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„The impact of the French Revolution on Saint-Domingue 1789-1793. The outburst of a tinderbox and the ways in which the United States were involved“

verfasst von / submitted by

Simon Cremer, BA

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ao.Univ.-Prof. Dr. Thomas Fröschl

For my Parents

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1. Introduction

The changes taking place during the last three decades of the 18th century in the Atlantic World had a remaining impact on the social, cultural and political life of the people in Europe and the New World. The events altered the monarchical system in Europe and challenged the old colonial order, by discussing new principles like the rights of men, abolition, freedom, equality, or democracy. Established hierarchies on both sides of the Atlantic were questioned, and at the same time new forms and possibilities of government, of division of labor and of rights for black and white men were discussed. There existed three major events that were partly initiator of these different movements, the *Transatlantic Revolutions*.

The first was the American Revolution starting in 1776. The Thirteen British Colonies in North America fought successfully for their independence and became not only the first independent country in the New World, but also the first republic with a republican constitution. In 1788 the constitution was ratified and one year later, in 1789, the first President, George Washington, was inaugurated. In the same year the French overthrew the *ancient regime*, founded the National Assembly and issued the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen*, which emphasized for the first time in Europe that every man is born free and is “equal in rights”¹. The third revolution also started in 1789, but really erupted in 1791 when the slaves in Saint-Domingue, a French colony later known as Haiti, rebelled against their masters. This marked the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, which not only challenged the plantation economy, which was build on slavery, but also the ideological justification of slave labor, also due to the proclamation that every man is born free.

The Atlantic World at the end of the 18th century was highly connected and a frequent exchange of information and goods was taking place. Therefore, the three revolutions have to be seen in the context of the end of the 18th century. It is important to underline the impact the American Independence had on the French Revolution and the declaration of rights on Saint-Domingue, as well as the effect the slave rebellion had on the U.S.A., concerning the question of slavery and their relationship to France. The triangle that is created by these three events is the exciting issue that will be discussed in this Master Thesis.

Saint-Domingue, since its independence in 1804 called Haiti, was a French colony in the Caribbean, which was known for its large sugar production. Therefore, it had a high economic value for the French Empire, as it was not only a leading producer of sugar but also of coffee

¹ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (4.5.17)

and indigo in the 1780s. These commodities were sold for high prices in Europe and made up a huge amount of the income of the French economy. Saint-Domingue was not only known for its large amount of goods shipped to Europe, but also for the many slaves arriving on the island from Africa. Especially in the last decades of the 18th century it emerged as the main destination of slave traders. More than half a million slaves were working on the plantation before the French Revolution started. Due to the high output of agricultural products, the demand for slaves was steadily growing in the French colony. Additionally, a large group of free colored, some 28,000 inhabited mainly the southern area of Saint-Domingue. In theory the free colored people should be treated equal to the white population on the island. But during the second half of the 18th century the discrimination by the whites worsened. The white population itself, some 30,000, was separated in rich plantation owners, the *grands blancs*, who presented the minority, and the poor white workers and artisans, the *petits blancs*. The conflicts between these four groups were already severe at the end of the 1780s, when the French Revolution started on the other side of the Atlantic.

Shortly after the Storm of the Bastilles on July 14, 1789, which marked the beginning of the French Revolution, the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* was issued. Its postulation in the first article, that every man is born free, seriously endangered the functioning of the slave society in Saint-Domingue. The free colored people started immediately, after the news of the declaration arrived in Saint-Domingue, to use it for their fight for equal rights in the colony. For the next two years the free colored people tried everything in Saint-Domingue as well as in Paris to achieve their goal of equal rights as free colored people in a slave society. However, the *petits blancs* also wanted to use the situation, to improve their position in the colony, whereas the *grands blancs* were struggling to keep the status quo and with it their dominance. The years between 1789 and 1791 were affected by the fights of these different groups for more rights and representation in the colony, until the majority of the population, the slaves, stood up against their masters.

Some of the masters were already aware that such a large slave population, which was working under brutal circumstances, would fight against the oppression one day. In Paris the Marquis de Rouvray was highlighting the precarious situation in the colony, by stating that the plantation owners are walking on “barrels of gunpowder”². In 1791 the slaves started the insurrection, which was going to dominate the island for the next 13 years until their independence in 1804. Haiti became the first former slave colony that freed itself, not only from

² David Patrick Geggus, Saint-Domingue on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution. In: David Patrick Geggus, Norman Fiering (ed.), *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington 2009) p. 3-21, p. 3.

colonialism but also from slavery and was governed by former slaves and free colored people. The Haitian Revolution was also the only successful slave revolution in the New World.

The Revolution in France was deeply connected with the events in Saint Domingue and the other way around. Still, for a long time, historians more or less neglected the slave revolution in Saint-Domingue. The French Revolution was at the center of their research, whereas the connection between the movement in France and the slave upheaval in their colony was not given much thought. One of the first publications that investigated the connection between these two revolutions was “The Black Jacobins. Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution” by C.L.R. James in 1938. This author fought for the rights of African people and used the slave revolution as an example and a motivation to stand up against white supremacy.³ Laurent Dubois, one of the leading experts on Haiti, highlights the pioneer work of C.L.R. James and underlines that he pointed at the connection between these two revolutions:” What his narrative suggests, [...] is that it may ultimately be extremely difficult to figure out where one revolution ends and the other begins”.⁴ Another important publication which helped to raise the awareness of the Haitian Revolution for many scholars was “The Making of Haiti” by Carloyn Fick. Jeremy Popkin, nowadays one of the leading experts on Haiti, appreciated and emphasized her work, especially because she was a pioneer in that field of research at a time when nearly all historians still ignored it.⁵ In 1995 another book, “Silencing the Past” by Michel Rolph-Trouillot, denounced that there existed only a few studies on the Haitian Revolution.⁶ During the last two decades a variety of publications on Haiti were issued, researching different aspects of the revolution and its connections to the Atlantic World. Laurent Dubois, as mentioned above, and David Geggus are two historians who dedicated their scientific work to the slave upheaval, its reasons, its process, and its impact.⁷ Therefore, both of them will recur in the following pages.⁸

Another reason for the increasing awareness of the events in Haiti was the emerging field of Global History during the last decades. The slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue was closely

³ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins. Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York 1989 Vintage Edition).

⁴ Laurent Dubois, *The Revolutionary Abolitionists of Haiti*. In: Richard Bessel, Nicholas Guyatt, Jane Rendall (ed.), *War, Empire and Slavery, 1770-1830* (Basingstoke, New York 2010) p. 44-61, p. 49, 51.

⁵ Jeremy Popkin colloquium at the University of Vienna on June 8, 2016. Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville 1990).

⁶ Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston 1995).

⁷ Their most important works are for example: Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The story the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge 2004). And by David Geggus David Patrick Geggus, David Gaspar (ed.), *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington 1997). David Patrick Geggus (ed.), *The impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic world* (Columbia 2001).

⁸ For an entire overview concerning the state of the scholarship in 2013 look at: Philippe R. Girard, *The Haitian Revolution, History's New Frontier: State of the Scholarship and Archival Sources*. In: *Slavery & Abolition* Vol 34. (2013) p. 485-507.

connected to the French Revolution, it had its repercussions in the United States and, of course, in the Caribbean. The English and the Spanish possessed colonies close to Saint-Domingue, the later even on the same island. Therefore, both intervened during the years of the struggle in Saint-Domingue, on the one hand, because of the threat the slave rebellion would spread to their colonies, and, on the other, because of the revolutionary war, which took place in Europe and affected the colonies across the Atlantic. Additionally, this conflict had its repercussions in many slave holding societies in the Atlantic World, for example in Brazil or the southern states of the U.S.A.

The first part of this Master Thesis will discuss the impact the French declaration, issued on August 26, 1789, had in Saint-Domingue and analyze the connection between the events in France and in Saint-Domingue. As soon as the news of the French Revolution and shortly afterwards of the declaration arrived in Saint-Domingue, the free colored people started to act accordingly and tried to use them for their purposes. The release of the declaration encountered the unique social structure in Saint-Domingue, which had developed over the last decades. The influence the French Revolution and the declaration had on their colony in Saint-Domingue will be analyzed in detail. Therefore, one important question, which is going to be discussed is how did the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* influence the struggle of the free colored people for equality on Saint-Domingue?

The free colored people were just waiting for an opportunity like that to demand their rights. The decisions that were made in Paris created an immediate response as soon as the news arrived in the colony. In the period between 1789 and 1791, the question whether the color line should be crossed or not, and in which way the declaration should be applied in Saint-Domingue was dominating the discourse on both sides of the Atlantic. The 18th century was the peak of Atlantic slavery and the events taking place in Saint-Domingue as well as in France, challenged the perception of slavery as an economic system and the oppression of men due to their race.

The Atlantic consequences of the struggle in Saint-Domingue, mainly of the slave insurrection, also had its repercussions in the young United States of America. Not only because the Caribbean is located nearby their southern borders, but also because a success of the slave insurrection could seriously endanger America's own plantation system in the southern states, which was also based on slavery. Furthermore, a lot of white planters were looking for shelter in the cities along the East Coast of the United States. Philadelphia was one of the main destinations, where many masters arrived alongside their slaves. Since Philadelphia and Saint-Domingue were connected by an intensive trading network, lasting for several decades, many refugees from Saint-Domingue already knew the city. A different destination for black and

white refugees from the French colony was New Orleans, where the refugee community had a lasting influence on the culture and the society of the city.

Another impact of the slave upheaval concerned the relationship between the United States and France, who helped them to become independent in the first place. Since 1778 a *Treaty of Alliance* existed between France and the United States of America. Additionally, the French asked the U.S. government to pay back their financial debts from the Independence War. For the U.S. government the slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue presented a first big challenge in various ways. It had to decide to which degree the U.S. would support their most important ally France, and had to deal with the wave of refugees and with the threat of a slave upheaval in the southern states.

Many of the founding fathers were slave holders. Jefferson grew up in the Virginia slave holding society and owned some two hundred slaves. However, at the same time he was one of the main writers of the *Declaration of Independence*, where the pursuit of happiness of every man was postulated. Therefore, in the second part of the Master Thesis the attitude of Jefferson, Washington and the U.S. government towards the slave upheaval and the events in France will be discussed. The U.S.A. were in various ways connected with Saint-Domingue and France, but in which way were the United States involved in the transnational struggle on the French colony? As soon as the slave upheaval broke out, the United States had to decide which role they would play, concerning their relationship to France and the commercial networks to Saint-Domingue. Additionally, the fear the rebellion would spread to the southern states of the U.S.A. was always present. Therefore, the perception in the American government of the rebellion in Saint-Domingue and the rights of slaves to stand up against their masters are another issue which will be discussed in the second part.

This Transatlantic triangle between the U.S., France and Saint-Domingue clearly shows the various connection between nations across the Atlantic in the end of the 18th century. The global impact of events like the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen*, which was celebrated in the U.S. and feared by the Saint-Domingan planters, the start of the slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue or the execution of the French King Louis XVI in 1793, was already recognized in the end of the 18th century. The exchange of goods and information between Europe and the New World was extremely high, although the travel from Paris to Saint-Domingue or Philadelphia took several weeks.

However, by discussing the impact of the declaration in Saint-Domingue, the repercussions of the slave upheaval in the U.S. and its influence on the relationship between the United States of America and France, the global aspect of these events and the effect each one had on the

other is demonstrated. An important factor is that these global connections and the highly linked Atlantic world in the end of the 18th century, is not projected by us historians from the present to the past, but was already recognized by the contemporaries.

2. Saint-Domingue on the eve of the Revolution

The French colony experienced a remarkable development in the 18th century. In the second half of the century it evolved into one of the most important economies in the Atlantic World. In 1776, Saint-Domingue was in economic terms more valuable for France than all the Spanish colonies in the Americas combined for the King in Spain.⁹ The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and its consequences for the British and French colonial empires, also changed the standing of Saint-Domingue for France. After the Treaty of Paris in 1763 the French lost most of their North American colonies, and hence concentrated on their colonies in the Caribbean. And next to the already booming sugar, coffee was introduced as a new crop, which could be planted in the mountainous regions of the island. Shortly before the revolution, the colony produced more sugar than Jamaica, Cuba,¹⁰ and Brazil combined. Furthermore, it provided half of the coffee, the world demanded for in the end of the 18th century.¹¹

The colony was responsible for 33 percent of the French trade with the Americas, and she traded a lot by itself with the neighboring islands in the Caribbean and of course the south of the U.S.A. through free ports. Though not all of it was legal, especially between the Caribbean islands smuggling boomed during these days. In the 1780s about 1500 vessels landed annually in the ports of the French colony, in 1789 even 4.100.¹² Regarding all this economic output, it is not surprising that Saint-Domingue was also the largest slave market in the Atlantic world. Shortly before the Revolution broke out about 30,000 slaves were brought there every year.¹³

Most of the enslaved Africans arrived in the north of the island, in Cap Francais (Le Cap), which constituted the center of the sugar growing area. The northern plain perfectly complied the requirements to grow sugar in large amounts, and due to the mountain chain, that separated it from the rest of the country, it had enough rain, especially during the tropic winter. Therefore, the high demands of fresh water on the cane fields could be satisfied. Port-au-Prince, located on the west coast of the island, was the administrative capital of the colony. It represented a contrast to the second major city, Le Cap, not only in terms of economic output but also because the social structure of the society was different. Since there were not as many plantations, far

⁹ Gordon K. Lewis, *Main currents in Caribbean thought: the historical evolution of Caribbean society in its ideological aspects, 1492-1900* (Baltimore 1987) p. 123.

¹⁰ The sugar age of Cuba was going to come in the 19th century.

¹¹ Laurent *Dubois*, *Avengers of the New World: The story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge 2004) p. 20ff.

¹² Patrick Bellergerde-Smith, *Haiti. The Breached Citadel* (Boulder, San Francisco, London 1990) p. 34.

¹³ David Patrick *Geggus*, *The Haitian Revolution in Atlantic Perspective*. In: Nicholas *Canny*, Philip *Morgan* (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic world c. 1450 – c. 1850* (Oxford 2013) p. 533-550, p. 533ff.

less slaves inhabited the western and southern regions of the Island. Instead, free colored people and French officials lived in the surrounding area of the capital. The big sugar plantations of the north were not as dominant in the rest of the country, where indigo and coffee plantations were favored. They needed less water, could be cultivated in the mountainous regions and, due to less amount of work, these crops did not demand the high number of slave labor the sugar plantations did. In general, the colony's hinterland was shaped by mountains, which isolated the various provinces from one another. Hence, it was often difficult to communicate between the south and the north province. Another specialty of Saint-Domingue was that the colony shared the larger part with Spanish Santo-Domingo. The border to Santo-Domingo, was going through the middle of the mountain chain.¹⁴



Map from colonial Saint-Domingue and Santo Domingo.¹⁵

The geography of Saint-Domingue, with its isolated regions, is important in order to understand the economic structure of the island, but to a greater extent even for the composition of the society, which will be explained in detail later on. The understanding of the social structure is crucial to discuss the impact of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* and of the slave insurrection. There existed many legal levels between the master and the slave,

¹⁴ Oliver *Gliech*, *Saint-Domingue und die Französische Revolution: das Ende der weißen Herrschaft in einer karibischen Plantagenwirtschaft* (Köln, Wien 2011) p. 42-46.

¹⁵ https://thelouvertureproject.org/images/f/f5/Colonial_haiti_outline_map.gif (13.4.17)

as well as between white and black. The following discussion will focus on the four main social groups living in the French colony.

2.1. The Grands blancs and Petits blancs

At the top of the social order that depicts the Society in Saint-Domingue were the so called *grands blancs*¹⁶. They often belonged to the French aristocracy and represented the ancient regime in Saint-Domingue. The majority of them owned plantations in the north of the colony, or belonged to the wealthy merchant class in harbor cities like Le Cap or Port-au-Prince.¹⁷ Most of the trade took place in Le Cap where the shipping routes in the Caribbean were located. Hence, Le Cap was the center of commerce for the *grands blancs* in the north of Saint-Domingue, with its sugar plantations.

The members of this class were very few, only one sixth of all whites belonged to this upper class, which were some 5,000 people out of the 30,000 white inhabitants.¹⁸ Which means they represented less than one percent of the whole population. The *grands blancs* took advantage of the colonial system and enriched themselves through the slave system. Most of them were born in France and saw their stay in Saint-Domingue as a welcomed opportunity to do business and return to France as even wealthier men. Some plantation owners moved back to France but still owned their plantations in Saint-Domingue, as Dubois shows by the example of Madame and Monsieur de Mauger, who supervised their property from abroad. They had a white plantation manager and a few loyal creole overseers, who reported regularly as to the activities on the plantation.¹⁹

Thus, it seems only logical that they were attached to the monarchical structures of the ancient regime and to a functioning slave system in Saint-Domingue. Many of them did not worry at all that this could change in the near future. In 1790, only a few months before the slave insurrection, a colonist wrote to his wife in Paris that a slave revolt is no danger at all and the slaves are not even thinking about something like an upheaval. They are quiet and follow their orders.²⁰ It seemed like the elite of the society in Saint-Domingue felt quite safe in their residences.

¹⁶ Big whites

¹⁷ Bellergarde-Smith, Haiti p. 36.

¹⁸ Malick W. Ghachem, The old Regime and the Haitian Revolution (Cambridge 2012) p. 13.

¹⁹ Dubois, Avengers p. 36.

²⁰ Trouillot, Silencing the past p. 72.

However, as mentioned above, most of the whites in Saint-Domingue did not enjoy the privileges of the *grands blancs*. Some 25,000 of the 30,000 whites belonged to the class of the so called *petits blancs*²¹, who were an important group on the island, especially during the French Revolution.²²

Most of them came to Saint-Domingue after the peace of Paris in 1763. During the next decades the immigration to Saint-Domingue constantly increased. The white colonists hoped to buy land and to establish themselves as white planters. The aim of returning to France as wealthy men and perhaps even to ascend to the nobility failed in most cases, since the majority of the land, that could be cultivated, was already controlled by the *grands blancs*.²³ Therefore, many of the *petits blancs* worked as overseers on the plantations, as artisans, shopkeepers or farmers. They definitely belonged to the poorer part of the society in Saint-Domingue and did not have the chance to participate in the wealth of their fellow countryman.²⁴

Their name *petits blancs* was given to them by the slaves and free colored people, simply to mock them. The poorest were called *blancs manants*²⁵, which is still today a term of abuse in Haiti. In the end of the 18th century they represented the lowest group of the white society in Saint-Domingue, what was underlined consistently by their contemporaries: “*The blancs manants are ill-mannered, rustic white stowaways and escapees from white ships who eat cassava and dried fish with hot peppers and drink cheap rum like slaves*”²⁶

Many members of the *petits blancs* were highly racist, especially against the free colored people, who were mostly wealthier than this group of whites. But at the same time they wanted to have a voice in the colony, which should be heard by the *grands blancs*.²⁷ With the ideals of the French Revolution and the questioning of the old order, this group also demanded more rights just as the free colored people did.

²¹ Small whites

²² Bellegarde-Smith, Haiti p. 36.

²³ Laurent Dubois, John D. Garrigus, Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804. A Brief History with Documents (Boston, New York 2006) p. 16.

²⁴ Frank Moya Pons, History of the Caribbean. Plantations, Trade, and War in the Atlantic World (Princeton 2007) p. 151.

²⁵ Could be translated to „white trash“

²⁶ Bellegarde-Smith, Haiti p. 37.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 36f.

2.2. The Gens de couleur

The *gens de couleur* or free colored people represented a very important group for Saint-Domingue and in the upcoming events starting in 1789. The *affranchis*²⁸, as they were also called, were free blacks or mulattos, who were either already born free in Saint-Domingue or freed by their masters. The concept of manumission was a common practice in slave societies to convince slaves to obey their masters. Loyal slaves and their children were sometimes freed, after they had served for several decades. Furthermore, due to the shortage of white women, white planters engaged with enslaved women and often freed their mixed race children. Thus, every slave island in the Caribbean had a certain number of freed slaves in their society.²⁹ Therefore, this was not a major factor that distinguished Saint-Domingue from Guadeloupe, Jamaica or Martinique. The outstanding development in Saint-Domingue was that the number of free colored people rose till the revolution in 1789/1791. In 1681 the group of free colored people were only some 4.8% of the quantity of the white population, in 1700 12.3%, in 1764 already 33.5% and in 1789 it were 89.4% relative to the size of the white population. Therefore, in 1789 almost as many white people as free colored people lived in Saint-Domingue. Especially, since the 1760s when three times as many whites lived in the colony, the community of the free colored people grew extremely.³⁰

This increasing development has to be seen in the evolving economic involvement of the free colored, especially as planters, in the southern region. As already mentioned above, the south was better suited for the cultivation of coffee or Indigo. Furthermore, an average coffee plantation had about 33 slaves, many even under 20, whereas a sugar plantation needed more than a hundred slaves as workers, equipment for the production, specialized workers and a huge piece of land. From the 1750s coffee production rose exponentially. In 1755 seven million pounds were exported and only nine years later the number more than doubled to 15 million. Accordingly the wealth of the free colored people in the south grew, who managed it to get more involved in the real estate market and to buy land to start their businesses.³¹

The increasing activity of the free colored can be seen in the rising purchase of rural land in the 1780s. They were engaged in 44 percent of all deals, as compared to some 28 percent in the 1760s. Furthermore, up to 30 percent of these commercial operations dealt with high value

²⁸ „Freed people“

²⁹ Jeremy D. Popkin, *You are all free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge 2010) p. 33.

³⁰ Ghachem, *The old Regime* p. 77.

³¹ John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (Basingstoke 2011) p. 173-175.

properties, and this figure tripled compared to the 1760s. In the cities, or the urban real estate, the figures remained more or less the same. However, especially on the southern peninsula the free colored people grew as a new planter class and accumulated a respectable amount of wealth. This led to an increasing demand for slaves by the free colored people. The fact that former slaves, who were freed, would have slaves of their own someday to start their plantation, was absolutely common in Saint-Domingue. For example, Julien Raimond, was born free into an already wealthy family, represented one of the spokesman of the free colored people during the French Revolution and sold 24 slaves to a white slave merchant in 1784. This depicts the clear separation between free colored and slaves.³²

Since the whites did not want to enter the military, the free colored people were recruited to serve in the colonial military, the *marréchaussée* and the police in Saint-Domingue. One task of the *marréchaussée* was to capture fugitive slaves, who hid in the mountains. It presented another possibility for the *gens de couleur* to have a career in the colony and to distinguish themselves from the slaves. When a master wanted to free a slave and avoid to pay the so called “liberty tax”, he could register him in the colonial military. The slave had to serve in the military for a specific time to relieve his master from the tax. Therefore, some members of the *marréchaussée* were practically still slaves.³³

With the rise of the class of free colored people, they demanded equal rights in the colony. They wanted the respect and the political rights they thought they deserved as members of the wealthy planter class of the southern peninsula. The members of the wealthy free colored community in the south even sent their children for education to schools in France. Education was seen as their strongest argument, especially compared to the *petits blancs*. They wanted to achieve the social status of the white planter class, so they figured their children should have the same education, which was only possible in France. Education was seen as a big step towards full citizenship.³⁴

The legal code that was still applied in Saint-Domingue was the *Code Noir*, which was enacted by Louis XIV in 1685. But a century later, it often was not properly implemented. For example, punishing slaves for running away or other crimes was defined in the *Code Noir* however the owners often changed the punishments. Instead of cutting their ears off or slicing the hamstring, they preferred to inflict less brutal methods which would not damage their property as much as the prescribed punishments. Whipping was a common measure for

³² Ibid. p. 176-177.

