THE FRENCH COLONIAL QUESTION AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE COLONY OF SAINT DOMINGUE, 1789-1792

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the class of free people of color in the French colony of Saint Domingue threatened the dichotomy of master and slave, as defined by a strict divide between white and black and as was necessary for the perseverance of racial slavery. In restricting the free people of color from the right to vote and hold public office, white supremacy was maintained by upholding a racial divide within the free sector of Saint Domingue's planter society. By the end of the eighteenth-century, the free people of color launched an aggressive campaign, by way of French legislative reform, to attain their rights as free and propertied citizens of France.

The perception that the white race was unalterably superior to the black race was at the core of the planter society of Saint Domingue to safeguard racial slavery against a rapidly emerging class of free people of color. Once the free people of color seized upon French legislative reform as a means to win their rights, white supremacy was challenged and ultimately exposed as a social and political system that was alterable. The subsequent failure of French legislation to officially enfranchise them motivated the free people of color to openly ally with insurgent slaves in a revolution against a common adversary, white supremacy. The result of this coalescence, I argue, was the rapid and complete debilitation of white power in the colony by April 1792 when the National Assembly declared full and equal citizenship for all free people of color.

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Most importantly, I would like to express my greatest appreciation for the continued support and encouragement of my Mother, Patricia, my brother, Zach, and my sister, Vanessa, without whom this work would never have come to fruition. It has been a long, hard journey, and I deeply thank you for staying with me.

Finally, I would like to thank my committee for their perseverance, guidance, and support in my research and studies.

DEDICATION

--So long as a people is constrained to obey, and obeys, it does well; but as soon as it can shake off the yoke, and shakes it off, it does better; for since it regains its freedom by the same right as that which removed it, a people is either justified in taking back its freedom, or there is no justifying those who took it away.

—Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the people of Haiti, to whom this history belongs, and to all those, throughout time, who have fought for equality.

INTRODUCTION

The planter society of the French colony of Saint Domingue, as common among the planter societies in the West Indies in the eighteenth-century, was based on a fundamental divide between the white and black populations of the colony, generated by a reliance on racial slavery. Saint Domingue's society was unique among the other colonies of the Caribbean through the rapid emergence of a class of free people of color, who rivaled the white class in both wealth and number. On the eve of revolution in Saint Domingue, the colony was home to almost half a million slaves, 31,000 whites, and 28,000 free people of color.[1] By virtue of their freedom, the free people of color were recognized as French citizens, but because of their African descent this citizenship was restricted in that they were prohibited from voting or holding public office. This restriction was enacted in an effort to retain a strict color line drawn between white and black in order to maintain the dichotomy of master and slave. It was the class of free people of color who, in championing for its rights as French citizens, positioned Saint Domingue as the first colony in the world to challenge and overcome this color line.

In the late eighteenth-century, Saint Domingue was the wealthiest and most prosperous colony in the Western Hemisphere. This wealth and prosperity earned the colony a major foothold in the economy of France and, at the same time, triggered the formation of a large class of free people of color, who first challenged white rule by petitioning for its rights as free and propertied citizens of France. This campaign for the rights of the free people of color developed into a revolution after the failure of French

[1] Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti, Saint-Domingue; écrite sur des documents officiels et des notes communiquées par Sir James Barskett* (Paris: Brière, 1826), 144.

legislation to enfranchise them. Late in 1791, the revolt of the free people of color for their rights as French citizens coalesced with the insurrection of the slaves, which broke out in August 1791. This coalescence rapidly extinguished white power in the colony leading to the institution of a decree in April 1792 that granted full and complete French citizenship to the free people of color. This decree prompted the end of white supremacy with the execution of racial equality within the free sector of Saint Domingue society.

This thesis argues that in the fall of 1791, the free people of color, disheartened by the ineffectiveness of French legislation as a tool of reform, openly allied with the slaves in a revolution against white supremacy. It is important in this argument to distinguish between the insurrection of the slaves and the revolution of the free people of color. Initially, the slaves were driven by a revolutionary agenda designed to win them three free days per week as opposed to only one. On the other hand, the free people of color, many of whom were slave-owners, did not support the agenda of the slaves. On the contrary, the free people of color possessed a revolutionary agenda aimed at the achievement of their political rights as citizens of France. Even though they were equipped with conflicting agenda, the free people of color and the slaves combined revolutionary forces late in 1791 against an adversary that was common to both. This common adversary was white supremacy.

I use this common adversary as the basis for a united revolutionary movement staged by the free people of color and the slaves to debilitate white rule in the colony. This debilitation, I contend, occurred when white supremacy collapsed with the April decree of 1792, ratifying racial equality throughout the colony by guaranteeing the rights of the free people of color. The removal of the barrier that separated the whites from

those of African descent marked the elimination of the color line as the deciding factor in the division of the colonial society of Saint Domingue.

The beginning of the colony of Saint Domingue dates to the late fifteenth-century when Christopher Columbus encountered an island in the West Indies, which he claimed for Spain under the name *Hispaniola*. The Spanish settled mainly on the eastern portion of the island and focused primarily on gold mining. By the middle of the seventeenth-century, the French governor of Tortuga, Bertrand d'Ogeron, traveled to the western side of *Hispaniola*, where he ousted the French pirates, who had settled in this neglected region, and encouraged the development of permanent French settlements. In 1697, Spain ceded this western portion to the French with the Treaty of Ryswick. After officially claiming the western third of the island, the French named it Saint Domingue.

The colony of Saint Domingue was divided into three provinces, separated by mountain ranges. The most important and agriculturally rich was the North province, which was composed of flat, open land that was good for the cultivation of sugar. This province also held the major trading ports of Cap Français (present-day Cap Haïtien), Port de Paix, and Môle Saint-Nicolas. Separating the North from the West province was a series of mountain chains that extended across the colony from the Gulf of Gonâve to the colony's border with Spanish Santo Domingo (present-day Dominican Republic). The West province was the largest and second most important of the three provinces. The main cities that developed in this region were Port-au-Prince and Saint Marc as well as Léogane, Gonaïves, and Croix-des-Bouquets. Bordered by mountains to the west and north of this province, this region focused on coffee plantations, which did not require large tracts of flat land as was essential for the cultivation of sugar. The South province

was similar to the West in terms of agriculture and was the least significant of the three provinces, holding only the chief port of Les Cayes.[2]

By the start of the eighteenth-century, France established a system of government to control the administration of French Saint Domingue. The most important colonial official and representative of French interests in the colony was the Minister of Marine who was responsible for appointing colonial officials. Below the Minister of Marine was the governor, who commanded the military with the assistance of the intendant, who presided over the civil functions of the colony including the judicial sector and public finance. The governor and the intendant worked in conjunction with one another and favored the interests of the *métropole*. In the French colonies, there was no real local control by the planters, as most of the legislation governing the colonies was executed by the government in France.

Colonial control by the *métropole* developed out of the economic desire that France benefit exclusively from her colonial holdings. This policy was rooted in the Exclusive, which was an economic formula designed to secure colonial profit solely for France. This system was developed by Jean-Baptiste Colbert in the seventeenth-century, and called for all manufactured goods consumed by the colonists in the French colonies to be imported from France while all the raw goods, cultivated in the colonies, were sold exclusively to France.[3]

By the middle of the eighteenth-century, Saint Domingue had replaced Martinique as the most valuable of the French colonies. This was underscored by

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[2] Herbert Elmer Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution in San Domingo* (Poughkeepsie: New York, 1889), 10-11.

[3] Mario Rameau and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, *La révolution de Saint-Domingue, 1789-1790,* 2d ed. (Port-au-Prince: Société Häitienne d'Histoire et de Géographie, 1990), 4.

Antoine Barnave, who was a member of the National Assembly, "…si Martinique est un poste Militaire très-important, Saint-Domingue est, quant aux produits, très-supérieur à la réunion de toutes les autres Colonies."[4] This prosperity was the result of the sugar boom that took place in the Americas and Europe in the middle of the eighteenth-century, in which sugar widened in usage especially among the middle classes. This period of tremendous growth and prosperity stretched from 1763 to 1791 and has been termed by historians as Saint Domingue's "Golden Age."

By 1789, Saint Domingue was made up of about 8,000 plantations and accounted for two-fifths of France's total overseas trade, which amounts to approximately 176 million francs or thirty-two million dollars in legal trade, producing one-half of all the sugar and coffee that was consumed in Europe and the Americas. Out of the 176 million francs, sugar accounted for almost eighty-four million. Next in significance was coffee at approximately forty-nine million francs. Cotton exports reached about twenty-one million francs and finally indigo produced in the neighborhood of three million francs.[5]

During the Golden Age of Saint Domingue, slave labor became the foundation of the economic system that flourished in the colony. The economy was centralized around the plantation system in an effort to produce massive quantities of sugar and coffee to meet the growing demand in Europe and the Americas. Earlier, in the seventeenth-century, the plantations of Saint Domingue had been worked by a combination of African slaves and white indentured laborers called *engagés* but, by the eighteenth-century, the

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[4] Antoine Barnave, *Rapport sur les colonies, et décret rendu sur cette affaire par l'Assemblée constituante, le 28 septembre 1791; sanctionné par le Roi le 29 du même mois* (Paris: Feuille du jour, 1791), 15-16. "…if Martinique is a very important Military post, Saint Domingue is, regarding its products, very superior to all the other Colonies combined."

[5] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution,* 12.

labor supply was deliberately racialized with Africans accounting for the entire labor force used on the plantations. The reliance solely on Africans to fill the plantation workforce created a rigid social structure, based on the dichotomy of master and slave, which was intended to maintain racial slavery as the backbone of the plantation economy.

This incredible prosperity enjoyed by Saint Domingue in the middle of the eighteenth-century situated the colony on the brink of a social eruption, as commented by Parham, who translated the letters of a Creole of Saint Domingue, "No other colony in the world was so wealthy, so shrewdly administered--or so ripe for disaster."[6] This rapid and overwhelming commercial success contributed to the increase in number and wealth of the free people of color, which greatly aggravated the relationship between the class of free people of color and the whites. The line that was drawn between these two classes was very fragile in that the majority of the free people of color were wealthier than the majority of the whites in the colony, but in order to preserve the dichotomy of white and black, or master and slave, they were prohibited from enjoying full French citizenship. This restriction on their citizenship increasingly frustrated the free people of color and positioned them for a revolution to acquire these rights:

> As for the Mulattoes, their resentment was if anything greater than that of the slaves because they had more time and freedom in which to exercise it. Since they owned a third of the land by 1791, they were all the more humiliated by restrictive racial legislation. Their full rights as French citizens were 'guaranteed' by the liberal *Code Noir* of Louis XIV; nonetheless, the reality of their situation between the slaves whom they feared and the masters whom they abominated was intolerable. It is not surprising, under the circumstances, that the Mulattoes were the first to strike for freedom.[7]

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[6] *My Odyssey; Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions by a Creole of Saint Domingue*, trans. and ed. Althéa de Puech Parham (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), xvi.

In August 1789, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen* was established in France as the ideological platform of the French Revolution. For the free people of color, this declaration offered an avenue for reform through legislation enacted by the government in France. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man* declared the equality of all men, exposing the hypocrisy of denying rights to the free people of color, who were recognized as French citizens by Louis XIV's *Code Noir* of 1685. Armed with the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, the campaign of the free people of color took shape and initiated a debate in the National Assembly over their enfranchisement, which became known as the colonial question. This debate first escorted the problem of the color line into the political forum of the French Government.

To the white colonists of Saint Domingue, the debate in the National Assembly over the rights of the free people of color was really a debate over the abolition of the color line. The enfranchisement of the free people of color applied racial equality within the colonial society thereby eliminating the barrier, which had been deliberately forged, between white and black. Enfranchising the free people of color granted them the potential to direct the local social and political administration of the colony, especially in Saint Domingue, where the free people of color were almost equal in number and wealth to the whites.[8]

By the fall of 1791, the failure of legislation to enfranchise the free people of color incited them to recruit slaves in a concerted effort aimed at dismantling white supremacy in the colony. By the spring of 1792 the white colonists aided by French

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[7] Ibid., xvi-xvii.

[8] David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 94.

military reinforcements were unable to contain the combined revolution of the slaves and the free people of color and so the National Assembly, on 4 April 1792, instituted a decree that officially abolished the color line by guaranteeing full and complete French citizenship to all free people of color. The intention of the National Assembly in establishing this decree was to enlist the free people of color to aid the whites in preserving the colony against the insurrection of the slaves. In the history of the Saint Domingue revolution, the April decree marked the pivotal moment at which racial equality was implemented in the colony, thereby destroying the color line between white and black. By equalizing the free people of color and the whites through the destruction of the color line, the declared inferiority of the black race was removed thereby undermining the declared superiority of the white race.

At the center of the revolution that raged in Saint Domingue was the realignment of the color line. The problem of the color line is a central element in W.E.B. Du Bois' highly influential work *The Souls of Black Folk*, in which he stated, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line."[9] Relating this concept of the color line to the revolution in Saint Domingue, Aimé Césaire declared that it was in the eighteenth-century, in the French colony of Saint Domingue, that this problem was first posed:

> Saint-Domingue est le premier pays des temps modernes à avoir posé dans la réalité et à avoir proposé à la réflexion des hommes, et cela dans toute sa complexité, sociale, économique, raciale, le grand problème que le XXe siècle s'essouffle à résoudre : le problème colonial. Le premier pays où s'est noué ce problème. Le premier pays où il s'est dénoué.[10]

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[9] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 34.

[10] Aimé Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture; la Révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1961), 21-22. "Saint Domingue is the first country of modern times to have posed

In opposition to this perspective is C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins*, in which he characterized the Haitian Revolution as a class war and not a race war. James presented this revolution as class-based, relating to property ownership and the appropriation of economic surplus in a decidedly Marxist interpretation. In James' analysis the source of this class conflict was the economic dependence of the colonial society on slavery, which kept the propertied free people of color, who were slave-owners, from allying with the slaves.

James' contention that class disputes were at the root of the Haitian Revolution was echoed by Thomas Ott in his work *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804*. Ott chronicled the course of the revolution through a series of shifting alliances forged and broken between the three main class divisions of the colony, the whites, the free people of color, and the slaves. His major theme was that white intraclass divisions were caused by the French Revolution and were exacerbated by the colonial legislation enacted by the National Assembly, considerably debilitating white power within the colony, which generated a power vacuum upon which the slaves seized in an attempt to free themselves. His work is severely deficient in its failure to represent the free people of color and the slaves as active agents of revolution. Instead, he attributed the success of the Haitian Revolution in overthrowing slavery and colonialism to the failures of the white class to remain undivided.

