"The Tardy Triumphs of a Cautious Policy": Saint-Domingue and Imperial Reform in British Abolitionist Discourse

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Introduction

Three preeminent authorities on slave emancipation, David Brion Davis, Seymour Drescher, and Robin Blackburn opened an edited volume on the economic and the ideological impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World with their own assessment of its international impact.[1] Measured by the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the end of the slave trade in the British Empire, Davis contended that enslaved insurrection in the French colony of Saint-Domingue did limit the expansion of slavery and the plantation system in Trinidad and the Guianas.[2] Nonetheless, Drescher and Blackburn discarded Davis's intermediate approach in favor of taking opposing sides in evaluating the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the abolition of the slave trade in the Americas. Drescher acknowledged the symbolic significance of the first successful slave insurrection in the Americas, but, affirmed that there is no conclusive evidence of its influence as a decisive issue in the larger debates for abolition.[3] Blackburn credited the Haitian Revolution as the first major breakthrough in the antislavery struggle, arguing that the defeat of the French in Haiti was a defeat for all pro-slavery powers.[4] Despite their differences, Davis, Drescher, and Blackburn arguments largely questioned whether economics or morality drove the impetus for the abolition of the slave trade.

This larger historiographical debate has rightly centered scholars' attentions to the tenets of anti-slavery arguments in the face of overwhelming support for the slave trade. Nevertheless, has this either one or the other approach has neglected other motivating factors for the arguments of British Abolitionists. More recently, Claudius K. Fergus explores the influence of the Haitian Revolution and other slave insurrections in the Caribbean, positing that enslaved Africans' struggle for freedom was a primary factor in the abolition of the slave trade.[5] Fergus rightly extends the discussion of the impetus behind the end of the slave trade to argue that fear was a motivation for British imperial officials to take preemptive action to control the direction of abolition in the name of security. The British Empire had taken on an increasingly global character and required reform reflecting a new commitment as a world power. Enslaved insurrection in French Saint-Domingue and the imperial war in the Caribbean provided the opportunity for British Abolitionists to contribute their vision of empire. This opening was one that strengthened the momentum that abolitionist reformers had from before the beginning of the Haitian Revolution.

The political discourse on the abolition of the slave trade in the British Parliament occurred within the context of larger debates about reforming the empire. Britons' anxieties concerning revolution in France and Saint-Domingue prompted colonial policy makers to reconsider their commitment to slavery as British subjects sought to define themselves and the identity of the empire

[1] David P. Geggus ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

[2] David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions" in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 7.

[3] Seymour Drescher, "The Limits of Example" in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 12 – 13.

[4] Robin Blackburn, "The Force of Example" in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), p. 17.

[5] Claudius K. Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 2013), p. xii.

vis-á-vis the loss of the thirteen North American colonies.[6] This transitive environment permitted Britons to comment on the old order with abolitionism at the forefront of these critiques.[7] In the years 1792 – 1803, abolitionist writers such as Thomas Clarkson, James Stephen, Henry Brougham and an anonymous author used pamphlets laden with the dire example of Saint-Domingue to campaign against the slave trade.[8] They all situated their arguments within the larger debate against the West India Planters lobby and others whose outmoded pro-slavery vision of empire fueled by the African slave trade precariously emphasized the permanence of enslaved labor.[9]

This article demonstrates that Saint-Domingue was at the *forefront* of abolitionists' arguments about the future of the British West Indies, its profitability, stability and morality before the end of the Haitian Revolution in 1804. Although this group of writers each wrote at different points during the insurrection, all four used the image of Saint-Domingue and enslaved insurrection within their larger arguments of their vision of empire. The anonymous author and Clarkson wrote at the beginning of the slave insurrection and Britain's political climate was not welcoming of dissent. Great Britain was in the midst of an anti-Jacobin backlash that was in response to the beginning of the Reign of Terror in France during the French Revolution. As a result of this turn of events, the anonymous author and Clarkson, therefore, had to be careful with other Britons not perceiving their writings as supporters of the revolution, even as they argued that the British Empire would eventually have its own version of Saint-Domingue if the trans-Atlantic slave trade continued to funnel enslaved laborers to the Caribbean. By contrast, when Stephen and Brougham were writing ten years later, they were not constrained by an Anti-Jacobin backlash, as had been the other two authors. Both Stephen and Brougham wrote at the height of the Napoleonic wars and were concerned with preventing the spread of slavery to newly acquired territories for the morality and safety of the empire. Despite apparent differences, all four writers presented their arguments as an imperial reform to strengthen the British Empire and avoid the French example of revolutionary instability in its plantation colonies and the metropole.

With possessions in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, and India, British subjects were a part of an empire that had become increasingly global. Britons saw their territory as Protestant, commercial, maritime, and free. This positive view of empire obscured and excused abuses that occurred in other parts of the domain such as the slave trade. The American Revolution tore away this veil and created doubts about the domestic regime and the nature of the British Empire. The aftermath created the environment for discussions of imperial reform. This study builds on the work of those scholars who emphasize the revolutionary war in the colonies as a turning point and examines a mature antislavery movement in which Saint-Domingue figured into the discourses of

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[6] Christopher Brown investigates the origin of abolitionism arguing that the defeat in the American Revolution forced the British to re-examine their empire and liberty. The slave trade became their first test in defining what the British Empire stood for. Christopher Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[7] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 133

[8] Anonymous Author, *A letter on the greater necessity of an abolition of the African slave trade in consequence of the insurrection at St. Domingo & c. by a Gentleman* (Bath, 1792), Thomas Clarkson, *The True State of the Case, Respecting the Insurrection at St. Domingo* (Ipswich, 1792), James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies, or, An Enquiry into the Objects and Probable Effects of the French Expedition to the West Indies and their Connection with the Colonial Interests of the British Empire; to which are Subjoined, Sketches of a Plan for Settling the Vacant Lands of Trinidada* (London, 1802), and Henry Brougham, *An Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of the European Powers.* 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1803).

