

Raborn Presents: The 1811 New Orleans Revolt.



The Largest Slave Revolt In The U.S.

Every year on January 6, the King's Ball marked the kickoff of the Carnival season that culminated in Mardi Gras. The ball featured the cutting of a cake in which a bean had been hidden. Amid dancing and music, the revelers would celebrate the election of a "King and Queen of the Twelfth Cakes, and drink prodigious amounts of alcohol"

As the planters celebrated Epiphany, five or six hundred African men and women from New Orleans and its environs gathered in the Common. Some of their faces bore the ritual facial scars and filed teeth of "the Kongo, others the tattoos of the Asante kingdom,

AMERICAN UPRISING

The Untold Story of America's Largest
SLAVE REVOLT

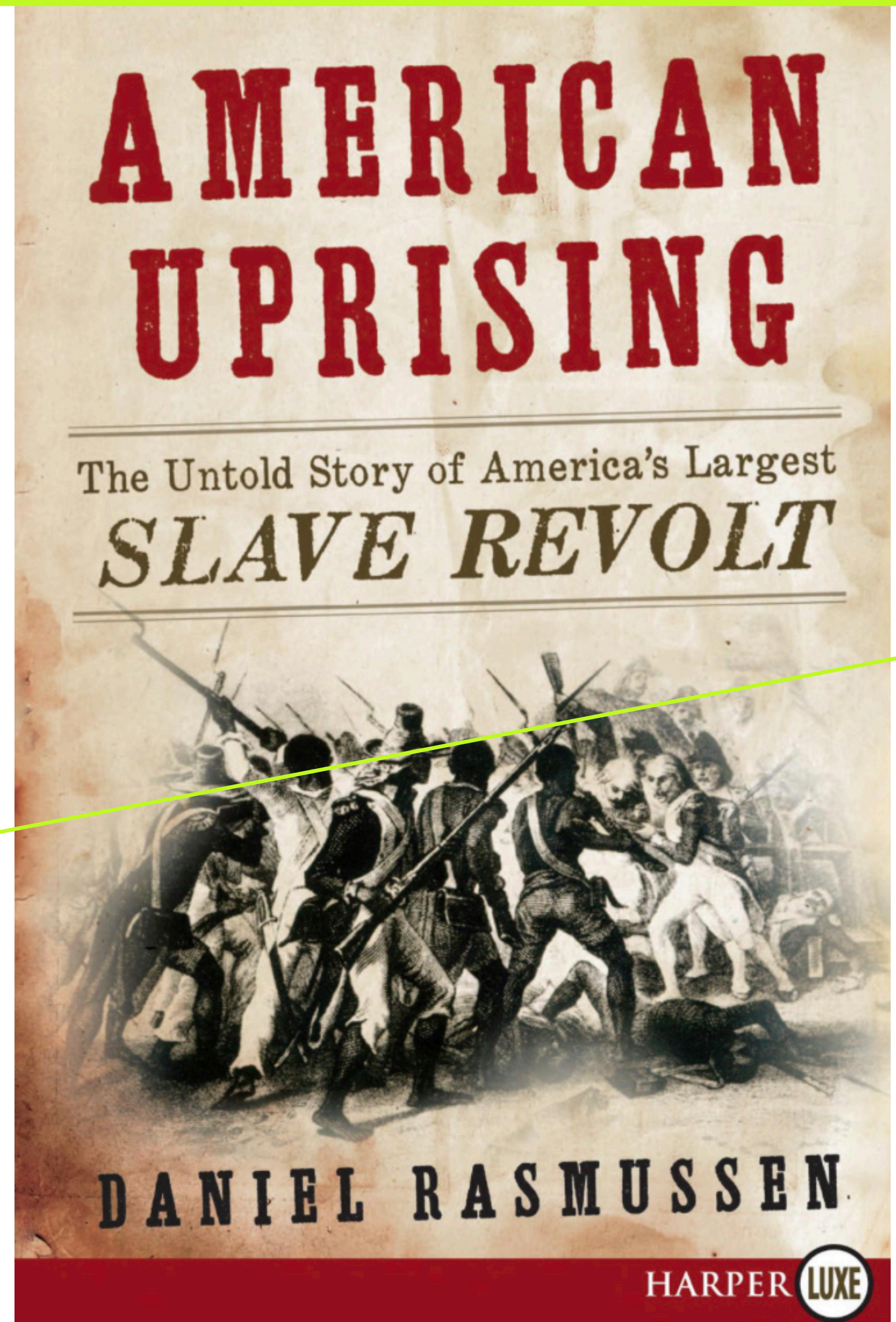


DANIEL RASMUSSEN.

The participants formed dancing circles around one central ring, where two women danced languorously, holding handkerchiefs with the tips of their fingers. An old man sat on top of a cylindrical drum about a foot in diameter, beating the canvas quickly with the edge of his hand.

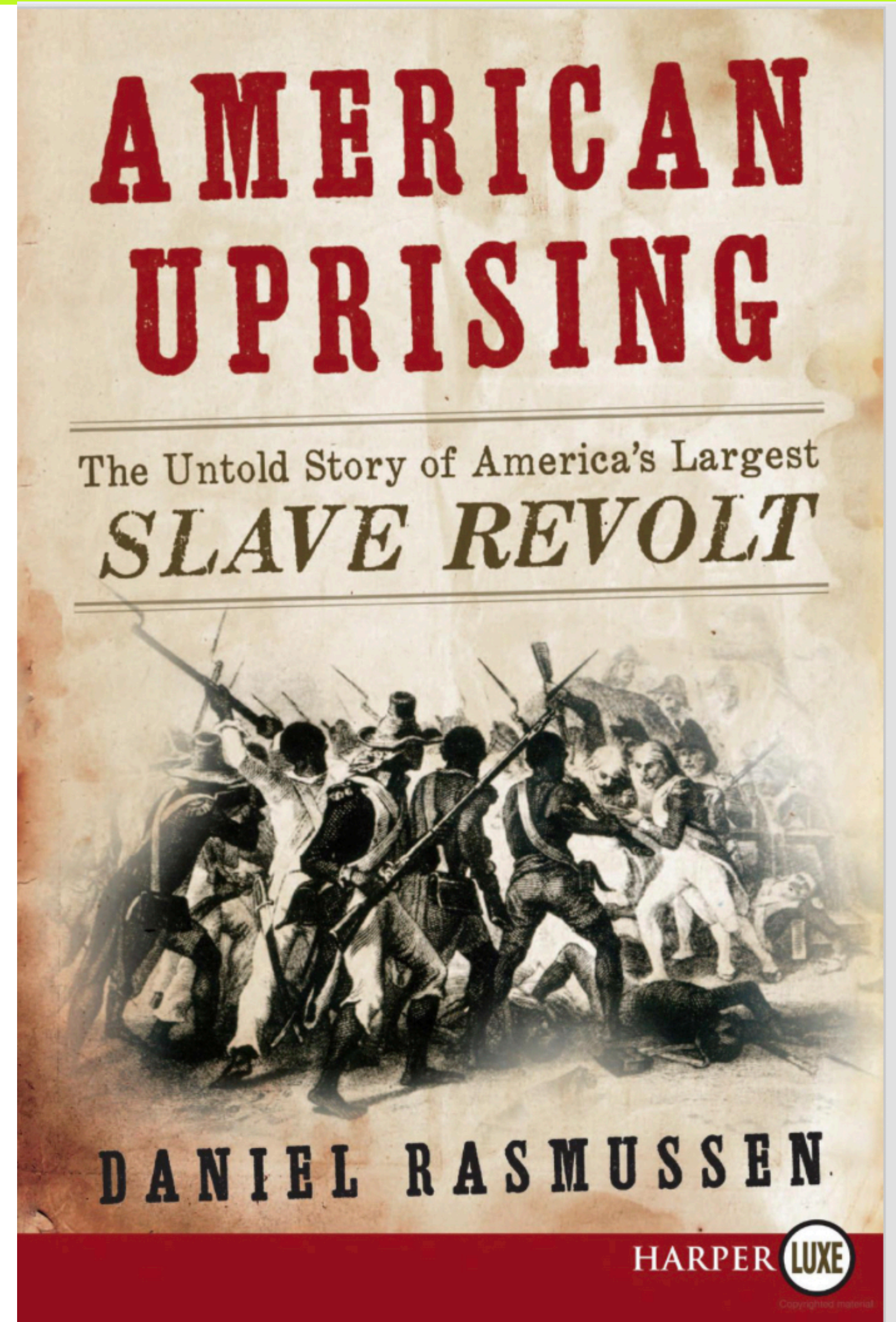
Several others held drums between their knees, producing incredible explosions of percussive sound. A grizzled man of not less than eighty years of age played an African stringed instrument that extended from the ground to over his head. Women sang African folk songs while walking rhythmically around the drummers. The sounds of Africa rocked the Crescent City.”

