

# SLAVERY, REBELLION, AND REVOLUTION IN THE AMERICAS

## A Historiographical Scenario on the Theses of Genovese and Others

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**To acknowledge the 200th anniversary of the bourgeois-democratic French Revolution is to be mindful not only of its worldwide impact on emergent or would-be emergent nation-states in the 18th-century-Western world but also of its equally chain-shattering tripartite cry of *liberte, egalite, and fraternite* on Africans held in bondage by France and other established, emergent, and would-be emergent Western slaveholding states. In a similar vein, we are reminded of the 1983 gathering of scholars at Stanford University to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the publication of Aptheker's seminal book, *American Negro Slave Revolts*. During that conference, scholars examined papers built around Aptheker's 1943 position as expressed in the book that "discontent and rebelliousness were not only exceedingly common, but, indeed, characteristic of American Negro slaves" (Aptheker, 1987 [1938], p. 374). In 1976, the author moved beyond his 1943 position to emphatically posit that "resistance, not acquiescence, is the core of history" (Craton, 1982, p. 11).**

Resistance, not acquiescence, characterized the key ingredient that brought on the Haitian Revolution of 1791. Coming in the wake of the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution was profoundly

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affected by the rhetoric of the Age of Revolution, particularly as it was expressed in democratic documents such as the American Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The year 1991, therefore, marked for the Haitian people the 200th anniversary of their fight for independence from revolutionary France. As the first incipient Black state on the road to freedom in the hemisphere, Haiti successfully challenged "the world capitalist system within which slavery itself was embedded" (Genovese, 1979, p. 374) and, to the astonishment of that world, won. In the words of James, whose 1938 book stands as a monument to that first Black revolution, "the slaves worked the land and like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors" (James, 1963 [1938], p. 66).

Resolved to destroy the peculiar institution once and for all, the Haitian people, under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, humiliated the mighty British lion unprecedentedly, humbled the "poor man of Europe" as epitomized in Spain, and, as argued elsewhere, "made their country the graveyard of Napoleon's magnificent army as well as his imperial ambitions in the New World. In the end, the Americas had its first Black national state" (Pieterse, 1988, p. 5).

The Haitian Revolution was a child of the Age of Revolution (1775-1815), a Black child at that but, nevertheless, a revolutionary one intimately intertwined with the others because of her brazen claim to the rights of liberty and equality (Palmer, 1964, Vol. 2, p. 338). It was this claim, something the French had claimed earlier but solely for White Frenchmen, that marked what Genovese (1979) saw as "a turning point in the history of slave revolts and, indeed, of the human spirit" (p. xix); and in the words of Davis (1966), the date when people of color in Haiti challenged "privileged orders" so as to displace them—August 22, 1791—was a "pivotal date in the history of the New World" (p. 144).

Using Genovese's idea of a turning point as an appropriate incentive to reexamine the historical significance of the African revolts in the Americas, it is therefore the aim of this article to reconsider the evolutionary and revolutionary potential of those revolts and conspiracies, which peaked with the Haitian Revolu-

tion, through an appropriately argued historical scenario. But first, a few cursory remarks about the historiography of slavery and slave resistance follow.

### SLAVERY, SLAVE RESISTANCE, AND THE HISTORIOGRAPHY

In the wake of the publication of Aptheker's book, and approximately three decades before the publication of Genovese's book (even though it is arguable that James's book was a precursor), appeared a number of books that sought to discredit the historical, pre-World War II Progressive School as reflected in the writings of Phillips (1918) such as his *American Negro Slavery* and those of some British writers such as the chauvinist James Anthony Froude on the Caribbean (Thomas, 1969). Succinctly, both Phillips and Froude represented a school of thought that sought to project the benevolence of a slave system and the acquiescence-*tabula rasa* mentality of the slaves. The books that sought to discredit Phillips's Progressive School were published by writers who had been identified with the Counter-Progressive School, a post-World War II period that peaked by the beginning of the 1970s. Those pre-1970s publications are represented by books written by Stamp (1956), Elkins (1959), Davis (1966), Patterson (1967), and even Tannenbaum (1946). For the Counter-Progressive School, Stamp's book epitomizes the so-called transitional point by arguing against the racist methodology of the Progressive School and by demonstrating the historicity of Africans in the American drama from the point of view of the African. The publication of the book was a concerted move to heighten the "peculiar urgency" of understanding the history of slavery as a "key to understanding the present," especially the implicit immediacy of Stamp's work calling for an examination of "what slavery meant to the Negro and how he reacted to it before one can comprehend [the Negro's] more recent tribulations" (Davis, 1986, pp. 189-190).

