

The Unanticipated Consequences of Haitian Reparation



Allen M. Price





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In the face of the fact that Haiti still lives, after being boycotted by all the Christian world; in the face of the fact of her known progress within the last twenty years; in the face of the fact that she has attached herself to the car of the world's civilization, I will not, I cannot believe that her star is to go out in darkness, but I will rather believe that whatever may happen of peace or war Haiti will remain in the firmament of nations, and, like the star of the north, will shine on and shine on forever.

Frederick Douglass, "Lecture on Haiti," 1893

In 1804, from the city of Gonaïve, after a thirteen-year battle, African slaves of the French colony Saint-Domingue emancipated themselves, eliminated slavery from the island, and founded the Haitian republic. Haiti became the first black-led republic in the world, the only country ever to be born from a slave revolt, and the first independent country in Latin America. The Haitian Revolution and the American Revolution were the only two rebellions in the New World to achieve permanent independence. While the United States prospered from its continued enslavement of blacks and went on to become the richest country in the world, Haiti lost its title as the wealthiest and most prosperous of any country in the Caribbean when it "shackled" itself to France's ankles through reparation to become the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

Prior to the Haitian Revolution, Saint-Domingue was the most profitable possession of the French Empire. The colony, along with Jamaica, became the main supplier of the world's sugar. By the 1740s, Saint-Domingue produced 60 percent of the world's coffee and 40 percent of the world's sugar imported by France and Britain. Although less profitable, the island was also a producer of cotton, cocoa, tobacco, and indigo. In one year, it exported 72 million pounds of raw sugar and 51 million pounds of refined sugar, one million pounds of indigo, and two million pounds of cotton.¹ Roughly the size of Maryland, Saint-Domingue became known as *la perle des Antilles*, the "Pearl of the Antilles."

Saint-Domingue was divided into four distinct social classes: French planters and plantation owners, the *grands blancs*, made up the upper-class whites. *Petits blancs*, artisans, shopkeepers, slave dealers, overseers, and day laborers, were part of the lower-class whites. Another group was the *gens de couleur libres*, free people of color. Saint-Domingue had the largest and wealthiest *gens de couleur libres* in the Caribbean. The majority of the *gens de couleur libres* were *métis*, light-skinned (mulattoes) offspring of white French planters and African women; through *plaçage*, a type of common-law marriage planters enjoyed with their slave mistresses, the *gens de couleur libres* were able to inherit and own considerable property. The *gens de couleur libres* had legal and social advantages over the slave classes. They were able to attend colonial entertainments.

They could not, however, hold administrative positions or work as doctors or lawyers. They were also forbidden to wear the style of clothes favored by the wealthy white colonists. Many identified themselves culturally with France rather than with the enslaved African population who made up the bottom part of the social class. African slaves outnumbered planters and plantation owners by a factor of more than ten.² Between 1764 and 1771, the average annual importation of slaves varied between 10,000-15,000; by 1786 it was about 28,000, and from 1787 onward, the colony received more than 40,000 slaves a year. White colonials, numbering only 40,000, lived in constant fear of slave rebellion.³

While racial tension between the *gens de couleur libres* and enslaved Africans polarized the country, violence between the white colonials and the African slaves erupted. Slaves would often disobey their masters and escape the plantations. Runaway slaves, *maroons*, would flee the plantations and find freedom and form communities of maroons in the mountains. When the slaves were caught, they were subjected to brutally harsh punishments in the form of whippings, castration, and burning. Henri Christophe, who was a slave for more than half his life, and aided Toussaint L'Ouverture, former slave, military leader of the Haitian Revolution, in the liberation of Haiti, described the crimes perpetrated against the slaves in his personal secretary:

Have they not hung up men with heads

downward, drowned them in sacks, crucified them on planks, buried them alive, crushed them in mortars? Have they not forced them to consume feces? And, having flayed them with the lash, have they not cast them alive to be devoured by worms, or onto anthills, or lashed them to stakes in the swamp to be devoured by mosquitoes? Have they not thrown them into boiling cauldrons of cane syrup? Have they not put men and women inside barrels studded with spikes and rolled them down mountainsides into the abyss? Have they not consigned these miserable blacks to man eating-dogs until the latter, sated by human flesh, left the mangled victims to be finished off with bayonet and poniard? ⁴