Countering James and Ott is Baron Pompée-Valentin de Vastey's *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Hayti.* In this work, Vastey claimed that at the core of this revolution were racial tensions, which had been building in the colony for

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concretely and to have offered to the thought of men, in all its social, economic, and racial complexity, the great problem that the Twentieth century has exhausted itself to solve: the colonial problem. The first country where this problem arose. The first country where it was solved."

years until the French Revolution set fire to them. Vastey's work is most critical to the study of the Haitian Revolution in that it attempts to provide a non-European perspective, placing this revolution outside the shadows of the French Revolution. Vastey stated this as the primary purpose for his work:

> Hayti has no general history written by a native of the country. The few detached fragments which we possess are chiefly from the pens of European writers, who have principally confined themselves to those parts more immediately connected with themselves, and who, when led by the subject to speak of the native inhabitants, have done so with that spirit of prejudice and partiality which never fails to appear whenever there arises a question involving the competition of Blacks and Whites.[11]

Combining the themes of C.L.R. James and Baron de Vastey, Mario Rameau and Jean-Jacques-Dessalines Ambroise offer their work, *La révolution de Saint-Domingue, 1789-1804*, which presents the revolution of Saint Domingue as a cross between a class dispute and a race war. Rameau and Ambroise suggested that this was a revolution waged against oppression in a double form, both politically and socially. The authors maintained that on the one hand this was a revolution of class between the propertied and those without property and then, on the other hand, it was a conflict of race between the propertied whites and the propertied free people of color. At the heart of this revolution, Rameau and Ambroise asserted, was the colonial question, or the enfranchisement of the free people of color, based on their rights as property-owning French citizens.[12]

Mitchell Bennett Garrett in *The French Colonial Question, 1789-1791; Dealings of the Constituent Assembly with Problems arising from the Revolution in the West Indies*, explored the evolution of the colonial question, or the enfranchisement of the free

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[11] Baron Pompée-Valentin de Vastey, trans. W.H. and M.B., *An Essay on the Causes of the Revolution and Civil Wars of Hayti, Being a Sequel to the Political Remarks upon Certain French Publications and Journals Concerning Hayti* (New York: New York Universities Press, 1969), 15.

[12] Rameau, *Révolution de Saint-Domingue*, 2.

people of color in the French colonies, through legislative action passed by the National Assembly between the years 1789 and 1791. Garrett abruptly concluded his work in 1791 with the revocation of the May decree, which initially enfranchised the free people of color, who were born of free parents, but was subsequently revoked in September 1791. By ending his study in 1791, Garrett failed to examine the fall of white supremacy in relation to the actual enfranchisement of the free people of color in the spring of 1792. Like Garret, Yves Bénot, in his work *La révolution française et la fin des colonies,* focused on the colonial question but primarily with regard to developments in France as opposed to events in the colonies that influenced colonial legislative policies of the National Assembly.

Laurent Dubois, in his work *Avengers of the New World*, overlooks the impact of the colonial question in regard to the universal application of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and the subsequent emancipation of the slaves in Saint Domingue: "The slave insurrection in Saint Domingue led to the expansion of citizenship beyond racial barriers despite the massive political and economic investment in the slave system at the time."[13] Dubois' analysis falls short in not fully exploring the relationship between the universal application of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and the colonial question. Laurent Dubois commented that "Interpretations of individual and collective action during the revolution that are based primarily on racial or class categories often fail to provide a complete or coherent picture of how and why people acted as they did."[14] I challenge this contention by Dubois and cite it as the primary reason that his work is

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[13] Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*; *the Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

[14] Ibid., 5.

deficient in failing to acknowledge the campaign of the free people of color as providing the initial spark of a revolution that eventually embraced the slaves. I argue that my analysis, while focusing specifically on the free people of color, neither limits in scope nor ignores the overall picture of the revolution, but demonstrates the process by which the free people of color embraced legislation as a tool of revolution and then, faced with the failure of this strategy, openly allied with the slaves, thereby instigating a race war that resulted in the fall of white rule in Saint Domingue.

The most decidedly Eurocentric and racist presentation of the Haitian Revolution is T. Lothrop Stoddard's *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, which maintains that the Haitian Revolution was a sidelight to the French Revolution. His work is draped in blatant racial prejudice, as demonstrated by his assertion that "The keynote to the history of the French Revolution in San Domingo is a great tragedy, the great tragedy of the annihilation of the white population."[15] Throughout his work, Stoddard sympathized with the white colonials, who were annihilated by what he referred to as the "barbarity" of the insurgent slaves. He attributed the extermination of white rule in Saint Domingue directly to "the vigorous determination of Revolutionary France to destroy the colonial ideals of slavery and the color line."[16] This perspective reduces the role of the slaves and the free people of color in the revolution to one of pure violence and barbarity with no preconceived agenda or design, and places the outcome in the hands of the National Assembly in France.

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[15] T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1914), viii.

[16] Ibid., ix.

In the same vein as Stoddard, Herbert Elmer Mills, in his work *The Early Years of the French Revolution in San Domingo*, presented the revolution in Saint Domingue as completely haphazard and chaotic, directed by the course of revolution in France. Mills claimed that the success of this revolution lay in the failure of the whites to govern themselves at a local level. Basically, the divisions of the white class and its inability to organize and establish an efficient system of local government left the whites vulnerable to rule by the colonial legislation of the National Assembly in France, which subsequently divided the white class and generated the opportunity for the slaves to stage a successful revolt.

Directly contesting the theory that the revolution in Saint Domingue was haphazard and disorganized, as presented by Mills and Stoddard, is Carolyn Fick's *The Making of Haiti*; *the Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*. Fick directly contradicted Mills by highlighting the efforts of the black slave laborers. While C.L.R. James devoted his study to the major leaders of the revolution—Toussaint Louverture, Henri Christophe, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines—Fick contemplated the activities of the masses of ordinary individuals who made up the bulk of the slave revolutionary force in an effort "to present the development of the Saint Domingue revolution from below."[17] She claimed that the slaves were responsible for having meticulously designed and executed the outbreak of the revolution on 22 August 1791, relating the source of this unity and coherence to voodoo and maroon communities. Her focus is primarily on the slaves in the South province, a region of the colony that is most often neglected by historians because it was

[17] Carolyn Fick, *The Making of Haiti; the Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 9.

not the most important economically and because it held the smallest slave population in Saint Domingue.

While there is a number of works that have sought to capture the essence and course of this revolution by way of an analysis of the slave society such as those by Thomas Madiou and Carolyn Fick, as well as a number of sources that focus on the whites in the colony, such as the histories of Herbert Elmer Mills, Thomas Ott, and T. Lothrop Stoddard, there are few works that study the role of the free people of color in regard to the Saint Domingue revolution. In fact, the free people of color are by far the least studied of the divisions in the colonial society of Saint Domingue, as affirmed by David Patrick Geggus, "Free people of African descent are invariably the least studied component of the slave societies…."[18] Several works have attempted to remedy the absence of such a study through analyses of the free people of color before the outbreak of the slave insurrection in August 1791. The first is Auguste Lebeau's *De la condition des gens de couleur libres sous l'ancien régime*, which is based on archival material and provides a valuable description of the legislative decrees that restricted the social and political condition of the free people of color in the French colonies before 1789. Lebeau's work is critical to understanding the various limitations that were set upon the citizenship of the free people of color in the colony of Saint Domingue and how these limitations positioned them for a revolution to secure these rights.

The second study to capture accurately the existence of the free people of color in the colony before the outbreak of the revolution is Pierre de Vaissière's *Saint-Domingue, la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime (1629-1789)*, which focuses on the formation of colonial society under the *ancien régime* with a primary focus on the

[18] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 34.

development of the Creoles, whom he designated as the people of color or mulattoes. Vaissière successfully described their position through primary correspondences mostly authored by the Minister of Marine and the top administrators of Saint Domingue. He showed that the restricted citizenship of the free people of color was the result of the colony's dependence on racial slavery and the need to uphold a distinct color line that divided the society between master and slave.

David Patrick Geggus contributes to the overall study of the Haitian Revolution primarily through his works *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* and *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*. The latter work, which is co-edited by David Barry Gaspar, provides a collection of essays that are used to reflect the influence of the Haitian Revolution on uprisings that occurred within the slave societies of Jamaica, Cuba, and Louisiana. This work is a critical study in developing an understanding of how the Haitian Revolution impacted subsequent emancipationist programs throughout the Atlantic World.

Geggus' work *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* attempts to show the process by which the independent nation of Haiti developed out of a slave uprising that broke out in 1791. This work provides a history of the Haitian Revolution through a focus on primary research. In this work, Geggus provided insight into the collaboration of the slaves and the free people of color during the Haitian Revolution by way of an analysis of the Swiss, who were maroon slaves that participated with the free people of color in a revolt against the whites in the West province in 1791. The overarching fault that pervades this analysis is that Geggus generalized the collaborative effort of the free people of color and the slaves through the example of the Swiss and did not relate it to the eventual

debilitation of white power in April 1792, which overlooks the effectiveness of this alliance in achieving racial equality and provoking an emancipationist program among the slaves.

The Haitian Revolution, while most often categorized by historians as a slave revolution, was far more. Generally, historians have given short shrift to the role of the free people of color in destroying the color line in 1792 that paved the way to the emancipation of the slaves in 1794. Geggus attributed the lack of studies focusing on the free people of color to a shortage of archival material concerning their participation, "Such *gens de couleur libres* (free people of color) tend to be less well documented in archives than both wealthier white property-owners and slaves classed as property. Relations between slaves and free coloreds, in particular, remain poorly understood."[19] I attempt to redress the absence of such a study by focusing on the colonial question and the development of an alliance of the free people of color and the slaves against the whites.

In this thesis, I depict the free people of color as agents of their own revolution in Saint Domingue, while, at the same time, I do not ignore the impact of the French Revolution. Instead, I emphasize a conjunction of the revolution in France and the Saint Domingue revolution. Through political and social reform made available by the French Revolution, the free people of color became active political agents by initiating a program for their rights by way of French legislation. The inability of this legislation to exact change pressed the free people of color to ally with the slaves against the whites in the colony. While Lebeau and Vaissière have provided works that have analyzed the condition of the free people of color in Saint Domingue prior to 1789, neither of these

[19] Ibid., 93.

works has pursued a more detailed understanding of how this condition is connected to the onset of an insurrection of the slaves in August 1791, and eventually to an alliance that proved fatal to white rule in the colony.

I contend that it was the coalescence of the revolutionary momentum of the slaves and the free people of color, in the fall of 1791, in a united front against white rule in the colony that forced the abolition of the color line in April 1792. To substantiate this argument, I devote my first chapter to a description of the white and slave classes in the colony in order to establish the basic dichotomy of white and black as the basis for strict racial division in a plantation society. I determine the social composition of the colony of Saint Domingue by way of a description of these two classes based on a social agreement or contract that divided the society between master and slave as a crucial component to the maintenance of racial slavery.

After exploring the racial basis for the development of Saint Domingue society, I use my second chapter to focus exclusively on the development of the class of free people of color. I demonstrate that the Golden Age of Saint Domingue produced a demographically significant and wealthy class of free people of color, who subsequently threatened the clear dichotomy of master and slave.

In my third chapter I intend to chart a series of decrees instituted by the National Assembly regarding the enfranchisement of the free people of color in the French colonies. These decrees will document a changing tide in the atmosphere in France regarding the colonial question and the rights of the free people of color. I use the decrees to establish legislative reform as a tool of revolution for the free people of color. In concluding this chapter I show the ultimate failure of this legislation in Saint

Domingue, which initially enfranchised the free people of color, born of free parents, and then revoked this right in the fall of 1791. The overall failure of legislation as an effective strategy to win their rights motivated the free people of color to unite with the slaves in a revolution against the whites.

My final chapter investigates the outbreak of the insurrection among the slaves in August 1791 in the North province as well as the outbreak of a revolution of the free people of color in the West and South provinces, where they outnumbered the whites. I intend to establish the dismantling of white supremacy as the crucial uniting element of revolution that overlapped in the agenda of the slaves and that of the free people of color. I then document specific instances demonstrating a united stance by the slaves and free people of color against the whites during the revolution, which proved successful in defeating white forces. I then apply these united efforts to the overall success of the revolution in achieving the revolutionary objectives that were common to both, the abolition of the color line and the end to absolute white rule in the colony with the April decree of 1792.

C.L.R. James stated in his work *The Black Jacobins*, "It was the quarrel between bourgeoisie and monarchy that brought the Paris masses on the political stage. It was the quarrel between whites and Mulattoes that woke the sleeping slaves."[20] In Saint Domingue the debate over the enfranchisement of the free people of color quickly became a revolution for the emancipation of the slaves and eventually resulted in the creation of a free and independent Haiti. By 1804 the French colony of Saint Domingue had become the independent nation of Haiti and claimed its place in history as the first

[20] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 3.

and only planter colony in which the color line between white and black was broken down by a combined revolutionary force of free people of color and slaves.

CHAPTER 1. RACIAL SLAVERY AND THE COLOR LINE DRAWN BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK

The planter society of Saint Domingue was composed of a three-tired system of whites, free people of color, and slaves, determined by racial differentiation as a product of racial slavery. This chapter examines the extremes of this system, the slaves and the whites, as forming the basic dichotomy of master and slave, which was at the root of the administration of the colony. Through an analysis of the class of slaves and whites, the general character of the society of Saint Domingue can be established as a colony that depended on a division between white and black in order to reinforce the perception of white supremacy throughout the colony.

After the failure of the white indentured *engagés* to withstand the harsh climate and brutal labor of the plantations, African slaves became the dominant and exclusive source of labor. The replacement of the *engagés* with African slaves altered the social system of Saint Domingue to one that was based entirely on race. In order to preserve the productivity and prosperity of the plantation complex, it was compulsory that the whole of the colonial society subscribe to the deliberate delineation of the African race to a status of inferiority in relationship to the perceived absolute rule of white superiority.

In his *Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted, "The social order is a sacred right which serves as a basis for all other rights. And as it is not a natural right, it must be one founded on covenants. The problem is to determine what those covenants are."[21] Here Rousseau indicated that the social order, which develops in a society or governs a society, is sculpted by a series of mutual contracts forged among its members.

[21] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, translated by Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 50.

In the case of Saint Domingue, the development of its society was founded on a social contract that was determined by race. According to Sidney Mintz, race was at the core of a plantation society because racial slavery demanded a strict class regime in order to smother the slaves' proclivity to revolt. Mintz asserted that in order for racial slavery to persist, it was absolutely necessary that the slaves viewed this system of racial delineation as non-arbitrary to ensure that they remained acquiescent.[22]

Crucial to the maintenance of this social pact was the subordination of the slaves, which accounts for the high mortality rate that stemmed, for the most part, from the harsh treatment that slaves endured at the hands of cruel masters.[23] In fact, during the first three to eight years after their induction into the colony, the mortality rate among the slaves was at fifty per cent.[24] Garran de Coulon stated that the annual death rate within the slave population of Saint Domingue was one-ninth, which was so high that not a single plantation throughout the colony could be maintained without continual purchases of slaves throughout the year.[25] Unlike the source of *engagés*, the supply of Africans, due to the profitability of the slave trade, was seemingly endless and could be easily replenished. Mills recorded the annual importation of slaves from Africa, during the years preceding the revolution, to be about 30,000. In addition, he held that, throughout

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[22] Sidney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974), 79.

