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Presentation Title: Untold Stories: Historical Analysis of the Caribbean Islands

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While throughout time, historians heavily studied Europe, the United States and other regions, the wealth of history regarding the Caribbean Islands has been extremely overlooked. While various research has been done regarding the Caribbean in recent decades, most of it emphasizes the disastrous effects of European colonization. However, in one panel presentation, five students discuss their research findings, stepping further away from the already discussed aspects of the Caribbean..

First, rather than looking at the different aspects of slave trade in the Caribbean, one paper, “Comparison of Economic Analyses of Caribbean Slavery,” analyzes the work of three different historians as they argue various conclusions about economic impacts of slavery. Clarence J. Munford, Kenneth W. Stickers, and Joseph Persky all use different economists in their arguments, ranging from Marxist to conservative. However, if studied carefully, there are common threads in all of these arguments that help paint the picture of economics in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. They all demonstrate that capitalism was born out of slavery, creating more of a context for the historical implications that this system holds today.

Similarly, in the paper “Comparing Post-Emancipation Societies,” there is research done comparing the post-emancipation society in the American South versus the post-emancipation society in the Caribbean, more specifically the British Caribbean. Though there is little research directly comparing these two societies, it can be shown that despite differences in population and economy the power dynamic that slavery contained deeply affected both societies, making people react in similar ways whether it meant further enslavement or rebellions.

Also during the post-emancipation time period, the research done in “Chinese Diaspora in the Caribbean: Chinese-Cuban History from 1847-1968” dives into an interesting chapter of Caribbean history: the immigration and migration of Chinese people into Cuba. The paper emphasizes the mass influence that Chinese people had once they moved into Cuba, becoming a large part of the labor force in the indentured servant system and eventually making communities that are similar to what occurred in the United States and Canada. However, while there was heavy immigration from China to Cuba, there was also migration out of Cuba after the Cuban Revolution, making Chinese diaspora not a heavily talked about topic.

Returning to comparison arguments, “Santería’s Adaptations to and Roles in Cuban and American Society” researches into the history of Santería, a religion that started in Cuba as a synchronization between Catholicism and Yoruba, a religion practiced by many enslaved people. After heavy research into the practices of Santería, it can be affirmed that the religion is still practiced in Cuba as well as the United States. Even though the religion had roots in Cuba and was incredibly influential to Cuban society, there is also lots of suppression of the religion with no formal churches and Communist Party requirements. Meanwhile the religion’s presence in the United States is arguably more formal and organized. Members are trying to get the religion accepted and recognized, very unlike the underground history of Santería in Cuba.

Regarding more modern day history, the final paper in the panel discusses the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Focusing on the devastation Hurricane Maria caused to Puerto Rico and the reactions of President Donald Trump, the paper goes into a historical background of their relationship. Examples ranging from Trump’s treatment of the

island to the Insular Cases in Supreme Court lead to a conclusion that the United States often act in self-interest when dealing with the island and there is much prejudice surrounding Puerto Rico.

While the research discussed in the panel appears vastly different from one another, each aspect of the discussion sheds light on a relatively undiscussed region in the world regarding historical research and analysis. The islands have a vast and rich history extending further beyond aspects of European influence and colonization. The Caribbean is vast and diverse as well as a key player in global history, interacting with the United States and other regions in major ways. comparing various aspects of history and sharing research, this panel will shed importance on the Caribbean through individual research.

Works Cited

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