We Were the First: Haitian Domestic and Foreign Politics, 1807-1867

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WE WERE THE FIRST: HAITIAN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLITICS, 1807-1867

by

Reina Henderson

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This project involves re-examining Haiti's domestic and foreign policy from 1807-1867. The goal is to demonstrate that Haiti self-fashioned its role as a democratic republic. A second goal is to re-examine the politics of the Atlantic World by focusing on Haiti's participation. This was done by examining four important areas. First, the dynamics between mixed-race Haitians and black Haitians held over from pre-Independence Haiti. Second, Haiti's efforts to protect its independence. Third, Haiti's participation in independence and abolition movements throughout the Atlantic World. Finally, how Haiti's role in these events aids in our understanding of democratic ideals in this period. Upon examination of these events, it becomes clear that Haiti's participation helped to determine Haiti's future and the future of other republics. Through demonstrating Haiti's self-fashioning its role in the Atlantic World, this research establishes Haiti as a vital actor in understanding racial and liberal politics during the nineteenth century.
« Les Haïtiens ne seront désormais connus que sous la dénomination génériques de noirs. »

“Haitians will henceforth be known only under the generic name of blacks.”

- Article 14, Preliminary Statement. Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805.

“The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.”

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Introduction

In 1860, the people of Haiti proclaimed to its present detractors and, prophetically, to the decades of historiography that followed, “the Republic of Haiti – a Republic that its enemies on another continent represent as always in ruin.”¹ This declaration helped to provoke my reexamination of the Haitian nineteenth century. Exploring fifty years of Haiti’s independence, this thesis argues that racial tension between its mixed-race and black populations fueled its domestic politics and promoting freedom through slave revolts and abolitionist movements abroad drove its foreign politics. These tenets culminated in forming independent Haiti’s nineteenth-century role. Its racial tension split a young Haiti in two nations, a gens de couleur (“free people of color”) republic to the north and a kingdom of black former slaves to the south, before President Boyer would work to unify Haiti under his ambitious ideal for Haiti’s future which would be tested in real time and in the years to come. This Haiti, “where Négritude rose for the first time and swore by its humanity” as the poet Aimé Césaire put it, was the first liberated black nation in a world of predatory imperial powers.² In the years after independence, I argue, Haiti sought to build upon its own interpretations of liberty, freedom, and equality thus forming a new Haitian identity as a republic of freedom for oppressed peoples whether on its own soil by legislating rights, opportunities, and escape from slavery or in lending its aid to freedom struggles overseas.

Delving deeper, to understand the complex processes of racialization and racial identity, the thesis will discuss Haiti’s civil war beginning shortly after it gained independence by studying the rule of Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe, Jean-Pierre Boyer’s presidency and

foreign policy initiatives creating the Haiti’s international positioning, and the combined internal and external struggles in the Faustin I Soulouque’s imperial regime and Fabre Geffrard’s restoration of the republic. Although scholarship on Haiti has exploded recently, the focus remains largely fixed on Haiti’s early and revolutionary years which presents an opportunity to reexamine its domestic and foreign self-fashioning. My research to date has drawn out persistent themes of racial conflict further expressed in competing democratic and imperial visions for Haiti’s identity contributed to its political upheaval. From its birth as a union between those of mixed and African descent to its present divisions between “métis” and “noirs,” Haiti’s long history represents an exemplary case of how racial constructs form and develop over time. In addition, the slaveholding world outside of Haiti, with its deeply-rooted fear of a thriving and active Haiti asserting itself in the black freedom struggle, sought to subvert its potential. While the internal struggle led observers to label Haiti a “failed state,” with further contextualization Haiti’s internal struggles fit into the larger context of post-emancipation in the 19th century and postcolonial states in the 20th century. Ultimately, this project aspires to read Haiti as a study of post-emancipation and postcolonial racial thinking and racial formation, and in so doing, elaborate the deep influence of racial influence over other aspects of life.

This thesis examines the critical period from 1807-1867 studying racial relationships between free people of color, former slaves, free African Americans, Dominican ethnic groups, and both colonial and European whites to track racial thinking and racial hierarchies in Haiti’s history contributing to its present. It begins, in Chapters 1 and 2, with Haiti’s civil war from 1807-1820, studying the roots of the conflict and analyzing the complex racial politics at work. The chapters serve to tell the story of the civil war and the years it was split in half through two perspectives. First, through Alexandre Pétion, a man of mixed heritage ruling the Republic of
Haiti in the South, and Henri Christophe, a black West African former slave ruling first the State of Haiti and then the Kingdom of Haiti in the North. Their differing perspectives and differing portrayals in the scholarship frame the conflict and its legacy. Historians’ interpretations of the rivalry between Christophe and Pétion, the assembly where Christophe’s power is diminished, and the resulting split of Haiti give excessive favor to Pétion and the mixed-race class. Davis fondly discusses this move by Pétion. He views Christophe as innately despotic and tyrannical partly attributed to his bond with Dessalines but mainly to his own belief that the freed blacks in Haiti were not fit to properly govern themselves. He states, “That the recently emancipated blacks were competent to exercise civil rights or had any conception of a democratic government, cannot for a moment be supposed.” He contrasts them to the mixed-race Haitians who, in his estimation, had some understanding of democracy given their upbringing by their French fathers and their educations in France. This perception is common in the literature describing this event and Christophe generally, giving preference to the better educated mixed-race class over a perceivably ill-equipped black class. Leyburn is one of the most cautious scholars in this case attempting a somewhat even-handed approach that also explores the ills of the mixed-race government. However, Leyburn also states that the cause for Pétion’s betrayal was a commonly held attitude amongst mixed-race Haitians that “they had had enough of rule by ignorant ex-slaves.” This kind of interpretation is common in what little scholarship exists of Haiti’s nineteenth century.

Furthermore, most scholarly commentary of Haiti’s nineteenth century, mainly written in earlier decades, often generates the sides of the conflict as a split between a black

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3 Davis, 100.
4 Leyburn, 43.
5 Leyburn, 42.
“ignorant/poorly educated, ex-slave, tyrannical” side that is inherently wrong and a mixed-race “better educated, affluent, democratic” side that is inherently right. Therefore, Christophe’s desire for similar power to Dessalines seems to come as a predisposition based on his background as a black former slave who lacked formal education and thus, like Dessalines and L’Ouverture before him, would be more inclined to “despotic tendencies.”\(^6\) Opposite of him, Pétion is portrayed as a champion of democracy and the hero of their rivalry due to having the correct background and so an inclination to these democratic values. I argue, however, that Pétion and Christophe’s successes, failures, and intentions should be analyzed on their own influenced by each man’s character instead of their racial status for a fairer judgment.

Chapter 3 focuses on Jean-Pierre Boyer’s presidency and foreign policy initiatives which produced a unified republic of both Haiti’s north and south as well as the emigration of African Americans and unification with Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic). It also discusses measures taken to assuage differences of these groups such as language with mixes of French and Creole amongst them and the influences of Spanish and English from those brought into Haiti. The final chapter studies the rise and fall of the imperial regime of Faustin Soulouque and the ushering in of a new republic under Fabre Geffrard contextualized by a global struggle for liberalism and independence in France and Latin and Spanish America. Both the third and fourth chapters employ themes of colonialism and imperialism to explain how Haiti’s experiences under colonial rule manifested in determining its role after independence. Additionally, this internal struggle factored into Haiti’s portrayal as a “failed state” yet by further exploration, Haiti’s internal racial struggle fits within the larger context of race in this century. Between Haiti’s birth as a union of those of mixed and African descent to its present divisions between

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\(^6\) Davis, 100.
“métis” and “noirs,” Haiti’s long history features an exemplary case how racial constructs form and develop over time.
Chapter 1
The President’s Ambition: Alexandre Pétion and the Republic of Haiti, 1807-1818

When Pétion was elected the first president of the Republic of Haiti in 1807, during a bitter power struggle with rival Henri Christophe, he took his forces to Haiti’s southern territory determined to make his republic a formidable example of freedom. Pétion, an advocate of democracy, sought to shape Haiti into a republic modeled on the espoused ideals of prior republics that he believed had not lived up to their goals. Understanding the opportunity Haiti had to position itself in the world, Pétion's domestic policies aimed to provide Haitian citizens with cause to feel pride and ownership in their country through agriculture. Its realization came with negative effects. He formulated his foreign policy with the goal of ensuring that Haiti would be both a place of refuge for those seeking freedom from their oppressors and also a place which aided freedom and independence struggles abroad. This, he reasoned, was part of Haiti's responsibility after having gained its own independence and serves as the reason he developed a close bond with Simon Bolivar of Venezuela. Although he worked towards these ideals, he still felt confined to the powers given to him by the presidency and opted later in his term to make himself President-for-Life and retained the right to choose his own successor from his own officials which demonstrates a contradiction in his ideas, however well-intended. Additionally, his compassion and even-handedness with both mixed-race and Black Haitians had an inadvertent effect of causing an even deeper rift between them as his fellow mixed-race Haitians...
considered him a traitor to his class causing eventual trouble. Pétion’s presidential legacy of compassionate demonstrates the best of ambitions though not without cost.

Pétion and Christophe’s differences start from the beginning. Pétion grew up as the son of a free mixed-race woman and a white French father. Though his skin wasn’t fair enough for his father to formally recognize him, he nonetheless grew up with prominence. Like many in Haiti with his background, his father sent him to France to be educated. In his case, his father sent him to a military academy in Paris. Afterwards, he served in and became an officer in the French Army including during the Haitian Revolution before Dessalines convinced him to switch sides. Henri Christophe, however, was West African and born as a slave. He served as a steward on a French warship before becoming one of the few hundred recruits led by the admiral of the French West Indian Fleet, Comte d’Estaing, to fight in the Battle of Savannah during the American Revolution and won many victories alongside Dessalines during the Haitian Revolution. After the assassination of Dessalines, Pétion and Christophe vied for power both viewing themselves as the proper leader for the young nation of Haiti to navigate its way after independence. Pétion, a strong believer in democracy and its ideals, felt determined to steer Haiti in the direction of democratic rule contrary to Christophe who desired absolute power much like Dessalines who was his predecessor and his closest ally. Believing Christophe to be power hungry, Pétion thought it was his duty to intervene. Therefore, he generated a plan to mitigate the consequences of Christophe’s rule even if he happened to succeed to the Presidency.

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11 Dalencour, 6.
13 Davis, 99.
14 Bellegarde, 168.
15 Davis, 101.
Utilizing a tactic first used by the Jacobins, Pétion insisted that the districts in the south and west of Haiti, previously unrepresented, also elect deputies to represent them in the assembly that would choose the next leader. Christophe’s supporters fought against this because they knew, as Pétion did, that these districts resented Christophe. Therefore, although Christophe was elected president in February 1807, Pétion was able to circumvent his power and held onto much of the political power. Pétion, with the help of his loyalists, stripped the presidency of much of its authority over governing the nation and instead gave the power to the legislature where he held the most sway. This included both matters of state and military authority. Christophe was so certain of his victory that he sent with his own loyalists a draft of a new constitution to the assembly. However, Pétion completely disregarded it and offered his own instead. Angered and fearing an attempt on his own life, Christophe escaped North with his forces and claimed it for his own while Pétion took the South and was elected president by the assembly in March of 1807. They governed this way for 3 years in the midst of a brutal civil war. Unable to come to mutual terms with one another, Pétion and Christophe signed a peace treaty in 1810 which divided Haiti between them both permanently. Finally holding the power he desired, Pétion then decided to put his plans into action in order to guide Haiti into his ideal republic.

Pétion had three major policies, two domestic and one foreign, to ensure Haiti’s success after the Revolution. His domestic policies involved an overhaul of the agricultural system and the establishment of public education. His foreign policy meant to aid and fostering connections to other revolutionaries and independence struggles. In terms of his domestic policy, Dantes Bellegarde, in his article “Alexandre Pétion: The Founder of Rural Democracy,” describes the

16 Davis, 101.
17 Dalencour, 9.
18 Bellegarde, 168.
circumstances quite differently. Bellegarde notes Pétion devised a domestic policy established under a rural democracy platform that made Haitians owners and caretakers of their own piece of land. He explains that by giving Haitian citizens a portion of their own land to tend to and cultivate that this would, therefore, provide them a sense of pride and connection to the land and thus Haiti as a whole. This would generate national pride by linking it to every Haitian citizen’s notion of civil responsibility to their land. Bellegarde further explains that by providing land to the common citizen to cultivate also provided a way out of the “world depression” of the time which was a problem not yet solved by America or European nations. As such, due to Pétion’s policy which he then made law in 1809 and 1814, Haiti took the first and boldest step to solving this agrarian crisis long before its contemporaries. In doing so, Haiti takes center stage at counteracting a global crisis and paving the way forward for others to emulate many years later. diversified the ability for many more citizens to hold land and property which offered a significant difference to the past.