[23] Honoré-Gabriel de Riquetti Mirabeau, *Les bières flottantes des négrier : un discours non prononcé sur l'abolition de la traite des noirs, novembre 1789-mars 1790* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1999), 76.

[24] Michel-René Hiliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations sur l'etat présent de la coloniale française de Saint-Domingue ouvrage politique et législatif ; présenté au ministre de la marine*, vol. I (Paris: Grangé, 1776), 68-69.

[25] Jean-Philippe Garran de Coulon, *Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue fait au nom de la Commission des colonies, des Comités de salut public, de législation et de marine* (Paris: Imp. nationale, 1797-1799), I:24.

the entire eighteenth-century, about 900,000 slaves were brought to the colony but, by the end of the century, in 1789, there were only about half the number that had been imported over the entire century.[26]

The vast importance of subduing this overwhelming majority of African slaves as related to upholding the dichotomy of master and slave is manifested in the refusal by white colonists to adhere to the *Code Noir*, which was signed into law by Louis XIV in 1685 and was intended to meliorate the condition of the slaves in the French colonies. According to Malouet, it was common in Saint Domingue for white masters to ignore these laws resulting in a high mortality rate throughout the eighteenth-century, "Le Gouvernement ne s'est jamais occupé à régler, avec assez de soin, le traitement des Esclaves. Les *Code Noir* renferme plusieurs dispositions vicieuses & incompletres."[27]

A prominent case to validate Malouet's claim occurred in Saint Domingue in 1788 involving a wealthy coffee planter, named Le Jeune, in Plaisance, which is located in the North province. Fourteen of his slaves brought charges of mistreatment before the judges of the North province. In turn, the judges appointed a commission that made an investigation into these charges. This investigation yielded confirmation of instruments on the plantation that were employed specifically for the use of torture, as well as physical evidence of mistreatment exhibited by several slaves on Le Jeune's plantation. At the preliminary hearing the testimony of the fourteen slaves was heard, in addition to

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[26] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution,* 21.

[27] Baron Pierre-Victor Malouet, *Mémoire sur l'esclavage des nègres dans lequel on discute les motifs proposés pour leur affranchissement, ceux qui s'y opposent, & les moyens praticables pour améliorer leur sort* (Paris: Neufchatel, 1788), 15-16. "The Government is never occupied in regulating, with enough care, the treatment of the Slaves. The *Code Noir* contains several incorrect and incomplete provisions."

the testimony of seven white witnesses who came forward in support of Le Jeune, as well as fellow planters of Plaisance, who petitioned before the governor and the intendant on behalf of Le Jeune demanding that each slave receive fifty lashes for having publicly disgraced him.

After one thousand days of deliberation, a verdict in favor of Le Jeune was handed down by the judges, and the case was dismissed. In the end, the governor and intendant wrote, "to put it shortly, it seems that the safety of the colony depends on the acquittal of Le Jeune." The final decision of the Council in regard to Le Jeune reflects the necessity of upholding the perception of white superiority against the slaves in an effort to safeguard racial slavery in the colony, "Et le Conseil acquitte de nouveau le sieur Le Jeune, affirmant ainsi une fois de plus la solidarité qui droit unir tous les blancs en face de leurs esclaves."[28] According to Vaissière cases like Le Jeune's were not isolated events but occurred regularly in the colony, and were always met by a united opposition of white colonists against the slaves.

The perception of an unalterable racial dichotomy was necessary in Saint Domingue, which had become the principal destination for slaves in the eighteenth-century. Placide-Justin placed the population of Saint Domingue, on the eve of revolution in 1789, at 30,826 whites, 27,548 free people of color, and 465,429 slaves.[29] The overwhelming preponderance of slaves to whites called for a strict delineation between white and black. According to Lebeau, racial division was crucial in order to

[28] Pierre de Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue, la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime (1629-1789)*, (Paris: Perrin, 1909), 188-189. "And the Council acquits Monsieur Le Jeune, reaffirming in this way the solidarity which must unite all the whites against their slaves."

[29] Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique*, 144-145.

maintain peace and prosperity in a plantation society in which the slaves outnumbered the whites fifteen to one.[30]

At the core of the master-slave dynamic was visual, racial difference and the plantation complex assigned identities based on this difference.[31] Race determined one's status in the colony, and governed the administration of Saint Domingue, as remarked by Alexandre de Wimpffen, who traveled in Saint Domingue from 1788 to 1790, "Quand on est ce que sont la plupart des Habitants, on est fait pour avoir des esclaves : quand on est ce que sont la plupart des esclaves, on est fait pour l'être : tout le monde est ici à sa place."[32] The plantation system dictated the social, political, and economic administration of the colony. In Saint Domingue, one was either white and, therefore, master, or one was black and therefore, slave. The plantation complex and the need for a continual supply of African slaves carved out a society in Saint Domingue based on a strict racial dichotomy between master and slave or, more precisely, between white and black.[33]

The white class in Saint Domingue, as common in all plantation societies, was the premier class. This class was extremely diverse in incorporating all those with white skin from the top colonial officials to poor merchants and retailers. The white class was,

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[30] Auguste Lebeau, *De la condition des gens des couleurs libres sous l'ancien régime; d'après des documents des Archives Coloniales* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1903), 30.

[31] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967), 110.

[32] Alexandre-Stanislas de Wimpffen, *Voyage à Saint-Domingue, pendant les années 1788, 1789 et 1790* (Paris: Chez Cocheris, 1797), 254-255. "When one is what the majority of the Inhabitants are, one is supposed to have slaves: when one is what the majority of the slaves are, one is to be a slave: all here have their place."

[33] Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: a Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 51.

therefore, further subdivided into the propertied *grands blancs*, or large whites, and those without property, the *petits blancs*, or small whites.[34] The *grands blancs* consisted of the propertied planters as well as the French maritime bourgeoisie and French-born bureaucrats including the head of this bureaucracy, the governor and the intendant, both of whom were appointed by the king.[35]

Absenteeism, among the wealthiest of the *grands blancs*, was frequent. According to the anonymous Creole author of *My Odyssey*, "The manner of life on the plain was quite monstrous; the wealthiest proprietors remained mostly in France."[36] As a result, many *grands blancs* traveled to Saint Domingue where they were able to generate a fortune off their plantations only to return to Paris to live lavishly off the profits of their colonial holdings. Very few *grands blancs* became permanent residents in the colony.[37] Therefore, many of the plantations were operated by plantation managers or agents, who were called *procureurs*. These were permanent residents in the colony who assumed total control over the plantations.[38]

Not all of the young, white men who traveled from France to Saint Domingue, in the hopes of obtaining a fortune from the sugar boom of the eighteenth-century, were able to prosper in the colony. In fact, according to Vaissière, due to the regularity of absenteeism among the *grands blancs*, the white population of Saint Domingue was

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[34] Wimpffen, *Voyage à Saint-Domingue*, 88.

[35] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 34.

[36] *My Odyssey*, 38.

[37] Ibid., 38.

[38] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 16.

composed largely of those whites who fled France, to Saint Domingue, to seek wealth, but who ultimately became poor and unemployed. These whites were the *petits blancs*, who occupied positions in the colony as shopkeepers, slave overseers, small merchants, artisans, retail grocers, shopkeepers, and tradesmen, as well as debtors, criminals, and vagabonds.[39]

In the colony, the *petits blancs*, despite the fact that they did not own property, by the late eighteenth-century, enjoyed equal French citizenship to the propertied *grands blancs* simply because of the color of their skin. This greatly aggravated racial tensions in the colony as the free people of color, who were often wealthy and propertied, were prohibited from enjoying these same rights of citizenship, specifically from voting and holding public office, because of the color of their skin. This denial of full citizenship rested on the dichotomy of master and slave. The sizable number of free people of color in the colony, as well as their overall wealth, produced intense hatred for them among the *petits blancs*, who were generally poor and unemployed. This hatred was described by Raimond, who was a prominent mulatto that resided in Paris, "Dans les villes, les petits-blancs, qui étoient ouvriers chez les gens de couleur, vouloient être leurs maîtres. Enfin, on ne peut se faire une idée des vexations, des humiliations et des injustices que l'on faisoit éprouver aux personnes de couleur."[40] This created enormous tension between the free people of color and the *petits blancs* in the colony, earning these whites the title

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[39] Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue*, 94.

[40] Julien Raimond, *Observations sur l'origine et les progrès du préjugé des colons blancs contre les hommes des couleur ; sur les inconvéniens de la perpétuer ;la nécessité, la facilité de la détruire ; sur le projet du Comité Colonial, etc.* (Paris: Belin; s.n., 1791), 11. "In the cities, the *petits blancs*, who are workers at the homes of the people of color, wish to be their masters. Even still, one is not able to understand the aggravations, humiliations, and injustices that are inflicted upon persons of color."

"Aristocrats of Skin," who by the color of their skin were part of the elite class in the colony.[41]

The status of the *petits blancs* is related to Albert Memmi's work *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, in which he stated that the colonial system was based solely on race, "Colonial racism is built from three major ideological components: one, the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact."[42] Memmi maintained that the colonial, whether large or small, benefited from the colonial situation.[43] This can be applied to the plantation system in Saint Domingue. The white colonists, whether poor or rich, simply by the color of their skin, benefited from the subjugation of the black race through the enjoyment of special privileges, primarily the right to vote and hold public office, which were reserved solely for the white race. At the same time, the free people of color, whether rich or poor, simply by the color of their skin, were subject to inequalities, primarily the restriction on the right to vote or hold public office, accorded by the colonial situation or the plantation system. This incensed the racial tensions in the colony and primed Saint Domingue to become the site where the class of free people of color, forced by the denial of their rights simply because of the color of their skin, launched a movement to destroy the color line.

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[41] Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 11.

[42] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, translated by Howard Greenfeld with an Introduction by Jean-Paul Sartre (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 71.

[43] Ibid., 7.

In order to maintain racial slavery, it was necessary that the slaves considered this system of superior versus inferior to be non-arbitrary and unalterable.[44] In this case, racial equality or the abolition of the color line threatened the perception that white supremacy was absolute. Aimé Césaire, in his *Discourse on Colonialism*, asserted that once the white race ceased to view itself as superior, it no longer was superior.[45] This idea can be viewed from opposing perspectives in that once the African race ceased to view itself as inferior, it no longer was inferior, a perspective that undermined this dichotomy as the basis for racial slavery. Once racial difference was eliminated as the determining factor in Saint Domingue society, the slaves ceased to view themselves and their race as inferior, and the dichotomy of white and black or superior versus inferior was shattered driving the slave to revolution in order to renegotiate the social contract based on racial equality and not racial slavery.

In his travel writing in Saint Domingue, Alexander de Wimpffen asserted that the prosperity of Saint Domingue's economy rested on the preservation of racial slavery:

> Vos colonies, telles qu'elles sont, ne peuvent plus exister sans l'esclavage : c'est une vérité affreuse à dire ; mais le danger de la méconnaître peut entraîner les plus terribles conséquences. Il faut donc maintenir l'esclavage ou renoncer aux colonies.[46]

In turn, racial slavery depended on upholding strict racial distinctions within the colony in order to enforce the notion that this system was not arbitrary or alterable in any way, as asserted by Vaissière, "Mais si la race nègre est ainsi à servir aux plaisir des maîtres, les

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[45]Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialim*, translated by Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 50-51.

[46] Wimpffen, *Voyage à Saint-Domingue*, 83. "Your colonies, such as they are, can no longer exist without slavery: it is an awful truth to speak of; but the danger to ignore it can induce the most terrible consequences. It was therefore necessary to maintain slavery or to renounce the colonies."

choses en général ne vont pas plus loin et le fossé reste presque partout profond et infranchissable entre blancs et noirs."[47] In the same vein, Colin M. MacLachlan suggested that in order for slavery to exist in a colonial society as a social and economic institution it had to be accepted by all participants of this society as being non-arbitrary and non-negotiable. He stated that, "effective slave control depended upon the recognition by those held in bondage that the system was not arbitrary, but institutionally supported by society in general."[48]

At the root of MacLachlan's argument is Rousseau's *Social Contract*, which never directly addressed racial slavery, but stated that any state of servitude was the result of a mutual contract because man, by nature, is free and, therefore, must consent to a condition of servitude in order that it persist: "Every man having been born free and master of himself, no one else may under any pretext whatever subject him without his consent."[49] Building on this concept of slavery as a product of consent or mutual agreement, Rousseau claimed that no man is naturally superior over another, but that if a superiority is implemented it is done so in accordance with a social contract or mutual agreement. In the application of this line of reason, set forth by Rousseau, to the colony of Saint Domingue, the white colonists were regarded as superior because it was the basis of the social system that was deliberately devised to maintain racial slavery as the

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[47] Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue*, 217. "But if the black race is thus to serve to the pleasures of the masters, the choices in general do not go very far and the gap between the whites and blacks is deep and impassable nearly everywhere."

[48] Colin M. MacLachlan, "Slavery, Ideology, and Institutional Change: The Impact of the Enlightenment on Slavery in Late Eighteenth-Century Maranhão," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 11, no.1 (May 1979): 3.

[49] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 152.

backbone of the colonial economy. The master, in a colonial society, was not superior to the slave except in that it had been agreed upon by this society.

Revolt represented the moment when members of this society no longer agreed to the terms of this social pact. Resistance accompanied the institution of slavery from its very beginning, as stated by Fischer, "Resistance to slavery is as old as the institution itself…"[50] Prior to the revolution of 1791, there were several uprisings that were isolated and ultimately unable to rally a large force of insurgents, and so were quickly extinguished. The most significant was coordinated by François Makandal, who was a maroon slave that organized a conspiracy, along with a small network of slaves, to assassinate the whites in the colony. This plot was detected and Makandal was executed in March 1758.[51]

The design of the racial hierarchy that reigned in Saint Domingue in the eighteenth-century was deliberate in order to uphold a consistent and rigid line between those who were masters and those who were slaves. This delineation rested on physical, racial difference that was used by the white colonists to legitimize racial slavery, by positioning the white race in a state of superiority to the black race. This chapter sets up the dichotomy of master and slave through an explanation of the binary opposition of superior master versus inferior slave. The colonial whites were the elite and associated with the role of master in the colony, while, in direct opposition, the black population was placed in a position of inferiority and associated with the role of slave.

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[50] Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed; Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 11.

[51] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 18.

