

### **Project Outputs:**

#### **Podcast Summary:**

This podcast explores two leaders who challenged colonial power in the Caribbean. Nanny of the Maroons led guerrilla warfare in 1728, Jamaica, securing conditional freedom through treaties. Toussaint Louverture commanded Haiti's 1791 revolution, achieving complete abolition and independence – the first free Black nation, representing fundamentally different paths to resisting imperialism.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

TITLE:

Resistance Against Empires.

[TRANSITIONAL MUSIC]

[CUT]

**INTRODUCTION:**

DEE:

In 1728, in the British colony of Jamaica, a small band of freed people were fighting for their freedom against the British. They were led by a woman, known as Nanny of the Maroons, a legendary figure in Jamaica's history. She had incredible military skills, and some stories claimed she could catch bullets in her clothes and hurl them back at British soldiers. 70 years later, a former slave called Toussaint Louverture was Governor-General of Saint Domingue, having led the Haitian Revolution and abolished slavery.

This podcast will explore these two leaders, telling the story of resistance against imperialism in the Caribbean. We'll compare the effectiveness of these two figures whilst giving some wider context around Caribbean slavery as a whole.

This is relevant to a variety of curriculum areas, including the AQA GCSE Paper 2 option: "Migration, Empires and the People" and the Key Stage Three curriculum on the transatlantic slave trade, adding a more human perspective to the story.

I'll be joined by two experts: Isaac on Jamaica and the story of Nanny, and Anna on Haiti and the story of Toussaint Louverture.

Hello both.

ISAAC:

Hi.

ANNA:

Hey.

[CUT]

**CONTEXT OF CARIBBEAN SLAVERY:**

DEE:

To start, Isaac, can you sketch out how slavery developed in Jamaica?

ISAAC:

Well, Jamaica is initially colonised by the Spanish, who introduced slavery for its indigenous Taino population rather than focusing on enslaved Africans. However, the island was later conquered by the British in the 1600s through a campaign of guerrilla warfare with the aid of early maroons such as Juan de Bolas.

DEE:

With the British invasion and conquest, how did life in Jamaica change?

ISAAC:

James Robertson argues in *Making Jamaica English* that it was similar to the 'sugar boom' agricultural methods of other colonies like Barbados, using large-scale sugar plantations; this plays a part in what Berg and Hudson argue as the causes for the industrial revolution.

DEE:

I know that in colonies such as Haiti, slavery was widespread. Presumably, this was the same in Jamaica?

ISAAC:

Yes, the sugar-boom style of colony was propped up entirely by the work of slaves, with British slavery being based on the enslavement of Africans rather than the natives, as Bev Carey points out in her book *The Maroon Story*.

DEE:

And what were these conditions like? Were they equally poor?

ISAAC:

The conditions of slaves within plantations were expectedly cruel. Living conditions were poor, with slaves housed on the far reaches of plantation properties, in houses with only one or two rooms. Punishments and judicial power were entirely in the hands of slave owners, who made them incredibly harsh as a form of deterrent, ranging from whippings to burnings. Deaths, as pointed out by Foster and Smith, were often higher than birth rates on plantations, with a third dying of parasites or illness.

DEE:

So where do the Maroons come in? I think most people know very little about what they did other than their resistance against British colonialism. How do they emerge from these conditions?

ISAAC:

The poor conditions directly led to the revolt of the Maroons and the introduction of Nanny as well as many previous slave revolts. For example, on Sutton's estate in 1690, 400 slaves revolted, with 318 successfully managing to join with the Maroons, along with many from shipwrecked slave ships. The Clarendon mountains in Jamaica became a homeland for these runaways, who united under a man named Cudjoe and began to fight the British in a form of guerrilla warfare becoming known as the first Maroon War. This is where Nanny first appears.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

[CUT]

### **NANNY OF THE MAROONS AND JAMAICA**

DEE:

Now we've established the context, who was Nanny, and why is she so important?

ISAAC:

Nanny, sometimes named Queen Nanny, was a military leader, known for her tactics in warfare and for leading the maroons. She taught them guerrilla warfare techniques, which they used to organise and raid British plantations for supplies, freeing enslaved people in the process

DEE:

So, Nanny already seems an incredibly strong leader, but what really made her crucial in Jamaica's resistance against the British?