However, this endeavor did not go as well as planned. Selden Rodman in Haiti: The Black Republic explains that “The paradox of Alexandre Pétion's place in history is that he was at once Haiti's best-loved ruler and the architect of her economic ruin.” He goes on to explain his domestic policy as laissez-faire and that despite his doubts in the goodwill of others, he nevertheless made strides to steady the balance between Black and mixed-race Haitians. This had the adverse effect of causing irreparable damage to the economy. Rodman states:

He began by redressing the balance in favor of the Mulattoes of the South, giving them subsidies when the coffee crop was poor, bolstering their social position. Next, he abolished Toussaint's law prohibiting the holding of plantations of less than a minimum acreage. Then he began giving away the State lands: fifteen acres to every soldier in the

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19 Bellegarde, 168.
20 Bellegarde, 170.
21 Rodman, Selden. Haiti: The Black Republic; the complete story and guide. 1954.
army. Finally, most of the remaining public domain was either parceled out by sale or made available for squatting. The immediate result of this "democratization" of the land was that a peasant class came into existence. Growing sugar on a few acres is not profitable; growing vegetables is a necessity. Coffee became the major export crop, but whereas the French had pruned, fertilized and grafted their bushes, nature (as now) was allowed to take its course. Pétion, who had taken over a Haiti rich and united, left it divided and poor.22

The common interpretation of this circumstance in narratives of Haiti, particularly after Independence, determined that former slaves and people of African descent could not properly govern themselves. On the one hand, Pétion managed to dissolve many of the advantages that separated black and mixed-race Haitians economically. On the other hand, that resulted in a destabilized economy while Christophe’s kingdom thrived despite embodying an undemocratic system. Pétion’s ambition in this instance makes the earnest attempt to address an issue yet broadly addressed in the world, much less solved. He makes a sincere effort to eliminate the tension between those under his rule and to guarantee freedom and equality to his people.

Scholars, like Rodman and James G. Leyburn in The Haitian People often emphasize this failure as an almost inevitable consequence of an inability or an unpreparedness for ruling the country. H. P. Davis in his book Black Democracy: The Story of Haiti states:

“It was soon demonstrated that his ideas were utopian and unfitted to the time and to the people, who were neither by inclination nor by training ready for self-government. Only sixteen years before the establishment of the Republic, a vast majority of its citizens had lived in abject slavery. And the interval between the first revolt of the slaves and the first election of Pétion to the presidency had been marked by a series of conflicts, involving unspeakable crimes against civilization, during which opportunities for the inculcation of civic virtues or for lessons in self-government.”23

While Haiti suffered numerous troubles as it charted its own course in self-governance, its problems were not extraordinary in this regard with similar power struggles throughout Europe including its former colonizer, France, before and after Napoleon. Also, the schools that Pétion

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22 Rodman, 18-19.
23 Davis, 108.
built successfully educated the intellectual elite he hoped to create and fostered a wealth of new literature produced by Haiti’s citizens in the coming decades after Pétion’s rule. Pétion’s implemented ideas to develop Haiti, while not necessarily met with the anticipated success he imagined during his own lifetime, managed to promote a vibrant and thriving Haiti in the years after his death.

In addition to his agricultural plans, he also devised a plan for education in Haiti which would allow for the development of a Haitian intellectual elite. In the capital city at Port-au-Prince, he commissioned that a lycée for boys and a secondary education school for girls built and enshrined a free, public education in the Constitution in 1816. This was the beginning of a new era after Independence that would see to it that the future of Haiti required a well-versed and educated a group of citizens. This also formed the basis for public education in Haiti which made them accessible to all citizens. Bellegarde remarks that “He liked to repeat that education ‘raises man to the dignity of his being.’ And, since, as Descartes said, ‘all our dignity is in our thought,’ Pétion believed that every human being, consequently every Haitian, man or woman, had a right to intellectual development - a belief which implied for him universal education.” The foundation of a cultured and educated elite was central to establishing a new culture in Haiti after Independence. Pétion understood just how crucial it was to establish this intellectual elite as it was an unfortunately common belief that people of African descent were incapable of learning, much less to the extent to improve and govern themselves. He, instead, believed that providing education in Haiti would not only stand as a testament to the capabilities of people of African descent in Haiti but also throughout the world. Though he, unfortunately, died before he could

25 Bellegarde, 172.
see the effects of this project take full form, the establishment of Haiti’s culture developed out of his work. Throughout the nineteenth century, Haiti’s intellectuals would thrive and create works of literature and philosophy that would also grow to prominence in the Francophone and Atlantic Worlds.\textsuperscript{26} He reasoned that a proper education was the key to defeating slavery and achieving Independence for oppressed people the world over, and he saw it as his mission to begin that work in Haiti.\textsuperscript{27}

Furthermore, Pétion determined that his foreign policy would be to encourage and aid struggles for freedom abroad to help secure Haiti’s own sovereignty as well as continue the fight for independence and the abolition of slavery.\textsuperscript{28} Haiti’s revolution and achievement of independence stoked fear for other slaveholding nations and nations benefitting from slavery and the slave trade. Pétion understood this and because Haiti was a product of a long, enduring fight for freedom built on many uprisings prior, Pétion thought it imperative to aid others however he could. The main example of this was his close bond with Simón Bolívar of Venezuela. During Bolívar’s exile from Venezuela, Pétion welcomed him in as an honored guest and provided him with protection and counseled him on his plans for when he would return to Venezuela to push for its independence. Pétion also provided as much aid to Bolívar as he could manage including “gun powder, rifles, cartridges and many other provisions” to ensure the best possible odds for Bolívar and his people to succeed.\textsuperscript{29}

The correspondences between Pétion and Bolívar further elaborate their bond and their mutual ideals. In a series of letters collected by Porfirio Mamami between the two leaders and

\textsuperscript{27} Bellegarde, 173.
\textsuperscript{28} Bellegarde, 173.
\textsuperscript{29} Davis, 107-108.
their generals from 1815-1823, they express their shared ideals and exchange potential plans and resources for Bolívar to free Venezuela and then expand his campaign across the whole of South America. In one such letter from Bolívar to Pétion, Bolívar mentions that he shares in-kind Pétion’s desire for a “common homeland” and he expresses his own earnest desire to live up to the confidence that Pétion invests in him when he wins over Venezuela. Pétion responds with reaffirming that confidence, and while he notes to Bolívar not to use his name in his plans so as to not bring any turmoil or threat to Haiti, he reestablishes his commitment to their cause.

The bond between Bolívar and Pétion was a complicated, but sincere one. Davis further explains that “Pétion was moved to this dangerous and generous action by his sincere desire to assist in freeing the slaves of South America, and Bolivar promised to abolish slavery in all provinces he might liberate.” Thus, building on the commonality between their mutual circumstances in overthrowing their colonial oppressors and their share in the global resistance for independence. This was not an easy thing for Pétion to agree to as he could have very well invited the Spanish to Haiti’s front door and risked Haiti’s safety in the process by harboring Bolívar. However, Pétion held firm and when Bolívar eventually returned to Venezuela and won its independence, he expressed his gratitude to Pétion for his help to him. Davis notes that “After freeing Venezuela, Bolivar sent Pétion a beautiful gold sword, in gratitude to ‘the author of liberties.’” A testament to Pétion helping to lead the charge for Haiti to become a place of welcome for the oppressed willing to aid where it can as instead of only a symbol of potential accomplishment.

30 Mamami, 133.
31 Mamami, 136.
32 Mamami, 170.
33 Davis, 108.
34 Davis, 108.
Despite Pétion’s successes and intentions, he nevertheless found the office of President too restricting. Although he was re-elected to the presidency in March 1811 and March 1815, he desired a much more permanent power. So, in the Constitution of 1816 which established free, public education and also gave some power to the legislature by establishing a senate and a chamber of duties, he also pressed to have himself as President-for-Life. He succeeded and gained the authority to nominate his own successor to the Senate for election. Bellegarde provides an impartial observation from an Englishman named Mark B. Bird at the time, saying "However pure and honest the motives may have been which led to the adoption of this principle, the wisdom of such a measure causes grave doubts.” Leyburn suggests that Pétion’s reasons for this change were that he wished to guarantee the stability of the country and understanding the general population’s love and trust in him, elite members of the mixed-race class notwithstanding, Pétion thought that he and his successor would be in the country’s best interest. Also, that this increase in power would further his goals of promoting policies to the benefit of Haiti.³⁵ Bird, through Bellegarde, continues “A president elected for a short term would have served as a safety valve by which might have escaped the extreme agitation of those fired by the legitimate ambition to reach this coveted post of honor. One may well question the wisdom of suppressing such a hope. Also, from that moment, there was always the fear that revolution might burst forth.”³⁶ Though Pétion managed to avoid this himself, after his death when Jean-Pierre Boyer succeeded him and also took up a life term, he was continually pressured by the mixed-race class with the threat of revolution against him. Others in power after him would also face the same threat. In 1818, in the midst of increasing economic and political

³⁵ Leyburn, 58.
pressure after the economy had grown stagnant, he suffered a devastating illness and died not long after.

Pétion’s domestic and foreign policies exemplify high-minded ambition and serve as the foundation for the plans that future presidents, including Boyer his successor, would later employ during their presidencies and stand out as demonstrations to the ideals of what Haiti, the new republic built by people of color, could become. While his agricultural plan resulted in failure and unintended consequences, it was an earnest attempt at an honest restructuring of land ownership in order to benefit the poorer class. This is especially significant because it aimed to eliminate the privileges and inequality in favor of mixed-race Haitians over black, former slaves. Despite its lack of success financially, it serves as an example for potential efforts at ending holdovers from slavery. Pétion’s education plan brought about the birth of an intellectual elite in Haiti though Pétion did not live to see it. They produced an abundance of works which aided in and promoted developing the foundations of Haiti’s culture, traditions, and national pride mainly rooted in the great accomplishment of Haiti’s revolution. His foreign policy insisting that Haiti had a responsibility to actively assist other movements and nations fighting against slavery and for independence became a defining goal for Haiti during its nineteenth century. Pétion called Papa Bon-Coeur (Father Good-Heart), and against the odds, had won the future of the nation.37

37 Bellegarde, 173.
Chapter 2
The King’s Justice: Henri Christophe and the State and the Kingdom of Haiti, 1807-1820

The first lieutenant to Dessalines and a war hero in his own right, Henri Christophe seemed poised to replace Dessalines after his assassination to become the president and leading general in Haiti. Christophe’s plans for Haiti, though they included the same level of power that had belonged to Dessalines, sought to push the new nation into prominence. Christophe understood Haiti’s potential in the world after its revolution as Pétion did. For his own domestic policies, he formulated a harsh yet successful plan for Haiti’s economy and agricultural status which retained the system held by his predecessors, Dessalines and L’Ouverture, that bound people to the land while providing them with some trappings of freedom.  

He also built schools providing education to the youth under his rule. He also had a mind for international affairs, and so through his foreign policy measures he managed to keep a close relationship with Great Britain, friendly ties to Germany and Russia, and careful connections to France. These negotiations helped to establish Haiti’s presence on the global stage as an essential actor shaping the world around it. Although he accomplished these feats and lead a thriving Northern Haiti because of it, he was not without fault. After declaring himself king and establishing a line of succession beginning with his eldest son as heir, he built several palaces and architectural structures which, despite their beauty, caused financial trouble and angered his subjects since they saw these buildings as built for Christophe to celebrate himself. This combined with his brutal methods of governing spelled disaster for him. Nonetheless, for his failures and successes, Christophe’s lasting imprint on Haiti looms large.

38 Rodman, 17.
39 Bellegarde, 170.
40 Griggs and Prator, 92.
41 Rodman, 18.
As previously mentioned, Christophe and Pétion’s circumstances growing up were different and they did not meet on common ground until they both became soldiers in the military. Even then, they fought opposite one another until Pétion decided to join the revolutionary cause. Furthermore, while Pétion seemed to inherit much of the good will from his fellow mixed-race counterparts, Christophe, through work, brought blacks and whites to his side. Though he lacked the formal education of Pétion, he insisted that his aids read to him often and thereby educated him this way. Additionally, he had plenty of charisma also had a handsome and commanding presence. Where Pétion emphasized good-naturedness, kindness, and compassion, Christophe preferred to lead his people with an iron fist and was unafraid of trouble. Scholars argue over the circumstances that lead to Dessalines assassination. Leyburn, for example, suggests that he may have been assassinated while staying with Pétion. Many agree, however, that both Christophe and Pétion had a hand in his assassination as they believed him growing unfit as leader. After they accomplished the assassination, though, the power struggle between the came on fast and bitter. Christophe was the only surviving general who had served under Dessalines, and as his second-in-command, it was all but certain that he would rule after him. Pétion thought him to be power-hungry, yet after serving so close to Dessalines and having the favor of most of the delegates in the assembly, his confidence was well-founded until Pétion swept the presidency out from under him.