The prospect of racial equality was devastating to white supremacy in Saint Domingue because it was supported by the dichotomy of master and slave. An alternative to this dichotomy of white versus black was especially dangerous in a plantation society in which the slaves outnumbered the whites fifteen to one.[52] For this reason, the society of Saint Domingue was based on the perception of white supremacy as unalterable in order to maintain the subordination of almost half a million slaves. Detrimental to this dichotomy was the large number of wealthy free people of color, "Particulièrement les mulâtres, qui, riches et instruits souvent, supportent mal ces dédains, et 'n'attendent, qu'on y prenne garde, dit un mémoire, que l'occasion d'une éclatante revanche.'"[53] It was the free people of color that emerged in the late eighteenth-century as a class of people, wealthy and almost equal to the whites in number, who staged a movement to garner their rights as citizens of France, thereby implementing a system of racial equality within the free sector of the colony. Before exploring the method by which the free people of color made an aggressive push for racial equality, it is imperative to understand how this class arose in the colony to threaten white supremacy and ignite a race war that spelled the end of white rule in Saint Domingue.

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[52] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 30.

[53] Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue,* 229. "Particularly the mulattoes, who, often were rich and educated, endure these horrible scorns, and 'only wait carefully, said a memoir, for the occasion of a devastating revenge.'"

CHAPTER 2. THE "IMPRINT OF SLAVERY" AND THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR IN SAINT DOMINGUE

Sidney Mintz described Saint Domingue as representative of the classic plantation society, except in one important way, which was the rapid growth and prosperity of an intermediary class known as the *gens de couleur libres* or the free people of color.[54] This chapter examines the manner in which restriction, enacted against the citizenship of the free people of color to preserve the dichotomy of master and slave, increasingly frustrated the free people of color who, by the end of the eighteenth-century, had developed into a wealthy class of people that nearly equaled the whites in number. This chapter will demonstrate that the free people of color became increasingly frustrated with their position in Saint Domingue society, in which they served as a barrier between the white and black populations of the colony. They were a class of free individuals, who had amassed considerable fortunes, but were prohibited from participating in the political processes of the colony because of their racial origin.

The majority of this class of free people of color was of mixed racial descent, the offspring of relations between white masters and black, female slaves, while a very small number were manumitted blacks.[55] Many were slave-owners and few were actually ex-slaves. They ranged in complexion from dark to light skinned, from full black to one-quarter black. Article 59 of Louis XIV's *Code Noir* of 1685 stipulated that the free people of color by virtue of their status as free individuals in a French colony were

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[54] Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, 262.

[55] Moreau de Saint-Mèry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique, et historique de la partie française de l'île Saint-Domingue*, vol. 1, edited and compiled by Blanche Maurel and Étienne Taillemite (Paris: Société de l'Histoire des Colonies Françaises, 1958), 86.

guaranteed full French citizenship and the right to own property.[56] As the wealth and number of this class expanded by the middle of the eighteenth-century, when Saint Domingue reached its Golden Age of production and prosperity, the citizenship of the free people of color was limited.

Accompanying the tremendous growth and prosperity that Saint Domingue experienced in the middle of the eighteenth-century, the class of free people of color grew tremendously in number and wealth. By 1789, according to Placide-Justin, the free people of color numbered approximately 28,000, which was nearly equal to the number of whites in the colony. Julien Raimond, who was a prominent mulatto from Saint Domingue living in Paris, declared that the free people of color accounted for one-third of the landed property, one-quarter of the real estate, and ownership of one-fourth of the slaves in the colony.[57]

The use of restriction to enforce racial delineation in the colony is encapsulated in a letter written by the Minister of Marine, M. Maillard, to the administrator of Cayenne on 13 October 1766, ". . . que tous les nègres ont été transportés aux colonies comme esclaves ; que l'esclavage a imprimé une tache ineffaçable sur toute leur postérité, même sur celle qui se trouve d'un sang-mêlé, et que conséquemment ceux qui en descendent ne peuvent jamais entrer dans la classe des blancs."[58] This letter purported that restriction served to imprint upon the free people of color their African ancestry, associated with slavery, and were, therefore, forbidden from enjoying the same rights and privileges as

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[56] Thomas Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, tome 1 (Port-au-Prince: Henri Deschamps, 1989), 477.

[57] Raimond, *Observations*, 7, and Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 19.

[58] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 4. "…that all the blacks were transported to the colonies as slaves; that slavery has imprinted an indelible mark on all of their posterity, the same on those of mixed blood, and consequently those who descend from them could never enter into the class of the whites."

were accorded the colonial whites. A ministerial letter dated 27 May 1771 was written to the governor and intendant of Saint Domingue and reiterated the call for a constant distinction between the white and black segments of society through the steadfast enforcement of restrictive political policies, "la nature a mise entre les blancs et les noirs et que le préjugé politique a eu soin d'entretenir comme une distance à laquelle les gens de couleur et leurs descendants ne devaient jamais atteindre."[59]

Restriction was dually imposed in the colony, socially and politically. Socially, the free people of color were prohibited from sitting with whites at the theater, in churches, when dining, and in conveyances of public transportation, as well as from practicing law, medicine, pharmacy, or any learned profession.[60] Politically, the free people of color were restricted from voting and holding public office.[61]

According to Lebeau restriction was placed on the citizenship of the free people of color as a necessary provision intended to preserve the dichotomy of master and slave in the colony:

> Cette loi, lit-on dans ces *Instructions*, est dure mais sage et nécessaire dans un pays ces où il y a quinze esclaves contre un blanc ; on ne saurait mettre trop de distance entre les deux espèces ; on ne saurait imprimer aux nègres trop de respect pour ceux auxquels ils sont asservis. Cette distinction, rigoureusement observée, même après la liberté, est le principal lien de la subordination de l'esclave par l'opinion qui en résulte que sa couleur est vouée à la servitude et que rien ne peut le rendre égal à

[59] Ibid., 4. "Nature has placed between the whites and the blacks a distance that political prejudice has cared to maintain to which the people of color and their descendants can never reach."

[60] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 21.

[61] Bryan Edwards, *An historical survey of the French colony in the island of St. Domingo : comprehending a short account of its ancient government, political state, population, productions, and exports; a narrative of the calamities which have desolated the country ever since the year 1789, with some reflections on their causes and probable consequences; and a detail of the military transactions of the British army in that island to the end of 1794* (London: J. Stockdale, 1797), 8.

> son maître. L'administration doit être attentive à maintenir sévèrement cette distance et ce respect.[62]

This restriction was exercised in Saint Domingue as early as 1733 with the first official document to record the enforcement of such limitations, based on racial origin, in the form of a letter from the governor-general to the governor of Le Cap Français on 7 December 1733, "L'ordre du Roi, Monsieur, porte cette lettre, est que tout habitant de sang-mêlé ne puisse exercer aucune charge dans a judicature, ni dans les milices."[63]

The existence of a relatively large number of free people of color in the colony can be attributed to the frequency of concubinage and, less frequently, due to the stigma associated with it, racial intermarriage between a white master and a female slave. By 1700 the number of free people of color hovered around 500, but by the eve of revolution in 1789, the free people of color accounted for nearly 28,000 individuals in the colony.[64] A dearth in the number of white women mainly as a result of the harsh climate of Saint Domingue resulted in widespread concubinage, a system of forced subjugation that rarely benefited the female slave:

> Ce commerce illégitime [concubinage] qui offense les mœurs et la morale religieuse, est cependant regardé comme un mal nécessaire, dans les Colonies où les femmes Blanches sont en petit nombre, et surtout dans celle de Saint-Domingue, où cette disproportion est encore plus grande.[65]

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[62] Lebeau, *De la condition,* 9. "This law, one reads in the Instructions, is harsh but wise and necessary in this country where there are fifteen slaves to one white; one knows to place a great distance between these two kinds; one knows not to transmit too much respect to the blacks in order that they are subjugated. This distinction, rigorously observed, even after liberty, is the principal link to the subordination of the slave who according to opinion by his color is to be devoted to servitude and nothing is capable of making him equal to his master. The administration must be attentive to maintain severely this distance and this respect."

[63] Lebeau, *De la condition,* 19. "The order of the King, Monsieur, carries this letter, that all inhabitants of mixed blood cannot exercise any judiciary charge, nor in the militia."

[64] Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 38.

A census taken in 1774 shows that out of 7,000 free women of color in the colony, 5,000 of these women lived as mistresses to white men.[66] This number of women who lived as mistresses to white men in the colony was probably even higher because this census did not include women who remained enslaved.[67]

Louis XIV's *Code Noir* of 1685, which was restated in the French colonies in 1784, permitted marriage between whites and slaves, but was a convention that was largely avoided by the whites in the colonies, because it was subject to social and legal ostracism as documented in a letter from the governor-general of Le Cap Français written on 7 December 1733, "Je veux que tout habitant qui se mariera avec une négresse ou une mulâtresse ne puisse être officier ni posséder aucun emploi dans la colonie."[68] Bryan Edwards, an eighteenth-century British historian who traveled to Saint Domingue, stated that, "No white man, who had the smallest pretension to character, would ever think of marriage with a Negro or mulatto woman: such a step would immediately have terminated in his disgrace and ruin."[69] The social disgrace that accompanied intermarriage accounted for the incredibly low number of cases in the colony, as compared to the extraordinarily high instances of concubinage. By 1776, Auberteuil

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[65]Saint-Mèry, *Description*, 107. "This illegitimate commerce [concubinage] which offends the customs and the religious moral, nevertheless is regarded as a necessary evil, in the Colonies where White women are in small number, and above all in Saint Domingue, where this disproportion is even more greater."

[66] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 19.

[67] Stoddard, *French Revolution in San Domingo*, 38.

[68] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 19. "I intend that every resident who will marry a negress or a mulatress cannot be an officer nor possess any employment in the colony."

[69] Edwards, *Historical Survey*, 9.

stated that there were only about three hundred cases of intermarriage in the entire colony.[70]

The execution of legal and social ramifications upon a white man who married a black or racially mixed woman is substantiated by several cases in which white men who married racially mixed women were excused of their functions in the colony. The first case involved a captain of a legion in Saint Domingue, the Marquis de Laage, who, in 1777, married a young girl of mixed blood and was, thereby, forced to retire from his company by order of the Minister of Marine. This is contained in a letter, written by the Minister of Marine, dated 14 May 1771, "M. de Laage, qui effectivement contracté ce mariage, ne peut aller reprendre son service puisque ces sortes d'alliances laissent aux Blancs une tache ineffaçable. Vous pourrez donc comprendre sa compagnie dans les emplois vacants."[71] A similar ostracism was exacted upon a white man in Saint Domingue who, in 1755, was refused by the Council of Port-au-Prince the position as secretary to the King because he had married a mulatress. Another case involved M. Guérin, a rich inhabitant of Jacmel, who in 1762, upon marrying a racially mixed woman, was immediately deposed, by the Council of Port-au-Prince, of his charge as the churchwarden in his parish.[72]

Intermarriage accounted for the emergence of a very small percentage of the free people of color who resided in the colony, while the majority of this class was the

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[70] Aubertueil, *Considérations*, 2:79.

[71] Ibid, 20. "M. de Laage, who successfully contracted this marriage, cannot resume his service since these sorts of alliances leave on the Whites an indelible mark. You will be able therefore to include his company in vacant employments."

[72] Raimond, *Observations*, 9.

product of concubinage, as described in a letter, written in 1777, by the *Petit Depute des Conseils Supérieurs des Colonies*:

> Le concubinage des femmes noires avec les blancs et des affranchissement successifs ont donné lieu à une classe de libres, différente du sang blanc, connue sous le nom de gens de couleur ou sang-mêlés, nègres, mulâtres, mestifs, quarterons, qui, quoique admis aux privilèges des la liberté, n'en jouissent cependant qu'avec des modifications, qui constituent un état mitoyen entre les blancs et les esclaves.[73]

The primary reason for this was that, while legal and social ostracism accompanied intermarriage, no formal or informal restrictions or repercussions resulted from instances of concubinage. In his description of the social categories of Saint Domingue in the middle of the eighteenth-century, Moreau de Saint-Mèry reiterated the widespread occurrence of concubinage in Saint Domingue as the leading factor in the increase in the number of free people of color, "C'est le concubinage des Blancs avec les nègresses, qui est la cause que les Mulâtres affranchis sont aussi nombreux…."[74]

No regulation was ever instituted against manumitting the offspring of racially mixed unions. In consequence, the offspring of these unions were regarded as free, as stipulated by Article 9 of the *Code Noir*.[75] This caused the number of free people of color to swell in the colony. On the eve of revolution this class had reached around 28,000. While most of the free people of color were the offspring of intermarriage or

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[73] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 3. "The concubinage of black women with whites and their subsequent liberation have given rise to a class of free persons, different from whites, known under the name free people of color or mixed blood, negros, mulattoes, mestifs, quaterons, who, although admitted to the privileges of liberty, enjoyed it nevertheless with restrictions, which constitute a middle state between the whites and the slaves."

[74] Saint-Mèry, *Description*, 107. "It is the concubinage of Whites with negresses, which is the cause that the freed mulattoes are so numerous…."

[75] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 101.

concubinage between a white man and female slave, a small percentage of this class was purely of African descent, having purchased freedom.[76]

As the number of free people of color increased in the colony so did the economic growth sustained by these individuals.[77] Herbert Elmer Mills stated that, by 1789, this class accounted for one-third of the landed property and one-fourth of the private property in the colony.[78] After 1763, while the white planters dominated the land of the North province, which was flat and good for sugar cultivation, many of the free people of color settled in the mountainous regions of the West and South. In these regions, the free people of color developed coffee plantations.

There were several provisions contained in the *Code Noir* that allowed the class of free people of color to accumulate sizable fortunes during Saint Domingue's Golden Age. In regard to property ownership, Article 59 of the *Code Noir* provided that the free people of color were guaranteed the right to limitless property, equal to that of the whites, in the French colonies, "Au point de vue de l'exercice et de la jouissance droit de propriété, tant sur les meubles que sur les immeubles, aucune limitation n'était apportée aux droits des gens de couleur libres : ces droits étaient les même étendue que ceux des blancs."[79] This meant that the free people of color could possess as much property as they were able to collect as well as stipulating that land possessed by a free person of

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[76] Mills, *The Early Years French Revolution*, 16.

[77] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 19.

[78] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 19.

[79] Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, I:477. "Regarding the exercise and enjoyment of property rights, furnishings and real estate, no limitation is brought against the rights of the free people of color: these rights are the same as those extended to the whites." This work contains the entire sixty articles of the *Code Noir*.

color could not be confiscated and subsequently occupied by whites, which meant that one-third of the landed property and one-fourth of the private property in the colony owned by the free people of color were off limits to the whites.

In addition to enjoying the right to possess limitless property in the colony, it was provided by Article 57 of the *Code Noir* that the free people of color could specify the beneficiaries of their estates.[80] This provision was extremely important because it ensured that their respective families could retain ownership of these estates for generations, thereby allowing for the accumulation of wealth and property over the years. This also declared that whites could not seize property owned by free people of color at the time of their death.