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of texts appeared that contributed to the transition from the Counter-Progressive period to what appropriately can be called the Post-Counter-Progressive period.

This period is exemplified by the publication of texts on slavery that sought to explain the pervasive racial malaise inherent in the Americas and to further decipher the socioeconomic girders of the peculiar institution through a more innovative, scientific methodology. Among the books with racial, analytic foci are the works of Jordan (1969), Degler (1971), Fredrickson (1981, 1988), and Cell (1982). A more innovative approach is identified by the entrance into the debate of the econometricians (quantifiers), as is evident in the publications of Genovese (1965) and Curtin (1969) as well as Fogel and Engerman's (1974) publication, a lamentable econometric dream deferred. All three publications were part of the "Cliometric Revolution" and mirrored the 1957 work of Conrad and Meyer (1958).

The historiography of slavery in the Post-Counter-Progressive period was further strengthened, and the thesis of resistance was more demonstrable, in erudite studies such as those of Blassingame (1972); Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick (1978); Genovese (1976); Mullin (1972); Palmer (1976); Rout (1976); Starobin (1970); and Wood (1974). In 1979, 36 years after Aptheker's book was first published, Genovese published his long-awaited study, *From Rebellion to Revolution*, thus capping the Post-Counter-Progressive period. On the one hand, the book was an attempt at an integrative, interpretative synthesis of the growing studies on the historiography of slave revolts (Bracey, 1987). On the other hand, the book was clearly in support of the thesis of resistance, not acquiescence, as the motive force of African slave revolts in the Americas.

### **THE BOOK—FROM REBELLION TO REVOLUTION—JUXTAPOSED**

*From Rebellion to Revolution* appears not to have gotten the recognition that the contents between its pages merit. It was, perhaps, seen simply as a bold Marxist analysis of hemispheric slave revolts, of which those that occurred in the United States were more peripheral given the enormous differences in variables conducive for revolts such as demography and topography, which in

the United States acted more as a retardant in holding revolts and conspiracies to a minimum. Given the fact that the number and frequency of rebellions and conspiracies in the Caribbean and parts of the Americas, other than the United States, were higher because of certain convenient variables, this should not be a reason to peripheralize the historical significance of Genovese's (1979) book. If we are to understand the dynamics of human conditions in the present, as Stampp has argued, then it is incumbent on us to view the "peculiar urgency" of understanding the history of slave revolts as a blueprint to avoiding the mistakes of the past. *From Rebellion to Revolution* can assist us in such an avoidance because it is an anatomy of a revolution—a crucible in whose ingredients, when subjected to an evolutionary, analytical process, not only reveal the seeds of revolution but also become a predictor of such events in the future. Predict? How? The answer lies in Aptheker's motive force of history: resistance, which remains constant in face of human oppression.

Genovese's book is a subtle but analytically astute description of slave revolts and conspiracies in a hemispheric perspective; but more than that, it is the study of such revolts on a historical continuum that precipitantly builds up to revolution. Of all the revolts, the only truly successful one completing the goal of exterminating their oppressors was the Haitian Revolution. Yet, in a way, all of them were evolutionary, lending themselves to the continuing refinement of personnel and military tactics to meet the ever-changing socioeconomic and political milieu in which the planter class was so adept at maintaining the advantage. But for the planters, the revolts and conspiracies were persistent, agonizing, lightning spurts of probing pain as if in search of imperialism's Achilles' heel. Those probes would soon find their mark in the Age of Revolution on San Domingo under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a deftly calculating coachman and stable groom.

