

Native Citizens and French Refugees: Exploring the Aftermath of the Haitian
Revolution

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Thesis here presented to the Graduate Faculty of The College of William & Mary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Master of Arts

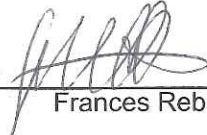
Lyon G. Tyler Department of History

College of William & Mary
August, 2017

APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



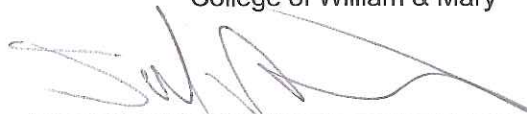
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ABSTRACT

“Native Citizens!” Citizenship, Family, and Governance During the Haitian Revolution, 1789-1806

Given the upheaval of the Haitian Revolution, and first head-of-state Jean-Jacques Dessalines’s insistence on divesting Haiti from all French influence, it is unsurprising that many historians have depicted Dessalines’s rule as a dramatic rupture; the end of an old state, and the beginning of a new one. However, despite Dessalines’s stated desire to divest from French influence, he continued to use the language of citizenship in legal texts, speeches, and proclamations, despite its strong association with French republicanism. By examining legislative texts and proclamations from 1793 to 1806, I argue that Dessalines used the language of citizenship as a shorthand for duty, obedience, and unity, in order to ensure the security both of the nation, and of his own authority. In doing so, he continued a trend set by pre-independence administrators, who used citizenship rhetoric in their attempts to establish order after the proclamation of emancipation in 1793.

“Thrown into this Hospitable Land:” French Refugees in Virginia, 1793-1810

I explore the experiences of French refugees from the Haitian Revolution in Virginia, tracing several members of one refugee household in order to understand how refugees negotiated the opportunities and limitations that they faced upon arrival in the state. French refugees were received in the state with a combination of enthusiasm and suspicion, with the latter being particularly directed towards enslaved refugees, who were feared to carry the “contagion” of slave revolt. By piecing together the archival traces left by two members of the Burot family – planter Alexander Burot, and enslaved domestic Julia Ann Burot – and their immediate relatives, I speculate on the ways in which they addressed the obstacles they faced in Virginia, and argue that their ability to exploit personal and professional relationships, together with sheer good fortune, was instrumental to their achieving some level of socio-economic success in the state.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My primary thanks must go to my committee members, Dr. Paul Mapp, Dr. Guillaume Aubert, and Dr. Joshua Piker, for their advice, encouragement, and enthusiasm for these papers. Their patience and (constructive) criticism, not to mention endless re-reads, made this thesis possible, and I am very grateful for their guidance. In particular, the advice of my adviser Dr. Mapp, who has not only guided these papers, but also helped to shape the beginning of my doctoral research, is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank the staff of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, for not only providing editorial training which has been incredibly helpful for my own work, but for fostering an incredibly rich scholarly community, which it has been a privilege to be a part of. The institute has been a truly inspiring place to work and study.

Secondly, I am incredibly grateful to have completed this year in the company of a wonderful cohort. Your friendship, support, and terrible jokes have been invaluable throughout my first year in Williamsburg. Thank you for all of the study tips, board games, and bonfires.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, thank you to all of the family and friends who have supported me throughout the year. In particular, Evan has been an incredible source of love, friendship, and encouragement, and has also done far more than his fair share of washing-up over the past year. And a final thank you to cheesy popcorn, for being the only snack I can eat in the library vending machines. You got me through some hard times.

Intellectual Biography

During the academic year 2016-2017, I have worked to complete the coursework for my master's degree in History at William & Mary. This has included writing two research papers, which are now included in this final portfolio. Whilst both papers focus on very different topics and sources, they allowed me to explore new aspects of my chief research interest – the history of the Haitian Revolution – that I had not previously studied. In doing so, they have also allowed me to gain some experience in the fields of French political history, and the political history of the American Early Republic. Both papers have been very helpful to my understanding of Haitian revolutionary history, and have been useful both for gaining experience of graduate study, and for exploring the field of early-modern Atlantic history.

The first paper in this portfolio, “‘Native Citizens!’ Citizenship, Family, and Governance During the Haitian Revolution, 1789-1806,” was written during Guillaume Aubert's Atlantic World research seminar in Fall 2016. The paper topic came from the idea of exploring the political philosophy of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, which has not yet achieved much scholarly attention. However, it quickly developed into an examination of the continuities between Dessalines's rhetoric of citizenship and family, and that of his predecessors, in order to understand the significance of this language in revolutionary Saint-Domingue/Haiti.

Whilst I enjoyed researching this paper, it was difficult to translate this research into a clear, concise thesis. In large part, this was because the paper's topic sits at the intersection of numerous fields of scholarship – Enlightenment philosophy, ancien regime concepts of the family and citizenship, French political rhetorical style and the creation of the French revolutionary state, and Haitian revolutionary history – which I often had little experience with before beginning this essay. Without this, it was difficult

to know which connections I should pursue, and which I should relegate to the background, and the paper became more convoluted than I would have liked. This problem will partly be solved by doing deeper reading on the French Atlantic, which I intend to begin this summer. In addition, the question at the heart of this paper – why Dessalines’s language was continuous with the French period – was not conducive to a sharp argument. Instead, it contributed to a structure which lent itself to vagueness and repetition. One of the most fundamental edits required by this paper, therefore, is a streamlining of the thesis, in order to shift the focus from the continuity of Dessalines’s rhetoric to the significance of discourses of family and citizenship in political rhetoric during the Haitian Revolution. Doing this will help to solve many of the above problems, by focusing my argument more sharply, and enabling me to devote more time to specifically analyzing the above discourses.