It was also common in the colony that the free people of color could be designated as beneficiaries to the estates of their white fathers. The commonality of this in the colony can be documented by several cases in which racially mixed children were awarded their father's estate upon his death. One such case took place in October 1775, in which the Council of Le Cap Français awarded to the illegitimate, racially mixed children of a white father, two residences containing 348 squares of land, 240 black slaves, 30 mules, and 80,000 feet of coffee. In another case, which occurred in 1781, the Council of Port-au-Prince, by the will of the Master Diancourt, awarded half of Diancourt's estate to his illegitimate children by a free woman of color named Nanette Soreau.[81]

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[80] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 113.

[81] Ibid., 114-115 and Saint-Mèry, *Description*, 252.

Absenteeism was common throughout the colony among the *grands blancs*, and so there were a number of cases in which the racially mixed children became managers of their white fathers' estates upon his return to France.[82] As a consequence of this specification in the *Code Noir*, many free people of color gained the ownership of large plantations in the colony, which increased the overall wealth and prosperity of this class, in addition to generating extreme hatred among the *petits blancs*, who were poor and without property, for the free people of color.

While the free people of color were not limited in their capacity to accrue wealth through land ownership, the general character of the class of free people of color allowed their fortunes often to surpass that of the whites in the colony. In comparison to the wealthy, landowning whites, the free people of color tended to be more thrifty and less decadent, while many whites quickly expended their fortunes on maintaining a life of luxury and opulence. This is validated in a letter by the administrators of Saint Domingue to the Minister of Marine, written in 1755:

> Leur étroite économie leur faisant mettre en caisse chaque année le produit de leur revenu, ils amoncellent des capitaux immenses, ils deviennent arrogants parce qu'ils sont riches et dans la proportion qu'ils le sont. Ils mettent l'enchère aux biens qui sont à vendre dans tous les quartier, ils les font porter à une valeur chimérique, à laquelle les blancs qui n'ont pas tant d'or ne peuvent atteindre, ou qui les ruine lorsqu'ils s'y entêtent. De là vient que, dans bien des quartiers, les plus beaux biens sont en la possession des sang-mêlés….[83]

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[82] Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 46.

[83] Vaissière, *Saint-Domingue*, 222-223. "Their [free people of color] tight economy made them place in a bank, their profit from their revenue every year, they accumulate immense capital and become arrogant because they are rich, and this increases in proportion to their wealth. They bid on properties that are for sale in every district and cause their value to increase to such heights that the whites who do not have so much wealth are unable to buy, or who ruin themselves if they persist. In this manner, in many districts the best land is owned by those of mixed blood…."

The increasing presence and wealth of the class of free people of color in the colony greatly challenged racial prejudice that was at the core of racial slavery. They were a class of people who were free and who had accumulated large fortunes, yet were of African ancestry and, therefore, restrictions were levied against them in order that they "retain forever the imprint of slavery."[84] The legislative refusal to enfranchise the free people of color was the most formidable barrier forged between the class of free people of color and the whites. It was, therefore, the last vestige of official racial prejudice, on which racial slavery functioned, in the colony.

It is inaccurate to assume that the manumission of racially mixed offspring is indicative of a relaxed racial dichotomy or hierarchy as stressed by Donald R. Horowitz:

> Racial differentiation [in white, colored, and black] and the presence of a large class of free non-whites, it has been thought, were reflections of tolerance or flexibility manifested concretely in frequent manumission and inconsistent with the harshest form of chattel slavery…Manumission—even of blacks [as distinct from coloreds]—cannot be used uncritically as an indicator of either the master's view of the slave or the general atmosphere of the slave society. Differentiation bears no necessary relation to degradation.[85]

The imprint of slavery transcended manumission in Saint Domingue society and was placed upon the free people of color in the form of racial discriminatory legislation that restricted this class from voting and holding public office. Therefore, even though manumission among racially mixed offspring was common throughout the colony, restriction on this freedom maintained the separation of white and black or master and slave. Manumission along with the right to possess property only served to recognize a social distinction between the free people of color and the slaves while restriction

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[84] Lebeau, *De la condition*, 4.

[85] Donald R. Horowitz, "Color Differentiation in the American Systems of Slavery," in H. Hoetink, Slavery and *Race Relations in the Americas; Comparative Notes on their Nature and Nexus* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1973), 10.

maintained a distinction between the whites and the free people of color, legitimizing white supremacy in the face of a growing class of free people of color.

The plantation system of Saint Domingue remained relatively stable until the late eighteenth century when an alternative or challenge to this system of racial prejudice emerged in the form of the French Revolution's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen*. In this period, members of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, which had been created in 1788 as an offshoot of the British abolitionist movement, equipped with an agenda to abolish slavery in the French colonies, embraced the colonial question as a direct contradiction to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Enfranchisement was detrimental to racial slavery and the dichotomy of master and slave by declaring racial equality for the free people of color, thereby removing the imprint of slavery. Legislative reform presented for the free people of color a revolutionary mechanism that could win them their rights of citizenship in the colony. The ultimate failure of legislation as a means of overturning restriction impelled the free people of color to join the slaves in armed revolution, prompting the collapse of white rule in "la première Colonie du monde, la plus riche et la plus productive."[86]

[86] Barnave, *Rapport*, 23-24. "the premier Colony of the world, the richest and the most productive."

CHAPTER 3. THE FRENCH COLONIAL QUESTION AND THE SLAVE INSURRECTION OF 1791

The exclusion of the free people of color from the right to vote and hold public office was necessary in Saint Domingue society to maintain an intermediary buffer between the whites and the slaves thereby preserving the dichotomy of master and slave.[87] Racial difference operated on the basic association of the white race with master and the black race with slave and was essential for the perpetuation of a planter society.[88] Clergyman, a delegate of the National Assembly, commented in his letter, written in 1791, against the enfranchisement of the free people of color, that this racial difference was ordained by nature and was a critical component of the social pact in Saint Domingue, which, he claimed, could not be altered without threatening the prosperity of the colony:

> Je croix qu'aux yeux de Dieu nous sommes tous égaux, mais c'est seulement dans le ciel que cette égalité doit avoir lieu, car sur la terre l'inégalité résulte du pacte social même…et ce pacte est indiqué par la nature et consacré par la politique et l'intérêt général de la colonie.[89]

In September, 1789, a major threat to the stability and maintenance of this social pact arrived in Saint Domingue in the form of *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen*.

On 20 August 1789, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was accepted and signed into law by Louis XVI. Rooted in the libertarian ideology of the Enlightenment,

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[87] Lebeau, *De la condition*, iii.

[88] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 119.

[89] Clergyman, *Lettre de M. Clergyman à MM. Les citoyens de couleur du Mirebalais* (Paris : s.n., 1791), 8. "I think that in the eyes of God we are all equal, but it is only in the sky that this equality must take place, for on earth inequality results from the same social pact…and this pact is indicated by nature and consecrated by politics and the general interest of the colony."

which asserted the equality of all mankind and the superiority of none, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* served as the first article of legislation in France to undermine the foundation of white rule in the colony of Saint Domingue, as noted by Charmilly in *Le Moniteur*, dated 5 November 1789, "The twentieth of August was the day when the destruction of San Domingo and of the other colonies was pronounced, and when three hundred thousand men of all colors were condemned to death."[90]

With the arrival of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, along with its libertarian ideology, it became apparent that those in the colony and in France, who wished to preserve white rule in the colony, had to form a united front in opposition to its application to the free people of color. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was dangerous in Saint Domingue because it promised the enfranchisement of the free people of color as propertied French citizens and therefore subject to the same equality and liberty as afforded the whites in the colony. This posed a tremendous threat to the color line in Saint Domingue, due to its large number of free people of color who would be recognized as full French citizens and who would thereby become the political equal to the whites in the colony.

The immediate reaction in France, among the absentee planters of Saint Domingue, resulted in the creation of the Club Massaic for the primary purpose of opposing the application of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* to the free people of color in the colonies.[91] The *Declaration of the Rights of Man* arrived in the colony in September 1789 and, according to Bryan Edwards, it was received by the white colonists with immense trepidation and alarm in that it threatened to undermine the racist

[90] *Le Moniteur*, 1790, 146 in Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 42.

[91] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 78.

foundation of this plantation society by destroying the color line that divided the colony between master and slave.[92] This reaction is echoed in a report by a royal officer, named Maribaroux, to the district commandant of Fort Dauphin, dated 14 October 1789:

> Sir, this word 'Liberty,' which is echoing so loudly all the way from distant Europe to these parts, and which is being everywhere repeated with such enthusiasm, is sowing a fatal seed, whose sprouting will be terrible. In France, where its application endangers despotism alone, we may hope for the best results. But here, where everything opposes the entire liberty of all classes, we should see only blood, carnage, and…certain destruction.…[93]

Once the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was passed, the colonial question could not be ignored.[94] The status of the free people of color as citizens of France, who resided in the colony, escorted the issue of race to the forefront of the National Assembly. Stoddard stated that: "In Paris, there had long existed a community of wealthy mulattoes, come thither to obtain a European education or to escape the rigors of the color line."[95] It was this group of free people of color, the *Colons Américains*, headed by Vincent Ogé and Julien Raimond that took hold of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* as a tool of revolution, "These men had been closely watching the Revolution and planning how they might best derive advantage from it. At the end of August, when the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* was adopted, they perceived that their hour had struck."[96] On 20 September 1789, this group appeared before the National Assembly and demanded the

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[92] Edwards, *Historical Survey*, 21.

[93] Archives Coloniales, F-3, 194 in Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 94.

[94] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 69.

[95] Mitchell Bennett Garrett, *The French Colonial Question, 1789-1791; Dealings of the Constituent Assembly with Problems arising from the Revolution in the West Indies* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1916), 22.

[96] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 22-23.

enfranchisement of the free people of color based on the universal application of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* to all French citizens in the French colonies. In response, the National Assembly evaded the question by referring it to colonies for an official decision.[97] The fact that the free people of color seized upon French legislation, as a product of the French Revolution, to win them their rights illustrates that they acted as active political agents directing their own movement for equality as opposed to Stoddard's presentation of the free people of color as bystanders who were unintentionally swept into an outpouring of the revolution in France into the colonies.[98]

For the free people of color in Saint Domingue, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* offered an avenue for change in the colony by way of French legislative reform. Abbé Grégoire, who was a member of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, encouraged the free people of color to resist oppression in the colonies by way of legislation as a means to exact social and political reform. He instructed them to "Souffrir des injustices, et laisser à la loi seule le soin de les venger…"[99]

The first time the National Assembly called upon the libertarian ideology of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* with regard to the enfranchisement of the free people of color in the French colonies was on 4 December 1789, by Charles de Lameth, who was a wealthy planter from Saint Domingue and a member of the National Assembly.[100] On

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[97] Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 80-81.

[98] Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, viii.

[99] Abbé Grégoire, *Lettre aux citoyens de couleur et nègres libres de Saint-Domingue et des autres isles françoises de l'Amérique* (Paris : s.n., 1791), 1-2. "Suffer these injustices, and permit the law alone to avenge you…"

[100] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 64.

this day Lameth lobbied before the National Assembly for the rights of the free people of color:

> Je suis un des plus grands propriétaires de Saint-Domingue ; mais je vous déclare que, dussé-je perdre tout ce que j'y possède, je le préférerais plutôt que de méconnaître des principes que la justice et l'humanité ont consacrés ; je me déclare et pour l'admission des sang-mêlé aux assemblées administrative et pour la liberté des Noirs.[101]

In the above lines, Lameth linked the enfranchisement of the free people of color to the liberty of the slaves, which incited the National Assembly to refuse the rights of the free people of color because it was viewed as an initial step toward the abolition of slavery.

By associating the enfranchisement of the free people of color with the emancipation of the slaves, Lameth's speech before the National Assembly succeeded only in suspending official deliberation on the colonial question. In March 1790, when spurred by continued pressure from the *Amis des Noirs* and the *Colons Américains*, Antoine Barnave, who chaired the Colonial Committee in Paris, called for the convening of the National Assembly in order to establish an official colonial policy regarding the status of the free people of color in the French colonies. In this debate a major voice in favor of the rights of the free people of color was Maximilien Robespierre. He championed the rights of the free people of color in accordance with upholding the principles of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. Robespierre was not an abolitionist and, in his speech, he never mentioned the liberty of the slaves, which separated granting equality to the free people of color from the abolition of slavery. Robespierre used his

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[101]Général Pamphile de Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, edited by Pierre Pluchon (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995), 49 and Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique*, 179. "I am one of the wealthiest proprietors of Saint Domingue, but I declare to you that I would prefer to lose all that I possess, rather than to ignore the principles that justice and humanity have consecrated; I declare myself for the admission of the mixed blood to the administrative assembly and for the liberty of the Blacks."

speech to underscore the blatant breach of the very principles upon which the French Revolution was based in the continued refusal to grant full political rights to the people of color, who by virtue of their free status were to be universally recognized, in accordance with Article 59 of the *Code Noir*, as French citizens. He urged the National Assembly to "perish the colonies" rather than the principle of liberty as set out in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*.[102]

This debate culminated with the decree of 8 March 1790, which called for the election of a colonial assembly in each of the French colonies.[103] This decree stated that each colonial assembly was authorized to put into execution the decrees of the National Assembly as relative to the governance of the colony and dictated by local conditions:

> Chaque colonie est autorisée à faire connaître son vœu sur la constitution, la législation et l'administration qui conviennent à sa prospérité et au bonheur de ses habitants, à la charge de se conformer aux principes généraux qui lient les colonies à la métropole, et qui assurent la conservation de leurs intérêts respectifs.[104]

The decree of 8 March was accompanied by the Instructions of 28 March, which outlined provisions for the election, within the colonies, of the colonial assemblies. Article IV of the Instructions declared that eligibility for voting included "all persons aged twenty-five years and upwards, possessing real estate or, in default of such property, domiciled for two years in the parish and paying taxes, shall meet and form the parochial

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[102] Philippe Haudrere and Françoise Vergés, *De l'esclavage au citoyen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 85-86.

[103] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 50-51.

[104] Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique*, 181. "Each colony is authorized to implement the constitution, the legislation and the administration as suits its prosperity and the happiness of its inhabitants, to charge itself to conform to the general principles which link the colonies to the *métropole*, and which assure the conservation of their respective interests."

assembly."[105] This Article did not specifically address the inclusion or exclusion of the propertied free people of color.[106] The decree of 8 March and the Instructions of 28 March solidified the official colonial policy of the National Assembly, but rather than resolving the colonial question, the ambiguity of Article IV fueled the campaign of the free people of color for enfranchisement.[107]

After the institution of the March decree, the free people of color demanded their rights in accordance with Article IV of the Instructions of 28 March.[108] In response, the Colonial Assembly of Saint Domingue held that Article IV was applicable solely to the whites in accordance with the decree of 8 March, which granted internal autonomy to the colonies in determining legislation deemed appropriate for local necessities. The Colonial Assembly resolved that inclusion of the free people of color in Article IV would prove to be perilous for the colony.[109] The National Assembly upheld the decision of the Colonial Assembly by refusing to grant an audience to the *Colons Américains*, eliminating any opportunity for them to oppose this decision. In consequence, a mulatto rebellion broke out in Saint Domingue, spearheaded by Vincent Ogé, the leader of the *Colons Américains*. The purpose of this rebellion was to achieve the rights of the free people of color based on Article IV of the Instructions of 28 March, as indicated in a letter by Ogé to Peinier, the governor of Saint Domingue, dated 29 October 1790:

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[105] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 53.

