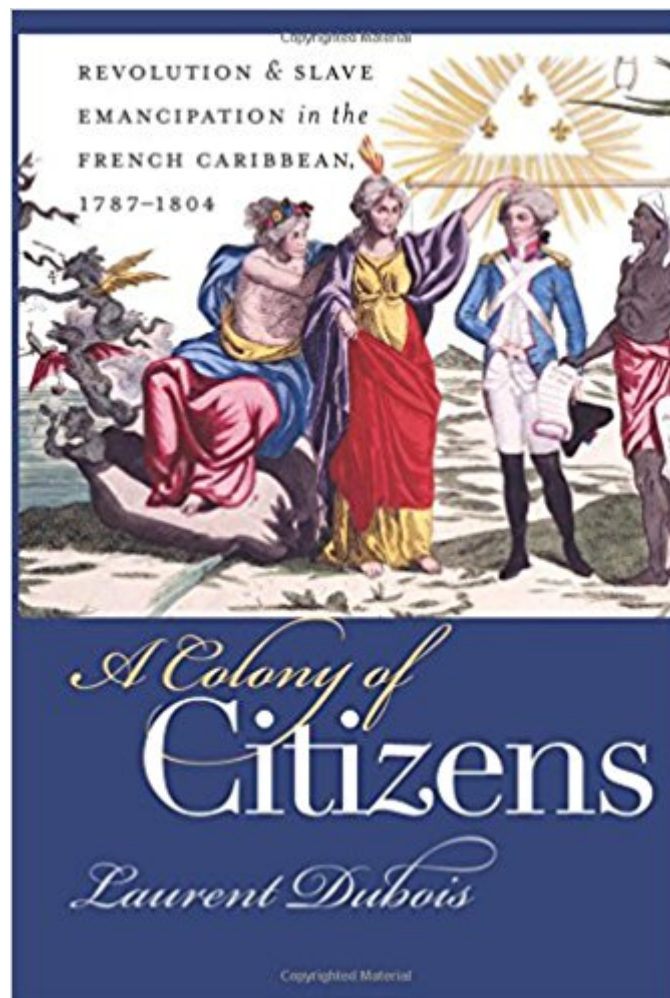


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# A Colony Of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation In The French Caribbean, 1787-1804



## Synopsis

The idea of universal rights is often understood as the product of Europe, but as Laurent Dubois demonstrates, it was profoundly shaped by the struggle over slavery and citizenship in the French Caribbean. Dubois examines this Caribbean revolution by focusing on Guadeloupe, where, in the early 1790s, insurgents on the island fought for equality and freedom and formed alliances with besieged Republicans. In 1794, slavery was abolished throughout the French Empire, ushering in a new colonial order in which all people, regardless of race, were entitled to the same rights. But French administrators on the island combined emancipation with new forms of coercion and racial exclusion, even as newly freed slaves struggled for a fuller freedom. In 1802, the experiment in emancipation was reversed and slavery was brutally reestablished, though rebels in Saint-Domingue avoided the same fate by defeating the French and creating an independent Haiti. The political culture of republicanism, Dubois argues, was transformed through this transcultural and transatlantic struggle for liberty and citizenship. The slaves-turned-citizens of the French Caribbean expanded the political possibilities of the Enlightenment by giving new and radical content to the idea of universal rights.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Elegantly written and meticulously researched . . . will be regarded as the standard account for some time to come. . . . Dubois has done a marvelous job." -- "William and Mary Quarterly" An

outstanding contribution to Caribbean historiography and Dubois has arguably written one of the best monographs on the Age of Revolution to date." -- "Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el Caribe" "In this impressive work, Dubois reveals a world of ideas and conflicts that will astonish even most specialists of eighteenth-century history. One of the most informative works of history [I] have read in a long time." -- "American Historical Review" "An inherently fascinating tale, and one rich in significance for our understanding of the history and legacies of slavery and racism, revolution and enlightenment, and democracy and human rights. . . . Beautifully written and exhaustively researched. . . . One hopes that . . . the book will be read across the traditional geographic boundaries of the academy." -- "The Americas" "A rich and important study on Guadeloupe . . . during the Revolutionary period. . . . An extended and subtle analysis of the changing meaning of republicanism and race. Opens the door to such future research, and not just fills the gap in the historiography but firmly places the question of the universality of the Revolution at the forefront of historical research." -- "Latin America and the Caribbean" "An impressive, erudite and engaging work. . . . Will undoubtedly be considered provocative. . . . Meticulously researched and well-written. . . . Exemplary. . . . Makes a significant contribution to Atlantic history." -- "The Southern Quarterly" "A milestone in the ever-expanding historiography of Atlantic slave emancipation. . . . Exhaustively researched, richly detailed, and superbly written." -- "The International Journal of African Historical Studies"

Imaginatively crafted and deeply probing in argument and interpretation, *A Colony of Citizens* focuses on the French colony of Guadeloupe to explore the role of enslaved Africans and their descendants in imagining and creating new worlds of universal freedom. In this very important book, Laurent Dubois demonstrates how the dynamic for change in societies and empires can be powerfully influenced by the agency of an underclass who make their own way upward and forward. The book throws much-needed light on the quite complex relations among slavery, revolution, race, ideology, and freedom during a critically significant era in world history.--David Barry Gaspar, Duke University

A rich and important study on Guadeloupe . . . during the Revolutionary period. . . . An extended and subtle analysis of the changing meaning of republicanism and race. Opens the door to such future research, and not just fills the gap in the historiography but firmly places the question of the universality of the Revolution at the forefront of historical research.--Latin America and the Caribbean

Dubois convincingly argues that no history of the Age of Revolution or of human rights is adequate without including the actions of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the Caribbean, who fought for emancipation and against racism. An important, thoughtful, and eloquent book. . . .

