

Colonialism plantation slavery and indentureship history essay



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Before emancipation, the Caribbean featured three main types of classes in society, that you will see highlighted in the research paper later on. The three classes were, the white upper class, these were predominantly the plantation owners and managers, who had all the knowledge and wealth, then we have the brown middle class, they were said to have skilled and semi skilled workers, traders and small groups of persons who owned and operated businesses. Finally, the lower class and they consisted of mostly black, unskilled workers in both the rural and urban areas. However, even though the Caribbean society featured these three main classes, studies conducted in the English speaking Caribbean suggested that stratification patterns was largely determined by a changing class structure that was shifting and expanding mostly in the middle classes, because the consistency of the skilled workers, pushing the means of production.

I will critically examine the island of St Lucia. The origin of the name Saint Lucia cannot be found, for it is lost in history. The common notion that has been passed on to generations, like other Caribbean islands, that Columbus first saw the island on Saint Lucy's Day on the 13th of December in the year 1498, is uncertain, for there is no reliable evidence of his discovery. Saint Lucia had a long colonial history under both French and British rule. The island was colonised for the very first time around 500 BC by the Amerindian people coming from Venezuela also known as Ciboneys. They were also colonized by the Arawak Indians around 200 AD, and later again, around 900 AD, by the Caribs. Today, in the beautiful small island, there are very little remains of the culture of these original inhabitants in St. Lucia. From 1605 onwards, the French, British and the Dutch began colonising St. Lucia. By the

year 1680, the Caribs had to give up their control of the island, and the European settlement began. Soon after, the French, British and the Irish colonisers brought in enslaved workers from the West-African coast to perform their demanding tasks associated to work on the sugar plantation. There was a major uprising in the 1790s, known as the Brigands' War, and slavery continued in St. Lucia until 1838. During that period of the eighteenth century, the island changed hands fourteen times and was finally under the British in 1814.

Culturally, however, St. Lucia still continues to demonstrate strong French influences as is highlighted by its predominantly French-based Creole, also informally known as 'patois'. St. Lucia was emancipated in the year 1838, and remained in many ways compliant to the demands and needs of the capitalist world system. The social stratification of St. Lucia, like most other Caribbean islands, was a small portion of white elite planters and merchants that maintained control over a large black workforce, with a small but expanding coloured middle-class mediating between the two classes. Some workers managed to establish themselves as peasants on lands not in use by the elite-owned sugar plantations, but many had to continue working on these estates for a livelihood. In those times, wages were said to be very low, until well into the 20th century, however there were alternative ways of making a living that remained. St. Lucians were limited to fishing, charcoal-making, wood cutting, shopkeeping or emigration. In the late 19th century, contract labourers from India were imported to work on the sugar estates, and this 'East-Indian' heritage has since complemented the African and European ethnic make-up of St. Lucian culture and society.

In the mid-twentieth century, St. Lucian society went through a series of major changes. Plantation-based sugar cultivation was abandoned in the 1950s, and replaced by small-scale, farmer-grown banana production. Around the same time, thousands of St. Lucians decided to try their luck overseas: in Curacao first, and soon after in the U. K., Canada, the United States and elsewhere. In political terms, the birth of a labour movement (in the 1930s) gave rise in the 1950s to an increasing level of self-governance. Adult suffrage, various constitutional changes and closer cooperation within the Eastern Caribbean finally gave rise, in 1979, to political independence for St. Lucia within the British Commonwealth. Since the 1970s, subsequent governments have prompted diversification of the local economy, by stimulating investments in the tourism and light manufacturing sectors. Today, tourism and banana production form the mainstay of the island's economy, with manufacturing and a range of other, smaller income-earners making up the rest.

St. Lucia is a parliamentary democracy, boasting two political parties:

The United Workers Party (which was in almost permanent power from 1964 until 1997, most of the time under the leadership of Sir John Compton), and the St. Lucia Labour Party, which was in power from 1979 to 1982, and again since 1997, under current Prime-Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony.

Traditionally, St. Lucia's education system has been in the hands of the Catholic church. Due to perpetual clashes between the (French-oriented) church and the (British-oriented) government, development of the education system has long been a bone of contention. Until the 1960s, the island relied

on only two secondary schools - St. Mary's College for boys, and St. Joseph's Convent for girls, in Castries. Since then, however, the expansion of primary and secondary schooling has steadily continued, and the aim of secondary education for all is now within reach. Extraordinarily, the absolute lack of educational opportunities has not prevented St. Lucians from attaining the highest honour any scholar can achieve: in 1979, Sir Arthur Lewis was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics and in 1992, Sir Derek Walcott received the same for literature. Besides that, numerous other St. Lucians are leading specialists, world-wide, in the fields of medicine, law, accountancy, history, chemistry, and other disciplines.