

NBCI Has Selected Marlene L. Daut's Book 'The First and Last King of Haiti' for its Book of the Year Award

Award-winning scholar Marlene L. Daut unravels the enigma that was Henry Christophe, the revolutionary, freedom-fighter, and only king of Haiti.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, October 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite having a layered history, Haiti is most often framed as having a single story that revolves around poverty, corruption, and disaster. "The First and Last King of Haiti: The Rise of Henry Christophe" by award-winning Yale scholar [Marlene L. Daut](#) is redefining Haiti's revolutionary past and global significance through the extraordinary story of Haiti's only king. Set to be published by [Knopf](#) on January 7, 2025, the book is highly anticipated following Daut's recent win of the 2024 Frederick Douglass Book Prize for her previous book, "Awakening the Ashes: An Intellectual History of the Haitian Revolution" (U. of North Carolina P, 2023).

"The First and Last King of Haiti" unravels the life of a slave, revolutionary, and king, who was, in his time, popular and famous the world over. Born in 1767 to an enslaved mother on the Caribbean island of Grenada, Christophe first fought to overthrow the British in North America, before helping his fellow enslaved Africans in Saint-Domingue, as Haiti was then called, to gain freedom from slavery. Yet in an incredible twist of fate, at one point, Christophe ended up fighting with Napoleon's forces against the formerly enslaved men and women he had once fought alongside. Later, reuniting with those he had abandoned, he offered to lead them and made himself their king. But it all came to a sudden and tragic end when Christophe—after nine years of his rule as King Henry I—shot himself in the heart.

What sets Daut's biography apart is her dedication to presenting Christophe as a real human, not a caricature. She explains the many attempts to portray Christophe's life on the page and



Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative

the stage from the nineteenth century to the present. By sharing all the conflicting accounts, she makes clear that if we hope to understand Christophe's life and death, we must ultimately turn away from the fictional portrayals. Through over a decade of meticulous research, Daut's new archival discoveries finally demystify this controversial historical enigma and help us understand how this vital moment of revolutionary political and cultural transformation has shaped our world today.

Avoiding both hero worship and outright condemnation, Daut sheds light on questions that have long puzzled historians, such as: Why did this once-revered revolutionary turn against his allies? How did Haiti, initially united in its fight for freedom, split into two nations, with Christophe ruling the north and President Pétion leading the south? And what lasting lessons can we take from Christophe's extraordinary yet tumultuous rise and fall?

Acclaimed novelist Edwidge Danticat praises the book as "a fascinating, in-depth biography." Critics agree, hailing Daut's work as a definitive account of this lesser-known royal. A starred review from Publishers Weekly describes it as "a powerful biography of Henry Christophe, who fought for, defected from, and ultimately ruled over



Professor Marlene L. Daut, Author

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NBCI is proud to present Professor Daut with the Book of the Year Award for her nonfiction work. We look forward to supporting other Black scholars as we inaugurate the NBCI Promotional Book Program.”
Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the National Black Church Initiative

Haiti...Christophe emerges in Daut's telling as a complex figure in a world gripped by radical transformation...The result is an expertly told and richly detailed reexamination of the revolutionary period.”

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the [National Black Church Initiative](#) said, "The National Black Church Initiative is proud to present Professor Marlene L. Daut with this year's Book of the Year Award for her nonfiction work, "The First and Last King of Haiti: The Rise and Fall of Henry Christophe". Black churches have always supported serious scholarship by Black intellectuals. We look forward to supporting other Black scholars in their pursuit of excellence and making their work available to NBCI's 27.7

million members as we inaugurate the NBCI Promotional Book Program. "

A powerful biography of Henry Christophe...an expertly told and richly detailed reexamination of the revolutionary period.” Publishers Weekly (starred

review)

Booklist, also awarding a starred review, writes, “By clearly chronicling Christophe’s complex story with detail and nuanced analysis, Daut portrays a crucial, if little-known leader and traces the deep roots of Haiti’s ongoing struggles.”