As an anatomy of a revolution, Genovese's book pulls together, in a hemispheric perspective and along a historical continuum, the perennial crises of a parasitic economic system caught in the throngs of moving "from seigneurialism to capitalism." According to Genovese (1979), "nothing better testifies to the integral role of

slavery in the transition from seigneurialism to capitalism—in ideological as well as socioeconomic terms—than the history of the slave revolts” (p. xviii). It is further argued in the book that, prior to the Age of Revolution, revolts in the restorationist phase never directly “challenged the world capitalist system” but were content, at the margin of the colonial world, “to defend their traditional conceptions of their own rights [as maroons]” (p. xix). When that challenge did occur in the late 18th century and into the 19th century, it was revolutionary and part and parcel of the bourgeois-democratic revolutionary wave sweeping the Western world.

As an anatomy of a revolution, what enhances the book’s argument and historiographical significance is when it is juxtaposed with some of the more recent publications of the 1980s decade such as Craton’s (1982) book, Thompson’s (1987) book, and the anthology on resistance edited by Okihiro (1986). There are some earlier writers whose works are complementary as well. Some of these earlier writers such as Price (1973) and Porter (1932, 1943), Porter having written on the relations between Blacks and Indians in the United States (especially in Florida), as with the more recent writers of the 1980s, not only complement Genovese’s book but also support Aptheker’s dictum of a continuity of resistance to slavery.

Craton’s (1982) work, although agreeing with the basic concepts of Genovese, does soft-peddle the book’s idea of the Haitian Revolution as a “decisive watershed between simple rebellions and true revolution” (p. 14); and because *Testing the Chains* concentrates on British Caribbean slavery, it plays down Genovese’s extraneous influences on rebellions and conspiracies and plays up intrinsic forces. By emphasizing intrinsic forces (effects of change), Craton sought to shed “light on the issue of whether slaves were more likely to rebel if driven on tight reins or on loose [reins]” (p. 14).

Thompson’s book, like that of Genovese, is comparative with a hemispheric orientation and addresses the theme of African slave resistance in a very perceptive, analytic fashion while laying out before the reader the factors contributing to the diaspora. It is the book’s third section that is of interest here in that it delineates African resistance to slavery in the Americas by describing “the ways and means which slaves devised and adopted for defeating

the system" (Thompson, 1987, pp. 258-259). Price's (1973) book is hemispheric and comparative like Thompson's, but Price's book, unlike Thompson's, lends specificity in highlighting regional case studies of slave resistance in the Americas.

Okihiro's (1986) book concerns itself with African resistance beyond the Americas to Africa to demonstrate parallels with respect to the Aptheker dictum. In addition, the book, through some of its female contributors, adds the feminine perspective to the study of slave revolts and conspiracies and thereby lends strength to the historiography (Marthurin, 1975; Steady, 1981; Terborg-Penn, Marthurin, & Steady, 1987).

### **THE MAKING OF THE REVOLUTION: SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL VARIABLES**

Before the revolutionary phase and/or what Genovese (1979) termed the bourgeois-democratic phase is reached, it is arguable that a number of key variables that were problematic and undeveloped had first to be resolved. The variable of a visionary leadership had to supersede a reactionary, restorationist African leadership. Ethnicity and particularism of that African leadership had to give way to a more inclusive, heterogeneous, universal tack to overcome problems of enlargement of scale. Ultimately, the African leadership had to be replaced by or tempered by an incorporation of creole-born Africans whose angle of vision was forward-looking and mirrored the bourgeois-democratic ideology of the Age of Revolution. Further, these creole-born African leaders, although acculturated and highly skilled in various crafts and in positions of leadership on the plantations, had to commit themselves to transforming slave uprisings from conspiracies and rebellions to revolution by rejecting self-denial as a byproduct of accommodation with the peculiar institution. Having reached this level of consciousness, this leadership then had to convince the masses, from whom their power derived, through a process of consciousness-raising that the revolution was in their best interest. The process involved combining elements of European acculturation such as

