

KEY DATES IN HAITIAN HISTORY

1500-1865 Ten million people are forcibly brought from Africa to the Americas as captive slaves. Many more die in transit. More than half of those numbers arrive in the years 1700-1810. The Caribbean islands of the French slave empire account for 2 million of these arrivals.

1776-83 War of independence of the United States of America opens a lengthy period of war and revolution throughout the Americas against European rule. Contemporary struggles against slavery and colonialism surge forward.

1789 A revolution against tyranny in France erupts and issues the Declaration of the Rights of Man, declaring principles of “Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood.”

1791 A gathering of Black people at Bois Cayman in northern Haiti launches a revolutionary war of reform and overthrow of the slave empires of France, Spain and Britain on the island of Hispanola (the future Haiti/Dominican Republic). The revolt ignites uprisings throughout the Caribbean.

Aug 1793 The Commissioners of the Republic of France in Haiti cede to the anti-slavery rebellion and take steps to begin the abolition of slavery.

Feb 4, 1794 The National Assembly in France declares the abolition of slavery. Henceforth, Haiti exercises a de facto autonomy from France under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture.

1801-03 Napoleon Bonaparte secretly re-introduces slavery to the Empire and sends an invasion force to re-conquer Haiti. The struggle against slavery becomes transformed into a struggle for Haitian independence. France suffers its final military defeat in Haiti in November, 1803, at Vertières. Earlier that year, Toussaint Louverture is captured and dies in a French prison.

Jan 1, 1804 Declaration of independence of Haiti. The first president is General Jean Jacques Dessalines. Haiti enjoys relative stability and prosperity in the decades following independence.

1810s and 20s Key support by Haiti to Latin America for the independence wars against Spain. In the Spanish-American wars of independence, about a half of the liberation forces were of African descent.

1825 France proposed an Independence Debt (compensation to the former slaveowners) as a condition of diplomatic recognition and economic relations, amounting to \$21 billion in current dollars. The measure is approved by then-Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer amidst great controversy. To pay the Debt, Haiti takes a crippling loan from French banks. The final payment on the loan was made in 1944.

1815-1860 Britain and the U.S. banned the Atlantic slave *trade* in 1807, but slavery continued to thrive in the U.S., Cuba and Brazil. The European powers continued to profit from it. From 1815 to 1860, the slave population of the Americas doubled and plantation output tripled.

1861-1865 U.S. Civil War results in the abolition of slavery. 180,000 Blacks, most of them former slaves, fought in the Union army.

1915-34 U.S. military occupation of Haiti. By the end of the 1920's, the Occupation is overwhelmed with protest and rebellion and ends in ignominy.

1929-57 Haiti presages the post-WW2 anti-colonial rebellion with nearly thirty years of intense political struggle for justice and democracy.

1957 Francois 'Papa Doc' Duvalier wins a fraudulent national election and begins a 30-year family tyranny.

1986 Popular uprising overthrows son Jean Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier.

1990 Following a four-year battle for democracy, Jean Bertrand Aristide is elected president of Haiti with 67% of the vote. The U.S.-favored candidate wins 14%.

Sept 29, 1991 Overthrow of Aristide government by the Haitian military. Thousands are killed and exiled during the three years that follow.

1994 Aristide is restored to the presidency with assistance, and conditions set, by the United States (President Clinton). The following year, Aristide abolishes the Haitian military. In 1996, he is succeeded as president by René Préval, the first peaceful transition of a presidency in the 20th century.

2000 Aristide wins a second election with close to 90% of the vote. Canada, the U.S. and Europe refuse to recognize the result and impose an embargo of aid against the new government.

2003 Haiti initiates an action in the World Court for recovery of the Independence Debt. The legal action is cut short by the coup d'état the following year.

Feb 2004 Second coup against Aristide, this time by paramilitaries with backing from the U.S., Canada, Europe and Chile. U.S. Marines remove Aristide from Haiti. For two years, a foreign-appointed regime rules Haiti. Thousands are killed, imprisoned or exiled.

Feb 2006 A national election chooses René Préval as president, but Aristide's party is excluded from this and all subsequent elections.

January 12, 2010 A massive earthquake just west of Port au Prince rocks a region of three million people, including the capital. Tens of thousands are killed; half of the buildings in Port au Prince are destroyed, damaged beyond repair, or requiring of major repair before being safe to re-inhabit. As many as 1.5 million people take refuge in temporary camps that gradually become permanent camps. Three years later, 400,000 people are still in the camps and hundreds of thousands more live in similarly precarious shelter.

October 2010 Due to neglect by the military occupation force of the UN Security Council in Haiti, cholera is introduced to the country for the first time in modern history. More than 7,000 die in the following two years.

March 2011 Aristide returns to Haiti from seven years in exile.

For complete news on Haiti:

* Website of the Canada Haiti Action Network: www.canadahaitiaction.ca.