"The First and Last King of Haiti" is a riveting story of not only geopolitical clashes on a grand scale but also of friendship and loyalty, treachery and betrayal, heroism and strife in an era of revolutionary upheaval. Christophe’s life provides a lens through which to understand Haiti’s history and its enduring impact on global struggles for freedom and equality.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MARLENE DAUT is Professor of French and African Diaspora Studies at Yale University. She teaches courses in anglophone, francophone Caribbean, African American, and French colonial historical studies. She has written for The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Nation, Essence, and Harper’s Bazaar. She lives with her family in New Haven, Connecticut.

ABOUT THE BOOK

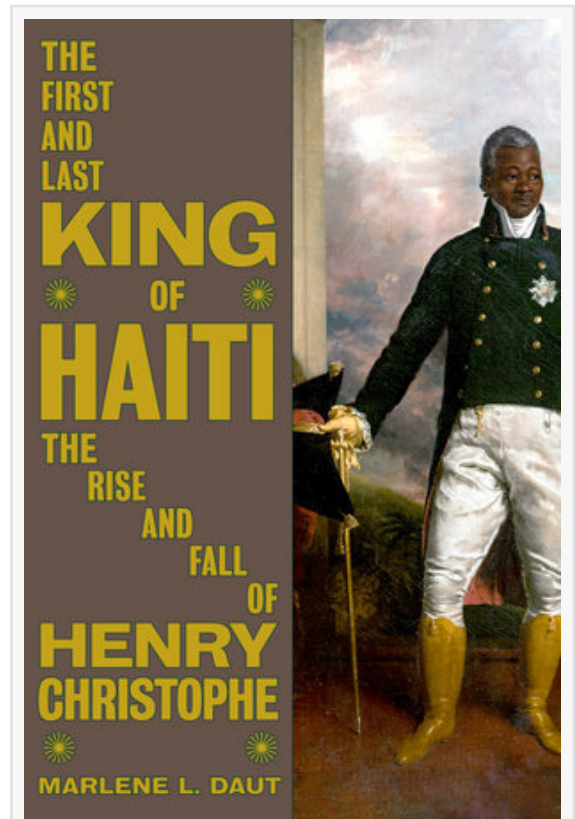
"The First and Last King of Haiti: The Rise and Fall of Henry Christophe" is the essential biography of the controversial revolutionary and only king of Haiti. Henry Christophe (1767 - 1820) is one of the most richly complex figures in the history of the Americas, and was, in his time, popular and famous the world over. Written by Marlene L. Daut, the book is scheduled to be published by Knopf on January 7, 2025.

PRAISE

“A fascinating, in-depth, and meticulously researched biography of Haiti’s revolutionary-turned-king.”

—EDWIDGE DANTICAT, author of “Breath, Eyes, Memory”

“Daut shows us, often for the first time, the various personal, cultural, political, and financial forces that created the controversial future king in all his complexity, as well as the specific contours of his leadership—and his failures. From a place of heartfelt agony, she deploys magnificent archival detective work to catalog the horrors of enslavement and the slave-based economy from which sprang the world-historic Haitian revolution, progenitor of the modern era.”



Cover, "The First and Last King of Haiti"

—AMY WILENTZ, author of “The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier”

“Daut’s monumental work conclusively demystifies one of the most misunderstood, romanticized, and demonized figures of the Haitian Revolution in order to set him free once more. This is an important, signal work from one of Haiti’s leading historians.”

—MYRIAM J. A. CHANCY, author of “Harvesting Haiti: Reflections on Unnatural Disasters”

“[Marlene] Daut, one of the foremost historians of Haiti, has penned a groundbreaking scholarly biography of Henry Christophe...Daut’s research is outstanding. She has unearthed new sources in Caribbean and European archives, and she weighs all evidence carefully and reaches judicious conclusions...A must-read for scholars.”

—Library Journal

ABOUT NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino churches, comprising 27.7 million members, that works to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches, and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology utilizes faith and sound health science. We also offer our member congregants and the public helpful and healthy science-based tips on how to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The National Black Church Initiative’s purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose primary mission is to reduce racial disparities in various areas, as cited above. NBCI provides faith-based, innovative, and cutting-edge solutions to complex economic and social challenges. NBCI’s programs are guided by credible statistical analysis, science-based strategies and techniques, and methods that are proven to be effective.

Anthony Evans

National Black Church Initiative

+1 202-744-0184

[email us here](#)

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