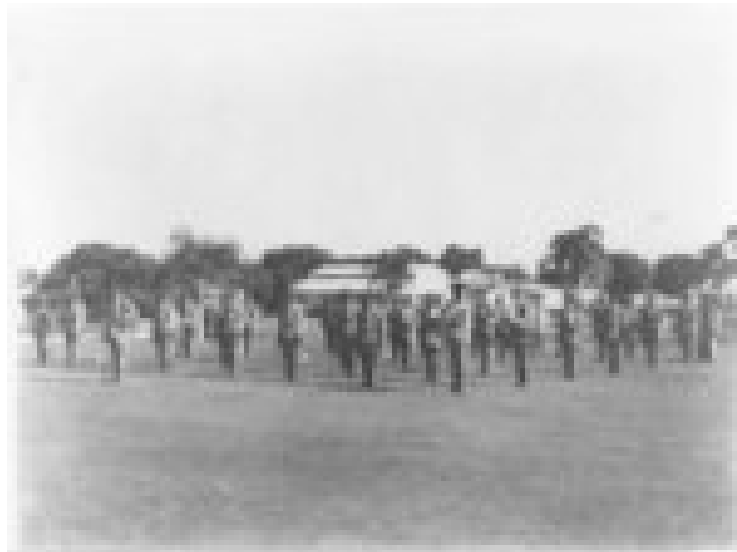


# THE U.S. OCCUPATION OF HAITI: SOCIAL

The U.S. occupation of Haiti perpetuated social injustices, resulting in military violence and new methods of activism. NAACP Secretary James Weldon Johnson went to Haiti in 1920 with the intent of writing an expose of American imperialism. In a series of four articles entitled "Self-Determining Haiti," he published the atrocities of the occupation, including the use of racism and violence to pacify Haiti. To President Wilson he wrote, "If the United States should leave Haiti today, it would leave more than a thousand widows and orphans of its own making, more banditry than has existed for a century, resentment, hatred, and despair in the heart of a whole people, to say nothing of the irreparable injury to its own tradition as the defender of the rights of man."



These social tensions resulted in a series of rebellions led by Haitian activists. Known as "Cacos," Haitian insurgents fought against the occupation for as long as it lasted. The First Caco War began almost immediately after the beginning of the occupation. The Cacos resisted American control by fighting against the Marines. It ended in November of 1915 after the Marines captured the important rebel Fort Rivière.

The Second Caco War started in 1918 due to the continued occupation of Haiti by U.S. military forces, despite President Wilson's statements at the Paris Peace Conference that he supported self-determination. Over 40,000 Cacos and 20% of Haitians were involved in the rebellion. At first, they outnumbered the Gendarmerie, but more U.S. Marines were soon sent to Haiti to quell the uprising. In the end, 2,000 Cacos, 28 Marines, and 70 gendarmes were killed by 1920.



Building off the failures of the Second Caco War, the Les Cayes Massacre garnered outrage in both Haiti and America. On December 6, 1929, Haitian activists protested the lack of representation in government officials and economic conditions. 1,500 Haitians peacefully protested in Les Cayes before being fired upon by U.S. Marines, killing 12 and wounding 23. This violence fueled international outrage that prompted President Hoover to form a concrete withdrawal plan.

Despite the violence and trauma thrust upon the nation, Haitians retained a spirit of rebellion. A multitude of art medias and publications were created in response to the occupation. Fueled by cultural and political ideas defined by the Haitian Revolution a century prior, the *La Revue Indigène* publication was a source of inspiration to many Haitians. Poet Jacques Roumain summarized, "And here we are arisen / All the wretched of the earth / all the upholders of justice / marching to attack you barracks / your banks / like a forest of funeral torches."

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