



Fear of a Black Republic --Transcript

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Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Welcome to the Neg Mawon Podcast

Leslie Alexander:

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [introduction] Chapter Dances

Leslie Alexander: Yeah That is a great question. And and if I'm totally honest, I never really expected anyone to pay any attention to that line other than my mother. But you know, I think you're right that

writing really is a chore. It's a labor of love, especially when you're writing about a topic that you feel passionate about and that means something to you, which was certainly true for me in the case of working on fear of a black republic. But it is it is still a... It's an exhausting solitary, very challenging process and So for me, it was important to build in fun playful rewards along the way, whenever I felt like I reached a benchmark or experienced some kind of a success. And so I built in a process where every time I finished a chapter, I would shut off my computer for a short period of time and I would go find my mom. We would we would play unfortunately something that's a little low brow. Probably for some of your listeners, but I would put on Dj ka. All I do is win. And for me, that was a really important way to celebrate the success of that chapter. So dj j collins, all I do is win.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: On the Title

Leslie Alexander: Yes. Absolutely. You know I came of age in the nineteen nineties and political rap was a really important source of inspiration for me intellectually and politically during my undergraduate years during my my years as a graduate student and public enemy was a really important part of that process. It was a huge public enemy fan, even when I was in college as an undergraduate, Chuck D came. He was doing a campus tour. And he came to my campus and he spoke. I was really inspired by him as a political thinker in addition to being a talented music musician. And so I really I really have carried public enemy with me over the years and in fact, I regularly play public enemy music in my classes. To challenge my students to think about political rap as a form of intellectual and political expression. And so absolutely, you know, the title of my book, fear of a Black Republic draws heavily and is really sort of molded upon public concept of fear of a black planet, particularly the title songs focus on, you know, the fear that many white folks have of blackness and black power and black empowerment, becoming these, you know, contagious presence that have the potential to take over the entire world. And I think in many ways, that same concept really explains how white folks particularly in the nineteenth century. But I think in the twentieth century as well, how a lot of white folks thought about Haiti. It it remained the only sovereign black nation in the Western hemisphere. That was founded on the heels of a rebellion by enslaved people who were refusing to submit. Not only to their enslave, but to

the very tenets of white supremacy. And I think because of that, there was at the time and, you know, during the nineteenth century, but also later in the twentieth century as well, a fear that Hades success could become a sort of contagious presence a contagious energy that could potentially subsume the planet. And I think for that reason, there was a tremendous fear that Haiti needed to be contained. And so the same concept that I think public enemy was trying to express in that particular song, but I think in the album, more generally about the danger that blackness and black power represents to a lot of a white folks around the world is also what what Haiti embodied. And so, yes, I drew tremendous inspiration. From from either tremendous inspiration from public enemy in a variety of ways over the years. But the that particular album definitely influenced definitely influenced this book.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Effects of the Haitian Revolution

Leslie Alexander: I think this is a really important question, and I'm glad you asked it because I do believe that haitian revolution was and is central to the global black freedom struggle. But I think that part of the challenge we face is that Haiti has been so demon in public consciousness, especially in the United States. And this image of Haiti as this impoverished, struggling, politically troubled nation so dominates the consciousness of folks within the United States that we we are actually being, I think, encourage to think about haiti as a failed nation and as a failed project. And as a result to think about the haitian revolution, as a failed project. But in reality, the haitian revolution really profoundly defines what the potential of the global black freedom struggle could have an ought to have been. I write in my book, about the fact that you know, Haiti remains the only country in the Western year that was founded on an armed struggle of formerly enslaved people against the colonize against their enslave and was not only a successful rebellion. But a revolution that ended in the establishment of a fully independent sovereign black nation. And I think that is a point not to be forgotten. Despite the fact that Us policy and the policy of other European nations have created a situation in which Haiti has found itself. In these cycles of political turmoil and economic imp that is a process that was created by design that it was the intention of you know, the French, the the folks in the United States to make sure that that Haiti would not succeed and thrive. But

in reality, the haitian revolution is a beautiful and glorious example of what was possible. When enslaved people came together and decided that they were no longer going to submit to the shackles of slavery and they were no longer going to submit to the the ideology of white supremacy. That they instead were not only going to seize and demand their freedom, but that they also wanted to create a beautiful, strong, fully autonomous and sovereign black nation. And so I think for that reason the haitian rebel solution needs to be held up Within the larger Pan african global black freedom struggle, as an example of what is possible when people come together and refuse to submit to oppression.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: black internationalism

Leslie Alexander: Yeah. I think this is a really important point. That over the past, maybe fifteen to twenty years, Black scholars have reached a point in the academy where we have really been able to ask the kinds of questions that we want to ask. And to guide the discipline in the directions that we want to see it go. And as a result, I think that Black scholars and black intellectual have been asking a different set of questions. And have been driving the discipline in in really kind of new and exciting ways. And one of these directions is to think about what the connections are between black activists in the United States and black activists elsewhere in the dia. Now, of course, kind of pan African thinking and African consciousness has always been part of of black studies and of the discipline of black history. But I think black international is a specific subset of that. Thinking not just about how black people thought about themselves in relationship to each other. Across the dia, but actually how they actively became involved in the liberation struggles of not just folks within the boundaries of their own nation, but also across the broader dia. And you know, there's a series of scholars, people like Carol Anderson, Ke Blaine, Keto Swan, who I think have really helped push the discipline in the direction of thinking about in what ways did black people around the globe actually care about the liberation struggles of folks who lived in very different countries who probably spoke different languages who worship different gods. And yet they still deeply cared about their right to freedom, and their struggle for justice. I think one of the things that really inspires me about black international as a concept is that it really demonstrates that black folks not only had a pan African

consciousness. But had a pan African commitment to freedom and liberty, any equality for all black people across the dia. And that meant that in certain times and around certain issues, they cared as much. About the liberation and the equality and justice for folks that they would never meet and who on the surface might seem very different from them. And yet, they felt deeply connected to them as a result of their shared blackness and as a result of their shared African heritage. And that bond played an incredibly powerful role in inspiring activists to become engaged in liberation struggles across the dia. And in the case of fear of a black Republic, it meant that black activists in the nineteenth century in the United States not only thought about and cared about haitian but actually became deeply involved in pressuring the United States government to change its policies towards Haiti in hopes that Haiti as a sovereign nation would be allowed to not just survive, but thrive.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Black Sovereignty

Leslie Alexander: Thank you. Yeah. This is a really, I think powerful question. One of the things that I really wanted to do with this book is highlight the importance of significance of the haitian revolution not just as a revolution. But as a successful revolution that resulted in the establishment of an autonomous sovereign black nation. And in my mind, this was really what caused haiti and the haitian revolution to be so threatening and inspired the fear that you know, I'm really trying to shed light on through the title. For me, the concept of sovereignty is really at the heart of this book because it was hades bold insistence. Not just on the era of slavery, but on their right to be a fully free and independent nation that completely threw off the shackles of colonialism and European authority that made it such a threatening presence to white folks around the world but made it such a powerfully inspiring symbol to black folks across the dia. So for me, this concept of sovereignty is about It's in part about the era of slavery. But to a much larger and broader extent, it's about black people's insistence on their right to be fully independent from colonial authority, and to make decisions for themselves to be fully self governing and independent and to be fully free to live on their own terms and I think it was that. It wasn't just the the presence of rebellious black folks, but it was the insistence that the haitian and the nineteenth century haitian leadership had on the right of black people

to live free and to govern themselves. That became so threatening to white folks.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Casimir