Throughout the early 1700s, African slaves continued escaping from plantations in large numbers, sometimes numbering in the thousands. They lived far away from control in the woods and mountains and conducted violent raids on the island's plantations. They generally lacked any type of leadership or any form of large-scale objective, until 1751 when François Mackandal, an escaped one-armed slave, succeeded in unifying the African slave resistance. Mackandal was a *vodou Houngan* (a male priest) who from 1751 to 1757 united many of the different *maroon* bands, established a network of secret organizations among plantation slaves, and staged many successful raids, reputedly killing over 6,000 people. When Mackandal practiced

vodou, Sèvis Lwa, he would create many of his own poisons and distribute them to slaves who would put the poisons in the meals and drinks of slave owners and planters.⁵ But after a failed plot to poison the drinking water of the plantation owners in 1758, he was captured and burned alive at the public square in Cap-Français. Mackandal's death did not stop the raids. Over the next three decades, large bands of *maroons* raided plantations, torch properties, and kill the owners.

By 1789, the French Revolution was well underway. France had made radical changes to French laws, establishing the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which declared all men free and equal. The *grands blancs* saw this as an opportunity to take control of the island, and create trade regulations that would further their own wealth and power. African slaves began to hear of the *grands blancs'* plans, and understood that if Saint-Domingue's independence were to be led by the *grands blancs*, it would mean that they along with the *gens de couleur libres*—who by 1789 owned one-quarter of the slaves and one-third of the plantation property—would be free to do as they pleased with the slaves without any accountability.⁶ The Code Noir, Louis XIV passed in 1685, regulated the treatment of slaves on the colony, but the *grands blancs* had blatant disregard, and openly and consistently broke the code, and had the colony's legislators reversed parts of it.⁷ The *gens de couleur libres* were also appealing for civil equality, and used the French Revolution to make their case. Vincent Ogé, an educated and wealthy leader of the

gens de couleur libres, pressured the French National Assembly to force the *grands blancs* to allow the *gens de couleur libres* the right to vote as well as the right to hold administrative positions. He believed that an amendment passed by the Assembly in March 1790 asserted the equality of free men of property. It read, "all the proprietors... ought to be active citizens." So determined Ogé was for civil rights, he petitioned the President of the Assembly:

GENTLEMEN:—A prejudice, too long maintained, is about to fall. I am charged with a commission doubtless very honorable to myself. I require you to promulgate throughout the colony the instructions of the National Assembly of the 8th of March, which gives without distinction, to all free citizens, the right of admission to all offices and functions. My pretensions are just, and I hope you will pay due regard to them. I shall not call the plantations to rise; that means would be unworthy of me. Learn to appreciate the merit of a man whose intention is pure. When I solicited from the National Assembly a decree which I obtained in favour of the American colonists, formerly known under the injurious epithet of mulattos, I did not include in my claims the condition of the negroes who live in servitude. You and our adversaries have misrepresented my steps in order to bring me into discredit with honorable men. No,

no, gentlemen! we have put forth a claim only on behalf of a class of freemen, who, for two centuries, have been under the yoke of oppression. We require the execution of the decree of the 8th of March. We insist on its promulgation, and we shall not cease to repeat to our friends that our adversaries are unjust, and that they know not how to make their interests compatible with ours. Before employing my means, I make use of mildness; but if, contrary to my expectation, you do not satisfy my demand, I am not answerable for the disorder into which my just vengeance may carry me.⁸

He then pressured the colonial governor, Count de Blanchelande. But when the governor refused, Ogé led an insurgency in the area around Cap Français. Being tortured to death by his white captors, "he took black powder or seedgrains in the hollow of his hand...sprinkled a film of white ones on the top, and said to his judges, 'Behold they are white;' then shook his hand and said, 'Where are the whites? *Où sont les blancs?*'"⁹ Ogé was brutally executed by being "broken on the wheel" in the public square in Le Cap on February 6, 1791. This enraged both the free people of color *and* the African slaves, for Ogé was a member of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, "Friends of the Negro." Comte de Mirabeau, a leading French Revolutionary, a statesman, and one of the great orators of France, noted that the whites of Saint-Domingue were *dormir au pied du Vésuve*, "sleeping at the foot of

Vesuvius.”¹⁰ And on the evening of August 22, 1791, under the lashing of a tropical storm, that volcano erupted.

