as the crown jewel of Caribbean slave colonies. Political leaders and slaveholders everywhere in the Americas, fearing the contagion of revolutionary slave insurrection, also wanted to create a military cordon sanitaire around Haiti and isolate it from the rest of the hemisphere.

The issue of the Haitian Revolution and its potential for replication turns on conception. It is a matter of imagining black resistance and political organization outside territorial boundaries and Euro–North American categories (the institutionalized, nonviolent social movement; the modernizing state-centered revolution; and the modernizing national identity).²⁸ Africans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were unencumbered by such Enlightenment classifications. The freedom struggles of enslaved Africans throughout the Americas showed little of the modern historian's deference to imperial and national sovereignty; slave insurrectionists, on the contrary, were blithely oblivious to established political boundaries. Interrogating the hemisphere-wide African quest for emancipation on its own terms makes it possible to chart the interlocution between events in disparate localities and, in so doing, uncover a formative phase in black internationalism.

The starting point of such a project is a recognition that the Haitian Revolution, for all its majesty and iconoclasm, did not emerge in a historical void. It had a prehistory in black resistance. A long series of revolts throughout the Atlantic preceded the Haitian Revolution, revealing a widespread anti-slavery surge. This trend, paradoxically, was not apparent in prerevolutionary Haiti, with the possible exception of the Makandal poison conspiracy of 1757. Elsewhere in the Americas, however, slave revolts and conspiracies advanced steadily from the 1730s onward, notably in North America, the Caribbean, South America, and even Atlantic West Africa.²⁹ Jamaica's massive Tacky's Revolt of 1760 rounded out more than a generation of violent antislavery resistance.³⁰ With the Haitian Revolution standing at the apex, another round of revolts began in the 1790s, including uprisings in Saint Lucia (1795–97), Grenada and Saint Vincent (1795–96), and Guadeloupe (1802) and wars against maroons in Surinam (1789–93) and Jamaica (1795–96).³¹ These events emerged from lived experiences in a highly racialized Atlantic political economy and, as such, defy portrayals that cast them as atavistic and isolated.

Indeed, a transnational slavery underground was alive and well throughout the eighteenth century, if not before, and various individuals, acting as itinerant revolutionaries, personally linked multiple revolts in different territories. As a group, these revolts were bound together by a common rejection of plantation slavery, the most fundamental pillar of mass production and accumulation in the capitalist world. In this sense, even apparently disconnected revolts, by their very character and synchronicity, reveal a transnational African response to capital and the political masters of the capitalist world.

The claim for a nascent black international before the advent of the Haitian Revolution runs counter to a scholarly tradition that stresses the difficulty of even local coordination among Africans, in view of the linguistic and cultural differences that separated them. Such divisions, to be sure, were real enough. Moreover, the massive mortality rate among the enslaved everywhere in the hemisphere (with the exception of North America, and then only after the late eighteenth century), and the attendant need to continuously introduce new slaves reinforced the diversity of the various slave societies.³² Yet, as Tacky's Revolt and, even more emphatically, the Haitian Revolution demonstrate, internal divisions among enslaved Africans was no impassable barrier to mass antislavery insurrections. Revolutionary activity by the enslaved did not require homogeneity—linguistic, cultural, or religious.

In their majestic work *The Many-Headed Hydra*, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker show how the construction of Anglo-Atlantic capitalism gave rise to an unruly, multiethnic, “motley crew” of coerced workers, slaves, and seamen on all sides of the Atlantic. Impressed seamen, working under extremely oppressive conditions, carried ideas and tactics of resistance throughout the Americas, with black seaman playing a central role. Julius Scott's equally magnificent work on black resistance in the greater Caribbean in the era of the Haitian Revolution offers detailed evidence of the “common wind” that propelled resistance, showing how sailors, including enslaved ones, carried news of revolts and revolutions and rumors of freedom to come.³³ Nor were seamen the only traveling vectors of revolution and discontent. Uprisings in British Honduras drew on the hundreds of rebels exiled there after Tacky's Revolt, while veterans of the French brigade that fought for the U.S. Revolution later emerged as leaders of the Haitian Revolution (e.g., Henri Christophe and André Rigaud).

The Haitian Revolution electrified the nascent black international circuits, which irrupted with news of emancipation, of slave armies defeating great white powers, and of the emergence of a mighty black republic. Slaves every-

where celebrated Haiti, from Philadelphia to Trinidad, from Havana to Curaçao. In Kingston, Jamaica, captives yearning for freedom composed a hymn to the anticipated new order, singing, “black, white, brown, all the same.”³⁴ Surveying the political landscape, slaveholders feared ruin for themselves and a dim future for their scions. Thomas Jefferson, ever the spokesman for his class, summed up the apprehension. “The revolutionary storm now sweeping the globe,” he allowed, “will [soon] be upon us.”³⁵ The prediction was not unfounded. Veterans of the Haitian campaigns, or witnesses to them, could be found in the vanguard of revolts in other territories. Some of the seeds of insurrection were unwittingly sown by masters who fled Saint Domingue with their human chattel; at the new destinations, a number of slaves so transported promptly took to the revolutionary path, as in Curaçao, Venezuela, and most notably, Louisiana.³⁶ In some cases, slave revolutionary leaders looked to Haiti for inspiration, even direct assistance, or else falsely created the impression of such assistance, apparently as a way to gain and solidify support among the enslaved. Thus Denmark Vesey, head of the 1822 conspiracy in Charleston, South Carolina, told his followers Haitian help would arrive to support the capture of the city.³⁷ Aponte had done pretty much the same in Havana, Cuba, in 1812, using portraits of Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe to solicit support and to inspire fellow rebels.³⁸ These connections, forged by Julius Scott’s common wind, point to the existence of vast antislavery efforts among the enslaved across imperial and national boundaries, *in fine*, to a nascent black international.

Black internationalism in the Atlantic world was defined by the emergence of a common black identity rooted in the struggle against slavery and, despite the efforts of some revolutionaries to counter such trends, the polarization of racial identities. Notably, the racial and territorial contours of the black international rested not on biology nor on a single ancient culture, but on common experiences, that is, actual struggles against white world supremacy.³⁹ The black international, then, only emerged with racial slavery and Atlantic capitalism and altered, waxed, and waned with successive emancipatory struggles. Such dynamics can be seen in the great struggles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when racial as well as class conflicts accelerated, driven by black insurrections and the ensuing counterrevolution of the white Thermidor.

