

BETRAYED BY THE REPUBLIC THEY BLED TO BUILD: How America Erased Haiti's Revolutionary Heroes to Protect the Chains of Slavery

By The Editorial Board (Aaron/Easyfynt.com)

History is often written by the victors, but more dangerously, it is edited by the fearful. For centuries, the foundational narrative of the American Revolution has celebrated the ideal of liberty while meticulously omitting the Black hands that helped forge it.

To understand how the United States became indebted to the people of Haiti—and how that debt was systematically repaid with centuries of geopolitical hostility and social ostracization—one must untangle a narrative long clouded by myth.

The true historical chronicle of the Southern Campaign does not begin with a refusal of European alliances, but with a desperate, bloody struggle spanning from the **Siege of Savannah** in 1779 to the **Siege of Charleston** in 1780. At the center of this history stands an elite legion of Free Black Men from the French Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue. They bled for American independence, returned home to ignite the greatest slave revolt in human history, and were subsequently punished by an American empire that chose racial subjugation over historical gratitude.

Beyond the battlefield, this Haitian intervention acted as a primary catalyst for the territorial expansion that would ultimately fuel America's rise to global dominance.

By 1779, the American rebellion was faltering in the South. The true sequence of events reveals the heavy price paid by these Caribbean volunteers:

THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

[Sept-Oct 1779]	[May 1780]	[
1791-1804]		
The Siege of Savannah	The Siege of Charleston	The
Haitian Revolution		
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* French & American forces
Veterans of Savannah
attempt to retake city.
return home with battle
* Chasseurs-Volontaires
experience.
act as elite rear guard,
apply European tactics
saving the retreat.
successfully defeat
French colonial rule.

* British surround General *
Benjamin Lincoln.
* Continental Army collapses
in catastrophic defeat. * They
* Captured Haitians forced to
back into slavery.

- **The Gathering at Savannah (September–October 1779):** A massive Franco-American force sought to recapture British-occupied Savannah, Georgia. Anchored in the French fleet was an extraordinary unit: [Les Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint-Domingue](#). Composed of over 500 **Free Black Men**, they constituted the largest unit of soldiers of African descent to fight in the entire Revolutionary War.
- **The Heroic Rear Guard:** On October 9, 1779, the Franco-American assault on the British lines failed catastrophically. As panicked American and French regular troops fell back in a disorganized, bloody retreat, the British army charged to annihilate them. The *Chasseurs-Volontaires* moved into the breach. Functioning as an elite rear guard, they held the line with fierce discipline and lethal marksmanship, absorbing heavy casualties to ensure the safe withdrawal of the Continental forces.
- **The Disaster at Charleston (May 1780):** Following the failure at Savannah, the theater shifted. A company of these Haitian soldiers accompanied the wounded to Charleston, South Carolina. There, British forces completely surrounded the Continental Army commanded by General Benjamin Lincoln. When Charleston fell in May 1780, it marked the worst American defeat of the war. For the white American soldiers, surrender meant prisoner-of-war ships. For the captured Haitian heroes, the punishment was far more sinister: the British stripped them of their military status and **sold them directly into southern plantation slavery**.

The Double-Edged Sword of Liberty: Seeds of a New Revolution

For the *Chasseurs-Volontaires* who survived and returned to Saint-Domingue, the American experiment was a revelation. They had sailed across the Atlantic to fight for a nation demanding "liberty or death," only to witness that same nation tightly clutch the chains of human bondage.

The veterans—including a young drummer boy named **Henri Christophe**, who would later become the first King of Haiti—realized that the myth of European military invincibility was a lie. They took the conventional European tactics, engineering knowledge, and ideals of liberty they acquired on American battlefields and applied them to their own shores.

In 1791, the enslaved population of Saint-Domingue rose up. Guided by the military expertise of Savannah veterans, they defeated the British, Spanish, and Napoleon Bonaparte's formidable French army. In 1804, they declared the birth of **Haiti**: the first independent Black republic in the world, and the only nation established by a successful revolt of enslaved people.

