Twitter Thread by Clint Smith



Clint Smith
@ClintSmithIII

217 years ago today, on January 1, 1804, Haiti became became the first independent Black republic in the world following a 12 year revolution. It changed the trajectory of world history.

In 1893, Frederick Douglass gave a speech outlining why Haiti's revolution was so important:

"Speaking for the Negro, I can say, we owe much to Walker for his appeal; to John Brown for the blow struck at Harper's Ferry...but we owe incomparably more to Haiti than to them all. I regard her as the original pioneer emancipator of the nineteenth century."

"It was her one brave example that first of all started the Christian world into a sense of the Negro's manhood. I was she who first awoke the Christian world to a sense of 'the danger of goading too far the energy that slumbers in a black man's arm.'"

"Until Haiti struck for freedom, the conscience of the Christian world slept profoundly over slavery. It was scarcely troubled even by a dream of this crime against justice and liberty."

"The Negro was in its estimation a sheep like creature, having no rights which white men were bound to respect, a docile animal, a kind of ass, capable of bearing burdens, and receiving strips from a white master without resentment, and without resistance."

"The mission of Haiti was to dispel this degradation and dangerous delusion, and to give to the world a new and true revelation of the black man's character. This mission she has performed and performed it well."

"Until she spoke no Christian nation had abolished negro slavery...Until she spoke the slave ship, followed by hungry sharks, greedy to devour the dead and dying slaves flung overboard to feed them, plouged in peace the South Atlantic painting the sea with the Negro's blood."

"Until she spoke, the slave trade was sanctioned by all the Christian nations of the world, and our land of liberty and light included. Men made fortunes by this infernal traffic, and were esteemed as good Christians...and representations of the

Saviour of the World."

"Until Haiti spoke, the church was silent, and the pulpit was dumb. Slave traders lived and slave-traders died. Funeral sermons were preached over them, and of them it was said that they died in the triumphs of the christian faith and went to heaven among the just."

"It will ever be a matter of wonder and astonishment to thoughtful men, that a people in abject slavery...have had left in them enough manhood...to organize, & to select for themselves trusted leaders & with loyal hearts to follow them into the jaws of death to obtain liberty."

Happy Haitian Independence Day. You can read Douglass' speech in full here:

https://t.co/q8hF5JgnFu

As an addendum, read this great piece by @JuliaGaffield: "From the first day of its existence, Haiti banned slavery. It was the first country to do so. The next year, Haiti published its first constitution. Article 2 stated: “Slavery is forever abolished.” https://t.co/mK3bFfZ8lD