Leslie Alexander: I'm so glad that you asked this question because I have so much respect for Jean Ka. And I agree with you that the haitian is is an extraordinary book it's. It's one of my favorite recent publications. I think that Jean Cas makes a brilliant point in his book around the ways in which Haiti has been thought of and presented as the first black Republic. And I understand his his objections and concerns to that, which really center her around highlighting the point that patients that to use a eternal like black to sort of describe the internal politics and the internal identities in Haiti sort of oversimplify and draw attention away from the complexities. Of haitian identity, haitian politics, haitian culture, And I think he makes a really legitimate point, right? That the categories of class and this long longstanding existence of this kind of colored class of people who at various points in history operated as a buffer, right? Between the enslaved black population and the white colonial population does sort of oversimplify and draw attention away from the complexity of internal racial dynamics in Haiti, which often played black people against mixed race or colored folks. So I think he's right that using a term like that can draw attention away from internal class conflicts in Haiti and also draw attention away from the complex racial structure that exists in Haiti both historically and temporarily. At the same time, and the point that I was wanting to make in my book is that I think he very brilliantly points out that Haiti was a free black nation in the minds of foreigners. And the point that I make in my book is that I think in this case perception matters. Because what I'm really trying to draw out in my book is really two big points. Right? The first is how haiti was perceived among the white western world in the nineteenth century and how that caused haiti to become demon. And also the question of how black activists in the United States in the nineteenth century viewed Haiti and why haitian sovereignty and independence was so important to them. So I don't think Cas is wrong at all in his you know, his formulation and in his interpretation. But I do think he's also right when he says as far as foreigners are concerned, right? It's far as folks outside of Haiti are concerned, it was viewed and understood as a free black nation. And I think in the case of the story that I'm trying to tell,

it's that point that is important because white folks in the United States certainly white folks in France and black activists in the United States all viewed Haiti as a black nation. And as the first black nation in the Western hemisphere, that had had the audacity to shake off slavery and declare its independence. So that is not to draw attention. Away from the internal complexities of race and class within Haiti. But it is to recognize that in the minds of foreigners, which included white folks around the world and also black folks within the United States. Haiti was viewed and understood to be a free sovereign black nation and that mattered to everyone. Right? It mattered to the white folks who viewed Haiti as a black nation that needed to be contained and destroyed. And perhaps re-enslaved. And from the perspective of black activists, it meant that Haiti was a symbol of the success of the black liberation struggle and therefore needed to be protected and defended at all costs.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Why this book and influences

Leslie Alexander: Yeah. I really wanna point out and this is actually a point that I make in both my acknowledgment and in the introduction that there just an extraordinary community of Haitian study scholars that have really enriched my work and to a large degree made this book possible because without them and without their work, it would have really been impossible for me to even imagine writing this book here. I'm thinking about folks like Mar Doucet and Gregory P. Staff, Ronald Johnson. There's a whole commit... Certainly La Laurent Dub. So you know, there's a whole community of folks out there who have just really written incredibly important studies that have helped us better understand Haitian history, Haitian, political thought and political consciousness. In this regard, another really important thinker for me is Sarah Johnson, as well as Chelsea S and and elle, all of these folks have really helped me understand better. Again, Haitian history Haitian culture patient political consciousness and just sort of given me insight into the environment on the ground in Haiti in the nineteenth century. What I was really trying to do in this book is to connect what was happening in Haiti in the nineteenth century to what was happening in the black liberation struggle in the United States in the nineteenth century to really gain a better insight into how black activists in the nineteenth century viewed and understood the Haitian revolution, the establishment of Sovereign Haiti and why Haiti and

haitian independence was so important to black activists in the nineteenth century. So what I was really trying to do with this study is not so much alter or challenge or, you know, revisit the extraordinary scholarship of the folks whose works I just mentioned. It's really to build and expand upon those studies by understanding better what the connections were. Between black activists in the United States and what was actually happening on the ground in Haiti. And what it was that he represented and symbolize two black activists that made haiti in their minds such a central part of the broader black liberation struggle.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Women's voices

Leslie Alexander: Yeah. I mean, this is always a challenge in my work, primarily because I study the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, And anyone who studies black women in particular during that time period knows that the archive can be incredibly frustrating. There are cases and circumstances in which the archives are incredibly rich. In terms of of giving us insight into black women's voices and into black women's political consciousness. But in the big picture, the silence in the archives can be incredibly madden name. We fortunately have had examples of historians like Maurice Fe who has really challenged us to think more creatively about how to engage and interact with the archives. And historians like V vanessa Holden who have really showed us, how we can creatively engage with the sources that we do encounter. But for this particular study, I was trying to understand uncover and examine what black folks in the United States in the nineteenth century thought about haiti and haitian sovereignty and what they felt about Us foreign policy towards haiti during this time. And trying to document black women's voices in very public political matters, is very difficult in the nineteenth century because even the most progressive of ab activists struggled around the question of whether women should have a voice in political matters, whether women should be allowed to speak publicly on political matters. And of course, you have famous very famous examples of women like Mariah Stewart who were essentially driven off the stage and out of, you know, the public realm, for speaking out about political matters. So women were not encouraged and more specifically we're actively desperate discouraged from expressing controversial political views or political views at all. In the nineteenth century. And so for this

very specific topic, which is about trying to understand what black folks thought about foreign policy. It was extremely difficult to find women's voices and to highlight them in the ways that I wanted to. What I was able to do and this speaks to the second part of your question about, you know, sort how I overcame those challenges. One of the things that really came as an extraordinary surprise to me is when I went to the national archives, to look at petitions that had been submitted to the United States Congress between eighteen thirty seven and eighteen forty four, pressuring the United States government to change its foreign policy. Towards towards Haiti. And more specifically to extend formal diplomatic recognition to haiti. And one of the things that I was really surprised to find when I actually looked at the petitions themselves was the extraordinary number of women. Who signed the petitions and the extraordinary number of women who circulated the petitions on their own and entire petitions came in that were signed only by women, close to half of the signatures of the like sixteen thousand signatures that were submitted to the United States congress supporting the recognition of Haiti came from women, white and black. And in some cases you could actually see that the petitions had been, like, hand sewn together. Into these like, long strips that could then be submitted to congress. So it was very clear that women not only sign the petitions but circulated and actually hand stitched them together in order to be able to submit them to congress. So that really lets us know how deeply important these political issues were, not just to the black community and not just to black men, but to black and white ab, both women and men. The other thing I had to do was just dig dig big through the archives read every single newspaper. Digging for references to women and to women's consciousness, searching through letters and people's personal papers. Digging out references to situations where women talked about Haiti or talked about their participation in the immigration movement. So it just really required diligence and and a willingness to to dig through the archives. But there were also as it turns out for me, some real surprises in the archives in the sense that women revealed themselves as political thinkers and as people who were deeply committed to haitian sovereignty.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: Chronology

