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Black Liberation in Transnational Terms: The Case of Haiti & the United States

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Abstract

Haiti made history on January 1st, 1804 when it secured independence from France. Not only did Haiti become a sovereign state, it also earned the title of being the first independent Black nation in the world. The latter accomplishment should not be ignored. The Haitians' efforts created an impact that transcends their national border, particularly in the context of Black liberation. For example, the United States' history of working towards achieving full freedom for Black people resembles the Haitian struggle. Whether the connection between the two states is widely acknowledged is a point of interest. As a result, this project aims to answer the following research question: **“How has the Haitian Revolution shaped our perception of Black liberation in the United States?”** Its methodology consists of a researcher-administered survey that captures the perspectives of legal-aged adults in the United States. By using this method, **the study hopes to find a commonality between Haitian and American history that further shows how Black history is everyone’s history.**

Variables

Independent: The Haitian Revolution

•When enslaved Haitians *organized* among themselves to gain independence from *France* towards the end of the 18th century.

Dependent: (The Haitian Revolution's) *impact* on American understanding of *Black liberation*

- Impact: a source of influence or inspiration
- Black: refers to skin color and cultural ties to the African continent
- Liberation: “Freedom is being you without anyone’s permission.”*

*Quote from an unknown individual, located at the Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia.

Argument

The Haitian Revolution *challenged* notions of Black people and their capabilities. While the Haitians' actions prompted *fear* among White Americans at the time, their *courage* to seek freedom also *invigorated* Black Americans and their allies to *fight* for a better life.

Methodology

Drawing inspiration from *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (4th Edition) by Louis M. Rea and Richard A. Parker, the researcher surveyed *29 adults residing in the United States*. The survey gauged each respondent's knowledge of the Haitian Revolution and its effect on the United States. In addition to the general survey questions, respondents were asked to voluntarily complete a series of questions related to their demographics so the researcher could have an idea of the survey's reach.

Please rate your confidence in your knowledge of the Haitian Revolution: *

1 2 3 4 5

I am not confident at all. I am absolutely confident.

Please describe what you know about the Haitian Revolution here. If you know nothing, please * write "N/A."

Long answer text

A screenshot of two survey questions.

Results/Discussion

The researcher completed a content analysis by reading the individual text responses and highlighting recurrent words or phrases. The process led the researcher to discover two findings:

1. There is *varying* knowledge levels of the Haitian Revolution and its connection to Black liberation in the United States.
2. There is a *consensus* of Black liberation's meaning in broader terms.

The first finding is a reflection of the ways in which the Haitian Revolution has been remembered (or overlooked) over the years. If school curriculums are not dedicating space to the Haitians' efforts, people are left with no choice but to seek the information other sources on their own time.

The second finding aligns with recent discussions of anti-racism prompted by the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests.

Conclusion

The survey results support the need for a proper acknowledgement of the Haitian Revolution's impact on Black liberation, especially in an American context.

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