The juxtaposition of black revolution and white reaction throws into sharp relief a major achievement of the black international in its formative stages: common visions of life outside the bounds of capitalism, and the active pur-

suit of those visions. Such a reading flies in the face of accounts that portray black revolts and uprisings as premodern, backward-looking, and seeking only to return to a precapitalist mode of production. In this interpretation, it was the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and specifically its French incarnation, that opened the door to the modern black pursuit of freedom, beginning with the Haitian Revolution.⁴⁰ Actually, neither the French nor the U.S. republic facilitated, much less promoted, slave emancipation, a fact stubbornly ignored in French Revolutionary studies, especially.⁴¹ Rather, it was black rebels who opened the door to freedom. Only black resistance and black revolution consistently stood for liberty without regard to race, class, or condition of servitude. Black struggles, culminating in the Haitian Revolution, did not just expand but redefined notions of freedom.

Negating the Black International: Haiti and the White Thermidor

The white Thermidor, full of fear and loathing for the black internationalism Haiti had come to symbolize, was brutal to the newly independent state. Faced with rebellious slaves and natives, white planters, merchants, and imperial powers coalesced to enforce white power. If the Haitian Revolution could not be rolled back, it would certainly be contained. Having won the war, the Haitians would be denied the fruits of victory: they would be made to lose the peace. The cost of throwing off the shackles of colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy would be very high, even crippling. European powers and white-run states variously isolated Haiti, embargoed its goods, demanded reparations, and barred from their shores its dangerous achievements and citizens. Everywhere in the Americas, the authorities circumscribed and repressed suspected black middle classes—free blacks and mulattos—further cementing racial polarization and identities. Meanwhile, scientific racism as a mode of securing postabolition global racial hierarchies flourished, initially and not accidentally, in post-Napoleonic France, most notably in the writings of Count Gobineau, “the father of racist ideology.”⁴² The multiracial motley crew that formed in the previous era of revolution, and about which Linebaugh and Rediker write with such feeling, could not survive the pressure and dissolved into separate racial and class components.⁴³ This was irony of a large order: through counterrevolution, the struggle for emancipation from racial slavery would result in a sharper and wider racial order than had existed in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

Faced with the new order in Haiti and its possibilities, white revolutionaries made an abrupt about-face. The case of the Jeffersonian republicans in the United States is instructive. The self-proclaimed keepers of the U.S. revolutionary flame, Jefferson and his acolytes recoiled in horror at the events in Haiti and attempts to reproduce them in the United States, most conspicuously in the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy of 1800.⁴⁴ Accordingly, the Jeffersonians forsook the notion of global and permanent revolution, a notion they had previously affirmed. In their minds, the pursuit of liberty and happiness was no longer the exclusive preserve of orderly white men of property and scions of the European Enlightenment, since enslaved Africans and other lesser breeds had taken up the cry.⁴⁵ In yet another irony, however, it was the Haitian Revolution that made possible Jefferson's most enduring legacy as U.S. president: the humiliating defeat in Haiti forced France to abandon its imperial ambitions on the North American mainland. The resulting Louisiana Purchase, under Jefferson's presidency, opened the door for the emergence of the United States as a "slave country."⁴⁶

Naturally, the legacy of the Haitian Revolution was anathema to the United States in its capacity as both slaveholding power and emerging hegemon of the Americas. Accordingly, a letter from the Haitian government requesting diplomatic ties between the two countries elicited scorn; U.S. president John Quincy Adams (1825–29) penned in the margins, "Not to be answered."⁴⁷ U.S. senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, a slaveholding state, explained why:

Because the peace of eleven states in this Union will not permit the fruits of a successful negro insurrection to be exhibited among us. It will not permit black Consuls and Ambassadors to establish themselves in our cities, and to parade through our country, and give their fellow blacks in the United States, proof in hand of the honors that await them, for a like successful effort on their part. It will not permit the fact to be seen, and told, that for the murder of their masters and mistresses, they are to find *friends* among the white People of these United States.⁴⁸

The resulting embargo on Haiti ran the gamut from the political to the economic and the discursive. Haiti was the only independent state excluded from the pioneering Pan-American Conference of 1826.⁴⁹ Writers of various stripes, scholarly and popular, joined the blockade. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has so eloquently chronicled, Western scholarship declared a blackout of the events that unfolded in Saint Domingue from 1791 through 1804. Haiti was both cen-

sured and censored: the country having become a nonentity, its revolution became, in Trouillot's formulation, a "nonevent."⁵⁰ Yet this intellectual embargo, which few dare to breach,⁵¹ was only imposed after the fact. Many Western observers and commentators, including slaveholders who had fled Haiti, wrote and published about the revolution while it was still in progress.⁵² The whitening out, which came after Haiti became independent, negated, at the level of written historical memory, not just the Haitian Revolution but also the black internationalism it had come to symbolize. The one as well as the other would be suppressed, whether by omission or commission.

The Haitian Revolution and the Narrative of the Black International

To contemporary friends and foes alike, the Haitian Revolution was an event of momentous black international import. Yet, incredibly, published accounts of the black international largely ignore the Haitian Revolution. Inspection of the literature reveals little about the Haitian revolutionary antecedents of black internationalism. There are two notable exceptions, standing two generations apart. The first is C. L. R. James's little gem of 1938, *A History of Negro Revolt*, which began with the Haitian Revolution and used it as a yardstick for judging a number of subsequent pan-African struggles.⁵³ Julius Scott's 1986 Ph.D. dissertation, which, alas, remains unpublished, greatly expanded on the black internationalism of the Haitian Revolution in its own era, using as an organizing principle the vast underground intelligence networks that circulated a common wind of revolutionary possibilities between Haiti and the greater Caribbean.⁵⁴ The pioneering and exceptional work of James and Scott aside, the pan-African narrative has been most unkind to the Haitian Revolution. The silence relegates the epochal and black internationalist transformation in Saint Domingue to the status of a nonevent, to use Trouillot's felicitous term for the burial of the Haitian Revolution in Western scholarship.

