



Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History; A Play in Three Acts (The C. L. R. James Archives)

By C. L. R. James

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In 1934 C. L. R. James, the widely known Trinidadian intellectual, writer, and political activist, wrote the play *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History*, which was presumed lost until the rediscovery of a draft copy in 2005. The play's production, performed in 1936 at London's Westminster Theatre with a cast including the American star Paul Robeson, marked the first time black professional actors starred on the British stage in a play written by a black playwright. This edition includes the program, photographs, and reviews from that production, a contextual introduction and editorial notes on the play by Christian Høgsbjerg, and selected essays and letters by James and others. In *Toussaint Louverture*, James demonstrates the full tragedy and heroism of Louverture by showing how the Haitian revolutionary leader is caught in a dramatic conflict arising from the contradiction between the barbaric realities of New World slavery and the modern ideals of the Enlightenment. In his portrayal of the Haitian Revolution, James aspired to vindicate black accomplishments in the face of racism and to support the struggle for self-government in his native Caribbean. *Toussaint Louverture* is an indispensable companion work to *The Black Jacobins* (1938), James's classic account of Haiti's revolutionary struggle for liberation.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Long legendary throughout the diaspora, the first version of C. L. R. James's play about Toussaint Louverture finally emerges from the archives. This play is the production that united James with his friend Paul Robeson on the London stage. It was an extraordinary event at the time—witness the contemporary reviews added to this publication—and it is no less extraordinary today. In addition to reviews, this edition also reprints valuable early statements from James and Robeson. It is a singular, one might even say Olympian, volume with much to teach us all."

(Aldon Lynn Nielsen, author of *C. L. R. James: A Critical Introduction*)

"[T]horoughly researched and intelligently prepared. . . . *Toussaint Louverture* is easily one of the two or three most important publications of C.L.R. James's work in decades – and the best-edited, by a very large margin."

(Scott McLemee *Inside Higher Ed*)

"This present volume . . . contains the play itself among an array of fascinating accompanying texts. These include an enlightening introduction by Høgsbjerg, a series of notices and reviews of the performances, which featured the most renowned black actor of his generation, Paul Robeson, as the Haitian revolutionary leader, plus other writings by James, Robeson and George Padmore, which pitch the play within its vital contemporary context: all in all, a profoundly engaging, original and epochal document."

(Chris Searle *Race and Class*)

"This script is from a bygone age; its value lies not only in its importance as a document of theater history but also as a crucial addition to the canon of works about the Caribbean. This work would be difficult to stage these days (it boasts an especially large cast), but it should not be ignored by groups that can marshal the resources. Historians of the Caribbean will find it essential."

(Larry Schwartz *Library Journal (Starred Review)*)

"Highly recommended."

(A.J. Guillaume Jr *Choice*)

"Why should we pay attention to this long-lost and largely forgotten play? We should do so because it is among the first efforts of one of history's great anti-colonial voices, wrestling with the distinctive aesthetic quandaries of form and performance, to show that freedom from imperialism is just a phrase if it does not entail direct democracy and universal rights. James was nothing if not ambitious."

(Robert Spencer *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*)

"We all owe much to the expert salvage operation Christian Høgsbjerg has performed here. As long as the world wilts with oppression, is awash with crisis, and punctuated by resistance this play, its subject matter, and now this book, will have to be read, watched and pondered on over and over again."

(Gaverne Bennett *London Socialist Historians Group*)

"More than any other contemporary writer on James, Christian Høgsbjerg appreciates how provisional and incomplete our understanding of this intellectual agenda has actually been. . . . The publication of James's

foray into theatrical prose is not only a delightful literary event in its own right but provides a welcome opportunity to revisit the historical and intellectual context in which James produced his landmark work of comparative historical analysis, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (1938). "

(Kent Worcester *New Politics*)

"[T]he many people interested in James, and the many admirers in particular of his *The Black Jacobins*, will welcome this first publication of his 1934 play. It includes Christian Høgsbjerg's well researched introduction and annotations, and several other pieces related to the play which form the appendix to this volume."

(Bridget Brereton *Trinidad Express*)

"It would be hard to overstate the importance of Christian Høgsbjerg's new critical edition of C.L.R. James's *Toussaint Louverture*.... Publication of *Toussaint Louverture* is such a resource for all readers. There could be no better work with which to launch the important new C.L.R. James Archives Series, edited by Robert A. Hill for Duke University Press."

(Rachel Douglas *Anthurium* 2016-05-01)

About the Author

C. L. R. James (1901–89) was a Trinidadian historian, novelist, activist, and cultural and political critic. He wrote many books, including a seminal cultural study of cricket, *Beyond a Boundary*, which is also published by Duke University Press.

Christian Høgsbjerg is a historian who lectures at Leeds Metropolitan University.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ann Davis:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important work, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a guide. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History; A Play in Three Acts* (The C. L. R. James Archives). Try to stumble through book *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History; A Play in Three Acts* (The C. L. R. James Archives) as your good friend. It means that it can being your friend when you really feel alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunated in your case. The book makes you considerably more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let us make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

Juan Turgeon:

The e-book with title *Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History; A Play in Three Acts* (The C. L. R. James Archives) has a lot of information that you can find out it. You can get a lot of help after read this book. That book exist new understanding the information that exist in this

reserve represented the condition of the world currently. That is important to you to find out how the improvement of the world. This particular book will bring you in new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read the item anywhere you want.

Gene Lyons:

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Edward Sullivan:

Exactly why? Because this Toussaint Louverture: The Story of the Only Successful Slave Revolt in History; A Play in Three Acts (The C. L. R. James Archives) is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap that but latter it will surprise you with the secret it inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning fully. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book get such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking method. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I have been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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