Within weeks, the number of slaves who joined the revolt reached about 100,000. Over the next two months, African slaves killed 4,000 whites and burned and destroyed hundreds of sugar, coffee, and indigo plantations.¹¹ This slave revolt was remarkable in both its scale and its degree of organization.¹² The key figure emerging from the revolt was Toussaint L’Ouverture. His organizational and military skills gave him sway over the *gens de couleur libres* and African slaves. L’Ouverture agreed to fight for the French if they agreed to free all the slaves—France did. France feared the *grands blancs* on the island who had made agreements with Great Britain to declare British sovereignty over the islands. L’Ouverture’s goal was to free the slaves, and restore the island’s economic prosperity—without slavery.¹³ By the end of 1791, African slaves controlled a third of the colony. The first victory of the revolt came to the *gens de couleur libres* in March 1792. The French Legislative Assembly, with the hopes of protecting the economics of the country, granted civil and political rights to all *gens de couleur libres*. Two years later, L’Ouverture restored control of Saint-Domingue to France, and on the 4th of February 1794, under the National Convention, during the first elected Legislative Assembly of *la République française première*, the French First Republic, slavery was abolished in France and all the colonies, and civil and political rights were given to all the *gens*

de couleur in the colonies.

The revolt sent shock waves and pandemonium throughout the world, particularly in the U.S. who had a booming business with the colony. Some 500 U.S. ships sailed to the colony’s ports each year, more than one a day, by the time of the French Revolution. In order to protect its investments, the young republic sent \$750,000 in military aid, as well as troops, to defend the *grands blancs*.¹⁴ And because the U.S. was a slave society that talked about freedom and liberty, but meant white freedom, and white liberty (and really only meant white men of means and wealth), it gave a spur and a spark to the anti-slavery movement on these shores, as the brilliant W.E.B. DuBois wrote in his *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America: 1638 to 1870*:

The role which the great Negro Toussaint, called L’ouverture, played in the history of the United States has seldom been fully appreciated. Representing the age of revolution in America, he rose to leadership through a bloody terror, which contrived a Negro “problem” for the Western Hemisphere, intensified and defined the anti-slavery movement, became one of the causes, and probably the prime one, which lead Napoleon to sell Louisiana for a song, and finally, through the interworking of all these efforts, rendered more certain the final prohibition of the slave-trade by the United States in 1807.¹⁵

More astonishment came to the world on April 1796 when L'Ouverture's named himself Lieutenant Governor of Saint-Domingue. L'Ouverture did not wish to surrender too much power to France. He then began ruling the colony as an autonomous entity. Throughout 1795 and 1796, L'Ouverture's focus was with reestablishing agriculture, and keeping the peace in areas under his control. He believed that the long-term freedom of the people of Saint-Domingue depended on the economic viability of the colony.¹⁶ He resorted to a combination of diplomacy and force to return the field hands to the plantations as emancipated and paid workers.¹⁷ Nevertheless, there were regular rebellions by workers protesting poor conditions, lack of real freedom with some fearing a return to slavery.¹⁸ He expelled delegates from Paris in 1798 and 1799. Napoleon, who came to power in 1799, was initially constrained to "offensives of charm towards L'Ouverture, whom he could not yet overtly attack."¹⁹ In 1801, L'Ouverture led an invasion of neighboring Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), and freed the slaves there. He then issued a constitution for Saint-Domingue, which decreed that he would be governor-for-life, as he called for black autonomy and a sovereign black state making it a self-governing territory. Frustrated, Napoleon dispatched his brother-in-law, Captain-General Charles Leclerc, to lead a large expeditionary force to the Saint-Domingue. Napoleon's goal was to reestablish French rule—and slavery.²⁰ L'Ouverture was again asked by the

French to fight for them, and to integrate his troops into the French Army in exchange for his freedom, and so in May 1802 he agreed. But L'Ouverture was deceived, and seized by the French. Upon being captured he said this now famous line, "In overthrowing me, you have done no more than cut down the trunk of the tree of the black liberty in Saint-Domingue. It will spring back from the roots, for they are numerous and deep." He was then shipped to France and imprisoned at Fort-de-Joux in the Jura region, "dying a slow death from cold and misery."²¹

Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Toussaint L'Ouverture's principal lieutenant, carried on with fighting Leclerc. As it became apparent that the French intended to reestablish slavery (because they had done so on Guadeloupe), Dessalines, whose motto was *koupe tèt, brule kay*, "cut their heads, burn their houses," was more determined to defeat Leclerc. In November 1802, however, Leclerc fell ill and died of yellow fever, like much of his army. Dessalines used a scorched-earth approach against Leclerc's successor, Vicomte de Rochambeau, and won the last battle of the Haitian Revolution, *la Batay Vètyè, la Batailles de Vertières*, the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803. *La Batailles de Vertières* marked the first time in the history of the world that a slave army led a successful revolution for their freedom. November 18 has been celebrated since then as Vertières Day.