Leslie Alexander: That is such a perfect question to ask me because that was an issue I really struggled with as a historian. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to look at the time period between eighteen o four when Haiti declared its independence and actually became a fully sovereign nation And I knew that I wanted to take it to about eighteen sixty two, which is when haiti you know, finally received formal diplomatic recognition from the United States. And I will say that as a historian of the eighteenth the nineteenth century, that was really where I wanted the book to stay. I wanted to sort of stay comfortably between, you know, the moment of haitian independence and then sort of trace, the battle for recognition and diplomatic acknowledgment and sort of conclude the book in eighteen sixty two with that. In fact, what I really wanted to do was end the book in eighteen sixty five so that I could actually kind of end the story on a happy note and say, okay, by the end of the civil war era, right, Black activists in the United States were able to celebrate not only the full emancipation of black folks in the United States and the end of the civil war, the passage of the thirteenth, the amendment meant the passage of the fourteenth amendment but also, you know, the formal recognition by the United States of haitian Independence. But of course, the reality of haitian history and United States history ultimately really made it impossible for me to end the story in eighteen sixty five. I I really could not in good conscience. End the book in eighteen sixty five kind of on a happy note suggesting that somehow haiti receiving formal recognition from the United States ultimately turned out to be a good thing or ultimately turned out to be some huge success. So the bulk of the book of focuses on that time period but the Apple log really picks up in the late eighteen sixties and early eighteen seventies and really ends extends all the way into the contemporary moment. Trying to sort of provide an overview of what Us foreign policy towards Haiti was following formal recognition. So it was really important to me in the epi to say the sort of po and sad end to the story is one in which black activists spent the better part of the nineteenth century, trying to pressure the United States government to formally extend a diplomatic acknowledgment to Haiti but when the United States finally did, it felt like a moment victory but it actually opened the door for Us imperial and led over the course of the twentieth century and even now into the early twentieth century, twenty first century, a a situation in which the arms and the talons of Us imperial really sunk themselves into Haiti, of course, more most

famously with the formal military occupation in the early twentieth century, but this sort of... I'm I'm really in the epi chart this much longer process and this much longer legacy of Us imperial in Haiti that that extends all the way till today. And is one that quite sadly I think has its roots in the formal recognition of Haiti. I hope your listeners in particular when they look at the book, we'll take a look at chapter eight, which is the chapter that is the the sort of last real the last real chapter in the body of the text before the app, and it's one that focuses very exclusively on the battle in Us congress over the recognition of Haiti. And part of the reason why that became its own chapter unto itself, is that I... Even as a historian was really shocked and stunned when I looked at the debate that actually took place on the floor of Congress. Was really shocked and stunned to see just the the naked racism and the naked economic op that dominated the Us congressional debate because even among those who supported the formal recognition of Haiti. The vast majority of them supported it because they wanted to open haiti up even further to Us economic exploitation. And to see how openly they acknowledge and discuss that was, you know, profoundly disturbing but I think was also very revealing and helps understand what happens in the decades after that. Looking at the arguments that took place on the floor of Congress in eighteen sixty one and eighteen sixty two I think really helps lay the groundwork and really helps us understand just the the very predatory Us imperialist attitude towards Haiti that unfolds over the course of the twentieth century.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 1 / 1804-25] Black & White
Reactions to 1804 Haiti

Leslie Alexander: Yeah. I'm glad you raised the injured man of color because I sort of stumbled upon the injured man of color following up on a couple of footnotes that I had seen other historians reference. And Other previous historians had kind of referenced this particular article in a rather passing way. And I just had a feeling that there was something more to it. So I actually went back to the original source and ended up uncovering the series of letters that were written by an anonymous black activist in eighteen o four who called themselves an injured man of color. And what was really fascinating about those particular writings is that this was a person based in the United States, who was defending very openly and very publicly, the

right of haitian and very specifically the the right at the time of the haitian leader Jean jacques to defend the haitian nation against French colonialism. Against the attempted imposition of French Colonial authority and slavery in Haiti. And these letters were published in Us newspapers and were published without as far as I can tell, any significant backlash, interestingly enough, the only printed response that appeared to the letter was one written by a white person who is actually endorsing and supporting the injured man of of color position. So I was really fascinated by the ways in which the injured band of color felt really empowered. To articulate support for patient independence for haitian sovereignty for the battle against slavery and French colonialism and the right of black people and specifically haitian to use, you know, to sort of pair for you know, a twentieth century phrase, The of color was defending the right of haitian and of black people to use any means necessary to maintain their freedom and to maintain their sovereignty. And so to see letters written like that by a black person that were then published in mainstream you know, Us newspapers in eighteen o four was really quite shocking. And... But I think also really powerfully important and showed that black folks in eighteen o four in the United States, were very clear about what was happening in Haiti. We're very clear about the political stakes understood entirely why haitian independence and haitian sovereignty was important. And we're really publicly assert black people's right to fight for their own freedom and to defend their independence and their sovereignty. It did as you point out, create a situation where Black folks in the United States placed an extraordinary amount of importance and probably pressure. On Haiti to become successful. As you pointed out, they thought about an understood haiti as their cradle of hope that they really thought of haiti as as the first sovereign black nation as you know, the birthplace of hope for black freedom, black independence, black sovereignty. And for that reason Haiti became profoundly important to them. Certainly during the haitian revolution, but the point that I'm making in this book is that it's really following the revolution through the establishment of Sovereign Haiti, that haiti becomes so important to black activists in in the United States. And yeah, I understand. You know why from the perspective perspective of patients that would feel kind of cringe worthy because that is an extraordinary amount of pressure. To put on a young black nation. But I think it also helps us understand why The establishment of Sovereign Haiti was so important to the global black freedom struggle and why

black to in the nineteenth century, were willing to dedicate so much time and energy to the mission to gain full recognition and an endorsement for haiti and its sovereignty.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 1]

Leslie Alexander: So you didn't actually ask a question here, but I wanted to add something to expand a little bit on the question that you asked. Relative to chapter two. So following the ind the United States really becomes profoundly concerned about the ramifications of the ind. Largely because what the ind created was a situation in which France in exchange for the the monetary payoff, agreed to formally recognize haiti as a sovereign independent nation. And that sends shock waves throughout the United States. Now certainly in the black community, in the United States black community, there's massive celebrations. This, of course, is before they realize the terms of the ind. All they've heard about is that France is willing to recognize haitian independence. So this is met with massive j modulation. In black communities in the United States initially you know, at least until they find out about the terms. But when they hear about French recognition, they are extremely excited and they hold, you know, parades and massive celebrations and huge parties and thus in celebration of France's recognition of Haiti. The United States government is much more concerned because up until that point, the United States has insisted upon a non recognition policy. That they're refusing to acknowledge Haiti existence as an independent sovereign nation. And they are framing their decision largely on the fact that France isn't recognizing them. Right? So since you know, Haiti had formally been France's colony. The United States position was well France isn't recognizing them. That's their foreign... you know, their former colony. So since France isn't going to recognize them, we're not going to either. But now France agrees to recognize Haiti. So now the United States government has to decide how they are going to grapple with that particular issue. It will probably come as a surprise to no one that the United States government, you know, officially decides that they are absolutely not going to recognize haiti and it is largely as the result of the fact that southern politicians refuse to allow the issue to even be considered that from their perspective, the existence of an independent haiti represents a full scale incredibly powerful threat to the institution of slavery. And that I think want to para phrase one of

