

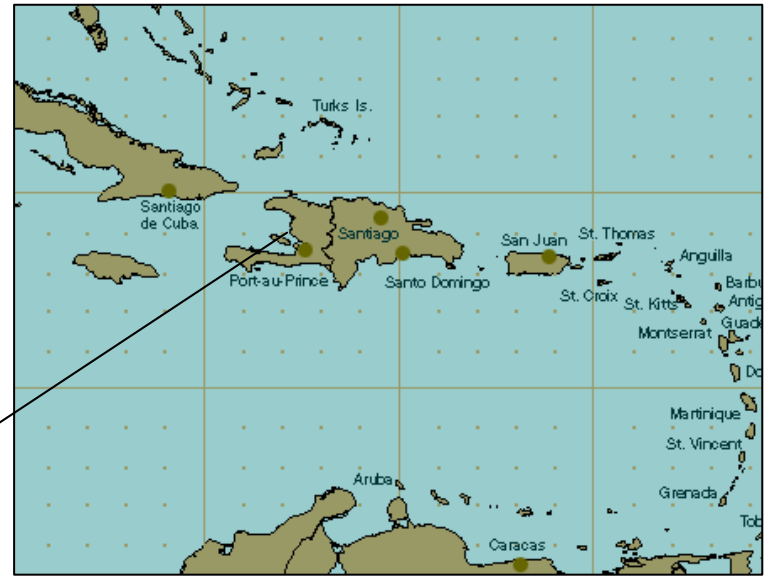
Property, Slavery, Power



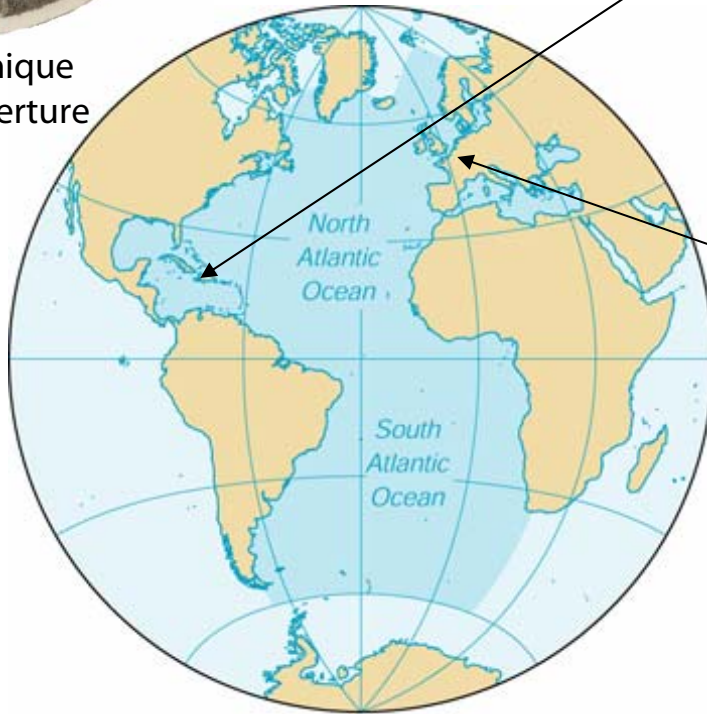
Fort de Joux (Doubs)



François Dominique
Toussaint Louverture



Saint Domingue (Haiti)



Fort de Joux

It is often said:

that the French revolution was motivated by ideals of liberty,
equality, and fraternity.

that it is natural for people to rise up when they have been oppressed.



Introduction: naïve explanations versus historical ones

Revolution in Saint Domingue



“Revolt of the *nègres*. The Assembly’s Decrees have delivered the colony over to civil war.”