Christophe’s confidence that he would succeed Dessalines appeared well-founded. With the fervent support of the clear majority of the delegates sent to the assembly to cast their votes

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42 Leyburn, 53.
43 Davis, 101.
44 Bellegarde, 168.
for the new leader to succeed Dessalines, Christophe instead decided to remain at his home in the Valley of the Artibonite and send his delegates to the meeting instead with his draft of the new constitution. Pétion, then, surprised Christophe’s delegates with his insistence of including the southern and western districts which were hostile to Christophe in order to mitigate Christophe’s advantage. Pétion knew he could not challenge Christophe too openly for fear of retaliation, and so resorted to a much more underhanded tactic to undermine Christophe. Christophe could have the presidency, he reasoned, but he would take away as much of its power and authority as he could before Christophe could assume the office. Pétion’s changes to the constitution would make the president a mere figure-head, a far cry from the substantive rule that Christophe had hoped to gain.⁴⁵ Pétion and his supporters knew that Christophe would be outraged by this attack on his power. Because of this betrayal, Christophe chose to remain in the North and claim it as his own leaving Port-au-Prince and the remainder of the South to Pétion. Though he did also seek power for his own ambitions, his proximity to the highest seat of power and his own popularity among those who had a say in choosing the next leader are more straightforward reasons. Christophe, defiant yet saddened, resented this for the remainder of his life and felt that his hopes for Haiti would never reach the height he believed they could have with half of his country taken from him.⁴⁶ After a few years of limiting democratic rule of the State of Haiti and war with Pétion resulting in a peace treaty, in 1810 Christophe declared himself king, renamed the State to the Kingdom of Haiti, and established a hereditary monarchy by naming his son as prince and heir.

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⁴⁵ Davis, 99.
⁴⁶ Griggs and Prator, 100.
Christophe’s policies, both foreign and domestic, aimed to strengthen Haiti from root to stem by establishing the economy and forming international alliances while ensuring that none would soon forget that he was responsible for Haiti’s prominence. Domestically, he emphasized and made moderate reforms to the agricultural system as a means to promote a flourishing economy. He didn’t choose to reside in the Northern part of Haiti at random. As his home, he was well-aware that the North afforded the most fertile land in the country, especially his property in the Artibonite, and so his retreat there after Pétion took over was a clever response in the power play between them. His agriculture plan was the same as his predecessors. As Rodman explains:

“Christophe's accomplishments in the early years of his rule solid. Without changing the over-all system of state lands and policed labor inaugurated by Toussaint and Dessalines, he allowed tenant-proprietors to make a profit after paying one-fourth of their annual crop yield to the royal treasury and one-fourth in wages. Laborers were permitted Saturday afternoons and Sundays off, but were not permitted to leave their place of work or change occupation...Commerce was encouraged, and foreign traders were given every protection. A sound currency was established. The wealth of Saint-Domingue returned briefly; for when Christophe died no less than $6,000,000 worth of his splendid silver coins found their way back into Boyer's half-empty treasury.”

In Christophe’s favor, his plan brought about a prosperous economy that could rival its former status as a colony under France’s rule. The Northern economy was thriving much more so than that of the South as it was always on the brink of collapse throughout the whole of Pétion’s term and leading into that of his successor, Boyer, when he assumed the presidency after him. On the other hand, however, this type of governance by Christophe was akin to that of English serfdom. The people lacked freedom and, not unlike their lives as slaves, they were bound to the lands where they worked. Christophe insisted on working them as hard as he could imagine. In his estimation, this was the best way to guarantee that his country would thrive and with the

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47 Leyburn, 43
48 Rodman, 17.
profits made, he had reason to believe as much. However, this began to fuel quiet resentment of Christophe amongst his own people and it worried him throughout the remainder of his life if one or more of them would see fit to kill him. He frequently insisted that he had to govern this way knowing that Haiti had no shortage of potential threats and so needed to maintain its economic status by any means necessary.⁴⁹ A strong economy was essential to an independent and protected Haiti.

Christophe also included plans for education and the caretaking of the people. In terms of his economic policy, Rodman continues, “Education, under the latest English system, was made compulsory. Books were printed, and beautiful coins issued.”⁵⁰ In addition to providing Haiti with financial security, Christophe also sought to promote the general wellbeing of his people and the country. He promoted an education system by building several schools throughout Northern Haiti believing, like Pétion, that an intellectual and educated youth was the way forward to help create and promote a Haitian culture. He also created the Code Henri which his effort to establish a legal system, laying out his policies for civil rights, the military and more. Christophe governed Haiti with a firm hand to an extent that guided him into trouble. Nevertheless, his way of governing accommodated for many of the needs of his people beyond what was previously thought possible. His plans also did a surprisingly better job at providing economic and financial stability than Pétion’s government. Leyburn, sharing the bewilderment that Christophe managed to become so successful, characterizes Christophe’s rule as such, “If the blacks were undemocratic, at least they had experience back of the system they selected for

⁵⁰ Rodman, 17.
administering the land: their methods worked.” His rule with an iron fist also served to provide Haiti with the strong economic backbone it needed in the years to come.

When it came to international affairs, Christophe presented a warm welcome to friendly, potential allies and a stern disposition to any who would threaten Haiti’s safety with none more on the receiving end of each side of him than Great Britain and France. Christophe fostered bonds with English abolitionists William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, communicating with each of them in a different series of letters. His main goal was for Great Britain to formally recognize Haiti as independent, and while Clarkson explained that he should not manage this due to fear that France would retaliate against them, Clarkson did reassure Christophe that Britain would help in any other ways it could. For one of the ways that they aided Haiti, English abolitionists put immense pressure on the French to abolish the slave trade. Christophe writes to Clarkson describing it as such. “The British Nation has long since earned a right to the gratitude of all Haitians,” said Christophe. “What it has just done, when it used its influence to obtain of France the abolition of the infamous slave trade, gives admiration and thankfulness. We are grateful also for the share which Their Majesties, the Emperor of Russia, and the Sovereign of Germany, had in the abolition of the trade.” Throughout the course of their letters to one another, Christophe and Clarkson develop an intense bond dedicated to the shared cause of global abolition of slavery. Through Clarkson, Christophe also had Britain’s assurance that Britain would inform him of any potential threats, most notably from France.

Britain did, in fact, send warning to Haiti when France decided to retake Haiti in 1814 after the removal of Napoleon Bonaparte and the beginning of Louis XVIII’s reign. Former

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51 Leyburn, 60.
52 Griggs and Prator, 92.
colonists in France convinced Louis XVIII that France could retake Haiti given its weakened state, split in half and governed by two leaders resentful of one another, and also that because Haiti was in this state it would welcome France back with open arms. The former colonists could not be more wrong. Despite the many differences and heated rivalry between Christophe and Pétion, both rulers resolved that France would never again be able to reclaim Haiti for itself no matter how friendly they appeared to be now. Davis, mincing no words, sums up the event and the mutual feelings from Christophe or Pétion like this:

“It is almost incredible that anyone of intelligence could have supposed that either Christophe or Pétion would for a moment entertain a proposal to submit again to French rule. And the absurdity of such expectations was quickly demonstrated by the reply of each leader to interrogations from France. Christophe at once stated that the King of Haiti would treat with France only as one independent power with another; and Pétion announced that on the first appearance of a hostile force he would set fire to all the buildings in the cities and destroy everything that could not be removed to the mountains.”

Christophe and Pétion were both fully aware of the threat that France posed to Haiti. France claimed that it would resume authority over Haiti as it would rule over a free people, but neither of the two leaders bought it and ready arms, ships, and positions to stave off any invasion that could come their way. Regardless of their differences in other aspects, both leaders knew how much was at stake and determined it better to set aside their differences in this instant, if nothing more, than to risk France reclaiming the country. Christophe explains as much in a letter to Clarkson from 1816. “We shall never again be deceived by the French Government, for we know that so long as it is influenced by the ex-colonists, it can never entertain just notions concerning us; and even if it should in appearance agree to a few concessions, it would only be for the purpose of deceiving us more thoroughly.” France called off its planned invasion

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53 Davis, 107.
54 Griggs and Prator, 101.
realizing that such a fight would not work in their favor, and so Haiti was once again strong and protected.

Finally, one of Christophe’s biggest goals was to generate a culture in Haiti after independence and his ideas for several new pieces of architecture, intended to symbolize this establishment of culture, proved a blessing and a curse. According to Bellegarde, he was responsible for building public roads and bridges and several large palaces. However, his Sans-Souci palace and the Citadelle that gained the most notoriety. Sans-Souci, which translates to “carefree” from the French, was a palace so grand that it rivaled Versailles and any other palace in Europe. Complete with several large rooms, floors of mahogany patterned with mosaic, fully and lavishly furnished, with gorgeous baths and gardens throughout the property, Sans-Souci was a wonder to behold. Rodman further elaborates by explaining that “Consciously or not, they were conceived as symbols of the first Negro state’s ability to compete in grandeur and ingenuity with the most enduring memorials of the white race. The shape these monuments took corresponded accurately with the two phases of Christophe’s rule. Sans Souci, a magnificent palace of brick and mortar back of Milot, symbolized the early effort of the benevolent arch to provide primitive Haiti with a lasting emblem of cultural leisure and good living.” Sans-Souci was Christophe’s chosen royal palace and he wanted it to become an embodiment of the luxury and culture that he hoped to begin in Haiti. While it was an over-the-top and expensive project requiring heavy labor from many Haitians, Christophe explained that such symbols are the images that last in a people’s culture. He intended it to fill Haitians with a sense of pride and to

55 Davis, 111.
56 Rodman, 18.
create a memory of itself at its height. He meant it to be a testament to the everyone of who Haitians were and what they aspired to become in the world.\textsuperscript{57}

Even with his earnest ambitions for Haiti and its culture and the powerful statement made by these monuments, they would also serve as a catalyst for his eventual downfall. Christophe said in his defense of building the palace that he “would instill that national pride in Haiti even if it means breaking every back in my kingdom.”\textsuperscript{58} He lived up to these words, and as he forced his people to work tirelessly to build these projects, their resentment towards him grew into fervent anger at their mistreatment. The final straw was the Citadelle. Like the palace of Sans-Souci, the Citadelle was also magnificent in every way conceivable, perhaps even more so. The people built it on a mountain and it stood as if a beacon for all to see. A formidable stronghold in the event of an invasion, the Citadelle towered above any and everything nearby.\textsuperscript{59} For all of its splendor, however, more than twenty thousand people died in its construction as Christophe pushed for the Citadelle’s completion because he feared a possible threat from the French. Rodman explains, “the Citadelle, on a peak of the range behind it, characterized the tyrant into whom Christophe grew. Threatening, useless, inaccessible, conceived in needless fear and militarily absurd, it was constructed at untold cost of toil, tears and blood. The Citadelle became, in 1820, the appropriate immediate cause of Christophe’s overthrow, suicide, and ignominious burial.”\textsuperscript{60} With the death of his rival, Pétion, in 1818, the rise of his successor, Boyer, having the full and unquestioned support of the Republic, and the disaster due to the construction of the Citadelle, Christophe saw the writing on the wall for his rule. He no longer had the full support

\textsuperscript{57} Vandercook, 54.  
\textsuperscript{58} Vandercook, 54.  
\textsuperscript{59} Davis, 111.  
\textsuperscript{60} Rodman, 18.
of the people as many fled South or generally expressed a warm disposition to Boyer. In 1820, as even his closest loyalists began to turn on him, he took to one of his private rooms in Sans-Souci and took his own life.

Henri Christophe’s policies intended to stabilize and protect Haiti while promoting a thriving and active culture by any means that he considered necessary to accomplishing his goals believing that the ends would justify his means. He was willing to carry over the same agricultural system of a quasi-serfdom utilized by his predecessors, though his people were former slaves who had to endure the pain of such work despite their freedom, as long as it meant that Haiti would have a lucrative financial status. For Christophe, their economic security was paramount, no matter the personal, human cost. He decided on a firm foreign policy that sought to promote Haiti’s presence in the world and kept a welcoming spirit to all potential allies while keeping a strict approach to any who might threaten Haiti’s safety and independence. In doing so, he insisted that Haiti would always be ready for a potential fight. Christophe made it his mission to usher in what he thought was the best way to create a culture behind which all of Haiti could and would unify through education and physical, national symbols of grandeur and pride. He was willing to sacrifice thousands of lives for these projects if it meant that the monuments would last as a testament to Haiti and his own perceived greatness. His personal glory was a part of his ambitions, but above all he genuinely aspired to do what he thought was in Haiti’s best interests using what he knew. Brutal and commanding, yet clever and charismatic, the king’s justice is not found in denying what he was, but in analyzing him in his totality. Though he did not win Haiti’s future, he ensured he would remain a part of it.
Chapter 3
A Nation of Our Own: Boyer’s Foreign Policy and Haiti’s International Resistance, 1818-1835

With the eyes of the world focused on Haiti after its victory in the Revolution and a tumultuous Civil War splitting the young nation in half, how it progressed forward to secure its freedom and position itself globally after this point was of critical importance. Jean-Pierre Boyer, upon the death of his predecessor President Alexandre Pétion, rose to the presidency of the Republic of Haiti in 1818 and began resistance initiatives which would include said annexation of Santo Domingo, the emigration of African Americans to Haiti, and sponsoring resistance in other nations of similar background to its own. Of dire importance to Boyer was to have Haiti’s independence recognized by other nations, especially France and the United States, in such a way that would not undermine their efforts of resistance in the Atlantic.\(^1\) The annexation, though ill-fated, would ensure that slavery would become and remain abolished throughout the island of Hispaniola. The emigration project of bringing African Americans into Haiti and parts of Santo Domingo to settle is well-understood for its impact on African American intellectual thought, however also aiding in promoting Haiti’s Western influence.\(^2\) Furthermore, Boyer also fostered relations of resistance elsewhere with nations like Greece and Jamaica.\(^3\) This built a network of ties for Haiti to expand its influence and effect change on a global scale. Throughout his tenure, Boyer developed and promoted strategic efforts of resistance that would protect


Haiti’s independence in a world hostile to its existence and ready to take advantage of even the slightest hint of weakness or vulnerability. The commitment to and engagement in these actions carved out a significant place for Haiti. Boyer’s foreign policy measures of resistance assert Haiti’s active presence in the Atlantic World and began the construction of Haiti’s role as the second republic in the Western hemisphere.