The square burst with color. The men came wrapped in traditional coastal African garb, brightly dyed robes wrapped around their otherwise naked bodies. The women boasted the latest fashions, sporting clothes made of silk, gauze, muslin, and percale. The flags of different African tribes, regions, and ethnicities flew above the celebrants.

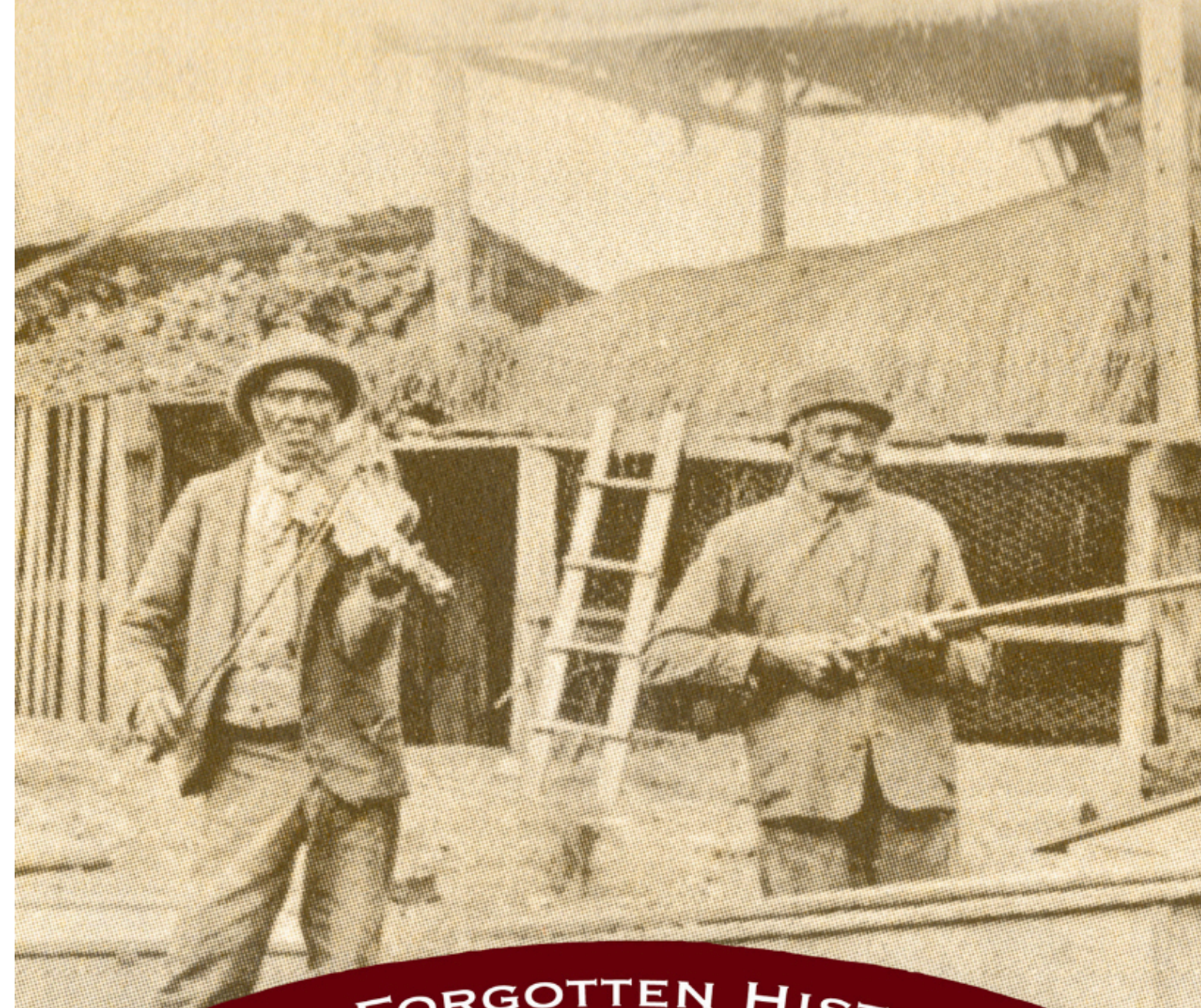


On this day, the day of the anointment of the planters' Carnival king, this festival would also celebrate the crowning of a new leader. Many times these leaders had been chiefs or kings in Africa. The crowning of the leader was the climax of the festival.

These dances were probably the largest African gatherings for hundreds of miles; because of its French and Spanish past, New Orleans still allowed large groups of black people to meet—unlike most of the rest of the United States, where such gatherings were banned for fear of the discontent that might surface.



The Pinkster King •• and the •• King of Kongo



THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY
OF AMERICA'S
DUTCH-OWNED SLAVES

**Jeroen
Dewulf**

Black kings

The presence of elected “slave kings” has been observed far beyond the borders of New England and New York. Several accounts of New Orleans’ Congo Square, for instance, refer to “black kings.” In her study on popular culture *American Humor* (1931), Constance Rourke writes that “many who heard the minstrels in the Gulf States or along the lower Mississippi must have remembered those great holidays in New Orleans early in the nineteenth century when hundreds of Negroes followed through the streets a king chosen for his youth, strength, and blackness.”⁷⁴