the the congressman, you know, he essentially says that, you know, the United States cannot recognize this nation that is governed by these people who, you, still have the blood of their masters dripping from their hands. Right? So from the perspective of of southern politicians, it is just absolutely unimaginable and unthinkable to allow the recognition of of Haiti to go forward. So the United States government is then sort of caught in this very complicated situation where they have to admit that even though France is going to recognize Haiti, they're not going to simply because Haiti represents a threat to the institution of slavery. There's also sort of a process that takes place and again, it's part of the reason why I chapter two I look at the time period between eighteen twenty five and eighteen twenty nine is because there's a really painful process that the black community in the United States goes through. In that time frame, leading up to the to the period, leading up to eighteen twenty five. There is a moment. There's actually a long period of time when Okay. I'm gonna pause there and let you edit this. So in the period leading up to eighteen twenty five, Black activists in the United States had had developed an immigration movement and had not only sort of supported Haiti ideological and politically, but had also migrated by the thousands to Haiti. And as I mentioned a moment ago in eighteen twenty five when it's announced that France is going to formally recognize haiti, there's, you know, these massive celebrations that take place in the black community because they see that as an endorsement by the French government and they are hopeful that the United States government will follow suit. The problem is that within months, the details of the terms of the md ind become public. So initially, all they know is that France has recognized Haiti. They don't know that the haitian government is required to pay these reparations back to France. And so when the terms of that agreement become public, it's really devastating to the black community in the United States I include and I actually... An excerpt of this is is the title of chapter two, but I quote one person who writes to the black newspaper. After visiting Haiti during this time in the immediate aftermath of the ind and they say, ruin stares everybody in the face. Should this policy be continued, we shall have to leave the island. So they really see the ind as being completely devastating to Haiti and to the to the global black Freedom struggle. Partly in economic terms, right? Because they know that paying a hundred and fifty million gold Francs is essentially impossible. But also because they see it as a

decision on the part of Boy a to to step away from the bold stand. That Haiti has a right to independence and sovereignty no matter what. And they see it as, you know, a decision to buy their freedom rather than to fight for a freedom that they automatically deserve simply because they're human. And so the politics of the ind are very disappointing to black activists, and it becomes particularly disappointing after the haitian economy starts to crumble. In response and due to the ind. And so by eighteen twenty nine, we really see black activists backing away from the immigration movement and also backing away from a lot of the public endorsements of Haiti that had taken place up to that time. I do wanna to underscore a point that I make at the end of that chapter though that I think is really powerfully important, which is that Bo decision to submit to the terms of the ind is really deeply disappointing to black activists in the United States. But even so none of them speak negatively about Haiti in any public setting. And I think that really says a lot about the african solidarity that existed even in that period in the nineteenth century. A very conscious and intentional decision on the part of Black activists in the Us not to dis Haiti and not even to dis Boy. Instead, they make a very conscious and intentional decision that while they might choose not to, you know, continue to participate in the immigration movement, they're also not going to speak publicly against haiti because at the end of the day, haitian sovereignty is still deeply and powerfully important to them.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 2] France & US

Leslie Alexander: This is a really important question. I ended up writing an entire chapter on just the four year period between eighteen twenty five and eighteen twenty nine. Because I felt like and I still feel like that that time period really marked a profound and significant turning point. Certainly for haiti, but also for black activists in the United States. Of course, the most significant thing that takes place during that time is that both France and the United States become utterly convinced that they have to use all of the means at their disposal to destroy hades sovereignty. The way I think I describe it in chapter two was that, you know, haitian, the notion of haitian sovereignty and Haiti existence as an independent nation by that time was a bitter pill that the French had still not swallowed. So, you know, this is now twenty years after Haiti had declared its independence. And you know, my guess is that France, the United States, most of the the

white Western nations had assumed that Haiti would completely fail, right? That it would have kind of just internally collapsed. And France... United States Britain, you know, whoever proved to be most powerful could then just sort of roll in and re-impose authority. But that turned out not at all to be the case. And by eighteen twenty five, Haiti had been a free and independent nation for over two decades. And of course, there was all kinds of challenges and internal struggle and strife as any newly independent nation would experience. The United States certainly did. Right? So that's not to say that, you know, always peaceful and breezy in Haiti. But it it was it could not have been viewed or understood as a failed project. Right? Slavery was not re-imposed and Haiti remained free and independent and fully sovereign and its existence really flew in the face of everything that the United States and France and all of the the Western slave holding nations wanted to be true and to believe. And as Haiti continued to exist and grow and and thrive. It really presented a challenge to the institution of slavery and to the very notion of white supremacy. And so after two decades, it's become clear that Haiti is not just going to kind of internal bust, but it's going to continue to exist. And so France in particular decides that they need to find some kind of a way to regain some kind of control over its former colony. And they had attempted a series of time... A number of times to try to get various Haitian leaders to accept the imposition of French authority and of course, each time they were re-robust. And so by eighteen twenty five, the French government decides that they are going to sort of, you know, let Haiti go, but they are only going to do it if they get some kind of financial compensation for the losses that they had sustained after Haiti gained, it's freedom from slavery and from colonial rule. And so in July of eighteen twenty five, the King of France sends a warship into Port-au-Prince Harbor and an additional squadron of twelve ships is immediately following behind. They ultimately point nearly five hundred cannons. At the Port-au-Prince Harbor and demand that the... That Haiti submit itself without any conditions to the supremacy of France. It is what I describe in my book as a men display of gun boat diplomacy. So essentially, France says threatens, right? Military violence war if Haiti does not concede to the terms that they present. Of course, I imagine most of your listeners know that what France demands through this has become known as the ind. Right, an agreement that requires the Haitian government to pay France a hundred and fifty million gold francs, in annual installments. And in

