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NAME: Arkoh-Yeboah Aaron INDEX: 10342330 CODE: HIST 315 THE AKANS WERE THE MOST VISIBLE GROUP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COLONIAL SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS. HOW TRUE IS THIS STATEMENT? The horrors of the whole institution of slavery in the world where slaves were subjected to vicious treatments by their owners still leave an irrevocable memory in the lives of especially the descendants of the enslaved victims. The slave institutions not surprisingly however suffered a lot of resistance from their enslaved victims in the form of rebellion, run aways and even suicide. As one scholar has put it, " slaves ' naturally' resisted their enslavement because slavery was fundamentally unnatural. "1 Forms varied, but the common denominator in all acts of resistance was an attempt to claim some measure of freedom against an institution that defined people fundamentally as property. (James Ramsay). Among the various groups that resisted slavery in the Americas, the Akans were the most visible. This was mainly because they were indomitable in their leadership skills in war and political organization, expertise in medicinal plant use and spiritual practice, great in number and above all most of those who led various slave revolts in America were mostly of the Akan background. The Akans were well known in their use of supernatural powers to resist slavery. In a slave revolt that took place in Jamaica, a slave by name Tacky, who was claimed to be a Koromantyn(Akan speaker) was the leader. Tacky was believed to have led this revolt with the aid of a number of " Obeah conjurers. "(Walter Rucker). Obeah was a spiritual practice linked to the Akan —speaking West Africans from the Gold Coast region. This practice was found among slaves in British, Spanish, Danish and Dutch Carribean and mainland South American colonies and

served as an important impetus to slave resistance. Some of the Obeah practitioners could just rub a powder on their bodies to make them invulnerable. Also, an Akan presence can be found in the 1712 New York city revolt. In the April 7th to 14th , 1712 edition of the Boston News- Letters, about 25-30 Koromantyn negroes took part in this uprising.(Boston News-Letter, 1712). The aftermath of this revolt also brought to book about 21 Africans facing criminal charges. Of these, 9 had Akan Day names, 4 were named Quacko, 2 were named Cuffee , 1 was named Quashi, Quasi and Amba respectively(Scott, 1961, pp63-65). The Akans also were visible in the fight against colonial slavery due to the display of gallantry by most of its members in the fight against slavery. For instance an Akan by name Kojo was believed to have been the leader of the Jamaican Maroons which after years of intermittent wars with the Jamaican authorities signed a peace treaty to gain their freedom on condition of not admitting or returning new runaways. This treaty became historic because it was not usual for slaves to gain their freedom in this way especially in America hence making the Akan influence factor visible. Perhaps, the most remarkable story of African American resistance is found in the forests of Suriname, a former Dutch plantation colony. There large numbers of slaves ran off in the 18th century and mounted an almost perpetual war in the rain forest against the various expeditions sent to hunt them down. Those captured were brutally executed, but eventually a truce developed. Today about 50, 000 Maroon descendants still live in Suriname and French Guiana.(Stearns Peter 1992) The Suriname Maroons maintained aspects of their West African background in terms of language, kinship relations, and religious beliefs, but these were fused with

new forms and ways drawn from European and American Indian contacts resulting from their New World experience. From this fusion based on their own creativity, a truly Afro-American culture was created. In the nutshell, the Akans were visible in the fight against colonial slavery due to their leadership skills in war and political organization, expertise in medicinal plant use and spiritual practice, great in number and above all most of those who led various slave revolts in America were mostly of the Akan background.

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