

The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,
analysis and investigations on issues affecting
African Americans and the African world.

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Nov 29, 2012 - Issue 496

Understanding the History of Haiti Worrill's World By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill, PhD BC Columnist

Much has been said about Haiti and its historical context. In order to understand the history of Haiti and the importance of the Haitian Revolution when Haitian people proclaimed their independence on January 1, 1804, everyone should begin reading and studying about Haiti. We must do this in preparation for the long struggle that will take place to rebuild this beautiful country of African people.

At this time, with the multitude of challenges facing our brothers and sisters, we must lift up our spirits and continue, with a vengeance, the great work that is needed to restore Haiti. Far too many African people are unfamiliar with the significance of Haiti, the Haitian Revolution, and its impact on the world. Far too much misinformation is being spread about Haiti and its history. *The Irritated Genie: An Essay on the Haitian Revolution*, written by our esteemed ancestor, Dr. Jacob H. Carruthers, made a profound contribution to the significance and implications of this event in the history of African people in the world.

Brother Jake, as we affectionately called him, was one of the leading African Centered Scholars in the world. His book, *The Irritated Genie*, is one of the most definitive books on the Haitian Revolution.

Brother Jake spent much of his time, over a forty year period, probing the 18th and 19th century Black Nationalist tradition and the leading thinkers, scholars, and organizers who represented this tradition. Out of this study and research, Jake produced the most incisive analysis in his book on the Haitian Revolution and its implications for our on-going struggle.

Since the 19th century, both Black and white scholars have written extensively about the Haitian Revolution, which began in the summer of 1791 and ended in the fall of 1803. However, most white scholars have relegated the Haitian Revolution as an "isolated event" and have interpreted its meaning in the framework of white supremacy of the western world order.

In this same context, the Black scholars who have written on this subject have suffered from the same problem - the problem of accepting a European framework in their efforts to describe the essence and meaning of the great African Revolution which took place in Haiti.

Dr. Carruthers addressed the concept of the "Irritated Genie" and what it meant to the Haitian people who rose up and defeated the so-called great military powers of the era - England, France, and Spain.

Haiti, an island in the Caribbean, is where millions of imported, kidnapped Africans were used by the European slave trading nations to supply their labor needs in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. As Dr. Carruthers writes, "On August 22, 1791 thousands of slaves crudely armed with stolen weapons, various tools and torches, overran and destroyed most of the plantations and besieged the towns of Northern Saint Dominique, the most prosperous European colony in the world at that time."

In his book, Brother Jake informs us that "this well planned, sustained offensive was the culmination of nearly three centuries of periodic Black rebellions against the European settlers."

The significance of the Haitian Revolution is revealed by Brother Jake in pointing out that the African people of Haiti successfully defeated the top military powers of that day - Napoleon and his French military might, Britain, and Spain. Many people are aware of the role Toussaint L`Overture played in the Haitian Revolution, but Dr. Carruthers unveils very clearly and concisely the leadership of General Jean Jacques Dessalines and Bookman Dutty.

In *The Irritated Genie*, Dr. Carruthers points out that the Haitian Revolution "is perhaps the most underemphasized war in what is called modern history." The fact that many African people are more inspired "by the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cuban revolutions than the

one truly Black revolution in modern history” is the reason all African people need to read this book.

Many people will probably be quick to ask the question, “If the Haitian Revolution was so great, why is Haiti in the shape it is today?” I must remind you that Haitian people were in need and struggling before this devastating earthquake.

Dr. Carruthers answers this question in the following manner: “For three centuries the crime of being Black was punished by torture, rape, and murder. Dessalines erased that crime by executing all of those he would find who had committed the atrocities - the true criminals. That is why the Haitian personality is so strong today even though most of the leaders sold them down the river after the fall of Dessalines.”

Dr. Carruthers was the founder of the Kemetite Institute and professor at the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies (CCICS) of Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) in Chicago, where he developed as one of the most gifted intellectuals and scholars in the African world. Any one of hundreds of students who took his classes at CCICS, or people who heard his numerous community or conference lectures will agree that Dr. Jacob H. Carruthers was a profound African Deep Thinker!

As we look to the days ahead, we must fortify ourselves. Read *The Irritated Genie*, lift up your spirit and let your positive healing energies flow over us all as we work to restore Haiti.

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