On January 1, 1804, from the city of Gonaïves, Dessalines declared the colony's independence. Saint-Domingue was renamed Haiti,

a modified spelling of the original Indian name, Ayiti— meaning “home or mother of the earth” in the Taino-Arawak Native American language, and “sacred earth or homeland” in the Fon African language—in order to symbolize a new era, and breakaway from the period of slavery. As founding father, Dessalines proclaimed, “I have given the French cannibals blood for blood. I have avenged America.”²² In May 1805 he promulgated a written constitution, declaring himself emperor, and the country “sovereign and independent of all other powers in the universe.”²³ It stated that “slavery was abolished forever”, and that all citizens, regardless of skin color, were to have equal rights. “Among children of a single family, whose father is the head of state, must necessarily cease, Haitians will be known from now on only under the generic name of ‘black.’” It even prohibited the *grand blancs* from acquiring property in the country.

Victory, however, was far from accomplished. Much of the infrastructure of Haiti was devastated during the revolution, an unintended consequence that the *gens de couleur* as well as the *gens de couleur libres* could not have envisioned. The infrastructure built under the colonial regime was now in poor shape. Considerable damage and destruction had been done to property and the costly sugar-processing machinery on the plantations. The irrigation systems vital for sugar-growing in drier regions had been disintegrated, and many roads had deteriorated so badly that carriages could no longer use them, forcing travelers to go on horseback or

by foot.²⁴ Thus the new nation of Haiti faced the daunting task of reviving the economic activity, and generating the resources to build its future— without slavery. But finding blacks capable of operating the machinery proved most difficult. The human cost of emancipation was a huge one: a massive multiracial exodus the revolution unleashed. Between 1791 and 1803, thousands of refugees fled to neighboring Santa Domingo, while others immigrated to North America: many of whom were *gens de couleur* and *gens de couleur libres* who owned slaves.²⁵ Couple this with a survey taken after the declaration of Independence in 1804 that suggested that, of the more than half million *gens de couleur* on the island in 1792, just 341,933 survived—a drop of almost a third from the figures in 1789²⁶—and only 170,000 of those were believed to be capable of field labor.²⁷ Where men had always outnumbered women during the slavery, women made up a majority of the post-independence population.²⁸ This left women having to learn the traits that were only taught to men.

Dessalines tried to keep the sugar plantations running without slavery. He demanded all *gens de couleur* work either as soldiers to protect the nation or as laborers on the plantations to generate crops and income to keep the nation going. He enforced a harsh regimen of plantation labor, described by anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot as *caporalisme agraire*, “agrarian militarism,” a contradiction between the provisions that guaranteed freedom from slavery and equality as protection from racial discrimination, and the

provisions that regulated agriculture.²⁹ This created conflict in determining the direction of the country, which turned into violence, and led to Dessalines's assassination in 1806. For fourteen years, after the assassination, from 1807 to 1820, Haiti operated under a dual economy, with forced labor on large plantations in the north and small-scale farming in partitioned land in the south. This division reintroduced the inequalities of the colonial system. The 1820 unification of the nation entailed the abandonment of plantation agriculture and the establishment of a peasant-based agricultural economy.³⁰ The new elite insisted that the peasantry produce commodities for an international market, but the peasants—the former slaves—wished to be left alone to grow foodstuffs for themselves and for local markets.³¹ Although policies of land redistribution and limited social and economic reform improved the lives of the former slaves, and production of sugar as well as rum and cotton became once again important exporters for the country, the policies also produced a severe and ultimately irreversible decline in agricultural production.

Many candidates succeeded Dessalines. And with each successor, Haiti's socioeconomic status declined. But it was Jean Pierre Boyer who indemnity bankrupt the country. Productivity under Boyer diminished as it did under his predecessor, Alexandre Sabès Pétion. Most Haitians, were content to eke out a quiet living after years of turmoil and duress, and proceeded to become full subsistence farmers, falling into

comfortable isolation on their plots of land.³² This caused the country's exports and state-revenue to sharply decline. With the Haitian economy stagnated, the Haitian society ossified, and slave nations—enraged and humiliated at the *gens de couleur's* audacity to emancipate themselves—punishing Haiti with commercial embargos and diplomatic ostracism, Boyer's solution to the problem was payment to France in return for recognition: 150 million francs, later reduced to a lower amount. The first part of the indemnity, 30 million francs, Boyer had to negotiate a loan from France. And while France's crushing reparation secured Haiti from French aggression, it emptied the treasury and mortgaged the country's future, and caused the former colony to become, once again dependent on France.