³³ Dubois, Avengers p. 64.

³⁴ Garrigus, Before Haiti p. 47, 290.

*maroons*³⁵, and later salt or lemon juice was rubbed in the wounds.³⁶ However, especially for the free colored people articles 57 and 59 were important:

“LVII. [...] manumitted slaves will not need our letters of naturalization in order to enjoy the advantages of our natural subjects in our kingdom,[...] although they be born in foreign lands.[...]”

*LIX. We grant manumitted slaves the same rights, privileges, and liberties enjoyed by persons born free; desiring that they merit this acquired liberty and that it produce in them, both for their persons and for their property, the same effects that the good fortune of natural liberty causes in our other subjects”*³⁷

That means, in theory, once a slave was freed he could enjoy the same rights as an any aristocrat that came from France to Saint-Domingue, as according to the *Code Noir* there was no legal difference between them. But after the Seven Years' War and the rising of the free colored class, more and more restrictions were added. Driven by the fear that both the *petits blancs* and the *grands blancs* had of the new rising class on their colony, they started to issue decrees to set limits to these free colored planters. In 1764 the colonial administration excluded them by a royal decree from surgery, medicine or pharmacy, only one year later other jobs at offices and notaries were eliminated, too.³⁸ In the following decades numerous limitations began, e.g. that free coloreds were not allowed to have white surnames, wearing a “white” dress or being spoken to as “Sir” or “Madame”. All these legal and social humiliations should discourage the free colored people in their effort to rise socially and distinguish them clearly from both groups of the white people in Saint-Domingue. Though this became more difficult with the rising number of this class, and its increasing awareness of their political rights and their desire for equality.³⁹

³⁵ Slaves that tried to runaway.

³⁶ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 61.

³⁷ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 54.

³⁸ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 62.

³⁹ Bellegarde-Smith, *Haiti* p. 38.

2.3. The Slaves

The three groups, discussed in the previous pages, represented only some 60,000 people of the total population of 523, 803 in 1788. The largest group, which was roughly half a million, were slaves working on the plantations. At the beginning of the 18th century some 24,146 slaves worked on the sugar plantations, however the numbers rose steadily during the last two decades before the insurrection.⁴⁰ Almost half of them, 220,000, arrived in Saint-Domingue between 1784 and 1790 and in Cap Francais alone, 20,000 arrived in 1790. Dealing with these figures, it's not a big surprise that one year later Le Cap would be the center of a slave insurrection.⁴¹

However, the slave society itself was highly heterogeneous. First of all, it was separated by the birthplace of the slaves, about two thirds of them were born in Africa, the other one third already in Saint-Domingue. This implicates that the majority of people living in Saint-Domingue were not born on the island itself but on the African continent. The next question is, where did they come from and who were these slaves before they were shipped to Saint-Domingue? Most of the slaves were captured as young men or women with the average age of 20 years. Mainly young men were needed for the plantation work in Saint-Domingue because they could stand the miserable working conditions on the sugar plantations in the north. In the late 18th century many wars were waged in west and central Africa, some of them were even triggered by the Atlantic Slave Trade. The captured soldiers were often enslaved by the victors and sold to the European merchants waiting on the coasts to ship the already enslaved to the Americas and during this period, the destination was often Saint-Domingue. Many veterans from these Inner-African wars survived but lost their freedom and were sent on their way through the so called *Middle Passage*⁴² to work on the sugar plantations around Le Cap. Many of these trained soldiers could use their skills again during the upheaval.⁴³

Since the demand of the plantation owners grew unbelievable fast, there were particular regions, for example the Congo, where many slaves came from. Although the slave society in Saint-Domingue was mixed, many had a common background, country or language, which allowed them to communicate with one another. Additionally, the plantations, especially in the north, were not far away from each other, which made it possible for the slaves to meet and discuss in common tongues such as the Krèyol language, established in the 18th century or African tongues like Kikongo, which was widely spread due to the large number of slaves from

⁴⁰ Pons, *Story of the Caribbean* p. 146.

⁴¹ Geggus, *Saint-Domingue* p. 7.

⁴² The often terrible journey by the slaves across the Atlantic is referred to as Middle Passage.

⁴³ Laurent Dubois, *Revolutionary Abolitionist* p. 45ff.

the Congo. In the end of the 18th century many civil wars took place in the Congo area, where prisoners were sold to slave traders and shipped to Saint-Domingue. Therefore, up to 60 percent of the slaves in Saint-Domingue, shortly before the revolution started, came from the Congo.⁴⁴ All these experiences the slaves went through until they came to Saint-Domingue were often transformed into religious thought or also music.⁴⁵ The religion of *Vodou*, which represented a mixture of different African influences and the experience of enslavement across the Atlantic, was one popular movement that originated during this period.⁴⁶

Out of this heterogeneous and mostly African born slave society erupted the slave revolution 1791. Some of the *grands blancs* did not see it coming, however there were others who anticipated that the volcano would break out eventually. Louis-Sébastien Mercier wrote a book in 1770 called “The year 2440” in which he imagined how the world would look like in the future. With this method he criticized the society in which he lived during the 18th century. Although it was fiction, the passage about all the slaves following a leader⁴⁷ into independence and revenging all their suffering, can be read as a prophecy, what was going to happen some twenty years later in Saint-Domingue:

*“The soil of America avidly drank the blood that it has been awaiting for so long, and the bones of their ancestors, murdered by cowards, seemed to stand up and shake with joy [...] He [the Leader] demonstrated that sooner or later cruelty will be punished and that Providence stores away souls that she unleashes on the earth to reestablish the balance that the iniquity of ferocious ambition has destroyed.”*⁴⁸

It is important to keep in mind the structure of the slave society in Saint-Domingue, if one wants to discuss the insurrection, which was finally successful. But it is also crucial to understand not only the disparate structure of the slave society but of the whole society in Saint-Domingue on the eve of the revolution.

*“It was such a multiple, heterogeneous and conflictual experiences that the population of Saint Domingue brought with them into the movement in the late eighteenth century when, relatively suddenly, there were new kinds of opportunities, not just for individual advancement within a seemingly anchored system, but for a different kind of transformation.”*⁴⁹

⁴⁴ John Thornton, “I Am the Subject of the King of Congo”: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution. In: *Journal of World History* Vol. 4 (1993) p. 181-214, p. 183ff.

⁴⁵ For example, the song *Sou Lan Mè* (On the ocean), which is still sung today by the members of *Vodou* Religion.

⁴⁶ Dubois, *Revolutionary Abolitionists* p. 48.

⁴⁷ The leader was often seen in Toussaint-Louverture, who, especially after 1794, led Saint-Domingue towards independence.

⁴⁸ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 55.

⁴⁹ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 50.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, which encouraged the free colored people as well as the *petits blancs*, and endangered the *grands blancs*, was the first match that was thrown into the tinderbox of Saint-Domingue.

Before discussing this impact, it is paramount to understand the situation on the other side of the Atlantic, where *La Société des Amis des Noirs* and the *Club Massiac* was founded, and where Louis XVI summoned the General Estates.

3. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and Saint-Domingue

3.1. The National Assembly and the Delegates of Saint-Domingue

The overview of the social and economic structure of Saint-Domingue, shortly before the outbreak of the French Revolution, indicates that slavery was on its peak. The slave trade between Africa and the Americas reached a climax during the 18th century, however, at the same time an anti-slavery movement developed which gathered momentum and attracted more and more members in the 1770s and 1780s. Granville Sharp was a pioneer in Britain who demanded the end of the Atlantic Slave Trade and in the longer run the abolition of slavery. In 1787 another forerunner, Thomas Clarkson, founded the *London Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. Following the British example, a similar movement erupted in France and institutionalized itself in 1788, *La Société des Amis des Noirs*, which was mainly founded by Jean Jacques Brissot and Etienne Clavière.⁵⁰ But their opponent was an influential group of planters who formed the *Club Massiac*.

On top of these movements for and against abolition, the King of France Louis XVI, summoned the General Estates. In 1789 the representatives of the three orders, the clergy, the nobility and the third estate, met for the first time since 1614.⁵¹ In the context of Saint-Domingue, the question of participation in these General Estates and the involvement of the *Amis* and the *Club Massiac* will be discussed in the following.

3.1.1. La Société des Amis des Noirs

The founding of the *Amis des Noirs* was clearly a response to the *London Society of Effecting the abolition of Slave Trade* established by their British companions, led by Thomas Clarkson. The formation of this institution is often seen in the context of the French Revolution, however, it was actually founded in 1788. There was no clear indication to assure that the events of 1789 would overthrow the ancient regime and later on the monarchy.

In the beginning of 1789 the *Amis des Noirs* had 141 members, most of whom were part of the political elite and who admired the constitutional process in the United States. Some of the

⁵⁰ John Stauffer, Abolition and Antislavery. In: Robert L. Paquette, Mark M. Smith (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas (New York 2010) p. 556-578, p. 565.

⁵¹ Marc Bouloiseau, Estates General. In: Samuel F. Scott, Barry Rothaus, Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution, 1789-1799 (Lanham 2004) p. 368-370, p. 368.

better known members were Lafayette, Condorcet, or Abbé Grégoire. The problem of the *Amis des Noirs* was that they kept their movement very elitist, by having a very high entrance fee. It was hardly possible for a common citizen to be part of the institutionalized abolition movement in France. The British model functioned differently, as it tried to mobilize larger masses by petitions and larger meetings. Even when Thomas Clarkson visited Paris to collaborate with the French abolition movement he remarked, that the meetings of the *Amis des Noirs* were poorly attended and, in contrast to the British, the French abolitionists were merely concentrated in Paris, whereas in Britain a local network was built which extended into 39 counties.⁵²

The members of the *Amis des Noirs* published their thoughts and ideals primarily in newspapers or through pamphlets. Their objectives also differed from the British, since they asked for the gradual abolition of slavery itself. Clarkson and his followers demanded the more realistic aim of abolishing the slave trade. First of all, this would stop the brutalities on the slave ships crossing the Atlantic, the *Middle Passage*. Secondly, the plantations in the Americas would have to treat their slaves better, especially since the supply from Africa would be stopped. And, last but not least, it would be a first victory against the planter class and therefore an important step towards a full, though gradual, abolition of slavery.⁵³

Another issue were the arguments the *Amis des Noirs* used to denounce slavery in the colonies. They were mainly grounded on moral reasoning's and not backed by economic arguments. The *Amis des Noirs* cited Rousseau and wanted to appeal to the humanity of their readers. The British movement tried to use economic figures and statistics to show, for example, the high costs of the Atlantic Slave Trade, or how many British sailors died during their travels on slave ships.⁵⁴ These efforts were not made by the French abolitionists, and that is why Seymour Drescher, an expert on the topic of Abolition from the 1770s to the 1820s, calls them: "an elite organization in Paris" that "functioned principally as a lobby to fellow members of the political elite."⁵⁵ This difference between the English movement and the French movement can be shown in simple figures of petitions in the British Parliament and *cahiers de doléances* in the National Constituent Assembly. In 1788, out of all the petitions that reached the British Parliament, more than half demanded the abolition of the slave trade, whereas in 1789 only 10 percent of the general *cahiers de doléances* in France addressed the issue of abolition. Furthermore, in the collection of *cahiers*, the topic of slavery in the colonies was ranked lower

⁵² Daniel P. Resnick, *The Societe des Amis des Noirs and the Abolition of Slavery*. In: *French Historical Studies* Vol. 7 (1972) p. 558-569, p. 560-562.

⁵³ Seymour Drescher, *Abolition. A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (New York 2009) p. 151-153.

⁵⁴ Resnick, *Amis des Noirs* p. 565.

⁵⁵ Drescher, *Abolition* p. 152.

than the 400th position on the list of urgent national reforms.⁵⁶ The demands for an improvement of the living conditions of slaves in the French Colonies were buried among thousands of other requests for more urgent changes in France itself. Especially concerning the *cahiers* in the beginning of the revolution mostly France-related topics were addressed.

All the arguments or figures above and the comparison to the abolition movement in the United Kingdom show that the effect of the *Amis des Noirs* was not as decisive as one might have expected. Although, it clearly demonstrates, that there were people who cared about the destiny of the 700,000 slaves working on the French plantations in the Caribbean, they engaged too little in the spreading of their ideals and undertook too less to really achieve their goal of gradual abolition, which presented a very ambitious target at the end of the 18th century.

In 1789 no one would have thought that only four years later 500,000 slaves would be freed in Saint-Domingue, not even the members of the *Amis des Noirs*. Brissot wrote in the beginning of 1789, that there is no fear that the slaves would take up arms and emancipate themselves. Like most of the white abolitionist groups, the *Amis des Noirs* did not want the slaves to free themselves, as they did not favor a sudden emancipation, like it happened in Saint-Domingue.⁵⁷ To found an institution which supports abolition of slavery was a big step towards abolition itself, however, the arguments this institution presented and the way it tried to spread its ideals was, especially compared to the British, too elitist.

The reason the *Amis des Noirs* were discussed here was to show that their role in the struggle for abolition and also in the fight for the free colored, was finally not decisive. Although, they had the opportunity with the outbreak of the revolution to get more and more attention in the public sphere and even managed that the issue of slavery was mentioned by Jacques Necker, the minister of the King, in the opening speech of the Estates General.⁵⁸ But in some literature, especially the one that deals mainly with the Haitian Revolution, it was often presented as a logical straight line from the foundation of *La Société des Amis des Noirs* in 1788 to the French Revolution 1789, to the Abolition of Slavery in Saint-Domingue in 1793. After discussing the institution and its impact in this chapter, it is clear that a “logical line” can not be drawn. Also because the *Amis des Noirs* ran against a very powerful white planter class, that formatted themselves in the year 1788 and also institutionalized one year later as the *Club Massiac*.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 153.

⁵⁷ Resnick, *Amis des Noirs* p. 567.

⁵⁸ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 72.

3.1.2. The *Club Massiac*

Almost simultaneously with the gathering of the abolition supporters, French planters, who wanted to strengthen the slavery system in the colonies, met in Paris. Their aim was to have a colonial assembly in Saint-Domingue, to be more independent from Paris, and hence, to exercise more control in Saint-Domingue. The aim of the meeting in 1788 was not yet to institutionalize, but it was the first gathering where the issues of more autonomy from the monarch in Paris were discussed. However, this group was not as homogeneous as one might expect. Since not all the planters lived in Saint-Domingue, their position was to strengthen the *grands blancs* in Saint-Domingue, without being too subordinate to the French government.⁵⁹

When the General Estates were called, the planters from Saint-Domingue wanted to participate as well. The French officials, both in Paris and in Port-au-Prince, neglected their demand for representation in the General Estates. Still, the planters managed to meet and to elect deputies. When the three estates gathered in Versailles in 1789, seventeen delegates from Saint-Domingue arrived without any permission to participate. They threatened, that if they were not admitted to take part in the General Estates, France would have to deal with the issue of representation of the colonies with weapons in their hands, as England had to a couple of years before. The opposition of the planter class was outraged. Brissot claimed that they were not legally elected and therefore could not be tolerated in the General Estates. In the end, they were invited to participate, but did not have the right to vote.⁶⁰

In the General Estates, the Third Estate was fighting for a head vote instead of a traditional vote by groups, it would represent a majority with its 578 deputies, in comparison to 291 of the first estate and 270 of the second. On June 17th, the National Assembly was proclaimed by the Third Estates then followed by the famous *Tennis Court Oath*. At first, the King repealed this proclamation, however on June 27th he gave in, and only a few days later the word *constituent* was added and with it the National Constituent Assembly was born.⁶¹

The planters of Saint-Domingue were included, but this meant as well that everything that would be issued in the Assembly would apply to Saint-Domingue. Hence, the planters that gathered for the first time in 1788 decided that they had to organize and institutionalize in order to have more power and hinder the assembly from interfering in colonial affairs. On July the 20th, 1789 the *Société correspondante des colons français de Saint-Domingue* was founded.

⁵⁹ Gliech, Saint-Domingue p. 242.

⁶⁰ Dubois, Avengers p. 74.

⁶¹ David M. Epstein, National Constituent Assembly. In: Samuel F. Scott, Barry Rothaus, Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution, 1789-1799 (Lanham 2004) p. 705-710, p. 705f.

Their meeting place in Paris was the villa of the Marquis de Massiac which led to their name *Club Massiac*.⁶²

The group consisted of more than 350 members, most of which belonged to the aristocracy or the military. Thirty-two percent were from Saint-Domingue, twelve percent from Paris and another third from the Atlantic harbors in France (twelve percent from Nantes, sixteen from La Rochelle and eight from Bordeaux). Most of the member's plantations were located in the North provinces, only 16 percent in the south. Furthermore, the plantations of the members of the *Club Massiac* were based in the sugar growing areas of Saint-Domingue, whereas the percentage of their property extremely declined in territories where coffee was favored. The picture, that is drawn with these numbers, illustrates that the majority of the *Club Massiac* were members of the *grands blancs* in Saint-Domingue and therefore did not want to lose their privileged status on the island, neither to the free colored people, nor to the *petits blancs*, and not to mention to the slaves.⁶³

3.2. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen and its immediate repercussions on Saint-Domingue

Until the beginning of July 1789, the colonial issues and the legitimation of the deputies from Saint-Domingue were discussed in the General Estates and later on in the National Constituent Assembly. However, the events happening in France during July and August completely disorganized the discussions in the Assembly and the colonial question had to be put aside. Due to the retreat of the King's Minister Jacques Necker from the assembly and the raid of the Bastille on the 14th of July, the concerns in France turned away from the colonies towards the domestic issues. On top of all that, an upheaval in the country side, called the *Grande Peur*, followed at the end of July, where peasants stood up against their lords. Subsequently, the National Constituent Assembly abolished feudalism in the night from the 4th to the 5th of August. The feudal system was more or less the backbone of the provincial, municipal and local governments. Furthermore, it presented an important part of the French monarchy, on which the monarchical system had relied for centuries. It was a further major step, that ripped the structures of the ancient regime into pieces.⁶⁴

⁶² Gliech, Saint-Domingue p. 243.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 246.

⁶⁴ William Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution (Oxford 1989) p. 117.

The time span in France between June and August, 1789 is highly interesting, but can not be discussed in detail in this chapter. A short overview is important, though, to understand the impact on Saint-Domingue as well as the reactions in the colony. The struggle of the *Club Massiac* to establish a colonial assembly with legislative power for the island was put aside for now, but the members of the club still debated behind the scenes and tried to connect with the persons of influence. The representative of the abolition movement did of course the same. They hoped that, after the end of feudalism an end of slavery would follow soon. Both groups had to react immediately to the rapidly changing circumstances in France, on which they had not much influence.⁶⁵

One of the greatest achievements of the French Revolution, which also had a major impact on the colonies, was still to come. The assembly that met in May 1789 saw its aim in writing a constitution. After changing the name to the National Assembly and adding *constituent* this goal became even more present. Most of the deputies agreed that the constitution should include a declaration of rights, similar to some states in the U.S.A. At the end of August, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* was finished and officially issued on the 26th of August 1789.⁶⁶ It would finally bring the colonial question back on the table.

The date 26th of August 1789, is still remembered as one of the fundamental days of the French Revolution. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* was seen as the first part of the constitution on which a better France should be built. This founding document of the French Revolution was considered “sacrosanct”⁶⁷ throughout the whole Revolution. But before discussing its repercussions in the colonies and how the seventeen articles it contained were interpreted by the different classes in Saint-Domingue, it is crucial to have look at the various articles, what they stated and what was omitted.

In the first article, the most famous one, the principles of the French Revolution were clearly stated: “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.”⁶⁸ It should not be any surprise that such a sentence could endanger the social order in the colonial societies, which were based on slave work. In the second article the declaration continued this thought by highlighting that the rights of every man are “liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression”. Again, these words do have an extreme power in a colonial society that is based on suppressing over half a million blacks, free coloreds and *petits blancs* by a small minority of white planters.

⁶⁵ Gliech, Saint-Domingue p. 285.

⁶⁶ Doyle, The Oxford History of the French Revolution p. 118.

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 118.

⁶⁸ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (4.5.17)

The National Constituent Assembly specifically highlighted the rule of law in the declaration itself. In nine out of the seventeen articles this is particularly underlined, for example, the fourth article:

*“IV. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.”*⁶⁹

Every French citizen should have the liberty to do whatever he likes, as long as he does not hurt any other citizen. The only limitation is the law itself, which is defined in article VI.:

*“VI. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.”*⁷⁰

The importance of this article can not be highlighted enough and it was often cited in Saint-Domingue together with the first and the second article. The general will defines the law. An assembly, out of citizens, is able to make laws and be the legislator of a country. It is not one person or one monarch, who decides what the laws are and who is allowed to participate in the process of defining them. The direct or indirect participation of all citizens is the crucial issue in this article. The king can not reign as an absolute monarch anymore, he has to bow to the will of the citizens, who took away the legislative sovereignty of the king. Furthermore, the separation of the classes was ended and with it unequal taxation (Article XIII). Another important issue was freedom of speech, which was phrased in article XI: “The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man.”⁷¹

Although not all articles can be discussed in this chapter⁷², reading these few and understanding their statements in the context of the 18th century and, even more decisive, in the context of a nation with colonies that were based on slavery, generates many questions. There is no doubt that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* is a revolutionary step towards a more just society. But how is it possible to implement these seventeen articles in France and especially in the colonies. To whom do they finally apply?

⁶⁹ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (4.5.17)

⁷⁰ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (4.5.17)

⁷¹ http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (4.5.17)

⁷² The complete declaration is in the Appendix.

This question leads to a further issue, namely what is not stated by the declaration. Many questions arose with the reading of these articles. What is meant in the first article by men are born free? Who is included and who is not? Do these articles only have force in France or also in the colonies? Is the reign of the *grands blancs* harmonizing with article four, “to do everything which injures no one else”? What is the response of free colored people to Article VI stating that “Law is the expression of the general will”, when they are as by law forbidden to have white surnames? Are the *petits blancs* allowed to vote for their representatives, while they were not to do so when the deputies of Saint-Domingue were sent to the General Estates? The Jamaican historian Shanti Marie Singham discusses in her article “Betwixt Cattle and Men. Jews, Blacks and Women”⁷³, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man” the groups in the population to whom the declaration did not apply. She argues that, on the one hand, the declaration was silent about these groups, however on the other hand, it started a discussion about including them and letting them participate.⁷⁴

After the news of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* had arrived in Saint-Domingue, the *petits blancs* and the free colored people saw their chance to stand up against the *grands blancs*, who of course feared that the principles of the declaration would also apply to the colonies.