[9] Despite the association of slavery with imperial wealth and power, Christopher Brown illustrates that the need to extend control over the British Empire after 1763 encouraged British writers—particularly policy makers—as British subjects. In addition, this facilitated novel ways about thinking about empire and thoughts about the future of the slave trade and slavery. Christopher Brown, "Empire without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution" in *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 56, No. 2, African and American Atlantic Worlds (April 1999), p. 275.

British Abolitionists and their call for imperial reform by terminating the slave trade before Haiti's independence in 1804.[10]

Scholars have written extensively on the Haitian Revolution and British abolition, with emerging scholarship giving more agency to enslaved Africans and their insurrections towards impacting imperial reforms aimed at emancipation. In particular, the literature on British abolitionist discourse explores how the movement became an aspect of national identity and a means of reconfiguring the ideas and praxis of empire. This historiography investigates the outside influences that shaped the movement's ideology.[11] This article builds on the work of Fergus and his analysis on how abolitionists and their opponents argued for amelioration and creolization as a feasible reform to the colonial system because of a fear of slave insurrections such as Tacky's War, the Haitian Revolution and the Baptist War. Fergus, in particular, examines pro and anti-slavery pamphlets and writings and asserts that abolition and emancipation in the British Caribbean were in response to the fear of slave insurrections. This article agrees with Ferguson's work, but differs in its focus on imperial reform brought about in the aftermath of the American Revolution and using insurrection of Saint-Domingue as an opening for larger discussions of imperial reform.[12]

Abolitionist Beginnings

The American Revolution and its aftermath had profound political repercussions in Great Britain. The war revealed that the British imperial political system was both costly and inefficient. Great Britain's

[10] For more on how Britons perceived of themselves and empire see the following works Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000). For some scholars who see a connection between abolitionism and the crisis of imperial authority see Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp. 133 – 134; Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation, 1707-1837 (*New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 132 – 146 and 350 – 361; Brown, *Moral Capital*, pp. 2, 27 and 53; and Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 165.

[11] David Brion Davis argues that the middle class used abolitionism as a tool of hegemony. In addition, abolitionism as a movement was conservative in nature and the middle class were willing to focus its energies on the influence of the slave trade in the far off West Indies but ignore the problems of the working class at home in *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 349-350. [11] For those works that have in part examined the effect of Saint-Domingue on British abolitionism, Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) Ch. 6 and David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) Ch. 8. For abolitionism as an aspect of national identity and how external conflicts brought British subjects closer together see Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 137-140 & 149-152. J.R. Oldfield's work places abolitionism within an Atlantic context illustrating the connections between British, American, and French Abolitionism in *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution: An International History of Anti-slavery, c. 1787-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 2 and p. 5. David Geggus considers the impact of the Haitian Revolution on British public opinion in the press by examining newspapers and British abolitionist pamphlets. This article looks at the use of the example of Saint-Domingue within British abolitionist discourse and their larger arguments for the end of the slave trade. David Geggus, "British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1791-1805" in *Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846* ed. James Walvin (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), pp. 123 – 149.

[12] Claudius Fergus, "Dread of Insurrection": Abolitionism, Security, and Labor in Britain's West Indian Colonies, 1760-1823" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 66, No. 4, Abolishing the Slave Trades: Ironies and Reverberations (Oct., 2009), p. 759 and pp. 762 – 763 and *Revolutionary Emancipation: Slavery and Abolitionism in the British West Indies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2013), p. xii. Historians of British Abolitionism have addressed the issue of how abolitionists juxtaposed economics with morality as a part of their larger arguments. Eric Williams argued for the central role of slavery in the rise of capitalism and how a mature capitalism was what led to abolition and eventual emancipation. Although largely rebutted, Williams's economic interpretation still holds merit in the study of abolitionism. Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), p. ix and p. 210. For more on Eric Williams and the modern historiography of subaltern agency in British emancipation and abolition see Ferguson, *Revolutionary Emancipation*, preface.

loss in North America reflected that Parliament and the monarchy lost influence over a situation that they could not afford, control, or win.[13] The American Revolution also changed the dynamics of British society in Britain and in the Caribbean. American independence took away a major source of support for slaving interests. Slave owners and those interests in the Caribbean were more isolated than ever before. American independence also brought former enslaved peoples who fought with the British from North America to the metropole of London. Unable to fit into the existing framework of London society and without existing support networks, these blacks struggled to survive in London.[14]

In response to these changes in British society, on April 1787, Quakers and other Christian sects founded The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.[15] British Abolitionists characterized themselves by their urge for social reform and evangelical leanings and sought to influence members of the British Parliament by lobbying and constructing arguments that could affect policy.[16] The British ruling elite had already used abolitionist proposals as a way to take a stand against the return of the former enslaved to American planters who had rallied to the loyalist cause.[17] British Abolitionism harnessed the public sentiment of middling and lower sorts' growing concerns for government reform and popular sentiment towards the evils wrought by the slave trade. Their movement also contained prominent blacks that used their previous experience in slavery as part of their arguments for abolition. Ottobah Cugoano, born off the coast of what is today Ghana, became one of the first published African critics of the slave trade with his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* in 1787. Cugoano's combined humanitarian and economic arguments for abolition that would precede the same tenets of other abolitionist discussed in this article.[18] Olaudah Equiano and his now famous *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* was a slave narrative that depicted Equiano's experiences captured in Africa, transported through the slave trade, enslaved, and then emancipated.[19] With these influential blacks at their side, The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade procured various signatures from the concerned public to send to Parliament by issuing pamphlets in support of abolition. Manchester alone gathered over 10,000 signatures.[20] Nevertheless, British Abolitionism did not question the metropolitan ruling elite and sought to use anti-slavery measures as a way to assist with the rehabilitation of imperial authority in the colonies.[21]