**Delayed but Not Denied: Recognition and Resistance**

The backhanded olive branch by France of appearing to concede Haiti’s independence in 1825 by King Charles X instead worked in Haiti’s favor for its standing in the Atlantic. Jacques Nicolas Léger speaks to this in *Haiti: Her History, and Her Detractors*. Léger mentions the connection in a statement that Haiti still managed to benefit in its pursuit of recognition with nations such as Great Britain recognizing its independence and the Nordic nations of Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark in various phases of relations to the same effect. Although France’s initial proposal of accepting Haiti’s independence was an insult to Haiti, it still managed to bring about the realization of the goal of securing independence. Julia Gaffield complicates this, however, as she explains in the conclusion of *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World: Recognition After Revolution*. She cautions that although there is good to glean from this recognition, due to the “holdout” from the United States this acceptance came with limits for Haiti. Recognition at this point came more so out of economic interests that diplomatic good will. She further draws out that diplomatic recognition would serve far better for Haiti to make its full presence in the Atlantic World. This is undoubtedly true. Nevertheless, the

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65 Léger, 186-188.
67 Gaffield, 186.
accomplishment on Haiti’s part to even obtain and sustain this recognition and assert its place in
the Atlantic World to this extent in the face of almost devastating opposition warrants judgment
as a success.

Haiti’s negotiations with Russia bears this justification out in important context. Haitian
historian Louis E. Elie records the matters of the mission to Russia in his *Le Président Boyer et
l’Empereur de Russie Alexandre Ier: Une mission diplomatique à Saint-Pétersbourg en 1821*.
On May 5th, 1821, President Boyer sent a diplomat to meet with the Russian Czar Alexander I.
Of important note, he chose General Jacques Boyé who once served under General Charles
Leclerc, Napoleon’s brother-in-law and the officer he sent into Haiti to squash its revolt. Boyé
and Boyer developed a close relationship both for Boyé’s affection for people of color and for
his advocating of Boyer to free him from prison. Boyer entrusted Boyé to handle the task of
securing a relationship between Haiti and Russia, well-understanding that Boyé would fight to
the best of his ability to handle the task at hand. This judgment was well-placed as Boyé would
use every connection at his disposal to see to it that Haiti had an audience to present their case
for recognition of its independence in Europe.

The first attempt would be to make its case in Brussels which would result in favor as
relations with France still held important sway over any potential negotiations with Haiti.
Nevertheless, Boyé would not give up the attempt and instead would seek an audience with
Alexander I. Although at first reluctant to come between France and Haiti in their contention,
Alexander I would, however, agree to setup a trading relationship with Haiti just as other nations
had done. In part because of the goods that Boyé had offered would be of great benefit to his
people, but also, as he explained in a quote relayed from the Count de La Ferronays by Elie,

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68 Elie, Louis E. *Le président Boyer et l’empereur de Russie Alexandre Ier: Une mission diplomatique à Saint-
France and Haiti are two countries predestined to come into existence, and as a signatory to the Treaty of Paris concluded between the four great powers of Europe, I cannot accept what has already been decided. However, I will make great efforts to arrive at the great result desired by the President Boyer.”69 He goes on, "In the conversation I had with the Emperor today, His Majesty spoke to me a long time of Santo Domingo, he thinks that the only party that France can take is that of recognizing the Independence of Haiti.”70 This action by Russia further granted Haiti’s recognition in the Atlantic, but more than that it signifies that Haiti holds justification for Haiti to pursue recognition of its independence and to continue to resist efforts to undermine that pursuit.

There are, however, lessons in failure. The Russian mission had every opportunity to fail on many occasions, and it is yet to good fortune that Boyé saw it through to the end. Contrarily, Boyer’s attempt to ensure its relationship with the Gran Colombia would not be as successful. In 1826 Simon Bolívar, the leader of the Gran Colombia which was a collection of young Latin American republics united together in their fight against Spain, convened together the Congress of Panama. This great occasion, which boasted over a dozen young nations seeking to secure for themselves standing and trade relations after their newfound freedom, saw fit to leave out Haiti from the meeting without even as much as an invitation. Earlier in 1815, Alexandre Pétion, Boyer’s predecessor, had welcomed Bolívar into Haiti to help him as he sought refuge and a place to reinvigorate his fight for his native Venezuela against Spain. John Edward Baur in Mulatto Machiavelli, Jean Pierre Boyer, and The Haiti of His Day argues that this may have been out of spite for Boyer’s annexation of Santo Domingo when it was in talks to become part

69 Elie, 26.
70 Elie, 28.
of the Gran Colombia. He states that as opposed to remembering this favor in 1815, “The Liberator had remembered 1822 better, the year Boyer had conquered Spanish Santo Domingo as it was about to join Bolivar’s Gran Colombia!”  All the same, while Haiti may not have been present physically, it was however the topic of much discussion surrounding the meeting.

Frances L. Reinhold in *New Research on the First Pan-American Congress Held at Panama in 1826* comments on objection by white nations to Haiti promoting itself as a black republic on the same level as that of white ones. This, perhaps, also serves as a reason for the decline of sending an invitation to Haiti inviting them to the Congress. An invitation to Haiti to a meeting of this nature provides it a status that might compromise the interests of the other Latin American nations and their negotiations with Europe. Whether in success or failure, Haiti became an entity that required notice. In demanding acceptance of its independence in every peaceable way possible, Boyer ensured that whether in opposition to or in support of Haiti, it would require everyone take a position.

**A Free and Independent Nation: The Emigration and Unification Projects**

The impact of the Haitian Revolution on African diasporic intellectual thought and its legacy in communities of African Americans who remained in America cannot be overstated. Sara Fanning’s “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans” argues that after the Haitian Revolution, there had long persisted a deeply-rooted interest on the part of African Americans in Haiti. The emigration that Boyer would start in 1826 would be part of a long and complicated struggle for African Americans seeking refuge from the United States in

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72 Baur, 329.

Haiti.\textsuperscript{74} Scholars in Maurice Johnson and Jacqueline Baker’s \textit{African Americans and the Haitian Revolution} further provide numerous studies on this impact, detailing how it lingered in the minds of African Americans as a source of hope and promise for their own potential future. \textsuperscript{75} One such example is that of Leslie Alexander’s “The Black Republic: The Influence of the Haitian Revolution on Black Political Consciousness, 1816-1862” which offers an account both the revolution’s and the emigration project’s influence on black politics. She argues that after taking hold of the minds of African Americans as an ideal escape from the contention they encountered in the United States, the ideal grew bitter when many African Americans returned to the United States from Haiti. \textsuperscript{76} These two works contrast one another splitting on the importance of the fact that the emigration would prove unproductive with Fanning opting to note that as little as possible and Alexander making it center focus. Despite its failure, though, it accomplished a great deal in terms of setting an example for what could be possible for a black republic. This idea meant a world of difference to the ideals of potential in the imaginations of the rest of the African Diaspora. Though it failed, its existence was not all for naught in why it matters.

In revisiting the emigration of African Americans, it is imperative to view it in conjunction with the unification of Hispaniola. Present scholarship of the unification remarks of it in the context of its failures as a project. Patrick Bryan’s \textit{The Haitian Revolution and Its Effects}, for example, examines it for its many points of opposition from the Dominicans such as white, slave owning Dominicans who saw it “as ‘Africanizing’ the province of Santo Domingo”

while already harboring resentment for Boyer for abolishing slavery and granting land to freed
slaves throughout the territory. Furthermore, Bryan notes the anger of Dominicans opposed to
forced to help Haiti pay off its foreign debts as they reasoned that it had not been a part of the
accumulation of these debts in the first place. 77 Selden Rodman echoes the sentiment in Haiti:
The Black Republic. 78 Indeed, he portrays the end of the annexation as inevitable for two crucial
reasons. First, that the Code Rurale which Boyer attempted to enforce in aiming to bring about,
if not slavery, but forced labor, was bound to fail once the Haitians and Dominicans had had a
taste of freedom. 79 Ignoring such a law was easy then. Second, Rodman indicates that in gaining
the recognition of independence from France at tremendous financial expense. As Bryan
mentioned, Boyer forced Dominicans to share the cost as well. 80 In this regard, the unification
was a failure, and for the hostile treatment of both Haitians and Dominicans it is not without due
criticism.

Both the emigration of African Americans into Haiti and the unification of the whole of
the island of Hispaniola were projects undertaken with the same final goal in mind. They both
would enforce the ideal of a realized republic, one which would live up to ideals of liberty,
equality, and independence. Boyer’s belief in the “indivisibility” of the island of Hispaniola first
prompted his invasion into the eastern side of the island in 1822. 81 In his estimation, it was up to
him to unite them both under his own rule which also served as his explanation for rejecting the
treaty put forth, in an ironic turn of events, to acknowledge the sovereignty of the newly
independent Santo Domingo. His belief was not unfounded, however, as at first many of the

78 Rodman, Selden. Haiti: The Black Republic; the complete story and guide, 1954.
80 Rodman, 20.
81 Logan, Rayford Whittingham. Haiti and the Dominican Republic. London: issued under the auspices of the Royal
Dominicans had wished to be formally integrated with Haiti and proposed the idea and would later that same year would voluntarily join with Haiti.\textsuperscript{82} Boyer’s treatment of the Dominicans would prove to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, he would abolish slavery and grant them land of their own as farms to work. On another, he also insisted on binding them to the land that they worked and pushed for forced labor, plantation-style labor, in order to stimulate enough revenue for the economy.\textsuperscript{83} This appears to be a contradiction of intentions. Nevertheless, it was Boyer’s sincerest belief that he operated in the best interest of the people in pressing for such measures. For Boyer, he had united a free nation from white rule, provided his people with land, and allowed them to work on that same land that was in their possession. This was another way for securing the ideal freedom, and to the extent that it remained this way throughout the remainder of his presidency hints that he was not entirely incorrect.

In the \textit{Code Rurale}, Boyer outlines and explains his policies for governing the agricultural aspect of this new unified nation.\textsuperscript{84} The \textit{Code} establishes from the beginning that the primary value of agriculture to sustaining the livelihood and prosperity of the country in the first article of the first law while the third article charges every citizen with the responsibility of sustaining the state.\textsuperscript{85} From the outset, this determines the priority of creating a prosperous agricultural center. With trade ties to other nations at risk, Boyer insists on guaranteeing the development of Haiti’s agriculture so that it can sustain itself in the midst of its economic condition. This is not to neglect the autocratic nature of his regime even under these circumstances. Laurent DuBois says as much in \textit{Haiti: The Aftershocks of History}. “Boyer’s regime – while welcoming – also had a marked authoritarian side. Indeed, Boyer’s very stable

\textsuperscript{84} Haiti. \textit{Code Rurale d’Haiti}. Port-au-Prince: de l’imprimerie du gouvernement, 1826.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Code Rurale d’Haiti}, 1.
rule needed tight control over political life in Haiti.” The forced labor impressed upon the people of Haiti and the incoming Dominicans and African Americans was hardly short of the slavery so hard fought against by all groups concerned. The sustainability that would come with Boyer’s rule would nevertheless come with oppressive restrictions. Perhaps also there lingered in Boyer some harboring of the past. As a born-free mulatto, he was well-acquainted to privilege and status. This background did not subject him to the brutality that black slaves suffered under prior to the Revolution. A combination of his reasoning for prioritizing agriculture and this status may have merged in Boyer’s mind allowing him to conceive of the idea to put in place such a regime. Taking this into account, however, his ability to guide Haiti through this period of challenge and uncertainty with its sovereignty still intact is nevertheless a point to consider.

When Boyer sent Jonathas Granville to the United States as his agent to encourage the emigration of African Americans into Haiti, he sent him with instructions of how to inspire the desire to emigrate with similar intention to his annexation of Santo Domingo. In the letter sent to Granville provided him with his instructions, Boyer expresses that sentiment of unity. Boyer speaks frequently of his desire for African Americans to fulfill their hopes of obtaining freedom and peace in Haiti. He asserts that it is both due to his calling to “serve humanity” that he should be open to the receipt of African American emigrants. He also considers it a responsibility for Haiti to provide asylum to African American emigrants in pursuit of refuge outside of the United States, especially as opposed to these emigrants moving to Africa which would be inhospitable to them. The instructions that he gives to Granville including language he insists that Granville

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87 Davis,116.
88 *Correspondence Relative to the Emigration to Haiti: of the Free People of Colour in the United States. Together with the Instructions to the Agent Sent Out by President Boyer*. New York: Mahlon Day, 1824.
89 *Correspondence*, 20.
use in convincing African Americans to emigrate as well as for how Granville should behave upon his arrival in the United States. This includes insisting that he fully submit to the laws and regulations that he encounters in the United States, conforming to them sufficiently.\(^90\) This has the potential to go without saying, but Boyer’s insistence suggests that there is a crucial reason why Granville must be so careful in his visit. Since Granville will not only represent the project of emigrating American Americans to Haiti but serves as a reflection of Boyer and the Haitian government as well, Boyer is strict in conferring to Granville his responsibilities. How Granville behaves in his handling of this mission had the potential to doom or maintain the life of the project. In addition to this, it also had the potential to reflect poorly on Haiti, which until this time still struggled to advocate its persona. Proper handling of this project could do wonders for the image of Haiti internationally, and Boyer knew this well.