It need not have turned out that way. Some of the first chronicles of the struggling black international offered visions of a historiography much different from the one that became dominant, a narrative that would have centered, rather than silenced, the Haitian Revolution. One such pioneering text, a key if often forgotten one, is *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, published in 1931.⁵⁵ Its author, George Padmore, was himself an outstanding toiler in the realm of pan-African liberation in the twentieth century.⁵⁶ *Life and Struggles* charted the struggles of black workers and peasants—Negro toilers—in Africa, the

United States, the Caribbean, and Latin America. Such resistance—revolts, strikes, and other forms of discontent—demonstrated, the 126-page booklet concluded, “the tremendous revolutionary potentialities of the Negro toiling masses.”⁵⁷

Where Padmore led, his fellow Trinidadian and boyhood friend, C. L. R. James, followed. Making his maiden appearance on the stage of black international scholarship, James came out with *A History of Negro Revolt* in 1938, the same year he published his magnum opus, *The Black Jacobins*. The beauty and grace of the Haitian revolutionary book, at once a great work of history and literature, quickly overshadowed the comparatively puny ninety-seven-page booklet on the struggling black international. Yet *A History of Negro Revolt* made manifest a point that was only implied in *The Black Jacobins*. *A History of Negro Revolt* demonstrated the impact and relevance of the Haitian Revolution for black internationalism, in its own era and later.

Unlike *A History of Negro Revolt*, Padmore’s *Life and Struggles* neglected the Haitian Revolution, although it had a section on the plight of the Haitian toilers “under the yoke of Yankee imperialism,” that is, during the U.S. occupation of 1915–34.⁵⁸ Yet despite differences in emphasis, style, and interpretation, Padmore and James began their narration from a common foundation: both works privileged the toilers—slaves, peasants, and workers. The contrast with later narratives of the black international could not be greater.

After *A History of Negro Revolt*, the black masses lost their position at the forefront of pan-African intellectual inquiry, dethroned in favor of the elite. Henceforth, the major narratives of the black international would highlight the activities of the transatlantic black petite bourgeoisie, especially the intelligentsia. Not incidentally, the turn away from the toilers was also a turn away from the Haitian Revolution.

The first installment on the new narrative of the black international appeared in 1956. Authored by no less a personage than Padmore, the volte-face came with a stark and provocative title: *Pan-Africanism or Communism? The Coming Struggle for Africa*.⁵⁹ This was, above all, a Cold War text. Since writing *Life and Struggles*, Padmore had made a grueling political odyssey, from the pan-Africanism of the international communist movement to an anticommunist pan-Africanism. As such, his chief concern in *Pan-Africanism or Communism* was to demonstrate that the anticolonial revolt then sweeping Africa in no way owed its inspiration to communism, as alleged by the defenders of empire and their consorts, political and intellectual.

In the process of cleansing pan-Africanism of the communist taint, Padmore repudiated his 1931 work, albeit without actually saying so. All the essential premises of *Life and Struggles*, epistemic and organizational, were abandoned in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. Gone was the expansive definition of pan-Africanism. Where *Life and Struggles* focused on three continents—Africa and the Americas—the much longer *Pan-Africanism or Communism* singled out one: Africa, and then with a predominant emphasis on the British territories. In his later work, Padmore also narrowed the social foundations of the black international. If *Life and Struggles* placed the emphasis on the toilers as a class, then *Pan-Africanism or Communism* privileged particular individuals. The masses and their movements had given way to the thoughts and actions of great men. One of those men was W. E. B. Du Bois, whom Padmore had thrashed in *Life and Struggles* as a petit bourgeois reformist misleader but rehabilitated in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, where he was elevated to the lofty status of “Father of Pan-Africanism.” According to this rendition, pan-Africanism “came of age” in the immediate post–World War II era, when Padmore himself succeeded Du Bois at the helm. In a final changing of the guard, Padmore in turn gave way to his star student, the Gold Coast nationalist and future Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, the two men having jointly organized the pivotal fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945. In Padmore’s estimation, Nkrumah embodied all the virtues of pan-Africanism as conceived by Du Bois and refined at the 1945 congress. In sum, Du Bois had planted, Padmore had watered, and Nkrumah was bringing forth the increase. The pan-African triumvirate, or rather, trinity, stood triumphant.

With such Whiggish tales of the heights that great men reached and kept, *Pan-Africanism or Communism* scarcely had a word to spare for the Haitian Revolution, even for such presumably towering figures as Toussaint and Desalines. But the die was cast. The framework of *Pan-Africanism or Communism* would prove enduring. Imported into the academy, the Padmorian teleology exercised a determining influence on the narrative of the black international for the remainder of the Cold War and, indeed, continues to do so down to the present time.⁶⁰

Even Imanuel Geiss’s *The Pan-African Movement: A History of Pan-Africanism in America, Europe, and Africa*, a work widely considered the standard text on the subject, failed to break with Padmore’s framework, and indeed duplicated it.⁶¹ Although offered as a corrective to Padmore’s rendition of the black international, *The Pan-African Movement* accepted the major assumptions of *Pan-*

Africanism or Communism. Geiss merely transposed Padmore's interpretations, casting as irrational many of the ideas, actions, and events that were celebrated in *Pan-Africanism or Communism*—but without questioning its basic structure or the validity of its narrative line. On the great slave revolt turned revolution in Saint Domingue, Geiss was not quite as silent as Padmore. Still, the various references to the Haitian Revolution in *The Pan-African Movement* remained peripheral and were never systematically developed.⁶²

The rise in the post-Cold War era of African Diaspora studies in the Anglo-American academy and beyond has hardly disrupted the dominant narrative of the black international. The reigning teleology, so fundamentally shaped by *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, remains ascendant in its main features. Thus the text that would become the touchstone of the revived African Diaspora studies, as well as a virtual canon of postmodern and cultural studies black internationalism, reproduced in important ways the narrative line of *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. That text, of course, is Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Double Consciousness and Modernity*, with its quintessentially Du Boisian subtitle.⁶³