Abolitionist fervor peaked with the beginning of the French Revolution, but the radical turn of French revolutionaries in the form of Jacobinism created difficulties for anti-slave trade supporters in Britain. Early admiration by the British public turned to horror in response to France's regicide and war against the rest of Europe. Public workers' associations in Britain threatened the hegemony of the British elite, as they were sympathetic to the plight of the French Jacobins. The outbreak of war

[13] Edward Royle & James Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers, 1760-1848* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1982), p. 27.

[14] Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journey of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), p. 80.

[15] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 136

[16] Ibid, pp. 137 – 138.

[17] Blackburn, *American Crucible*, p. 163.

[18] Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain* ed. Vincent Carreta (New York: Penguin Books, 1999).

[19] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism* ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Norton, 2001). Vincent Carretta's insightful work has questioned the validity of Equiano's African birth, most notably in *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005). Despite the uncertainty of Equiano's birth, the meaning and importance of this text inscribed by its readers during the eighteenth century should not be discounted, Paul E. Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African." *Slavery and Abolition* Vol. 27 (December 2006), pp. 317 – 347.

[20] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 139.

[21] Brown, *Moral Capital*, p. 312.

with France in 1793 gave the British impetus to crack down on dissent and those who supported the French.[22] The Anti-Jacobin backlash made it dangerous to support the French Revolution and anything associated with it. Jacobin rhetoric of equality coupled with French expansion in Europe threatened Great Britain both abroad and at home. At the behest of French planter royalists, the British government sent a huge fleet to the Caribbean in September of 1793 to seize the French islands and defend the French planters.[23] With France's growing threat in Europe and a renewed rivalry in the Caribbean, the British government sought cohesion and unity at home over the disunity caused by abolitionism.[24] The association of Jacobin violence and instability with reform movements within Britain influenced Britons' perceptions of abolitionism.

The Necessity for Abolition

The opponents of the British abolitionists were the West India planter lobby. This opposition group argued in support of the slave trade. They believed that maintaining the slave trade was in the best interest of the empire. The planter lobby had at their disposal the experience and points of view of people who lived and or owned plantations in the Caribbean to counteract the influence of abolitionists. For instance, the Jamaican planter Edward Long, author of the *History of Jamaica*, justified slavery through racialist ideologies.[25] Long's work also was considered authoritative because of the data he gathered from Jamaica.[26] Bryan Edwards, a former planter and at the time a Member of Parliament was a part of the planter lobby. His own work, *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, earned him a reputation as an expert on economy and society in the British Caribbean.[27] Edwards's travel to Saint-Domingue on September 26, 1791, convinced him that if the British did not secure Jamaica from the threat of slave insurrection it would have the same fate as Saint-Domingue.[28] Edwards also believed French abolitionists to be a cause of the Haitian Revolution and associated abolitionism with slave uprising.[29] The abolitionists were up against politically powerful people with ties to the Caribbean and whom Britons considered experts in their field.

An anonymous pamphlet, *A letter on the greater necessity of an abolition of the African slave trade in consequence of the insurrection at St. Domingo & c. by a Gentleman (1792)* responded to those planters and members of Parliament who supported the slave trade. The author argued that the slave trade was morally wrong and ending it would be beneficial to the planters on multiple accounts. For example, the author stated that the importation of enslaved Africans was no longer needed and that planters could take advantage of the use of plows and other machinery to make up for the lack of human labor.[30] The main thrust of his argument, however, was that planters would benefit from the end of the slave trade by increasing profitability and ensuring security in the Caribbean from slave insurrection. Thus, decreasing the amount of enslaved Africans imported to the island provided opportunities for other sources of labor to maintain agricultural cultivation.

The anonymous author juxtaposed the benefit of abolishing the trade while assuring planters that emancipation was not the goal.[31] The tension between acknowledging the evils of the slave trade

[22] Royle & Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers,* p. 61.
[23] Blackburn, *American Crucible,* p. 167.
[24] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 147
[25] Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island: With Reflections on its Situations, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government vol. 2*(London: New edition, Frank Cass & Co. LTD, 1970), p. 364.
[26] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery,* p. 154.
[27] Davis, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution,* pp. 186 – 187.
[28] Olwyn M. Blouet, "Bryan Edwards and the Haitian Revolution" in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* ed. David P. Geggus, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press: 2001), p. 46.
[29] Blouet, "Bryan Edwards and the Haitian Revolution," p. 46.
[30] Anonymous Author, *A letter on the greater necessity of an abolition of the African slave trade in consequence*, p. 4.
[31] Ibid.

and maintaining the status of enslaved Africans was characteristic of the eighteenth century.[32] The author and abolitionists' larger argument in favor of ending the slave trade makes sense within this context. The unknown identity of the author of this pamphlet and message makes it unlikely that they would have been a planter. It was also unlikely that the "Gentleman" would have invested in plantations or slavery. Nevertheless, it was important that the author of this pamphlet had a tie to the British islands in the Caribbean because it gave them a sense of authority in the argument for the benefits of abolition. Members of the West India Planter's Lobby such as Long and Edwards drew on their expertise for their arguments. As a result, abolitionist writers such as this author presented themselves with the knowledge of conditions in the Caribbean.