3.2.1. The Grands blancs and the Comité du Nord

When in September 1789 the seventeen articles arrived in Saint-Domingue the *Club Massiac* already had tried everything to prevent that the people in the colony would hear about the ideals of the assembly. The impact these articles, once they were applied, would have on their colony, was simply too dangerous for the white planter class. One member of the *Club Massiac* suggested that no blacks or mulattos, coming from Europe should be allowed to enter the island. Further more, they tried to hinder blacks, mulattos and people who could spread the ideals of the revolution in France to leave the Atlantic harbors of France. However, to stop the flow of information across the Atlantic was almost impossible.⁷⁵

⁷³ Although the women had to wait until the aftermath of the Second World War, till they were allowed to fully vote in France.

⁷⁴ Shanti Marie Singham, *Betwixt Cattle and Men. Jews, Blacks and Women, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man*. In: Dale van Kley (ed.), *The French Idea of Freedom. The old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford 1994) p. 114-154, p. 114.

⁷⁵ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 77.

The wish to separate Saint-Domingue from France as a “self ruling province”⁷⁶ was more relevant in the debates of the club then ever before. A published pamphlet “Overview of the Constitution of Saint-Domingue”, which was written by a planter belonging to the *Club Massiac*, argues that Saint-Domingue is a self-ruling province of France and not a part of it. Therefore, the declaration could not be applied to the colonies.⁷⁷ This document was not only a threat to slavery, but also to the standing of the merely 5,000 whites on the island. Their economic interests like their social superiority over the *affranchise* and the *petits blancs* were extremely in danger. The arrival of the declaration in Saint-Domingue could, of course, not be prevented in the colonies.

The *grands blancs*, in the north of the island, elected a Provincial Assembly, called *Comité du Cap* or *Comité du Nord*. The organization of this assembly goes back to the first meetings of the white planter class in Paris during the summer of 1788. They declared that they would have the full legislative power as well as the executive power to rule over the colony. It was clearly an affront to the colonial governor and the colonial ministry in Paris. The colony’s intendant left the island as fast as he could. He was already unpopular since he had closed down the *Conseil Superior* of Le Cap in 1787. Two thirds of the members of the Assembly in the north were born in France and the majority of them originated from the military or the aristocracy. The picture that was drawn from the members of the *Comité du Nord* was very similar to the insiders of the *Club Massiac*.⁷⁸

The province in the north was not the only one who thought about gathering into an assembly to declare their wishes and demands for the colony, in the west and in the south people met and debated in assemblies. Especially, the western committee, that met in Port-au-Prince, was not ready to give up their legislative and executive power for the northern assembly. Their composition was clearly different from the northern province. More *petits blancs* participated there and wanted to prevent the planter class in the northern assembly to govern the whole colony.⁷⁹

France was determined to keep the colony under control since its economic value was still considered essential. This fact was also clear to the National Constituent Assembly. Till now the plantation work and the trade with France functioned well, there were no signs of a brutal civil war or even a slave insurrection. As already mentioned, in 1790 20,000 slaves had arrived in the harbor of Le Cap to work on the sugar fields of the *grands blancs*.

⁷⁶ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 19.

⁷⁸ Glied, *Saint-Domingue* p. 259. Dubois, *Avengers* p. 78.

⁷⁹ Philip D. Curtin, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man in Saint-Domingue 1788-1791*. In: *The Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 30 (1950) p. 157-175, p. 162.

The colonial ministry sent instructions to the colony for the gathering of a consultative assembly, which existed only for a short period of time. Instead, the white population decided to vote for a general assembly that should not gather for a short term but for a longer period of time. The vote took place in February 1790 and included all whites who lived on the island for more than one year. This meant that the *petits blancs* would have a voice eventually but of course the downside of it was the racial question. Dubois calls it a “democratization based on racism”⁸⁰, since the *petits blancs* in particular saw their opportunity to further downgrade the rights of the *gens de couleur*.

The free colored people were excluded completely from the assembly. It did not matter how much land or money someone possessed, the only thing that decided if one could vote or not was the color of the skin. Therefore, the vote was highly racist and excluded the 28,000 free colored people, however, their struggle during that period will be discussed later on in detail. The assembly finally gathered in April 1790 in Saint-Marc, located a little further north of Port-au-Prince in the Western Province.

3.2.2. The Assembly of Saint-Marc and the decree of March 1790

The 212 deputies, who gathered in Saint-Marc, called themselves the General Assembly of Saint-Domingue. The composition of the people forming the General Assembly had a higher variety concerning the social status and the origin compared to the northern assembly. Only less than one third came from the northern province, which gave the south and west provinces the majority. But still most of the people participating were born in France, had their families in France and only 18 percent of them were creoles. In contrast to the northern assembly, the sugar plantation owners were clearly in the minority with only 19 percent, whereas only a few had their plantations in the north. Therefore, the majority of the planters were from the coffee plantations in the south and west of Saint-Domingue.⁸¹

The lack of members from the northern province can be explained by the still existing *Comité du Nord*, which did not want to disperse after the voting of the General Assembly in Saint-Marc. Furthermore, the deputies from Saint-Domingue in the National Constituent Assembly, were still the same as during the formation of the General Estates in May 1789. Therefore, they favored the demands of the northern province and the white planter class who

⁸⁰ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 78.

⁸¹ Glied, *Saint-Domingue* p. 264.

owned the sugar fields in the northern plain. The *Comité du Nord* saw its right to exist in “their” deputies in Paris. However, for now two assemblies claimed the legislative and executive power for Saint-Domingue: The *Comité du Nord*, more or less led by the white planter class, which favored the ideals of the *Club Massiac*, and the General Assembly of Saint-Marc, where the *petits blancs* and some smaller planters from the south and the west provinces presented the majority, who were driven by different aspirations. Philip Curtin, who wrote his article on the declaration of rights in Saint-Domingue already in 1950, stated:

*“In a very general way the great planters, the merchants in seaborne commerce, and the royal officers were drawn to the Assembly of the North. The smaller planters, the small traders and the petits blancs were drawn to the Assembly of Saint-Marc.”*⁸²

This summary, which is very general, depicts an accurate picture of both assemblies, which can be supported by statistics in more recent publications, as seen above.⁸³ Even though some members of the northern assembly left and joined the deputies in Saint-Marc, the concentration of the *grands blancs* was in the north. The General Assembly in Saint-Marc formulated their slogan *Notre union fait notre force* (Our unity is our strength) and knowingly did not consider the word *Colonial* in their name or to their motto.

The deputies in Saint-Marc were eager to separate Saint-Domingue from the decisions that were and would be made by the National Constituent Assembly in Paris. The high customs, the colonists had to pay for goods from French traders, played a significant economic role. The Saint-Domingan deputies felt that this should be dropped. In addition to this, they wanted to expand the restrictions imposed on the free colored people on the island. Due to the rumors that arrived in Saint-Domingue about the end of feudalism and the speeches and cahiers of the *Amis des Noirs*, some members of the *petits blancs*, who finally could take part in the decisions-making in the colony, did not want to loose their privileges in favor of the free colored people. In contrast, they wanted to further downgrade the right of the colored in order to strengthen their own position and ascend on their behalf.⁸⁴

Since day one, when the news of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* had arrived in the harbors of Saint-Domingue, the free colored people wanted to take their chance not only to rise in economic aspects, but in social status and legal matter as well. The free colored people, who owned several plantations in the south were at least as wealthy as many white planters sitting in the General Assembly in Saint-Marc. However, they were excluded

⁸² Curtin, Declaration of Rights, p. 163.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 153, 164. For further statistics on both assemblies have a look at Gliech, Saint-Domingue p. 259 for the Comité du Nord and p. 264 for the Saint-Marc Assembly.

⁸⁴ Dubois, Slave Revolution p. 20, 21.

from the voting in the assembly and further more from the participation of writing a separate constitution for Saint-Domingue.

In Paris, the Constituent Assembly decided to establish a Colonial Committee which should look after the representation of the colonies. On March 8th, this colony declared before the Constituent Assembly in France that every colony should write its own constitution. This decision was exactly what the assembly in Saint-Marc hoped for. But when the free colored people asked for a clear answer, if they would be included in the constitution making process or not, an explicit statement was again omitted. In the first decree on March 8, 1790, it was only stated that:

*“Each Colony has the right to express its wishes regarding the constitution, laws, and administration appropriate to its prosperity and the good fortunes of its inhabitants, as long as it conforms to general principles that connect the colonies to the metropole and guarantee the protection of their respective interests”*⁸⁵

Like in the declaration of 1789 the issue of who should participate in the colony is not clearly stated. After the demand for clarification in the case of Saint-Domingue, because of the high number of free colored people, the Constituent Assembly on March 28 issued another instruction *Addressed by the National Assembly to the Colony of Saint-Domingue* in which the assembly again avoided a clear statement. It only stated, that if the assembly in Saint-Marc decides to hold a new election for the making of the constitution, “all persons having attained the twenty-five years of age and owning property or, failing this, resident in the parish for two years and paying taxes”⁸⁶ are allowed to take part in the gathering. The white people, poor and rich, saw it as a clear statement, since it was not mentioned to include the free colored people. But the free colored people saw it differently, since it was not explicitly stated that they were excluded and kept on fighting for their participation.⁸⁷

The fight of the free colored people for equal rights was a major factor in the struggle for Saint-Domingue since the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. The *petits blancs* already found a way to express their voice in Saint-Marc. The *grands blancs* had their deputies in the National Constituent Assembly in Paris and *Comité du Nord*. The free colored people were still struggling for their rights, which they saw clearly formulated by the declaration’s Articles I, II and VI.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 71.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 72.

⁸⁷ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 85.

The following chapter will focus on this struggle going back to August 1789, when the declaration was issued and the hope of many free colored people to attain an equal part in the colonial society in Saint-Domingue rose.

3.3. The struggle of the free colored people in Saint-Domingue since 1789

Already in the 1770s and 1780s the rise of the free colored people as a wealthy planter class became noticeable to the authorities in Saint-Domingue. On the one hand, some of them had big plantations, owned slaves or were wealthy merchants, but on the other hand, especially legally, they were treated as second class people. Many factors define a social class. Even if a free colored person had wealth, was educated and had a high social standing in his local community, he was still inferior before the legal system and in the colonial society. The decisive factor remained the color of his skin.

The free colored people sensed new possibilities in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* to finally achieve equality in the society of Saint-Domingue:

*“The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen has awakened the colonists of color to their past condition; they have shown themselves worthy of the dignity that you have assigned them; they have learned their rights and they have used them [...] The citizens of color are clearly as qualified as the whites to demand this representation.”*⁸⁸

These lines are addressed to the National Assembly in Paris shortly after the declaration was issued. They were written by a wealthy free colored merchant from Le Cap, who was one quarter African and named Vincent Ogé (1755-1791). He demanded the same representation as the whites on the grounds of the declaration. The National Assembly should give the free colored people in Saint-Domingue “those rights that you have so solemnly recognized and so faithfully established when you established as the foundation of the constitution that all men are born and remain free and equal in rights”⁸⁹. Ogé became one of the protagonists for the next two years in the struggle of the free colored people. Julien Raimond (1744-1801), a wealthy planter from the south, is another important figure for the free colored and will also be discussed. Both men were united in their motivation to give the free colored people equal rights and representation in the colonial assembly in Saint-Domingue. However, they differed not

⁸⁸ Dubois, Slave revolution p. 69.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 69.

only in their background but also in the ways in which they wanted to achieve the common goal.

3.3.1. Vincent Ogé and Julien Raimond

In the years of 1789 and 1790 several attempts were made to improve the conditions of the free colored people in Saint-Domingue. But most of the time, the authorities reacted extremely brutal to the crossing of the color line or only the call for it. Ferrand de Baudières, a former judge, was asked by some free colored farmers in his region to write a petition in their favor. Since elections were held for the assembly in Saint-Marc, they had hoped that their modest demands would be discussed. When other white colonists heard about the help of Baudières, they threw him into jail, held a mock trial and later he was publicly executed.⁹⁰ In Le Cap a young free colored named Augustin Lacombe wrote a petition, in which he demanded the implementation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* for the free colored people in Saint-Domingue. He was hanged by a mob of white colonists soon after the petition was made public.⁹¹

These two examples show how strict the policy was in Saint-Domingue towards those who supported the free colored people and their rights in the declaration. The purpose of these executions was to intimidate the free colored people. The arbitrary executions were often not carried out legally, thus the lynch law dominated this period in Saint-Domingue.

The movement of the free colored people during these years is often connected with the two protagonists already mentioned above: Vincent Ogé and Julien Raimond. Both were in Paris at the time the French Revolution broke out and the National Assembly issued the declaration. Vincent Ogé was one of the wealthiest free colored merchants in Le Cap, where normally the *grands blancs* dominated the plantations and its commerce. He originated from a family that grew rich with coffee plantations in the northern Province. In their parish the family had a very good standing for a free colored family in the north of the colony. Ogé himself enlarged his wealth in Le Cap by brokering houses to rich white planters. His trip to Paris is often described

⁹⁰ Glied, Saint-Domingue p. 279ff.

⁹¹ John D. Garrigus, "Thy coming fame, Ogé! is sure": new evidence on Ogé's 1790 revolt and the beginnings of the Haitian Revolution. In: John D. Garrigus, Christopher Morris (ed.), *Assumed identities: the meanings of race in the Atlantic world* (Arlington 2010) p. 19-45, p. 31.

as a business trip, but soon after the Storm of the Bastille he avowed himself as a supporter of the revolution and its ideals.⁹²

On September 7th, 1789 he held a speech in the *Club Massiac*, where he defended the principle that all men are free. Since he dealt with the members of the *Club Massiac* and their colleagues in various businesses in Le Cap, he knew them quite well. Ogé pointed out, that the ideals of the revolution might be dangerous for Saint-Domingue and its social structure, therefore he would present himself as a middleman. On the one hand he would rescue the status of the *grands blancs* and tame “the storm that rumbles of our heads”⁹³, and on the other hand the free colored people would be accepted as equals in the colonial society of Saint-Domingue. However, his plan to convince the wealthy planters of his idea failed.⁹⁴

His colleague Julien Raimond was the son of a wealthy planter, living in the southern peninsula, in the province of Aquin. He was very well educated and his manners suggested that he belonged to the elite of the colony. He accumulated his wealth by growing cotton and indigo, which he also smuggled into the ports in Jamaica. He and his second wife, who brought a large fortune and 22 slaves to the marriage, left Saint-Domingue in 1784 and sailed to France. The reason for their journey was to sell land near La Rochelle. During their stay in France Raimond quickly started his political career. In the next couple of years he submitted a few petitions and manuscripts to end colonial racism.⁹⁵

It is crucial to keep in mind that both Ogé and Raimond were not literally fighting for every man to be free, or against slavery, but for the indiscrimination of the free colored people in society and legal processes in Saint-Domingue. Especially Raimond, who owned a couple of dozen slaves himself, underlined that the class of free colored people supported slavery. Furthermore, they were industrious, and if “wealthy, light-skinned, and legitimately born men of colour”⁹⁶ could be given the status of “new white”, it would improve the colony’s economy, which were only about 2,000 people. Just like Ogé, Raimond tried to convince planters in Paris of his ideas, however, he did not succeed to persuade them with his concepts.⁹⁷

In the following weeks of October and November 1789 free colored people and their French supporters gathered in Paris. Raimond and Ogé were part of the group, which had some 79 members and was led by the advocate Louis Hector DeJoly; since the two were by far the

⁹² John D. Garrigus, Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757–91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution. In: *The Americas* Vol. 68 (2011) p. 33-62, p. 40, 44, 48.

⁹³ Garrigus, *Thy coming fame* p. 27.

⁹⁴ Garrigus, Vincent Ogé p. 48.

⁹⁵ John D. Garrigus, Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744–1801) and the Haitian Revolution. In: *Slavery and Abolition* Vol. 28 (2007) p. 1-21, p. 3ff.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6.

richest, they quickly ascended as leaders next to DeJoly. Together they drafted a petition for representation in the National Assembly. On November 1789 they met with the *Amis des Noirs* and the English abolitionist Thomas Clarke, where primarily Raimond managed it to shift the focus of the *Amis* towards colonial racism and away from the abolition of the slave trade. In January 1790 Raimond and DeJoly persuaded the *Amis des Noirs* not to pressure the National Assembly for a vote against the slave trade, however with their help they achieved that the National Assembly, in March 1790, established a committee that would look into the colonial voting rights.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, by the end of March 1790, a decree was released, already discussed above, that avoided the racial question and was interpreted by the whites in Saint-Domingue as permission to exclude the free colored in Saint-Domingue. After the decree the group split up, or at least no more recorded meetings were taking place in Paris, and Raimond was no longer publishing with the *Amis* or DeJoly, but under his own name. Now the issue where Ogé and Raimond had different opinions became obvious. How would they proceed from here to achieve their goal? Raimond defended his point of view that it must be a legal, gradual process and he stayed in Paris to agitate and to hold speeches for the rights of the free colored people in the capital. Ogé followed a different strategy and returned to Saint-Domingue to start a revolt.⁹⁹

Due to his actions during the years of 1790 and 1791, Vincent Ogé became a hero in today's Haitian history. His role during the first two years of the French Revolution is still debated among historians. An expert of this topic is historian John D. Garrigus, who found new sources and therefore questions Ogé's role as the beginner of the Haitian Revolution and the upheaval against slavery and racism. But let's go back to the year 1790 and the beginning of his journey to Saint-Domingue.

Since the declaration was issued, the white planters tried to prevent free colored people from traveling to Saint-Domingue. They did not want the spirit of the French Revolution to spread in the colony. Thus, Ogé had to sail to London first, from there to Charleston in Virginia, where he had to wait two weeks until he could finally travel to Saint-Domingue where he arrived in October 1790. It is often written that Ogé already came with weapons from Paris to Saint-Domingue, but Garrigus argues that he arrived in the colony empty handed. However, Ogé had already made some contact with Jean-Baptiste Chavanne, who was the leader of a militia group in Saint-Domingue and had already mobilized free colored people in the autumn of 1789 and spring of 1790. Shortly after his arrival Ogé met with Chavanne and his men near Le Cap. The

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 7f. For the next 4 paragraphs see: Garrigus, Vincent Ogé. p. 57-61, Dubois, Avengers p. 87, 88.

contact between Chavanne and Ogé existed for some 10 months while they planned the revolt. This indicates that Ogé started his plans before the disappointing decree of March. Furthermore, with his decision to leave Paris, Ogé also left the elitist movement of the free colored. The supporters of Raimond had too much to loose. The followers of Chavanne represented the poorer and more radical part of the free colored. They were a much larger group then the elitist free colored in Paris. Since most of them were serving in the *marréchaussée*, they also knew how to fight and Ogé showcased himself not only as a political leader like in Paris but as a military leader as well. He linked the elitist movement in Paris to the more radical one in Saint-Domingue.

After meeting with Chavanne, they sent letters to the governor and the provincial assembly to give the free colored people voting rights. Hence, French troops were sent from Le Cap to arrest “the rebels“. Chavanne asked Ogé to use the slaves as weapons against the whites, in other words to provoke a slave rebellion, however Ogé refused since he was not against slavery itself. Instead, they went higher up into the mountains to hide from the troops. Contrary to most historians, Garrigus argues that there was never a real fight between Ogé and the French troops. The “rebels” left Saint-Domingue to the Spanish side of the island, but the Spanish expelled them to the French. Ogé, Chavanne and their men were put in jail in Le Cap. Instead of sending him back to Paris, and grant him a fair trial, the Provincial Assembly decided that he should be tortured and executed publically together with Chavanne. Their heads were put on spikes to display them in the city, which was normally done with revolting slaves.

This procedure not only shocked the free colored people in Saint-Domingue, but also the National Assembly including the *Amis des Noirs* on the other side of the Atlantic. Because of his death, the issue of the free colored voting rights was once again debated upon. Garrigus states: “Ogé’s greatest single contribution to the gathering revolution was not his “rebellion” but his death.”¹⁰⁰ The rebellion was never taking place in form of a battle, because the free colored fled to the mountains. However, his brutal death made him a martyr on both sides of the Atlantic.

Especially in the 19th century Ogé was seen as one of the founding fathers of Haiti, next to Toussaint-Louverture and Dessalines. Primarily mixed race presidents recalled his memory. For all blacks, Ogé resembled the “mulatto arrogance” that was later on common in Haiti. However, in the end he was the one who brought the intellectual thought of the elitist free colored to the poorer ones in Saint-Domingue, who suffered even more under the restrictions

¹⁰⁰ Garrigus, Vincent Ogé p. 60.

of the whites in the colony. Although he failed, his movement played a significant role for the decree of May 1791.¹⁰¹

3.3.2. The Decree of May 1791

The tragedy that happened to his colleague Vincent Ogé helped Raimond to find supporters for his rallies and speeches. Nevertheless, he still despised the tactics of Ogé and was determined to follow his own. He was writing, holding speeches and trying to improve the living conditions of the free colored people gradually and without violence. During the spring of 1791, when the impressions of the execution in Saint-Domingue were still present, Raimond was able to make some progress. On the 13th of May he held a speech at the Jacobin Club in Paris, which he eventually joined later that year. The speech was similar to a pamphlet he published earlier in 1791.¹⁰² His tactic was to present the free colored people as a group, where everyone had mixed race parents, who had always been loyal to France, and of whom two thirds were born free. Furthermore, he accused the white planters that they were mistaking the free colored people as slaves and treated them accordingly. This was the reason that most members of the National Assembly had no clue of the property owning free colored class that was living in their colony.¹⁰³ In his speech he laid out the history of the free colored and how their rights dramatically changed since the 1760s and after the Seven Years' War:

*"It was during the reestablishment of the militia [in 1769] that white jealousy against the people of color was wielded with a furor that had never been seen before. It was not enough to strip men of color of their officers' commissions despite their outstanding service. This injustice was followed by a host of laws that outdid each other in tyranny and absurdity. [...] Finally, this frenzy was pushed so far that Hilliard d'Auberteuil¹⁰⁴ dared recommend that whites take justice into their own hands with people of color without ever informing the judicial system."*¹⁰⁵

Raimond wanted to appeal to the emotions of the members of the Jacobins Club. The revolution they started in France, because of the oppression that was executed by the nobility for centuries, was built on the principles of equality. This equality was demanded by Raimond for the free colored people by presenting his class as worthy Frenchman, who were brutally oppressed by the white planter class in Saint-Domingue and who were not even put before a

¹⁰¹ Garrigus, *Thy coming fame* p. 37f.

¹⁰² Garrigus, *Raimond* p. 7.

¹⁰³ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 80ff.

¹⁰⁴ Author of that time, who wrote a book about Saint-Domingue.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* p. 81.

judge but were hunted freely by the whites. However, the reality in Saint-Domingue didn't always appear as Raimond described it in his pamphlets or in his speeches in the Jacobin club, but his tactic worked. Only two days later the issue of the free colored people in Saint-Domingue, was discussed by the National Assembly in Paris.