ISAAC:

Nanny was a great warrior and leader. The stories of her using spiritual Obeah practices to catch bullets in the folds of her clothes before firing them back at the British soldiers showed that she was a respected fighter. Now, whilst these stories are presumably untrue, her guerrilla warfare tactics eventually forced the British to ride two people to a horse so that one soldier could always look behind

ANNA:

So what kind of tactics could she have used then?

ISAAC:

Mainly camouflage to avoid detection. They used animal horns to send coded messages across Jamaica. Although much of what we know is debated due to a heavy reliance on oral sources and biased documents

ANNA:

If what we know is based on oral history. How do we know she really had an impact?

ISAAC:

Well, Nanny was responsible for many of the victories the Maroon guerillas won. She defeated Lieutenant Soaper in 1730, stopped Hunter's advance in 1733 and conquered an estate in St George in 1734, capturing its fort and barracks. British records scarcely mention Nanny, but what is said is rarely positive, which is understandable when you consider that none of the four governors they sent to Jamaica could defeat her.

DEE:

Fascinating. So, how successful were the Maroons in bringing about freedom in Jamaica?

ISAAC:

Well, the British were forced to sign treaties granting the Maroons freedom in 1739 and 40, but this was on British terms. Mavis C. Campbell argues that they had autonomy, but it was a conditional freedom - depending on their cooperation with the colony, especially in capturing escaped slaves.

Meanwhile, for Nanny, she was respected but treated unequally, with White-patented estates being given preeminence over maroon towns. This shows that, despite being legally sovereign, the maroons continued to be heavily restricted by the British government

ANNA:

That's terrible, did these restrictions on the Maroons and Nanny lessen as time went on?

ISAAC:

Sadly not, in fact it got worse as a 1791 Act tightened the laws against the maroons leading to another war. This Act was passed the same year the Haitian Revolution began and was probably the result of a terrified Jamaican plantocracy. Similarly, even after the 1834 Act abolishing slavery, the Maroons were not truly free. The Charles Town Maroons attempted to apply for enfranchisement but were completely ignored, despite fulfilling all legal requirements

Restrictions continued until 1842, when the laws governing the Maroons were repealed. Yet they still suffered unfair land divides.

This oppression heavily ties into an argument made by Imaobong Umoren in her book *Empire Without End*, which was published earlier this year. She makes the point that white liberals in the 19th century were by no means anti-racist in their pushing for abolitionism, supporting the freedom of enslaved individuals without any intent of changing the oppressive and racist social system that facilitated it.

DEE:

SO, what happened to Nanny and her Maroons?

ISAAC:

Nanny herself quickly disappears from the historical record.

However, we do know that Maroon towns in modern-day Jamaica celebrate the legacy of Nanny through cultural traditions, music and ceremonies that have been preserved. We may not know much, but it is clear that Nanny's legacy is alive within Jamaica to this very day.

DEE:

Brilliant, thank you Isaac. I think that gives us a really clear picture of Nanny and her significance in Jamaica.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

[CUT]

## **TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE AND THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION**

DEE:

So, to start, would you mind explaining why the events in Saint-Domingue were important to France?

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

[CUT}

ANNA:

Well, by the late 18th century, Saint-Domingue was the wealthiest colony in the entire world and the jewel of the French Empire. Think about that for a moment... This single island produced about 40% of all the sugar and 60% of all the coffee consumed in Europe.

But here's the critical thing that people tend to gloss over...This extraordinary wealth came at an unimaginable human cost. It was all based on a plantation system that relied on an enormous enslaved African majority and a much smaller white population. The colony's

prosperity rested entirely on a brutal, highly centralised system of slavery.

DEE:

This society sounds like it was built on extreme tension. Were there already signs of instability before the revolution?

ANNA:

Absolutely. Saint Domingue was a rigid, highly unequal society with an enslaved majority held in place by violence and law. Across the Atlantic, the French Revolution in 1789 spread new talk of liberty, equality, and fraternity, and some enslaved people began to hear those ideas. Those tensions and ideals together basically turned the colony into a powder keg ready to explode

ISAAC:

Oh wow! So, it wasn't inevitable then? It depended on specific events?