Furthermore, in Boyer’s instructions, Article V bears an important familiarity of language that may have been familiar to free black Americans in the black middle class open to emigrating. It reads:

“The advantages which attend immigration are, 1st, that they shall enjoy in Haiti all civil and political rights, (Article 44th of the Constitution;) 2dly they shall have entire liberty of conscience, in their religious practices; 3rdly, they shall obtain concession of land in fee simple, when they shall have made settlements on said lands, (copy of my circular to the governors of the provinces;) the whole, provided, they engage to be faithful to the laws of the Republic, whose children and citizens they will become, and provided they undertake nothing contrary to its tranquility and prosperity.”\(^91\)

The language of this article reads familiar to that of the first amendment of the United Stated Constitution, and there is reason to believe in this as intentional.\(^92\) Boyer previously commented in his letter to Loring Dewy of the African Colonization Society, who first reached

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\(^90\) *Correspondence*, 20.  
\(^91\) *Correspondence*, 22.  
\(^92\) *Correspondence*, 22.
out to Boyer of the possibility of African American emigration to Haiti, that he had full knowledge of the mistreatment of African Americans in the United States. In part, the mistreatment came from denying them such rights due to prejudice. With this knowledge, Boyer’s choice of language in how he hoped to portray Haiti is evidence here. He describes that they will find in Haiti the rights and liberties deprived to them in the United States. In doing so, he not only positions Haiti as a place that would be a place of freedom for African Americans. He also positions Haiti as the realization of what the United States had not honored on the part of its African American residents. Haiti, since the United States had not afforded African Americans these rights, would take up that mantle as the republic promoting liberty and equality.

Granville’s biography from 1873, as written by his son, also gives significant detail to this very nature of the mission from Granville’s perspective. The biography offers, in part, explanations from his son, but also full letters to and from his father during his work. Upon arriving in the United States, Granville immediately began his work promoting the cause of emigration. He met with the dignitaries in Loring Dewey and his associates as Boyer instructed him to do and discussed with them opportunities to publicly declare his given proposals for African American emigration. One famous such occasion was that of his speech in New York on June 26th, 1824 to a crowd of gathered African Americans. Granville proved himself a very charismatic and brilliant speaker. In the middle of his speech, he proclaimed to the crowd:

“I do not come here to obtain recruits. For more than 30 years the world has beheld us struggling alone against the tempests of despotism. Though we have not withheld from others we have received nothing from any; alone we have resisted the storm; the winds are now calm and our vessel glides smoothly upon an ocean of tranquility and happiness.”

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93 Correspondence, 6-11.
95 Granville, 160.
In this portion of the speech, he mentions the trials that Haiti has had to steady itself against in the face of incredible pressure to buckle at any moment. He notes of Haiti’s ability to withstand through that pressure and come out still sustained. He goes on in the speech making references to the Haiti as an “efficient government” that has plenty to offer those who seek to emigrate in the form of protection and numerous other advantages.96 He also addresses potential concerns such as that of language and religious barriers that some may find unnerving. He states that due to Haiti’s relationship with the United States and Great Britain that their language gap should not hamper their plans to emigrate as Haiti is able to overcome the language conflict. In speaking on the differences in religion, Granville massages this by stating that, “Your religion differs in some points from ours, but we all worship the same God. Your prayers and ours may ascend to Heaven by different modes, but they all reach the throne of the Eternal.”97 As such, he echoes the sentiment Boyer expressed in his articles of the message to relay to African Americans of their religious freedom.

Although Granville’s speech sparked interest in Haiti within many African Americans to emigrate, scholars studying the event have drawn clear contrasts from the Haiti Granville described and the Haiti that African Americans found when they arrived. Davis mentions, as stated previously, that the same Code Rurale instituted for the Dominicans and Haitians applied to African American immigrants as well.98 This, of course, did not sit well with many of the African Americans who arrived there. Baur notes that the very issues of language, religious, and social differences that Granville persuaded them were already corrected or corrected in the

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96 Granville, 160.
97 Granville, 160.
98 Davis, 117.
future, in fact were still problems for them once they arrived in Haiti. This lead a great many of the African Americans who tried to emigrate ready to leave and return home to the United States.

However, in The Missionary Herald, it was also reported at the time in 1825 that while there were many who returned to the states, there were still others who found prosperity and good fortune in Haiti. They had integrated well and opted to remain there. This variation of experiences is unsurprising as the Herald also briefly noted that those who integrated well were those who had sufficient background to foster an easier transition. Well-educated, lighter complexions, and with some substantial wealth to carry over into the new nation. Granville himself would also fall out of interest in the project and resigned his post in 1825 choosing instead to become an educator. With this understanding in tow, it seems justifiable to judge the emigration project as a failure. Several African Americans had returned home, Granville had resigned, and Boyer’s position as leader started to show faint signs of weakness already much to his discontent. All the same, while there was much to go wrong, there was enough to go right to salvage the project.

In June 1824, after his arrival in the United States, a white stranger accosted Granville while on a steamboat leaving Philadelphia. Although, as reported by the New York Commercial Advertiser in Granville’s biography, the stranger was rude towards Granville, he instead took it in stride and replied to the stranger with civility stating who he has and his business there on the boat. This polite reaction by Granville encouraged the stranger to apologize immediately. This, however, would not be the only time for such an occasion. While hosting a

99 Baur, 327.
100 The Missionary Herald, Boston, XXV, 1825, p. 333.
101 Herald, p.333
102 Baur, 328.
103 Granville, 118.
dinner for various national and international dignitaries, a white Southern military officer harassed Granville by exclaiming that he would not be willing to sit at the same table as a Negro.\textsuperscript{104}

Once again, Granville reacted to the poor treatment with calm, restraint, and grace. Granville cleverly remarks that such disrespectful behavior would likely get a perpetrator sent into custody if they acted that way towards a stranger. Like the previous rude stranger, this one also apologizes, but on this occasion, Granville responded to him so sincerely and profusely that the stranger felt immediately accountable for his actions. Henceforth after these incidents, Granville was lauded for his calm and dignified demeanor even in the face of such intolerable behavior on the part of strangers.\textsuperscript{105} It was in part for this that Granville, and therefore the mission of encouraging African American emigration would continue forward. Boyer’s assumptions were correct. Granville’s respectful image reflected well upon Haiti and the cause for which it and he were fighting for. This would make future exchanges and potential for relationships much easier to push forward. Granville, in his adhering to the rules that Boyer insisted upon and which Granville also possessed a similar position, was able to clear pathways of negotiation and relationships for Haiti.

For the unification and the emigration projects, in spite of their numerous and perhaps inevitable failures, they were regardless initiatives that would benefit Haiti’s image. The matter of unification resulted in disastrous consequences for the poorer inhabitants of this new unified Haiti including the Dominicans integrated into the system from Santo Domingo. Boyer’s attempt at establishing the \textit{Code Rurale} would result in awful conditions on the parts of rural and

\textsuperscript{104} Granville, 120.
\textsuperscript{105} Granville, 120.
agricultural people. As the same time, this effort to prioritize developing agriculture in Haiti would benefit Haiti throughout the remainder of Boyer’s more than twenty years of service in the presidency. The emigration project would go much the same way. Emigration ended up a better concept in theory than that of its reality. The reconciliation of so the numerous barriers to a successful merging of people would have had to be rethought and accounted for before such a task could be undertaken.

It was, perhaps, an effort of jumping too soon, no matter how well-intentioned, before the needs of all parties involved could be addressed. Even so, its undertaking would make an indelible impression both on African Americans and on Haitians for the better. Haiti’s existence and the potential for a unifying project like that of the emigration dwelled in the consciousness across the African diaspora long after the end of the project. Haiti itself would benefit from demonstrating its potential to execute such a project on that grand scale, and in seeing it through with a rightly chosen agent like Granville helped its image in terms of its stability and its dignity. These two projects, intertwined, in the long term accomplished more than imagined and stand as a testament for the potential of resistance.

**From Counted Out to Counted On: Sponsoring Resistance Abroad**

Part of forming its own role in the Atlantic and staging resistance for itself, Haiti was also compelled to sponsor resistance efforts elsewhere across the Atlantic. As previously mentioned, under the rule of Pétion, Haiti would become a refuge for Simon Bolivar in 1815 where he would mount his comeback in his revolt against the Spanish in South America.\(^\text{106}\) Although Bolivar forgot or neglected this favor in excluding Haiti from the Congress of Panama, Haiti was nonetheless essential if providing the support he needed in order to continue his own resistance.

\(^{106}\) Baur, 329.
in his homeland. Davis even states in Black Democracy that the very existence of Colombia owes its creation to Haiti’s aid. Boyer would never press this issue, however. This shunning by Bolivar would not deter Boyer from entertaining others who sought his help. Two of these instances bear little discussed, but relevant note in this discussion. First among these is that of Greece. While Greece engaged in a war for its independence from the Ottoman Turks from 1821 – 1832, it was Haiti that first recognized Greece as an independent nation in 1822. Boyer’s letter to Greece solidified this recognition, imparting to Greece a favor reluctantly or not at all done for itself. In addition to this, Haiti would also take in refugee slaves from the islands of Turks & Caicos when they land on Haiti’s shores. For Boyer and according to Haitian law, these refugee former slaves had not gained their freedom. By accepting the freedom of these slaves who landed on Haiti’s shores and offering aid and recognition to a nation like Greece in a similar predicament to that of itself, Boyer speaks volumes for the capacity of Haiti’s international resistance and its efforts to retain its status as a republic.

Despite the vast distance between Haiti and Greece, it nevertheless stands as remarkable that Haiti’s influence would reach so far and inspire that distant nation in its own revolution. As the Greek fought for their independence in the 1820s and early 1830s, they sought aid from several nations across the globe to help them in their fight against the Ottoman Turks which had ruled in Greece for centuries. Ex-patriates from Greece who had escaped to Paris sent abroad letters asking for help in their war for independence. Among the many nations who received this

107 Davis, 115.
call and indeed was the first to respond was that of Haiti. Greece’s story felt all too familiar to Boyer with Haiti in a similar situation to Greece in dealing with France. As such, he decided to send a letter back to the Greek ex-patriates with his support for their cause. The letter in its entirety is exceptionally well-crafted, both aligning itself with Greece, showing admiration and knowledge of its history, and furthering its own efforts of resistance.

Boyer compares the situation of the Greeks with that of the Haitians in his letter with the line, “Such a beautiful and just case and, most importantly, the first successes which have accompanied it, cannot leave Haitians indifferent, for we, like the Hellenes, were for a long time subjected to a dishonorable slavery and finally, with our own chains, broke the head of tyranny.”

This puts the Greek fight for freedom right in line with that of Haiti’s which demonstrates a sense of common ground to the ex-patriates reading it and might put on edge any who would support Greece and not Haiti. Boyer also heaps praise and introduces his knowledge of Greek history by calling the revolutionaries “sons of Leonidas.” In this, Leonidas was the Spartan king who led his army of Spartans against the Persians. In using this metaphor, Boyer would remind the revolutionaries of their storied past and encourage them to continue to fight even with the odds against them. Though outnumbered defeated, Leonidas and his army bravely fought to the last man. Boyer further makes references to Salamis (an ancient naval battle against Xerxes of Persia), Miltiades (leader of Athenian forces at Marathon), and Marathon itself (another battle between Greeks and Persians). This letter would become a source of profound encouragement to the Greeks and demonstrates Haiti’s involvement in global resistance.

111 Sideris, 169.
112 Sideris, 169.
Moreover, Boyer’s welcoming of the slave refugees from Turks & Caicos was a critical move to make to establish Haiti’s place in the world. By accepting the refugees especially to the extent of naming them citizens, should they so choose to embrace it, places Haiti’s standing in contrast to the slaveholding nations surrounding it. The Turks & Caicos island was very small in terms of size, but it was a very popular destination for runaways fleeing slavery before transitioning to find freedom elsewhere.\textsuperscript{114} This made it a crucial spot where several slaveholding nations would try in earnest to reclaim its former slaves. As the non-slaveholding republic in this area, Haiti would become a beacon of hope that runaways strived to make it to in hopes that they could obtain their freedom by reaching the island.\textsuperscript{115} Boyer’s letter to the British Agent in Jamaica declaring the freedom of the Turks & Caicos slaves would ensure exactly that. Although it is very brief, its language is nonetheless potent in declaring Haiti’s position in these matters. Boyer stated that while Haiti had agreed “to never threaten the tranquility of its neighbors” or rather disrupt the current standing and governance of the nations surrounding it in their matters of dealing with slaves and slavery. Haiti had, still, undertaken a “sacred obligation” to ensure the freedom of all those who sought it in Haiti and were able to make it to its island. Any who stepped foot in Haiti would henceforth and forever be free. This letter would guarantee that Haiti would be a place for freedom. Both for those already living within her borders, and for those who managed to make the journey and land on its shores. All were entitled to a promise of freedom and citizenship.\textsuperscript{116} This, of course, put Haiti at odds with the slaveholding nations


surrounding it. It would also confirm Haiti as a place of refuge for former slaves and forced the recognition of Haiti’s global and active participation despite the desire for it to remain isolated.

