



# 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

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As people who live in the modest era should be update about what going on or details even knowledge to make these keep up with the era that is always change and progress. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to you actually is you don't know which one you should start with. 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 our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

#### Amanda Lara:

The reason 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 the idea but latter it will distress you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book adjacent to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is

good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking means. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I have been you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

**Juan Hinkson:**

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