From the time since the *Declaration of Rights of the Man and Citizen* was issued, the struggle of the free colored people was often neglected or simply ignored, as in the decree of March 1790. But now the movement for their concerns was on its absolute peak. This was due not only to Raimonds efforts, which he had put into his pamphlets, speeches and contacts he made to the *Amis des Noirs*, to Thomas Clarkson, or to the Jacobins, but also to Vincent Ogé influences and tragic death in the beginning of 1791. The result of the meeting on the 15th of May was a decree of the National Assembly, which allowed free colored people born to free parents, to have political rights and therefore also representation in the Assemblies. The explanatory statement of the National Assembly was that "it cannot grant one part of the empire the ability to exclude men from active citizenship when constitutional laws guarantee those rights in the entire empire."¹⁰⁶

This decision by the National Assembly presented a success for the *Amis* as well as for Raimond and his followers. The color line was finally broken in the colonies, which was a huge step in a society based on slavery located in the Caribbean in the end of the 18th century. But this success was a formal one since it did not really affect a large part of the society in Saint-Domingue. Some historians even think that it was only relevant for some hundred free colored. Because all those who had one parent who was not free when they were born, were not included in the decree. Nevertheless, the wealthy planters around Raimond had the possibility to stand up for their class in the colonial assemblies and it was the first step over the color line that would dominate the colony for decades to come.

This decree and the fact that some free colored people had achieved representation before the law should not mislead. In Saint-Domingue the circumstances were still tense, *petits blancs* and *grands blancs* were outraged about the decision of the National Assembly and did not want to fulfill it. When the governor of Saint-Domingue heard about the news, he wrote the National Assembly that he could not execute this decree. Other whites gathered and protested against it, which often led to violent mobs, which publically called for the heads of the free colored people. They wanted to be independent from France and called the English for help.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 85.

¹⁰⁷ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 90.

The situation in Saint-Domingue, not even two years after the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* was published, was more than chaotic. Since the news of these 17 articles had arrived in the colony, the different social groups were fighting for their rights, especially the *petits blancs* and the free colored people. The *grands blancs* wanted to keep the status quo and later on reestablish it. After the first time the question of color was partially answered by the National Assembly with the decree of May 1791, the issue of slavery emerged more and more. The by far largest group of the population was not really taking advantage of the circumstances in the colony and in France during the first two years of the revolution. During the summer 1791 this aspect changed and with it everything else in the colony, even the achievements by the free colored will be withdrawn.

3.4. "The fields are burning"

The year 1791 was decisive for Saint-Domingue, not only because the color line had been crossed for the first time with the decree of May 1791, but also because by far the largest group of the population started to stand up for themselves. Even though free people on the island were deeply divided concerning the issues of participation and rights, the events in France gave the slaves the opportunity to fight for their rights and to claim the first article of the declaration for themselves. From August 22nd to August 23rd, the slave insurrection around the northern metropole Le Cap started. The revolt was originally planned for two days later, however, one group could not wait for it and started to burn down the sugar cane fields during this night. Shortly after the first fields were burning many followed around le Cap. The next day, the insurrection spread quickly to neighboring parishes. Some 2000 slaves were burning down plantation after plantation, killing every white person that came in their way and also loyal slaves that were not participating in the insurrection. On many plantations the slaves were already waiting for the insurgents to arrive.

Before the slave insurrection started, the conspirators, who met before, tried to link as many plantations as possible in order to build a large network of slaves who were willing to rebel against their masters. Most of the leaders of the insurrection were drivers on the plantation, which was a relatively high position in the plantation system. Due to their status they had the possibility to move more or less freely and could hence organize the gatherings. However, the

danger of getting caught and executed rose as exponentially as the number of insurgents increased.¹⁰⁸

The dynamic of the upheaval during the first couple of days was enormous. After only four days 10,000 slaves were organized in three armies. During the next month stories of the cruelties committed by the rebelling slaves reached France, the U.S.A. and other islands in the Caribbean. In the National Assembly in France it was used against the *Amis* and Brissot, indicating that they were guilty of these cruelties. Camille Desmoulins, a leader of the revolution in France, blamed Brissot personally saying that he and his friends are responsible “if so many plantations have been reduced to ashes if pregnant women have been eviscerated, if a child carried on the end of a pike served as standard of the blacks”¹⁰⁹ Although, the *Amis* did not favor a slave upheaval, they wanted the slaves freed by a decree of the government in France and not by themselves. Furthermore, the decree of May 1791, which gave some members of the free colored people equal rights, was withdrawn immediately. All the effort by Ogé and Raimond was for nothing. The fight for the rights of the free colored started all over again in Port-au-Prince, due to the revolting slaves in the northern part of the colony.

Since the slaves were not trained in European warfare and tried to avoid direct contact with the French soldiers, a guerrilla war developed. The members of the insurrection were hiding in the hills around Le Cap, where it was very difficult for the armies to find and more importantly to fight them. Many slaves were born in Africa and had been fighting in wars before they were enslaved and sold to European merchants on the coast of Africa. This surely helped the insurgents to keep the revolt going. However, by the end of September, white troops managed to conquer some plantations, which had been held by slaves, and massacred all rebels. Additionally, in the autumn of 1791, French troops were starting to arrive from Paris, however the insurgents did not surrender. The whites had to fight against the free colored people in the south and the west of the island and deal with the Assembly in Saint-Marc, which grew more radical every day. The free colored had been separated itself, because a small part supported the slave revolution, one of those supporters was their future leader Toussaint-Louverture. The *petits blancs* blamed the free colored people for provoking the slave upheaval by demanding their rights and the implementation of the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen*.¹¹⁰

However, to argue that the slaves were revolting because of the articles of the declaration issued two years earlier would simplify the complicated and diverse situation. There does exist some evidence that slaves were following the demands articulated by the 17 articles. One slave,

¹⁰⁸ Popkin, *You are all free* p. 40ff. Dubois, *Avengers* p. 94. Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 24ff.

¹⁰⁹ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 111.

¹¹⁰ Geggus, *Haitian Revolution* p. 538ff.

who was captured and executed, carried pamphlets from France with him articulating the Rights of Men and the demands of the French Revolution. Some slaves, who were caught and asked why they joined the insurrection, argued that they wanted to enjoy the liberty granted to them by the declaration. The depiction of these stories shows, that slaves knew about the declaration and its contents and were willing to fight to achieve it.¹¹¹

Many historians¹¹² argue that a rumor about the imprisonment of King Louis XVI during the summer of 1791 was decisive. One particular rumor mentioned that he wanted to abolish slavery or wanted to release laws in order to improve the working conditions of the slaves, which is why they believed that he was captured and imprisoned. This led many slaves to fight in the name of the King of France.¹¹³ Important to add is, that in 1791, France was still a Constitutional Monarchy and not yet a Republic, which meant that many saw the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* and the will of the King as one. Most the leaders of the insurrection, who were fighting for the King of France, indicated their loyalty by wearing his coat of arms. The insurgents, especially those who were born in Africa and were used to monarchical structures, proclaimed their own leaders as Kings.¹¹⁴

The free colored people built their arguments for representation almost completely based on the declaration. Between 1789 and 1791, the question which mainly dominated Saint-Domingue was for whom did the declaration apply, which also included the *petits blancs* and their demand for more rights. However, the slaves used the confusion of the varied groups and beliefs on the island to fuel their fight and to finally stand up against their masters.

The slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue became a global issue. Many other slaveholding nations were afraid the spirit of the insurrection could spread to their plantations in the Caribbean and in the south of the U.S.A.

In the following years the Spanish and the British became involved since they were at war with revolutionary France after the execution of the King in January 1793. Furthermore, free colored and *grands blancs* were using slave armies to fight against the patriots in Port-au-Prince. After the slave insurrection the colony was a complete chaos with various groups fighting each other. The economy of the colony, which was still intact until 1791, collapsed completely and the French were not able to control their most valuable colony anymore, since the insurrection raged in the north and the fighting between the free colored people, *petits blancs* and *grands blancs* took place in the west and south of the island.

¹¹¹ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 102, 105.

¹¹² i.e. Oliever Gliech, David Geggus, Laurent Dubois.

¹¹³ Gliech, *Saint-Domingue* p. 335ff.

¹¹⁴ Geggus, *Haitian Revolution* p. 338.

3.5. Conclusion I

During the 18th century Saint-Domingue evolved as the most valuable colony of the French empire. The agricultural production was dominated by plantations, some 8.500 in 1789, located especially in the north of the island, in the Le Cap area. The colony contributed to two thirds of the total income France received from her colonies.¹¹⁵ The structure of the society, which developed during the 18th, century was inimitable in the Caribbean. The high output of mainly sugar, coffee and indigo could only be achieved with some 500,000 slaves working in the plantations in the end of the 1780s. This number becomes even more impressive if compared to some 30,000 whites, 5,000 *grands blancs* and 25,000 *petits blancs* on the island. Regarding the fact, that about two thirds of the slaves were not even born on the island, but captured in Africa and shipped to the Caribbean, underlines the precarious composition of the society in Saint-Domingue. Additionally, a large group of free colored people, 28,000 people, almost as many as all whites on the island, wanted to stop their discrimination by the whites and be an equal part of the colonial society.

The shares the different groups had in the entire population was completely out of balance shortly before the news of the French Revolution and the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* arrived. In addition, the *grands blancs* were fighting against poorer whites, the *petits blancs*. As soon as the rich planters heard about the declaration, the aim of them was to prevent its arrival and the implementation of the seventeen articles in the colony.

However, all their efforts could not hinder that the news of the declaration finally came to Saint-Domingue. For the free colored people, the declaration offered a perfect opportunity to ask for equal rights as free men and for French citizenship. Already the first article emphasized, that every man is born free and equal in rights was welcomed with joy by the free colored people, struggling for more freedom in the society of Saint-Domingue during the last decades. Also in Paris, free colored people like Vincent Ogé and Julian Raimond insisted that the declaration would apply to the free colored people in Saint-Domingue. The National Assembly refused to make a clear statement whether the declaration includes the free colored people or not. Ogé was tired of arguing in Paris and sailed to Saint-Domingue to ally with the already organized militia by Chavanne. Yet, he was executed and his attempt to take up arms for the rights of the free colored failed, but the free colored community finally succeeded. After convincing the *Amis des Noirs* to take their side, and a speech by Julien Raimond in front of the National Assembly, the decree of May 1791 was released, granting equal rights and the

¹¹⁵ Bellegarde-Smith, Haiti p. 34f.

French citizenship for at least a part of the free colored community in Saint-Domingue, a first success due to the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen*.

However, the decree also had to be applied in the day to day life in Saint-Domingue, which seemed to be very complicated. The *grands blancs* and the *petits blancs* did not accept the decision made by the National Assembly in Paris. In September 1791, after the slave rebellion broke out, the decree of May 1791 was withdrawn and the achievements of the free colored people between 1789 and 1791 were retracted. Now the French colony was drowning in the chaos of a slave upheaval and the fights of different groups against each other.

The declaration gave the free colored people a basis on which they could argue for equal rights. They wanted to use the situation in Paris to finally stop the discrimination inflicted on their class during the previous decades. However, shortly after their aim was achieved and the declaration was partially applied, the slave upheaval broke out. The insurrection was now dominating political life in the colony and the French policy towards it. The free colored people had to wait until slavery was abolished in 1793 and the declaration was applied to all blacks in Saint-Domingue.

4. The Government of the U.S.A. and its involvement in Saint-Domingue

4.1. The U.S.A., France and Saint-Domingue

Already during the Seven Years' War, Saint-Domingue was an important military base for the French, since they could ship their troops to the island before they went to war in North America.¹¹⁶ After the Peace in Paris in 1763, the relationship between the thirteen British Colonies in North America and the French island in the Caribbean became even stronger. The French pushed the sugar producing economy and concentrated more on Saint-Domingue after the loss of their possessions in North America.

The French did not want to share the economic output, mainly sugarcane, with their British enemies. However, the smuggling between these colonies boomed during the decades between the Seven Years' War and the American Revolution. The illegal trade was also not favored by the British either, due to their loss of taxes. Even when France established free ports in Saint-Domingue in 1767, the smuggling did not stop. The fact that both colonial powers were often at war during the second half of the 18th century did not change anything for the commerce. Due to the slave economy, mainly labor intensive agricultural products like sugar, coffee or indigo, were produced and exported. In addition, commodities, which were the so called "subproducts" of sugar production, especially rum and molasses, were highly demanded in the British Colonies in North America. American merchants sold their rum to native Americans or used it to buy slaves. In return the traders from Saint-Domingue could buy a variety of articles like, rice, flour, corn, oats, potatoes, onions, or apples. They could sell these articles on the markets in Saint-Domingue with a huge margin. It presented for both parties a lucrative business. Hence both colonial powers, the French and the British, could not control or forbid the exchange between their colonies.¹¹⁷

When the Thirteen Colonies declared independence in 1776 and the French promised their support in the Independence War, Saint-Domingue again presented a strategic base for military operations. Troops were located at Saint-Domingue or Martinique, often in collaboration with the Spanish in Santo-Domingo.¹¹⁸ Additionally to the French forces, troops from Saint-Domingue, mainly consisting of free colored people, were shipped to the battlefields in North

¹¹⁶ Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: migration and influences* (Gainesville 2007) p. 19.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/global-history-and-us-foreign-policy/essays/two-revolutions-atlantic-world-connection> (5.2.17). Dubois, *Avengers* p. 33.

¹¹⁸ Johann R. Dull, *The French Navy and American Independence: A Study of Arms and Diplomacy, 1774-1787* (Princeton 1975) p. 177ff.

America. The strength of free colored divisions had already been proved during the Seven Years' War, mainly at the border to Santo-Domingo, where the French troops, who were neither accustomed to the climate nor to the geographical circumstances, were rather useless. In 1779 the Siege of Savannah took place where the division of free colored people from Saint-Domingue, 941 men strong, fought against the British troops. Next to the honor they felt to fight side by side with white French troops, they also wanted to prove their abilities as soldiers. The following lines are from a white planter, who wanted to encourage the free colored to fight, by speaking for them. "I must prove to them that as a soldier I am capable of at least as much honor and courage and of even more loyalty".¹¹⁹ The Battle of Savannah and the participation of the free colored division was later on often used by Julien Raimond to show the loyalty to France and their willingness to die for their country. But the expected improvement of the situation after the Independence War of the United States, when the free colored returned to Saint-Domingue, did not occur. Connections are often made between participants of the Battle of Savannah and the leaders of the free colored movement after 1789. However, there is no clear evidence who actually was in the free colored division, but many claimed that they fought in the Battle of 1779.¹²⁰

During the second half of the 18th century Saint-Domingue had a lively exchange with the British Colonies in North America. The commercial exchange even improved after Independence, since the British were not dictating their trade regulations anymore. The U.S.A. were now free to choose if they wanted to buy their sugar from the English or the French, which tightened their relationship with French islands in the Caribbean. For example, in Baltimore, between 1784 and 1785, 24 French ships arrived from Saint-Domingue, whereas from the British Colonies like Jamaica or Barbados only 16 and 15 arrived. At least, these are the numbers, which were part of the legal trade. Like mentioned above, a lot of the trade between the U.S.A. and Saint-Domingue depended on smuggling, they often met on neutral islands to exchange the products. Since there does not exist any data about this trade, it is extremely difficult to measure the amounts that were trafficked.¹²¹

After 1789 and the events of 1791, this exchange of products still continued on a lower level.¹²² The merchant ships often brought the latest news from Saint-Domingue to the ports on

¹¹⁹ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 67.

¹²⁰ <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/global-history-and-us-foreign-policy/essays/two-revolutions-atlantic-world-connection> (5.2.17). Garrigus, *Before Haiti* p. 207ff.

¹²¹ Manuel Covo, *Baltimore and the French Atlantic: Empires, Commerce, and Identity in a Revolutionary Age, 1783-1798*. In: A.B. Leonard, David Pretel (ed.), *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy* (New York 2015) p. 87-108, p. 93ff.

¹²² <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/global-history-and-us-foreign-policy/essays/two-revolutions-atlantic-world-connection> (5.2.17).

the East Coast of the U.S.A. The ships not only delivered new information but also white refugees from the island, who escaped the slave insurrection, often bringing their slaves with them.¹²³ The impact they had on their destinations and who these refugees were will be discussed in the following.

4.2. Refugees from Saint-Domingue in the U.S.A.

For the young United States of America, who had just ratified their constitution and in 1789 inaugurated their first President, George Washington, the slave upheaval next to their borders presented one of the first challenges. One aspect the U.S.A. had to deal with, shortly after the insurrection, were refugees, who were looking for shelter on the East Coast of the United States. After the slave upheaval broke out in the north of Saint-Domingue, fights between whites and free coloreds intensified again around the capital Port-au-Prince. Many primarily whites fled from the island to various destinations. One of the first destinations was on the same island, the Spanish colony Santo Domingo. However, for the refugees also other Caribbean islands, like Jamaica or Cuba, were favored destinations. Some of them went on a longer journey to different cities of the young United States: New York, Boston, Baltimore, Charleston or particularly popular, Philadelphia in Pennsylvania. Some of the refugee families first escaped the upheaval to Cuba or Jamaica, because they thought it is going to be over soon and then later on moved to Philadelphia, when they saw that the situation in Saint-Domingue was not improving for them. Sooner or later many of the refugees settled in Louisiana after the purchase by the United States in 1803.¹²⁴

The numbers of refugees that left Saint-Domingue in the beginning of the 1790s can only be estimated. But some historians, like Nathalie Dessens, write about “several tens of thousands”¹²⁵ that looked for shelter in North America and the Caribbean. But who escaped from Saint-Domingue? Mainly *grands blancs* had the possibilities to flee from Saint-Domingue quickly, to pay for the journey and to find shelter in various places. People from the clergy, merchants or colonial officials were leaving the island, too. But also slaves and free colored people entered the U.S.A., which presented an interesting phenomenon.¹²⁶

¹²³ John Davies, Saint-Dominguan Refugees of African Descent and the Forging of Ethnic Identity in Early National Philadelphia. In: The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography Vol. 134 (April 2010) p. 109-126, p. 109.

¹²⁴ Dessens, From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans p. 20ff.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

¹²⁶ Frances Sergeant Childs, French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800. An American Chapter of the French Revolution (Baltimore 1940) p. 23.

4.2.1. Refugees from Saint-Domingue in Philadelphia

All larger harbor cities on the East Coast of the United States welcomed white refugees from Saint-Domingue. One of the major destinations was Philadelphia, the capital of the United States of America in the beginning of the 1790s, which became known as the “New Cap”¹²⁷. Philadelphia was the center of French culture in the United States during that period because several hundred refugees from France who fled from the French Revolution were already there. Later on, even the future King Louis Phillipe was looking for shelter in Philadelphia. Yet another reason existed for the planters and rich merchants to go the United States from Saint-Domingue. Many of them already had contacts in Philadelphia, because of the various trade relationships they had with merchants from this city.¹²⁸

For most merchants in Philadelphia, Saint-Domingue was a very important business partner and an attractive possibility to earn money, even after 1789. The information the people in the U.S.A. heard about the revolution in Saint-Domingue normally passed the harbor of Philadelphia. It presented the main entrance for news and products from the French colony. Although the data is not complete, it still reveals the importance of Saint-Domingue as a trading partner. In 1789, 18.6 % of the vessels that arrived in Philadelphia originated from Saint-Domingue, in 1793 even more than 25%. From October 1, 1792, to September 30, 1793, 19,754 tons of cargos were imported from Saint-Domingue to Philadelphia. In 1795 the year after the abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue, even more ships entered the harbor of the capital of the U.S.A., and in 1796 up to 34.5% arrived from the island. This commercial exchange was also going the other way around: In 1790 the Philadelphia merchants exported more to Saint-Domingue than to all other islands of the West Indies combined. When the troubles on the island started, it was becoming harder to maintain the highly frequented trade.¹²⁹

Shortly after the slave upheaval in Le Cap, it became especially difficult for American vessels to land and unload their ships: “I am still lying here with my cargo on board, as well as all other vessels which are loaded with American produce, they will neither buy our produce nor let us out of port [sic!]”¹³⁰, a captain complained to his owner in Philadelphia about the circumstances in September 1791. Nevertheless, the commerce was not heavily interrupted. Other reports from that period point out that the prices for food were becoming very low and

¹²⁷ Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution. Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore 2010) p. 10.

¹²⁸ Nash, *Reverberations of Haiti* p. 46.

¹²⁹ James Alexander Dun, “What Avenues of Commerce, Will You, Americans, Not Explore!”: Commercial Philadelphia's Vantage onto the Early Haitian Revolution. In: *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 62 (2005) p. 473-504, p. 476ff.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 490.

the demanded sugar was hard to find, but instead the demand for guns and powder was increasing day by day. Some of the merchants also traded with the revolting slaves, as long as they paid. However, the trade with the French colony was worth all the trouble, the profits were big enough, and hence the intense contact between these two locations remained.¹³¹

Looking at the commercial connections between Saint-Domingue and Philadelphia, and given the many ships that sailed from the French colony to the American port cities every year, it is not surprising that a large amount of the refugees arrived in Philadelphia in the years after the upheaval. Most of them arrived after June 1793, when Le Cap was almost completely destroyed during a battle between whites, free colored and slaves. Thomas Francois Galbaud, the new governor, gathered white men around him to win the city back and fight the commissioners that were sent by the National Convention in Paris, led by Léger Félicité Sonthonax. After Galbaud and his men lost the battle and Le Cap was almost completely destroyed, his followers mainly fled to the U.S.A.¹³² All in all, 2,317 refugees from Saint-Domingue entered the harbor of Philadelphia this year, 629 slaves, 1,659 whites, and 29 free colored people. With the knowledge of these numbers, one can suggest that mainly Galbaud's supporters, slave owners, entered Philadelphia in 1793. Additionally, most of them came from the city and not from rural plantations, thus had the possibility to connect with Philadelphian merchants, who could transport them to Philadelphia, or already had their own ships who frequently sailed that route. The issue of the slaves and why so many joined their masters and not the slave rebellion will be discussed in the next chapter.¹³³

Many of the white refugees came to the U.S.A. without sufficient financial and material resources. Their first destination was often Norfolk, until they could afford to travel to their final destination. The bigger cities like New York, Boston, or Philadelphia, raised mostly private money for the refugees, or built hospices for them.¹³⁴

Especially in Philadelphia, the refugees received much aid, even though in 1793 an epidemic broke out, the yellow fever. At the end of the epidemic almost 5,000 people had died¹³⁵, many did not know where it came from and why someone was infected. Due to the several thousand refugees that entered the city during the year from Saint-Domingue, the people started to accuse them for bringing the fever from the Caribbean to Philadelphia. Dr. Benjamin Rush, a

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 492ff.

¹³² Dubois, *Avengers* p. 156ff.

¹³³ Gary B. Nash, *Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Domingans in Philadelphia*. In: *Pennsylvania History* Vol. 65 (1998) p. 44-73, p. 50.

¹³⁴ Childs, *French Refugee* p. 84ff.

¹³⁵ J. H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead. The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia 1993) p. ix.

philanthropist and abolitionist, played an important medical role during the fever, he argued, that the sickness did not come from the outside, but from the smells and the filth of the city itself. Still, most of the population and also other doctors were convinced that the fever arrived alongside the refugees.¹³⁶ Therefore it is even more surprising, that this aspect did not change the effort of the inhabitants, who continued to raise money for the refugees.

