

Struggle for freedom: The Long Journey of Combating Imperialism

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Abstract

The western hemisphere, known for their political revolutions, can be exemplified by two countries: America and Haiti. The latter one is the first black republic that gained independence from European colonizers, and America is the founding country of democratic system. This essay will focus on how both countries' revolutions set the stone for human rights, and how they laid the foundation for the modern society. When studying, the analyzation of the two founding documents are pivotal. Declaration of Independence and The Haitian Declaration of Independence are the prime sources that helped to understand revolutions that took place in the past, and their profound impact on the development of modern democratic principles and human rights. As a result, Haiti and America will be the prime subject targeted in this essay, and the conclusion showed that American revolution entailed people rights to abolish the government, and Haitian revolution symbolized the success of rebellion led by blacks, which fostered the equality between different races[1].

Keywords: America, Haiti, Right, Revolution, Human Right

Introduction

Revolution, rights, and democracy, key words surrounding the rise of the western hemisphere, represent the fundamental idea revolving the revolutions for both America and Haiti. As two of the first nations to break free from European colonial control, Haiti and America's success in revolution set the stone for other countries in the region. The *Declaration of Independence* and *The Haitian Declaration of Independence*, two of the founding documents that both similar in some ways but differ in others, are the documents that express the central idea for each revolutions. While the *Declaration of Independence* defines the goal of revolution as to establish a democratic nation that guarantees basic human rights for everyone, *The Haitian Declaration of Independence*, on the other hand, defines the goal as to create the first independent Black republic in the world. Both are the foundation of modern human rights as American Revolution established right to life, liberty, and personal security, and Haitian Revolution exemplified freedom from slavery[2]. The theme of this research paper revolves around the colonization of European countries, and how western hemisphere responded to the suppression after a prolonged period of abuses, which can be symbolized by two countries: Haiti and America. The essay wants to figure out what is the similarity between the two countries, how each revolutions founding documents resemble. Upon that, this paper discusses the contribution that two revolutions contributed to the modern society, namely human rights.

Background information regarding American and Haitian revolution:

American Revolution took place in between 1775 and 1783. Authored by Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence is the document that freed America from the British control.

Constitution and Bill of Rights is yet another important aspect that established a framework for a

government based on popular sovereignty and checks and balances. Haitian Revolution, on the other hand, took place in between 1791 and 1804. Following the steps of America, Haiti is the first country in Latin America that set free from the European control. The Haitian Revolution was fundamentally a slave rebellion, and its success led to the establishment of Haiti as the first independent nation in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also became the first post-colonial black-led nation in the world. The Declaration of Independence of Haiti also emphasized freedom and equality for all its citizens, challenging the institution of slavery and colonialism.

Analysis

How can America and Haiti symbolize the foundation of Human rights, and which ones do they symbolize?

Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms that every person is entitled to, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, or any other status. America's primary goal was to break free from British control, and the Declaration of Independence stresses all the atrocities that the British king had imposed on the colonies. Jefferson in *The Declaration of Independence* states that "the history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states" [3]. As stated in the document, the British King executed numerous atrocities that made the life of colonies unbearable. These included the forbidden of laws that was important, quartered large bodies of armed troops, and imposed taxes without consent. Therefore, *The Declaration of Independence* is a document that granted colonies with

an important right: the right for people to overthrow the current government if it is causing constant harm and misfortune. Jefferson states that, “when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security” [4]. This right empowers people the ability to have the control over their life, and forms the idea that government’s power derives from the people. This laid the foundation for the modern society, setting a precedent that the legitimacy of any government depends on its respect for the rights and welfare of its people. As for human rights, the American revolution set the foundation in a few ways. By emphasizing the importance of protecting individual liberties against the oppressive rule, the American Revolution guaranteed the right to life, liberty, and personal security [5]. Moreover, The Declaration of Independence explicitly states that all men are created equal and endowed with unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This assertion directly challenged the monarchical systems, and promoted the idea that individual have unalienable rights and must be protected by the government. It also highlighted the right to self-governance. That is; by rejecting the British rule, the colonies asserted their right to establish a government that derived its powers from the consent of the governed. This, again, was a significant advancement in the promotion of political rights and democratic governance. Lastly, the Bill of Rights protected specific individual liberties from different Amendments: the First Amendment protects freedoms of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition; the Second Amendment guaranteed the right to bear arms; the Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures; and the Sixth Amendment guarded the right to a fair and speedy trial. As a result, by establishing a representative