exchange, France agrees to recognize Haiti independence. One of the points that I make in the book is that this obviously creates a sort of a major crisis for the the leader of Haiti, president Jean Pierre Bo, who had only been the president for five years. At that point. He then is sort of caught between A rock and a hard place. Right? He has to decide whether he's going to submit to the terms and agree to the ind or reopen the door to full out warfare with France again probably fully aware that France could potentially get support from the United States from Great Britain from other white western nations who want to bring Haiti back under white rule and to essentially force haiti to resubmit to slavery. So, you know, it's important I think to keep in mind that from the perspective of of haitian leaders, they're not only grappling with how to maintain haitian sovereignty and haitian independence, they're also trying to ensure that patients never again have to submit to slavery. And so both of those things are at stake. Right? The potential read imposition of slavery and the potential reit imposition of colonial rule, especially if they lose a military conflict. So Jean Pierre Bo is is faced with a real problem. Right? You either submit to the terms of the ind or you open yourself to warfare, which again could lead to years of bloody conflict and could potentially result in a loss that would lose haitian independence and also potentially result in the reit imposition of slavery. Obviously, Jean Pierre, Bo ultimately makes the decision to agree to the ind. The terms, as I mentioned before require that Haiti, repay a hundred and fifty million gold Francs to France and I'm using the term repay because in the minds of the French government. This is reparations, right, that the haitian are required to pay back the losses that the French suffered as the result of the revolution, and it's important to underscore that that dollar amount does not just indicate, you know, the value of the land and the value of the colony but actually also the value the total of the value of the human beings that had been formally enslaved. So this is literally a situation in which people are purchasing not only the independence of the colony but literally purchasing their own physical freedom. In the years that follow of course, the official debt is lowered from a hundred and fifty million francs to sixty million gold Franks. But of course, is still an impossibly large amount of money for a newly established nation to repay and it leads to cycles of debt that end up having a completely disastrous effect on the haitian economy. In that chapter I actually quote some statistics from Laurent Dub the historian La laurent Dub, who points out that by eighteen ninety eight, fully half of Haiti government budget

went to paying France and French banks. And by nineteen fourteen, which of course is right on the eve of the United States military occupation that proportion had climbed to eighty percent. So the ind of course, really sets into motion these impossible cycles of debt where in order to pay back, and in order to meet the the terms of the ind, haiti forced to borrow at incredibly high interest rates, from French banks and they just find themselves digging deeper and deeper into into extraordinary debt. One of the things that I point out in the epi log is that, of course, in later years in the twentieth century, that cycle of debt transfers from Haiti to the United States. And so following actually during but following the Us military occupation of Haiti the United States really becomes the the primary holder of haitian debt. And therefore, Haiti becomes stuck in these impossible cycles of debt now to the United States rather than France.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 3 /1829-39] Tough decade

Leslie Alexander: Yeah. In some ways this chapter that focuses on the time period between eighteen twenty nine and eighteen thirty nine, was one of the hardest to write because it was an incredibly incredibly difficult time for black activists in the United States, particularly pertaining to their views about Haiti and the internal questions that they had to grapple with relative to what they what their relationship to Haiti was going to be. Obviously, Jean pierre Bo had agreed to the to the terms of the ind in eighteen twenty five. And by the end of that decade by the end of the eighteen twenties, it was clear that Haiti was already in severe financial difficulty. Bo had made the decision to implement a series of very controversial taxation policies and even sort of like policing policies that forced a lot of patients especially those who lived out into the countryside into a form of of semi slavery. I think that Bo felt like he was trying to figure out how to meet the terms of the ind. He was trying to figure out an economic plan that would allow Haiti to actually meet the terms, the repayment plan without having to resort to loans and without having to borrow. But it created a a deeply oppressive and exploit labor system and taxation system that obviously black activists in the United States could not endorse. That haitian on the ground reasonably found completely into and quite frankly to akin to the institution of slavery to tolerate, and it leads to a series of attempted uprisings against Bo, So there is extreme economic and political turmoil in Haiti throughout the

early part of the eighteen thirties. And creates a situation in which black activists in the U. S are really having to rethink their relationship to Haiti, they're having to rethink their political perspective. About haiti as a sovereign nation and they're having to think about how they're gonna publicly position themselves within the United States relative to the haitian struggle for for the recognition of its independence. During those very early years, between eighteen twenty nine and, like, eighteen thirty five. There's a couple of black activists who are really who are kind of the the only public voices that are willing to sort of publicly articulate their views on Haiti and and continue to endorse. Haiti and haitian sovereignty. One is Mariah Stewart, who was a a black female ab, a person who ultimately got driven out of the ab movement for being a very outspoken, politically conscious black woman at a time when women were not particularly embraced or endorsed as political activists or as public speakers. But Mariah Stewart was a person who spoke very openly and very publicly about the fact that she believed that haiti and haitian sovereignty needed to be celebrated and needed to be publicly recognized. And again, she she was one of the few people during that time who who was actually willing to to speak out in such a fashion. The other one was Samuel Corn who had been a long standing activist and ab in the black community. He was largely centered in New York where he had worked as the editor of the first black newspaper and whose paper called Freedom Journal. And along with his c editor, John Russ, Samuel Corn had been very much involved in keeping haiti at the center. Of black political consciousness in the United States. Almost every issue a Freedom journal during the time of its existence had focused or highlighted some aspect of haiti or haitian history or you know, haitian politics during the time that Freedom journal was in existence. But Freedom journal came to an end in eighteen twenty nine. And shortly thereafter Samuel Corn started a new newspaper. Its original title was the weekly advocate and later became called the colored American. But Samuel Corn used his newspaper to advocate for Haiti. Actually to even continue to advocate for migration. To Haiti, but certainly to advocate for haitian sovereignty.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 4 / 1837-44] Haitian Recognition

Leslie Alexander: You know, this is a really important point because I think it is important to underscore the fact that black

activists in the United States in the nineteenth century were a hundred percent fighting for Haiti right to full sovereignty and for diplomatic recognition. But in their minds, the struggle for Haiti was very much caught up with their own struggle. And I've actually had people asked me before, like, what weren't black activists in the United States really just kind of being selfish, like you know, isn't it true that they were really only interested in Haiti because they cared about their own liberation struggle. But I think that's a little, you know, too cynical. I think that that black activists in the United States in the nineteenth century saw the battle for the recognition of Haiti sovereignty as part of their struggle. And that they they really believed that Haiti fate as the first independent black nation in the Western hemisphere that had gained its independence as the result of a slave rebellion and had resulted in the establishment of a sovereign black nation, they felt like their fate in the United States and the fate of black people elsewhere across the world were in part linked to Haiti success or failure. So was there, you know, in was there support of Haiti partly driven by self interest? Like yes. To some degree it was. Like, they did see their fate as being in linked to Haiti. But I think that's because they actually had like an early pan African consciousness that felt like every all black people free and enslaved across the African continent were in linked with each other and that, you know, no one was going to be able to succeed unless everybody succeeded. So I don't think it was necessarily selfish. Like, their support of Haiti wasn't necessarily driven just by selfish. I think it was driven by a consciousness that they had that the black freedom struggle needed to be global in order for it to be successful. There was actually one black activist during this period, who essentially was pointing to the example of Haiti and saying, look, whatever the United States is willing to do to Haiti they're willing to do to us. And so I think it's a situation in which they saw their fate as being deeply connected. And they felt like they wanted Haiti to be successful on its own terms. But also because they knew that Haiti success was in some ways connected to the success of everyone of all African peoples throughout the world. So in my mind, I think they really saw Haiti success as determining the success of the entire global black freedom struggle. What that means is that they fought for the recognition of Haitian sovereignty in a variety of ways. And as I mentioned earlier, one of the strategies that they used particularly in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century was petition. Now petition doesn't necessarily sound like a particularly complicated

