



Haitian Heritage Month

- JP Dorval



Location

- 838 miles to the Southeast of Florida
- Shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic
- 10,714 sq mi, roughly the size of Maryland

Demographics of Haiti

- Haiti is the eighty-first most populous country in the world with a population of 11,584,996 people
- Most populous country in the Caribbean
- 95% Black
- Official languages: French and Haitian Creole



Slavery by the French

- The island was initially claimed by Spain, which later ceded the western third of the island to France.
- Prior to independence Haiti was the French colony of Saint-Domingue
- Wealthiest colony in the French empire
- Saint-Domingue produced roughly 40 percent of the sugar and 60 percent of the coffee imported to Europe



Slavery by the French

- French owners imported almost 800,000 Africans to the colony (almost double the number of Africans carried to North America)
- The slave system in Saint-Domingue was regarded as one of the harshest in the Americas



Haitian Revolution

- The revolution began on 22 August 1791 and ended in 1804
- Kicked off by a vodou ceremony at Bois Caïman
- Following the ceremony Haitians engaged in a scorched earth strategy that allowed them to take over the norther province of Haiti within 10 days
- This strategy continued throughout the revolution and coincided with the French Revolutionary Wars



Haitian Revolution

- Haiti became the first free black republic in the world
- The first independent state in the Caribbean
- The second independent state in the Western Hemisphere after the United States
- The only successful slave revolt in history



Economic Injustice, Racism, Occupation and Crisis

- After the Revolution Haiti was levied with astronomical reparations to France.
- By 1900, Haiti was spending about 80 percent of its national budget on loan repayments.
- Under President Thomas Jefferson's presidency, the United States pursued a policy to isolate Haiti, fearing that the Haitian revolution would spread to the United States.



Economic Injustice, Racism, Occupation and Crisis

- Since Haiti's founding five of its Heads of State have been assassinated including one of its founding fathers, and the most recent president
- Between 1911 - 1915 seven presidents were assassinated or overthrown
- United States sent Marines to occupy Haiti on the orders of President Woodrow Wilson in 1915 to protect U.S. financial interest



Economic Injustice, Racism, Occupation and Crisis

- During the nineteen years of the U.S. occupation, fifteen thousand Haitians were killed
- U.S. officials altered Haiti's Constitution to allow foreigners to become landowners.
- The U.S. also trained the Haitian military ideologically to defend U.S. interests which led to many more military led coup's



Economic Injustice, Racism, Occupation and Crisis

- Haiti has had 23 constitutions without counting the amendments, with each lasting on average a little more than eight years
- The island has experienced 58 natural disasters including cyclones, hurricanes, tropical storms, torrential rains, floods, earthquakes and disease.



Culture



Haitian Creole / Kreyol

- Haitian Creole based on 18th-century French combined with Portuguese, Spanish, English, Taino, and countless West African languages.
- Used by the slaves to communicate and organize in the presence of slave owners
- Sounds like French but written like an African dialect



French vs. Haitian Creole / Kreyol

- Regarder → Gade = To look
- Garçon → Ti Gason = Boy (Literal translation is little man)
- Pourquoi → Pou Kisa = Why (Literal translation is for what)
- Qui es-tu? → Kiyès ou ye? = Who are you?



Conclusion

- Haiti is a beautiful nation that has been plagued by brutality, natural disaster and instability
- Its monetary wealth was robbed but its culture is rich, and its people are vibrant
- Haitians have a strong sense of pride and despite the struggle feel they can take on anything