Through Boyer’s policy initiatives guided by a theme of resistance, Haiti would be well-positioned against a backdrop of colonial powers standing as a realization of a free and independent republic. Its ceaseless pursuit of recognition along with its successes and failures to this feat both secure for Haiti significant standing seeing to it that it would either be acknowledged properly or strained to be ignored due to its ever-present role in foreign affairs. Its fight to establish itself as a republic for all those of African descent, even in the collapse of the projects of emigration and unification of its island, still generated a lasting legacy in the consciousness of what could be possible for establishing a separate state of freedom for former slaves and permitted Haiti to be at the forefront of its attempt. All the same, its efforts of pushing for resistance globally in any capacity it could whether encouraging another nation’s struggle for independence or offering refuge to those who crossed into its territory, both confirm Haiti’s place as a free republic.
Chapter 4
The Empire and the New Republic: Faustin I Soulouque and Fabre Geffrard’s Visions for Haiti, 1847-1867

Many of the new nations that were born out of the Age of Revolutions and the various wars of independence in the Americas and Europe faced a host of challenges as they developed new governments founded on ideals of freedom, democracy, and equality. These challenges included colonial powers aiming to reclaim their former territories and primarily internal political dissention over different ways of executing these ideals and different conceptions of what they meant. Complicating the existing struggles, several leaders such as Faustin I of Haiti and Napoleon III of France effectively infused these ideals with their dictatorial politics. They advocated for liberal policies and bolstered support for the poorer classes while at the same time pressing for the expansion of their own power.\footnote{Baur, John E. "Faustin Soulouque, Emperor of Haiti His Character and His Reign." \textit{The Americas} 6, no. 2. 1949.; Truesdell, Matthew. \textit{Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849-1870}. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.} Moreover, the caudillos of Spanish America used continuous military campaigns to further expand national territory and the rising spirit of nationalism to gain support for their regimes.\footnote{Hamill, Hugh M. \textit{Caudillos: Dictators in Spanish America}. Norman, OK: Univ. Oklahoma Press, 1995.} Republican governments and their leaders were not immune from similar ideological conflations. Fabre Geffrard, after overthrowing Faustin I, restored the republic by reestablishing the earlier 1816 constitution which both brought back the power of Haiti’s congress and granted him a lifetime presidency.\footnote{Baur, John E. "The Presidency of Nicolas Geffrard of Haiti." \textit{The Americas} 10, no. 4. 1954.} In the United States, however, the ever-present issues of slavery, abolition, and the legacies of racial hierarchies continue to drive debates over the practical reality of adopting liberal principles and their application to those of African descent.\footnote{Ericson, David F. \textit{The Debate over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America}. New York: New York University Press, 2001.} Thus Haiti, in its struggle between an imperial vision
and a republican one, not only participated in a global fight for democracy, but aided in determining the future and realization of democratic ideals.

For this chapter, the conception of liberalism utilized here is “a social and political system involving a commitment to treating all persons with equal concern and respect” as well as “with maximal extensive equal liberties for all.”¹²¹ This definition, which is also featured at the heart of Charles Mills’ *Black Rights/White Wrongs: The Critique of Racial Liberalism*, provides the most succinct understanding of the concept though it is also problematic for reasons beyond the scope of this project. However, as Mills points out, liberalism defined this way leaves room for marginalization and unfair treatment partially dependent upon who had personhood. Mills speaks to the racial qualifications of personhood, which is also featured in this paper, in addition to political boundaries when determining personhood. In his article “Dictatorship and Democracy in the 19th Century,” E. Wilson Lyon argues of the various European dictatorships during this century were not developed in a vacuum or as anomalies to the republics that preceded them, but that they developed out of these republics and their failures to live up to the promises of liberalism that they espoused.¹²² Due to these failures, people developed a fervor for nationalism as it appeared to offer real solutions and unity that fell to the wayside with liberalism and revolution. This allowed for dictators to seize power and capitalize on the discontent amongst the people with their governments using liberal policy and national internal conflict to sustain themselves. War would provide additional support up to a point until the people would

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grow tired with the failures of the campaigns. Lyon’s argument is an effective one and it extends well beyond the bounds of Europe where he situates his study.

As he further explains, citing Napoleon III as an example of such a dictator and regime, Napoleon III derived his power by employing liberal policies specifically to aid the poorer classes while expanding the reaches of his own power. Napoleon III’s cases bears resemblance to cases throughout the Atlantic World including notably in Haiti where Faustin I would declare himself emperor following a slew of ineffective republican leaders before him. Latin and South American caudillos often built their nations, in the years after independence through the same forms of rule. This connection speaks to a broader current of change taking place. Analyzing it expands our understanding of the difficulties liberal nations encountered throughout this period.

**The Struggle for Liberalism: Faustin I and Liberal Dictatorships in the Atlantic**

The reign of Faustin Soulouque, or Faustin I, bears parallels not just to Europe’s dictatorships, but more importantly to a figure in Haiti’s own past, Henri Christophe, King of Haiti. Prior to Faustin I, after unification after its civil war by Jean-Pierre Boyer, a prominent general of mixed-ancestry, the mixed-race class installed four black presidents to be figureheads for the bidding of the mixed-race class, a solution to a problem under Pétion. After their individual failures, Faustin I was declared president by the Haitian congress, and after a short period of biding his time in wait, he declared himself emperor. He held a spectacular coronation for himself, his wife, and his daughters proclaiming in the full extravagance in Haiti’s capital bolstered by the support of Black Haitians who had embraced him as their champion. This was a lavish celebration that endeared him to Black Haitians. Faustin I would capitalize on this

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123 Baur, 132.
popularity to the benefit of Black Haitians granting them rights and status once primarily held by those of mixed-descent and using his power to eliminate his mixed-race political opposition. He also capitalized on the spirit of nationalism and pride in Haiti likening his rule to previous leaders like Dessalines and Christophe which unified the people to his cause. Part of this meant recommitting himself and Haiti to the notion that they were the true heirs to ideals of liberty and equality and were responsible for promoting these ideals abroad. As such, he also attempted to unite the Caribbean under his rule in the name of unifying its black populations. However, because of his failures to execute this strategy, he would be overthrown by a new mixed-race ruler Fabre Geffrard who would usher in a return of the republic form of government that would last until the years just before American Occupation in 1915.\(^{124}\)

Haiti embodied the dynamics described by Lyon.\(^{125}\) After Boyer’s rule for more than twenty years, the mixed-race ruling class deposed him due to both failed military exploits, economic stagnation and collapse, and the loss of support from his own mixed-descent class.\(^{126}\) After him, the mixed-descent ruling class installed puppet rulers each to varying degrees of success in fulfilling their role. While Boyer, throughout most of his presidency, had the favor of the mixed-race class, his predecessor Pétion did not. After Boyer, the mixed-race elite sought to protect their power and advantage reclaimed under Boyer, but they also wanted to avoid potential resentment, and worse, revolution from black Haitians. These puppet rulers were their key. First, Charles Rivière-Hérard, who lead the revolt against Boyer in 1843, and yet after seizing power for himself with the control of the army, led an expedition to reclaim the Dominican Republic which declared its independence in 1844 in the absence of Boyer who first

\(^{124}\) Baur, John E. "Faustin Soulouque, Emperor of Haiti His Character and His Reign." *The Americas* 6, no. 2. 1949.
\(^{125}\) Lyon, 457.
unified it with Haiti. His defeat led to mistrust within the government and eventually he was
overthrown himself and forced into exile in Jamaica in April 1844. Philippe Guerrier followed
him in May 1844, a black Haitian installed by the mixed-race class to ease tensions with black
Haitians and served his position well until dying in office in just under a year in April 1845.
Jean-Louis Pierrot was elected in April 1845, installed as a puppet. However, due to his
diminished support among the ruling class, he was forced to resign and retire to his plantation.
Finally, just before Faustin I, Jean-Baptiste Riché took power, and tried to do more with his
station that serve the interests of the elite. He chose more honorable officials in the government
and tried to strengthen the Haitian economy through negotiations with foreign markets. Scholars
believe that he may have been assassinated for his efforts and died in office in February 1847.
They stand as an excellent example of the sort of ineffective republican leadership that made a
way for leaders like Faustin I.

Faustin I’s rise to power began slowly. As Baur explains, like those before him, Faustin I
was intended to be another pawn for the ruling class. Though a successful military commander,
he boasted little education and could hardly read and write. He was even mocked by Boyer, who
quipped years before that even he, a man of little knowledge, could assume the presidency in the
middle of Haiti’s turmoil. Nevertheless, he understood his position well and knew the
potential of his new standing. In the two years prior to declaring himself emperor, he amassed a
private army of black Haitians who would serve as his protectors and execute his bidding.
Furthermore, his loyalty to and sympathy for the plight of black Haitians gained increased his

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127 Davis, 118.
128 Davis, 119.
129 Davis, 119.
130 Baur, 131.
popularity. Additionally, he was aware of the delicate tension between black Haitians and those of mixed-descent. Baur explains:

Fear is a fearful thing for anyone, but for Soulouque it meant a transformation of both himself and his nation. He had always feared the enlightened mulattoes who conducted most of the business of Haiti. They had ruled the nation long and well, although largely at the expense of the Negroes. They did not respect Soulouque. Perhaps worst of all, they did not take him seriously. Mulattoes had helped put Faustin Soulouque in power, but the rural Negroes and Voodoo chieftains had influence over him. Soulouque felt that in the long run the mulattoes, with white immigration, would become invincible and overthrow the newly-won Negro supremacy. In the short run, they would overthrow him.\(^{131}\)

Understanding this, with his personal militia strengthened, in the Spring of 1848, Faustin I had many prominent leaders of the mixed-race ruling class executed in public. Any who resisted or posed a threat to his power were cut down. Any who managed to survive and escape with their lives would then forced into exile. Having then concentrated his power to himself and his select trusted few, he declared himself emperor on August 26\(^{th}\), 1849 in a similar style to Napoleon Bonaparte just a generation earlier.\(^{132}\)

In terms of his domestic policy, Faustin I offered a mixed bag. He promoted the practice of Voodoo, which bolstered his support amongst black Haitians, its main practitioners. Furthermore, he disavowed Haiti’s relationship to the Church, held closely mainly by mixed-race Haitians raised by French Catholic fathers.\(^{133}\) His changes to the Constitution of 1849 did little to further foster the well-being of Black Haitians previously subjugated by mixed-race Haitians. Instead, he used it as a tool to solidify his power and establish Haiti as an empire under his command.\(^{134}\) His efforts to reinvigorate the economy resulted in stagnation as his policy to print

\(^{131}\) Baur, 134.
\(^{132}\) Davis, 120.
\(^{133}\) Baur, 149.
more money failed dramatically. This caused the start of deep unrest within Haiti especially amongst the remaining mixed-race Haitians within Haiti as many of them were executed by his command. Furthermore, he was regrettably successful in silencing Haiti’s press. Haiti’s *Le Moniteur Haitien*, at this time the official newspaper for Haiti, reflects this as there is a lengthy gap in reporting spanning many of the years of Faustin I’s regime.”

Baur further explains that “his first important arbitrary action was to silence the editor of the *Feuille de Commerce*, Port-au-Prince's only vocal paper. The journalist was tried by the Senate, but since this body was still free and fairly enlightened, it sentenced the critic of the new president to but one month's imprisonment. Faustin I called a new trial—before his council of war. The editor was condemned to death, but the French and British consuls pleaded for his life.”

This brutality domestically was only exasperated by his ill-fated encounters abroad.