The refugee community in Philadelphia grew and organized themselves. For historians the person Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de St. Méry (1750-1819) and his detailed diary about the refugee life in Philadelphia between the years 1793 and 1798 is an interesting source. Additionally, he and his bookstore presented a center for the refugee community coming from Saint-Domingue. Originally he was born in Martinique, however, after his studies of law in Paris he did not return to Martinique but settled in Le Cap in Saint-Domingue. After that, he returned to Paris again to be part of the Constituent Assembly to represent Martinique. Unfortunately, he had an enemy in Robespierre, and hence had to leave France as quickly as possible to escape the guillotine. In the Philadelphian exile he published amongst other writings a *Description de la Partie française de Saint-Domingue*. It was one of the books, which was often used for readings in his bookstore, where the community of white refugees gathered.¹³⁷

These meetings had more of a social component, whereas many Saint-Domingans also gathered to discuss political issues. They founded the *colons de St.Domingue réfugiés aux États-Unis*, who first met in September 1793. Their position towards the happenings in Saint-Domingue and France was interesting, since they did not despise the principles of the revolution itself, but their application to the colony Saint-Domingue. The latter aspect shows their common ground with the *Club Massiac*. Additionally, they saw Brissot and the *Amis des Noirs* as the originator for the colonial situation. The lack of support from France for the refugees in the New World was why they felt betrayed by their home country, to which they acted loyally. The group wrote an apologia to France called *Le Cri de douleur et de vérité. Conspiration Trahisons et Calomnies dévoilées et dénoncées par plus de dix mille français réfugiés au continent de l'Amerique*. This defense of their situation, of the ten thousand refugees, more or less summarizes their anger about the situation in their colony and the less help they received from France in their exiles. These refugees who managed to organize themselves along the East Coast of the U.S.A., with their main seat in Philadelphia, had very similar opinions and demands to the *Club Massiac* in Paris, which is not surprising since most of them belonged to the planter class in Saint-Domingue.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 37ff.

¹³⁷ Child, French Refugees p. 33ff. The following two paragraphs are from: Ibid. p. 142ff.

However, Frances Sergaeant Childs, a historian who did a lot of research regarding the Saint-Domingan and the French refugees in Philadelphia, which is still up to date, precisely summarizes their point of view: “*All in all, the apologia indicates the existence of a large group basically loyal to the revolution, though critical of its course in Santo Domingo where it touches them vitally; supporters of the revolution in theory rather than in practice*”¹³⁸ Their loyalty to the French Revolution stopped as soon as the principles of *égalité* and *liberté* were practically applied to the black people and had a negative impact on their personal lives in Saint-Domingue.

Like mentioned above, most of the refugees were part of the white planters in Saint-Domingue, their voice was articulated through this club. It was not the voice of the slaves that came with them, or of the poorer whites who somehow managed it to escape the horrors of Saint-Domingue. These groups were not able to articulate themselves as the *colons de St.Domingue réfugiés* could, which implies that they did not speak for ten thousands of refugees in the U.S.A., like they claimed in their apologia, but only for themselves and their interests. It is also crucial to discuss the slaves that came with their masters, just like the few free colored people, how they influenced the black community in Philadelphia and what their life as a refugee looked like in the United States.

4.2.2. Black Refugees from Saint-Domingue in the U.S.A.

After the beginning of the French Revolution and primarily after the sugar fields in Le Cap were burning, also black refugees were arriving in Philadelphia, most of them with their Masters. From 1790 to 1794, 3,084 people arrived in Philadelphia, 816 slaves, 32 free colored, and 2,236 whites. This figure shows pretty clearly that almost none of the free colored people left the island, but instead fought for equal rights. Most of the slaves that arrived were more or less equally divided between men and women, or more precisely boy and girl. The average age for arriving boys was 14,1 and for girls 15,5. There were almost no black male refugees from Saint-Domingue older than 23, or females older than 30. These figures imply that no slave families were brought to the United States, but parentless children or young adults.¹³⁹

Reading the data of the black slaves that arrived in Philadelphia, especially compared to the free colored, one question comes up: Why weren't they revolting in Saint-Domingue with other slaves? How did their Masters manage it to bring them on vessels heading to the United States?

¹³⁸ Ibid. p. 146.

¹³⁹ Nash, *Reverberations of Haiti* p. 50ff.

The answer has various aspects. First of all, in 1791 or 1792 nobody knew that this slave upheaval would finally be successful and lead to abolition. Secondly, most of the families that arrived with slaves in Philadelphia only brought a few with them. There existed some exceptions where Jean Baptiste Reynard Barbarian came directly from Saint-Marc with 23 slaves, or Madame Chambrun who brought eight slaves with her. But the majority arrived with one or two slaves in Philadelphia. This indicates that mostly loyal domestic slaves came with their masters. The slaves who rebelled had to do hard labor on the sugar cane fields every day, but not the domestic slaves, which also explains the high amount of women. Normally, only young man about 20 years old were working on the fields. Putting it in a nutshell, the average black slave from Saint-Domingue that arrived in Philadelphia was in his teens and a domestic slave.¹⁴⁰

After their arrival the masters had to deal with a new gradual emancipation legislation that was practiced in Pennsylvania during the 1790s. It dictates that every slave owning refugee from Saint-Domingue had to free his slaves after six months. But it was also issued that they had to be indentured till the age of 28 was achieved, which also explains the age of slaves that were brought by the masters, who of course knew about that law before they arrived. Most of the indentured slaves lived with their former masters, became food and worked in the house. Although they were still not free, they had a relatively secure start into their new life in Philadelphia. The few free colored people that came to Philadelphia often had problems to find a place to sleep, or to work.¹⁴¹

The opposite was sometimes seen by colored females, free and enslaved, who lived a better live, due to their services to mainly white French and Saint-Domingan refugees. Moreau de St. Mery writes about it: *"The French colored women live in the most obnoxious luxury in Philadelphia, and since this luxury can only be provided by the French and by former French colonials, the contrast of their condition with the misery of the mass of their compatriots is revolting"*¹⁴² These black women were mistresses or prostitutes to increase their standard of living. They used their beauty to escape poverty, or their status as indentured or enslaved.

For the black community in Philadelphia the several thousand black refugees, most of them slaves, were definitely a new challenge. First of all, like mentioned above, the blacks from Saint-Domingue were very young, secondly most of the Afro-Americans could not speak French and the other way around. Thirdly, the black community in Philadelphia consisted of 3,000 African-Americans during the 1790s, of which one hundred were slaves. That implicates,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 52ff.

¹⁴¹ Davies, Saint-Domingue Refugees p. 110ff.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 113.

that with the arrival of the Saint-Domingan masters, the amount of slaves in the city multiplied by eight.¹⁴³

Before the arrival of all the refugees in Philadelphia, the black community was planning to build the first free black African church in the United States of America. The money should come from small donations that should be collected. One famous advocate of that idea was Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was already mentioned in context of the yellow fever. Finally in the beginning of 1793 a loan was promised and the first “spade was put to the ground”¹⁴⁴. But later during that year the numbers of arriving white refugees from Saint-Domingue increased extremely, which effected the construction of the church. Many of the whites who promised loans for the church gave it now to the refugees. The black community worked for two years to raise 3,500\$ and the campaign for the aid of the refugees, took a couple days to collect four times as much. Considering who these refugees were that arrived in Philadelphia, it is almost ironic that the same persons that wanted to give the money to a black community gave it to a member of the slave owning class from Saint-Domingue. *“Thus, African Americans learned that even the most sympathetic white Philadelphians placed the distress of white slave owners, even those from outside the United States who drew their wealth from managing the hemisphere’s most brutal slave regime, ahead of the aspirations of those who had been slaves.”*¹⁴⁵

Gary B. Nash highlights two very important aspects in this one sentence. First of all, the standing the foreign white planters had compared to the black community, and secondly, that the white refugees coming from Saint-Domingue have been welcomed and supported in every way possible, mostly by white Americans. Thomas Jefferson himself called for beneficence by underlining the horror the white planters went through.¹⁴⁶

The warm welcome, the white refugees received, was not equally given to the black refugees. Many people in the U.S., especially slave owners, were afraid they would bring the spirit of the slave rebellion to the United States of America. It was not such an urgent matter in Philadelphia since not many slaves lived there, but especially in the rural areas or more southern regions, the fear of a slave upheaval grew with every Saint-Domingan black and white refugee that arrived. A lot of so called “secret keepers”, blacks that planned conspiracies, were assumed to gather and target the plantations in Virginia, for example in Norfolk, Charleston or in

¹⁴³ Nash, Reverberations p. 53.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 45.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 45.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 45.

Hampton. In these contexts, the uprising slaves in Saint-Domingue were always mentioned, whether they were delivering guns or were joining the revolution as soon as it broke out.

It is difficult to say if these thoughts were pure fear of the white planters and can be simplified as paranoia or if there existed serious plans. A slave revolt did not take place in the U.S.A. A connection between these two slave societies would be very unlikely since there existed many barriers to cross, not only the language. However, only the fear of these uprisings led to executions of slaves, from Saint-Domingue and from Virginia, who were suspected to prepare an uprising or were involved with slaves who were caught planning a conspiracy against the white masters. Additionally, fights between migrant slaves from Saint-Domingue and Virginian slaves broke out. The latter were afraid that the whites might punish all slaves, because some migrants from Saint-Domingue would spread the spirit of a slave rebellion in Virginia.¹⁴⁷

4.2.3. Saint-Domingan refugees in New Orleans

Regarding the Saint-Domingan refugees, white and black, in the United States of America, Louisiana has to be discussed separately. Many refugees from Saint-Domingue finally settled in New Orleans, though it was not their first choice of destination when the slave upheaval broke out. The interesting aspect concerning New Orleans, especially in contrast to Philadelphia, is that the refugees from Saint-Domingue had much more impact on the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana than they had in Philadelphia, or elsewhere on the East Coast of the U.S.A., where they assimilated to the dominant culture of the location or returned to Saint-Domingue or France later on. The arrival of the refugees started as early as in Philadelphia with the slave upheaval in Le Cap, but its last and by far largest wave of immigrants from Saint-Domingue arrived in 1809/10 from Cuba. Although, these years are not included in the time span discussed in this Master Thesis, it seems important to highlight the remaining impact Saint-Domingan refugees had on the culture, the politics, and the economy of Louisiana, particularly of New Orleans.

For the most part of the second half of the 18th century Louisiana was under Spanish rule, but the French culture never really disappeared. The Spanish had always been a numerical and cultural minority and therefore did not influence the predominant culture permanently. “Louisiana was a Spanish colony with a French population and a merchant class with close ties

¹⁴⁷ James Sidbury, *Saint-Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800*. In: *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 63 (1997) p. 531-552, p. 542-550.

to France”¹⁴⁸ This presents another reason why so many Saint-Domingans chose New Orleans as their final destination. In most cities on the East Coast they stayed only for a limited time. Those who actually settled integrated in the dominant Anglo-American culture. However, in Louisiana the refugees found “a culture that was similar to theirs, especially since the dominant religion had remained Catholic [...]”¹⁴⁹ Another aspect presented the plantation society that already existed in Louisiana. Although the ratio between slaves to free whites wasn’t by far as high as in Saint-Domingue, many planters could settle and start a new plantation, as they were used to in Saint-Domingue.

The influence the events in Europe and in the Caribbean had on Louisiana were immense during the second half of the 18th century. After the French lost the Seven Years’ War, they gave it to the Spaniards as a gift for their help during the war against the British Empire. Since France had kept Louisiana only for strategic rather than for economic reasons, this decision was not too difficult for the French King. Spain was thankful also for strategic reasons. Louisiana represented a buffer between new Spain and the British Colonies in the east of North America. The Spaniards were interested in the control of the mouth of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. They did not try to convert the former French colony into a Spanish one, therefore many institutions were not really changed. The Code Noir for example was named differently, but its content was practically not altered. In 1800, the political map of Europe had changed. Napoleon was on the rise and wanted to establish a strong French Empire in the New World, and since Spain needed money, the return of Louisiana to the French Empire was arranged. Only three years later Napoleon sold it again, this time to the United States, which is known as the *Louisiana Purchase*. Napoleon’s decision was made after it was inevitable that Saint-Domingue was lost as French Colony. The territory of Louisiana was again traded for strategic purposes of the European powers.¹⁵⁰

The refugee wave of 1809 was again happening due to the events taking place in Europe. Napoleon replaced Ferdinand VII of Spain with his older brother Joseph. When the news arrived in Cuba the captain general, Marques de Someruelos, founded committees that searched every town and parish of Cuba for Frenchmen who could be dangerous to the Spanish crown, and expelled them from the island. All Frenchmen, who might stand up against the Spanish in Cuba because of the events in Europe, had to leave the island immediately. With this decree the first massive wave of French migration, primarily refugees from Saint-Domingue, began. In

¹⁴⁸ Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans* p. 36.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 36.

¹⁵⁰ Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans* p. 33, 35.

the following year more than 9,000 refugees were entering Louisiana, mostly from Santiago de Cuba, and settled in New Orleans.¹⁵¹

The refugees that came from Cuba can be separated in three groups: 2,731 white planters, 3,102 free colored and 3,226 slaves. The largest group, the slaves, brought the biggest danger with them, since Louisiana and the southern states of the United States were a slave holding society, nobody wanted that the ideals of the slave revolution would spread in their territory. Similar to Virginia, the masters were afraid that such an influx of slaves could endanger their superiority. However, in this case most of the slaves were very loyal to their masters, which was the reason they followed them from Saint-Domingue in the first place, instead of turning against them. Another aspect, that made the Louisianans insecure was the amount of free colored people coming from Cuba. In 1806 2,301 free people of color lived in New Orleans, which was more than doubled by the free colored people coming with the refugees. The high number of refugees meant a doubling of the population of the city. Thanks to the mayor who registered each individual who entered the city in 1809 and 1810, precise numbers are existing. In 1805 the population of New Orleans counted 8,475. Only five years later more than 9000 people were entering the city and established their new lives in New Orleans. Still the mayor and the people of New Orleans welcomed the refugees.¹⁵²

The mayor appealed to the people, called for their *“inclination for charity[...]/considering that the majority of these [white] persons arrive in an absolute want of objects of prime necessity, and are unable to procure them if they are not helped[...]*”¹⁵³ Like in many other areas in the United States only the whites, who fled the horrors of a slave upheaval, were pitied by the local population. Just like in Philadelphia money was raised to help the white planter classes. But this time some 6000 slaves and free colored came to New Orleans too, and were welcomed as well, despite all fear of a slave revolution similar to the one in Saint-Domingue. On the one hand, some time had passed since the upheaval and most of the slaves were said to be loyal to follow their masters all the way. On the other hand, as Ashli White argues, the population saw not the military possibility to block so many black refugees. Particularly the free colored people were better educated and trained in warfare than the black inhabitants of New Orleans.¹⁵⁴ However, this aspect might have been a reason, but more decisive was that the

¹⁵¹ Paul Lachance, The 1809 immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration, and Impact. In: Carl A. Brasseux and Glenn R. Conrad (ed.), The Road to Louisiana. The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792-1809 (New Orleans 1992) p. 245-285, p. 248.

¹⁵² Ibid. 248, Paul Lachance, Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Louisiana. In: David Geggus (ed.), The impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World (Columbia 2001) p. 209-231, p. 213.

¹⁵³ Lachance, 1809 immigration p. 251.

¹⁵⁴ White, Encountering Revolution p. 185.

population of New Orleans was afraid of an upcoming “Americanization”. Since the state of Louisiana belonged to the U.S.A. an Anglo-American immigration was planned and had already started, which threatened the French speaking culture.¹⁵⁵

The major impact these refugees, mainly coming during the wave of 1809/1810, had on the culture, the politics and the economy of New Orleans is sometimes neglected in the literature. The fact that French culture was predominant in Louisiana for most of the 19th century is often not connected to the 9,059 black and white refugees who came to New Orleans during that time. In the last part of this chapter the focus will be on the impact the settlement of these refugees had on the unique development of the city of New Orleans.

For the population of Louisiana, the arrival of thousands of French speaking people, who were accustomed to the same cultural background then they were, was highly welcomed confronting the Anglo American influence that grew stronger and stronger since the *Louisiana Purchase* in 1803. It was not only the large number of migrants from Saint-Domingue, but also their higher education compared to the inhabitants of New Orleans, which permanently influenced the society. Additionally, to the white migrants, the free colored people distinguished in education and literacy from the free colored already living in Louisiana. Since they integrated very easily into the society, they played a crucial role “for the preservation of the French language and Gallic Culture”¹⁵⁶ in New Orleans and contributed to the fact that twenty-five years after the *Louisiana Purchase* French was still the official language in the New Orleans city council.¹⁵⁷

Next to the foundation of newspapers, like the *Louisiana Courier*, which was published only in French in the beginning, education was another way the refugees influenced the society in New Orleans. In 1812 the *Collège d’Orléans* was founded and its first president was Jules d’Avezac, a former Saint-Domingan. One of the pupils became the famous creole historian and advocate Charles Etiennes Arthur Gayarré¹⁵⁸ (1805-1895). In his autobiographical novel *Fernando de Lemos* (1872) he emphasized the positive influence of his Saint-Domingan teachers. Another institution for education was the Catholic Church, which was another aspect the community in Louisiana had in common with the refugees arriving from Saint-Domingue,

¹⁵⁵ Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans*, p. 41. Lachance, *Repercussions* p. 213.

¹⁵⁶ Nathalie Dessens, *The Saint-Domingue Refugees and the Preservation of Gallic Culture in Early American New Orleans*. In: *French Colonial History* Vol. 8 (2007) p. 53-69, p. 58.

¹⁵⁷ Alfred N. Hunt, *Haiti’s influence on Antebellum America. Slumbering Volcano in the Caribbean* (Baton Rouge 1988) p. 48.

¹⁵⁸ Gayarré is famous for his *Histories of Louisiana* and his presidency of the Historical Society of Louisiana from 1860-1888. However, he was also involved in politics, his highest position was Secretary of State of Louisiana from 1845-1853.

and differed from the mostly protestant United States. Louis Guillaume Valentine Du Borg¹⁵⁹ (1766-1833), another refugee, became one of the most famous catholic educators in the U.S.A., later on he was announced Bishop of “Louisiana and the Floridas” by Pope Pius VII. In the political life, it was even an advantage to speak French, it took until the 1840s, that Americans gained control over the local politics at all. Next to the institutional and public influence the refugees had in Saint-Domingue, the focus is now shifting to the impact they had on music, theater and the opera.¹⁶⁰

Louisiana historians underlined for a long time which high influence the refugees had on the theater scene in the beginning of the 19th century. Although it was disproved, that Saint-Domingans opened the first theater in New Orleans in 1791, which was actually initiated by two brothers from Paris, the refugee group supported the upcoming theater scene as donors, actors and viewers. Already in Santiago de Cuba, the Saint-Domingan community tried to develop a vital theater scene. Louis Tabary, a Saint-Domingan who already came before the mass of migrants in 1809/10, introduced the permanent French theater in the city. In the following, the *Théâtre d’Orleans* was opened in 1809, and after a fire rebuilt by another Saint-Domingan, John Davis, in 1817. It had seven shows each week, four times theater and three times opera. Most of the actors, also free colored people, were originally from Saint-Domingue. It presented the center of theater and opera in New Orleans for most of the 19th century.¹⁶¹

Another cultural field the refugees influenced was music. They brought with them different styles, rhythms and dances like the *passepied* and the *contredanse*. The musicians, who accompanied them, were influenced by the different styles of the Caribbean and the European music. They are often seen as forerunners of the very early jazz in New Orleans.¹⁶² Louis-Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) was a popular musician that descended from Saint-Domingan refugees and became famous for the mixture of European classical music and the rhythms played by the slaves in Congo Square in New Orleans. He became one of the best known musicians in America in the 19th century. “*To his European admirers, who flocked to hear his concerts while he was on tour there, he was a ‘pianiste compositeur louisinai’ an artist from the New World who represented what they thought a young American was all about. As Parisians saw it, he was a Creole ‘noble savage’.*”¹⁶³ The influx of so many Francophone people

¹⁵⁹ Du Borg was born in Le Cap, but raised in France, where he started his clerical career. After the French Revolution, he fled to Baltimore, where he founded St. Marys College of Baltimore. In 1812 he settled in New Orleans to reorganize the catholic church of Louisiana. Shortly before his death in 1833 he returned to France.

¹⁶⁰ Hunt, *Haiti’s influence* p. 54ff.

¹⁶¹ Dessens, *Gallic Culture* p. 62ff. Hunt, *Haiti’s influence* p. 67ff.

¹⁶² Thomas Fiehrer, *Saint-Domingue/Haiti: Louisiana’s Caribbean Connection*. In: *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* Vol. 30 (1989) p. 419-437, p. 431.

¹⁶³ Hunt, *Haiti’s influence* p. 72.

had various influences on the population in New Orleans and Louisiana. Before moving on to the next chapter, one final issue has to be discussed, the economy, in particular, the production of sugar in Louisiana.

Since Saint-Domingue, as most important sugar supplier for Europe in the 1780s, was not able to ship such high amounts anymore, other Caribbean islands tried to fill the gap and became rich on their behalf. The refugees that arrived in Louisiana still had the know-how of planting and producing sugar, at least the white planters who already had plantations in Le Cap. In 1795 the first Saint-Domingan refugee was successfully planting sugar in Louisiana and some twenty years later over 200 sugar plantations existed in New Orleans. Alfred Hunt is underlining the importance of the slaves as well, who arrived with their masters and knew the work as plantation overseers, managers and workers. He points out that “black St. Domingans ensured that sugar became the primary economic asset in lower Louisiana”¹⁶⁴.

Paul Lachance in the opposite argues, that Hunt exaggerates his emphasize on the influence the Saint Domingan refugees had on the Louisiana sugar production. The real starting point for the sugar economy in Louisiana was after the 1830s with a method that was introduced by the French and not by Saint-Domingans.¹⁶⁵ However, the Saint-Domingans brought with them their knowhow of sugar production, but were not the single trigger for the booming sugar production in Louisiana during the 19th century.

The refugees who settled in Louisiana were discussed in detail in this last part of the Saint-Domingan refugee chapter, because their influence and impact stayed a long time during the 19th century and is somehow responsible for the French influence New Orleans still has. Like already mentioned above, although it is not in the time frame discussed in this Master Thesis and happened 18 years after the upheaval, the 9,059 refugees that arrived in New Orleans had to be included in this chapter. First of all, to show the difference to the refugees that arrived in Philadelphia, who either integrated in the dominant American-protestant culture or went back to Saint-Domingue or France. And secondly, to emphasize the impact the refugees had on the society of New Orleans in various ways.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 63.

¹⁶⁵ Lachance, *Repercussions* p. 220ff.

4.3. The involvement of the government of the United States of America in the affairs of the insurrection in Saint-Domingue

The United States were not only confronted with a wave of migrants coming from Saint-Domingue, but with an even greater challenge. The first President George Washington and his close advisers had to decide how to react to the events in the French colony. After the Independence War and the ratification of the Constitution, a second colony in the New World stood up against a European Power and their suppression. The historian Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall is underlining the similarity of the American and the Haitian Revolution. Both revolted against powers in Europe and asked for more rights and independence. The Americans fought under the slogan: *no taxation without representation* and the Haitian population followed the three words leading the French Revolution: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. However, the sameness of both revolutions is merely theoretical. The conception, that both countries are fighting for a similar course is immediately interrupted with the fact that the United States of America officially recognized Haiti in 1862. Some 58 years after its Independence the United States admitted Haiti a place on their diplomatic world map. Even France already recognized them in 1825.¹⁶⁶ How do the first two independent states in the New World keep ignoring each other for the most part of the 19th century especially after their highly connected trade networks before 1789, when John Adams highlighted that "We are necessary to them and they are to us"¹⁶⁷?

