

The Revolt that Forced Slavers to Reconsider Their Ways

The Louisiana coastal rebellion of 1811 was fiercely contested and brutally suppressed. Yet, together with subsequent revolts including the insurrections of 1822 and 1831 led by abolitionists Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, they also succeeded in destabilizing the psyche of a nation, pushing free whites out of their comfort zone (plausible deniability) to choose between two sides in stark opposition: support for a system of violent, race-based bondage, or active protest.

What initially began as a tiny band of attackers, encouraged by horrid conditions of habitat, subsistence, and labor to attack their abusers, grew quickly to the vocal, armed protest of hundreds rising up with cries of “freedom or death” in opposition to their treatment—a declaration of their very humanity.

The uprising was just one within a long history of a movement that pushed the government to reconsider its ways, culminating in an emancipation proclamation on the first of January, 1863.

