

# Toussaint L'Ouverture on Slavery

In the late 1700s, Toussaint L'Ouverture led a successful revolt in Haiti to eliminate slavery. But Toussaint was haunted by the fear that the French, who still held Haiti as a colony, would try to reestablish slavery. Many French officials, as well as colonists, had already expressed such a desire. Toussaint wrote to the French Directory to oppose any plans to reimpose slavery.

**“The attempts on . . . liberty which the colonists propose are all the more to be feared because it is with the veil of patriotism that they cover their detestable plans. We know that they seek to impose some of them on [the French government] by illusory and [deceptive] promises, in order to see renewed in this colony its former scenes of horror. . . . My attachment to France, my knowledge of the blacks, make it my duty not to leave you ignorant either of the crimes which they meditate or the oath that we renew, to bury ourselves\ under the ruins of a country revived by liberty rather than suffer the return of slavery. . . . Blind as they are! They cannot see how [their] odious conduct . . . can become the signal of new disasters and irreparable misfortunes, and far from making them regain what in their eyes liberty for all has made them lose, they expose themselves to a total ruin and the colony to its inevitable destruction. Do they think that men who have been unable to enjoy the blessing of liberty will calmly see it snatched away? They supported their chains only so long as they did not know any condition of life more happy than that of slavery. But today when they have left it, if they had a thousand lives they would sacrifice them all rather than be forced into slavery again. . . . *But if, to re-establish slavery in [Haiti], this was to be done, then I declare to you it would be to attempt the impossible: we have known how to face dangers to obtain our liberty, we shall know how to brave death to maintain it.*”**

—Toussaint L'Ouverture

**1. What is the tone of Toussaint's letter?**

**A diplomatic**

**B peaceful**

**C warning**

**D friendly**

**2. What does Toussaint say will happen if the French try to reestablish slavery?**

**E The British will take over.**

**F The colony will be ruined by war.**

**G The blacks will feel resentful.**

**H The French will be condemned.**

**3. Critical Thinking Making Inferences**

**(a) Why do you think Toussaint emphasized that one paragraph in his letter?**

**(b) What might you infer about Toussaint himself?**