The use of Saint-Domingue as a threat was implicit within the anonymous author's larger argument for the abolition of the slave trade as part of imperial reform. The date and title of the pamphlet suggest that they drew on the example of insurrection in Saint-Domingue to argue in favor of the abolishing the slave trade. The author used Jamaica as an example because of its proximity to Saint-Domingue and it was the most important of Great Britain's possessions in the Caribbean. For example, they cited Jamaica's use of British troops to protect the planters from their enslaved laborers. This internal protection would not be necessary, the author argued, if there were more settlers who were white within Jamaica.[33] Jamaica and the rest of the British Caribbean depended on the British government for a number of things, including security. Yet, according to historian Roger Buckley, the British were unable to maintain a large standing army consistently.[34] It is safe to assume that the planters in the Caribbean were aware of this problem and that the alternatives would not have been too appealing. For instance, one alternative would have been the use of African slaves as troops to protect the colonies.[35] If the planters were less dependent on the slave trade for sources of labor then they could avoid situations where they would need to be dependent on enslaved Africans who could potentially rebel—whether as slaves working plantations or as soldiers protecting the islands—born out of a concern for similar situations like in Saint-Domingue. Jamaica had experienced plenty of slave conspiracies and a massive revolt in the form of Tacky's War in 1760. Yet, the title of the pamphlet invoking the name of Saint-Domingue as its publication with a year of the beginning of the Haitian Revolution suggests that the author invoked this example to make a larger argument for abolishing the slave trade.

Thomas Clarkson, a prominent British abolitionist who campaigned for the end of the slave trade as the Saint-Domingue insurrection erupted in August of 1791, also used Saint-Domingue as a rhetorical weapon to argue for slave-trade abolition within a larger vision of empire reform. Clarkson argued for the end of the slave trade stating that the purpose of his pamphlet was an observation about the cause of slave insurrections in general and that of Saint-Domingue, in particular.[36] Clarkson was addressing those who considered abolitionists to be agitators and the cause of slave insurrection.[37] This pamphlet was part of a larger series of debates between British Abolitionists and the West India planters lobby. These Caribbean planters rightly saw an attack on the slave trade as a threat to enslaved labor. At the time of this pamphlet's publication, the insurrection in Saint-Domingue had been underway for two years. Clarkson framed *The True State of the Case* as the findings of his research on the causes of slave insurrections in the Caribbean and specifically Saint-Domingue. "To what cause then may we attribute the Insurrections in the Islands? Undoubtedly to the Slave Trade, in

[32] Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Trenton, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975), p. 93.
[33] Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, p. 7.
[34] Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795-1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 7.
[35] In fact, by April 1795, the British government decided to raise regiments of African soldiers known as the West India Regiments in response to the growing threat of insurrection and war in the Caribbean. For more on the policy, plans, and reactions to this act see Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats*, Ch. 2 and 3.
[36] Clarkson, *The True State of the Case*, p. 2.
[37] Ibid, p. 3.

consequence of which thousands are annually poured into the Islands who have been fraudulently and forcibly deprived of the Rights of Men."[38] Clarkson concluded that the slave trade was the cause of all insurrections in the Caribbean.

Clarkson's pamphlet also addressed charges brought forth by the West Indian planters. Planters according to Clarkson "have insinuated that the foundation of the Insurrection in St. Domingo, was laid in the efforts of such of the Gentlemen of Great Britain, as have associated themselves for the Abolition of the Slave Trade."[39] Pro-slave-trade forces also invoked Saint-Domingue to accuse abolitionists of being agitators of slave insurrection. To distance the abolitionist movements from these accusations, Clarkson used examples from the past before Saint-Domingue. "It is impossible for any one to have read the History of Greece and Rome with attention, without knowing that there were many and bloody Insurrections of the Slaves in the countries which their Histories respectively comprehend."[40] Clarkson established that even in antiquity there were examples of insurrections in societies that relied on slave labor. Continuing his point he noted that it was "impossible to attribute these [insurrections] with any propriety to persons associated either for the abolition of the Slave Trade, or of personal slavery; because, it does not appear from History, that there ever were associations in those days for so laudable a purpose."[41] Clarkson used the history of Greece and Rome, where there was a history of slave insurrections without the existence of abolitionist associations like those in the British Empire. By using the examples of Greece and Rome, Clarkson intended to further disassociate abolitionism as the cause of slave insurrection in the Caribbean.

Clarkson turned from the history from antiquity to that of the Caribbean presenting it as one of the several insurrections throughout the British possessions like Jamaica and one in Saint-Domingue before hand. In this way, Clarkson presented the history of the Caribbean as similar to Greece and Rome. Nonetheless, the difference being that the slave trade made this situation worse. The British carried Africans in through the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the Caribbean "with dissatisfied and exasperated minds; and this discontent and feeling of resentment…heightened by the treatment which people coming into them under such a situation must unavoidably receive."[42] The slave trade made an already volatile situation in the Caribbean worse by adding enslaved Africans who could potential revolt and put Britons and their empire in danger. Applying this point to Saint-Domingue, Clarkson partially blames the slave insurrection of 1791 to the slave trade.

Nevertheless, Clarkson also presented Saint-Domingue's instability as partially a result of France's political condition from the French Revolution that reflected in the colony. "Here then we see no less than three factions prevalent at the fame moment in St. Domingo."[43] Clarkson's account noted the disagreement among the different segments of the white population and the free people of color. This division was what the enslaved Africans took advantage of before the start of the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue "to assert their violated rights by force of arms."[44] The conditions engendered by slavery and exacerbated by the slave trade converged with the events from the French Revolution to result in rebellion in Saint-Domingue. Clarkson invoked this example to the West India planters lobby and Britons as a warning. Britons were forewarned that "the St. Domingo insurrection, in particular, so far from affording us a just argument to discontinue our exertions at the present moment, calls upon us to redouble them, if we have any value for our own islands."[45]

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid, p. 2.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid, p. 3.
[43] Ibid, p. 7.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid, p. 8.

