

The Effects of 19th Century Slave Revolts

Introduction:

By the 19th century, revolts became more and more common. Before we begin to examine the effects of 19th century slave revolts on the system of slavery in the Caribbean let us list the three famous revolts that occurred during that period.

1. Barbados Rebellion (1816)
2. Demarara Revolt (1823)
3. Jamaica Christmas Rebellion (1831)

There was both long term as well as short term effects on the plantation and its operations which ultimately affected the system of slavery.

(a) The massive loss of slave lives meant not only a decrease in the labor force but a subsequent decrease in the volume of production. Remember that these revolts are happening after the end of the slave trade. (1807) It is not easy to replace these slaves especially if they were artisans who need more training than field slaves.

(b) The brutality of the masters in their response to the rebels won much support among humanitarians.

(c) The blaming of the Missionaries, the burning of the Churches and the ill treatment and imprisonment of Missionaries such as the Rev. John Smith of Demarara also attracted support for the cause of abolition.

(d) The planters were very fearful during and after a revolt. They tended to increase security on the plantations after a revolt. This increased their cost of production at a time when their profits were already down due to the competition from beet sugar.