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# Avengers Of The New World: The Story Of The Haitian Revolution



## Synopsis

The first and only successful slave revolution in the Americas began in 1791 when thousands of brutally exploited slaves rose up against their masters on Saint-Domingue, the most profitable colony in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Within a few years, the slave insurgents forced the French administrators of the colony to emancipate them, a decision ratified by revolutionary Paris in 1794. This victory was a stunning challenge to the order of master/slave relations throughout the Americas, including the southern United States, reinforcing the most fervent hopes of slaves and the worst fears of masters. But, peace eluded Saint-Domingue as British and Spanish forces attacked the colony. A charismatic ex-slave named Toussaint Louverture came to France's aid, raising armies of others like himself and defeating the invaders. Ultimately Napoleon, fearing the enormous political power of Toussaint, sent a massive mission to crush him and subjugate the ex-slaves. After many battles, a decisive victory over the French secured the birth of Haiti and the permanent abolition of slavery from the land. The independence of Haiti reshaped the Atlantic world by leading to the French sale of Louisiana to the United States and the expansion of the Cuban sugar economy. Laurent Dubois weaves the stories of slaves, free people of African descent, wealthy whites, and French administrators into an unforgettable tale of insurrection, war, heroism, and victory. He establishes the Haitian Revolution as a foundational moment in the history of democracy and human rights.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What Laurent Dubois has achieved is a synthesis of the most current research in a strikingly

accessible and appealing presentation, be it to experts or to general readers unfamiliar with the subject. *Avengers of the New World* is more than likely to become the new standard work in English on one of the most under-reported events in the history of the Western Hemisphere. (Madison Smartt Bell, author of *All Souls Rising* and *Master of the Crossroads*) The course of the Haitian Revolution was as checkered as the storyline of an Italian opera. Laurent Dubois wisely and eloquently reduces that complexity to understandable proportions. He shows how the revolutionary leadership evolved over time, both defining its own objectives and winning its battles along the way. With care and good judgment, Dubois builds for us a compelling picture of the emergent consciousness of the slaves. His distinctive contribution is to bring to life one of the most significant events in modern political history, an event that has been deliberately misrepresented for the past two centuries. (Sidney Mintz, author of *Caribbean Transformations* and *Sweetness and Power*) By abolishing slavery and granting citizenship to all men, the Haitian Revolution fulfilled the ideals of the Age of Democratic Revolution in a way that France, the United States, and other nations were not yet ready to accept. Dubois demonstrates the revolutionary determination of enslaved Caribbean- and African-born people and captures the voices of key actors including Toussaint Louverture, individual slaves, free people of color, rival black generals, and white women. This is a story that needs to be told in the engaging yet scholarly voice that Dubois achieves. (John Garrigus, Professor of History, Jacksonville University) *Avengers of the New World* is a luminous model for the history of revolution, for a 'people's' history of freedom, and, not least, for a history that is truly Atlantic in scope. At once original, deeply learned, and gracefully written, Dubois's achievement is worthy of its great lineage: that of C.L.R. James and Aime Cesaire. (James C. Scott, author of *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* and *Weapons of the Weak*) [A] sinuous and stirring account of 'the largest slave revolt in the history of the world, and the only one that succeeded.' (John Leonard Harper's 2004-03-01) In this exhaustively researched and valuable account, Laurent Dubois, a history professor at Michigan State, looks back to the founding of Haiti. Dubois, writing in an accessible style and with a wide-ranging focus, has done an impressive job depicting the tumultuous founding of Haiti. Readers wanting to place the Caribbean nation's current struggles in a larger historical context will find Dubois an eminently worthwhile resource. (Chuck Leddy *Christian Science Monitor* 2004-03-23) A stern and brilliant new book. The Haitian Revolution, in all its ugliness and brutality, was the response of the oppressed, indentured and enslaved to their unjust condition. And it is this whirling and chaotic world that Dubois so vividly brings to life in *Avengers of the New World* and so accurately deconstructs. Dubois starts this book about war with chapters about love, death, books and graveyards. His discussions of interracial love affairs and the attitudes

of slaves both toward death among slaves and toward death among masters are riveting and eloquent. Indeed, Dubois' literary sensibility informs the book from start to finish, so that at its beginning as well as its end, the reader feels as if the story must be fiction, yet it is not. Dubois calls Haiti a nation 'founded on ashes,' and he has written splendidly about the fires, both political and cultural, that lit up the land during the days of revolution and that are still, in a sense, burning today. (Amy Wilentz Los Angeles Times Book Review 2004-04-18) Avengers of the New World weaves the experiences and stories of slaves, free Blacks, wealthy whites, and French administrators into an unforgettable tale of insurrection, war, heroism, and victory. Laurent Dubois examines the actions of the famous leaders of the revolt such as Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, but also of lesser-known men and women caught up in the violent and tumultuous events. Dubois establishes the Haitian Revolution, which is often misunderstood or forgotten, as a foundational moment in the history of democracy and of human rights. Avengers of the New World can help us put the current situation in Haiti in context, explain the reasons behind the violence, and give us an idea of what the future might hold. (Caribbean Life 2004-03-23) Laurent Dubois's patient study offers a valuable glimpse into the complexities of the creation of modern Haiti that supplants the usual commonplaces on this 'first black republic.' (Nick Caistor Times Literary Supplement 2004-06-11) There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of books about the Haitian Revolution, but only a handful are indispensable. Avengers of the New World joins that select company. A powerful narrative informed by the latest research, it digs beneath ready-made notions—whether of purely heroic rebels or of implacable caste hatreds—to bring to light the forging of new identities and new ideals. (Robin Blackburn The Nation 2004-10-04) Brilliantly conceived, beautifully rendered, Laurent Dubois's narrative places the Haitian Revolution at the center of the Age of Revolutions—one of three that shook the world—challenging in the process the stubborn academic myopia that divides the history of Europe from its colonies, and whites from blacks. (Thomas Holt, author of The Problem of Race in the 21st Century) This wonderfully readable account is a timely reminder of the perils and sacrifices that marked Haiti's revolutionary path, resulting in only the second independent nation of this hemisphere. Dubois rightfully emphasizes the impact of French revolutionary principles (i.e., the Rights of Man) on the Haitian rebel slaves, as well as the inextricable influence of French politics on the fate of its Caribbean colony, highlighted by the power struggles between Napoleon and Louverture. The author's insights about the nature of solidarity, trust, and leadership among the slaves, as well as the organization of insurgents across the colony, are well worth recalling, especially in this fateful year. (R. M. Delson Choice 2004-11-01) For those who wish to recall the dramatic events that led to the creation of the world's