[106] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 32.

[107] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 67.

[108] Beaubrun Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti suives de la vie du général J.-M. Borgella*, 2nd ed. (Port-au-Prince : François Dalencour, 1958), I:131.

[109] T.G. Steward, *The Haitian Revolution 1791 to 1804, or Side Lights on the French Revolution* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1914), 19.

> Messieurs, un préjugé trop longtemps soutenu va enfin tomber. Je suis chargé d'une commission bien honorable pour moi, sans doute. Je vous somme de faire promulguer dans toute la colonie le décret de l'Assemble nationale du 28 mars, qui donne, sans distinction, à tous citoyens libres le droit d'être admis dans toutes les charges et fonctions. Mes prétentions sont justes, et j'espère que vous y aurez égard. Je ne ferai pas soulever les ateliers ; ce moyen est indigne de moi.[110]

Ogé reached Le Cap Français on 12 October 1790 and immediately traveled to his home in Dondon situated close to the Spanish border. There he collected a small band of mulattoes, numbering nearly three hundred. On 29 October 1790, with his band of mulattoes and Jean-Baptiste Chavanne as his second in command, he attacked the village of Grande-Rivière about fifteen miles outside Le Cap Français. The whites were able to drive Ogé's force to the mountains and, faced with defeat, Ogé fled to St. Jago in Spanish Santo Domingo, where he and Chavannes were later extradited back to Saint Domingue.[111] Once back in the colony, the Superior Council of Le Cap Français accused them of sedition, robbery, murder, and intention to provoke the slaves to revolt. On 23 February 1791, they were sentenced and executed by being broken on the wheel.[112]

In his rebellion, Ogé refused to implement the suggestion made by his associates to enlist the slaves to his aid. Instead, as he clearly indicated in his letter to Governor Peinier, he had no desire to include the liberty of the slaves as part of his program for the enfranchisement of the free people of color, "Lorsque j'ai sollicité à l'Assemblée nationale un décret que j'ai obtenu en faveur des colons américains connus anciennement

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[110] Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, 69. "Messieurs, a prejudice too long sustained is finally going to fall. I am charged with a good commission honorable for me, without doubt. I call upon you to promulgate in all the colonies the decree of the National Assembly of 28 March, which gives, without distinction, to all free citizens the right to be admitted in all charges and functions. My claims are just, and I hope that your will consider them. I will not stir up revolts; this custom is unworthy of me."

[111] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 37.

[112] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 86-88.

sous l'épithète injurieuse de sang-mêlé, je n'ai point compris dans mes réclamations le sort des Nègres qui vivent dans l'esclavage."[113] In his letter, Ogé demanded the rights of the free people of color on the grounds that they were citizens of France, thereby distancing his effort from any association with the slaves, who were considered property and, therefore, did not qualify for this equality.

The martyrdom of Ogé and Chavannes elevated the colonial question to the fore of the National Assembly and generated, in France, an overarching compassion for the rights of the free people of color. [114] As the popularity of Ogé rose in France, the National Assembly was urged to resolve the colonial question, leading to the creation and institution of the decree of 15 May 1791, a decree that proved to be the most incendiary of the decrees instituted by the National Assembly regarding the rights of the free people of color in the colonies.[115]

The debate over the colonial question ran from 11 to 15 May 1791. The two opposing sides of this debate stood firmly. The opposition to the free people of color stated that enfranchising them would incite the slaves to revolt and that, most importantly, it was necessary to maintain slavery at all costs because it was critical to the success of French commerce.[116] The free people of color were backed by the *Code Noir*

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[113] Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, 69. "When I have solicited to the National Assembly a decree that I hold in favor of the *colons américains* known formerly under the injurious epithet of mixed blood, I have not at all included in my reclamations the sort of Blacks which live in slavery."

[114] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 38.

[115] Ibid., 38.

[116] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 90.

of 1685 that guaranteed their French citizenship and qualified them to enjoy the privileges of voting as dictated in Article IV of the Instructions of 28 March 1790.[117]

On 15 May 1791, Rewbell, a radical Jacobin in the National Assembly, called for a compromise, that all the free people of color who were born of free parents would be guaranteed the right to vote. This would have affected only about four hundred people in the colony of Saint Domingue.[118] Rewbell's proposed amendment was passed in the National Assembly and became the decree of 15 May 1791, "Les gens de couleur nés de père et mère libres seraient admis dans toutes les assemblées paroissiales et coloniales futures, s'ils avaient d'ailleurs les qualités requises."[119] Since the May decree promised to enfranchise a very small percentage of the free people of color in the French colonies, the National Assembly saw no danger in passing it.[120]

Before the May decree arrived in Saint Domingue, the whites had been divided into three parties based on loyalty to the revolution in France and opinions regarding the proper method to govern the colony internally. The whites were separated into the royalist bureaucracy that opposed the revolution in France, the General Assembly of Saint Marc, known as the Patriots, desiring complete internal governance of the colony, and the Provincial Assembly of the North, that supported the revolutionary government in France. It was this division within the white class that Thomas Ott maintained was

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[117] Saint-Mèry, *Description*, I:56.

[118] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 85.

[119] Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, I:40. "The free people of color born of free father and mother will be admitted in all future parochial and colonial assemblies, if they have otherwise the required qualifications."

[120] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 166.

directly responsible for the loss of the colony to the revolution of the slaves.[121] According to Ott, the failure of the white class to remain undivided created the opportunity for the slaves to stage a successful revolt. Weakening Ott's argument is substantial evidence to suggest that the whites were, in fact, always united in opposition to enfranchising the free people of color. On 1 July 1791, the news of the May decree reached the colony and immediately all parties of the white population united in opposition, including the absentee planters, many of whom returned to the colony to oppose the enforcement of this decree.[122] This is documented in a letter dated 18 July 1791, from Lescène, who was a procurer of a sugar plantation in the Cul-de-Sac plain to the absentee owner comte de Vaudreuil in Paris:

> Il m'est impossible de vous peindre l'étonnement et l'indignation qui ont éclaté ici à la nouvelle d'un décret relatif aux gens de couleur libres…Toute la colonie vient de se coaliser pour s'opposer à la promulgation de ce décret et elle convient que l'Assemblée nationale manque au serment qu'elle a fait de ne jamais rien innover dans le régime intérieur des colonies.[123]

These lines indicate that the basis for opposition by the white colonists to the May decree was rooted in the fact that it was a product of legislation composed by the National Assembly in France, and, therefore, was in direct violation of the internal control that had been granted to the colonies by the decrees of 8 March and 12 October 1790, which can be validated by an address from the National Guard of Port-au-Prince, dated 4 June 1791, "Considérant, y est-il dit, que les décrets des 13 et 15 mai étant une

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[121] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 21.

[122] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 67-69.

[123] Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, 82. "It is impossible for me to paint for you the surprise and indignation which has broken out here to the news of the decree relative to the free people of color…The whole colony has united to oppose the promulgation of this decree and it suits that the National Assembly refuses its vow that it will never break new ground in the interior rule of the colonies."

infraction aux décrets des 8 mars et 12 octobre de l'année dernière, c'est un parjure national et un nouveau crime à ajouter à tant d'autres."[124]

The unity of the whites in opposition to the enfranchisement of the free people of color prompted them to reject legislation instituted by the National Assembly that they regarded as unsuitable to the maintenance of order in the colony. In contrast, Ott asserted that the division of the white class left them unable to govern themselves at a local level and therefore, vulnerable to rule by legislative action in France.[125] The above lines contradict this notion in that the white colonists accepted or rejected legislation that they felt was pertinent to the administration of the colony. The May decree did not divide the whites, but rather united them into a cohesive force firmly opposed to breaking the color line.

Based on the internal autonomy of the colony as set out in the decrees of 8 March and 12 October 1790, the whites officially refused to enact the May decree. The official stance of the colony in response to the May decree was embodied in a letter by Blanchelande, the governor of Saint Domingue, to the Minister of Marine, dated 3 July 1791:

> It is inevitable that all the whites will unite into a single party opposed to the execution of the [May] decree. In a word, Monsieur, I have reason to fear that this decree, if it is not at least modified, will prove the death warrant of many thousand men, including those very persons who are the objects of its solicitude.[126]

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[124] Ibid., 80. "Considering, there it is said, that the decrees of 13 and 15 May were an infraction to the decrees of 8 March and 12 October of last year, it is a national perjury and a new crime to add to so many others."

[125] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 21.

[126] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 119.

This excerpt, taken from Blanchelande's letter, implied that it was not the few hundred free people of color who were granted the right to vote by the May decree that the whites feared, but the overarching repercussions that would transpire in the colony from an act of irreversibly crossing the existing color line.[127] This directly threatened the institution of slavery as the backbone of the political, social, and economic systems of the colony. This was reiterated by Daugy, who was a member of the General Assembly of Saint Marc, in a letter, dated 7 June 1791, to the planters resident in the North Province, "Our possessions are endangered by this decree of the National Assembly relative to the colored people…. Today resistance becomes the duty of every good patriot; but in order that resistance be effective, it must be unanimous."[128]

Moreau de Saint-Mèry, in his speech before the National Assembly on 5 July 1791, asserted that the refusal to uphold the May decree was not limited to a specific area or region of the colony, but was unanimous among the whites throughout the colony. Its institution was not only opposed by the white colonists, but also the colonial assembly and the governor, "The citizens here at Cap Français are all united for the common cause. Since the arrival of the decree of May 15, opinions are no longer divided. We are sure that the two other provinces are of the same mind as ourselves."[129]

Faced with such fierce opposition, the free people of color were convinced that their rights could only be won by means of insurrection. This is indicated in a letter

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[127] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 85.

[128] Garrett, *The French Colonial Question*, 105 and Garran de Coulon, *Rapport*, 94-100.

[129] Ibid., 120.

written 27 August 1791, by a mulatto named Labuissonnière in Léogane, addressed to Julien Raimond, which stated:

> On all sides the whites are saying that the decree of 15 May will never be executed, and that they would sooner lose the island than to see it go into effect…I for my part am convinced that our class, which is almost as numerous as the whites, could if properly led execute all the National Decrees on our own account.[130]

In the fall of 1791, shortly after the failure of the May decree to be accepted in the colony, the free people of color revolted in the West province, and, at the same time, the slaves revolted in the North.[131] It was at this point in the history of Saint Domingue that the nineteenth-century historian Herbert Elmer Mills marked as signifying the commencement of a new stage, which he referred to as the "history of the blacks."[132] According to Mills:

> During the first two years of the French Revolution, the history of the French part of San Domingo was largely the history of its white inhabitants. The questions of slavery and of the political status of the free blacks were important political factors, but during this time the negroes were not the chief actors. Since the fifteenth of May, 1791, the history of the colony has been the history of the blacks, either in their struggle for freedom or in their life after its acquirement.[133]

The May decree denoted a turning point in the colony of Saint Domingue, in which the colonial question regarding the rights of the free people of color had been answered by official legislative action, proposed and approved by the National Assembly. With this decree the color line had been irreversibly broken. Equality had been extended

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[130] *Archives Nationales*, D-xxv, 114 in Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 142-143.

[131] Mills, *The Early Years of the French Revolution*, 98.

[132] Ibid., 98.

[133] Ibid., 98.

to the free people of color, who were born of free parents, and revolution became the only alternative once these rights were refused within the colony. As a class of people in Saint Domingue society, the free people of color had crossed the color line with the May decree that guaranteed voting privileges to those born of free parents. The refusal of the white colonists, the Colonial Assembly, and Blanchelande to enforce the May decree in the colony prompted an alliance between the free people of color and the slaves against white rule and ignited a race war between the white and black populations of Saint Domingue.

CHAPTER 4. THE ABOLITION OF THE COLOR LINE AND THE END OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN SAINT DOMINGUE

This chapter explores the process by which a coalescence of the revolution of the free people of color and that of the slaves developed by the end of 1791 bringing about the collapse of white rule by early 1792. In this chapter, I demonstrate the importance of the free people of color to the protection of white supremacy in Saint Domingue through an examination of two attempts at an alliance between the free people of color and the whites, which ultimately failed. The failure of these alliances and the revocation of the May decree in September 1791, incited the free people of color to abandon legislation as means of revolution and openly ally with the slaves in a race war against white rule.

The colonial question denoted the initial step in a revolution for absolute liberty in Saint Domingue. The revolutionary program for enfranchisement by the free people of color coalesced with the emancipationist program of the slaves into a general revolution for absolute liberty, based on a common adversary, but not a common revolutionary objective. In Ogé's earlier rebellion in October 1790, the free people of color refused to embrace the slaves in their drive for enfranchisement because they feared that their rights would be denied, based on the assumption that this would be considered, by the whites, a step toward the abolition of slavery. Baron de Vastey, a nineteenth-century Haitian historian, clearly identified that the failure of Ogé's revolt lay in refusing to recruit the support of a potentially large force of black slaves. Vastey labeled this refusal as an outcrop of racial prejudice, which was utterly ingrained in Saint Domingue society:

> It was thus that the unfortunate Ogé, claiming a participation of civil and political rights for his coloured brethren alone, refused to follow the advice of the brave and generous Chavanne, who undertook to extend these advantages to the Blacks: and thus Ogé voluntarily deprived himself

> of the aid of an immense force: he became the unhappy victim of his error: the Whites held him in no esteem; and he expired on the wheel with his adherents.[134]

On 22 August 1791, a slave insurrection erupted in the North province and, at the same time, the free people of color, disillusioned by the failure of legislation to enfranchise them, revolted in the West province.[135] The slave insurrection in the North was well planned and executed by the insurgent slaves catching the white population unaware and, therefore, unable to resist. As a result, within just a few days, the entire North province was saturated in utter destruction:

> The sword was then exchanged for the torch; fire was set to the canes, and the buildings soon added to the conflagration; it was the appointed signal; revolt was the word; and, with the speed of lightning, it flamed out on the neighboring plantations; wherever there were whites, there were so many victims slaughtered; men, women, the infant, and the aged, expired indiscriminately under the knife of the assassins.[136]

One week before the outbreak of the insurrection, slave representatives from the major plantations in the North assembled at Lenormand de Mézy plantation in Morne-Rouge where they drew up final plans for the insurrection. These representatives were, for the most part, from the upper echelons of slave society. It was decided that, once the signal was given, the plantations throughout the province would be methodically set on fire, marking the start of the insurrection.[137] The rapid execution and efficiency of this revolt resulted from the formation of a network of insurgent forces stretching across the

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[134] Vastey, *Essay*, 19.

[135] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 131.