First of all, the European power was France, who aided the U.S.A during the Independence War and secondly, the suppressors in Saint-Domingue were slave holding white planters, like in the southern states of the U.S., especially the latter was a crucial argument. In addition to the articles the newspapers wrote about the cruelties that were happening to the Masters, the population of the U.S.A. heard many stories first hand from the refugees, coming from Le Cap. As mentioned in the chapter above, most of them, who arrived at the East Coast, were white planters, fleeing from the chaos on their plantations.

In the southern states of the U.S.A. planters feared the revolution might spread to their plantations. The slaveholding states separately forbade slaves, arriving alongside their masters, to enter from Saint-Domingue. South Carolina started as early as 1792, followed by Virginia in 1793 and North Carolina in 1795. This already indicates how these state legislatures thought

¹⁶⁶ Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Specter of Saint-Domingue: American and French Reactions to the Haitian Revolution*. In: David Patrick Geggus, Norman Fiering (ed.), *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington 2009) p. 317-339, p. 319.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 319.

about the events on their southern border.¹⁶⁸ Before turning to the decisions made by the federal government after the rebellion started in the French colony, it is interesting to discuss the reactions of the founding fathers and the first government of the U.S.A. towards the outbreak of the French Revolution two years earlier.

When George Washington heard about the Storm of the Bastilles, shortly after he was inaugurated as the first President, he welcomed the news. In October 1789 he noted that “The Revolution, which has been effected in France is of so wonderful a nature, that the mind can hardly realize the fact.[...] The nation will be the most powerful and happy in Europe.”¹⁶⁹ In another statement, Washington connects the events in France directly to the American revolution: “the peculiar light of the age seems to have opened the eyes of almost every nation in Europe [...] the American Revolution has been productive of happy consequences on both sides of the Atlantic”¹⁷⁰

Most of the Americans applauded the events in France, just like their President did. Thomas Jefferson and his followers were eager to support the revolution as much as possible. Jefferson himself was in France during the first weeks of the revolution and wrote from Paris in the beginning of August 1789: “The national assembly have now as clean a canvas to work on here as we had in America. Such has been the firmness and wisdom of their proceedings in moments of adversity as well as prosperity that I have the highest confidence that they will use their power justly.”¹⁷¹ The connection of the American and the French Revolution across the Atlantic is underlined by Washington, Jefferson and primarily Thomas Paine in his *Rights of Men*, written in 1792. This pamphlet, which he dedicated to George Washington, highlights the close link between the two events on both sides of the Atlantic. In the preface of part two, he emphasizes the “intercourse” between the two countries and points out that France follows the positive example of the United States of America.¹⁷²

In Philadelphia people went on the streets to celebrate the rebels in France, who fought against the oppression of the monarchical System. They saw it as a proof of loyalty towards their companion in Europe and to the principles of democracy and liberty. Jefferson remarked in the summer of 1789 that “All the old spirit of 1776 is rekindling”¹⁷³. For the government and

¹⁶⁸ Hunt, *Haiti's influence* p. 109.

¹⁶⁹ The Writings of George Washington, Jared Sparks (ed.), Volume X (New York 1847) p. 39ff.

¹⁷⁰ Simon P. Newman, *American Political Culture and the French and Haitian Revolutions: Nathaniel Cutting and the Jeffersonian Republicans*. In: David Geggus (ed.), *The impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia 2001) p. 72-93, p. 74.

¹⁷¹ Thomas Jefferson Writings, Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), (1984 New York) p. 957.

¹⁷² http://www.constitution.org/tp/rightsman_pre.htm (9.5.17)

¹⁷³ Newman, *American Political Culture* p. 76.

the population of the U.S.A. the French Revolution was continuing the spirit the Thirteen Colonies had started in the New World.

However, the slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue, the third revolution, only some 600 miles away from Florida, erupted and after the violence in the French Revolution increased, the cheering for the revolution decreased. The revolutions taking place on both sides of the Atlantic presented a great challenge to the just inaugurated President Washington.

4.3.1. The reaction of the government towards the upheaval in Saint-Domingue

As soon as the news of the slave upheaval arrived in the United States of America in September 1791, a reaction by the government was demanded by various fractions. Charles Pinckney, the Governor of South Carolina, was afraid that the slave rebellion could spread to the southern states of the U.S.A. He immediately wrote the colonial agent of Saint-Domingue, M. Polony, who was send by the colonial assembly, pointing out the similarity of Saint-Domingue and their southern states, underlining that the people from South Carolina “feel for your situation” and expresses his hope for the help of the U.S. government and other friends who, ”will enable you to effectively crush so [sic!] daring and unprovoked rebellion”.¹⁷⁴

Governor Pinckney wrote another letter to President Washington on September 20, 1791, warning him of the danger the slave rebellion presented to the United States. He urged him to help France to fight the rebellion on the small island and to set an example for the slaves in the southern states. Otherwise the flame of the revolt could seriously endanger the United States.¹⁷⁵ This line of argument is found consistently in the letters, newspapers and pamphlets, which were written and published during that period. In this Master Thesis different examples were already mentioned, like in Virginia and Louisiana or the entry ban on slaves from Saint-Domingue in some southern states, which were issued during the first years after the revolution started.

Nevertheless, there were people raising their voice speaking for the slaves and supporting their struggle for freedom. In Pennsylvania an unknown Quaker was offended by the resolution, which was brought in by an colonial agent named M. Roustan send by the colonial assembly in Saint-Domingue, that called for shiploads of provisions for the white planters in Saint-Domingue. The Quaker reminded his colleagues of the spirit their own revolution had, by

¹⁷⁴ Tim Matthewson, *A Proslavery Foreign Policy. Haitian and American Relations during the Early Republic* (Westport London 2003) p. 22.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 23.

pointing out that “it would be inconsistent on the part of a free nation to take measures against a people who had availed themselves of the only means they have to throw off the yoke of the most atrocious slavery.”¹⁷⁶ But most of his fellow countrymen did not see the spirit of the American Revolution in the Haitian Revolution as they did in the French. This “inconsistency” will be a major issue accompanying the government of the U.S. during these first years of the Revolution, which will be discussed later on in more detail. However, the demand of the Saint-Domingan agent was fulfilled. Due to the trade relations the state of Pennsylvania and especially Philadelphia had with the island, the interest of the Pennsylvanian legislature was based on economic reasons, not on humanitarian ones.¹⁷⁷

The individual states, even Pennsylvania where the anti-slavery movement was centered, mostly helped the white planters. Their motivations for the aid were economic, humanitarian towards the fellow white planters, and the fear the slave rebellion could spread to the United States of America. However, the Federal Government of the U.S.A. was soon approached by the French officials, asking for help.

The French Minister Plenipotentiary Jean Bapiste de Ternant (1751-1833), who arrived in Philadelphia in August 1791 wrote to Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, informing him about the rebellion that broke out, and asking him to pay the debt the United States of America are still owing France from their Independence War. “*Une revolte dans les ateliers de la partie de st. Dominique m’oblige d’y faire passer sans delay des secours de plus les genres dont le Gouvernemen annonce avoir le plus pressant besoin. Mes moyens ne pouvant suffire aux achats indispensables dans cette occasion, je vous prie de vouloir m’accorder sur le Tresor federal un credit de 40 mille dollars à valoir en à compte de ce que les Etats unis doivent à la france.*”¹⁷⁸

Hamilton answered on the same day pointing out his sympathy for France, and that the government was willing to pay the requested money: “regretting most sincerely the calamitous event announced in your letter of this day, it is with real pleasure, I find myself in a condition to inform you, that the sum you desire is at your command to operate as payment, on account of the debt due to France.”¹⁷⁹

One day later he informed President Washington of the letter he received from Ternant and reported him, that he already agreed to pay the sum, since he was sure that Washington would

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 23.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

¹⁷⁸ The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Volume IX: August 1791-December 1791 (New York, London 1965) p. 219.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 220.

not hesitate any longer in such “urgent & calamitous”¹⁸⁰ matters. Only three days later, Washington responded to his letter and completely supported the decision of Alexander Hamilton.¹⁸¹

George Washington was shocked hearing about the slave rebellion in the French colony. Like most of the whites during these times, even if they were supporters of Abolition, Washington did not prefer the blacks liberating themselves. Shortly after he was informed about the events in Saint-Domingue, he wrote: “Lamentable, to see such a spirit of the revolt among the Blacks.”¹⁸² And just after writing to Hamilton, that he was supporting his decision concerning the financial aid towards France, he was answering a letter by Henry Knox, the Secretary of War, about a supply of arms for the white planters. Knox pointed out that he saw this as “a singular opportunity for the United States to manifest their zeal to repay in some degree the assistance afforded us during the perilous struggle of the late war.”¹⁸³ Washington fully agreed with Knox. Hence, the United States of America shipped amongst others 1,000 muskets and bayonets, 110 musket cartridges, 10 barrels of musket powder and 5,000 flints to Saint-Domingue to help the white planters fight the rebellious slaves.¹⁸⁴ Washington wrote a third letter on September 24, 1791, this time directly to the French Minister Ternant. First of all, to ensure him that his financial and military demands will be fulfilled, secondly, to underline the alliance between France and the United States of America and thirdly, to express his concern about the black rebels.¹⁸⁵ Only one week later, on October 2nd, Washington wrote another letter to Ternant about the “unfortunate insurrection of the Negros in Hispaniola”¹⁸⁶. In which he emphasized his fear of the rebellion in Saint-Domingue and especially of its unknown ending: “What the final issue of this affair may be, is difficult at this distance, and with the imperfect information we have, to foretell; but, certain it is, the commencement has been both daring and alarming.”¹⁸⁷

In a letter the president wrote to Governor Pickney, who feared the rebellion might spread to South Carolina, he emphasized the bond between the United States and the suffering planters in Saint-Domingue: “I feel sincerely those sentiments of sympathy which you so properly

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 225.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 238.

¹⁸² The Writings of George Washington, From the Original Manuscripts 1745-1799, John C. Fitzpatrick Volume 31 (Washington 1939) p. 453.

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 375.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 375.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 375.

¹⁸⁶ Writings Washington, Sparks p. 194ff.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 195.

express for the distresses of our suffering brethren in that quarter, and deplore their causes. We have not as yet any information which may lead us to hope they will soon be at an end.”¹⁸⁸

In these letters and notes Hamilton and Washington are emphasizing their sympathy for the white planters but express also their fear. Washington did not want to send troops to Saint-Domingue, or set an example to threaten the slaves in the U.S.A as asked by governor Pinckney. But he clearly was eager to restore the hegemony of the planters in Saint-Domingue. Still, Washington was a supporter of the Abolition Movement in the United States. But just like the *Amis des Noirs*, he favored gradual abolition that was led by a white government, and not a forced immediate abolition due to a slave rebellion.

After the first aid of U.S. government in autumn 1791, Ternant wrote again to Hamilton in March 1792 asking for another 400,000\$, because of the debt the U.S. still owed to France. The payments were made in four divisions of 100,000\$ till the end of the year 1792. The French Minister needed the money very urgent to buy supplies for the population in Saint-Domingue and did not wait for any allowance from the National Assembly in France.¹⁸⁹ The National Assembly in Paris ratified his actions later on in June 1792, adding that these supplies should only be bought from American merchants. However, in September 1792 the French Monarchy was abolished and the National Convention proclaimed the French Republic. Although Ternant was send by the French King, he stayed in the U.S. and kept on negotiating with the government. It was not sure that the approval by the National Assembly in June was still valid. In the first months after the end of the Monarchy, he did not have any approval by the new National Convention to negotiate with the U.S. government about their debts.

Nevertheless, Ternant continued to ask for more money from the government not only because of the imminence famine, but also because he did not want to get the British involved. The French officials still feared, that the planters would turn themselves towards the British empire to ask for help, or even worse, declare their independence from France. Some influential planters were insisting that only the British King could help them, especially with Jamaica as direct neighbor.¹⁹⁰

In the chapter concerning the refugees in the Unites States the important trade relations with Saint-Domingue were already highlighted. Beside the debt to France, the trade relations with the French colony were crucial for the United States. In the correspondence between Ternant and Jefferson in November 1791 the latter underlined that the United States could also loose

¹⁸⁸ Writings of Washington, Fitzpatrick p. 413.

¹⁸⁹ The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Volume XI: August 1791-December 1791 (New York, London 1965) p. 113ff.

¹⁹⁰ Matthewson, Foreign Policy p. 26.

something and that France was not the only one who wanted the chaos in Saint-Domingue to stop.¹⁹¹

When Ternant asked again for more money in November 1792, even before the last payment of the already accepted 400,000\$ was implemented, the U.S. government was not as sure as in September 1791 when the weapons were shipped almost immediately after the request of Ternant. In 1791 Hamilton only wrote Washington a short letter to inform him about the help he had granted the French Minister, without seriously asking for his permission. This time he wrote a long letter, articulating his concerns of another payment for Saint-Domingue: *“I have carefully reflected on the application of mr Ternant, for an additional supply of money for the use of the Colony of St Domingo on account of the Debt due to France; which I regard more and more as presenting a subject extremely delicate and embarrassing. Two questions arise 1 as to the ability of the UStates to furnish the money, which is stated at about 326,000\$, [...] 2 as to the propriety of doing it on political considerations.”*¹⁹²

Since the cheering in the beginning of the Revolution in 1789 the circumstances changed, now the King Louis XVI was imprisoned and nobody knew how long the existing government would be in place at all. The United States became very careful towards the events in France. The government was afraid that payments they had made in the past year and would make in the future would not be acknowledged by possible new governments. Hamilton suggested in his letter to Washington on November 19, 1792, that *“If a restoration of the King should take place, I am of the opinion, that no payment which might be made in the Interval would be deemed regular or obligatory.”*¹⁹³ Although the mistrust towards the circumstances in France was large, he does not forget to underline the role the United States has, to help Saint-Domingue and not to expose it to the *“total ruin by famine.”*¹⁹⁴

In the end Thomas Jefferson informed Ternant that the payments will continue, but only as emergency aids on an *“ad hoc”* basis and only if all goods were purchased alone from American traders.¹⁹⁵ But to make sure the National Convention would ratify the payments, Jefferson wrote to the American Minister in France, Governor Morris¹⁹⁶ (1752-1816). He explained that they are continuing to fund the supplies for Saint-Domingue but asked Morris for his help in Paris

¹⁹¹ Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁹² The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Volume XIII: August 1791-December 1791 (New York, London 1965) p. 169ff.

¹⁹³ Ibid. p. 170.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 170.

¹⁹⁵ The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 24 (Princeton 1990) p. 653.

¹⁹⁶ Morris is seen as one of the *“founding fathers”*. He wrote parts of the American constitution and stayed from 1792 to 1794 in Paris to report about the events in France and the ongoing of the revolution. After his return he was a member of the US-Senate.

because they would need a “formal sanction from the government of France,” and a “full sanction of the past & a complete expression of the desires of their government as to future supplies to their colonies”.¹⁹⁷ This shows the insecurity of the U.S. government concerning the events in France and in Saint-Domingue. They wanted to reestablish the planter sovereignty on the island, but did not know whether they could trust the political development in France or not.

Hamilton and Washington showed very quickly their general position towards the slave rebellion in their correspondence with the French Minister. Their hostile opinion did not really change, but their view regarding the events in France did. However, during the time between September 1791 and June 1793 the United States of America paid 726,000\$¹⁹⁸ to France, due to their debt. Hence, helped them to supply the planters and the French troops with food and weapons, so they could fight the rebellious slaves.¹⁹⁹ An American merchant highlighted that “troops had been fed principally by the American merchants.”²⁰⁰ The U.S. government was not only paying off their debts, but also had an economic advantage since the value of exports to the French colonies in the Caribbean did not decline, but increased from 3.4 million dollar to 5.0 million dollar between 1791 to 1793.²⁰¹

4.3.2. Thomas Jefferson and the first years of the slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue

Thomas Jefferson was Secretary of State when the revolution in Saint-Domingue started. In 1801 he became President of the United States and was in office at the time of the Louisiana Purchase and when Haiti declared independence in 1804. Many historians emphasize his hostile role towards slavery, Saint-Domingue/Haiti and blacks in general.²⁰² But at the same time Thomas Jefferson was one of the main authors of the *Declaration of Independence*. Its first sentence states, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Jefferson Writings, Merrill D. Peterson (ed.), (1984 New York) p. 1003.

¹⁹⁸ The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, Volume XIV: August 1791-December 1791 (New York, London 1965) p. 554.

¹⁹⁹ Donald R. Hickey, America's Response to the Slave Revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806. In: Journal of the Early Republic, Vol. 2 (1982) p. 361-379, p. 364.

²⁰⁰ Matthewson, Foreign Policy p. 45.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 44.

²⁰² Tim Matthewson, Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti. In: Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Vol. 140 (1996) p. 22-48.

²⁰³ <http://www.ushistory.org/DECLARATION/document/> (6.4.17)

At the time Jefferson wrote these lines, he owned more than 200 slaves. This contrast is discussed by Edmund S. Morgan in his book “American Slavery, American Freedom”.²⁰⁴

He emphasizes that the founding fathers and their dedication to democracy, liberty and freedom went hand in hand with holding slaves. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were both plantation owners, where many slaves worked. Like already mentioned above, they were not per se proslavery and technically knew it was not “right”, but in the end they did not feel responsible for it. Jefferson inherited the plantations and grew up in the planter society of Virginia, which shaped him for the rest of his life. Morgan puts it very directly by noting that, “The rise of liberty and equality in America had been accompanied by the rise of slavery.”²⁰⁵ This inconsistency evolves even more researching the reaction of the United States to the events in Saint-Domingue between 1791 and 1793. Thomas Jefferson played a central role as Secretary of state during that time. His often ambiguous position between slavery and freedom is worth to have a closer look at.

Jefferson was highly interested in the commerce between the U.S.A. and Saint-Domingue. Hence, he shared Washington’s view to reestablish the planter’s hegemony as soon as possible. In June 1792, he wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette, who was a founding member of the *Amis des Noirs*: “What are you doing for your colonies? They will be lost if not more effectually succoured [sic!]. Indeed no future efforts you can make will ever be able to reduce the blacks. All that can be done in my opinion will be to compound with them as has been done formerly in Jamaica. We have been zealous in aiding them, lest your government should feel any jealousy on our account. But in truth we as sincerely wish their restoration, and their connection with you, as you do yourselves.”²⁰⁶

On the one hand, he almost accuses him and his country for letting Saint-Domingue fall in this present chaos, underlining that the U.S. government had helped in any way it could. On the other hand, Jefferson is suggesting, that there is no way the blacks are going to work on the plantation like they did before, therefore he suggests to solve the issue similar to Jamaica. In 1739 Jamaica managed it to end a slave rebellion by negotiating a treaty with them. This contract included for example freedom for many slaves, who participated in the upheaval and also sovereign territory on the mountains of Jamaica. In return, the slaves had to promise to stop revolting against the English and to help the government in case of a revolt. This treaty proved itself for Jamaica ever since.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom. The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (London, New York, 1975) p. 4.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁰⁶ The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Vol. 24 p. 85.

²⁰⁷ Matthewson, *Foreign Policy*, p. 39.

Therefore, Jefferson is indicating a similar solution for Saint-Domingue in the letter to Lafayette. The idea actually came from Nathaniel Cutting, who wrote Jefferson from Saint-Domingue. Cutting was a witness of all three *Transatlantic Revolutions*. Born and raised in Massachusetts, being part of the American Revolution, he moved to France, where he lived as a trader in le Havre till late 1789. After the revolution in France became too risky for his business, Cutting went on to West Africa, where he found work as a slave trader, which finally brought him to Saint-Domingue from 1791 till June 1792.²⁰⁸ Nathaniel Cutting kept Jefferson informed concerning the ongoing of the revolution and suggested in March 1792 that “it will be the most prudent for Government to enter into a Treaty with them similar to that which the Government of Jamaica formerly made with the Maroon Negros²⁰⁹”.²¹⁰ The Secretary of State was longing for the latest news coming from Saint-Domingue: “We receive with deep regret daily information of the progress of insurrection and devastation in St. Domingo. Nothing indicates as yet that the evil is at it’s height.”²¹¹ Cutting delivered these information with precise descriptions of the events in Le Cap. For Jefferson, Nathaniel Cutting was an excellent source, his engagement as a slave trader, did not make any difference for the Secretary of State.

Suggesting the “Jamaican deal” to Lafayette was an attempt by Jefferson to solve the crisis in Saint-Domingue as soon as possible and to restore Saint-Domingue as a reliable trading partner. Unfortunately, Lafayette probably never read this letter, since he was first expelled from the National Assembly in August and only a few days later imprisoned by Austria first in Nivelles and later on in Prussian prisons in Wesel and Magdeburg. However, Jefferson was not only worried about the economic aspect of the French island but also of the danger the British presented. Since the planters were asking the British King for help, the thought that British troops might take over the island was not far fetched. The American government still feared the English were trying to win their former Thirteen Colonies back. With another island next to the southern border of the U.S.A. under their rule, this threat seemed to become even more sincere. So next to the commerce, which was important for the American ports, the fear of an invasion by the British troops played a significant role for Jefferson’s Haitian Policy.²¹²

Another aspect influencing the position of Jefferson towards the slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue and slavery in general was his background as a planter from Virginia and his loyalty to the Virginian planter community. Like already mentioned in the context of Morgan’s book, this loyalty to the Virginian planter does not imply that he was not aware of the right of slaves

²⁰⁸ Newman, *American Political Culture* p. 73ff.

²⁰⁹ Slaves who escaped from their plantations and often lived in the Mountains.

²¹⁰ *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Volume 23 (Princeton 1990) p. 179.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 26.

²¹² Tim Matthewson, *Jefferson and Haiti*. In: *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 61 (1995) p. 209-48, p. 216.

to stand up against their oppression. Already in 1785 he stated in *Notes of the state of Virginia* that slavery would be a “great political and moral evil“, and that he hoped for “a complete emancipation of human nature.”²¹³ Further on, he underlined the natural right of slaves to rebel and that sooner or later the slaves will rise against the masters. In the Notes of Virginia he clarifies that in his opinion a slave emancipation was inevitable. He just hopes that it will be “with the consent of the masters, rather than by their extirpation”.²¹⁴

These quotes, written six years before the slave rebellion actually started, sound very friendly towards the emancipation of slaves. But the last part of his sentence, the “extirpation” of the masters, was the driving aspect of his concept for the emancipation of all slaves. It was not the valuation of human nature but the anxiety of a slave upheaval. A letter from him to James Monroe on July 14, 1793, written exactly four years after the Storm of the Bastille and almost two years after the slave upheaval began, perpetuates this argument: “*I become daily more and more convinced, that all the West India Islands will remain in the hand of the people of colour, and a total expulsion of the whites sooner or later take place. It is high time we should foresee the bloody scenes which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves [South of Patowmac] have to wade through, and try to avert them.*”²¹⁵

He is warning the slaveholding states, south of the Potomac River, that they will experience the same destiny as Saint-Domingue, if they are not acting accordingly. When he wrote this letter, in the summer of 1793, the largest wave of refugees entered Philadelphia. Jefferson interpreted all these white planters, who were fleeing from their plantation, as a warning to the American planters, especially to the Virginian planter society, in which he grew up.