Great Britain warred with France in the Caribbean and Europe and sought to take advantage of the instability of the new French regime.[46] The two sides battled over republicanism versus monarchy, heredity and privilege versus equality, and territorial bounds of empire[47]. The two empires warred over their Caribbean possessions, too. Whites in the British colonies in the Caribbean unified in the face of war and the threat of insurrection that reflected the unity and cohesion in Great Britain. The French colonies in the Caribbean were sites for insurrection that reflected the instability in France. Seeking to take advantage of such instability and to prevent its spread, the British invaded Saint-Domingue and other French islands in the Caribbean such as Guadeloupe.[48] By this time, enslaved blacks in the French Caribbean had already claimed their freedom for themselves. Thus, the French extension citizenship to enslaved peoples in order to enlist their help in fighting the British was tacit realization of what Africans and their descendants had earned through fighting that France saw as a strategy to hold onto its colonies.[49]

This act of desperation shifted the balance towards the French by providing them with more forces; however, it did not result in an overall victory for France.[50] Tired and financially drained from war, the British and French were willing to sue for peace and the British acquired new territories, however; this did not include the ultimate prize of Saint-Domingue. Fighting in the Caribbean affected how some in Great Britain viewed the negative impact of the slave trade. Seeking to prevent the spread of revolution in Great Britain's newly acquired territories of Trinidad, Essequibo, Demerara, and Berbice, abolitionists, led now by James Stephen, focused on the slave trade once again as an evil, asserting it was one of the causes of insurrection in Saint-Domingue.[51] In order to win the support of those in the older islands, abolitionists focused on the benefits of abolishing the slave trade and then slavery.[52]

A Cautious Policy in the Caribbean

Writing in 1802, James Stephen also used the Saint-Domingue revolution to argue for slave-trade abolition and reform of the empire. At the time of publication for *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies*, abolitionism was no longer associated with French Jacobinism. The rise of Napoleon coincided with the dampening of French Jacobinism in the interests of French capitalism and militarism.[53] The Treaty of Amiens in 1802 gave new hope to Britons for political and social reform that also fostered a climate of national unity because of the temporary end of the imperial wars with France.[54] Unlike the 1790s, in the early 1800s abolitionists' call for imperial reform was a sign of loyalty to the empire. Abolitionist reformers had only succeeded in publicizing and politicizing the slave trade and slavery,

[46] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 148

[47] Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) argues that the origins of universal citizenship were in the Caribbean.

[48] British response to the insurrection at Saint-Domingue was both a defensive and aggressive act in the sense of defending British possessions in the Caribbean and taking advantage of war with the French to import more slaves and sells sugar for more expensive prices. David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint-Domingue, 1793-1798* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 79.

[49] Although French officials in return for their help offered the slaves liberty and freedom, the military strength of these people of color in both Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue forced the Republican administration to make good on that promise. In defense of their actions, Léger-Félicité Sonthonax made the point that slaves gained their freedom because they had acted as citizens, Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, p. 157 and p. 167.

[50] The British also experimented with African slaves as troops. The West India Regiments bore the brunt of much of the fighting in the Windward and Leeward Islands because of their high resistance to malarial disease and their avoidance of rum poisoning and poor diet. Buckley *Slaves in Red Coats*, p. 88 and p. 104.

[51] James Stephens brought to the abolitionist movement an imperialistic vision that would link abolition to the security of the British Empire. Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolitionism in the Age of Revolution*, p. 170.

[52] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 302

[53] Ibid, p. 299.

[54] Ibid, p. 298.

however, the British government prioritized national security and stability over anti-slavery.[55] With the end of British military engagements in Saint-Domingue and the security of the empire's Caribbean possessions, British abolitionism served as a foil and rallying cry against the external threat of France and Napoleon's imperial ambitions.

Stephen wrote the pamphlet in the midst of the Napoleonic wars when Great Britain had acquired new colonies from France. He was a lawyer from the West Indies with many links to merchants and planters. Stephen had a reputation as an expert of legal aspects on commercial and naval policy.[56] He further cemented his reputation as an expert on colonial affairs with the publication of *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies.*[57] All of the points that Stephen made in his pamphlet were for one larger argument: the best way to preserve the British Empire in the Caribbean and its commerce was to abolish the slave trade. According to Stephen, neutrality was the best course for the British Empire to take.[58] A victory or loss by the French in their efforts to reestablish slavery in their colonies would present its own set of problems. These problems were the threat of a militarized independent nation as a symbol for enslaved peoples in the Caribbean in Saint-Domingue, or a base in which a larger French military presence in the Caribbean would threaten British possessions in the Caribbean.

In the meantime, the focus, Stephen argued should be on the defense of the Caribbean islands. He had already addressed the vulnerability of the islands and their reliance on the British for defense. Stephen also believed that abolishing the slave trade was the first step towards reforming slavery and improving security in the colonies. Ameliorating the conditions of enslaved peoples and increasing internal security was urgent because of the examples of the slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue. He also affirmed the position of Parliament's power to regulate the slave trade over the protest of colonial assemblies in the Caribbean.[59] Stephen believed that Parliament's job was to protect the interest of the empire against those of the West India planters.[60] The best approach was through amelioration of enslaved laborers' conditions and abolishing the slave trade.