The Blueprint for American Dominance: The Louisiana Purchase

The victory of these Black soldiers did more than just free Haiti; it fundamentally reordered the global balance of power and directly paved the way for the United States to become a global superpower.

Napoleon Bonaparte's grand strategic vision was centered on building a massive, profitable empire in the New World. He intended to use the rich sugar colony of Saint-Domingue as his economic engine, supported by the vast agricultural lands of the Louisiana Territory in North America.

However, the relentless brilliance of the Haitian revolutionaries destroyed Napoleon's plans. The fierce resistance of the Haitian people decimated France's finest military forces and drained the imperial treasury.

Defeated, broke, and realizing he could not hold territory in the Americas without Haiti as a naval base, Napoleon abandoned his dreams of a Western empire. In 1803, out of financial desperation, he offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory to Thomas Jefferson for pennies on the dollar. The resulting **Louisiana Purchase** instantly doubled the size of the United States overnight. It handed America the fertile plains, vital waterways, and natural resources that fueled its westward expansion, agricultural

wealth, and ultimate rise to global dominance. America's continental mastery was bought with Haitian blood.

Why They Became the "Forgotten Heroes"

The erasure of the *Chasseurs-Volontaires* from standard American textbooks was not an accident of time; it was a deliberate strategy of archival censorship.

THE ANATOMY OF ERASURE

[Southern Slaveocracy] ==> Terrified that the story of free Black soldiers defeating European armies would inspire domestic revolts.

[Diplomatic Isolation] ==> Thomas Jefferson and US leadership refused to recognize Haiti, implementing a total economic embargo.

[Historiographical Veil] ==> 19th and 20th-century narratives systematically omitted Black contributions to preserve white supremacist myths.

To an American Republic heavily dependent on chattel slavery, the existence of free, highly trained Black soldiers who fought for US independence—and then went home to violently overthrow their white masters—was an existential nightmare.

If American slaves learned that Black men had successfully commanded armies and built a free republic just hundreds of miles off the coast of Florida, the entire plantation economy of the American South would collapse. Therefore, US politicians, historians, and educators systematically scrubbed the *Chasseurs-Volontaires* from the national consciousness. They chose to bury a debt of honor to preserve an institution of cruelty.

The Long Shadow: From Liberators to Marginalized Immigrants

This historical amnesia directly informs the systemic prejudice faced by Haitian immigrants in the United States today. The modern media and political rhetoric that frequently maligns Haitian arrivals—painting them through a lens of poverty or instability—is the continuation of a 220-year-old policy of containment.

When Haiti won its independence, the United States, under President Thomas Jefferson, refused to recognize the country. Instead, the US instituted a crippling economic embargo. Later, in 1915, the US occupied Haiti for nearly two decades, destabilizing its financial sovereignty. For centuries, Western powers forced Haiti to pay staggering "reparations" to France simply for the crime of freeing themselves, forcing the young nation into a cycle of systemic poverty.

THE TIMELINE OF SYSTEMIC MARGINALIZATION

1804: Haiti declares independence; US refuses diplomatic recognition.
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1806: US implements a total economic embargo on the Black Republic.
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1915: US military occupies Haiti, seizing financial assets and rewriting its constitution.
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Modern Era: Media and political rhetoric weaponize the poverty caused by this very history to brand Haitian immigrants as undesirable.

The tragic irony is profound: the very nation that pioneered modern anti-colonial liberty has, for generations, demonized the immigrants of the nation that perfected it.

A Call for Global Enlightenment

The bronze statues of the [Haitian Monument in Savannah's Franklin Square](#) do not just honor the dead; they demand an apology from the living. They stand as a testament that Haitian blood is permanently woven into the fabric of the United States.

It is time for the citizens of the United States and the world to unlearn the biased histories of the past. Haiti did not fail itself; it was isolated and penalized by an ungrateful Western world terrified of Black liberty. True education requires acknowledging that the freedom enjoyed in America today—and its geographical status as a global powerhouse—was bought, in part, by the bravery of the

Chasseurs-Volontaires. Only by restoring these forgotten heroes to their rightful place in the global archives can we begin to dismantle the deep-seated prejudices that still cloud our borders today.
