

Role of Haiti in U.S. Independence and Expansion: A Cross-National Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the crucial, yet frequently neglected, contribution of Haiti to the United States' quest for independence and territorial expansion. It explores Haiti's influence on U.S. foreign policy and economic strategies from a cross-national perspective, focusing on key historical events such as the American Revolution and the Louisiana Purchase. Despite Haiti's significant role, mainstream media and historical narratives have largely downplayed these connections, diminishing its impact on the U.S. trajectory. The article also contextualizes current issues, noting the racism faced by the Haitian Community in Springfield, Ohio. The discrimination observed today mirrors wider trends of marginalization and racial bias shaped by a lengthy history of suppressing Haiti's contributions to the American narrative. This analysis reveals historical truths and links them to contemporary racial dynamics, highlighting how systemic prejudice continues to obscure Haiti's legacy in the U.S.

Keywords: Cross-national influence; Forced migration; Haiti's global significance; Haiti's legacy; Haitian contributions; Haitian revolution impact; Haitian influence on abolition; Haitian impact on US expansion; Imperial influence; Jean Jacques Dessalines; Pan-African Solidarity.

It is imperative to acknowledge the frequently disregarded contributions that nations make to each other's development when analyzing the complex relationships between nations. The contributions of Haiti to the independence of the United States remain one of the most overlooked aspects of the American history. One of the most evident indicators is the media's frequent emphasis on Haiti's present challenges without acknowledging its significant contributions to global historical events or its rich history. They frequently neglect the wider framework of post-independence challenges, including foreign exploitation, economic isolation, and subsequent political interference. These oversights engender a distorted comprehension of the underlying reasons for Haiti's ongoing economic and political challenges.

In today's global environment, we are presented with the opportunity to broaden our understanding of Haiti's role in the independence and expansion of the United States, as well as the other nations that Haiti has assisted in their development. Specifically, we can elucidate the negative stereotypes and misconceptions by examining the objectives and practices inherent in the current circumstances that Haiti has been subjected to by the core group, which comprises approximately nine rotating international career ambassadors. Consequently, it is worth reiterating that the relationship between Haiti and the United States, while frequently analyzed through political, social, and cultural perspectives, but it also encompasses historical contributions and territorial expansion.

The media frequently resort to patronizing explanations of "corruption" or "poor leadership" instead of acknowledging the detrimental impact of centuries of debt repayment to France on Haiti's development or the influence of numerous US military occupations on its system of governance. The media has neglected to acknowledge that the United States' actions have directly contributed to Haiti's hardship. They hardly acknowledge that the US has confiscated \$500,000 worth of Haitian government gold, detained control of Haiti's customs houses, administrative institutions, banks, and national treasury, and used over 40% of the nation's income to repay U.S. debts. Additionally, the US rewrote Haiti's constitution, overturning the long-standing prohibition on foreign

land ownership, a safeguard established since the Haitian Revolution to protect the country's sovereignty. Rarely did they address that a group of refugees, Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli who relocated to Haiti in the 19th century, continue to hold power at every level, which birth a profoundly unequal economic framework. And, of course, this emphasis on contemporary challenges without historical context has resulted in the perpetuation of stereotypes and misconceptions by shallow-minded individuals. Haitians in Springfield, Ohio are now endangered and are being subjected to harassment simply because of the baseless claims being disseminated by Trump and his associates. Despite the fact that the rumors have been refuted, these racists disregard evidence when it pertains to Haitians.

Abolition of Slavery and Social Reforms, Support for Abolition Movements Worldwide

Haiti's history is characterized by its critical role in the fight for freedom and human rights. The lack of awareness among many Americans of the intricate historical ties between Haiti and the United States might be attributed to deficiencies in school curriculum, which inadequately acknowledge the significant contributions of Haiti to American history and worldwide independence movements. One could argue that this dearth of a comprehensive historical education is a contributing factor to the current perpetuation of negative perceptions regarding Haitians.

