

## African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter

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Volume 13  
Issue 1 March 2010

Article 15

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3-1-2010

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*LA Times and AP News*

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#### Recommended Citation

Washington, Jesse (2010) "Haiti's History as First Black Republic Creates a Special Bond with Many African-Americans," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 1 , Article 15.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/adan/vol13/iss1/15>

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## **Haiti's History as First Black Republic Creates a Special Bond with Many African-Americans**

**By Jesse Washington  
AP National Writer**

**Article posted online Jan. 17, 2010, at  
[http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/  
nation/wire/sns-ap-us-haiti-blacks,0,5283621.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/wire/sns-ap-us-haiti-blacks,0,5283621.story)  
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**A terrible earthquake anywhere in the Caribbean would have hit a sympathetic nerve in most Americans. But as the first black republic of the West, born when slaves overthrew white rulers, Haiti holds a unique place in the hearts of many American blacks.**

**That's why Toussaint Tabb, a college student named after the Haitian slave-turned-general who led the revolution more than 200 years ago, was jolted when he saw televised images of the devastation in Haiti.**

**"They looked just like any other black people over here in America," said Tabb, a history major at North Carolina Central University. "They're the same people."**

**"I would say it hit home harder because it was a predominantly black country, and my name is Toussaint and it's Haiti."**

**Joel Dreyfuss, a native Haitian and editor of the black-oriented Web site TheRoot.com, said American blacks easily "could have ended up in Haiti instead of the U.S., depending on where the slave ship stopped."**

**"I think there is a connection," Dreyfuss continued. "It's not unreasonable or racist, it's human nature, just as Jews identify with Israel. ... There's a natural sense of identification with people who look like yourself."**

**Much of that connection revolves around racial issues, said Jean-Max Hogarth, a physician born in the United States to Haitian immigrants.**

**Haiti's status as the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere "has a lot to do with the fact it has been independent since 1804, it had a long period of**

**discrimination, it had to pay reparations" and had corrupt dictators, said Hogarth, whose medical practice donated a five-figure sum to send him and other doctors to Haiti to treat earthquake victims.**



Sculpture of the "Black Maroon" with Presidential Palace in background, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1970. Photograph by Jerome Handler.  
<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/>.

**"That has created further solidarity with African-Americans," he said. "We think about Haiti being a nation that gained its own independence through struggle. It gives a sense of pride not only for Haitians, but for African-Americans as well."**

**Under French rule, Haiti's abundant sugar plantations made it perhaps the richest colony of the Caribbean. The slave rebellion began about 1790 and a leader soon emerged: Toussaint L'Overture. After years of fierce fighting, L'Overture was captured by Napoleon's forces and died in France.**

**The rebellion lived on, and Napoleon's mighty forces were defeated. Haiti declared itself a nation on Jan. 1, 1804. For years to come, however, Haiti would pay reparations to France.**

**The loss of Haiti's riches and strategic location was part of Napoleon's decision to sell the Louisiana Purchase, which doubled the size of the United States.**

**In America, where blacks were still seeking freedom, there was pride and wonder that Haitians had seized their destiny. This left an indelible imprint on African-American culture. [Read the full article in the L.A. Times >>>].**