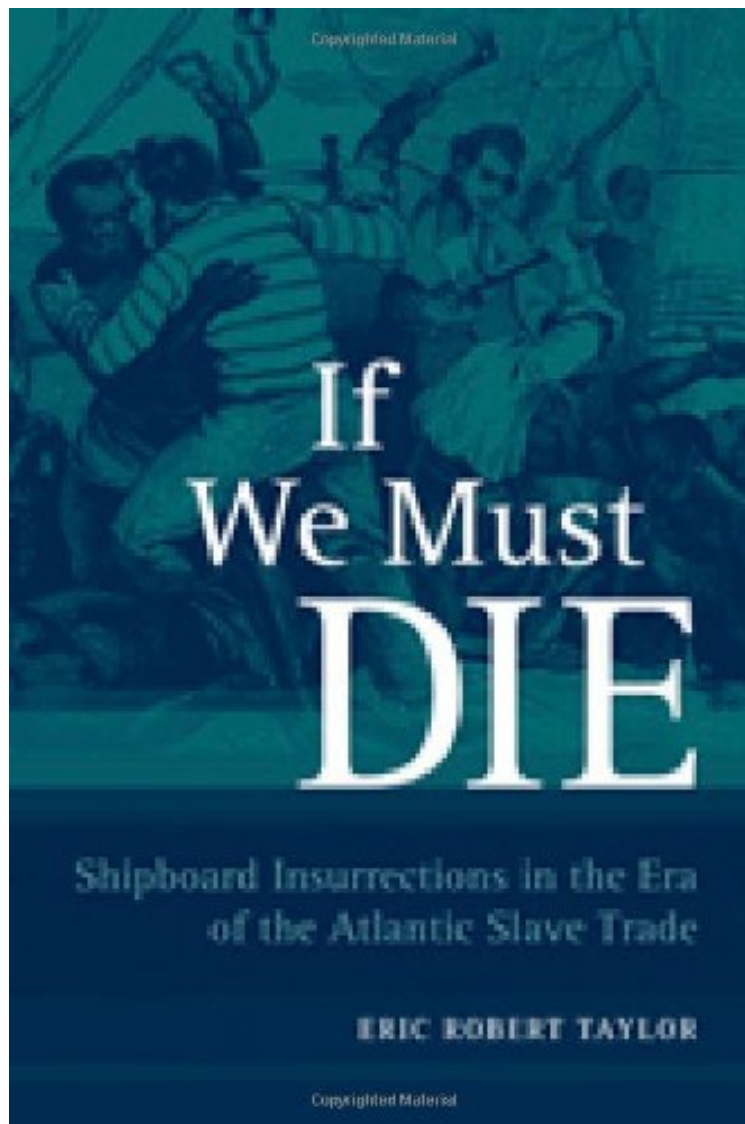


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If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade (Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World)

Eric Robert Taylor

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If We Must Die is the first book to focus on slave resistance that occurred aboard ships at anchor, along the African coast, during the Middle Passage, and beyond. Challenging the presumption that such resistance was infrequent and insignificant, Eric Robert Taylor demonstrates conclusively that shipboard insurrections affected slave traders every step of the way throughout the trade's long history. The uprisings helped to define, limit, and ultimately end the traffic in African slaves, and they stand as important predecessors to the many revolts that subsequently occurred in the plantation societies of the Americas. Taylor presents evidence of nearly five hundred shipboard rebellions, often in amazing detail. He shows that slaves used whatever they could get their hands on to wage attacks, which frequently occurred at night or during scheduled routines such as meals. Women and children sometimes played pivotal roles because of their privileged positions or unusual mobility onboard. One key element in a successful plot was surprise. Most revolts were crushed quickly, but others raged on for hours, days, or weeks. Occasionally the Africans captured the vessel and returned themselves to freedom. Taylor explores a thorough range of issues, including aid from other ships, punishment of slave rebels, and treatment of sailors captured by the Africans. Insurrections on board, he finds, commonly shared similar characteristics regardless of the slaves' or captors' region or nation of origin. His scrutiny of a second wave of shipboard revolts that occurred during the domestic and international slave trade within the Americas suggests that the tactics employed in transatlantic voyage insurrections were passed on to later generations of slaves. *If We Must Die* enlarges the historical view of slave resistance, revealing a continuum of rebellions that spanned the Atlantic as well as the centuries. Shipboard insurrections formed a surprisingly influential and successful part of that continuum, and their history can no longer be overlooked. AUTHOR BIO: Eric Robert Taylor holds postgraduate degrees in history and African American Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. He is a freelance television producer and lives in Los Angeles.

About the AuthorEric Robert Taylor, a freelance television producer who lives in Los Angeles, holds a doctorate in history from the University of California, Los Angeles.