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Around 1540 the black community separated itself and applied for its own charter as Irmandade de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos (Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Black Men), which it received in 1565.

During processions, the king and queen were usually protected from the sun by a sunshade held by one of the members and wore a crown or a hat covered with pieces of gold, silver, or anything shiny to make it look like a crown.⁴ In places with a large number of slaves, several black brotherhoods could develop that were subdivided according to the slaves' origins or "nations," named after the place or region in Africa from where they had been shipped, such as Kongo, (São Jorge da) Mina, or Mozambique.⁵

Other important holidays for black brotherhoods were Corpus Christi, Epiphany, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints' Day, All Souls' Day, St. John's Day (June 23), and St. James's Day (July 25).

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Trinidad Carnival tradition is the Canboulay which is African- but it has incorporated vital masquerade traditions of the East Indian and Amerindian.

The Canboulay is inclusive, drum-music led, concerned with the vital African Oratory tradition, is about sacred masquerade, ancestral masquerade, satirical masquerade, and is revolutionary.

It is connected to dozens of Secret Society masquerade forms which hid and mutated their forms into all the things we call 'traditional mas'- the Pierrot Grenade, the Midnight Robber, the Indian Masks, the Sailor Masks, the Cow Bands, the Devil bands, etc. Nearly every single traditional mas has an African masking precedent. In form and function.

