



It's strange that two biographies I wrote on two people who are American founding fathers, each in his own way, would appear in the same year, same month, by the same publisher.

[BIG GEORGE](#) was to be published in fall of 2008 by Harcourt. [OPEN THE DOOR TO LIBERTY](#) was to be published in January 2009, in time for Black History Month. But because of the bizarre condition lately of book publishing Harcourt ended up being acquired by Houghton and the two became one. I had a long history with Harcourt, and none with Houghton.

Everyone knows who George Washington is, but few people recognize the name of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the father of his country. There were three great revolutions in the 18th century, and each one impacted world history. The American Revolution, The French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution.

Toussaint L'Ouverture was the former slave who successfully led the first slave uprising in history. It took place on the French colony of St. Domingue, now called Haiti. He governed well, and was much admired by the second President of the United States, John Adams. Toussaint was one of the most amazing men of his or any other time. But because he was feared by another great revolutionary, Napoleon Bonaparte, he did not live to finish the work he began so well. Had Napoleon not locked horns with Toussaint, he wouldn't have so impoverished France that he had to sell all the French territory West of the Mississippi River to the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, making the United States the enormous nation it became. And to find out how that came about, you'll have to read the book.

We've all heard the stories of Lewis and Clark exploring the Louisiana Purchase, the entry into that new territory of hordes of Europeans, the rush for gold in the new lands, and the tragic battles with the many Indian tribes who lived in that territory in their own way. But few of us have ever heard of the man responsible, a quiet, intelligent, man, who was born such a puny infant that no one expected him to live. But he lived, and read, and thought, and I've tried to tell his story for other children in [OPEN THE DOOR TO LIBERTY](#) .

It's a story I've known for as long as I can remember, perhaps because I was born and brought up in the deep south, where his story lived longer. It was a tough book to write, and I hope readers find their way to it. It's a story I'm proud to have told.