the apocalyptic tenets of Christianity, appropriately fashioned as instruments of political and spiritual change, with an African consciousness molded by millennial and messianic values of traditional African religion (Craton, 1982, pp. 243-350; Genovese, 1979, p. 7). In the words of Craton (1982), "rebellion [and conspiracies and ultimately the revolution] occurred because the leaders [over time] were able to mobilize the slaves, harnessing their discontent, exploiting their potential for retaliatory violence, and offering fulfillment of their deepest dreams" (p. 252). And for all of this to come to fruition, that acculturated, visionary, creole-born African leadership had to be in place because, as James (1963 [1938]) argued, "masses roused to the revolutionary pitch need above all a clear and vigorous direction" (p. 94).

A mature leadership cadre is arguable in Genovese's restorationist phase, but it was politically parochial and ethnically particularistic; flight and rebellion were perceived by that African-born leadership (Coromantee, Ibos, Yoruba-Nagos, Ewe, Angolans) as "external to society—as a withdrawal from society" (Genovese, 1979, p. xviii). The outcome of such a limited perception and/or vision was the rise of maroonage throughout the Americas on a large scale—the creation of marginal communities of escaped slaves in the Caribbean and in North, South, and Central America.

The restorationist or "tribal regression" phase (Palmer, 1976) characterized the pattern of African slave rebellions in the Americas to the end of the 18th century, after which it shadowed the 19th century until the abolition of slavery throughout the hemisphere. Although ethnicity was a pervasive attribute of slave leadership and was reflected in rebellions such as the revolt of 1522 on the island of Hispaniola ("the first black slave revolt in the New World" [Clarke, 1988, p. 54]), the revolts in Mexico of the 16th and 17th centuries, those in Colombia and Venezuela of the same centuries, and the 1712 and 1739 revolts in New York and Stono, South Carolina, respectively, there was an incipient creole African element present within the predominant African leadership circles. Craton, Palmer, and Rout all argue for its appearance prior to the Age of Revolution. Palmer argues for an acculturated, highly schooled creole element in the African slave rebellions that occurred in



Mexico during the early 17th century. For example, the 1608 conspiracy in the vicinity of Mexico City, in which a king and queen were ceremoniously installed to reign over a victorious outcome, was formulated entirely by (except for the king, Martin) "criollos"—free Blacks, mulattoes, and slaves (Palmer, 1976, p. 136). But until that incipient creole element within the leadership circles reached the evolutionary point where it merged its ideology of liberation "with the trans-Atlantic bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century" (Genovese, 1979, p. 9) and displaced the African-born leaders, its vision remained reactionary, limited, and isolated.

In support of the presence of an incipient, evolutionary, creole element within the leadership circles during the restorationist phase, it is possible to argue that if resistance characterized the response of Africans to their enslavement, then it should be equally possible to posit an arguable correlation between an increased intensity and extent of that resistance with a more mature, acculturated slave leadership cadre. The foregoing lends credence to the slave rebellion debate because as the restorationist phase progressed through the 16th and 17th centuries and on into the 18th century, an evolving, more mature and acculturated African leadership cadre, highly integrated with creole Africans, adjusted itself to respond appropriately to both intrinsic and external forces to maintain coveted, negotiable options within and without the peculiar institution. Flight and rebellion and their outcome—maroonage—remained perennial phenomena of African restorationists and their creole offsprings, but more and more the leadership cadre concerned itself with negotiable options to temper the severity of the system both within and without. Enslaved and maroon Africans soon reacted to counter sudden, systemically traumatic changes in the organic functioning of the peculiar institution.