When the slaves were fighting for freedom and independence, it is safe to say that not one of them could have envisioned such an unanticipated consequence resulting. But reparation became just that: an unanticipated consequence that indemnity bankrupted the newly-founded country. This unanticipated consequence of freedom took more than a century to pay, well into the 1950s, and bled away Haiti's resources for economic development. In many regards, this unanticipated consequence was just another type of enslavement. A social control in the form of reparation that kept the "emancipated" slaves shackled to France's ankles for decades. For it was a way of disciplining and surveying the sovereign country, of controlling the country's resources, determining the country's

finances, and regulating its role in the world. The intentions of France and the U.S. were clear: make it impossible for Haiti to build schools and roads, to build health and agricultural infrastructures, to become prosperous and as rich a country as it was under France rule. The burden of this unanticipated consequence left Haiti, a country in financial balance, no chance of any sort of common financial future. It begs the question why? Why did the Haitians feel they needed France to keep the country's agriculture productive? Why did they accept the demands of France? They had just defeated one of the strongest, richest countries in the world. They had freed themselves from slavery, and established a new country. They had the skills and the equipment to produce some of the world's most sought after commodities, commodities that had made France so rich and so powerful. So why? Paul Farmer states what he believes are the reasons Boyer agreed to reparations in *The Uses of Haiti*:

Haiti became the outcast of the international community. Though some have confused this status with economic and political isolation, a pariah nation may have many *uses*. It may be a source of raw materials and tropical produce, much as a colony; it may serve as a market for goods; it may serve as a cautionary tale. And for the French, the uses of Haiti included all of these.³³ The legally anomalous indemnity is best thought of as a *dépense d'entreprise*, business expense. An elite [Dessalines] who

saw diplomatic recognition as essential to their own survival held the growth of the republic to be tied to continued export of subtropical commodities. It was for this reason that the 'major, essential, primordial objective, pursued in diverse ways by all [Haitian] governments—from Dessalines to Geffrard—was, even when not explicitly announced, the recognition of independence.'³⁴

Sibylle Fischer, too, addresses these questions in, *Modernity disavowed: Haiti and the cultures of slavery in the age of revolution*:

There can be no doubt that Toussant Louverture was right to worry about the survival of the island and that measures were needed to get agricultural production back on track. After ten years of civil war, many of the white planters had fled the country or had been killed, and the former slaves had abandoned the plantations. With agriculture in shambles, the colony had no income and no source to feed the population. But the point here is not to assign blame or provide exculpatory explanations. It should be obvious that the problems the Haitian revolutionaries were facing were enormous and largely a result of ruthless colonial exploitation and abuse. The question I am trying to tackle is how these inherited problems translated into the

foundations of a new state.³⁵

The first thing President Boyer did to help pay the debt was increase all the tariffs on imports from 12 to 16 percent. This was to offset one of the agreements in the clause, which cut the tariffs imposed on French ships in half. These tariffs were the principal source of income for the government to pay the debt. Boyer then enacted the Rural Code, which was designed to regulate Haitian farmers in order to more efficiently produce export crops with which to pay the indemnity, bound farmers to their land and placed production quotas on them, forcing them into large-scale production of export crops. The code also banned small-scale commerce, so that farmers would produce crops strictly for export. But the Haitian farmers, agricultural workers, and the government lacked the wherewithal, the enthusiasm, and the discipline to enforce the code. Boyer also used the taxes levied on production to pay the indemnity, and not to build schools, a strong agricultural and health infrastructure, or to the generators of this great wealth. For example, for almost 200 years, from 1804 to 1994, only 195 new primary schools and 104 new public high schools were constructed and/or refurbished.³⁶ To make the first payment, Haiti closed all its public schools in what has been called the hemisphere's first case of structural adjustment, although one could certainly argue that reparations was the first case of structural adjustment.³⁷

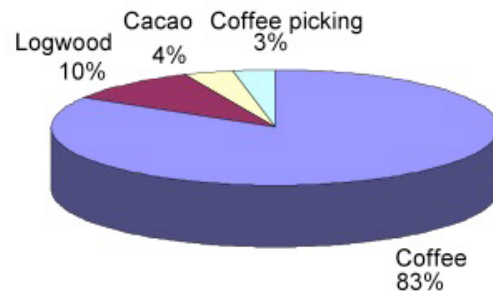
How much money went from the slave colony to one of the richest countries in the world

