An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti

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Chronology

1492  Christopher Columbus lands on the island called Xaymaca by its Taíno and Arawak inhabitants. The Spaniards build the fort La Navidad. Columbus returns a year later to find the fort destroyed and all Spanish occupants dead.

1502–9  The Spanish governor Nicolás de Ovando arrives on the island with hundreds of troops and introduces the cultivation of sugar cane from the Canary Islands. A year later under pretense of a friendly meeting he massacres many Taíno.

1513  Enslaved Africans are first imported to Jamaica.

1625  French and English buccaneers settle on the island of Tortuga off the northern coast of Hispaniola, present-day Haiti.

1665  Louis XIV establishes the French colony of Saint-Domingue (St. Domingo), which includes Tortuga and the western half of Hispaniola.

1676  The Maroon leader Padrejean incites St. Domingo’s first slave rebellion near Port de Paix. He is caught and killed by buccaneers.

1697  Spain recognizes French possession of western Hispaniola with the Treaty of Ryswick.

1743  François Dominique Toussaint de Bréda is born.

1758  Marcus Rainsford is born in Salins, County Kildare, Ireland.

1763  The Treaty of Paris settles the Seven Years War. Great Britain gains control of French possessions in North America.

1770  The first edition of Guillaume-Thomas Raynal’s Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies is published.

1773  Rainsford graduates with a Master’s degree from Trinity University, Dublin.

1775  The American Revolution begins.

1776  The Second Continental Congress approves the Declaration of Independence.

1779  Rainsford joins Lord Francis Rawdon’s Volunteers of Ireland to fight in the American War for Independence.

1781  Rainsford is shipped to Jamaica in Lord Montagu’s Duke of Cumberland Regiment, also known as the South Carolina Rangers. The unit is disbanded two years later, and Rainsford is released on half-pay.
October 1781  The British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia.

1782  William Hayley publishes *An Essay on Epic Poetry*, calling for the revival of epic poetry in Britain.

1783  The Treaty of Paris ends the American War for Independence, and Great Britain recognizes the United States of America.

1789  Representatives of the clergy and the Third Estate in France meet in assembly and swear not to disband without a constitution.

July 14, 1789  The people of Paris storm the Bastille.

1790  The mulatto planter Vincent Ogé leads a failed revolt in St. Domingo. He is caught, tried by colonial authorities, and executed at Cape François.

1791  The first canto of Marcus Rainsford’s *The Revolution; Or, Britain Delivered* is published anonymously in Edinburgh and London.

May 1791  The Constituent Assembly in France gives full political rights to mulattos and free blacks.

August 14, 1791  A voodoo ceremony at Bois Caïman in St. Domingo, led by Jamaican-born Boukman Dutty, sparks revolution, which ignites in full on August 21. Cape François burns.

October 1791  Port-au-Prince is burned during the fighting between whites and mulattos. Toussaint Louverture joins the rebellion, siding initially with the Spanish.

1792  The French Legislative Assembly grants citizenship to all free men of color. The commissioners Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, Étienne Polverel, and Jean-Antoine Ailhaud arrive in St. Domingo with six thousand troops.

January 1793  Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are executed in Paris. Spain joins the coalition against France.

February 1793  France declares war on Great Britain. Toussaint and his troops side with Spain against the French.

August 1793  Sonthonax abolishes slavery in the northern province. Abolition is extended to the western and southern provinces by year’s end.

September 1793  British troops land at Jérémie in St. Domingo.

1794  Toussaint and the Spanish gain control over the north of St. Domingo except Cape François.

February 1794  Slavery is officially abolished by the French National Assembly.

May 1794  Toussaint changes sides and joins France, becoming a general in the French Army.

June 1794  British troops take Port-au-Prince.

June 1794  Sonthonax is recalled to France to face trial for treason.
October 1794    General Étienne Laveaux is appointed the interim governor-general of St. Domingo. Marcus Rainsford joins the Duke of York’s expedition in the Netherlands with the Royal York Fusiliers.

1795    French troops led by Toussaint and André Rigaud fight the British in the western and southern provinces of St. Domingo.

1795    Spain cedes eastern Hispaniola to France.

1796    Rainsford arrives in Jamaica with the Third West India Regiment as a recruiting officer. Lieutenant Governor Lord Balcarres detains him and other troops meant for St. Domingo to fight rebellious Maroons.

March 1796    Governor Laveaux is arrested and temporarily jailed in a failed coup attempt.

April 1796    Laveaux names Toussaint the lieutenant governor of St. Domingo.

May 1796    The commissioners Sonthonax, Phillipe-Rose Roume, and Julien Raimond arrive in St. Domingo.

October 1796    Laveaux returns to France to serve as the representative for St. Domingo.