<https://face2faceafrica.com/article/fascinating-history-african-resistance-trinidad-tobago-carnival>

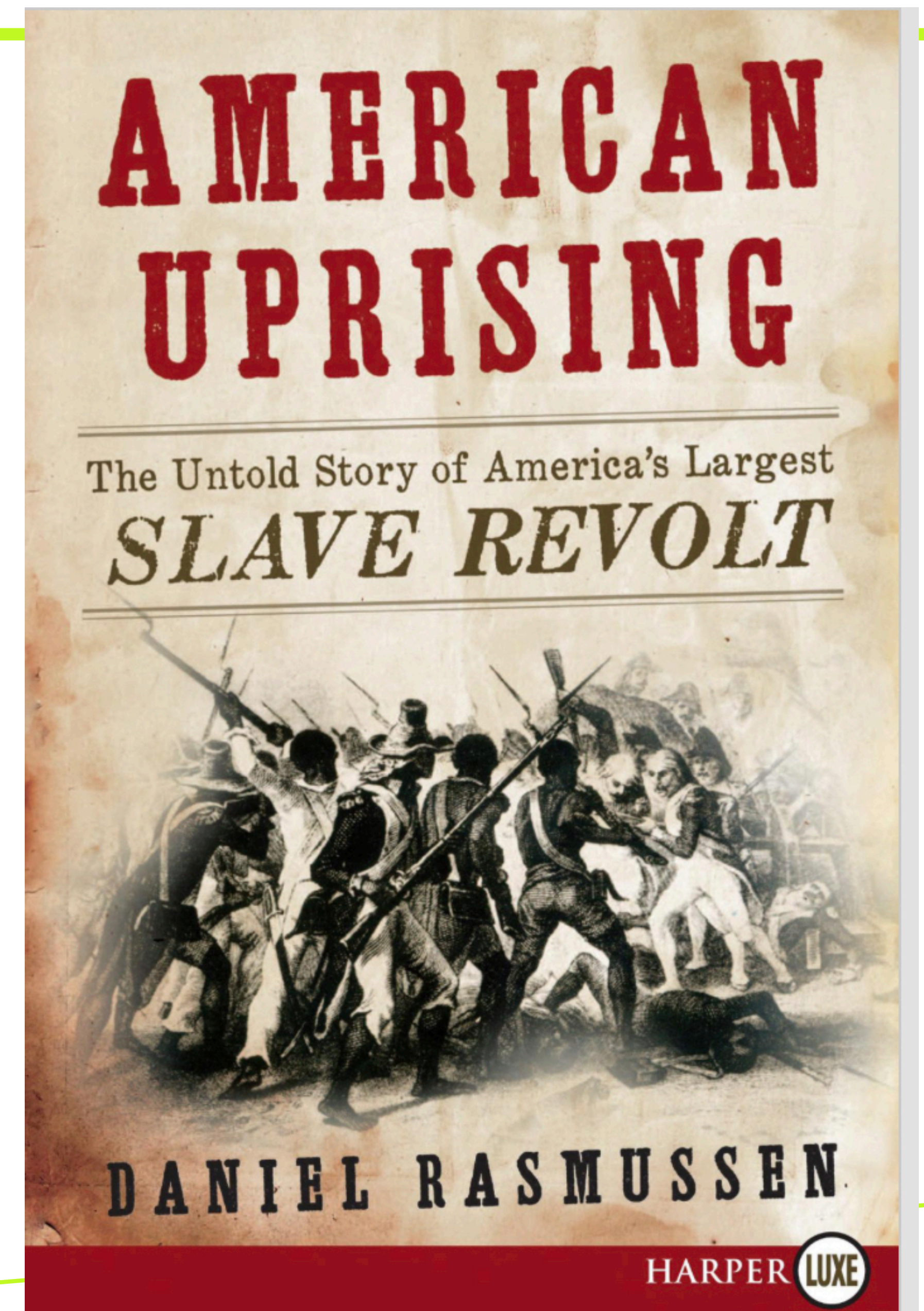


These meetings served as a means of exchange, both cultural and economic. But they also served another role, as a breeding ground for slave conspiracies. And that Sunday, the circuits of secret slave communication buzzed with signals: a plot was afoot.”Two men, Kook and Quamana, were in large part responsible for activating these African channels with revolutionary activity. Like the participants in the dance that January Sunday, Kook and Quamana were Africans. Their names suggest that these two men were Akan, children of a warlike African empire in the height of its glory.