However, his attitude towards race in general and in particular towards the black race was absolutely common in the 18th century. Although the 18th century presented the peak of enlightened thinking, it was also the height of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Therefore, to call Jefferson a racist, like some historians²¹⁶ do, might not be appropriate considering the context, society and time he lived in. Many other thinkers, philosophers and writers of the Enlightenment, like Immanuel Kant, David Hume or Charles de Montesquieu, had similar views about the black race. The latter wrote in his celebrated *Spirit of Laws*, in which he formulates the separation of powers, also about the right of slavery: “*These creatures are all over black, and with such a flat nose that they can scarcely be pitied. It is hardly to be believed*

²¹³ Jefferson Writings, Peterson p. 214.

²¹⁴ Ibid. p. 289.

²¹⁵ The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Volume 26 (Princeton 1990) p. 503.

²¹⁶ Tim Matthewson for example.

that God, who is a wise Being, should place a soul, especially a good soul, in such a black ugly body”²¹⁷ Therefore, the racist thinking of Jefferson is rooted in a racist Enlightenment tradition.

His commitment to the planters in Virginia further formed his thinking about race. In *the Notes on the state of Virginia* he emphasizes the differences between the black race and the white race. For him the various characteristics of both races, no matter if it concerns the looks or the qualities as human being, are unchangeable. Further on, he emphasizes the different values of both races and sees the “superior beauty”²¹⁸ in the race of the whites. “Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races?”²¹⁹ With this rhetoric question Jefferson clearly shows what he thinks about the black race. Some lines later he explains why the blacks can be compared to animals: “In general, their existence appears to participate more of sensation than reflection. To this must be ascribed their disposition to sleep when abstracted from their diversions, and unemployed in labor. An animal whose body is at rest and who does not reflect must be disposed to sleep, of course.”²²⁰ One last sentence from the passage sums up his thinking about both races: “Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”²²¹ Jefferson is denying a black person the possibility to understand math, due to his race. This opinion is irrespective of education or intelligence. The same applies for the lack of imagination he is referring to. For Jefferson, these are two main aspects a black man or women will always be inferior compared to a white person, simply, due to their color of skin and not because of lacking education or possibilities to study math, history or art.

All these quotes and arguments by Jefferson clearly show his attitude towards the black race, towards their capability to think logically like whites and also lead governments or states. Thomas Jefferson at least thought about the possibility of emancipation, which separated him from many of his fellow planters in Virginia. But as Matthewson concludes, it was not possible to consider gradual abolition of slavery, for planters like Jefferson, to be more than a theoretical concept to prevent a slave rebellion in the southern states of the U.S.A.²²²

²¹⁷ Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) Translated by Thomas Nugent 1752 (Kitchener 2001) p. 264.

²¹⁸ Jefferson Writings, Peterson p. 265.

²¹⁹ Ibid. p. 264.

²²⁰ Ibid. p. 265ff.

²²¹ Ibid. p. 266.

²²² Matthewson, Jefferson p. 248.

In this context it is interesting to look at Jefferson's opinion of Native Americans. For him Native Americans were on the same level like the white men concerning intelligence or moral behavior. And in contrary to the blacks, he was very interested in their way of living in their culture and their history. Jefferson did not share the disguise he felt for the black race with the Native Americans. He noted, that they were absolutely equal to the white men in any consideration: "we shall probably find that they are formed in mind as well as in body, on the same model with the 'Homo Sapiens Europaeus.'"²²³ Therefore, his general racist attitude towards the black race did not include the Native Americans.²²⁴

Thomas Jefferson's Haitian policy, primarily in the beginning of the 19th century, when he was President of the United States, is often discussed between historians. Historian Arthur Scherr tries to defend Jefferson against the allegations made by Matthewson or Hickey, by looking at his quotes in a different angle. He describes Jefferson more as a statesman in a diplomatic triangle between France, the U.S.A. and Haiti, instead of looking at his view on slavery and the rebellion in Saint-Domingue. However, his argument is often too constructed and not really compelling, especially for the two years between 1791 and 1793. Scherr is eager to show that Jefferson did not want to destroy the Haitian Revolution, but often gets lost in details, which hinder a clear argument.²²⁵

The relation between Jefferson and Saint-Domingue/Haiti could be discussed in more detail, especially when he became president. However, in the last few pages the aim was to analyze the different motivations Jefferson had for his actions concerning the upheaval in Saint-Domingue till 1793, as Secretary of State, as Virginian planter and as a private person.

4.3.3. Abraham Bishop: "The Rights of the Black Men"

At the end of this chapter discussing the government of the U.S., in particular Thomas Jefferson, and their "inconsistency" towards the revolution in Saint-Domingue, it is important to highlight Abraham Bishop and his work, to see that people who rallied for the cause of the slaves did

²²³ Anthony F.C. Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians* (London 1999) p. 77.

²²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 76ff.

²²⁵ Arthur Scherr, *Thomas Jefferson's Haitian Policy. Myths and Realities* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth 2011). Also see: Wendy H. Wong, *Thomas Jefferson's Haitian Policy: Myths and Realities* by Arthur Scherr. In: *Journal of the Early Republic* Vol. 32 (2012) p. 714-716.

exist in the U.S.A. Bishop was born in Connecticut in 1763, went to Yale and wrote three essays for a little Boston Newspaper in the end of 1791 called “The Rights of the Black Men”.²²⁶

He was one of the few who realized the inconsistency of the American population and its government concerning the slave rebellion shortly after it erupted. Bishop not only sympathized with the slaves but in contrast to most of his contemporaries, he saw the upheaval in Saint-Domingue as a further step in a global change, after the American and the French Revolutions. His support for the events in Saint-Domingue was even among other anti-slavery advocates not typical. Hence, compared to the general society in America, Bishop, who was strongly involved in Connecticut’s politics later on, was completely standing out with his view.

His first argument builds upon the comparison with the American Revolution, arguing that the slaves were fighting for the same reason the American citizens were only a decade ago: “We believe, that Freedom is the natural right of all rational beings, and we know that the Blacks have never voluntarily resigned that Freedom. Then is not their cause as just as ours?”²²⁷ Bishop goes even further and argues that the slaves had actually more right to fight the French Masters than the American population did: “We fought with bravery and prayed earnestly for success upon our righteous cause, when we drew the sword and shed the blood of Englishman- for what!-not to gain Freedom; for we were never slaves; but to rid ourselves of taxes, imposed without our consent and from the growing evils of usurpation.”²²⁸ He concludes, that when it is legitimate that Americans can fight for a tax relief and kill English soldiers to fight their oppression then the slaves can do it for their freedom as well. “Believing our cause to have been just, I believe firmly, that the cause of the blacks is just.”²²⁹

Bishop continues by relating to the French Revolution, where everyone in the United States was applauding the fellow Frenchmen. Again, he asks why the revolution, taking place in Saint-Domingue is handled so differently from the two revolutions before. The glorification of equal rights for men that was happening on both sides of the Atlantic is now questioned and reduced to the white men only. He denounces the decision made in the last meeting of the society for the abolition of Slavery, where Washington, Hamilton and Jefferson are members, that the slaves are allowed to fight for Freedom but with petitions and not with arms. This issue is already discussed above and was a common line of argument of most white abolitionist. This

²²⁶ For this chapter, if not marked otherwise, see: Tim Matthewson, Abraham Bishop, “The Rights of the Black Men” and the American Reaction to the Haitian Revolution. In: *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 67 (1982) p. 148-154.

²²⁷ Ibid. p. 150.

²²⁸ Ibid. p. 150.

²²⁹ Ibid. p. 150.

presents another reason Abraham Bishop stands out compared to most of the contemporary abolitionists.

Highlighting that it is not possible to draw a color line through the rights of men, he completely objects the help the U.S. government offered to the French planters. The blacks in Saint-Domingue are following the lead of the American people “pursuing the principles which had taught them [...] yet Americans are sending assistance to their enemies.”²³⁰ To clarify, Bishop does not want the United States to send troops in favor of the rebels, but heavily opposes to send weapons and supplies to the slaveholding masters. He also denounces the newspapers for writing only about the horrors of the whites in Saint-Domingue and that no one can even speak privately about favoring a victory of the blacks, without being severely criticized. To speak openly against the right of every man to fight for his freedom “in 1775, would have cost a man the loss of his liberty” but “will now, in 1791, be applauded”. Hence, he is not only questioning the government’s action, but also the public opinion of the slave rebellion.

Finally, he is fighting against the argument, that the blacks should have petitioned for their rights, by pointing out, that taking up arms was the only possible option they had left to end the terror. For Abraham Bishop there is no doubt that the rights of men are not for whites only, but for everyone including Indians and blacks: “The blacks are enslaved within the United States. The Indians are driven into the society of savage beasts, and we glory in the equal rights of men, provided that we white men can enjoy the whole of them [...] we did not say, all white men are free, but all men are free”²³¹

The later politician of Connecticut was one of the very few people in American society who thought that way in 1791. Still he found the courage and a way to publish his thoughts and ask the American citizen, if there exists any difference between the fight against the British oppression, the French monarchy or the planters in Saint-Domingue. In Bishops understanding all of them were fighting for the same cause: Freedom.

4.4. Conclusion II

Already the British Colonies in North America had close ties to Saint-Domingue throughout the 18th century. During the Independence War Saint-Domingue served as base for the French troops. However, as colonies of the British Empire and as United States of America the largest

²³⁰ Ibid. p. 153.

²³¹ Ibid. p. 151, 153.

connection with Saint-Domingue was the mutual trade. The flow of goods primarily between Philadelphia and Le Cap had its peak shortly before the slave insurrection started. The upheaval in Saint-Domingue had various effects on the United States of America, who just ratified their constitution and inaugurated their first president George Washington two years earlier.

The immediate consequences for the government were the request by the French Minister Ternant who asked for financial and military support, shortly after the insurrection broke out. During the next two years the President and his advisors had to discuss the role of the United States time and again.

The U.S.A. still owed money to the French from their Independence War against the British, which was called for by the French government after the slave revolt in their colony. However, the U.S. government was welcoming the French Revolution at first and wanted to help the French people to “liberate themselves”, but later on they became more skeptical concerning the different governments and the increasing violence in Paris and France. Therefore, Hamilton, Washington and Jefferson expressed their concerns whether the future governments were going to recognize their payments they had done to former ones. This did not change the general hostile attitude towards the slave revolt near their southern boarder. The U.S.A. were still a slave holding society in the southern states, where many masters were afraid that the spirit of the revolution might spread to their own plantations.

The fear of revolting slaves also determined the policy of the federal government and single states like Virginia, Georgia or South Carolina. President Washington was a member of the abolition movement, but was convinced that only a gradual emancipation led by the whites would be the right way and any movement by the slaves themselves especially a violent one could not be tolerated. The inconsistency of the U.S. government to help the slave holding masters on the one hand and celebrating the rights of men and the pursuit of happiness on the other, can be seen clearly during these two years. Thomas Jefferson is a perfect example for this two-sided thinking. He saw the white man superior towards the blacks, and did not see any reason to help the revolting slaves to fight against the oppression of a colonial power like the U.S.A. did a decade ago. Abraham Bishop was one of the very few who articulated this inconsistency, already during the upheaval.

The general public in the United States of America helped many refugees that arrived on the East Coast, especially after the battle of Le Cap in June 1793. Primarily in Philadelphia, people welcomed the refugees and collected money for the former planters, although the city was a stronghold of the abolition movement. In the following years a refugee community developed in some cities on the West of the U.S., the biggest one in Philadelphia. However, the Saint-

Domingan refugee community with the largest cultural, political and social impact on the American society arrived some 15 years later in Louisiana, which belonged to the U.S.A. since 1803, after they were expelled from Cuba. The high amount of refugees prevented an “Americanization” of the francophone community and kept the French culture alive for a large part of the 19th century. The relation between Saint-Domingue and the U.S.A. after the slave upheaval is very interesting to analyze. Although only the period between 1791 and 1793 has been discussed in the previous pages, their relationship stayed tense, which also explains the official recognition of Haiti by the U.S.A as late as 1862.

5. The Abolition of Slavery in Saint-Domingue and the Declaration of Neutrality of the United States

On April 22, 1793, the United States of America officially declared their neutrality regarding the events in Europe and the conflict between France and England. To understand that decision, it is necessary to have a short look at the politics in Europe, especially after the U.S. had helped the French so devotedly for the last two years (1791-93) and were applauding their accomplishments.²³²

Already at the end of 1792, when Ternant asked for more money, the U.S. government hesitated due to the unknown future of the revolution in France. Since autumn 1792 a second revolution, which was democratic and republican, but also violent, made the U.S. even more insecure. Although the republicans primarily celebrated the end of the Monarchy and the establishment of the National Convention in France, the American government stayed suspicious. After the execution of the French King on January 21, 1793, the declaration of war by France against England and Holland in the beginning of February and against Spain in March, the government of the U.S. had to decide, which side they should support.²³³

France and the United States had signed a Treaty of Alliance, in February 1778 due to the Independence War against Britain. This treaty still was in force. The United States would be obliged to help France in the war against Britain. The treaty states *“that in case of a rupture between France and England, the reciprocal Guarantee, declared in the said article shall have its full force and effect the moment Such War Shall break out”*²³⁴ Therefore, the question was, if the government of the U.S. would follow the Alliance Treaty or not.

In the United States different aspects had to be considered. Since the war in Europe extended to the Caribbean and especially to Saint-Domingue, a support of the French could also include to fight the British in Saint-Domingue in case of an invasion. And of course the commerce with the island could be in danger, if the British would block it. Hence, the complete support of France in the war against Britain would contain too many unknown aspects and risks. Jefferson and his followers were eager to keep Saint-Domingue under French control, for the safety of the United States. They still feared an attack by Great Britain. Therefore, declaring neutrality

²³² Matthewson, Foreign Policy p. 47.

²³³ Peter McPhee, the French Revolution 1789-1799 (Oxford 2002) p. 100ff, 213.

²³⁴ <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-25-02-0476> (9.5.17)

would prevent the U.S.A. from being in war with Britain again but could also endanger their relationship with France.²³⁵

While the decision was discussed in the U.S., Washington had several questions prepared concerning the *Declaration of Neutrality*, which he sent to the members of the government to prepare their meeting, where this issue should be decided: “I. Shall a proclamation issue for the purpose of preventing interferences of the Citizens of the United States in the War between France and Great Britain &ca.? Shall it contain a declaration of Neutrality or not? [...] IV. Are the United States obliged by good faith to consider the Treaties²³⁶ heretofore made with France as applying to the present Situation of the party. May either renounce them, or hold them suspended till the Government of France shall be established.”²³⁷

The purpose of these questions was to think about the consequences of neutrality, primarily to the relationship with France and their Treaty of Alliance from 1778. Turning against France and to help the British was never being seriously discussed. The question was either to support the French or to declare neutrality. The final decision for the latter is justified by Thomas Jefferson as follows: “to pursue steadily the ways of peace, and to remain in Friendship with all Nations.” To explain their decision, although treaties with the French Monarchy existed, Washington declared that the treaty of alliance was signed by the French King, and since France is now “preparing a republican form of government [...] we have a right of election to renounce the treaty altogether or to declare it suspended till their government shall be settled in the form it is ultimately to take”²³⁸

The U.S. government was suspicious concerning the developments in France and therefore was reluctant to make any decision. Washington used the chaos in Paris to void the Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States of America. In the end they did not enter a war of various European powers only a decade after their Independence War was over. With the *Declaration of Neutrality*, they remained an observer of the events in Europe.

However, their exchange with Saint-Domingue and the influence the small island had on the policy of the following Presidents did not end with the declaration of neutrality. John Adams, who followed Washington as President, continued to trade with the colony, whereas President Jefferson, succeeding Adams, issued a trade embargo in 1806 and never acknowledged their independence of 1804. The interesting relationship between these two countries continued in the 19th and 20th century.

²³⁵ Matthewson, Foreign Policy p. 47.

²³⁶ The Treaty of Alliance from 1778.

²³⁷ The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, John Catanzariti (ed.), Volume 25 (Princeton 1990) p. 569.

²³⁸ Papers of Hamilton Vol. XIV. p. 329.

However, for Saint-Domingue the year 1793 also brought many changes, not only that Le Cap was destroyed and many white planters left the Island, but the commissioners Sonthonax and his colleague Polverel made a historical decision.

Sonthonax, who only defeated Galbaud with the help of slaves, whom he promised freedom in exchange, needed more assistance to fight the Spanish and British, hence, offered more slaves freedom if they would fight for France. On 29 August 1793, after some smaller upheavals were taking place in Le Cap, Sonthonax emancipated all slaves in the northern region. In the southern and western province, only slaves who fought for the French were freed, but as soon as the British occupied the southern province in October, the emancipation was extended to every slave in the whole colony.²³⁹

The Decree of General Liberty, which Sonthonax addressed to the slaves, starts by highlighting that “Men are born free and remain free and equal in rights; citizens, this is France’s gospel. It is high time that it be proclaimed in all areas of the republic.”²⁴⁰ This statement is exactly what Abraham Bishop demanded in his essays. Sonthonax continues to explain his decision: “Upon our arrival, we found a horrible division among the whites who, separated by interest and opinion, agreed only in one single point: to maintain the slavery of the nègres forever and therefore to prohibit any system of liberty.” The conflict between Sonthonax, who arrived in autumn 1792, and the whites under the leadership of Galbaud, culminated in the destruction of Le Cap in the summer of 1793. After he continues with his explanation he lists 38 articles, which should be implemented immediately. The first two state, that “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen will be printed, published, and displayed everywhere it is needed. 2. All the nègres and mixed blood people currently in slavery are declared free to enjoy all the rights of the French citizens.”²⁴¹ The last article banishes the *Code Noir* provisionally from the northern Province. Sonthonax still had to wait for the decision in Paris.²⁴²

Nevertheless, Sonthonax is underlining the duty the former slaves have now as citizen of the French republic. Hence, they still have to work, as any other French citizen does. He reminds them that liberty is not equal to inactivity or laziness. And that they should honor the republic, because only a republic grants them liberty, which has never been done by a King: “The kings promise you liberty, but do you see them giving this to their subjects? Do the Spanish free their own slaves? No, surely not.”²⁴³

²³⁹ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 27.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 121.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 123.

²⁴² The most important Articles can be seen in the Appendix.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 123.

With the release of this declaration the slave rebellion lasting for two years was finally successful. It was the first slave rebellion in the New World, which was not put down by the masters or European armies. This slave rebellion was going to be glorified by many generations of slaves and blacks in the Atlantic world, just as it was feared by every white slaveholding planter. A little less than 100 years later, in January 1893, Frederick Douglass, the most popular black abolitionist and spokesman for the rights of black people, held a speech at the Chicago World's Fair honoring the achievement these slaves had accomplished: "When they struck for Freedom [...] they struck for the Freedom of every black man in the world"²⁴⁴

The declaration sounds like everything Thomas Clarkson, Brissot, Bishop and all the friends of abolition asked for, but the reality looked different. All former slaves who lived in the southern areas, which were occupied by the British since October 1793, lost their freedom again because the British reintroduced slavery in their region. Those who lived in republican controlled areas also had to deal with various difficulties. From one day to the other the majority of the population was emancipated. The commissioners did not provide any kind of transition period or planned how this would practically work. All the abolitionists in Europe and North America emphasized the importance of gradual abolition, arguing that "the slave" would not be prepared to be suddenly freed. Even if the slaves themselves were ready to be emancipated, the whole economy of the colony was built upon plantations that relied on slave work. After emancipating all slaves, the work had to be paid, but was the production of sugar still lucrative, if the workforce had to be paid a wage? Would the economy of Saint-Domingue still be that worthy to the French without slave labor? All of these questions could not be answered when Sonthonax released his decree. Another problem was that there was no similar case. It didn't exist any precedent the commissioners could refer to. Saint-Domingue was the first slave holding colony that completely abolished slavery.²⁴⁵

Additionally, Sonthonax did not have any instruction from Paris, since he made the decision without any allowance or knowledge of the National Convention in France. A delegation sent by the commissioners should present the latest news in Paris. One of the five delegates was Jean-Baptiste Belley, who was the leading officer in the battle against Galbaud in June 1793. Their travel was full of inconveniences. To cross the Atlantic in times of war against the naval power of Britain was already dangerous enough. But the delegates had to take a ship full of white refugees, sailing to Philadelphia. Since most of the refugees in Philadelphia were former followers of General Galbaud and left Saint-Domingue after their defeat, they did not really

²⁴⁴ David Brian Davis, *Impact of the French and the Haitian Revolution*. In: David Geggus (ed.), *The impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia 2001) p. 3-10, p. 3.

²⁴⁵ Dubois, *Avengers* p. 165.

welcome Belley and the other delegates. As soon as they arrived, their ship was entered. Belley was treated the worst of all. One person of the delegation was even held as a hostage, but could escape and rejoin the group later on. To ensure that at least some of the five delegates arrive in Paris, they split up in groups and continued their travels separated. Three of them, one of whom was Belley, managed to arrive in France, where they were imprisoned again, before they finally reached the National Convention.²⁴⁶

The National Convention welcomed the three delegates with applause. They saw their chance to spread the spirit of the revolution beyond Europe. Danton states that, “until now our decrees of liberty have been selfish, and only for ourselves. But today we proclaim it to the universe, and generations to come will glory in this decree; we are proclaiming universal liberty. [...] we are hurling liberty into the New World; she will bring abundant fruits and establish deep roots there”.²⁴⁷ His speech was followed by the applause of the Convention. He highlights the importance to export the ideas of the French Revolution to the colonies. Only three years earlier Raimond and Ogé had to stand up and fight for it, the latter even gave his life. Now, after the first step was made in Saint-Domingue by Sonthonax, the National Convention in Paris followed suit and declared the abolition of slavery in all French colonies on February 4th 1794: “The National Convention declares that slavery of the *négres* is abolished in all the colonies; consequently, it decrees that all men living in the colonies, without distinction of color, are French citizens and enjoy all the rights guaranteed by the constitution.”²⁴⁸ Six years after the Club Massiac was founded to defend the rights of the planters in Saint-Domingue, slavery was abolished throughout the French empire. This decision was ahead of its time, thinking that only some 20-30 years earlier the first abolition societies were founded. Unfortunately, the law did not last longer than eight years, before Napoleon would reintroduce slavery in the French empire, which presented the final motivation for the people of Saint-Domingue to declare their independence and call themselves Haiti.

²⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 168ff.

²⁴⁷ Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 132.

²⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 133.

6. Conclusion

Between 1789 and 1793 the Atlantic World experienced a remarkable transformation. During the period of these four years the French Revolution developed from the gathering of a National Assembly with the aim to form a Constitutional Monarchy to a radical republic, which executed the French King Louis XVI and abolished slavery. In Saint-Domingue the demand of the free colored for equality in 1789 evolved during the next couple of years to a complete chaos in which the colony almost drowned. The slave upheaval in 1791 shocked the established elites on both sides of the Atlantic. However, the fact that it lasted for two years and was finally successful, would have been unthinkable in 1789, when only the free colored fought for more rights in the colony.