The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies is a lengthy study, which Stephen divided into four letters. In the first letter, he questioned the motives of Napoleon's expedition to the Caribbean after the Treaty of Amiens signed by Great Britain and France. He supported the assumption that the point of the expedition was to restore slavery in Saint-Domingue and the other French possessions in the Caribbean where emancipation occurred.[61] His description of "West India slavery" for opponents and supporters of the slave trade was in order to provide context for why newly emancipated enslaved peoples would resist a reinstitution of slavery. For example, in Stephen's comparison of how enslaved laborers worked before and after emancipation, he emphasized how they were "driven to their work" in the field with the use of a lash, unlike, however, after emancipation, coerced enslaved people of color worked but not with the use of an enslaved driver.[62] In the case of Saint-Domingue, it was by law enforced by the military.[63] Meanwhile, Stephen used the example of Guadeloupe, stressed the change in the relationship between master and servant, and compared it to the condition of

[55] Blackburn, *American Crucible,* p. 168.
[56] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery,* 300.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Stephen, *Crisis of the Sugar Colonies,* p. 114.
[59] Ibid, p. 128.
[60] Ibid, p. 137
[61] Ibid, p. 7.
[62] Ibid, p. 9.
[63] James Stephen was not as certain of the situation in Saint-Domingue under Toussaint Louverture as he was with Guadeloupe under Victor Hughes, Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies,* p. 16. Nevertheless, Laurent Dubois's study on the Haitian Revolution confirms Stephen's description of Saint-Domingue. Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.173 and pp. 186 – 187.

English laborers.[64] The use of this comparison provided an example to Stephen's contemporaries they would be familiar with in order to understand the change in the labor relationship in Guadeloupe.

Most importantly, however, was that emancipated peoples became citizens of the French Republic. Stephen wrote, "The great and recent abuses of the terms, 'liberty and freedom,' 'slavery and bondage,' have given them a meaning in European ears widely different from their genuine political import; but infinitely more distant still from what they are practically felt to imply in the West Indies."[65] He used the example of serfdom in Europe compared to that of chattel bondage in the West Indies. Although those Europeans were in bondage, there was still a particular sense of freedom not shared by those in slavery in the Caribbean.[66] Lastly, the final reason Stephen gave to support his assumption for the French to reinstitute slavery was to retain their empire. Stephen cited Napoleon as one to go for "rapid dazzling achievements" as opposed to "the tardy triumphs of a cautious policy."[67] The reemergence of French planters and the influence they had on Napoleon was also a reason given by Stephen.[68] He surmised that the experience of the last ten years of the emancipated enslaved peoples would make it difficult for the planters to live among them, let alone re-enslave them.[69]

But what did this all mean for the British? Stephen believed that any action the French attempted in Saint-Domingue would put the British Caribbean possessions in danger. He believed that the reason for British support of peace with the French was with the assumption that a counter-revolution in the Caribbean was in the best interest of the British.[70]A counter-revolution would have entailed re-enslavement of people of color in the French Caribbean and reestablishing the plantation system. Nonetheless, Stephen saw dangerous implications for the British, whether or not the French were successful in their endeavor. A loss would mean an independent nation that would possibly seek to free other enslaved peoples throughout the Caribbean.[71] A victory would result in a base for French ships that put British possessions at risk for a possible invasion, especially Jamaica.[72]

The last issue Stephen addressed was the newly acquired islands, specifically the colony of Trinidad and the best way to integrate them into the empire. As an abolitionist, Stephen was against the spread of slavery and for its abolition throughout British possessions because he believed it was morally wrong. Nevertheless, he sought not to appeal to the conscience of members of Parliament but their prudence. Stephen believed that it was not prudent to open Trinidad to the slave trade when it could become a destination for enslaved Africans. Stephen's readers would have believed enslaved Africans to be more likely to rebel than the enslaved blacks born in the islands because of their violent treatment in the slave trade. Trinidad's isolated location in the Caribbean juxtaposed to its proximity to French, Spanish, and Dutch colonies did not make it a wise choice for the British to begin importing enslaved Africans to the island. In the words of Stephen, "to found a new slave colony in that neighborhood seems to me scarcely less irrational, than it would be to build a town near the crater of Vesuvius."[73]

Stephen appealed to the Parliament members' interests in the commercial well-being of the empire. According to Stephen, Trinidad's geographic location made it a safe haven from hurricanes and for the use of its harbor.[74] The island's distance from other foreign imperial colonies also served as an advantage. The advantageous location of the colony meant that the British could take advantage

[64] Stephen, *Crisis of the Sugar Colonies,* p. 18.
[65] Ibid, pp. 26 – 27.
[66] Ibid, p. 27.
[67] Ibid, p. 29.
[68] Ibid, pp. 30 – 31.
[69] Ibid, p. 32.
[70] Ibid, p. 78.
[71] Ibid, p. 80.
[72] Ibid, pp. 81 – 82.
[73] Ibid, p. 157.
[74] Ibid, p. 179.

of trade among the Spanish, Dutch, and French.[75] He envisioned a colony that would be a Western commercial hub.[76] This factor was why Stephen did not want Trinidad's potential ruined by turning it into a slave colony along the designs of the older possessions of the British in the Caribbean. Trinidad was not a colony accustomed to the older plantation system. The colony would be free to implement a different system of labor constituted of free people of color and smaller farms. Lastly, if there were the potential of slave insurrection as a plantation colony, the nearby European powers could take advantage and take the colony from the British.