Craton (1982) referred to such reactions to change as "testing the chains" and argued admirably and persuasively on such a theme with an emphasis on slavery's intrinsic forces rather than on "abstract and extraneous influences, including all the ideologies of the Age of Revolution (1775-1815) that loom so large in many accounts" (p. 13). As Craton stated, "By emphasizing the effects of

change, my view dismisses the simple dichotomies between accommodation and resistance, accommodators and resisters, and sheds light on the issue of whether slaves were more likely to rebel if driven on tight reins or on loose [reins]" (p. 38).

To demonstrate this thesis, Craton drew on several incidents of slave resistance from the Caribbean region, one of which is mentioned here in support of this article's thesis. The incident took place on the island of St. Vincent between 1763 and 1773, when British officials and settlers had to contend with a guerrilla war from the Black Windward (as opposed to the so-called Yellow) Caribs who reacted defensively under their leader, Joseph Chatoyer, against the gradual erosion of their traditional lands to White planters rushing to benefit from the "sugar revolution." In addition to a politically astute and diplomatically calculating Black Carib leadership under Chatoyer, the maroons of St. Vincent "had the advantages of interior lines, familiarity with the terrain by night and day, and superior fighting skills as well as a greatly superior will to fight" (Craton, 1982, p. 151). With Chatoyer and his followers wishing to maintain many of their coveted negotiable options, and with the British fearful of the cost of such a war to the Ministry of the Exchequer, the two parties agreed to a peace treaty signed in May of 1773 (pp. 145-153).

Writers such as Genovese, Palmer, and others give equal weight to both intrinsic and extraneous variables. In arguing the intrinsic, Genovese put an emphasis on the impact of depressed economics on the planter class as well as its opposite, economic improvement. "Economic distress," he wrote, "provoked many big slave revolts in the hemisphere . . . where war and inadequate local provisioning often resulted in desperate food shortages and outright starvation . . . [which] triggered . . . the massive rising on St. John [in the Caribbean] in 1733. . . . [Other] revolts, however, came during periods of material improvement, which stimulated expectations" (Genovese, 1979, pp. 12-13). Using Frederick Douglass to support this idea of expectations, Fredrickson and Lasch (1971) intimated that if we are to accept the testimony of "Douglass, resistance was more likely to result from indulgence and rising expectations" (p. 180).

A combination of rising expectations and perhaps the idea of African slaves driven on loose reins could account for the Prosser conspiracy of 1800 in Richmond, Virginia, and both the subsequent conspiracy of Denmark Vesey and the rebellion of Nat Turner of 1831. In support of this, Schwarz (1982) argued in his Gabriel article

that the relatively open slave society of the late eighteenth-century tidewater Virginia favored mobile, assimilated, and skilled slaves. Because white Virginians needed a great variety of labor skills and simultaneously desired workers who did not seem alien, they consciously granted or else carelessly allowed the assimilated and trained slaves greater privileges such as freedom of movement. (p. 286)

Freehling (1986), in his article, "Denmark Vesey's Peculiar Reality," echoed Schwarz when he wrote that

in the period immediately preceding Denmark Vesey's conspiracy, Charleston patriarchs tended to treat their especially dense, especially talented, and especially domestic black population with special leniency. . . . Leaders of the Vesey conspiracy exemplified expectation aroused, then thwarted. . . . Enraged that his children would remain slaves, [Vesey] gambled everything he had achieved to destroy a system blunting his posterity's achievement. (pp. 28-29)

Attempts at enlargement of scale (especially plantation and/or regional alliances) were difficult for African revolutionaries, both in the so-called tribal regression (restorationist) and intermediary (conspiracies and/or abortive-stillborn revolts) phases. This was evident, for example, with the Jamaican maroons when, in 1735, Cudjoe of the Leeward maroons rejected an offer of alliance with the Windward maroons of Nanny Town (Marthurin, 1975, p. 33). Yet it is possible to talk of locally inspired coalitions of Amerindians and Africans and/or of Africans, creole slaves, freedmen, and mulattoes in various parts of the Americas. Such coalitions occurred during the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina of 1739 (which recruited slaves from local and adjacent plantations as the

rebellious slaves progressed south toward Florida), the Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia of 1831, and the earlier 1712 slave rebellion in New York. But enlargement of scale as a phenomenon of revolution had to await the late 18th/early 19th centuries. Until that time, the evolutionary process continued to nurture a maturing, creole African leadership that grew more and more politically self-assured, diplomatically astute, and ideologically attuned to the revolutionary fervor of the Age of Revolution.