The Black Atlantic, despite mentioning Padmore only in passing,⁶⁴ has much in common with *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. For one, the authors share an Afro-Saxon bias: Padmore for the east bank of the black Atlantic and Gilroy for the west. In substance, if not in tone, Gilroy is no less fulsome than Padmore in celebrating the great pan-African man, most tellingly Du Bois and his fellow African American Richard Wright, a communist apostate like Padmore and the contributor of a laudatory foreword to *Pan-Africanism or Communism*. The corollary snubbing of masses and mass movements explains, to a large extent, the virtual silence of both texts on the Haitian Revolution. Yet Gilroy could well have accommodated the Haitian Revolution within his own paradigm, even if not as a mass movement. Few figures in black internationalism, surely, exemplify the ordeal of modernity and double consciousness more poignantly than Toussaint—who, in the event, does not even merit a single reference in *The Black Atlantic*.⁶⁵ Despite such limitations, Gilroy's book skillfully deploys certain tropes, most notably the ship, that offer the possibility for a different kind of narrative of the black international—one that would reserve a rightful place for the Haitian Revolution. Seven years before *The Black Atlantic* appeared, Julius Scott had done just that, deepening the pioneering insights offered by James in *A History of Negro Revolt*. Gilroy's influential work, on the contrary, took the well-trodden path on the Haitian Revolution, thereby perpetuating a serious lacuna in pan-African scholarship.

Emergent Black International Traditions: Revolutionary and Revivalist

Beginning in the Age of Revolution, the black international evolved into two traditions, which we will call revolutionary and revivalist. The Haitian Revolution, which capped a long line of violent antislavery resistance, even as it qualitatively altered the nature of that resistance, became an emblem of the revolutionary tradition. Evolving alongside the revolutionary tradition, and serving as both its counterpart and its counterpoint, was the revivalist tradition, with its center in the Anglo-American world and its origins in the Evangelical Revival. The dominant narrative of the black international is derived largely from the revivalist tradition and its permutations.

The two traditions in black internationalism, the revolutionary and the revivalist, emerged under different conditions, the one grounded in armed struggle and the other formally, although not always actually, committed to nonviolent resistance. Frequently, if not in all instances, epistemic distinctions further set the two traditions apart. Scholars of the Haitian Revolution, a defining event in the revolutionary tradition, are broadly agreed that it originally cohered around vodun, the dominant slave religion of Saint Domingue.⁶⁶ Boukman Dutty, the first leader of the Haitian Revolution, was a noted practitioner of vodun. Of syncreticism, a term that would later be used to describe the melding of African and European (and often Native American) cultures, Boukman was disdainful, at least in the realm of religion. At the Bois Caiman ceremony, simultaneously the inaugural moment of the Haitian Revolution and the most iconic of vodun events, Boukman categorically rejected Christianity. “The God of the white man calls him to commit crimes,” he informed the assembled vanguard of the coming revolution, in what amounted to the keynote address at Bois Caiman, whereas “our God asks only good works of us.” But a good God demanded justice, even vengeance. “This God who is so good,” Boukman continued, “orders revenge! He will direct our hands; he will aid us.” He then concluded, no doubt on a note of high drama and perhaps even to acclamation, “Throw away the image of the God of the whites who thirsts for our tears, and listen to the voice of liberty that speaks in the hearts of all of us.”⁶⁷

The adherents of the black international revivalist tradition also listened to the voice of liberty, even as they rejected Boukman’s binary religious categories. The revivalists did not so much discard the God of the whites as to make

him anew, transforming him into the God of the blacks, all the while preserving his universality. It was a deft maneuver, ideologically speaking, and it began with the Evangelical Revival.

Before the Evangelical Revival, enslaved Africans in the British colonies, whether on the North American mainland or in the Caribbean, had little real contact with Christianity. The Evangelical Revival inaugurated the meeting of African spiritualities and Protestant Christianity.⁶⁸ A movement that came out of the Church of England, or the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Revival was, in part, a reaction to the European Enlightenment, then nearing its end. Rejecting Christianity as part of the dark past best consigned to the dustbin of history, the Enlightenment proposed to replace faith with reason, tradition with progress, and contentment with happiness. The Evangelical Revival came to defend faith and to affirm the truth of revealed religion. In the process, the Evangelical Revival launched a critique of the established church, insisting on a more vibrant, engaged, and relevant Christianity. The Enlightenment argued that Western society, which it assumed to be the human norm, was excessively religious. On the contrary, the Evangelical Revival countered, the problem was not too much religion but not enough of it.⁶⁹

In the colonies, if not in the center of the empire, the message of the Evangelical Revival appealed most to the disinherited and the dispossessed. In British North America, where it would become known as the Great Awakening, the outstanding organizing mechanism of the Evangelical Revival was the camp meeting. Spiritual conversion, not familiarity with the catechism or mastery of the minutiae of Christian doctrine, the evangelists insisted, constituted evidence of salvation. The Holy Spirit, they continued, was readily and freely available to all, irrespective of class, servile status, race, or gender. It was simply a matter of heeding the revelation, that is, the revelation of the Holy Spirit. To the enslaved Africans and their descendants who flocked to the camp meetings, the concept of revelation would have been quite familiar; it was an established feature of most African religions. The correspondence facilitated conversion, allowing the slaves to accept the new without rejecting the old.⁷⁰ Thus began the mass conversion of Africans in British lands, and with it the origins of the black international revivalist tradition.

The U.S. Revolution would prove to be a boon to the revivalist tradition. Out of the free black community that emerged from the U.S. Revolution would come some of the notable exponents of that tradition.⁷¹ Then there were the black refugees from the U.S. Revolution, a diaspora within a diaspora. Armed

with the gospel of the Evangelical Revival, sometimes combined with the founding ideals of the U.S. Revolution, these refugees would have a profound effect on the societies in which they resettled. Scholars are still pursuing their footprints in places as diverse as the Bahamas, Bermuda, Jamaica, Sierra Leone, Canada, and England, among others.⁷² In this way, the U.S. Revolution unwittingly produced vectors of black internationalism, in its revivalist guise, on both banks of the Atlantic.