January 1797    Rainsford returns to England from St. Domingo to recover from an arm injury and possibly yellow fever.

May 1797    Sonthonax appoints Toussaint the commander in chief of French colonial forces.

August 1797    Toussaint forces Sonthonax to return to France.

October 1797    Rainsford lands in St. Domingo at Mole St. Nicholas.

1798    Rainsford visits Cape François disguised as an American sailor. Later he is arrested as a spy, tried, and condemned to death. His sentence is commuted by Toussaint.

May 1798    The English General Thomas Maitland and Toussaint sign an armistice. British troops begin evacuating, remaining at Mole St. Nicholas until October.

April 1799    Rainsford rejoins the Third West India Regiment in Martinique.

May 1799    The War of Knives begins between Toussaint and Rigaud.

June 1799    Toussaint negotiates a secret convention with Great Britain and the United States.

November 1799    Napoleon Bonaparte overthrows the Republican government in the Eighteenth Brumaire coup d’état.

March 1800    Rainsford is released from military service on half-pay. He returns to England and sells his commission.

July 1800    Toussaint defeats Rigaud, who flees to Guadeloupe.
1801 The second edition of Rainsford’s *The Revolution: Or; Britain Delivered* is published in London.

January 1801 Toussaint seizes Spanish Hispaniola and abolishes slavery there.

July 1801 Toussaint creates a constitution for St. Domingo that proclaims himself governor general for life.

October 1801 The Treaty of Amiens suspends hostilities between Great Britain and France. Napoleon appoints his brother-in-law Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc the chief of an expeditionary force for regaining control of St. Domingo and restoring slavery.

January 1802 Rainsford’s *Memoir of Transactions That Took Place in St. Domingo* is published in London.

February 1802 Leclerc’s troops land in St. Domingo near Cape François. Toussaint leads the resistance.

March–April 1802 The Battle of Crête à Pierrot.

May 1802 The generals Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe surrender to Leclerc. Toussaint capitulates and retires to his plantation in Ennery.

June 1802 Leclerc arrests Toussaint under false pretense and deports him with his family to France. Two months later Toussaint is jailed in the Fort de Joux in the Jura Mountains.

August 1802 Rainsford’s *St. Domingo; Or, an Historical, Political and Military Sketch of the Black Republic* is published in London, a second edition of his memoir. A third, containing a portrait of Toussaint, appears before the end of the year.

October 1802 As the revolution’s final leader, Dessalines renews the fight against the French.

November 1802 Leclerc dies of yellow fever and is succeeded by General Rochambeau.

February 1803 William Wordsworth’s “To Toussaint Louverture” is published in London’s *Morning Post*.

April 1803 Toussaint dies in his cell in Fort de Joux.

November 1803 Dessalines and Alexandre Pétion defeat French troops at the Battle of Vertières. Rochambeau capitulates.

January 1, 1804 Dessalines proclaims independence from France and himself the governor general of the nation of Haiti.

March–April 1804 Dessalines massacres the white colonists remaining in Haiti.

July 1804 Rainsford writes *An Hymeneal on the Marriage of the Right Hon. Francis, Earl of Moira, etc., to the Right Hon. Flora, Countess of Loudon; on the 12th Day of July, 1804.*
October 1804  Dessalines proclaims himself emperor of Haiti.
December 1804  Napoleon declares himself emperor of France.
1805  Rainsford’s *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* is published in London.
October 1806  Dessalines is assassinated. Christophe is appointed president.
1807  Haiti is divided into the Northern State of Haiti under Christophe and the Southern Republic of Haiti under Pétion.
1807  The British Parliament passes the Slave Trade Act abolishing the slave trade in the British Empire.
1809  Spain regains Santo Domingo from Haiti with help from Britain.
1810  Rainsford joins the First Royal Veteran Battalion.
1811  Christophe declares himself King Henry I of the Northern Kingdom of Haiti.
1813  Rainsford is imprisoned for debt.
April 1814  Napoleon abdicates and is exiled to the island of Elba. Louis XVIII becomes king of France.
November 1814  The Congress of Vienna authorizes France to resume the slave trade for five years. Rainsford participates in a popular campaign of opposition.
1815  Rainsford acts as an agent in London on behalf of King Henry I.
February 1815  Napoleon escapes Elba and regains control of France.
March 1815  Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and Austria form the Seventh Coalition against Napoleon at the Congress of Vienna.
June 1815  Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo.
1816  Pétion provides Simon Bolivar haven and support in his expedition against Spanish colonial authorities in Venezuela.
1816  Rainsford’s *Translation of an Official Communication from the Government of Hayti* is published in London.
November 4, 1817  Rainsford is buried at Saint Giles in the Fields, Middlesex.
Map of St. Domingo by Bill Nelson.