The Haitian Revolution established the second sovereign nation in the Americas, following the independence of the United States in 1783. This Revolution was spearheaded by prominent individuals including Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe, and notable women including Abdaraya Toya, Sanité Bélair, and Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière. A revolution that not only liberated Haiti but also conveyed a forceful message to colonial powers in the Americas and Europe about the potential of a free and independent society without slavery. Abolition movements in the United States were inspired by Haiti's opposition to the institution of slavery. The establishment of a sovereign Black nation in the Americas had a cascading impact on societal changes, motivating both enslaved and free Black populations throughout the region to advocate for emancipation and equal rights.

Jean Jacques Dessalines, a Pan-Africanist and the greatest Haitian General who ever lived issued a proclamation in 1804 in which he extended an offer to the captains of American vessels. The offer entailed a payment of \$40 for every native or Black man of color who passed by Haiti. In exchange for this payment, the individuals would be granted freedom and immediate citizenship upon arrival in Haiti, provided that they publicly declared themselves as Black. The Haitian revolution not only liberated hundreds of thousands of enslaved individuals but also served as a symbol of resistance against oppression and an inspiration for other colonies. Haitian authorities offered refuge and aid to the Dominican Republic during their struggle for independence and also extended military aid to Mexico in their pursuit of independence from Spain. Haitian leaders provided military and logistical support to liberation leaders such as Simón Bolívar and his colleagues in achieving independence for numerous Latin American nations, including Brazil, Guyana, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Bolivia under the condition that all enslaved individuals within these territories be liberated. The New Orleans slave revolt of 1811, which is rarely referenced or learned in schools, was assisted by Haitians. A chapter in Haiti's global contributions that is symbolically significant but less well-known is its support for Greece's War of Independence.

Haiti was one of the nations that offered refuge to Jews who were fleeing persecution in Europe during World War II. Haiti's involvement was instrumental in providing a safe haven and awarding visas to Jews who were fleeing the

Holocaust. In a period when numerous nations were either unwilling to open their borders, Jewish refugees were able to reach Haiti, where they found a degree of safety. In addition to this, Haiti played an important role in the international effort to establish a homeland for the Jewish people. Haiti was one of the 33 countries that voted in favor of the UN Partition Plan (Resolution 181), which supported the establishment of a Jewish sovereign state in 1948. Having achieved sovereignty, Haiti's leadership advocated for abolition across the globe.

Haiti's Role in U.S. Territorial Expansion, Historical Contributions

Haiti's role in the American Revolutionary War is a prime illustration of the contributions that have been significantly ignored in U.S. history. Haitian soldiers rendered assistance to the American cause in addition to providing naval support. In 1779, over 500 Haitians, known as Les Chasseurs Volontaires, fought alongside American troops in the Battle of Savannah, which was one of the bloodiest battles during the American Revolutionary War.

The Louisiana Purchase is one of the most significant ways in which Haiti contributed to the expansion of U.S. territory. The United States doubled its extent by acquiring approximately 829,000 square miles of land from Napoleon in 1803. Following the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte's army, the Haitian Revolution had a substantial impact on this acquisition. To the east of the Rocky Mountains, the acquired land encompassed the states of Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, as well as Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Minnesota, and Colorado.

Several Haitians, including the following below, have contributed to the cultural and demographic composition of various regions in the United States, influenced local development, and contributed to the broader American narrative of expansion and growth in the wake of Haiti's independence.