[136] Assemblée générale de Saint-Domingue, *A Particular Account of the Commencement and Progress of the Insurrection of the Negroes in St. Domingo, which began in August 1791: being a Translation of the Speech Made to the National Assembly, the 3d of November, 1791, by the Deputies from the General Assembly of the French Part of Saint-Domingo*, 2ed. (London: J. Sewell, 1792), 5.

[137] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 91.

North province and encompassing a range of rebels, from house slaves to maroons to free blacks.[138] Once initiated, the uprising of the slaves spread quickly throughout the North province, invading district after district and leaving a wake of destruction in its path, "Mean time the flames gained ground on all sides. *La Petite Anse*, *la Plaine du Nord*, the districts of *Morin*, *Limonade*, presented only heaps of ashes and of mangled carcasses."[139]

On 23 August, just a day after the slaves revolted in the North, the free people of color assembled a force at Croix-des-Bouquets, in the West province, about five miles from Port-au-Prince, where they attacked and defeated the whites.[140] This was important to the success of the revolution in the colony because, while the slave insurgents of the North were debilitating white power in this province, the free people of color revolted in the West, thereby eliminating all chances for aid in the North from the whites in the West.[141]

In the very early stages, these two revolts, the one of the slaves and the other of the free people of color, were separate and unconnected with two different goals. Initially, the slaves desired three free days while the free people of color strove for enfranchisement.[142] By the end of August 1791, an insurgency within the slave populations of the West and South provinces did not develop, as had occurred in the North. Consequently, in the West, slave revolutionary participation began with the

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[138] Ibid., 110.

[139] Assemblée générale, *A Particular Account*, 8.

[140] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 96.

[141] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 120.

[142] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 99.

incorporation of a small band of maroon slaves known as *la Suisse* by the free people of color. Most likely, the free people of color applied the name "the Swiss" to this group of slaves as a derivation of France's royal government guards who were called Swiss Guards.[143]

The Swiss numbered fewer than three hundred and were the first to join the free people of color with the goal of fighting a common adversary in white rule within the colony. It is not certain whether the Swiss ever actually took part in combat. The collaboration of the free people of color and the Swiss in the West served, more importantly, as a threat of a possible coalescence of a revolutionary force of free people of color and a large mass of slaves, which would easily overcome the small number of whites who resided in this region.[144]

By September 1791, white rule had been gravely debilitated in the colony. The slaves in the North under Jean-François, who was a maroon slave, and Biassou, who was a member of the religious group called the Fathers of Charity, had established control of the city of Grande-Rivière.[145] The general state of devastation that overwhelmed the North province by September 1791, just one month after the start of the insurrection, is related by Bryan Edwards in his travel writing:

> We arrived in the harbor of Le Cap at the evening of September 26, and the first sight which arrested our attention as we approached was a dreadful scene of devastation by fire. The noble plain adjoining Le Cap was covered with ashes, and the surrounding hills, as far as the eye could reach, everywhere presented to us ruins still smoking, and houses and plantations at that moment in flames.[146]

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[143] Ibid., 100.

[144] Ibid., 102-103.

[145] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 90.

[146] Edwards, *Historical Survey*, vii.

Aware of the devastation that was taking place in the North, along with a fear of a coalescence of the slaves and the free people of color in the West, as in the case of the Swiss, the whites decided to ally with the free people of color for support in suppressing the possibility of a slave insurgency filtering in from the North.[147] The whites realized that there was no way for them to successfully combat a united revolutionary front posed by the free people of color and the slaves, but by allying with the free people of color, the slaves could be kept subdued. This alliance confirms that the class of free people of color was the key to maintaining the subordination of the slaves and the supremacy of the whites in the colony.

The alliance drawn between the free people of color and the whites was called the September Concordat, which was signed in the cities of Croix-des-Bouquets and Mirebalais on 7 September 1791.[148] This concordat was composed of eleven articles that outlined specific provisions for an alliance between the free people of color and the whites. The basic stipulation of the concordat was the guarantee of the rights of the free people of color in the colony in exchange for their support against the insurgent slaves:

> Et de la part des citoyens de couleur, que, vu l'acceptation de tous les articles sans restriction inférés au présent concordat, ils se réuniront & se réunifient en effet de cœur, d'esprit & d'intention aux citoyens blancs, pour ramener le calme & la tranquillité, pour travailler de concert à l'exécution ponctuelle des décrets de l'assemblée nationale sanctionnés par le roi, & pour employer toutes leurs forces & tous leurs moyens contre l'ennemi commun.[149]

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[147] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 138.

[148] Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 144.

[149] *Concordat de MM. les citoyens blancs du Port-au-Prince avec MM. les citoyens de couleur* (Port-au-Prince, s.n, 1791), 11. "And on the part of the citizens of color, that, seeing the execution of all articles without inferred restrictions to the present concordat, they will meet in effect out of heart, spirit, & intention with the white citizens, in order to bring back calm and tranquility, in order to work in concert

On 11 September 1791, a second concordat was signed between the whites and free people of color in Port-au-Prince, guaranteeing political equality for all free persons of color, regardless of the status of their parents. The concordat promised the immediate execution of the May decree, which the colonists had originally rejected, based on Article IV of the Instructions of 28 March 1790.[150] Even though this concordat was agreed to and signed by the whites, promising the enforcement of the May decree, the free people of color did not trust that the whites would uphold this agreement. This is ascertained from a letter written on 9 July 1792 by Labadie, who was a mulatto leader in Saint Domingue, to Raimond, "…although those of them [whites] allied with us had carried out the Concordat, it is certain that they had never taken it seriously. They rightly counted upon the fact that the General Assembly would never pronounce in our favor."[151] This fear among the free people of color was well placed, as revealed in a letter by the Royalist commandant at Saint-Marc, M. de Coigne, on 21 September 1791:

> You have three classes of brigands to fight. First, the white brigands, who are the most to be feared. Leave them to be destroyed by the mulattoes, if you do not care to destroy them yourself. Next, with the aid of the mulattoes, you will reduce the rebel Negroes. After that, you will gradually restore the old laws, and by that time you will be able to suppress the refractory element among the mulattoes themselves.[152]

This confirmed that, once order was restored to the colony with an alliance between the whites and the free people of color, the whites would refuse their rights based on the internal autonomy of the colony sanctioned by the king in the decree of 12 October 1790.

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toward the punctual execution of the decrees of the national assembly sanctioned by the king, & in order to employ all their forces & all their means against a common enemy."

[150] Ibid., 4.

[151] *Archives Nationales*, D-xxv, 114 in Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 146.

[152] *Archives Nationales*, D-xxv, 46 in Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 145-146.

In the West province, slave insurgents responded to the news of an alliance between the free people of color and the whites by attacking Port-au-Prince. They were defeated by the combined efforts of the free people of color and the whites and so the insurgents retreated from the city. Shortly after the successful defeat of the insurgent slaves, the promise of equality for the free people of color quickly faded as the governor, Blanchelande, and the Colonial Assembly, refusing to enforce the May decree in the colony, revoked the September concordat. In light of this revocation, in October 1791, a force of fifteen hundred free people of color gained control of Léogane and turned toward Port-au-Prince while, at the same time, an army of twenty thousand slaves headed in the same destination. Anticipating defeat at the hands of these two forces coalescing in Port-au-Prince, the whites were forced, once again, to ally with the free people of color in order to save white rule in the colony.

By October 1791, white rule had been significantly diminished in the colony, as established by Bryan Edwards:

> It is computed that, within two months after the revolt first began, upwards of two thousand whites had been massacred; that one hundred and eighty sugar-plantations and about nine hundred coffee, cotton, and indigo settlements had been destroyed; and twelve hundred families reduced from opulence to abject destitution.[153]

Consequently, the whites had no choice but to renew the September Concordat with the free people of color in an effort to preserve the colony against the insurgent slaves.[154] By resurrecting this alliance, the whites recognized the significance of the free people of

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[153] Edwards, *Historical Survey*, 82-83.

[154] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 53.

color in effectively suppressing the slaves, but were reluctant to break the color line by granting them racial equality.

On 17 October 1791, the whites of Port-au-Prince met with representatives of the free people of color in order to restore an alliance. After three days of negotiations, both parties signed a new treaty, reaffirming the September concordat, which was called the "Concordat of October."[155] The major obstacle in forming this treaty was what to do with the Swiss, since they were maroon slaves and could not be permitted to enjoy the same rights as the free people of color. Finally, it was decided that the Swiss would be deported to the coast of Guatemala with provisions to last them for three months. Instead, due to weather conditions, the captain of the ship took these few hundred Swiss to Jamaica. The Jamaican government, not wanting to deal with them, sent them back to Saint Domingue. Upon arrival back in Saint Domingue, the Colonial Assembly decided to put them in chains and place them aboard a ship in the Môle Saint-Nicolas harbor, which was located at the western end of the island, where they died. The leaders of the free people of color had written the Colonial Assembly against the deportation of the Swiss. According to the nineteenth-century historian Ardouin the slaves knew that most of the free people of color had contested this deportation and, therefore, no split arose between them to encumber future coalescence as the revolution progressed.[156]

Another problem that plagued the October Concordat was the decree of 24 September 1791, which arrived in the colony just days after the signing of the concordat of October. The September decree, instituted by the National Assembly in France, revoked the May decree and reaffirmed internal control of the colony. This decree

[155] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 124.

[156] Ardouin, *Études sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, I:61.

developed out of a speech made by Barnave before the National Assembly on 23 September 1791, in which he called for the revocation of the May decree, placing the status of the free people of color under the authority of the colonial assemblies to determine in relation to local conditions.[157]

Barnave asserted emphatically that the National Assembly existed to enact legislation to protect the colonies and encourage their prosperity rather than hinder or endanger it. He claimed that the May decree proved to be perilous in situating Saint Domingue on the brink of disaster by enfranchising the free people of color. Barnave established a direct correlation between the onset of revolution among the slaves in August 1791 and the enfranchisement of the free people of color by the May decree.[158]

In October 1791, the September decree arrived in the colony. The free people of color of Mirebalais, which was situated in the West province, immediately turned to Blanchelande requesting that he uphold the May decree and the rights of the free people of color as outlined in the October Concordat. Blanchelande responded to them in a letter dated 20 October 1791, in which he refused to adhere to the May decree on the grounds that it was not best for the colony. Instead, he encouraged the free people of color to put aside their rights and to assist the whites in suppressing the insurrection of the slaves for the overall good of the colony.[159] In this letter, Blanchelande pledged to uphold the

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[157] Barnave, *Rapport*, 40-41.

[158] Ibid., 19.

[159] Blanchelande, *Lettre de M. de le Général à MM. les citoyens de couleur du Mirebalais* (Paris: s.n., 1792), 1.

September decree throughout the colony, thereby officially denying the rights of the free people of color.[160]

The September decree ultimately resolved the colonial question, thereby guaranteeing revolution in Saint Domingue.[161] According to Geggus, the revocation of the May decree was a "fatal move by the wavering National Assembly," which instigated a race war, "In the south, they divided along color rather than class lines, while in the north many free coloreds joined the slave rebels."[162] The National Assembly did not strictly enforce the May decree and then revoked it with the September decree of 1791, placing the status of the free people of color under the domain of the colonial assemblies. The arrival of the September decree shattered any chance for an alliance between the free people of color and the whites.[163] With the arrival of the September decree and the refusal by Blanchelande and the Colonial Assembly to uphold the May decree in Saint Domingue, the free people of color turned to an armed revolution, in conjunction with that of the slaves, in order to gain their rights as French citizens. An article from the *Révolutions de Paris*, dated 5 November 1791, showed that after the revocation of the May decree, the free people of color openly allied with the slaves against the whites:

> Nos planteurs, qui prévoient que la révocation du décret du 15 mai ne sera pas reçue par acclamation chez les hommes de couleur, et qui savent, en outre, que les hommes de couleur, par une juste représaille, se coaliseront avec leurs frères les nègres, pour repousser par la force une loi contre nature….[164]

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[160] Ibid., 4.

[161] Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, 104.

[162] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 13.

[163] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 55.

This alliance was based on the common adversary of white supremacy as evidenced from an extract of the deliberations of the provincial assembly of the South dated 12 April 1792, "C'est, pour la province de Sud, le même système dans les affranchis et dans les esclaves, la destruction des blancs."[165]

By early November 1791, the collaboration of the revolutionary forces of the free people of color and the slaves, after the failure of the concordats and the arrival of the September decree, proved extremely debilitating to white power in the West. A prime example of this coalescence concerns Romaine Rivière, a free black of Spanish origin, who organized an armed rebellion of a large number of slaves from the area surrounding Léogane and Jacmel.[166] Rivière claimed to be a shaman, or prophet. He preached mass and promised the slaves their freedom if they joined the revolution of the free people of color. He rallied the slaves to the cause of the free people of color by telling them that the king had already freed them, but that their white masters had not complied. He was a free person of color, who managed to agitate the slave population in the West province by engaging several thousand slaves in a revolution against the whites. By the end of November 1791, Romaine's forces were able to crush white rule in Léogane and seize control of this area.[167] Romaine's efforts in the West province reflect the basis of the

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[164] "Insurrection des Noirs dans nos colonies," *Révolutions de Paris*, no. 121, in Yves Bénot's *La révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris : Éditions la Découverte, 1988), 246. "Our planters, who foresee that the revocation of the decree of 15 May will not be received by acclamation among the men of color, and who know, in addition, that the men of color, by a just retaliation, will unite with their brothers the blacks, in order to push back by force a law against nature…." This work contains the entire article from the *Révolutions de Paris* dated 5 November 1791.

[165] *Extrait du registre des délibérations de l'assmeblée provinciale et provisoirement administrative du Sud* (Paris: s.n., 1792), 10. "It is, for the province of the South, the same system for the free people of color and the slaves, the destruction of the whites."

[166] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 127.

coalescence of the free people of color and the slaves against white supremacy in the colony. The free people of color never advocated emancipating the slaves, but still called on them to join the free people of color in a revolution against the whites.

In the South province, the struggle of the free people of color paralleled the events in the West province. With the news of the September concordat at Croix-des-Bouquets, the free people of color of Les Cayes and Torbeck, in the South, petitioned for a similar treaty to award them their rights as granted by the May decree. Fearing a similar path of destruction as occurred in the West province, the whites in the South province agreed. By November 1791, the Provincial Assembly of the South drew up a similar concordat to the one developed in the West. As in the West, this concordat was considered a temporary agreement and was not taken very seriously by the whites, and so it quickly failed, inciting the free people of color to turn to the slaves to unite in armed revolution.[168]

In late November 1791, the National Assembly sent three civil commissioners from France to Saint Domingue with instructions to restore order in the colony. These commissioners were not welcomed by the whites in the colony, who greatly distrusted the National Assembly after the institution of the May decree.[169] As a result, the authority vested in these commissioners, by the National Assembly, had little impact in the colony, providing them with no real power with which to reinstate stability.[170] By the time they arrived, white control in the North province had been lost to the insurgent slave forces,

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[167] Ibid., 128.