The insurrection in Saint-Domingue illustrated that in the changing world of imperial rivalry there was much at stake. Indeed, why else would Napoleon send two large fleets into the Caribbean? Saint-Domingue was a reminder to Stephen's readers of what could happen because of slave insurrection and the British Empire's failure to take advantage of the situation to expand its empire in the Caribbean. David Geggus puts the number of British troops that had died in Saint-Domingue in the years 1793 – 1798 at 13,000 – 20,000.[77] There was much more to lose then profits: the moral sentiments of an entire empire were at stake, as was the empire's security. Within this context, Stephen juxtaposed his argument of security and commercial interests with the abolitionist belief that the slave trade was morally wrong. Nevertheless, Stephen's larger argument rested on the use of Saint-Domingue as a reminder that the threat with France had not ended. For better or worse, the events that occurred on the ground in Saint-Domingue had the potential to influence British interests in the Caribbean.

Addressing the Defects of the West Indian System

Like James Stephen, Henry Brougham was also an accomplished pamphleteer who used the Saint-Domingue insurrection to further an abolitionist argument of imperial reform. He was an up-and-coming Scottish lawyer. His contemporaries knew Brougham for his two-volume work on the colonial policy of the European powers and as well as a leading contributor to *The Edinburgh* Review.[78] *The Edinburg Review* had a circulation of 7,000 readers and established itself "as the most authoritative voice of responsible reform."[79] Brougham first received national attention with his attacks of the slave trade and was in favor of a total reformation of the colonial system.[80] Nevertheless, Brougham's ambition to be a politician prevented him from using the same arguments as Stephen. For instance, Brougham's critiques of the slave trade often contained racist arguments and were in support of a "sound policy" for the possessions in the Caribbean.[81] Nonetheless, Brougham's position outside the ranks of religious enthusiasts did not prevent him from allying with them in their mutual quest to end the slave trade.[82]

The first section of his pamphlet tract, *The European Powers*, addresses the policy of using free people of color to cultivate the land in Trinidad. Stephen had supported the idea of using such people to work in Trinidad to avoid spreading the slave trade to the island. Brougham was not in agreement with Stephen on this matter. He refers to people of color as "savages" and as not being industrious. Overall, he was neither in support of the free labor system of people of color nor in support of the use of enslaved labor. For example, he emphasized similarities between both free and enslaved people of color: according to Brougham, neither of them showed any desire to work unless

[75] Ibid, p. 181 and p. 183.
[76] Ibid, p. 185.
[77] Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution*, p. 383.
[78] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 300.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Davis, *Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, p. 359.
[81] Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 301.
[82] For Brougham the example of Saint-Domingue left Britons with a simple choice: give up the slave trade or to risk losing everything, Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolition in the Age of Revolution*, p. 4.

forced.[83] The singular use of enslaved or free people of color was not within the best interest of Trinidad. The use of people of color implied the increased risk of insurrection. No combination of free or enslaved labor would work. Brougham used Saint-Domingue as an example of how the presence of different types of people of color fostered insurrection. Like Stephen before him, Brougham also thought that the location of Trinidad worked against the island in the scenario of a slave insurrection. Trinidad's location would be a threat to the other islands in the Caribbean just as Saint-Domingue was.[84]

Brougham had a completely different tone in his second section than his first. He argued that there were two deficiencies of West Indian society, which threatened the security of the British Empire and its colonies.[85] These two deficiencies were the treatment of enslaved laborers in the British Caribbean colonies and the African component of the enslaved population. Many of the rebels and their leaders in Saint-Domingue were Africans. He saw the slave trade as the source of such deficiencies. Nevertheless, reformations to the system of slavery in the British Caribbean entailed remodeling the present structure while retaining the parts that composed it.[86] For example, Brougham did not suggest that slavery should end but advocated reforms to the colonies' conditions and structure. According to Brougham, the greatest vice of the slavery system was the oppressive treatment of enslaved people.[87] The slave trade constantly supplied the planters with enslaved labor giving them no incentive to treat them better. The violent nature of slavery affected the moral character of the owners as well. Brougham believed that treating enslaved laborers better was more profitable in the end then mistreating them. Bad treatment also fostered insurrection, however, good treatment preserved security and the potential for opulence. He was a slave-trade abolitionist as well as an ameliorationist.[88]

The next greatest "defect in the West Indian system" was the large proportion of imported Africans in the enslaved population.[89] The transported enslaved Africans were already miserable because of the forceful kidnapping from their home to a different setting. This factor juxtaposed with the treatment of enslaved Africans by the planters had the potential for slave insurrection. Saint-Domingue served as an example for Brougham of what a large proportion of enslaved Africans could do.[90] Importing enslaved African was just a short-term solution but not a long term one. Generally, the image of Creole or enslaved people born in the Caribbean was happier and less likely to incite insurrection.[91] Similarly to Stephen's pamphlet, one of the issues that Brougham addressed was the concern for the security of the British Empire and its colonies in the Caribbean. Brougham also addressed the idea of doing what was best for the greater good of the empire. The security of the empire was more important than increasing the wealth of the empire.[92] The slave trade undermined the empire and the solution was to end it. Abolishing the slave trade would ameliorate the condition of enslaved peoples and destroy the dangerous mixture of enslaved African in the colonies.[93]

Brougham's tone in this section was markedly different than in the previous sections. He replaces the negativity about the character of people of color—both enslaved and free—with concern for their treatment and condition. Ultimately, Brougham's premise was security and the greater good