It was not just the revivalist tradition, however, that benefited from the U.S. Revolution. As Sylvia Frey so incisively shows in her essay, some among the enslaved seized the opportunity offered by the war for U.S. independence to launch armed struggles of their own making against racial bondage. A number of these self-organized freedom fighters previously belonged to the black units of the British army, and some were steeped in evangelical Christianity. The result was a merger of the revivalist and revolutionary traditions in black internationalism, or what Frey calls, respectively, “evangelical pan-Africanism” and “revolutionary pan-Africanism.” In the main, though, the revivalist tradition was more closely linked to the U.S. Revolution and its black internationalist consequences than was the revolutionary tradition.

Pioneers of the revivalist tradition produced an important body of literature, part of it destined to be incorporated into later chronicles of the black international. These founding texts, which began to emerge in the late eighteenth century, consisted of poetry, sermons, autobiographical accounts, and philosophical musings by ex-slaves, some of whom had personally experienced the transatlantic journey of the Middle Passage.⁷³ Part of the Western canon, even as they challenged that canon, such works mirrored the position of black folk in the white-dominated Atlantic world. The founding texts thus occupied a peculiar intellectual and political space, precariously perched between the Evangelical Revival and its ideological nemesis, the Enlightenment. From an uneasy synthesis of the two—the Revival and the Enlightenment, the sacred and the profane—arose abolitionism, which became the first great organizing principle of the revivalist tradition.

Abolitionism, then, was not the exclusive product of the white imagination, as the Eurocentric master narrative would have it.⁷⁴ For one, the black founding narrators of the revivalist tradition powerfully mediated abolitionism, as only they *experientially* could do. In any case, abolitionism was hardly an intellectual abstraction. Whether as an idea or as a movement, it emerged in concert with slave resistance, especially slave revolts.⁷⁵ The violent attempts

at self-liberation spurred the literary and organizational exertions of the abolitionists, whose campaign, it bears remembering, initially targeted not slavery but the slave trade. It remained for the enslaved themselves, in the midst of their essays in self-liberation, to formulate the “genius of universal emancipation,” to borrow the title of an early-nineteenth-century African American publication. In sum, the *plan* to end slavery as a form of social organization was conceived not in the heads of the abolitionists, black or white, but in slave revolts, culminating in the Haitian Revolution, which decisively shifted the locus of abolitionism from the slave trade to slavery. The official termination of the slave trade by Britain in 1807, and by the United States the following year, confirmed that shift. In both cases, but especially that of the United States, a major consideration in abandoning the commerce in human cargoes was the fear of slave revolts, behind which stood the greatest specter of all, the Haitian Revolution.⁷⁶

The boost to abolitionism was also a boost to the revivalist tradition in black internationalism, its ideological helpmeet. Broadly, the revivalist tradition shared the goals of the revolutionary tradition—namely, antislavery, antiracism, and more equivocally, anticolonialism. Unlike the revolutionary tradition, though, the revivalist tradition was constrained by its alliance with white abolitionism. With few exceptions, white abolitionists throughout the Atlantic were committed to a pacific, and often gradual, approach to emancipation. Generally, white abolitionists saw the Haitian Revolution as unhelpful, even as a setback to their cause.⁷⁷ Some revivalists rejected that depiction, extolling the emancipationist glory of the Haitian Revolution. Already in 1797, seven years before Haiti officially became independent, Prince Hall rejoiced in the outcome of the revolt there. A staunch revivalist and pioneer of African American masonry, Hall asserted that events in Saint Domingue had shown that “God hath no respect of persons,” paraphrasing a biblical passage (Acts 10:34) much beloved by the founders of the revivalist tradition. Invoking another scripture (Psalms 68:31) that would gain even greater popularity, becoming a rallying cry in black internationalist circles down to the Garvey movement, Hall concluded of the Saint Domingue revolt, “Thus doth Ethiopia begin to stretch forth her hand, from a sink of slavery to freedom and equality.”⁷⁸ Not all revivalists, however, followed Hall’s lead. Others, more closely allied with white abolition, remained mum on the Haitian Revolution. Thus publicly, at any rate, the founding generation of revivalists was not of one mind on the subject of Haiti.

The heirs to the revivalist tradition would help to keep alive memory of the Haitian Revolution outside Haiti. One such individual was James Theodore Holly, the African American clergyman and staunch supporter of the emigration of free blacks to Haiti in the years leading up to the U.S. Civil War. A sectarian Protestant, like so many of his generation of black international revivalists, Holly's enthusiasm for Haiti was tempered only by his disdain for its official religion, Catholicism (he largely ignored vodun, the faith of most Haitians). Holly proposed to replace Catholicism, which he apparently considered effete, among other errors, with a "manly" Protestantism. Otherwise, Holly's fervor for Haiti seemed boundless. In his view, the Haitian Revolution was an epochal event, "vindicating" as it did the capacity of black folk for "self-government and civilized progress," in short, to attain modernity and rise in the scale of white bourgeois culture.⁷⁹

The black masses were equally buoyant on Haiti. In various parts of the Caribbean and South America, enslaved people and free people of color incorporated tropes of the Haitian Revolution into their culture—music, dance, visual art, and folkways.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, free African Americans also embraced the Haitian revolutionary legacy, turning January 1, Haiti's independence day, into a popular, if unofficial, public holiday. The embrace of Haiti was facilitated by the exclusion of black people, often by violent means, from U.S. independence celebrations.⁸¹

David Walker had a keen appreciation of the legacy of the Haitian Revolution, at both the intellectual and popular levels. His iconic pamphlet hailed Haiti as "the glory of the blacks and the terror of tyrants,"⁸² even as he helped to organize Haitian independence celebrations in Boston, his adopted hometown. Walker came a generation before his fellow African American James Theodore Holly, for whom he may as well have been a model, balancing enthusiasm for Haiti with a Protestant chauvinist aversion to its official religion, Catholicism, "that scourge of nations," all the while displaying a vibrant black internationalism. Walker linked the fate of African Americans, slave and free, to the liberation of black folk globally, a pan-African connection evident in the title of his deeply biblical and black text, *David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Walker wrote in the urgent tone of the prophetic tradition—the tradition of speaking truth to power, damn the consequences.⁸³ In his vacillation between the pacific tendencies of abolitionism, on one hand, and armed struggle, on the other, he stood athwart the two traditions in black internationalism: the revivalist and the revolutionary. Similarly, Walker's epis-

tle was situated between a biblically based teleology of emancipation and a Christian theology of liberation—the one founded on providential predetermination and the other appealing to the agency of the oppressed.