or radical approach. But in fairness to black activists during that period, it is a strategy that had been successful up to that point at least to some degree to a large degree, the passage of emancipation acts that had led to the ab of slavery in the north had come about to a large degree as the result of the use of petitions and also the use of court cases. To argue for the right of all people under the constitution to live as free and equal citizens. And so petition is actually a strategy that over the long term did not particularly pan out well. But up to that point, petition had actually been success within the anti slavery struggle. And so during much of the eighteen thirties, the anti slavery movement relied heavily on petition to protest slavery in a variety of ways. They used it to argue against the extension of slavery into new territories. They used it to just ask for the ab of slavery outright. They used it to attack the existence of the slave trade within the boundaries of the United States. So Petition was a strategy that anti slavery activists had used for quite some time. And starting in the late eighteen thirty specifically in eighteen thirty seven, black and white ab used petition as a strategy to try to bring the issue of haitian sovereignty to the national agenda. This turned out to be a really effective strategy at least initially. Because during the year prior in eighteen thirty six, the United States congress had been so overwhelmed. By the volume of anti slavery petitions that had been sent to the congressional floor that they passed a series of what became known as gag rules, essentially saying that the United States Congress was no longer going to hear. Petitions or issues or bills on the congressional floor related to the issue of slavery. What black and white ab in the United States did then was to sort of bypass those rules in a couple of ways. One was that they just simply continue to bombard cameras with petitions anyway. But the other is that they used petitions dealing with haitian sovereignty to get issues of slavery and race onto the national political agenda. Without actually having to explicitly deal with the issue of slavery. So since petitions explicitly mentioning slavery could not be heard on the congressional floor. What they did instead was submit petitions that simply said we are calling for the United States congress to extend formal diplomatic recognition to Haiti. There's no mention in the petitions about race. There's no mention in the petitions about slavery. They're just saying, we want Congress to recognize Haiti. Now obviously, the sub of those petitions are all about race and slavery. And it forces then those issues onto the national political agenda and very specifically onto the

congressional floor. And so using the haiti petitions they're able to kind of step around the gag rules and still force those topics onto the congressional floor. But in a very specific way, they're also forcing the United States congress to grapple with the question of whether or not they're willing to extend formal recognition to Haiti and to sort of force a conversation around why they are not recognizing Haiti. Ultimately, I don't wanna give away too much because I wanna be able to read the book, but I'll just simply say that, you know, ultimately that campaign turned out to be very disappointing for a variety of reasons, but I think it also ended up being extremely revealing about sort of, you know, main stream white political consciousness, not just about the issues of race and slavery, but very specifically about Haiti. I think it's also really again important to point out how how incredibly important the petition campaign was. That even though it was not successful in the way that activists had wanted it to be, it did show that there was a very powerful coalition of activists who were willing to bombard congress with demands for haitian recognition. And just in the course of, like that seven year period between eighteen thirty seven and eighteen forty four, there's almost four hundred petitions containing over sixteen thousand signatures. That find their way onto the congressional floor. Now, this is not the sum total of the petitions that were actually submitted. These are the petitions that actually, you know, reached congress and we're at least considered for discussion on the floor. So how many more hundreds of petitions and how many more thousands of signatures never reached consideration. We don't know. But even that amount indicates that Haiti had really seized the consciousness by the late eighteen thirties and early eighteen forties not just of only black activists in the United States, but also of progressive white ab as well.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 5 / 1838-48] Black Activist Strategies

Leslie Alexander: You know the period between eighteen thirty eight and eighteen forty is a really interesting one for black activists relative to the struggle for the recognition of haitian sovereignty because it is in the aftermath of the congressional campaign that again had not quite followed the plan that they had hoped it would. And so black activists kind of find themselves on a political spectrum. Relative to their relationship to Haiti and how they wanna think about and

advocate for Haiti. So on the one hand, you have people like Samuel Corn, who I mentioned before who was a an activist and ab and a newspaper editor who was still advocating for haitian immigration and he's joined by people like Charles Ray, who is also an ab an activist and newspaper editor, and the two of them are using their newspapers and their sort of public platform as a way to continue to advocate not just for haitian sovereignty, but also to urge black people to migrate from the United States to Haiti in their minds, they feel like one of the ways to help and support Haiti is to have black activists from the United States and from elsewhere around the dia, migrate to Haiti to help build up this sovereign black nation in the Western year. And so in their minds, immigration certainly offers a solution to black folks who are trying to escape racism in the United states. But more importantly, it offers an opportunity to again kind of create this pan African vision for folks coming from around the dia to build up and support the the nation of of Haiti. On the other side, and again, just sort of, you know, and another part of the spectrum. You have people who are not necessarily interested in advocating for immigration anymore. Largely because of the challenges that had come about as the result of the ind, the economic and political conditions in Haiti that had developed as a result of the ind and a concern that immigration might not necessarily be the best strategy for defeating slavery in the United States. And advocating for haitian sovereignty. So you have people like Charles Len Raymond, who certainly was a supporter of haitian sovereignty, but who had been standing ab. He was actually one of the first black activists to kind of become a speaker on the anti slavery circuit. Along with people like James Mc Smith who was a very known well known ab a very prominent activist out of New York City who fought not only for ab, but also fought for suffrage rights. And he was also pretty pretty wealthy and influential person. He had actually left the United States gone to Scotland received a medical degree and then came back to New York City to provide medical services to the black community. And so you have people like James Mc Smith, and Charles Len raymond, who are kind of changing their relationship to Haiti in the sense that they're not endorsing immigration as a solution. But they are continuing to champion Haiti right to sovereignty and are perhaps most importantly using Haiti success in the revolution as an inspiration for the black freedom struggle. So they are traveling in the Us and elsewhere abroad, telling the story of Hades try you know, the haitian peoples, triumph over slavery, their triumph over there for their former

colonize. And using that as a model for what the United States freedom struggle could look like. So to me, part of what's interesting in this you know, decade between, you know, the sort of decline of the the congressional petition and campaign movement. And the the end of president Jean pierre, Bo rain as president. During that time period, you have this kind of, you know, fascinating moment where black activists are positioning themselves relative to Haiti in different ways. Some of them are still advocating for immigration. But far more of them are kind of embracing the the symbol of haiti as a model for what black what the black liberation struggle could actually look like and how it might be successful.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 6 / 1848-59] Soulouque Reign