- Jean Baptiste Point du Sable is recognized as the first permanent settler and founder of Chicago.
- Pierre Toussaint, a prominent philanthropist and social activist in New York City. Toussaint's legacy is characterized by his contributions to a variety of charitable organizations, such as the establishment of orphanages and his advocacy for the Catholic Church.
- Marie-Rose Juliette Gaston, an educator and social reform advocate. She devoted her life to the empowerment of African American women and the promotion of education. Gaston contributed to the enhancement of African American children's access to quality education through her advocacy and education work. Her endeavors were instrumental in the broader movement for educational reform and the promotion of women's rights in the United States.
- Elizabeth Clarisse Lange, an educator who established the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first Roman Catholic religious community of African American women in the United States.
- Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes is a celebrated historian, journalist, and ardent champion of African American rights. His research centered on precisely recording the historical events and significant achievements made by African Americans in Louisiana and other regions. Through his meticulous documentation and

preservation of African American history, his contributions have had an enduring influence on the fields of historical research and civil rights activism.

Their contributions to the development of major cities, education, and social justice have left a lasting legacy that must continue to influence and inspire, while also contributing to a fairer and more equitable world.

Economic Displacement and Forced Migration

The United States was a trade partner prior to the Haitian Revolution. They continued to import agricultural products from Haiti throughout the 19th century. By the mid-1800s, the U.S. exported more goods to Haiti than to any other Latin American country, while underscoring the importance of their economic relationship.

Over the past 40 years, U.S. involvement in Haiti has been marked by multiple interventions and invasions, resulting in a complex relationship. Haiti's economy has experienced a consistent decline since the 1970s, which has been further aggravated by international sanctions and detrimental government policies.

In 1982, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) pressured Haiti's dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier to slaughter the nation's population of Creole pigs, a major source of economic investment for the rural population. Consequently, Haitian producers suffered a financial loss of approximately \$600 million. According to former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the pig slaughter led to a 30% drop in rural school enrollment, reduced protein intake, the decapitalization of the peasant economy, and severe damage to the agricultural sector.

In 1995, U.S. President Bill Clinton pressured Haiti to drastically reduce its tariffs on imported rice from 50% to 3%. This policy has forced Haiti's domestic rice industry collapsed, leaving the country more reliant on subsidized American rice, much of which is produced in Clinton's home state of Arkansas. The collapse of the local rice industry weakened the country's food security and further impoverished rural communities.

On January 12, 2010, Haiti was impacted by a catastrophic earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0, resulting in the displacement of over 1.5 million and the deaths of over 300,000 people. The country was further plunged into crisis which caused widespread psychological trauma and worsened an already precarious economic situation. Development efforts were halted. However, intermediaries have received nearly all of the \$6 billion that was raised to be disbursed in official aid to assist the Haitian people.

Haiti's situation has deteriorated further following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, which the primary financier of the assassination purportedly participated in the operation based on the assurance of complete support from the United States. Port-au-Prince has fallen under near-complete control of paramilitary groups, with an estimated 90% of the capital being affected. The absence of strong state control has enabled these criminal organizations to thrive, further destabilizing the country, as a result of weak governance that has been influenced by U.S. policies.

In 2023 the United Nations released a report that highlighted the role of the U.S. as a primary source of guns flowing into Haiti, particularly into the hands of paramilitary groups. The report shed light on how illegal firearms, largely trafficked from the U.S. have exacerbated violence in Haiti, contributing to the instability and growing influence of armed groups in the country. Following the ousting of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and the absence of

effective government control, criminal activity has only increased, with some presenting themselves as revolutionary groups. The transitional government established on 12 April 2024, meant to lead Haiti to elections, has struggled to bring order, leaving millions of Haitians without access to basic needs like food, water, electricity, and fear for personal safety among the population.

As previously stated, Haiti's suffering is a direct result of a lengthy history of U.S. intervention and exploitation. Haiti is compelled to remain politically unstable, and unable to completely recover from natural disasters or internal strife due to a variety of factors, including economic subjugation, military occupation, presidential assassination, and neoliberal economic policies. Consequently, the persistent negative perceptions of Haiti in American discourse are indicative of nescience of the history of Haiti. We can promote a more informed and respectful dialogue about the interconnected nature of global history by challenging stereotypes and recognizing Haiti's substantial contributions to American history and global independence movements.

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Consent for Publication

Author declares that she consented for the publication of this study.

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