1788-1789 planters agitate to participate in Estates-General

Aug. 1790 local assembly shut down

Oct. 1790 uprising of free, mixed-race people who demand citizenship rights

Aug. 1791 slave insurrections

1793 France goes to war with Britain and Spain; Commissioners sent by the Convention to Saint Domingue offer freedom to enslaved people who fight British or Spanish, then abolish slavery; Toussaint Louverture continues to fight for the Spanish

1799 “War of the South” (civil war) between forces commanded by Louverture and others headed by Rigaud

1801 Louverture’s constitution names him “governor for life”, supports plantation system

1802 French forces arrive on island: capture Louverture and re-establish slavery

1803-1804 French troops surrender in St. Domingue; Haitian independence declared

Saint Domingue's Population in 1789

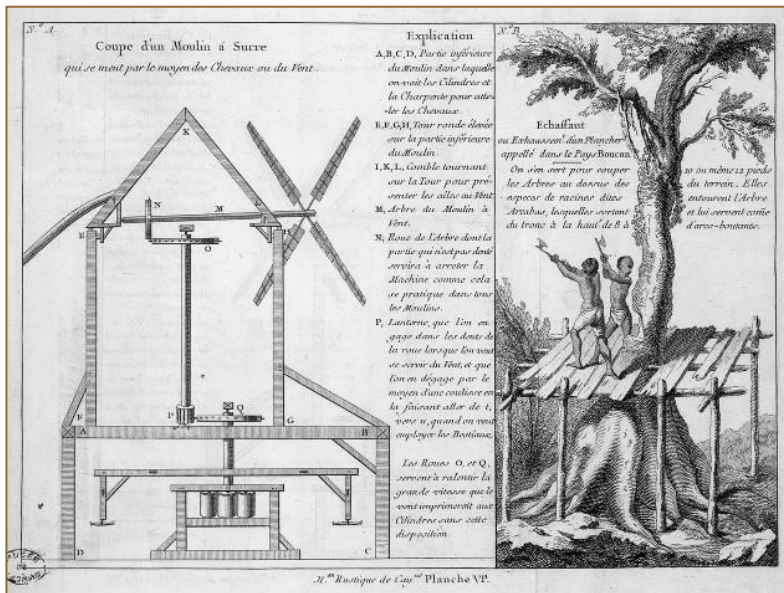
free white	32,000	
free non-white	28,000	
enslaved	500,000+	[between 50 and 67% of which had been born in Africa]

Sugar Plantations (18 in 1700; 288 in 1789)

- 200-300 enslaved people; island-born men most likely to be named as overseers, carpenters, blacksmiths, etc;
- island-born women as house servants; Africa-born men and women work in the fields
- 5-10 free people; very few white women or children



A "Negress" and a "Mulatto" woman in Saint Domingue (179?).



Cross section of a sugar mill (1763)

Saint Domingue's population in 1789

free white	32,000
free non-white	28,000
enslaved	500,000+ [between 50 and 67% of which had been born in Africa]

Guiana's population in 1789

free white	1,346
free non-white	483
enslaved	10,430



Virginia, 1790

free	454,983
enslaved	292,627

North Carolina, 1790

free	293,179
enslaved	100,572

South Carolina, 1790

free	141,979
enslaved	107,094

2011 map for reference purposes only;
in 1790, the Spanish and Portuguese Empires controlled South and Central America
Revolution and Demographics

Colonies in the Constituent Assembly

- 8 deputies from Saint Domingue
- 5 from Guadeloupe
- 4 from Indian Ocean colonies
- 2 from Martinique

Club Massiac—colonial “lobby” dedicated to maintaining slavery and introducing free trade

Society of the Friends of the Blacks—copied British abolitionist society; Brissot, Lafayette, Condorcet

Colonial Committee, March 1790

- colonies should create own assemblies;
- colonial assemblies will formulate “wishes” about laws, administration, etc. “appropriate to its prosperity and the good fortune of its inhabitants”
- National Assembly’s decrees apply when they can be “adapted to local custom”



Count of Gouy d'Arsy (1753-1794)
cavalry captain and one of the deputies
representing Saint Domingue