[168] Ibid., 133.

[169] Lacroix, *La Révolution de Haïti*, 121.

[170] Ibid., 110-111.

the concordats had been broken, Port-au-Prince had been devastated, and the slaves in the West and South had openly joined the free people of color in a revolution against white supremacy.[171]

Earlier rebellions in Saint Domingue had failed within the initial stages, but this revolution persisted by way of the revolutionary momentum of the free people of color unified with the slaves and sustained by the colonial question. By the time this question was answered, the revolution was already in full swing. The failure of the previous rebellion of Ogé proved that the free people of color, alone, could not defeat the whites in the colony but, through an alliance with almost half a million slaves, a revolution could be carried out successfully. With conflicting revolutionary objectives, the common ground for a coalescence of these two groups was the debilitation of white rule in the colony.[172]

This coalescence was extremely efficient in reducing all white power in the colony by November 1791, as documented in a speech made by the deputies of the General Assembly of Saint Domingue before the National Assembly on 3 November 1791, "Hitherto we have only spoken of the misfortunes of the Northern parts. They are not all we have to lament. Blood was spilt in the Western province; fire destroyed several properties there…The Southern parts had also great cause of alarm."[173]

In March 1792, white rule in the West was dealt its final and most devastating blow by a combination of free people of color and slaves that besieged Port-au-Prince

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[171] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 129.

[172] Lacroix, *Révolution de Haïti*, 121.

[173] Assemblée générale, *A Particular Account*, 14-15.

and was able to hold it against the whites. In the North province, the insurgent forces captured Fort Dauphin and Le Cap Français. According to Carolyn Fick, in the South province over one-third of the plantations had been burned and an equal fraction of whites massacred.[174] Consequently, by March 1792, white power had been lost in all three provinces of the colony inciting the National Assembly to convene on 24 March 1792.[175] In this meeting, it was decided that, in order to restore stability to the colony, it was necessary to grant rights to the free people of color and to send three civil commissioners to enforce it in the colony.[176] The members of the National Assembly voted collectively in favor of full citizenship for the free people of color because it was deemed the only way to save the colony. On 4 April 1792, Louis XVI signed into law the April decree, which guaranteed citizenship to all free people of color regardless of their parentage.[177]

The April decree nullified the September decree and upheld the rights of the free people of color in accordance with Article IV of the Instructions of 28 March 1790. The specific purpose of this decree was laid out in the preamble that stated that in order to save the colony of Saint Domingue, it was necessary to extend the rights of full French citizenship to the free people of color:

> The National Assembly recognizing that the public safety, the interest of the mother country and of the colonies, demand that means most prompt, and most efficacious be taken to remove the causes of dissensions among the colonists, to repress the revolt of the blacks, and to reestablish peace; recognizing that one of the principal causes of these

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[174] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 149.

[175] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 59.

[176] Ibid., 65.

[177] Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique*, 237.

> troubles is the refusal that the people of color, free, met to their demand for the enjoyment of equal political rights—an equality that justice, general interest, and promises solemnly renewed, ought to assure them. It is therefore recognized and declared that the free colored men, and free Negroes ought to enjoy, as the white colonists, equality of political rights.[178]

Unlike the preceding May decree, the April decree outlined specific measures intended to ensure its passage in Saint Domingue. These measures were laid out in Article XII of the decree, calling for three civil commissioners to be sent to the colony to implement the rights of the free people of color. These commissioners were authorized to take all measures necessary to restore order and peace in the colony.[179] In addition, this article called for a force of six thousand troops to accompany the three commissioners to ensure the implementation of the April decree throughout the colony.[180] These commissioners were Sonthonax, as commissioner of the North, Polverel, as commissioner of the West, and Ailhaud, as commissioner of the South. All three were equipped with the authority of the king to enforce legislation in the colony as set out in the April decree.[181]

The debilitation of white power, by the spring of 1792, forced the whites to adhere to the April decree, which was, therefore, accepted throughout the colony. This is validated by a letter sent by Blanchelande to the civil commissioners, in which he stated that the entire colony had agreed to the April decree.[182] This sentiment was reiterated by

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[178] Steward, *The Haitian Revolution*, 57-58.

[179] Placide-Justin, *Histoire politique et statistique*, 238.

[180] Ibid., 240.

[181] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 315, no. 3.

[182] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 121.

the civil commissioners in their report to the Minister of Marine in September 1792, "Every one seems disposed to obey the Law of the 4th of April."[183]

By the time the whites realized that the means to securing white rule in the colony was to accept the rights of the free people of color, it was too late and the slaves had already been swept into a revolution for absolute liberty. Had the whites allied themselves with the free people of color by upholding the May decree in the colony, the revolution might not have succeeded so effectively in deposing white supremacy in its early stages. This underlines the vast importance of maintaining the color line in Saint Domingue society. It was inconsequential to the whites that an alliance with the free people of color could possibly save the colony. Most importantly, the color line could not shift or white supremacy would be lost.

Before the institution of the April decree, an alliance with the free people of color was advocated by several whites in the National Assembly, one of whom was Gérard, a delegate from Saint Domingue. He stated, "Win over the *gens de couleur* class to your cause. They surely could not ask for more than conforming their interests with yours, and of employing themselves with zeal for common security. It is therefore only a question of being just to them and of treating them better and better."[184] Racial prejudice in the colony was too severe and the color line too tightly drawn for the whites to allow the free people of color to become their equals in Saint Domingue society.

Before the end of 1792, the plantations throughout the colony were in complete ruin, the six thousand soldiers sent by France to enforce the April decree had been

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[183] Archives Nationales, D-xxv, 4 in Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 189.

[184] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 31.

annihilated by the harsh climate and sickness, and the majority of the whites had fled the colony, while those that remained were massacred. As a result, slaves, who had remained on the plantations, were left unsupervised and so turned to revolt.[185] In addition, the institution of the April decree destroyed the last vestiges of white rule in the colony by officially recognizing the rights of the free people of color as equal to those of the whites. By the time the National Assembly issued the April decree of 1792, the slaves had been armed and trained by the free people of color. In consequence, there was no way that the slaves were going to accept the April decree as it applied only to the free people of color and resume their lives of forced servitude on the plantations.

In a plantation society, especially one in which the slaves outnumbered the whites by fifteen to one, as was the case in the French colony of Saint Domingue, the institution of racial slavery had been reinforced and legitimized by white rule, which rested firmly on the existence of a barrier between the white and black populations in the colony. The exclusion of the class of free people of color from the right to vote and hold public office served as the dividing factor between the 31,000 whites and the nearly equal number of free people of color in the colony. This restriction on the citizenship of the free people of color was imposed in an effort to maintain white supremacy in the colony by drawing a clear distinction between those with white skin and those with black skin.

Racial slavery was based on the perception of the white race as irreversibly superior to the black race, as communicated by Carteau, who was a wealthy planter in the colony, "It was by means of this unalterable superiority of the white race that, until the

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[185] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 149.

Revolution, nearly 600,000 blacks…obeyed without a murmur a handful of masters."[186] The April decree officially shattered this distinction and erased the line that divided the society of Saint Domingue on the basis of white versus black or master versus slave. With the April decree, the free people of color gained racial equality. Consequently, the social and political barriers were no longer based on race, but on freedom. This is reiterated by Sonthonax in a speech dated September 1792, "We declare in the presence of the Supreme Being, in the name of the mother country, before the people and amid its present representatives, that from this time forth we recognize but two classes of men at San Domingo—the free, without distinction of color, and the slaves."[187] The creation of the April decree demonstrates that the free people of color, motivated by restrictions enacted against them on the basis of racial discrimination, operated as active political agents who developed and directed a successful revolution that won them their rights as free citizens of France. The April decree marks the culmination of this project and the achievement of their goal.

While the April decree the rights of the free people of color were guaranteed, but the state of the slaves remained the same in the colony. This marked the point at which the revolution took on an emancipationist program spearheaded by the insurgent slaves. According to Césaire, it was the colonial question that became the locomotive for the revolution in Saint Domingue. In his estimation, this question fueled the first two years

[186] J. Félix Carteau, *Soirées Bermudiennes : ou Entretiens sur les événemens qui ont opéré la ruine de la partie Française de l'isle Saint-Domingue ...* (Bordeaux : Chez Pellier-Lawalle, 1802), 60-61and Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo*, 44.

[187] *Archives Nationales*, D-xxv, 4 in Stoddard, *French Revolution in San Domingo*, 188-189.

of the revolution, which, after April 1792, became a movement of the slaves for their emancipation.[188]

[188] Césaire, *Toussaint Louverture*, 156.

EPILOGUE

According to David Patrick Geggus, the abolition of racial discrimination was won by the free people of color with the April decree, but it did not guarantee rights to the slaves.[189] Therefore, by the end of 1792, the slaves who had been thrust into a revolutionary fervor and were not inclined to return to their lives of servitude on the plantations.[190] In addition, many of the free people of color turned against the slave insurgents after April 1792. As the colony descended into utter chaos and the threat posed by the encroaching forces of the Spanish and English loomed heavily, Sonthonax, who had been appointed the governor of Saint Domingue in 1792, decided to solicit the support of the insurgent slave forces in defending the colony. In order to secure this military force of rebel slaves, Sonthonax proclaimed the abolition of slavery on 29 August 1793, which sparked a civil war between the free people of color and the former slaves. In 1794, Spain and England invaded Saint Domingue and the National Assembly immediately passed Sonthonax's proclamation into law on 4 February 1794, officially emancipating the slaves in the French colonies, although this emancipation did not last long.

In 1802, Napoleon, who had come to power in France, reinstated slavery in the French colonies. The arrival of Napoleon's forces, who were sent to Saint Domingue to restore slavery, resurrected an alliance of the former slaves and free people of color in a drive for independence from France.[191] In 1803, this revolutionary force defeated the

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[189] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 95.

[190] Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, 150.

[191] Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 96.

Napoleonic troops, proclaiming the colony independent of France, and the nation of Haiti was officially born.

On 1 January 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who fought alongside Toussaint Louverture, declared Saint Domingue independent and renamed it "Haiti," which is an aboriginal Amerindian name and a symbolic gesture intended to root the colony in its indigenous history and to separate it from its ties to France. Shortly after declaring the independence of Haiti, Dessalines ordered the execution of all whites on the island, which resulted in a mass exodus of the remaining whites from Saint Domingue, many of whom fled to the Southern United States where slavery still existed as a legitimate institution and where plantation life resumed under a climate similar to that of Saint Domingue.[192]

Within a decade, following the declaration of this new nation, Haiti had completely withdrawn from the sugar market. The outcome of the revolution that ravaged Saint Domingue was the eradication of the foremost manufacturer of sugar in the world.[193] More importantly, this revolution was responsible for the creation of a free and independent nation of formerly enslaved peoples and their descendants. The dawn of this nation proved that, above all else, liberty was innate in the heart of all mankind, as remarked by Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre, who co-wrote the Constitution of Haiti on 29 May 1805 with Juste Chanlatte, "Et vous, esclaves de tous les pays, vous apprendrez par ce grand homme, que l'homme porte naturellement dans son cœur la liberté, et qu'il en

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[192] Ott, *The Haitian Revolution*, 128.

[193] Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 90.

tient les clés dans ses mains.[194]" These words by Tonnerre encapsulate the lingering essence and legacy of the Haitian Revolution, which inspired freedom within the slave communities stretching from Latin America to the Southern United States.[195] It was not the French Revolution, the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, nor the intraclass dispute among the whites that supplied the ideological core of this country's war of independence, it was simply man's innate desire to be free. The free people of color and the slaves coalesced on this point of freedom, which caused the revolution in Haiti to be a success and ended in the creation of a nation based on this absolute freedom.

The creation of this independent nation of formerly enslaved peoples and their descendants coincided with the emergence of scientific racism as a means to rationalize racial prejudice.[196] While advancements in technology and industry removed a reliance on racial slavery as the primary means to procure economic profit, these developments also paved the way for scientific racism.[197] In the middle of the nineteenth-century, scientific investigation was employed as a means to legitimize the notion that Africans occupied a lower echelon along "the great chain of being," as compared to whites.[198] This line of reasoning maintained that Africans were not beasts or animals, but were savages capable of being civilized. As a result, in the wake of the abolition of slavery, a

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[194] Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre, *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire d'Haïti* (Port-au-Prince: Éditions des Antilles S.A., 1991), 119. "And you, slaves of all the countries, you will learn by this great man [Dessalines], that man carries naturally in his heart liberty, and that he holds the keys to this freedom in his hands."

[195] David Brion Davis, "Impact of the French and Haitian Revolutions," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 4.

[196] Patrick Brantlinger, "Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent," in *'Race,' Writing, and Difference*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 210.

[197] Klein, *African Slavery*, 90.

[198] Ibid., 90.

new framework of racial prejudice materialized in the form of a mission intended to civilize the supposed barbaric African.[199]

Today, Haiti is a beautiful country consumed in turmoil and atrocity. It is a nation born of a glorious enterprise to erase the color line waged between white and black. As the premier colony to undo racist legislative policy, Haiti became a preeminent model that proved the falsity of racial prejudice and the glory of those who fought for their freedom. The world at large was not ready to accept such a nation, "The only newly independent state in the Americas to have unequivocally abolished racial slavery, Haiti was the only one that was not invited to the Pan-American Conference in 1826."[200] Out of the ashes of this revolution that set fire to white supremacy surfaced a national identity, which was distinctly separate from its colonial oppressor. Jean Dominque, a Haitian radio journalist and an advocate of democracy in Haiti in the late 1980s and early 1990s, stated in an interview with Jonathan Demme, in the documentary entitled *The Agronomist,* that the Haitian national identity was unique because it was driven by a deep desire for freedom, "Never forget that you are from this land. You are not French. You are not British. You are not American. You are Haitian."[201] The momentum that impelled this revolution forward was generated and sustained by freedom: first by freedom from restriction based on the color line; then freedom from a life of forced servitude; and finally freedom from France. It was this underlying drive that earned Saint

[199] T. Carlos Jacques. "From Savages and Barbarians to Primitives: Africa, Social Typologies, and History in the Eighteenth-Century French Philosophy," *History and Theory*, 36(2), May 1997, 210-215.

[200] Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 4.

[201] Jonathan Demme, *The Agronomist* (S.I.: Clinica Estetico Ltd.; Optimum Releasing, 2004).

Domingue a place in the annals of history as the first colony to witness the creation of a nation where "Colour goes, and man remains."[202]

[202] Jean Copans, *The French Revolution and the Black People of and from Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Center for research, documentation, and university exchanges, 1989), 2. This work contains the complete lyrics of the song "The Freedom of the Negroes."

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Molly Herrmann was born in Ft. Thomas, Kentucky and grew up in Winston-Salem, NC. She attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, from which she graduated in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History, concentrating in Ancient History. In May 2005, Ms. Herrmann graduated from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington with a Master of Arts degree in Global History, concentrating in Caribbean and Latin American Studies.