Haiti under Faustin I’s rule was comparable to France under Napoleon III. After France’s own revolution in 1789, it underwent several years of political upheaval fighting for its own ideally liberal identity. Napoleon III, like Faustin I, after first being elected president used his popularity and high standing to declare himself emperor of France in 1852. His uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte, shared this ambition. He also preyed on the failures of the Republic before him to adequately address the problems felt by the people of France. After France’s own revolution in 1789, it undergoes years of political upheaval fighting for its liberal identity. Seizing the opportunity, he proposed policies that would set him apart from his predecessors and further win over the public. Roger Price, in his book *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political*

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136 Baur, 152.
Power, offers a study of the policies of Napoleon III.\textsuperscript{137} In the seventh chapter of the book, he details the policies Napoleon III enacted with his economic advisor Michel Chevalier as the development of public works and projects and promoting the social wealth of the people. Price quotes from a pamphlet written by Chevalier in 1853:

“One of the essential conditions for the stability of the state and society is growing social wealth, so that the objects and services which respond to the various human needs increase more rapidly than the population, and each individual is able to gain a better return for his work, and as a result enjoy improved nourishment, better clothing, and warmer, more brightly lit and better-furnished homes.”\textsuperscript{138}

This brought him plenty of support amongst the people as they saw him as the antithesis of the government before him. Already, he had begun to do for them what the Republic had not, and they loved him for it. Unfortunately, however, this favor would also fuel his private ambitions. For Napoleon III, in addition to these policies, he deemed further measures necessary to keep himself within the public’s good graces. According to Matthew Truesdell, he also employed the use of public celebrations and spectacles to keep the people entertained and also to further promote himself as the face of the nation. Truesdell argues that “the celebrations also worked through visual spectacle. For many at the time, elaborate ceremonies and the apparatus of court etiquette were part of the necessary elevation of power. The people, in this view, ‘respect above all that which is surrounded by an appropriate splendor and consideration that is due it.’”\textsuperscript{139} Truesdell asserts that essential for Napoleon III maintaining his power was through persuading the people through these public celebrations of his worthiness in his position of power which parallels Faustin I. The celebrations reinforced his standing and the participation of

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\textsuperscript{138} Price, 210.
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the people served to confirm their necessity. His expressions of nationalism also reminded the people of his uncle who still was held in high regard among many French citizens. They also further embodied the ideals of the French Revolution of liberté, égalité, fraternité. Napoleon III viewed himself, and encouraged this view among the people of France, that he and his regime were the true heirs of these ideals. This garnered him further support and endearment to his cause.

He goes on to state that these celebrations also filled the people with a sense of nationalistic pride and helped to connect Napoleon III which the sentiment as well, per Napoleon III’s ambitions. By linking himself, not only through his position, but through the media and public outlets as the embodiment of what it meant to be French in this day, this reinforced his power. Furthermore, Truesdell also informs that Napoleon III, made a point of advocating the Arts and wanted to be see promoting them as well. He also staged photographs and portraits of himself with his family to depict themselves as the model for French society, another link establishing himself with the identity of the nation. ¹⁴⁰ These efforts would also allow him to assuage any misgivings about the state of France at least for a time as they depicted an image of prosperity and success.

Napoleon III, like others before and contemporary to him, successfully integrated prosperity for the people with personal prosperity for himself. His policies promoted the welfare of the French public just as he claimed that they would, and the public loved him for it. Though his absolute rule ran contradictory to conceptions of liberalism, in promoting democracy and equality, his politics encouraged a better standard of living for those under his leadership. By

¹⁴⁰ Truesdell, 85.
doing so, his method of governing further complicates what it means for a government to properly embody liberalism.

Leaders in Europe and the United States already found much to fear in Faustin I’s rule. In addition to his treatment of his own people, he relentlessly sought to reclaim the Dominican Republic after it had declared its independence from Haiti after Boyer was removed from office. He invaded the island on three separate occasions in 1849, 1850, and 1855, and was routed with each attempt. Nevertheless, spectators abroad, including French journalist Gustave D’Alaux who considered him to be a tyrannical threat, deemed his persistence in the fight problematic. Baur explained it further as he states, “There was much anxiety in the 1850's about Faustin Soulouque, and it reached its height in a belief that the Emperor's imperialism was not to be limited to the island of Hispaniola. The United States was probably foremost in predicting that Faustin I wanted a Caribbean empire, a union of all West Indian Negroes in a sort of black Mare Nostrum. The United States was coming to consider the Caribbean its own Mare Nostrum and consequently was alarmed at every new competitive trend.” The assumptions of those in the United States was correct, as Faustin I had every intention, as best he could, to somehow found a Black empire in the Caribbean and expelling as many whites and mixed-race individuals as it would take to do so.

Nevertheless, for Faustin I, he generated his ambitions from the idea of maintaining the security and freedom of Blacks from threats to its safety such as France and the United States who may cause harm taking the island for themselves. This is how he promoted his motivations to the Haitian people as he embarked on his endeavors pursuing further territory elsewhere. In

142 Baur, 147.
his estimation, a Caribbean freed from slavery was best protected from outside influence and possible re-enslavement if they were all united.\textsuperscript{143} Beyond this, he also sought to reinvigorate the American Emigration project that Boyer had championed twenty years prior and bring American Blacks into the fold by granting them citizenship in Haiti. Though the attempt would ultimately be unsuccessful even in conception, as Faustin I offered few answers to the problems encountered by Boyer in the original project, he made his ambitions clear by making a proposal to the American Emigration Society and welcoming them to Haiti to meet.\textsuperscript{144} Even with such principled ideals, however, they were still not without his own personal ambitions of being the one who would, in fact, unite the Caribbean under his own rule. He deemed himself to be the correct leader to lead the united Caribbean of which he dreamt. Additionally, while in favor of his own rule, Baur explains that part of his reasoning for desiring a united Caribbean was to further strengthen his rule and eliminate any possible opposition who could threaten or undermine his authority.\textsuperscript{145} A prime example of conflating liberal idealism with personal ambition common amongst post-independence leaders of this era.

After Haiti, various other Latin American nations gained their independence in the years to follow. Simón Bolívar, the Venezuelan leader who helped to liberate several other nations from the Spanish Empire was, for an extended period of time, a political refugee in Haiti aided and guided by then-President of the Republic of Haiti, Alexandre Pétion, in his earliest years as a leader before going back and freeing the nations he did from control. Robert Scheina, in his book \textit{Latin America's Wars Volume I: The Age of the Caudillo, 1791-1899} argues that the caudillos were mainly interested in immediate and self-promoting efforts above the interests of their

\textsuperscript{143} Davis, 120.
\textsuperscript{144} Baur, 155.
\textsuperscript{145} Baur, 153.
people. He states “A few *caudillos* were motivated purely by patriotism for the fatherland (la Patría) and a few by purely selfish desires. Most were motivated by a combination of these and other factors. Although *caudillos* generally professed political ideologies, many willingly sacrificed these when they conflicted with their quests for power. This explains how the Mexican Antonio López de Santa Anna could alternately profess allegiance to liberal and then conservative ideologies in order to achieve power.”¹⁴⁶ Historians Eric R. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, however, offer a different interpretation in their article “Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis” as they argue that several *caudillos* used war as another tool for exercising their political power a part of a broader political strategy. Political ideology and power formed the basis for any moves going forward including decisions to go to war.¹⁴⁷ For the purposes of this article, perhaps there is a meeting ground between both. Here, war and political ideology fuel one another in a back and forth cycle each contributing to the development of the other. Instead, war, once used as a means to gain independence, became a necessary action to settle political strife and at the same time shapes the politics of whoever is involved in the chaos.

Scheina goes on to explain how politics and political ideology shaped the mind of a caudillo of Venezuela. Here he quotes him as saying: “The Venezuelan caudillo Antonio Guzmán Blanco wrote: ‘I don't know where people have got the idea that Venezuelans love federalism, when they don't even know what the word means. The idea of federation came from me and some others who said to ourselves: Since every revolution has to have a slogan…let's invoke the idea of federation. For if our opponents, gentlemen, had said *federalism*, we should

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have said centralism!148 This does not stray far from Wolf and Hansen’s interpretation of the flexibility of political position. If anything, it can further be used as an example of the ever-changing conception of political positions. Such encounters as described depict instances of determining political strategy on the margins and maneuvering based on what will yield the most gain. It takes great understanding and knowledge of the influence of the use of political strategy as well as a sufficient level of awareness amongst the people the caudillos governed in order to successfully use this to their advantage. Alternatively, the notion Scheina offers that in the quest of power, one’s political standing is easily traded away, could explain that advantage.149 However, as Wolf and Hansen pose, caudillos had expectations and loyalties to maintain with their people to succeed. A sound structure to the caudillos political organization always needed to be maintained.150

In addition, Scheina also notes that “The power of a caudillo was his ability to deliver his followers to the cause of his choice. Their loyalty was to him personally and could be lost if the caudillo were defeated in battle, or unable to deliver the spoils which his followers expected. In 1814 the monarchist José Tomás Boves was killed in battle and many of his followers joined the Revolutionary José Antonio Páez because of his military prowess. In 1860 the followers of republican Ignacio Mejía Fernández joined the monarchist Leonardo Márquez because the Mexican government had stopped paying them.”151 Once again, in wielding such tremendous power over their own following, it required not only political prowess but a fidelity of political allegiance. These allegiances, nevertheless, were dependent upon the outcome of the wars

148 Scheina, xxvii.
149 Scheina, xxvii.
150 Wolf and Hansen, 170.
151 Scheina, xxvii.
whether in the favor of the caudillos or otherwise. While this would not hinder caudillos and their greater ambitions for their own power, it did, however, require them to negotiate their ambitions within some reason for the sake of maintaining their support amongst their people.

Furthermore, not limited to the wars for independence, the rulers during and after independence maintained or lost their power through numerous wars waged against one another for any number of purposes. According to Robert Scheina, these caudillos or “military leaders” engaged in war for nearly any facet of struggle, as he states, “The causes for wars in Latin America during the nineteenth century are numerous and create a vivid, plaid tapestry. Patterns are difficult to discern however; threads do stand out and some even transverse the entire cloth. The most vivid threads have been the race war, the ideology of independence, the controversy of separation versus union, boundary disputes, territorial conquests, caudilloism, resource wars, intraclass struggles, interventions caused by capitalism, and religious wars.”¹⁵² Moreover, perhaps the constant war cycle replayed the strife leftover from independence. As each nation sought to assert its own place in the world, there was a reason for them to clash and compete with one another especially if lead by dictators with their own ambitions of prominence. The continuing conflict represented a holdover from the rebellions that got them to their present state and in doing so, shaped the terrain both physically and politically.

After gaining independence, Haiti and many of the nations of Spanish America were particularly vulnerable to the predatory ambitions of colonial powers who posed a constant threat to their sovereignty and liberty. This allowed for leaders like Faustin I and Venezuela’s Blanco to enter as protectors of their young nations to defend them against foreign adversaries seeking to

¹⁵² Scheina, xxvii.
take advantage of their struggles. Simultaneously, they served as leaders ensuring the rights of their people as well as a pair of the harshest leaders in terms of the treatment of those same people. Their revolutions and independence wars, sparked by these liberal ideals of freedom and equality, and all that consequentially followed embodies discussions of liberalism and its reality that pre-date their attempts to cultivate it. Contradictory implementations of liberal policies existed before Haiti and Venezuela, and their respective pitfalls echo that of their colonial predecessors.

A New and Restored Republic: Geffrard’s Ambitions and Haiti’s Impact on America’s Free Blacks

Over time, black Haitians began to pull away from their support of Faustin I as he brought little in terms of elevating them despite their loyal support of him throughout his reign. In 1858, mixed-race Haitians rallied around General Fabre Geffrard and staged a revolution against Faustin I. Geffrard had gained his popularity amongst the people through his military prowess in the invasions of the Dominican Republic. Though these invasions were ultimately unsuccessful, Geffrard proved himself to the people to be a compassionate and effective leader and masterful military mind. By 1858, Geffrard was ready to seize the opportunity this popularity brought for him and devised a plot to overthrow Faustin I and his empire. Geffrard was careful to position his coup strategically and ensured that in his proclamations to the people and those in his close circle that he was doing so based on the will of the people. After his victory over Faustin I, he gave an address to the Haitian people and described the state of Haiti as so, “Haiti was in the depths of an abyss; the revolution retrieved it and saved it from

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imminent ruin,’ he explained, then went on to show how Faustin I had tyrannized over his people while wasting the national resources and patriotic vitality.” In other words, he characterized his opposition to Faustin I, not simply for himself, or to eliminate an opponent, but instead conceived of it as doing what was best for the people of Haiti on their behalf. This, he thought, would help him retain the supporters he gained and not antagonize any remaining supporters of Faustin I. He had successfully managed to link his efforts to the high-minded ideals of liberty and justice for Haiti’s people. 

Critical to establishing himself as the new leader of Haiti, it was important for Geffrard to differentiate himself from Faustin I in the eyes of the people as much as he could, especially after having overthrown him in a coup. Baur quotes from a proclamation given by Geffrard as he states, “Revealing himself a conservative liberal, Geffrard told the legislature with which he must now work:

‘Called upon to put myself at the head of the glorious revolution which has been accomplished, I had not wanted it to cost even a drop of blood . . . The most moral and peaceful revolutions are the best. I realize the danger of overthrowing everything in order to rebuild everything. It was wise and prudent to conserve intact the institutions of our republican regime, which was lost under the Empire, all of which are reclaimed today, their legitimate influence and their free action.’