democracy with amendments to protect individual's rights, America's breakaway from Britain laid a robust foundation for human rights and the protection of individual freedoms [6].

The Haitian Declaration of Independence, in the same manner, strives for the basic human rights, tries to break free from French, and accuses the France's immoral actions. Jean Jacques Dessalines, the author of *The Haitian Declaration of Independence*, stresses the extreme hate towards French colonizer as he states that "let us vow to ourselves, to posterity, to the entire universe, to forever renounce France, and to die rather than live under its domination; to fight until our last breath for the independence of our country" [7]. Dessalines's determination of pursuing liberty was intense. The principles he announced deeply moved the generals, which all voted unanimously to the declared project of independence. Moreover, being the first slave led rebellion, Haiti set an example that oppressed peoples could overthrow colonial and oppressive regimes. The Haitian revolution has two goals: fighting slavery and establishing an independent nation. It was first a slave revolt that tried to fight the French colonial administrations, but as time wore on, the object was to break free from France and drive all the French out of the nation as Dessalines states that "it is not enough to have expelled the barbarians who have bloodied our land for two centuries" [8]. The barbarian that Dessalines mentions in the text is referred to French colonizers. It was not enough to just expel French colonizers from Haiti; they also want complete independence from colonial rule and the establishment of a sovereign nation governed by its own people. Thus, it is evident that Haiti altered its goal and aimed to achieve independence. The success of Haitian revolution symbolized the uprising of people who were under long term suppression. The creation of the nation is the best support for the human rights including freedom from slavery and oppression, as well as the right to self-determination and

equality. The Haitian Revolution was fundamentally a struggle for freedom from slavery. It was the first successful slave rebellion in history, which resulted in the complete abolition of slavery in Haiti. This monumental achievement demonstrated that enslaved people could fight for and secure their own freedom. Also, the Haitian Declaration of Independence emphasized the right to self-determination. Rejecting French colonial rule, Haiti asserted their own right to govern themselves, and promoted the idea that everyone has the right to determine their own political status and pursue their own economic, social, and cultural development. Lastly, Haiti established a sovereign nation, which showed the possibility that people can establish a nation free from colonial exploitation and dedicated to the principles of liberty and equality.

By successfully establishing an independent nation, and also being the first independent nation of Latin America, Haiti not only became a symbol of resistance and hope for enslaved and colonized peoples, but also evoked other Latin American countries to fight against the colonial control from European countries. As a result, Haiti's success showed the world their determination of fighting against racism and suppression from European authorities.

Conclusion

The American Revolution was pivotal in promoting human rights by establishing principles of individual liberty, self-governance, legal protections, and democratic participation. The Haitian Declaration of Independence and the Haitian Revolution, in the same manner, were pivotal in promoting human rights by achieving freedom from slavery, asserting the right to self-determination, and challenging the colonial controls. Both Jean Jacques Dessalines and Thomas

Jefferson used powerful statements and led successful rebellions that set a global example of how oppressed peoples could overthrow European countries and establish their own sovereign nations. Both nations inspired and laid the foundation for modern society, forming the structure for the human rights. Through its emphasis on protecting individual freedoms and holding the government accountable, the American Revolution ensured the right to life, liberty, and personal security. The Haitian Revolution, in the same way, ensured the right from slavery and right to self-determination and equality.

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