is still uncertain. But what is certain is that with each payment, the country spiraled deeper and deeper into massive debt. In 1874, President Michel Domingue negotiated two loans with French banking houses in the sum of 36 million francs, with the intention of developing the economy; he received 10 million of it in the form of old obligations. The balance was paid in commissions and discounts to French bankers and in bribes to Haitian politicians.³⁸ Fifteen years later, President Florvil Hyppolite, following down the same path, borrowed 50 million francs from France.³⁹ In 1910, another loan in the amount of 65 million francs, bearing interest of 5 percent, was issued. It was to redeem the old internal debt and to provide for the final redemption of paper money, but only 47 million of it was deposited in the National Bank of the Republic of Haiti. Most of these loans were used to pay off other loans, not for the development of Haiti's infrastructure.⁴⁰ For example, in 1908, coffee represented 83.5% of the income generated by tariffs and of that 97.8% was allotted to paying the debt.

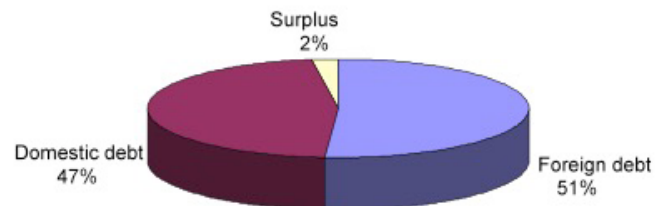
% of government expenses, 1890-1914					
	1890-91	1891-92	1892-93	1897-98	1900-1901
Expenses	26.6	23.3	25.5	50.2	44
Debt	26.6	23.3	25.5	50.2	44
Interior, Army, Navy	30.1	34.1	33.7	21.6	28.8
Total	56.7	57.4	59.2	71.8	72.8
Agriculture	3.8			2.1	
	1901-02	1908-1909	1909-1910	1912-13	1913-14
Expenses	53.6	50.9	57.9	52.6	67.7
Debt	53.6	50.9	57.9	52.6	67.7
Interior, Army, Navy	20.8	24.3	19.4	26.5	22.7
Total	74.4	75.2	77.3	79.1	90.4
Agriculture		1.4	1.4	1.4	

Source : F.BLANCPAIN, *Un siècle de relations financières entre Haïti et la France*, Paris, L'harmattan, 2001, p.23

Breakdown of tariffs in 1908



Allocation of coffee revenues, 1908



Source : G-K. GAILLARD, *L'Expérience haïtienne de la dette extérieure*, Maison Henri Deschamps, 1990, p.118

The causality of Haiti's socioeconomic and sociopolitical hardships is not completely of its own doing. Much of it has been caused by the international community's hatred towards the country, an unintended consequence that resulted from the *gens de couleur's* audacity to win freedom and independence from the world's richest and most powerful country, and to not allow themselves to fall back under French rule in paying reparations. France and the United States were still slave nations as was much of Europe; they had slaves in Africa and Asia. The international community could not enforce their global agenda on Haiti unless they contained and destroyed its righteous vision. So the international community decided that a nation of freed slaves set a dangerous precedent. And for a long time, Haiti did not receive full recognition. Thomas Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and even members of Congress refused to recognize the country for fear that it would strengthen V. Hayne of South Carolina stated, "Our policy with regard to Hayti [sic] is plain. We never can acknowledge her independence....The peace and safety of our large portion of our union even forbids us even to discuss [it]."41 It was not until 1862 when President Lincoln acknowledged the new black republic did the U.S. recognize Haiti's existence.

Haiti was used, raped, and profited off of by the U.S., France, and many other European countries, and yet those countries have not taken responsibility for any of Haiti's socioeconomic and sociopolitical suffering, laying the blame all at

Haiti's feet. On January 14, 2010, just two days after the earthquake struck Haiti, *The New York Times* columnist, David Brooks wrote in his column, *The Underlying Tragedy*, "Haiti, like most of the world's poorest nations, suffers from a complex web of progress-resistant cultural influences. We're all supposed to politely respect each other's cultures. But some cultures are more progress-resistant than others, and a horrible tragedy was just exacerbated by one of them." So what was the underlying basis of this unintended consequence of Haitian reparation? Were the rich white West and East angry for losing such a great land as Haiti? Were they fearful of the Africans' emancipation? Or were they afraid to see Africans become rich and powerful, as the country was under French rule? Randall Robinson addresses the causality of this unintended consequence in his book, *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, from Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President*:

What was it, though, about Haiti that made the place so different from other Caribbean places, so especially combustible? What property, what special character did it have that would incite the rich white West [and East] to engage a poor, largely black nation with such glowering, unrelenting hostility?....The Haitians knew their history. The Haitian peasants may have had few material possessions to speak of, but they knew what their slave ancestors had done to the French, to the English and

to the Spanish. They also knew what they had done to liberate all of Latin America, as well as themselves. No matter how poor they were, the Haitians knew these things about themselves, things that made them special to themselves, that made them resilient and independent, that gave them great art, that unsettled, even now, those nations the peasants' slave ancestors had once soundly thrashed.⁴²

Nothing has revealed this hatred towards Haiti and the *gens de couleur* as the HIV/AIDS epidemic. When AIDS, *sida*, first appeared in the U.S., Americans blamed Haitians not only for the disease, but for spreading the disease throughout America. In 1982, five U.S. states reported 34 cases of AIDS in Haitian patients. The CDC, Center for Disease Control, then grouped Haitians as a 'high-risk group' for AIDS, alerted doctors to "be aware that such opportunistic infections may occur in this population too," and prevented Haitians from donating blood in the United States.⁴³ Some U.S. researchers reported that Haitian animal sacrifice and voodoo rituals were to blame for the disease, while others claimed that Haitians contracted the virus from monkeys as part of bizarre sexual practices in Haitian Brothels.⁴⁴ This gave Haitian haters reason enough to blame Haitians for the disease. The head of the Roman Catholic Haitian refugee center in New York City, told the *New York Times*, "Those who did not like Haitian, have found a new element. They are saying they do not want

Haitians here because they are AIDS carriers."⁴⁵ It was reported in some parts of the U.S. that the unemployment rate for Haitians was twice the rate of other black workers. Haitian students were beaten up in school, and Haitian families had been evicted from their homes.⁴⁶

There has been no evidentiary support to the claim that Haitians were the cause of the HIV/AIDS virus, so why were (in many regards, still are) Haitians blamed for the disease? It is certainly not scientifically correct, for germs, viruses, bacteria care less about a person's race or ethnicity. It certainly is not socially correct. People don't refer to syphilis as a black disease, although some have. Was AIDS then, as Paul Farmer questions in *AIDS and Accusations*, a product of North American Imperialism? A study of Haiti's economy revealed that the country has had close ties to the United States through an economic network in what Orlando Patterson coined the "West Atlantic system:"

Originally a region of diverse cultures and economies operating within the framework of several imperial systems, the West Atlantic region has emerged over the centuries as a single environment in which the dualistic United States center is asymmetrically linked to dualistic peripheral units. Unlike other peripheral systems of the states—those of the Pacific, for example—the West Atlantic periphery has become more and more uniform, under

the direct and immediate influence of the all-powerful center, in cultural, political and economic terms. Further, unlike other peripheral states in their relation to their centers, the West Atlantic system has a physical nexus in the metropolis at the tip of Florida.⁴⁷

Of all the countries with the most AIDS cases in the West Atlantic system—Haiti, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, the Bahamas, and Trinidad/Tobago—Haiti is the country with the largest number of AIDS cases, and is the most dependent on U.S. exports. And to understand the connection between Haiti's dependence on the U.S., and the West Atlantic AIDS pandemic, it is necessary to look at the unanticipated consequences that occurred as a result of the *gens de couleur's* defeat of France, their emancipation, and their audacity to pay reparation in exchange for recognition. For Haiti's dependence on the U.S., and blame for the AIDS pandemic may have never occurred if it weren't for the unanticipated and unintended consequences that resulted. One may ask, what do the unanticipated and unintended consequences of Haiti's emancipation and reparation have to do with Haiti being blame for the AIDS virus? The AIDS virus was not detected on the island until 1981, at the same time the first cases were documented in the U.S. In fact, some epidemiological data has shown that American gay men brought the disease to Haiti. Many of the world's superpowers at the time didn't expect

Haiti to defect France, nor did they expect Haiti to be so bold as to break the chains of slavery. It put the world in a difficult, rather fearful and unsure position. The rich white world wanted desperately to retake the sovereign country over again and reinstate slavery, but when Haiti agreed to pay reparations those chances were gone forever. Haiti has paid dearly, well beyond monetarily, for its freedom, for its boldness, and for defeating the rich white world. The blame Haiti received for the AIDS virus stems from the unintended consequence of hatred and animosity, and the hatred and animosity stem from the unanticipated consequences of reparation that resulted from Haiti's freedom and independence.