An important phase of leadership maturity among African slave revolutionaries was the development of a more sophisticated approach to diplomacy. This innovative approach to diplomacy initially involved attempts at enlargement of scale through negotiated moves at unity among restorationists, facilitated by crosscutting ties of ethnicity, race (with Amerindians), and religion and, later, through diplomatic overtures with the planter class for coveted concessions. In Mexico, for example, although it initially was difficult to coordinate the attacks of dispersed cimarron groups against the Spaniards, there were incipient, nominal alliances established between some cimarron communities and, as already mentioned, Amerindians as well as enslaved Africans and freedmen. This became possible in 1549 and again in 1579 near the Mexican towns of Nueva Galicia and Guadalajara. During those dates, Spanish officials recorded a series of "collaborative, clandestine raids" by a combination of local cimarrones and the Chichimecs Indians (Palmer, 1976, p. 123). During the 17th century, in 1608 and 1618, in the Orizaba zone of Vera Cruz, a frustrated Don Luis de Velasco, Spanish viceroy, fought a series of guerrilla wars with Orizaba cimarrones under the leadership of their king, Yanga, who was of royal blood and referred to by the Spanish Order of Franciscans as "un hombre razon." The outcome was the recognition of several concessions put forth by Yanga, one in particular being the establishment of the cimarron "pueblo of San Lorenzo de Negros" (pp. 126-127). Again, in 1608, an abortive-stillborn conspiracy in Mexico City revealed that suspected conspirators were a coalition of free Blacks and mulattoes as well as slaves (p. 136).

In the Trombetas region of Alcobaca in Amazonia of 18th-century Brazil, Portuguese authorities, rather than attempt to de-

stroy a mocambo (cimarron community headed by the powerful "Negress, Fillippa Maria Aranha,"), elected to form an alliance with her instead (Bastide, 1971, p. 197). A similar but earlier occurrence took place in Spanish-controlled Colombia in Cartagena de Indias at the turn of the 17th century. The Spaniards, rather than continue the enormous expense to suppress "King Benkos" (Domingo Bioho) and his palanqueros of the palenque San Basilio, under the leadership of governor Don Diego Fernandez de Velasco, agreed to concessions from King Benkos in 1619 (Rout, 1976, p. 77). On the island of Jamaica, this growing sophistication in diplomacy culminated in treaties of peace between the British and their maroon protagonists; the British recognized the Leeward maroons of Cudjo and the Windward maroons of Moore (Nanny) Town under Quao as independent polities with certain treaty obligations to the British crown in 1739 and 1740, respectively (Craton, 1982, pp. 81-92).

The transition of the leadership from predominantly African to creole was completed by the late 18th century in most of the Americas, with such a dichotomy in North America having peculiarities of its own. Craton pinpoints 1780 for Jamaica because by that time creole slaves outnumbered African-born slaves. The leadership was highly skilled, elite, in positions of leadership on the plantations, acculturated, steeped in the ideological fervor of the Age of Revolution, and politically calculating. The findings in the 1735 Tackey conspiracy on Antigua gave every indication of a growing involvement of highly skilled creoles in such rebellious acts. Tackey's conspiracy recruited "Tomboy, a creole master-carpenter . . . Scipio . . . described as a 'waiting man' or domestic . . . two drivers: Secundi and Jacko [and] four other skilled craftsmen" (Craton, 1982, pp. 121-124). The appearance of these skilled creoles not only was an indication of things to come but highlighted the fact that by the mid-18th century it would be almost completed. On Jamaica, the transformation of leadership really got under way before Craton's date of 1780 because of the Hanover Parish slave plot of 1776, which coincided with the start of the American Revolution. On the island, the planters in Hanover Parish were confronted, unbelievably, "for the first time in the colony's history [with a widespread plot that] involved the creole elite of

drivers, craftsmen, and domestics, who never before engaged in rebellions, and in whose fidelity [the planters] had always most firmly relied" (p. 172).