Highly recommended.--ChoiceIn this impressive work, Dubois reveals a world of ideas and conflicts that will astonish even most specialists of eighteenth-century history. One of the most informative works of history [I] have read in a long time.--American Historical ReviewLaurent Dubois has given us a fascinating account of the revolution in Guadeloupe. . . . Merits the attention, not only of a few readers in the rather limited field of French Caribbean studies, but of a broader audience interested in Atlantic revolutions, slavery and abolition, the genesis of human rights, or even just a mighty lively story.--H-CaribbeanA milestone in the ever-expanding historiography of Atlantic slave emancipation. . . . Exhaustively researched, richly detailed, and superbly written.--The International Journal of African Historical StudiesElegantly written and meticulously researched . . . will be regarded as the standard account for some time to come. . . . Dubois has done a marvelous job.--William and Mary QuarterlyA Colony of Citizens is the leading edge of a new wave of historical work on slavery and slave resistance in the Caribbean. Using the widest possible range of archives and manuscripts, Laurent Dubois offers a compelling account of slave emancipation in the era of the French Revolution--and more tragically, of Napoleon's reimposition of slavery. This rich and nuanced work restores the colonial story of slavery and emancipation to its rightful place as one of the most significant moments in the history of revolution, democracy, and human rights.--Lynn Hunt, University of California, Los AngelesAn impressive, erudite and engaging work. . . . Will undoubtedly be considered provocative. . . . Meticulously researched and well-written. . . . Exemplary. . . . Makes a significant contribution to Atlantic history.--The Southern QuarterlyAn outstanding contribution to Caribbean historiography and Dubois has arguably written one of the best monographs on the Age of Revolution to date.--Estudios Interdisciplinarios de America Latina y el CaribeAn inherently fascinating tale, and one rich in significance for our understanding of the history and legacies of slavery and racism, revolution and enlightenment, and democracy and human rights. . . . Beautifully written and exhaustively researched. . . . One hopes that . . . the book will be read across the traditional geographic boundaries of the academy.--The AmericasA Colony of Citizens, based on much original research, at last enables us to assess the true importance of battles in the Eastern Caribbean.--The NationAdroitly linking the dramatic black revolutions of Guadeloupe and Saint Domingue, Laurent Dubois neatly balances the local and Atlantic dimensions and stakes a claim to the centrality of those revolutions to the history of empire and democracy.--David Geggus, University of Florida

This book is a brilliant corrective to those who might look solely to Europe to understand the formation and implication of the French Revolution. Dubois demonstrates that the Caribbean, far

from being simply the colonial "periphery," was the central staging ground which lent the ideals of the French Revolution their most radical content, and where the limits of French republicanism were realized. He develops useful concepts like "Republican racism," uniquely assesses documents to reach new conclusions, and unfixes the often static definitions of citizenship. Highly recommended, even if you're not a student of the Caribbean (which I am not).

The end of slavery in the French Caribbean is a story that has many facets. This book looks at one of the smaller islands (Guadeloupe) and tracks its progress as it tries to free itself from the grips of slavery. Dubois tells a very good story and it is well written. The book focuses on Guadeloupe but also gives a sense of what is happening in the entire British and French Caribbean. Dubois in his other books really provides a complete picture of what is occurring in the Caribbean and they are all recommended.

This book looks at the results of the French Revolution in its Caribbean colonies. One of the results of the revolution was the declaration of the rights of man and the acceptance of the belief in the equality of all individuals. The brutal plantation system that operated in the Caribbean Islands was an anathema to this philosophy. So how would the new French Republic deal with this contradiction? This book charts the history of this focusing on the Island of Guadeloupe. I found this very interesting because we have all heard about Haiti but verily little is ever said about the other French Islands during the age of Napoleon. The book does a good job of presenting explaining the different tensions in revolutionary Guadeloupe. After the emancipation of the slaves there is still a desire to keep the colony profitable this goes directly against the freed slaves desire to strike out on their own. There is also the issue of how the colony will be defended against the British whom the French are at war with. What one gets is a picture of what emancipation could have looked like in the New World as different groups navigated around the new slave free society and despite the pleas of former plantation owners who appealed to various racist stereotypes and subversion of the new government to regain power. Unfortunately this idea of the future would be put to an end by the rise of Napoleon. The author also does a good job of connecting the better known struggle for freedom in Haiti to Guadeloupe and showing why it went different on the two islands. This is a very good book that deals with a subject that I was not very familiar with. We hear so much about the European struggles for freedom and liberty in the New World but very little about those whose very life hinged on them winning their struggle for liberation. This book is a must read for anyone interested in the history of the Caribbean or the struggles against slavery in the New World.

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