first black republic and the Western Hemisphere's second independent nation, I would strongly recommend Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World* | The story of Haitian independence is well known and has been told many times before, but Dubois's vigorous text brings the story to vibrant new life. The battles, personalities, and complex sociopolitical turmoil brought about in Haiti and elsewhere in the world, especially the slave-owning American South, are recalled with a depth and passion that makes this an invigorating work of historical writing. (Phil Hall New York Resident 2004-09-06) Readers unfamiliar with the history of Haiti will find this thoughtful, gracefully written book an eye-opening account of the complexities of the Haitian revolution. (Milton Berman Salem Press Online) How well Dubois wears the mantle of this exciting area of study. His engaging analysis of the social forces at play in Saint Domingue (now Haiti) at the turn of the nineteenth century reveals this conflict to be of wider significance than we may previously have thought | Dubois's masterful grasp of the 'contorted human relationships' that define the period renders his study infinitely relevant to our global society | With his help, we may yet come to understand the far-reaching impact of this amazing revolution and the true meaning of Haiti's beloved motto: *L'Union fait la force*. (Patti M. Marxsen French Review) In *Avengers of the New World*, Laurent Dubois has crafted a nuanced yet highly readable narrative of the Haitian Revolution | It is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the revolutionary Atlantic World. Readers new to the Haitian Revolution will especially benefit from Dubois's lucid explanation of an enormously complex period. (Yvonne Fabella New West Indian Guide)

What Laurent Dubois has achieved is a synthesis of the most current research in a strikingly accessible and appealing presentation, be it to experts or to general readers unfamiliar with the subject. *Avengers of the New World* is more than likely to become the new standard work in English on one of the most under-reported events in the history of the Western Hemisphere. (Madison Smartt Bell, author of *All Souls Rising* and *Master of the Crossroads*) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is the best document I have had about Espaniola, The information about the revolution is priceless, the slavery description is also most informative. The writer's approach to inform about the Dominican Republic and Haiti actions provides an unusual lot of information in one text and gives a better than most, interesting and complete view of the situation at one time. It is a very well explained situation of the French military involvement and of the action/reaction of the slave element within the then white society. The emergence of Haiti is well covered in this book.

The Haitian Revolution, although a major event in history of the 18th century, is nowhere near as famous as the earlier American or French Revolutions. Perhaps the fact that Haiti is a small, relatively powerless country in comparison to the United States and France plays a role in this historical amnesia. Nevertheless, the Haitian Revolution was an important event in the history of the Caribbean, as Haiti was the first country to gain independence from a European power in the Caribbean. It was also the only successful slave revolt in world history. I purchased this book along with Phillippe Girard's book *The Slaves who defeated Napoleon*, which covers the 1802-04 war that ended with Haitian independence for a close friend of mine who is Haitian. She greatly enjoyed both Girard's book and this one by Dubois. I have read both books myself, and while Dubois' account is the best about Saint Domingue, the slave revolt, and the abolition of slavery, for readers who want to know more about the phase of the war that ended when Haiti became independent, would be advised to read Girard's book instead. But for those who are interested in pre-revolutionary Haiti and the slave revolt, they need look no further than *Avengers of the New World*. Anybody interested in Haiti would do well to read this wonderfully written volume.

The book is a great look into Haitian history and should be read by anyone who wants to learn about Haitian history.

Extraordinary story-telling. DuBois confronts a daunting, byzantine topic and renders it clearly. The prose is beautiful and moving. While giving Toussaint Louverture his rightful share in the narrative, DuBois avoids discussing him until well into the story, a perfect decision. DuBois' most profound claim is that "great men" and grand events in France notwithstanding, Saint Domingue's slaves freed themselves through their willingness to kill and be killed in pursuit of the basic dignity and a more reasonable material existence that slavery denied to them. A must-read.

Historically fluent literature. Wonderful read.

A thoughtful, easily read overview of the Haitian revolution and concurrent social and economic changes. Highly recommended for anyone interested in an introduction to this neglected and oft overlooked event in democratic, republican, and anti-colonial history.

I want to thank Laurent Dubois for this great educational masterpiece. This book is awesome. I'm

haitian but there's a lot of informations that i have not learned from the books that i've studied and read. for those of you who want to learn about this great nation and its past, I recommend this book for you.

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