The last decade of the 18th century heralded the "turning point" in which a visionary creole leadership cadre took up the challenge to transform conspiracies and rebellions into revolution. Up to that point, it is arguable that growing creole leadership, still with numbers of African-born slaves in the inner circles of power, prepared itself for the revolution as its acts of violent retribution sought the Achilles' heel of imperialism and an African freedom not far distant.

### **THE TURNING POINT: THE REVOLUTION IN HAITI**

With the start of the Haitian Revolution, all the key ingredients necessary for revolution were in place. First and foremost was that by 1791 the leadership circle was dominated by creoles and, in spite of a large number of African-born slaves on the island, the ideology of the Age of Revolution was preached by highly skilled slaves in positions of leadership on the many plantations. With the creole Africans in the leadership circle, ethnicity had given way to cross-cutting ties of ethnic unity, which in turn created a basis by which to move to a more innovative and universal strategem of resistance fostered by an enlargement of scale. The intrinsic and extraneous variables were in play and key to the success of the revolution. Internally, the petite and grand blancs (Whites) were diametrically opposed to one another and could not agree as to an appropriate approach to the Black slave majority and the mulatto property holders. Externally, and in addition to the counterrevolutionary activity in Haiti, France was at war in 1793 with both England and Spain, two enemies determined to wrest control of Haiti from France but that miscalculated on the revolutionary resolve of the Africans to defeat the Whites at their own military game to win their freedom and self-determination.

In the leadership circle, along with Boukman (whose counterpart in the failed Denmark Vesey plot of 1822 would be Gullah Jack)

were Jeannot, Francois, Biassou, and Toussaint, known as Francois Dominique Toussaint a Breda. All were highly skilled craftsmen attached to prominent White planters on Haiti. They were acculturated creoles but were men who were enslaved to others. The first four would lead the masses initially into battle against the French, Spanish, and British, but it would be the latter, Toussaint ("Fratras Baton," or thrashing stick, as he was known in his youth), who would emerge as the supreme Commander.

A strict disciplinarian and one familiar with military strategy through his many readings, Toussaint created from an African slave population of approximately 500,000 (and a White and mulatto population of only 30,000 each) one of the most formidable armies in the Age of Revolution (Korngold, 1964, p. ix). In the British lion's unprecedented humiliation, it is recalled that the "British 20,000 well-trained and excellently equipped soldiers [sent to Haiti] had been decisively defeated by Toussaint Louverture" (p. ix). And in the words of a contemporary, "His [Toussaint's] army amounts to 55,000 men, of which 30,000 are of the line and disciplined. The remainder are militia—a formidable army" (pp. ix-x). With respect to the guerrilla tactics used so successfully by the Haitian army, it has been remarked that "it was Toussaint who first brought guerrilla warfare to the notice of military historians . . . [and] not one before or for many years to follow was to combine strict discipline and precision with athletic prowess among his troops as did Toussaint" (Parkinson, 1978, p. 51).

When Napoleon moved to reinstate the peculiar institution in Haiti and other French holdings in the Caribbean (after its abolition in 1794), the die was cast (Palmer, 1964, Vol. 2, p. 514). From the revolutionaries under Toussaint, the cry went up: "la luta continua; liberte ou morte." Napoleon's meteoric appearance on the world stage as an apparently indomitable personality was equally matched by his meteoric fall from power as a result of his decree to reinstate slavery in the French colonial empire. As he sat a defeated man in a Western prison, he bemoaned the fact that his better judgment forsaked him at a crucial moment in history. " 'I have to reproach myself,' moaned the fallen Napoleon Bonaparte when it was too late, 'with the attempt made upon the colony [Haiti] during my