Leslie Alexander: I'm glad you asked this question about the era of Sun luke's reign because for me, this was actually one of the most interesting chapters to research and to write because you know, I feel like faust so luke emperor faust the first. Rain is one of the sort of most mali aligned and misunderstood errors in kind of haitian presidential history to a large degree at least outside of Haiti, you know, within United States scholarship. So luke has traditionally been kind of, you know, dismissed as sort of an ignorant bumbling foolish person who just fundamentally did not really need did not really fundamentally know how to lead his people or how to lead the nation. And one of the things that I wanted to do in this chapter was to reposition the story of So luke's rain. First as president and then later as emperor faust in the first. Within the broader context of what was happening in the global political arena, particularly in terms of, you know, the efforts of white western nations to rei impose imperial control over haiti. I think one of the reasons why so Luke's presidency and and later his, you know, his reign as emperor has been so demon is because he did lead endless military campaigns against what becomes the Dominican Republic in an effort to bring the Dr r back under haitian rule. And in that process, you know, so luke drives the haiti farther and farther into, you know, financial ruin. He sacrifices tens of thousands of people's lives. And he has a pretty brutal mil leadership style. So so Luke was a very, you know, difficult and, you know, violent leader. But one of the points that I wanna make in this chapter is that he is also a person who is a hundred percent committed to ensuring that Haiti never falls under colonial rule again and that slavery is never imposed again. And that

drives him to extreme measures. He's very concerned that if the Dominican Republic remains independent that the United States, Spain, France, essentially, any white western power will gain a foothold in the Dominican Republic and use that as a launch pad. To regain imperial control over Haiti, and perhaps most importantly to re-impose slavery. And the truth is that the historical record a hundred percent supports So luke's fear and contention. The United States was in fact plotting to do exactly that. To use the Dominican Republic as a launch pad to impose US authority over Haiti and to re-impose slavery that was precisely the plan. And I, you know, so so luke was not wrong. But his fear about the potential of that leads to a situation in which his reign becomes very bloody and rep. Both against his own people. But also, you know, he initiates these endless bloody campaigns trying to force the Dominican Republic back under haitian rule so that the country would not be left vulnerable to, you know, United States or European imperial. So Sole luke's reign as emperor was a very problematic and disturbing time period in haitian history. But I think it's important that people understand why that people understand that Sal at the end of the day was really committed. To ensuring that Haiti would remain independent and sovereign and that it would may remain completely free. Of slavery. Interestingly enough, I think black activists in the United States at the time understood that. Understood the reason for what Luke was doing even if they didn't necessarily agree with the extreme measures. That that Sal luke resorted to. I think they understood that that emperor thousand the first was trying to protect haiti from imperial and from slavery, and they knew that the United States was cons to gain control over Haiti. And so black activists were very outspoken in their support of So even though he was a very complicated political leader. And Frederick Douglas, famed United States ab, newspaper, editor, activist author, along with his newspaper c editor Martin Delaney, who is also an ab and later a proponent of immigration to West Africa. They... For a period of time were c editors of the North Star newspaper. And throughout this period of the late eighteen forties into the early eighteen fifties, they used the North Star newspaper. And later Frederick Douglass on his own as editor of the newspaper and then later editor of his subsequent newspaper, the Frederick Douglas paper, used that those newspapers as a platform. To advocate for haitian sovereignty, but very specifically to defend sol luke against the very vicious and extremely racist attacks that were taking place against Emperor faust in the first during that time.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 7 / 1850s-60s] Resurgence of Haitian Emigration movement

Leslie Alexander: Chapter seven was a really interesting one for me to write because it forced me as I dug deeper and deeper into the archives to recognize that some of my previous understanding and assumptions have been wrong. To a large degree prior to my book, people had assumed scholars of patient immigration had assumed that black activists in the United States during the fifties and eighteen sixties, had been somewhat interested in migration to Haiti that there had really only been like a trickle of folks who came during that period and that those who did were really kind of driven primarily by religious reasons that they wanted to convert patients to protestant Christianity. And they also assumed that as soon as the shots were fired at Fort Sump signaling the beginning of the United States civil war. That black activist is immediately abandoned the immigration movement to Haiti. But as I dug deeper and deeper into the research for chapter seven, I just realized that, like, really all of that was wrong. That it was wrong on a number of different levels. First, was to recognize that the Haitian immigration movement never really went away over the course of the nineteenth century. That historians and scholars had kind of previously assumed there had been, you know, a big movement in you know, the mid to late eighteenth twenties then it completely disappeared, and then there's another little trickle in the eighteenth fifties and then the US civil war starts and it's over. But that's actually not the way it happens. There certainly is a huge blossom of immigration in the mid to late eighteenth twenties, and it does go into decline. For the reasons that I talked about earlier, the you know Bo decision to accept the terms of the ind, forces a situation where Haiti is in a bit of a crisis. Economically and politically, and it does cause US black activist to back off of immigration. And so the immigration movement definitely goes into a decline, particularly after the Haitian government decides they're not going to continue the induce plans, the you know, the financial induce. That had encouraged immigration up to that point. But the immigration movement never goes away entirely. And over the course of the eighteenth thirties and the eighteenth forties, black folks are still migrating from the United States to Haiti. And of course, this is a point that I talk about in chapter five as well, right? That you still have people like Samuel Corn, Charles Ray and others who are continuing to advocate for immigration even though the immigration movement is

not happening in numbers that were as large as they had been in the mid twenties. But there there remains a trickle of migration throughout the eighteen thirties and the eighteen forties. And then there's a resurgence starting in the eighteen fifties. Now one of the things that was really interesting for me is that this sort of, you know, resuscitation of or the new life that gets breathed into the movement is not as driven by religious reform as I think was previously suggested, in fact all of the evidence that I uncovered show that it was really strongly politically motivated. And it was politically motivated really by two impulses. One is that the eighteen fifties were just sort of a time of ultimate disaster. For the black population in the United States. The eighteen fifties begin with the passage of an extremely rep and terrifying fugitive sleigh act that basically turns the north into open hunting season for slave catcher and slave holders. Making life very dangerous and tenuous for the free black community in the north. And of course, over the course of the eighteen fifties, you see the expansion of slavery into new territories, like Texas and others. You see the debates over slavery becoming increasingly tense and rank. So it's clear that the United that the United States is starting to sort of break apart over the issue of slavery. And then you also by the the late eighteen fifties have the passage of the the Dread Scott decision being handed down from the Supreme court, which underscores the idea that black people were intended to be forever enslaved, and that even legally free black people had no rights that white people were bound to respect. And so the eighteen fifties really signal to black activists in the United States. That the Us may never be a place free of slavery, and it may never be a place that extends the full rights of equality and citizenship to the black population. So in the eighteen fifties, there's lots of reasons for black people to want to leave the Us and they do. Some, you know, through the leadership of folks like Martin Delaney and Henry Highland ga and many others. Rep to West Africa. A large number of folks primarily let by people like Mary Chad carrie and others are choosing to migrate to Canada in part because of its proximity largely because of its proximity to the United States, but also because they had a abolish slavery and seemed any way to perhaps be passing some more, you know, progressive policies relative to the free black population. And a large portion of people are also advocating for migration to Haiti. So you have folks like James Theodore Holly, William Watkins Junior, William Wells brown just to name a few who are literally traveling around the United States, encouraging folks to to migrate to