Two years after Walker wrote, the two conceptions—the hand of God and the human hand—found a synthesis in revolutionary praxis. The year of reckoning was 1831, when the Nat Turner Revolt in Virginia and the Christmas Rising in Jamaica, two attempts at self-emancipation, occurred just four months apart. Whatever their other connections (and Julius Scott's common wind, although calmed by repression, had hardly faded away), the two rebellions were related, ideologically, through a common adherence to the Baptist faith. Turner was a Baptist preacher, while the Jamaican insurrection is also known as the Baptist War, black Baptist refugees from the U.S. Revolution, among others, having brought their faith to the island.⁸⁴ With the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising/Baptist War, black Christianity had given rise to a liberation theology based on armed struggle, much more explicitly than the independent black revolutionary activities attendant on the U.S. Revolution. For the first time since the Haitian Revolution, the revivalist and revolutionary traditions in black internationalism had merged on the field of battle, if ever so briefly. It was a meeting, finally, of Boukman and the Baptists.

It was only partially, however, a rendezvous of victory.⁸⁵ The revolutionary antislavery crusades of 1831, the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising, had quite different historical outcomes. In yet another demonstration of the dialectical interrelationship between slave revolts and abolitionism, the Christmas Rising served as an important and final impetus for emancipation in the British Empire. Relative to its economic value in the emerging British industrial order, the cost of slavery had become prohibitively high.⁸⁶ Moreover, suppressing revolts and maintaining armies in the slave colonies were burdens the British treasury had grown tired of bearing. Given the frequency and ferocity of such uprisings, Britain seemed to face two choices: risk another Haiti or decree abolition from above. With the Abolition of Slavery Act, which was passed in 1833 and became effective the following year, the British authorities chose the safer option.⁸⁷

The situation was quite different in the United States, where slavery had become more important than ever, centering increasingly on the production of cotton, primarily for the British textile industry. Accordingly, the U.S. slaveholders and the state, over which they exercised ever more dominance, responded to the Turner Revolt with even more repression. The revolutionary tradition negated, there would be no more major slave insurrections in

the United States. Yet, the tradition of black self-organization, everywhere the foundation of antislavery revolutionary activities, remained alive and well among African American slaves, in their cultural and religious institutions and practices. The “sable arm,” recalled to martial duty by a repentant state more than three decades after the Turner Revolt, during the U.S. Civil War, would play a major role in bringing about emancipation.⁸⁸ For many of its black participants, the Civil War effectively constituted a synthesis of the revolutionary and revivalist traditions in black internationalism. All they needed was President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, which actually freed not a single slave but, rather, appealed to the agency of the enslaved and incited them to rebellion. Thus unchained, the sable arm would become its own liberator.⁸⁹ The Emancipation Proclamation, then, was the equivalent of the Bois Caiman ceremony in the Haitian Revolution—not a bestowal of freedom but a clarion call for the enslaved to revolt against bondage and make real the promise of liberty.

The connection between the two emancipation campaigns—the Haitian Revolution and the U.S. Civil War—was deeper still.⁹⁰ Matthew Clavin has recently shown how the transformation of black men, free and slave, into soldiers during the Civil War at once deepened and brought to light hidden identification among African Americans with the Haitian Revolution, and especially with Toussaint Louverture. For many African American soldiers and their boosters, “Toussaint and the men who followed him into battle affirmed the redemptive quality of violence to prove black manhood.”⁹¹ This black international legacy, in the form of memory of the Haitian Revolution, was transmitted through both the literary and oral traditions—that is, the writings of the free blacks and the word of mouth of the slaves, including a handful of old bondsmen who claimed to have seen action in Toussaint’s army. The resulting consciousness and cultural tropes deeply inspired African Americans in the theater of war and beyond, as revealed in matters ranging from martial music to naming practices, including the names of military units, places, and individuals.⁹² Here, indeed, was an affirmation of the unbroken circle of emancipation envisioned at the foundational moment of black internationalism, a vision most readily symbolized by the Haitian Revolution and its legacy.

Coda

Since assuming more definite form in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the black international had ebbed and flowed. The revolutionary tradition, on

becoming associated with the Haitian Revolution, caused much excitement and helped to fuel insurrectionary activities among the enslaved throughout the Americas. But the vigilance and repression of colonial and slaveholding powers, not some preordained historical force, ensured that despite repeated attempts, the revolutionary tradition would not gain any real traction outside Haiti after the revolution there. Meanwhile, the other paradigm in black internationalism, the revivalist tradition, adopted as its guiding principle universal emancipation, a principle first proclaimed *and* put into practice by adherents of the revolutionary tradition. Later, champions of the revivalist tradition would draw inspiration from the Haitian Revolution and defend Haitian sovereignty. At certain moments, the two traditions merged, as in the black guerrilla warfare on the sidelines of the U.S. Revolution, in the Turner Revolt and the Christmas Rising, and rather more tentatively, among the black contingent in the U.S. Civil War. In the main, though, the revivalist tradition remained dominant in black internationalism in the post-Haitian Revolution era, certainly in Anglo-American lands. In the United States, meanwhile, some among the free blacks advocated leaving the country in search of real liberty, and Haiti was one of the suggested destinations for potential African American emigrants in the period leading up to the Civil War.

Then, in the early twentieth century, Haiti and the legacy of the Haitian Revolution dramatically reappeared in black internationalism. The cause was the U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915, followed by a generation-long military occupation lasting until 1934.⁹³ Historically and symbolically, this violent repudiation of Haitian sovereignty constituted a payback for the revolution against slavery, white supremacy, and colonialism over a century earlier. As such, it amounted to Jefferson's revenge. Accordingly, Haiti and the Haitian Revolution became an important, if not fully appreciated, trope in the black international renaissance, political and cultural, that followed World War I.