consulship. The design of reducing it by force was a great error. I ought to have been satisfied with governing it through the medium of Toussaint' " (Genovese, 1979, pp. 92-93; Parkinson, 1978, p. 153). Like Napoleon, the British had to confront the historical legacy of their defeat, and Haiti was that long black shadow of defeat that even the British historians had to interpret correctly. As stated elsewhere, "The losses suffered by the British in Saint Dominique weakened them in their war against revolutionary France: Sir John Fortescue, a British military historian, observed that the secret of Britain's failure to crush the French revolution 'may be said to lie in the fatal words, [Toussaint L' Ouverture]' " (Pieterse, 1988, p. 5). When all was said and done, and when the battles had all been fought and won (with a little help from a tropical mosquito), the Age of Revolution had produced another offspring: a Black child among White siblings but whose traumatic birth resounded throughout the Americas as a dramatic harbinger of things to come. The Western world was confronted by its future.

### SLAVERY, REBELLION, AND REVOLUTION: A CONCLUDING ASSESSMENT

"In the end, the Americas had their first black national state" (Genovese, 1979, p. xvii). Hemispherically, and on that historical continuum of African resistance, if the scenario is to hold up with respect to the evolutionary process of revolution, the evolutionary process peaked in Haiti because, as stated earlier, all the conditions necessary for a revolution were in place. With a slave population of 500,000 or more, and with a White planter class of 30,000, the Black/White ratio was astounding. France's war with Britain and Spain, and its pariah status among other nation-states of the Western world, brought into play the extraneous factors. And if we are to believe Genovese's and Craton's positions that conspiracies and rebellions were possible not only in times of prosperity but also when slaves were driven on loose or tight chains, then the fact that the revolution came to Haiti in the midst of an economic bonanza (as the colony was the most prosperous in the French empire)



holds credence. Rising expectations among the acculturated, highly skilled creole Africans were constantly thwarted by so-called White revolutionaries who guarded their privileges and human property with such a blind passion of fear that they acted as counterweights in bringing down their world around them. Above all else, the Haitian revolutionaries linked their revolutionary ideology with that of the Age of Revolution and thus made the transition from rebellion to revolution. Further, it must be recalled that what makes Haiti so distinct in this scenario is that it is differentiated from other regions in the Americas in that its revolutionary leadership attempted "to fashion a modern black state, a state that did not turn its back on world society. . . . Its ideology was the bourgeois-democratic ideology that guided the American and French revolutions" (Pieterse, 1988, p. 4). For the many Africans still enslaved throughout the Americas and/or as alluded to by others, "Haiti was to the African diaspora . . . a call of awakening" (p. 5).

Toussaint L'Ouverture (the one who gets over, the thrasher of White nation-states) was a name that shook the Western world so profoundly and sent fear and trepidation into the hearts of slaveholders and changed the course of history. The trans-Atlantic trade in slaves would shortly end officially as a result of the revolution; the abolitionists' cause was strengthened throughout the world; in the wake of the revolution, a French dream of empire came crashing down around the would-be emperors; and the revolutionaries, in what became an America mired in its own contradictory meaning of democracy and inalienable rights, acquired a vast tract of Western territory that led it to the Pacific, but only after it had "steam-rolled" Native American nations in its path (Pieterse, 1988, p. 6).

The evolutionary process of the revolution had come to fruition; it was a harbinger "of a new nationalism [a Black nationalism of hope, humility, and freedom] representing [a] turning point in consciousness and political practice" (Pieterse, 1988, p. 5). The idea of the revolution had so entrenched itself in the historical consciousness of the enslaved and/or oppressed that it made and makes possible such an idea in the 19th and 20th centuries, and beyond, for those whose antecedents were 18th-century revolutionaries. As Toussaint stated so prophetically on the day of his depor-

tation from the homeland to France, and which is so apropos for the entire Americas, "In overthrowing me you have cut down in Saint Dominique only the trunk of the tree of liberty; it will spring up again from the roots, for they are many and they are deep" (Parkinson, 1978, p. 189).

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