Haiti in part to escape conditions in the United States, but more importantly, to build up the nation of Haiti. And the movement really takes off after the coup occurs that removes Emperor Faustin I from power. And J. P. Duvalier becomes the new president. When Haiti becomes a Republic again. Under the leadership of Duvalier, you see a whole wave of migration to Haiti. I think what's really significant about what happens during this period in the late 1950s and even into the early 1960s is that the political conversation around immigration is very different in this period than it had been up to that point. In the 1920s, there's just widespread support for migration to Haiti. But in the 1950s, the debate over immigration becomes extremely nasty and, among and between Black activists. And this is for a couple of reasons. One is that you have a whole faction of people who are insisting that Black people need to remain in the United States and fight for full equality and for full citizenship. And this is an idea that is not new to the 1950s, it was really born in the late 1920s early 1930s and was just continuing into the 1950s. But you have a lot of activists in the United States including people like James Mc Smith, who I mentioned earlier, who really believe that the only way that slavery is going to end in the United States. And the only way that Black people are gonna gain full equality and citizenship is if free Black activists are willing to stay in the United States and fight. And so they're just opposed to immigration anywhere. They believe that if slavery is ever gonna come to an end in the United States, Black people have to be willing to stay and fight for it. So there's one contingency in the Black community who's just opposed to immigration anywhere. Arguing instead that Black people have to stay in the United States and fight. And in their minds, they feel like if Black people don't stay and fight for citizenship, who will and you know, millions of enslaved people remain in bondage in the US. So that's kind of one contingency. The other sort of conflict that is taking place is that those who support immigration, those who believe like look, the only way Black people are ever gonna be free for us to get out of the United States and go somewhere else. Those folks have really profound disagreement about where to go. So again, you have some people like Mary Chad, Carrie, who are arguing that people need to go to Canada. Others like Martin Delaney are arguing in favor of West Africa, and still others, of course, are arguing in favor of Haiti. And even though these are all folks who support immigration, they are arguing with each other over location. And so the folks who are supporting either West Africa or Canada are

often using very negative ideas and stereotypes and characterization to argue against patient immigration. So chapter seven turned out to be a really interesting one to me because it really showed the complexity of the political conversation and the political debates. That were happening among black activists at the time. First, over the question of whether immigration should exist at all should happen at all. Versus those who are arguing among themselves about where in the world, black people should go. And so the debates are really... That chapter is really fascinating to me for that reason. The other the the last sort of thing that was significant to me about this chapter is the way that the sources revealed the decline of the immigration movement. As I mentioned earlier, for a long time, historians and scholars had assumed that the outbreak of the Us civil war is what causes the haitian immigration movement to go again into klein that, you know, once shots are fired at Fort sum, everybody decides oh, we're gonna stay in the United States and fight to end slavery. But looking at the sources, you realize it's it's not as fast as that. Frederick Douglass, makes the decision that he's gonna turn away from immigration and he's gonna stay in the United States. And fight against slavery. But the vast majority of people who supported immigration were not convinced that the beginning of the civil war was automatically going to result in the era adaptation of slavery. And so it's not really until the passage of the emancipation proclamation. It's not really until eighteen sixty three that black activists decide okay. Maybe a northern victory in the civil war will actually bring about an end to slavery and perhaps it means it will be safe to remain here. But to me, that timeline was really interesting that it was not a quick or automatic decision to back away from immigration, but rather a very specific and strategic decision based on real life political matters on the ground, both in the Us and within Haiti. So I'm hopeful that people will really enjoy learning about the details, the ins and outs of that in chapter seven.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [chap 8 / 1859-63] Senate Bill no 184

Leslie Alexander: Chapter eight was a really interesting one for me to research and write because what I found when I went into the archives and actually started looking at the documents, particularly the documents detailing the debate on the floor of congress over patient recognition was really very different than what I had thought it was

going to be. You know, previous historical studies that I had looked at, essentially said you know, the United States refused to recognize Haiti, but once the civil war broke out, the north decided to just go ahead and recognize Haiti. Kind of, like, the south was the problem and once they ce, you know, Haitian recognition just sort of sailed through congress. But when you look at the debate and the discussion on the congressional floor, you realize that's actually not at all the case. And that the story is much more complicated. The part of that story that is true is that the United States up until eighteen sixty two refused to extend formal diplomatic relations to Haiti and refused to recognize Haiti as a sovereign nation. And one of that is really one of the main points that I trace over the course of the entire book that the United States is government's policy towards Haiti. Was really driven by their obsession with slavery and with white supremacy. And the United States government was insist that they could not recognize Haiti as a sovereign independent nation because to do so would be in their minds, a tac endorsement of slave rebellion and of the right of black people to have a sovereign nation and govern themselves. Right? And all of those things flew in the face. Of everything the United States government upheld, which was slavery and white supremacy. And so numerous times, and this is again something I traced throughout the book. You know, over the course of the eighteen thirties, eighteen forties, eighteen fifties, activists and even northern merchants. Were appealing to the United States Congress and to the government to change its policies towards Haiti and to formally recognize Haitian independence. What's interesting is is that it actually went against the financial interests of the United States and of Northern merchants to persist with a non recognition policy because Haiti imposed additional taxes on every merchant and on every nation that wanted to trade with Haiti without formally recognizing it. And so the United States and Northern Merchants lost millions of dollars. Over the course of the nineteenth century, simply because of the United States refusal to recognize a fact that was already true, which was that Haitian was a Haitian was a sovereign nation. But the United States is refusal to acknowledge that was extremely costly for the United States and for northern merchants. And so over the course of the nineteenth century, a lot of pressure is put on congress to form to extend formal diplomatic recognition and yet over and over and over and over again, they refused to do so. And it's all because of their attachment to slavery and to white supremacy and because what Hades rise as a sovereign black

nation represented to them. Finally, once the United States civil war breaks out, northern politicians kind of a radical wing of, you know, northern politicians push through a bill recognizing extending recognition, actually, not just to haiti, but to both Haiti and Liberia. So they package recognition for both of these, you know, black nations into one bill. It's called senate bill number one eighty four. And it's a bill designed to have the United States extend formal recognition to both Haiti and the West African nation of Liberia that had gained its independence in eighteen forty seven. What was really interesting to me as a historian, but also just as a human, was the really vicious and ugly process of debate that senate bill number one eighty four had to go through. As I mentioned a moment ago, every kind of historical study that I had looked up looked at up to that point had kind of suggested that, you know, once the civil war broke out and the North controlled congress, they presented the bill in congress and it was accepted and yay haiti was finally officially recognized. But when you look at the actual language of the debate on the floor and the intensity of the rank, between the politicians over this question. You realize that the conflict over this bill was much u and much nas and much more laden with racism and white supremacy and economic greed. Then I had actually ever imagined. And as a historian, I tend to be a realist. And to sort of expect the worst in some cases. But it was worse even than I had imagined, and I really hope that your listeners will take a really close look at chapter eight as I mentioned before because the process that the bill has to go through in order to get approved really shows the United States government's attachment. Two white supremacy, two global imperial and to exploiting haiti economically for the gain of the Us government and wealthy business leaders in the United States. It becomes very clear that although there are a few people in congress who support haitian recognition because it's the right thing to do. The vast majority of the people who finally vote in favor of formal recognition for Haiti really ultimately only support it because they feel that formal diplomatic relations with Haiti will better position the United States to exploit haiti financially going forward. And that is in fact exactly what happens. And it's part of the reason why I feel like chapter eight is such an important bridge between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century because the United States government's attitude towards Haiti that is articulated in the debates. Around formal recognition really then play out over the

course of the twentieth century in terms of the United States is imperialist attitude towards haiti.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste: [Epilogue]

Leslie Alexander: <No transcript>

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