Their names were anglicizations of the names Kwaku and Kwamina in the Akan dialects of Twi and Fanti. The name Kook was the name associated with the spider—the classic trickster Kwaku Anansi of Akan folklore—and meant that Kook was born on a Wednesday. The name Quamana was assigned to men born on Tuesdays and was associated with the ocean.”According to their master’s estimates, Kook and Quamana were born around 1790—a time when war was ravaging the African continent.

In the Lower Guinea region, the Oyo empire, the kingdom of Dahomey (known for having palaces decorated with human skulls), and the smaller states of the coast fought for regional supremacy, enslaving and selling prisoners of war to European traders at coastal forts. In the kingdom of the Kongo, a series of civil wars that had begun in 1665 mobilized large numbers of troops, with guns and horses, who fought across the African plains.

The violence peaked around 1781, when 30,000 Kongolesse warriors stormed the fort at São Salvador under the command of King José I. In the Gold Coast, the Akan were driving toward the coast with massive armies, threatening the European vassal states that supported the Atlantic slave trade. Kook and Quamana were born, grew up, and were sold into slavery amid these international conflicts, children of war fueled by a fast-growing Atlantic economy.”



1811 uprising involved a wide diversity of African peoples, drawn from all over”“the Atlantic world, and of many different languages and nationalities.

An inner circle of “headmen” was responsible for organizing specific communities into insurrectionary cells—for “recruitment, discipline, and solidarity.” With the rewards for betraying a revolt extremely high, headmen like Kook and Quamana had to be extremely careful about whom they spoke with; they had to be sure they could be trusted.

In New York, headmen had focused on organizing within specific national groups. Slaves were “not to open the conspiracy to any but those that were of their own country,” wrote a participant in the New York revolt, since “they are brought from different parts of Africa and might be supposed best to know the temper and disposition of each other.” They addressed each other as “countrymen” and used a coded language to feel out other slaves’ beliefs and politics.

New recruits swore a war oath when they joined an insurrectionary cell. These military oaths were widespread across West Africa and invoked the “primal powers of thunder and lightening” to ensure utmost secrecy and violent camaraderie.”

