

Haiti and the United States: The Psychological Moment



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(Wellington Connelly)

HAITI AND THE UNITED STATES: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENT

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University of Georgia Press. Paperback. Book Condition: New. Paperback. 320 pages. Dimensions: 8.6in. x 6.4in. x 0.8in. In a prescient remark made at the turn of the century, U. S. Secretary of State Elihu Root said that establishing the right sort of relations with Haiti must await the psychological moment. Indeed, as Brenda Gayle Plummer notes, much of the Haitian-U. S. relationship has turned on matters of perception. For many in the United States, tales of voodoo, political violence, and stark deprivation have made Haiti appear to be a doomed land, beyond comprehension and help. Haitians, meanwhile, have often seen the United States as persistently racist, grossly materialist, and lacking in spiritual values. In *Haiti and the United States*, Plummer pays special attention to the role of social and cultural factors in the two countries' views of each other and the manner in which relations have developed as a result of those perceptions. The disparities between the two republics, she notes, are all the more remarkable in that their experiences of anticolonial rebellion and nationhood converged in some striking ways. Despite the parallels, however, the varying cultural and racial identities of Haiti and the United States and the sociohistorical context in which those identities have been construed forced them to confront the challenges of slavery, republicanism, democracy, and economic development quite differently. Stressing the importance of domestic policy and the character of civil society in the formation of foreign policy, Plummer illuminates the various factors that figured in the relationship between the two countries throughout the nineteenth century. She discussed the aspirations of Haiti's founders in building a self-governing black society, Haitian responses to the transatlantic abolition movement, the development of Haiti's creole culture, and the country's shrewd negotiations with the United States over commercial and strategic issues. The late 1800s,...

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