Colonial Assembly in Saint Domingue (summer 1790)

dominated by poorer white people

opposed “despotism” of planters

called for laws that would distinguish people on basis of “race,” not legal status

Free Non-White Population

“My claims are just, and I hope you will pay due regard to them. I shall not call the plantations to rise; that would be unworthy of me. ... I have never included in my claims the condition of the negroes who live in servitude. Our adversaries have misrepresented my steps in order to bring me into discredit with honorable men. No, no, gentlemen! we have put forth a claim only on behalf of a class of freemen, who, for two centuries, have been under the yoke of oppression.”



Vincent Ogé, 1750-1791

“Neither the decrees of this assembly, nor the relation between these decrees and the rights of citizens, could give any sort of clear idea to men rudened by slavery, men who have very few ideas and whose few ideas are alien to the matter we are discussing.”

Robespierre, supporting civil rights for free non-white people.



Nicolas Monsiau, *The Convention Abolishes Slavery* (1794)



summer 1791

slave uprisings in Saint Domingue

spring 1792

France declares war on Austria and Prussia;
sends 6000 soldiers to Caribbean

winter 1793

France goes to war with Spain and Britain

spring 1793

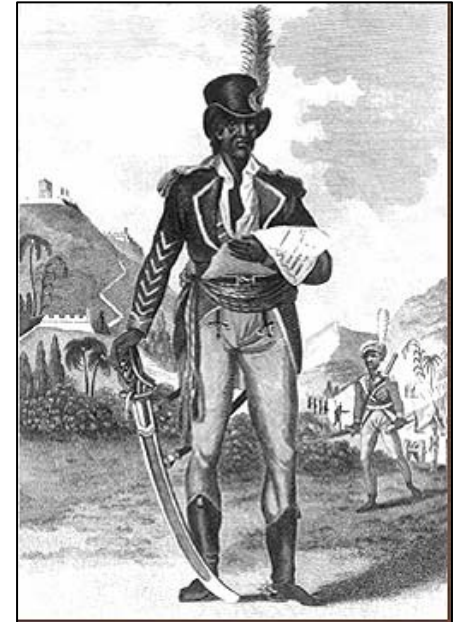
Spanish colonial leaders promise land and
liberty to enslaved who join them
planters invite British troops

August 1793

Sonthonax and Polverel abolish slavery

Feb. 1794

Convention ratifies abolition





Anne-Louis Girodet, *Jean-Baptiste Belley* (1797)

In the case of Saint Domingue:

“national sovereignty” emerges
from failure to combine political
and social demands

rebellion of enslaved people was
successful because of international
military context

“liberty” nonetheless still does not
result in economic equality

Sources

1. wikimedia.org
3. cocarde worn by a regiment in Italy, 1792-1815, Musée de l'Armée; www.photo.rmnm.fr
4. "Revolt" BNF; www.photo.rmnm.fr
5. one of many illustrations from Grasset de Saint Sauveur, *Encyclopédie des voyages...* (1796?), available on gallica.bnf.fr; *Maison rustique à l'usage des habitants de la partie de France...* (1763); gallica.bnf.fr; numbers from Dubois and Garrigus, *Slave Revolution...* and Dubois *Avengers of the New World* (2004).
6. <http://worldmap.org>; US population figures from www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1790.html
7. Gouy d'Arsy, gallica.bnf.fr
8. Ogé, gallica.bnf.fr
9. Nicolas Monsiau, *The Convention Abolishes Slavery* pen and ink, gouache; Carnavelet Museum (Paris)
photo from <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr>;
10. two images of Toussaint Louverture, adapted from gallica.bnf.fr
11. Anne-Louis Girodet, *Jean Baptiste Belley, Deputy of Saint Domingue to the National Convention* (1797), oil on canvas, 159 x 111 cm; Versailles; image from http://www.metmuseum.org/special/Girodet/view_1.asp?item=4