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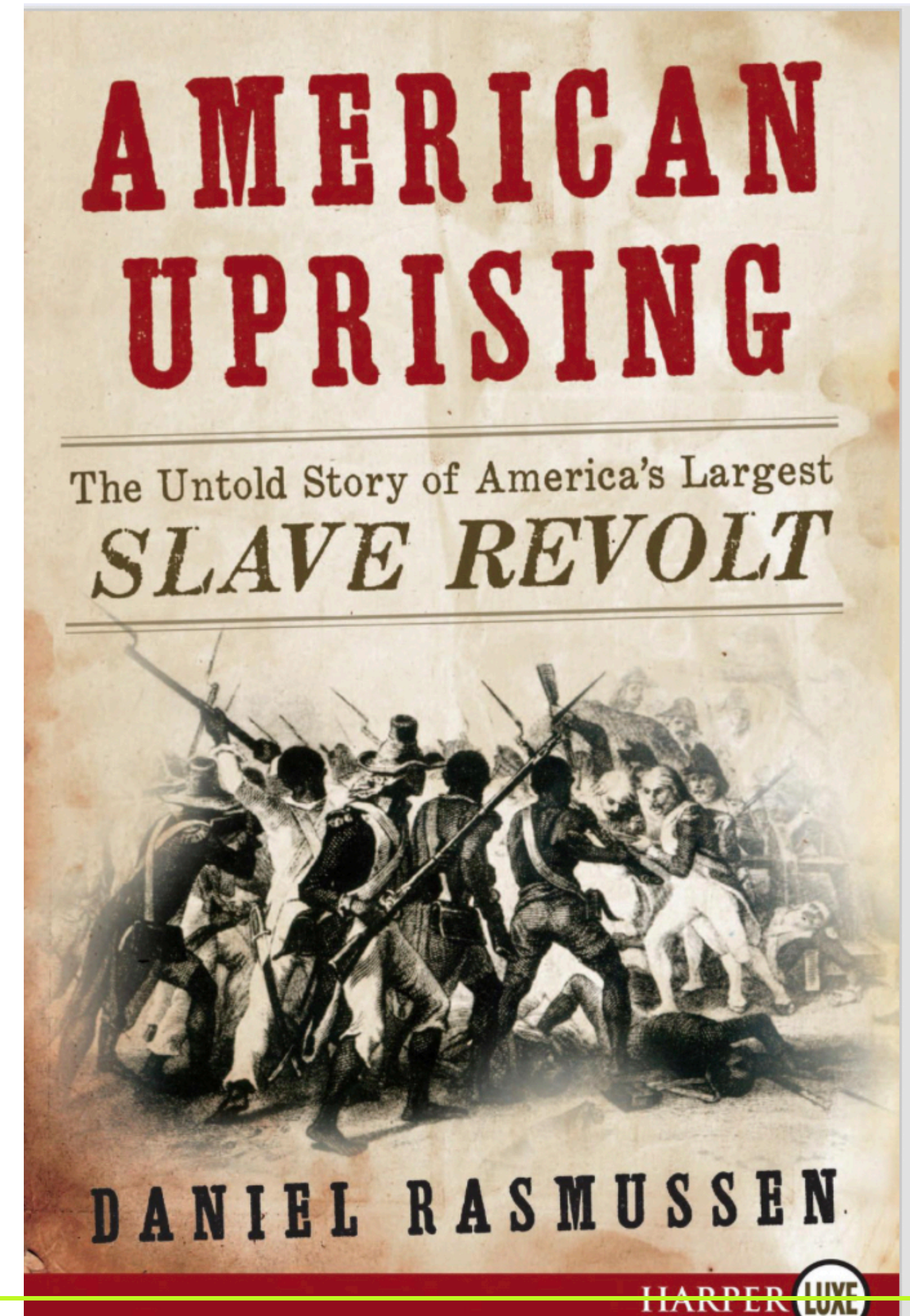


DANIEL RASMUSSEN

HARPER LUXE

Charles Deslondes was one of these slaves. A light-skinned black man, he served as a slave driver, a member of the slave elite. Slave drivers were a notoriously conservative group with a bad reputation as traitors to the slave cause. “It is fair to say that these slaves, intermediary links, who would fasten in some way the chain of servitude to that of despotism and would find a malicious pleasure in overburdening others with work and vexation, combined the baseness of their condition with the insolence of their authority,”