ANNA:

Well, I'd say the contradictions were so extreme that some kind of upheaval was very likely to happen. But the specific form it took - a massive slave revolution led by an enslaved African, could not have been predetermined.

DEE:

Perfect. I think that sets up where we need to go. Next, lets explore who Toussaint was and how he emerged as a leader in this volatile situation.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

[CUT]

ANNA:

So, Toussaint was born into slavery on the Breda plantation in the north of Saint-Domingue and spent more than three decades enslaved before gaining his legal freedom in the 1770s.

As an African freed man, he managed a small plantation and owned a few enslaved people himself, which gave him experience of both sides of the plantation system. Then, when a massive slave uprising broke

out in 1791, he freed the people on his plantation and joined the revolt.

ISAAC:

Alright! So, we know now that revolutionary beliefs were stirring within the enslaved population. How did Toussaint help the cause?

ANNA:

Well, he quickly proved himself as a military organiser and strategist, commanding growing numbers of rebel troops. Then, in the 1790s when Spain and Britain were trying to intervene, hoping to seize part of the colony, Toussaint initially allied with the Spanish because they promised freedom for his followers. When the French revolutionary government abolished slavery in its colonies, he then switched sides, fought the Spanish and British, and helped secure emancipation across Saint Domingue.

ISAAC:

Interesting, so how did Toussaint deal with the remaining Spanish and British forces on the island?

ANNA:

By negotiating with them, he forged deals in exchange for British and Spanish retreat.

ISAAC:

Then, with the goal of freeing Saint Domingue successfully obtained, how did Toussaint go about ruling? What were his priorities?

ANNA:

One of his main priorities was restoring the plantation system using paid labour, and while this was controversial, the production of sugar was crucial for the economy.

He embarked on a project of modernisation through extending abolition to the Spanish Santo Domingo, until Napoleon took this as an affront to French control of the island, and Louverture was arrested and deported to France.

DEE:

And so, what happened to Toussaint?

ANNA:

Unfortunately, in 1803, he passed away in prison, leaving Jean-Jaques Dessalines to continue his efforts, later declaring independence for the sovereign nation of Haiti in early 1804!

BUT Toussaint Louverture and the rebels' actions led to the establishment of the first sovereign state in Latin America and the first free black nation in the Western world, challenging the European colonial order.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

[CUT]

### **COMPARING FREEDOMS - MAROONS VS HAITI**

DEE:

So, when comparing both Jamaica and Haiti, what kind of freedom did the Maroons actually achieve?

ISAAC:

The Maroons gained land and limited self-rule. But their freedom came with conditions—they had to help maintain the colonial system by returning runaway slaves. Their autonomy did not extend to all enslaved people, just to themselves and their descendants

ANNA:

So, would you say slavery continued for everyone in Jamaica?

ISAAC:

Well yes. The wider enslaved population remained in bondage; the Maroon victory was selective, not transformative of the whole system

DEE:

And how different was this from what happened in Haiti?

ANNA:

I would say the difference is huge! In Haiti, the leaders of the revolution fought for TOTAL abolition. After independence, slavery was ended everywhere - not just for a group, but for the whole country.

DEE:

And why do you think the Haitian model was unique in this way?

ANNA:

Well, Haiti was founded by people who had been enslaved. The revolution created a nation where freedom was unconditional and universal, breaking every tie to the colonial system.

DEE:

How did these different routes to freedom shape history?

ISAAC:

Jamaica's Maroons kept the slave system intact for most people, but Haiti's revolution destroyed it entirely and reshaped global debates about slavery and liberation. Haiti's success inspired others and alarmed slaveholders around the world.

DEE:

What would you say educators could learn from comparing these stories?

ANNA:

The stories show there's more than one way to seek freedom. The Maroons' negotiated path came with strings attached, while Haiti's revolution showed the possibility - and the cost - of complete transformation. Comparing them helps us reflect on what freedom means, who gets it, and how it's won.

DEE:

Thank you both. That's a very interesting comparison, and one that helps put the Haitian Revolution and Toussaint in a unique place in the history of resistance and liberation.

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END.

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