Since the aggression emanated from the United States, the cause of "bleeding Haiti" became especially dear to African Americans.⁹⁴ Black folk in the United States were all the more outraged because the invasion of Haiti came just weeks after the premiering of the film *Birth of a Nation*, a vilely racist attack on African American political rights and a vindication of the violent white-supremacist overthrow of Reconstruction, the brief but remarkable experiment in nonracial democracy that had followed the Civil War.⁹⁵ In the circumstances, African American activists, writers, and artists swung into action, protesting the occupation of Haiti in multiple forms, including demonstrations, commissions of investigations, essays, books, paintings, plays, and

poems. “Black Majesty,” an ode by Countee Cullen, among the most equivocal of the African American poets of that era, his racial eulogy frequently tinged with apologetics, was typical of the outbreak of celebration of Haitian revolutionary figures:

These men were kings, albeit they were black,
 Christophe and Dessalines and L’Overture;
 Their majesty has made me turn my back
 Upon a plaint I once shaped to endure. . . .
 Stifle your agony; let grief be drowned;
 We know joy had a day once and a clime.

Still in verse, the lesser-known Ben Burrell, in one of the radical, U.S.-based pan-African journals, went beyond celebration of the past and issued a call to arms against the U.S. occupation. Listen to Burrell’s “Haiti, Awake!”:

Haiti, Awake! A hundred years
 Of toil is marked upon thy brow. . . .
 Oh, brethren, for your fathers brave
 Assert your free and ancient rights. . . .
 The Haitian nation never dies. . . .
 Great champion of the Indies West,
 Arise! The world shall guard your fame. . . .
 The memory of thy dead endure;
 The Dessalinos of faith sublime.
 The noble knight; L’Overture.⁹⁶

In fact, the U.S. occupation did produce vigorous martial resistance in Haiti, guerrilla warfare, along with a cultural resurgence.⁹⁷ Interestingly, a central figure in the Haitian cultural rebirth was the physician and man of letters Jean Price-Mars, a scion of the nineteenth-century African American emigration to Haiti.⁹⁸ Concurrently, Haiti and its revolutionary inheritance also attracted the attention of the apostles of Negritude, the cultural movement produced on French soil by colonial subjects from Africa and the Caribbean, in dialogue with the Haitian and African American renaissances, among others.⁹⁹ Indeed, Price-Mars was a founder of Negritude, albeit an oft-neglected one.¹⁰⁰ Aimé Césaire, in his long prose-poem, the single most famous work of Negritude, lauded “Haiti, where negritude stood up for the first time and swore by its humanity.”¹⁰¹ The great irony is that the historical narrators of the black international, who began to emerge around the same time, failed to

take a cue from the literary figures. As is often the case in telling the story of African-descended peoples, “fiction” turned out to be truer than “fact,” imaginative productions offering a more accurate portrayal of lived experiences than historical accounts.¹⁰² Accordingly, the greater body of pan-African historical scholarship would pass over in silence an epic moment in the making of the black international. It remains for the reconstituted field of African Diaspora studies to correct the record and affirm the black international majesty that was the Haitian Revolution, sparing others from having to wail, like the calypso singer David Rudder, “Haiti, I’m sorry.”

NOTES

1. For the broad scholarly treatment of the Haitian Revolution, see, most notably, James, *Black Jacobins*; Fick, *Making of Haiti*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; and Dubois, *Avengers*. See also, most recently, Bell, *Toussaint Louverture*, which credits the claim, rejected by almost all modern historians, that the revolution began as a royalist conspiracy.

2. James, *Black Jacobins*, 163–98; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 157–70; Fick, “French Revolution.”

3. Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution and Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 171–78; Dubois, *Avengers*, 152–70.

4. James, *Black Jacobins*, 199–240; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 119–36.

5. James, *Black Jacobins*, 241–68; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 157–203.

6. James, *Black Jacobins*, 269–321.

7. Quoted in Dubois, *Avengers*, 278.

8. *Ibid.*, 290–93.

9. Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 204–36.

10. Quoted in *ibid.*, 211–12.

11. Long an autonomous force within the revolution, these guerrillas were heavily African-born, compared to the leadership of the mainline revolutionary army, which consisted mainly of Creoles (individuals born in the Americas), men like Toussaint and Dessalines. For a portrait of Sans Souci, whose career illustrates the African-born/Creole divide, see Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 31–69.

12. Quoted in Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 27.

13. Brinton, *Anatomy*; Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*; Moore, *Social Origins*; Skocpol, *States*.

14. The most notable exception is perhaps Langley, *Americas*, which discusses the experiences of the United States (“the revolution from above”), Haiti (“the revolution from below”), and Spanish America (“the revolution denied”). See also Blackburn, *Overthrow*, 161–211; Benot, *La révolution française*; and from the side of Haitian studies, Fick, “French Revolution.”

15. See, for example, Defronzo, *Revolutions*; Foran, *Future*; and Goldstone, *Revolutions*.

16. See, for example, the special issue of *Social Research*, 56, no. 1 (Spring 1989), and the summary of bicentennial debates in Doyle, *French Revolution*, 98–108.
17. Geggus, “Haitian Revolution,” 402–20 (citation from 402).
18. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*; Knight, *Slave Society*; Stein, *Vassouras*.
19. Geggus, “Haitian Revolution,” 402.
20. While most historians attribute this to European balance of power politics, the loss of Haiti had a key role; see Paquette, “Revolutionary Saint Domingue,” and Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*.
21. See, especially, the following works by David Brion Davis: *Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, *Slavery and Human Progress*, and *Inhuman Bondage*.
22. Drescher, “Ending of the Slave Trade”; Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology.”
23. Northrup, *Indentured Labor*; Jung, *Coolies and Cane*; Yun, *Coolie Speaks*.
24. See Lewis, *Growth and Fluctuations*; Wallerstein, *Modern World-System III*, 127–89; and Wolf, *Europe and the People*, 310–53.
25. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 27, 207; Dubois, *Avengers*.
26. See, most notably, Fick, *Making of Haiti*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; and Dubois, *Avengers*.
27. Drescher, “Limits of Example,” 13.
28. Beckles, “Caribbean Anti-Slavery”; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.
29. Santiago-Valles, “World-Historical Ties.”
30. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 221–24.
31. See the list of rebellions and conspiracies in Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolution,” 46–49.
32. Klein, *African Slavery*; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*.
33. Scott, “Common Wind.”
34. Geggus, “Slavery, War, and Revolution,” 14; Childs, “Black French General”; Branson and Patrick, “Étrangers dans un pays étrange.”
35. Quoted in Newman, “American Political Culture,” 79.
36. LaChance, “Repercussions”; Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue*.
37. Robertson, *Denmark Vesey*, 51–53; Starobin, *Denmark Vesey*.
38. Childs, “Black French General.”
39. Robinson, *Black Marxism*.
40. This argument is most clearly articulated in Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution*.
41. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Fick, “French Revolution.”
42. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology*.
43. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 33–34.
44. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion*.
45. Newman, “American Political Culture.”
46. Rothman, *Slave Country*; Hunt, *Haiti's Influence*.
47. Quoted in Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4.
48. *Century of Lawmaking*, col. 330 (emphasis in original). See also Logan, *Diplomatic Relations*.

49. Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4.

50. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

51. Among the most curious exceptions at the turn of the twentieth century was the white-supremacist ideologue Lothrop Stoddard, whose work on the Haitian Revolution studiously avoided that term, underlining Trouillot's point. Stoddard considered the "French Revolution in San Domingo," as he called it, "the first great shock between the ideals of white supremacy and race equality, which erased the finest of European colonies from the map of the white world and initiated that most noted attempt at negro self-government, the black republic of Haiti." See Stoddard, *French Revolution*, vii.

52. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution*.

53. James, *History of Negro Revolt*; this text was refurbished and published anew in 1969 as *A History of Pan-African Revolt*.

54. Scott, "Common Wind."

55. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*.

56. On Padmore's life and politics, see Hooker, *Black Revolutionary*, and Edwards, *Practice of Diaspora*, 241–305.

57. Padmore, *Life and Struggles*, 78.

58. *Ibid.*, 64–68.

59. Padmore, *Pan-Africanism or Communism?* This book reappeared in 1972 under a new, more politically anodyne title, simply, *Pan-Africanism or Communism*, without the question mark and the subtitle.

60. See, for example, such otherwise admirable works as Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism*; Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism*; and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*.

61. Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*.

62. *Ibid.*, 37, 80, 127–28.

63. Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.

64. *Ibid.*, 13, 18.

65. For a discussion of Toussaint and modernity, see Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*, 132–69.

66. James, *Black Jacobins*, 86; Fick, *Making of Haiti*, 104–5; Dubois, *Avengers*, 101.

67. Some scholars of the Haitian Revolution have questioned whether the Bois Caiman ceremony really happened. The weight of opinion, however, supports its authenticity. See, most authoritatively, Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 81–92.

68. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*; Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*.

69. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*; Ditchfield, *Evangelical Revival*; Hempton, *Methodism*; Kidd, *Great Awakening*.

70. Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 235–71.

71. On blacks and the U.S. Revolution and the resulting free black community, see Quarles, *The Negro*; Frey, *Water from the Rock*; Rael, *Black Identity*; and Nash, *Forgotten Fifth*.

72. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*; Walker, *Black Loyalists*; Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*; Pulis, *Moving On*; Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border*; Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*; Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers*.

73. Such figures include James Gronniosaw, John Marrant, Quobna Ottobah Cugoana, Olaudah Equiano, Phillis Wheatley, and John Jea. A number of anthologies contain

their writings, in whole or in part. See, for example, Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*; Gates and McKay, *Norton Anthology*; and Gates and Andrews, *Pioneers*. Marcus Rediker has discoursed incisively on the impact of the Middle Passage on the ideas of some of these figures, most notably Equiano. See Rediker, *Slave Ship*.

74. The standard statement in this regard is Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery Movement*. For more recent, and nuanced, recapitulations, see Brown, *Moral Capital*, and Schama, *Rough Crossings*.

75. Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, 211–47.

76. Rothman, *Slave Country*, 19; James, *Black Jacobins*.

77. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 2.

78. Hall, “Charge,” 204.

79. Holly, *Vindication*.

80. Geggus, *Impact*; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Geggus, “Influence.”

81. Sweet, “Fourth of July”; Rael, *Black Identity*, 223–26. See also White, “‘It Was a Proud Day.’”

82. Walker, *David Walker’s Appeal*, 23.

83. On the black prophetic tradition internationally, see Bogue, *Black Heretics*. On the same phenomenon in the United States more specifically, see Howard-Pitney, *Afro-American Jeremiad*.

84. Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*; Greenberg, *Nat Turner*; French, *Rebellious Slave*; Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, 148–78; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 291–321; Pulis, “Bridging Troubled Waters.”

85. The expression is borrowed from Césaire, *Notebook of a Return*, 140.

86. The classic statement on this subject is Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

87. As J. R. Kerr-Ritchie has so ably shown, British emancipation would have considerable impact on African Americans, notably the free blacks, including those who took refuge in Canada, especially after the U.S. Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. See Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First*. In the same connection, see also Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*.

88. Cornish, *Sable Arm*.

89. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*.

90. British emancipation, along with the Haitian Revolution, had provided an important template for the struggle between the defenders and opponents of slavery in the decades leading up to the U.S. Civil War. See Rugemer, *Problem of Emancipation*.

91. Clavin, “American Toussaints,” 89.

92. *Ibid.*, 87–113.

93. Schmidt, *United States Occupation*; Plummer, *Haiti and the Great Powers*.

94. Plummer, “Afro-American Response”; Pamphile, “NAACP and the American Occupation”; Suggs, “Response.”

95. Boston Branch, *Fighting a Vicious Film*.

96. *Crusader*, May 1920, 11.

97. For an effective roundup of the Haitian experience, from colonial times to the Duvaliers, including the impact of the U.S. occupation, see Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy*.

98. Shannon, *Jean Price-Mars*.

99. Irele, *African Experience*; Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris*; Ellis, “Nicolas Guillen and Langston Hughes.”

100. See, however, Geiss, *Pan-African Movement*, 305–21, which places Price-Mars at the center of Negritude’s origin.

101. Césaire, *Notebook of a Return*, 66. Césaire would later write a play about Christopher, Dessalines’s successor, in addition to a biography of Toussaint.

102. On this point, see Depelchin, *Silences in African History*.