[83] Brougham, *Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of European Powers,* p. 415.
[84] Ibid, p. 441.
[85] Ibid, p. 456.
[86] Ibid, p. 451.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Amelioration became a way to preempt any forms of emancipation and abolition that would threaten the security of British possessions and to regulate abolition legislation. Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation,* p. 104.
[89] Brougham, *Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of European Powers,* p. 464.
[90] Ibid, p. 468
[91] Brougham based this assumption on the myth that African born slaves were less predictable and more likely to rebel. West Indian planters such as Edward Long believed and perpetuated this idea, Long, *History of Jamaica vol. 2,* p. 444.
[92] Brougham, *Inquiry into the Colonial Policy of European Powers,* p. 468
[93] Ibid, p. 473

of the empire. As a man seeking to be an influential politician in the British Parliament, he would have had to address this in the face of imperial conflict and rivalry with France. Yet, his analysis of the slave trade and its faults were similar to those of Stephen. In his attack on the slave trade, Brougham also addressed counterarguments in support of the slave trade. These arguments consisted of one that was particularly French and the other being British. According to Brougham, the French had "maintained, that the negro trade is the only means of civilizing the interior of the great African continent; that the natural constitution of the negroes is utterly repugnant to the climate in which they are born; and they must be transplanted to the milder regions of the new world, and civilized by main force."[94] Nevertheless, the slave insurrection of Saint-Domingue and the rest of the Caribbean made this assumption moot. The British, Brougham wrote, had "asserted that the Negroes are happier in the West Indies than in their own country, and enjoy more of the comforts of life than the peasantry of Europe…"[95] This point was moot if compared to the treatment of enslaved Africans in the West Indies and the potential for insurrection in the colonies.

To those in support of the slave trade, Brougham wrote about the advantages that abolition would have in the larger theme of the greater good of the empire. He expressed the belief that if the British stopped then the rest of the slave-holding powers would follow suit. If not, then it would be up to the British to enforce this ban.[96] Brougham also believed that it was "the dignity of Great Britain to take the lead, and to trust that her example would be followed."[97] The increased value of enslaved people would result in better protection and treatment. Ultimately, it would be up to the government as to who would have the final say. Brougham believed that the end of the slave trade was possible with minimal detrimental effect on the bigger picture of maintaining the security of the empire and preserving commerce. Abolishing the slave trade would ameliorate the condition of enslaved peoples and force slave owners to take better care of them. The termination of the slave trade would speed up the process of creolization, as the African element in the population would no longer be prevalent. Brougham cited the U.S. as an example of a slave-holding society that had increased its wealth and growth of its enslaved population without the use of the slave trade.[98] Lastly, the colonial assemblies and not the imperial government in London would deal with the transition after the end of the slave trade.

Conclusion

Stephen's predictions would come to fruition as in May of 1802 French forces arrived in the Caribbean to disarm former enslaved peoples and reinstitute slavery.[99] Despite their success in Guadeloupe, the French could not overcome disease and the renewed onslaught of the freed enslaved of Saint-Domingue. Now led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, former enslaved Africans, and their descendants' defeated French forces at the battle of Vertiéres in November 1803 and on January 1, 1804, Saint-Domingue became the independent black republic of Haiti.[100] Even with the presence of the first independent nation founded by enslaved peoples, abolitionists still invoked the example of the insurrection of Saint-Domingue in their arguments for the repeal of the slave trade. In his *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, William Wilberforce argued that the disproportion of enslaved Africans to whites in the Caribbean placed British possessions in danger. "Such being the lesson which the Island of St. Domingo has taught those most unwilling to receive it; the immense disproportion between the Blacks and Whites in our islands, perhaps ten or even fifteen to one, is a

[94] Ibid, p. 478.
[95] Ibid, p. 480
[96] Ibid, p. 489
[97] Ibid, p. 491.
[98] Ibid, p. 501.
[99] Oldfield, *Transatlantic Abolition in the Age of Revolution*, p. 165.
[100] Ibid, pp. 166 – 167.

subject of most just and serious dread."[101] Wilberforce used Saint-Domingue as a warning to the danger that the British put themselves in by continuing to import enslaved Africans to the Caribbean.

As Wilberforce was writing and publishing his argument against the slave trade the British government adopted an order in council in August of 1805 that restricted the importation of African slaves from Africa to Trinidad, Berbice, Demerara, St. Lucia, Suriname, and Tobago.[102] Although the order in council was a temporary wartime measure, Parliament passed a Slave Trade Abolition Bill that banned British ships from participating in the Atlantic slave trade at the beginning of 1808. The abolitionists were successful.

From 1792 – 1803, abolitionists were writing within two different political climates. The anonymous author and Clarkson wrote during the 1790s as the anti-Jacobin backlash in Great Britain dampened abolitionist fervor. Restrained by this environment, both writers had focused their arguments on warning Britons about the consequences of continuing with the slave trade. Meanwhile, Stephen and Brougham wrote during the Napoleonic wars in the 1800s. No longer restrained by anti-Jacobinism, both authors were able to argue more forcefully for the termination of the slave trade in the larger debate of imperial reform. Moreover, by this time the tide had turned to favor enslaved people as new subjects before Haiti's independence in 1804.

In sum, the British abolitionists used Saint-Domingue prominently in their discourse of empire reform. This facet illustrates another dimension of the movement outside of the moral and economic arguments that scholars of British Abolitionists have analyzed. This analysis of four writers' pamphlets suggests the need for more sustained study, particularly how pro and anti-slavery forces continued to use the example of Haiti after its independence from France. The motivation to end the slave trade was more than just economic self-interest or moral expression. It also incorporated larger debates over imperial reform and security. These abolitionists and their pamphlets influenced abolitionism by their use of Saint-Domingue to shape British imperial reform through their words and warnings. Nonetheless, this could not have been possible if it were not for the slaves in Saint-Domingue and other islands in the Caribbean whose actions to procure their liberty forced the hand of the British ruling elite within the context of imperial rivalry and reconstitution of the empire during the Age of Revolution.

[101] William Wilberforce, *A Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade; Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire*. (London: Luke Hansard & Sons, 1807), p. 321.
[102] Fergus, *Revolutionary Emancipation,* pp. 104 – 105.