These unintended and unanticipated consequences are the reason humanitarianism has been a failure in Haiti. Between 1915 and 1934 the nation underwent U.S. military occupation; America fear that the country's political turmoil would spin out of control. Repressive coups and military dictatorships under the hereditary Duvalier regime made the country economically and politically subordinate to the international community. These socioeconomic and sociopolitical forces resulting from structural violence caused deep-rooted poverty, and created the conditions for diseases to flourish. Foreign intervention in the form of stabilization measures and structural adjustments, in the hopes of bringing economic and political stability to the first black republic, made it dependent on foreign aid. Once the richest French colony in the New World—as a result of

the immense profits from the production and exportation of sugar (a commodity considered the most valuable commodity in European trade⁴⁸), coffee, rice, and other produce, an outcome made possible by the labor and knowledge of the enslaved Africans who brought to the island the skills and technology for production—Haiti, by the end of the 80s, was dependent on those same imports to meet its food consumption. The food policies of the U.S. imposed on Haiti during the Clinton Administration made the country dependent on foreign food, an unexpected consequence that President Clinton did not envision.

In 1994, Clinton forced Haiti to cut its rice tariff on imported subsidized U.S. rice from 50 percent to 3 percent. The intended consequence was to improve the conditions of the Haitian people by making Haiti the most open to trade of all the Caribbean countries large amounts of cheap American rice imports. But Clinton's political interventions of free trade came with a price that caused the unemployment and displacement of thousands of farmers, traders, and millers, wiped out Haitian rice farming, and seriously damaged the country's ability to be self-sufficient. It is hard to believe that President Clinton actually thought it was better for Haiti to import its food from the U.S. rather than produce its own. America's founding is based on independence. So how could Clinton possibly believe such a thing? How could he not have known that people not being able to fend for themselves, as Americans do, would produce

such unanticipated and negative consequences? Surely he knew about the country's history. Surely he knew how similar past policies had made Haiti as poor as it is. It makes one wonder if the reason American policies imposed on Haiti are the same reasons Americans blamed Haitians for the AIDS virus in the U.S. Clinton, himself, called it "a devil's bargain" when speaking to a reporter after admitting that his food policies made things worse for Haiti to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10, 2010:

Since 1981, the United States has followed a policy, until the last year or so when we started rethinking it, that we rich countries that produce a lot of food should sell it to poor countries and relieve them of the burden of producing their own food, so, thank goodness, they can leap directly into the industrial era. It has not worked. It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked. It was a mistake. It was a mistake that I was a party to. I am not pointing the finger at anybody. I did that. I have to live every day with the consequences of the lost capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people, because of what I did. Nobody else.⁴⁹

Humanitarianism failures and anthropological perspectives, have not only enslaved the people of Haiti in the same manner as reparation, but are a direct result of reparation. One

of the unintended consequences of humanitarian interventions to repair the sequelae of human rights violations perpetrated against victims of human rights abuses is what Erica James termed “the political economy of trauma:”⁵⁰ the suffering of another person, when extracted, transformed, and commodified through maleficent or beneficent interventions, can become a source of profit for the intervener.⁵¹ International and national governmental and nongovernmental initiatives to provide redress and healing to victims of human rights abuses from this period inadvertently contributed to the growth of a political economy of trauma.⁵² This is yet another example of the international community using, raping, and profiting off of Haiti. *Viktim* were often identified through the aid apparatus Erica James termed “technologies of trauma”—forensic anthropology, physical examinations, photography, among other practices—technical languages of medicine, psychiatry, law, feminism, and others that speak the discourse of trauma and psychosocial rehabilitation.⁵³

Both humanitarian interventions stemming as far back as the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 1915, and anthropological analysis such as social scientists writing and publishing articles in major medical journals that Haitian voodoo was the cause of the AIDS virus failed to acknowledge the real ownership of responsibility, and have prevented solutions to solving Haiti’s socioeconomic and sociopolitical problems that have resulted in Haiti becoming the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

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Allen M. Price | is an African American writer from Rhode Island. He wrote *The Unintended Consequences of Haitian Reparation* while taking the course Global Health Case Studies from a Biosocial Perspective taught by United Nations Deputy Special Envoy to Haiti and medical anthropologist Dr. Paul Farmer at Harvard University. Allen is a 2018 semi-finalist for *Grub Street's* Emerging Writing Fellowship. He has an MA in journalism from Emerson College. His fiction and nonfiction work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Fourth River*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *Jellyfish Review*, *The Citron Review*, *Gertrude Press*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Tulane Review*, *Columbia Journal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Muscle & Fitness*, *Natural Health* magazine, and many other places. He is writing a memoir and spent time working on it with Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Paul Harding. Excerpts of it have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Fourth River*, and *Jellyfish Review*.