For Geffrard domestically, this meant a full restoration of the republic as it had been under Boyer and Alexandre Pétion before him. For the first few years of his presidency, Geffrard pressed for laws which he deemed as cleaning up Faustin I’s messes. In 1860, he backed a law that held judges accountable and permitted their removal for corruption. Nevertheless, this additionally came with his power to suspend them, within reason, to correct, in his estimation,

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155 Baur, 157.
156 Baur, 426.
any unjust behavior. He brought back the press including *Le Moniteur Haitien*. Geffrard restored the educational institutions that Faustin I had torn down with the help of his hand-picked education ministers.\textsuperscript{157} Closer to home, he also reconstructed laws centered on marriage and families both allowing Haitians to marry foreigners for the first time since this became illegal in the first constitution and providing an exemption to fathers with multiple “legitimate” children from serving in the military unless in the event of a great threat to the nation.\textsuperscript{158} Furthermore, he sought to decrease the power of the military altogether by decreasing the number of soldiers from 30,000 to just above half at 16,000. This was a sharp contrast to Faustin I who not only increased the strength of the military, but additionally employed many other servicemen for his own personal militia. Most important above all was his return to the portion of the 1816 Constitution which granted him the presidency for life.\textsuperscript{159} After some years, he would also somewhat mirror some of Faustin I’s actions by limiting the power of the legislature to check his authority. This would serve as a thorn in the side of his opponents throughout the remainder of his presidency, which, as the leader also deriving from the wealthy mixed-race elite would already be problematic.

Although tensions remained domestically between its mixed-race elite and Black Haitians, in addition to his reforms at home, Geffrard saw the opportunity to promote unity abroad. Picking up where Faustin I left off, he worked to diplomatically resurrect the emigration project to bring American Blacks into Haiti. In 1861, he oversaw the emigration of James Theodore Holly and his supporters into the more prosperous south of Haiti providing them with the same rules of emigration offered to those prior including a mandate to tend to the land they

\textsuperscript{157} Baur, 427.  
\textsuperscript{158} Baur, 430.  
\textsuperscript{159} Baur, 431.
owned and cultivate it well and to commit to public service as needed by the Republic.\textsuperscript{160} Moreover, he reached out to the family of John Brown in America after his death in order to foster a bond promoting abolition in the United States. On behalf of Haiti and its people, Geffrard donated to the John Brown Family Fund in the amount of a few thousand dollars to help further the effort. He also sent a letter to John Brown’s family via the New York Times, a strategic move both aiding the bond while also allowing others in the United States to have access to a different portrayal of Haiti than has been common at the time.

“Citizens of Albany,” Geffrard wrote, “the cannon you fired to commemorate the death of JOHN BROWN has reechoed in the hearts of Haitians and of the strangers in our land, and reverberates through our fields and cities.” Here he begins with a statement of solidarity to the cause of abolition. Later in the letter, he ends with a refutation of the ill-perception of Haiti, especially common in America. “Receive, then, the sincere thanks of the citizens of the Republic of Haiti -- a Republic that its enemies on another continent represent as always in ruin. It is by our conduct…that you can find arguments capable of refuting the assertions of those enemies of humanity who decry us.”\textsuperscript{161} Author Victor Hugo and others commenting on Geffrard’s letter in the New York Times both praised Geffrard’s eloquence and were taken aback by his tone when speaking of the United States. The New York Times, like many, kept track of the turmoil within Haiti and its power struggles in its recent years to his time with the perception of its conflict as apart from its own world. However, as Geffrard’s letter makes clear, Haiti’s struggles with adapting to the world as a nation of freed people from the bondage of slavery mirrors that of the circumstances of the remainder of the world. Geffrard was well-aware of Haiti’s reputation

\textsuperscript{160} Baur, 434.
within the rest of the immediate world as he penned this letter and specifically intended it for a broader reading audience that had its own ideas of Haiti’s reality.

Although the United States did not fall into the chaos of having dictators for leaders, it did have to wrestle with reconciling its version of liberal ideals within its political system, especially as debates loomed in this period over slavery, abolition, and the treatment of people of African descent. Lincoln, famously, portrayed the political fray as a “house divided,” which David F. Ericson utilizes as his central metaphor in his book *The Debate over Slavery: Antislavery and Proslavery Liberalism in Antebellum America*. Ericson traces the roots of the arguments for and against slavery during the Antebellum era and analyzes their roots in liberal philosophies of freedom. For Ericson, though the two camps came to drastically different conclusions, their fundamental ideologies of liberal values both united them and caused the most tension in deciding between the two positions. He explains:

> Because the two sides appealed to similar ideas for such divergent ends, it became increasingly apparent that the differences between them were fundamental. Because the two sides applied liberal ideas to the particular circumstances of their own society with such diverse results, it became more and more difficult to dismiss the conflict between them as peripheral to the future of a nation conceived in liberty and the Civil War was a case in which rhetoric mattered...It was a case in which liberal ideas mattered, making racial slavery vulnerable to attack and yet not foreclosing all avenues of defense.\(^{162}\)

Ericson further clarifies his argument when he states that the liberal arguments for the anti-slavery camp argued for the rights of all human beings to have the freedom to choose for themselves their own pathway. Slavery was unjust as it robbed them of this fundamental right of existence. Also, slavery was a system intended to strip away the dignity and humanity of those enslaved which made it even more unjust and antithetical to what should be believed as liberal

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values. On the other hand, pro-slavery position argued that enslaved people were freer that those who had the burden of maintaining their wealth. He quotes from a prominent pro-slavery apologist at the time asserting “Fitzhugh even suggests that Southern slaves are freer than British (and American) capitalists, stating: ‘But the reader may think that he and other capitalists and employers are freer than negro slaves. Your capital would soon vanish, if you dared indulge in the liberty and abandon of negroes. You hold your wealth and position by the tenure of constant watchfulness, care, and circumspection. You never labor; but you are never free.’”  

The pro-slavery argument in this case holds the idea of the freedom from responsibility on the part of enslaved people of African descent. Capitalists, in their wealth, were bound to a more powerful system that restricted them within the confines of economic chaos. Enslaved people of African descent, although in bondage, did not have to endure the suffering that came from the expectations of maintaining their capital in their system.

Black Nationalism also derived from a similar spring in trying to navigate how to confront a United States that espoused liberal ideals while holding slaves and marginalizing free people of African descent. The United States, at the time Black Nationalism first formed in the 1820s, was still a slave-holding nation although it also espoused ideals of freedom and equality for all. Free people of African descent in America pressed for debate and change calling this contradiction into question and laying the groundwork for abolitionist movements. Others went further by pressing for an independent Black American nation, or emigrating to either Liberia which was newly formed or Haiti like a previous generation of free black Americans had done.  

The Haitian Revolution, bringing about the first Black nation in the West and the West’s

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163 Ericson, 113.
second republic, was the catalyst that first began the thoughts of an attainable free Black nation in the minds of Blacks in the United States. Even still, after the American Emigration Projects failed, it continued to hold a prominent place in the minds of American Free Blacks. Sara Fanning, in her article “The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans,” argues that after the Haitian Revolution, there had long persisted a deeply-rooted interest on the part of African Americans in Haiti. The emigration that Boyer would start in 1826 would be part of a long and complicated struggle for African Americans seeking refuge from the United States in Haiti. 165

Haiti’s Revolution and example provided a testament to what people of African descent could create in the Western world. In his lecture, “A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government, and Civilized Progress,” James Theodore Holly captures this sentiment when he states that Haiti’s Revolution was brought about by “a race of almost dehumanized men–made so by an oppressive slavery of three centuries–arose from their slumber of ages, and redressed their own unparalleled wrongs with a terrible hand in the name of God and humanity.” 166 Furthermore, Haiti’s example cast doubt on perceptions of people of African descent and their capability of adapting liberal ideas for themselves especially in establishing their own freedom. Not only did the institution of slavery come under threat, but the possibility of other Black republics taking shape had greater potential to become reality. Taking this example and pushing it further, American Black Nationalists were able to further push the cause

for abolition and developed a strong opposition to slavery with a powerful example of its injustice.

Geffrard, in time, would be overthrown himself after a downturn in the Haitian economy as well as a rise of Faustin I loyalists who grew mistrustful of the “mulatto government” leading them.167 His reforms, while potent, were not enough to correct everything that was needed and keep him in power. However, in his aspirations for Haiti and restoring its Republic, it would prove to be the form of government which would last up until the American Occupation in 1915. Geffrard was aware of the international perception of Haiti’s internal struggle which considered Haiti a failure. John Stuart Mill also commented on this very issue when he responded to an essay in Fraser’s Magazine by Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle’s essay, “The Negro Question,” sparked controversy in 1849 by stoking fear of the consequences of granting freedom to those of African descent. He asserted that people of African descent could not govern themselves or be properly governed using Haiti and its political troubles as an example. Mill’s response questioned Fraser’s Magazine editor: “We are told to look at Haiti: what does your contributor know of Haiti? ... Are we to listen to arguments grounded on hearsays like these? In what is black Haiti worse than white Mexico? If truth were known, how much worse is it than white Spain?”168 Haiti’s struggles, for better or worse, appear entirely indicative of struggles for liberal ideas throughout the Revolutionary world wrestling with the legacies of its colonial and imperial past.

Throughout the nineteenth century, liberalism and the foundations of freedom faced shared challenges across many nations throughout the Atlantic World. In transitioning from revolution to independence, there are shared themes of public spectacle, nationalism, and liberalism to win favor with the people and promote their national standing. Faustin I and Fabre Geffrard of Haiti, Napoleon III of France, and the warring caudillos of Latin and South America intermixed liberal ideals with their pursuits of consolidated power in the name of protecting their respective nations and their people. They did this through war with foreign enemies and with one another in the name of national pride and the welfare of the people. In their public spectacles and liberal reforms, they gained both the support of the people and promoted themselves to becoming the face of their nations. Debates over slavery and the possibility of blacks to form a new nation or emigrate to an existing nation lead by other black people raised many questions over what it would mean to become a truly liberal and democratic nation. In the ever-growing post-independence world, the fight for the heart of liberalism generated legacies of debates that still require modern attention.
Conclusion

Haiti in the nineteenth century was a nation thrust into a new frontier becoming the second overall yet first black republic in the Western hemisphere, born out of the first and only successful slave revolt in history, and determined to make its place in the world as an example to others of the potential for freedom and independence. The biggest misconceptions of Haiti during this period are 1) that it was an indisputable failure and 2) that it held an isolated, inactive position in the world away from the main events of this period. Throughout the course of this thesis, I have argued against both of these points viewing them as fundamentally incorrect. By examining its politics, we are able to observe Haiti’s measures, successful and otherwise, to actively participate in global politics and set for itself an identity to promote with its domestic and foreign policies. Each of Haiti’s leaders discussed during this period shape its identity according to their own methods of execution while holding to the fundamental principles that Haiti is meant to embody freedom within its borders and that it must contribute in every way it can to continue the fight for freedom and independence. That was the mission that would define most policy measures in Haiti in the nineteenth century, for better or for worse, and became the heart of its identity.

A free and independent Haiti had the potential to spark further change in nations all over the Atlantic World, and each of its leaders took up the mantle, in their own capacity, to guide Haiti along that path. With Christophe and Pétion I argue that, however different they were in terms of their backgrounds and styles of governing, in the nuances of the outcomes of their policies they go against the narrative that Haiti was a total failure. In seeking the best for Haiti, they had strikingly similar ideas for how to accomplish their shared goal of protecting and promoting Haiti and its people. Christophe’s economy was the wealthiest of the two Pétion’s guaranteed more freedom for the people. They both successfully funded education for their
citizens, and both contributed to the establishment a unique Haitian culture founded on pride for the country and its recent history, emphasizing its revolution. Christophe through his monuments, and Pétion through educating the youth. Their foreign policy measures gained connections for Haiti as well as assisted in the liberation of other nations through Pétion’s bond with Bolivar. They laid the foundation upon which all others would develop their own policies and methods to achieve these goals. With Boyer building upon the legacies of both Christophe and Pétion, primarily focused on foreign affairs, Haiti’s connections and bonds to other resistance struggles took shape on more than simply Haiti’s existence as an example. Boyer, in unifying all of Hispaniola, creating a relationship to bring American free blacks into Haiti, aiding the Greek War of Independence, and granting the safety of the escaped slaves from Turks and Caicos, demonstrates an active role in international politics as opposed to a backseat. Lastly, with Faustin I and Geffrard, I establish a connection between their struggles in adapting democratic ideals in the new era of independence in kind to other republics of the time. Haiti, instead of being isolated from these events, was very much a part of them and helped to form our understanding of them.

Reluctant to rest on the laurels of its own success after achieving independence, Haiti, reflected in the policies of its leadership, considered themselves responsible for helping to determine the fates of similar groups and nations seeking the same goal. Haiti’s successful revolution came about after several attempts elsewhere prior to its own. As the first to freedom, it took on with pride the onus of bringing as many as possible along with them. It met the challenges of its colonial and slaveholding past, though not always with success, but always with a plan to do the best for its people. From within its borders to without, they embraced the charge they set for themselves boldly and intently, understanding that while it had a target on its back by
disrupting business as usual, it could not sit by while others suffered the same as it had not too long ago. It is not only essential to understand how Haiti was responded to by others, but for how it charted its course after it obtained independence. Haiti was feared for its potential replication as well as for its hand in bringing about revolts throughout the Atlantic. Haiti was not idle. It was never alone in the fight. It was always aware of its own power and used that to determine its identity. The first into this form of freedom and independence and willing to work to the best of its ability to welcome others along.
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