The abolition of slavery is one of the greatest achievements of this period. The decision by the National Convention to abolish slavery in all colonies of the French empire was absolutely unique and would have been impossible to foresee in 1789. Some historians try to draw a line from the *Amis des Noirs* to the abolition of slavery in 1793/94 arguing that they were already fighting for abolition since 1788, but they were discussing a gradual abolition led by the white elites. An abolition, which was forced by the blacks through a rebellion, was never considered in the first place. Even if they would have petitioned for it, like for example George Washington suggested, the abolitionists in Europe and the U.S.A. wanted the slaves to be freed by the whites and not by themselves. This phenomenon clearly shows the attitude of the whites, who were members of abolitionists clubs. Thomas Jefferson just like Washington, who had slaves themselves, were also members of the Abolitionists in Philadelphia. In Jefferson's writings and correspondences, he underlines the necessity of a gradual abolition to prevent a slave rebellion. Therefore, the abolition of slavery was for him a way to avoid that the masters in the southern states of the U.S.A. were massacred by revolting slaves. Although, Jefferson knew that slavery itself was wrong, he considered the black race as inferior, just like many of his contemporaries did.

The Enlightenment in the 18th century went hand in hand with a deeply racist thinking towards the black race. David Hume (1711-1776), an influential Scottish philosopher and one of the main representatives of the Enlightenment, wrote about the intelligence of black men and their ability to learn: "*there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; ... In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely he is admired ... like a parrot, who speaks a few*

words planly.”²⁴⁹ By comparing a black man from Jamaica, who is said to be intelligent, to a parrot, Hume underlines that a black is not able learn by himself, but can only imitate the whites. This clearly indicates the common sense of the white elite concerning the black people in the 18th century.

Nevertheless, the abolitionist movement was founded by people, who were convinced, that the black race could not be treated like this, and that they are equal to the whites. Thomas Clarkson in London or the Quakers in Pennsylvania were already fighting for the abolition of slavery in the 1770s. However, in the 1780s it became a more elitist movement especially in France and the U.S.A. The *Amis*, with their high entrance fee, presented a perfect example for that. The U.S. government was scared by the events in Saint-Domingue and definitely not inspired. Still, people like Abraham Bishop or Quakers from Pennsylvania reminded the American population of their own postulates of freedom and their own fight against the oppression just a decade ago. When the rights of men were articulated in the *Virginia Declaration of Rights* in 1776 or the pursuit of happiness in the *Declaration of Independence*, the question about the black race was omitted. The *Declaration of Independence* of the United States, as revolutionary as it was, completely neglected the issue of slavery in the southern states. However, after the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen*, which also ignored to mention slavery or if the articles would apply to the colonies or not, was issued, the black people in Saint-Domingue started to demand the rights of men for themselves, too.

Abraham Bishop emphasized that nobody wrote the rights of white men, so why shouldn't it apply for black people? Why should the phrase “every man is born free and equal” not be valid for blacks?²⁵⁰ The free colored people in Saint-Domingue asked the same question. Their status in Saint-Domingue worsened over the last decades, they lost more and more rights, which were initially granted them by the *Code Noir*. The declaration gave them the opportunity to formulate their demands for equality and French citizenship. The free colored people waited for a chance like that to finally stand up for themselves and fight against the white supremacy in Saint-Domingue. The discrimination they had to suffer day by day in the colony could be stopped, if the articles of the declaration would apply for them and if they became French citizens and were allowed to vote and participate in the colonial assemblies. Still, it took two years until the National Assembly decided in the Decree of May 1791 to grant equal rights to all free colored people, who were born free and whose parents were free. Therefore, only a small part of the 28,000 free colored people was actually free. And even this decree was

²⁴⁹ David Hume, *Of National Characters* (1748). In: Eugene F. Miller (ed.), *David Hume, Essays. Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis ²1987) p. 197-215, p. 208.

²⁵⁰ The same question applies to women of course.

withdrawn as soon as the slave upheaval broke out. The free colored people were finally granted equal rights when Sonthonax abolished slavery and applied the *Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* to everyone in Saint-Domingue.

However, it is important to add that most of the free colored people were against the abolition of slavery. First of all, many of them had slaves and plantations on their own. For example, one of the most famous advocates of their rights, Julien Raimond, was the son of a planter family with several dozen slaves in the southern peninsula of Saint-Domingue. Secondly, they feared that their status could be even more degraded if the 500,000 slaves were freed. The free colored saw themselves as French citizens and wanted to be treated that way.

Until 1791 the color of skin was the decisive factor for the social status in Europe and the Americas. In 1791 the Decree of May crossed this line for the first time in the Atlantic World. The question of color and race was now more discussed than ever before. Shortly after the decree when the slave rebellion erupted in Saint-Domingue, the topic of slavery and race couldn't be neglected any more. The government of the U.S.A. had to deal with it, just as the National Assembly in Paris or the officials in Saint-Domingue. The question to whom the declaration does actually apply was the main issue between 1789 and 1793. In 1793 Sonthonax solved it at least provisionally by declaring that all former slaves and free colored people are included in the declaration. Therefore, the declaration was applied to every man in the French empire, white and black.

However, the discussion about the abolition of slavery and the rights of black men was just beginning. In the years between 1789 and 1793 the Atlantic World made first steps towards racial equality and the abolition of slavery. The slave upheaval in Saint-Domingue played an important role to fuel the fight against slavery. However, France reintroduced slavery under Napoleon in 1802 and completely abolished it as late as 1848. It took almost 100 years from the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue till the last slave societies in the Americas, Brazil and Cuba, finally abolished slavery at the end of the 19th century.

The United States waited until 1865 till they abolished slavery in their southern states. Their role during the first years of the slave rebellion is not only interesting because their southern economy was dependent on slave labor, but also because of their close ties to France and their merchant network to Saint-Domingue. Since their *Treaty of Alliance* in 1778 France was the only ally the U.S.A. had in Europe. After the Storm of the Bastilles in 1789 and the declaration of rights the U.S. government applauded the events in France, especially because the U.S. saw itself as an initiator of the revolutionary movement in France. The connection of the two revolutions was not only highlighted by Thomas Paine in his *Rights of Man*, but also underlined

by Jefferson and Washington. The citizens of the U.S.A. celebrated the French Revolution on the other side of the Atlantic, at least in the beginning. After the execution of King Louis XVI and the ongoing radicalization of the revolution with violence increasing, the U.S.A. withdrew from their close relationship to France. A good indicator for that are the payments they were making to France to repay their debts from the Independence War. France needed the money urgently to fight the rebellion in Saint-Domingue.

In September 1791 the news of the slave upheaval arrived in Philadelphia, the capital of the U.S.A. until 1800. The government was shocked about the events in Saint-Domingue and promised the French Minister Jean Baptiste Ternant, who had arrived shortly before that in Philadelphia, immediate help in form of weapons and money. Ternant pointed out, that it would be the best opportunity to repay their debts and help their struggling ally. In the end of the year 1791, the U.S. government did not hesitate to fulfill the demands of the French Minister, but this changed after September 1792. First of all, the situation in France changed. The king was imprisoned, the republic of France was proclaimed, and the revolution in France became more violent and chaotic. Secondly, the U.S. government wasn't sure, if the payments they had made would be acknowledged by any government, who would succeed the present one, especially because Ternant, who was sent by the monarchy but stayed in the U.S. after the republic was proclaimed, was acting without permission of the current government, the National Convention. The Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton pointed out that considering the political circumstances the regular payments should be stopped and only made on an ad hoc basis. Additionally, Jefferson frequently corresponded with Governor Morris who represented the U.S.A. in France during these years. Jefferson wanted to make sure that the current government, the national Convention, was acknowledging the payments already made. Furthermore, Jefferson, as Secretary of State, was always longing for the latest news from Paris.

The relationship between France and the U.S.A. worsened step by step from 1789 to 1793. In the beginning the U.S.A. was acclaiming the French Revolution, the declaration and the gathering of the National Assembly. In 1792 this attitude towards France changed slowly, due to the events in France. After the declarations of war by Britain and Spain in the beginning of 1793, the U.S. government had to decide, if they would join France in the war or not. The U.S.A. did not want to risk their independence and fight against the British again. They wanted to keep themselves out of the struggle in Europe, which was already effecting Saint-Domingue and other colonies in the Americas. With the *Declaration of Neutrality* issued on April 23, 1793, the U.S.A. articulated clearly their position towards the events and the ongoing war in Europe, although they violated the *Treaty of Alliance* with France. However, France accepted

the neutrality of the U.S.A. and seven years later the Treaty of Alliance was officially resolved. However, the friendship between these two countries stayed. Napoleon proclaimed a national mourning when Washington died in 1799.

Nevertheless, the involvement of the U.S. was not limited to the relationship with France. The east of the U.S. was a place of refuge for the white planters from Saint-Domingue. Philadelphia became a center for the Saint-Domingan refugees, especially in 1793 when Le Cap was destroyed during the battle between the commissioners and Galbaud. Philadelphia was known as the “New Cap”, due to the many refugees that arrived in the city. Many merchants and traders from Saint-Domingue had a good network in Philadelphia due to the frequent trade that was lasting for several decades. The refugee community in Philadelphia organized themselves and tried to stop the revolution in their colony as soon as possible. Some of them connected with royalist who fled from the revolution in France or with other French citizens who made an enemy in Robespierre and had to flee from the Guillotine. Alongside the white planters a lot of slaves arrived in the U.S. In Virginia and other slave holding states many feared that these slaves would spread the spirit of the slave revolution and inspire the slaves in the U.S. to revolt against their masters. In Philadelphia, where the black community consisted mainly of free colored people, this problem did not really occur.

Another important destination was New Orleans, Louisiana. Although the biggest wave of Saint-Domingan refugees arrived as late as in 1809/1810, after they were expelled from Cuba, they had a remaining impact on the city of New Orleans. After Napoleon sold Louisiana to the U.S. in 1803, the mostly Francophone and catholic population should be integrated into the Anglo-American protestant society of the U.S.A. This “Americanization” was hindered by more than 9,000 Saint-Domingan refugees entering Louisiana in 1809/10 from Cuba. They were catholic, francophone and knew French culture and traditions, which they brought with them to New Orleans. The French influence the city still has, would not exist to that extent if it wouldn’t have been for the Saint-Domingan refugees. For the most part of the 19th century, the city, its culture, its language and its politics were dominated by the French.

One last aspect, that is discussed in this Master Thesis, is the “inconsistency” of the United States concerning the question of slavery, which becomes obvious looking at their reactions hearing about the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue and their attitude towards the island later on. For most of the founding fathers it was completely normal to have slaves of their own and at the same time to postulate the pursuit of happiness. Most of them did not see any connection between the American Revolution and the Haitian Revolution. A colony rebels against their colonial government and its oppression to achieve the same freedom the U.S. had fought for in

their Independence War a decade before them. Still, it never crossed the mind of the U.S. government to help the second colony in the New World that fought for independence. Abraham Bishop was one of the few who demanded it or at least thought about it. Still, he never asked the government to support the rebels, but he questioned the decision of the U.S.A to help the colonial government and the French masters. It took another 58 years after Haiti had declared its independence in 1804 that the U.S.A. acknowledged the island as a sovereign state.

Haiti as independent state had a hard time in the beginning of the 19th century, since no one acknowledged them or wanted to trade with them. Their economy was still laid out for an agriculture that was based on plantation work. However, without slave labor and partners to trade with, its economy was heavily declining in the 19th century. Already after the abolition of slavery in 1793 by Sonthonax, the commissioners did not have any plans how to transform the slave economy. There was no precedent of a slave economy that was transformed into a functioning wage labor based economy. Additionally, most of the planters and merchants, who had the money, the knowhow and the international trade relations to build up a new plantation economy, had left the island looking for shelter in the U.S. or other Caribbean islands. Therefore, to speak about a successful slave revolution might not always be appropriate. Regarding their aim to stop slavery, it definitely was successful, but if the immediate freedom of half a million slaves improved their living conditions is another question. The slave revolution of Haiti is often glorified, without mentioning the horrors of the revolution, the civil war, and the problems the independent Haiti had after 1804. There would be a lot of issues to further research about, especially concerning the troubles of Haiti after the slave revolution and their independence. For example, is it possible to draw a line from the Haiti in 1804 to the Haiti of today, which is still one of the poorest countries in the world? But these questions and considerations are the subjects of other papers.

At the end of my thesis I would like to sum up the questions posed in the Introduction. First of all, it is important to underline the influence the *Declaration of Rights of Man and the Citizen* had on the struggle of the free colored people in Saint-Domingue. It provided a basis on which they could argue and gave them the opportunity to demand equal rights. The other interesting issue is the perception of the U.S. government, which did not support the slave rebellion in anyway, not only because it was afraid that the upheaval might spread to the southern states of the U.S., but also because it did not want to be involved in a war with Britain or France.

The journey I took in the last couple of months, while writing this thesis, surprised me time and again. Before I started researching and writing these pages, I had already been familiar to the topic, its Atlantic connections, its particularity and also its network with the U.S.A. Still,

especially the global connections of the 18th century and the flow of information between Europe and the New World, just like the frequent exchange of goods is often underestimated by historians and people looking back to the 18th century from today's perspective. The different networks were already recognized and used by the contemporaries. A perfect example is Nathaniel Cutting, who was born in Massachusetts and worked as a merchant in Nantes, West Africa, and Saint-Domingue. Cutting witnessed all three *Transatlantic Revolutions* by himself. The elite of the 18th century was very well informed about the events on the other side of the Atlantic. The people on both sides were curious to hear about new information, especially in such turbulent times like the end of the 18th century.

In the American Revolution race was more or less neglected, just like in the French declaration, till the free colored people in Saint-Domingue rebelled against the “rights of the white man”, which led step by step to the slave rebellion of 1791 and the first independent slave colony in the New World, governed by former slaves and free colored. These dramatic changes are only explainable by connecting the three events and discussing them in a global context.

Furthermore, it is interesting to see that many of these postulates that were made more than 200 years ago, are not practically applied today. For example, the United States is still struggling with major racial issues and minorities all over the world are fighting against racism and prejudices. There is still a long way to go, which started in the 18th century.

I want to highlight once more how important it is not only to acknowledge the global connections and networks but also to analyze them correctly. In this regard, historians still have much work and research to do. However, the sources do exist and a lot of work on single events has been done already, it is time to link them and draw new conclusion from these networks and correlations. The triangle between the U.S.A., France, and Saint-Domingue, the various links between these three revolutions, the relationship between France and the U.S.A., the inconsistency of the U.S. government, the racism of the Enlightenment, just like impact of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* on an already struggling society in Saint-Domingue underlines the importance to look at these events from a global perspective and connect all these locations, cultures, events and decisions. The *Transatlantic Revolutions* completely transformed the Atlantic World by initiating new ways of thinking about issues like race, rights of men, democracy, and equality.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen from August 26, 1789²⁵¹

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has a right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its foundation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to the forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.

²⁵¹ All articles are taken from: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp (25.4.17)

8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.

9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.

10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, accordingly, speak, write, and print with freedom, but shall be responsible for such abuses of this freedom as shall be defined by law.

12. The security of the rights of man and of the citizen requires public military forces. These forces are, therefore, established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those to whom they shall be intrusted.

13. A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

14. All the citizens have a right to decide, either personally or by their representatives, as to the necessity of the public contribution; to grant this freely; to know to what uses it is put; and to fix the proportion, the mode of assessment and of collection and the duration of the taxes.

15. Society has the right to require of every public agent an account of his administration.

16. A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all.

17. Since property is an inviolable and sacred right, no one shall be deprived thereof except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it, and then only on condition that the owner shall have been previously and equitably indemnified.

8.2. Decree of General Liberty by L  ger F  licit   Sonthonax August 29, 1793²⁵²

[...] Orders the following, to be carried out in the northern province [of Saint-Domingue]

First Article: The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen will be printed, published, and displayed everywhere it is needed.

2. All the n  gres and mixed blood people currently in slavery are declared free to enjoy all the rights of French citizens; they are nevertheless subject to the regime described in the following articles [...]

5. Servants of either sex can be hired by their masters and mistresses only for three months, and this for a salary that they will fix according to the wishes of each.

6. Former house slaves working for persons who are older than sixty, sick, or for nursing infants less than ten years old, are not free to leave. Their salary is set at 1 portugaise [8gourdes]²⁵³ per month for wet nurses and 6 portugaise for the others, for men and women alike [...]

9. The n  gres are currently working on the plantations of their former masters are required to remain there. They will work in agriculture.

10. The enlisted fighters who are serving in army units or in forts will be allowed to establish themselves on plantations for agricultural work by first obtaining a furlough from their leader or an order from us, to be delivered if they find a willing man to replace them.

11. The former fields hands will be obliged to work for a year, during which time they can change plantations only by permission of a justice of the peace.

12. the profits for each plantation will be divided into three equal portions after taxes are deducted from the whole amount. One-third will remain with the owner of the land. He will have access to another third to cover the costs of planting. The remaining third will be divided by the field workers in a manner to be set [...] In addition, the field workers will have their own provision grounds; they will be divided equally between each family, according to the quality of the land and the amount needed [...]

²⁵² All the articles are taken from: Dubois, *Slave Revolution* p. 123ff.

²⁵³ The portugaise and the gourde were, respectively, Portuguese and Spanish coins that circulated widely in the Caribbean in the eighteenth century. Just before the revolution, one gourde, equal to 8 1/2 colonial livres, would buy a medium-size table or rent a coastal trading boat for two days.

27. Punishment by the whip is absolutely forbidden; for violations of discipline it will be replaced by the stocks for one, two, or three days, according to the severity of the case. The most severe punishments will be fines, up to complete loss of salary.
28. For civil crimes, the former slaves will be judged like other French citizens.
29. Field hands cannot be forced to work on Sunday [...]
31. Women who are seven months pregnant will not work and will only return to the fields two months after their delivery.
32. Field hands can change plantations for health reasons or for an incompatible personality at the request of the crew in which they work. These affairs will be subject to the decision of a justice of the peace and his counselors.
33. On the fifteenth day after the publication of this proclamation, all men who do not own property and are neither in the military, nor working in agriculture nor employed in someone's home, within the limits set above, or are found to be vagrants, will be arrested and put in prison.
34. Women who do not have an obvious source of income, who are not working in agriculture or employed in someone's home, within the time limits set above, or are found to be vagrants, will be arrested and put in prison.
35. The men and women imprisoned in these cases for the first time will be held for a month. The second time they will be held for three months, and the third time they will be sentenced to a public work detail for one year.
36. Persons working in agriculture and household workers will not leave their employment for any reason without permission of the city or the town government where they live [...]
38. The Code Noir is provisionally repealed.

8.3. Abstract

The Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen, issued on August 26, 1789, played a significant role in the transformation of the Atlantic World during the end of the 18th century and had a major impact on the slave society in the French colony Saint-Domingue, since 1804 known as Haiti. The free colored people, or *gens de couleur*, used the postulation of the declaration to stop the discrimination by the whites in Saint-Domingue. This fight of the free colored lasted for two years until the largest group on the island, nearly half a million slaves, stood up and demanded their rights, which led to a complete chaos on the island. The slave rebellion finally ended with the abolition of slavery and the application of the declaration of rights in Saint-Domingue in 1793. The events in France during the first four years of the revolution and the struggle of the blacks in Saint-Domingue are closely connected. The French Revolution and the *The Declaration of the Rights of Men and the Citizen* ignited the powder keg in Saint-Domingue, which developed into the Haitian Revolution.

All these changes have to be analyzed in an Atlantic context, which also involves the young United States of America, who had just inaugurated their first President, George Washington. One of their first challenges was to deal with the outbreak of the slave upheaval and its repercussions, the refugees which arrived from Saint-Domingue, the ask for help from France, with whom they had an Alliance Treaty since 1778, and the fear that the rebellion might spread to the slave holding southern states of the U.S.

The global connections between the triangle of the U.S.A., Saint-Domingue, and France, are absolutely important, to understand the transformation of the Atlantic World during that period. Issues like the rights of men, abolition, freedom, or equality were discussed across the ocean and initiated new ways of thinking. The *Transatlantic Revolutions* at the end of the 18th century were extremely linked with each other, which was already realized by the contemporaries.

8.4. Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Während der letzten Jahrzehnte des 18. Jahrhunderts veränderte sich die atlantische Welt grundlegend. Werte wie Gleichheit und Freiheit wurden während der sogenannten *Transatlantischen Revolutionen* zum ersten Mal artikuliert und in Deklarationen festgehalten. Die Französische Menschenrechtserklärung, die am 26.8.1789 veröffentlicht wurde, verkündete zum ersten Mal in Europa, dass jeder Mensch frei geboren wird und gleiche Rechte besitzt. Dieser erste Artikel der Erklärung hatte große Auswirkungen auf die sklavenhaltenden Kolonien in der Karibik, allen voran Saint-Domingue.

Die französische Kolonie war bekannt für ihre vielen Zucker- und Kaffeeplantagen, die am Ende der 1780er Jahre von einer halben Million Sklaven bearbeitet wurden. Eine weitere Besonderheit der Gesellschaft in Saint-Domingue war, dass es 28,000 *gens de colour*, freie Schwarze, gab, die zwar nicht versklavt waren, aber trotzdem von der weißen Bevölkerung auf der Insel diskriminiert wurden. Die Weißen selbst, rund 30,000, waren in *grands blancs* und *petits blancs* aufgeteilt, letztere stellten die deutliche Mehrheit der Weißen dar und lebten in eher armen Verhältnissen, während erstere vor allem weiße Pflanzer waren.

Seit September 1789 kämpften die freien Schwarzen auf der Insel dafür, dass die Inhalte der Menschenrechtserklärung in der Kolonie umgesetzt werden. Da sich die Weißen beider Schichten dagegen stellten, drohte die Kolonie immer mehr im Chaos zu versinken. Im August 1791 nutzten die Sklaven die Wirren auf der Insel, rebellierten gegen die Plantagenbesitzer und lösten damit die Haitianische Revolution aus, die bis zur Unabhängigkeit der Kolonie führte.

Die noch sehr jungen Vereinigten Staaten spielten ebenfalls eine wichtige Rolle in der Haitianischen Revolution. Erstens waren sie eine der ersten Anlaufstellen für die flüchtenden Pflanzer, zweitens waren sie seit 1778 in einem Allianzvertrag mit Frankreich und mussten nun entscheiden, inwiefern sie den Franzosen helfen und drittens hatten sie Angst, dass sich die Sklavenrevolution auf die Südstaaten der U.S.A. ausbreiten könnte. Außerdem wurden die *founding fathers* einmal mehr mit der Frage nach der Berechtigung der Versklavung von Schwarzen konfrontiert. Der Zwiespalt, zwischen *Pursuit of happiness*, *Freedom* und Sklavenhaltung, den man generell in der Aufklärung beobachten kann, ist hier deutlich zu sehen.

Aufgrund der Transatlantischen Revolutionen, der Erklärung der Menschenrechte und den darauffolgenden Debatten in Saint-Domingue, Frankreich und den Vereinigten Staaten wurden nicht nur Begriffe wie Demokratie oder Gleichheit diskutiert, sondern es wurde auch die Frage nach den Rechten der Schwarzen und dem Verbot von Sklaverei gestellt. Während dieser Zeit

wurde ein Prozess angestoßen, der die atlantische Welt in der darauffolgenden Zeit weitgehend verändern sollte.