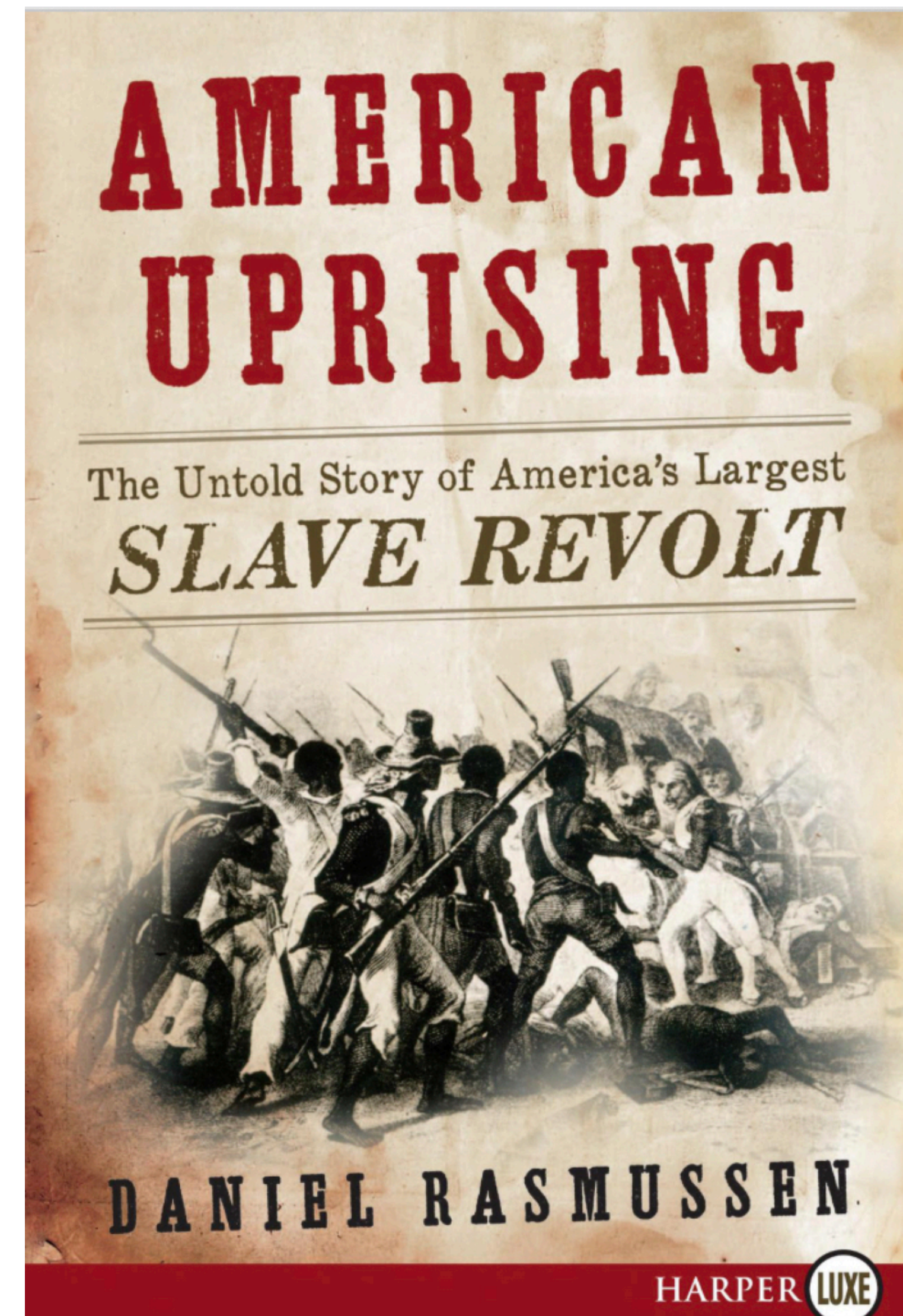
“Charles Deslondes had quickly risen through the ranks, driven by ambition, success, and a light skin tone that made him seem more trustworthy than the many Africans imported into the area. Born on the Deslondes plantation on the German Coast, Charles served as the driver for the Spaniard Manuel Andry, a planter known for his cruelty toward his slaves. As driver, Charles served as Andry’s right-hand man, running the day-to-day operations of the sugar plantation.”



“As Charles, Quamana, and Harry met on that Sunday in 1811, they came well armed for battle with a powerful set of revolutionary political ideas, well-honed skills, and a complex organization of insurrectionary cells prepared to attack as soon as they gave the word. And by all accounts, they gave the word that day. Thursday would be their moment to strike.”

“On January 8, 1811, they would turn their world upside down.”

“Charles Deslondes laid out the plan and gave some final words of encouragement. Every man assembled knew that his presence meant a near-certain death sentence if the revolt failed. No slave revolt in Louisiana had ever before been successful, and the punishment for failed rebellion was clear: torture, decapitation, and one’s head upon a pike. Yet with the planters distracted by Carnival and the American military fighting the Spanish past Baton Rouge, the slaves believed they just might have a chance.”



About 500 slaves rose up, caused considerable damage and killed two white men. They were stopped after a rough battle. Dozens of slaves were executed, and beheaded. The heads were planted on poles. The Whitney Museum has commissioned Woodrow Nash to create 63 ceramic heads depicting the revolutionaries, which will be mounted on steel rods along a pond.

<http://slaveryandremembrance.org/collections/object/?id=OB0102>