However, although this paper was not as clear as I intended, and although I do not intend to publish it, the project was nevertheless a valuable one. At a basic level, it acted as my first introduction to research and writing at graduate level; it helped me to understand the parameters for my future work. It was also incredibly valuable as an introduction to French political and legal theory, and French revolutionary politics, both of which will eventually be the cornerstones of my further research in the French Atlantic. Specifically, it added a new dimension to my understanding of the Haitian Revolution, which had previously been quite isolated from the wider French political context. I am looking forward to deepening my understanding of these topics in my reading for the comprehensive exams this summer. And finally, in presenting a section of this paper at the 2017 Graduate Research Symposium, the paper gave me my first real experience of presenting and discussing my own research in a conference format. The process of

researching, writing, and critiquing this paper was a valuable introduction to graduate study.

The second paper – “‘Thrown into this Hospitable Land:’ French Refugees in Virginia, 1793-1810” – was written for Joshua Piker’s Colonial America research seminar, during the 2017 Spring semester. The paper began from a desire to explore the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the Early Republic, but to do so from a social and cultural, rather than a political perspective. After coming across accounts of French refugees in the United States, I discovered that very little work had been done on the refugees in Virginia, despite the significant number who made their home in the state. A lack of primary source accounts from these refugees, and a desire to understand their lived experiences, led me to focus on the Burot household, after discovering a letter written by planter Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson in 1810. This letter provided a starting-point for piecing together the movements, business, and marriage of several members of the Burot household, creating a rough timeline around which I could speculate about the decisions and constraints that guided their actions in Virginia.

Overall, I feel happy with this paper. Having already completed the process with Dr. Aubert, I felt more confident in my sense of the process of completing a semester research paper. In addition, whilst the paper topic still involved multiple historiographies, it also set much clearer parameters by being limited to the Burot household. As a result, it was far easier to stay focused on digging into that single history. This topic enabled me to broaden my understanding of the Haitian Revolution beyond the country’s borders, and to gain deeper knowledge of the networks of kinship, commerce, and class in which many of the country’s residents (and former residents) operated. It also gave me the opportunity to dip my toe into the historiography of the Early Republic, which I haven’t

previously studied, and which I intend to research more fully for another of my comprehensive exam fields.

In order to make it ready for publication, this paper could benefit from a stronger thesis statement, and this will be my focus when editing. Whilst my initial goal was simply to understand the Burot's experiences, there is an argument to be made about the importance of social maneuvering to the socioeconomic success of French refugees in the Early Republic, and I will attempt to make this clearer and more explicit throughout the paper. In order to strengthen this thesis, I would also like to conduct further primary research: although the paper is intended to be about French refugees in Virginia, with the Burot household as a case study, I currently do not have enough information about other French refugees in the state to evaluate how typical the Burots's experiences were of the refugees. Many of my primary source examples have, by necessity, come from other states. More primary research will enable me to provide a clearer picture of the experience of the refugees in Virginia, and to situate the Burots in this context.

Altogether, writing both of these papers has been a very useful experience, and has helped to deepen my understanding of my field, gain experience of graduate study, and explore new research topics. Whilst both papers explored themes that will be critical to my future study, I found the case study approach of the second paper particularly enjoyable to research and write, and hope to conduct similar studies in future research.

“Native Citizens!” Citizenship, Family, and Governance During the Haitian Revolution, 1789-1806

On January 1st 1804, the official Haitian Declaration of Independence, designed by military general and new head of state Jean-Jacques Dessalines, was published. Written at the end of a brutal war of independence against France, and in the wake of a turbulent decade of revolutionary upheaval, the Declaration was intended not only to mark the beginning of Haitian independence, but also to consolidate a distinct Haitian identity, defined by nativeness, unity, and opposition to French invasion. This identity shift seems almost to take place within the declaration itself; whilst the status of Dessalines’s audience is at first unequivocal – “Citizens!” – it soon begins to blur, from “citizens, my countrymen,” to “native citizens,” and finally, at the declaration’s climax, “Natives of Haiti!” The transformation from colonial citizens to postcolonial Haitian natives seemed complete.¹ In light of this emotive rhetoric, one would be forgiven for thinking that concepts of citizenship in post-independence Haiti had morphed completely into those of Haitian nativeness. However, despite Dessalines’s declared intent to divest Haiti from all French influence, references to republican-style citizenship appeared regularly in language of proclamations, speeches, and legislation during Dessalines’s rule. In particular, Dessalines emphasized the metaphorical equivalence of the citizenry to a family, referring to the citizenry as “brothers,” and to himself as “the father of my fellow citizens.”²

¹ “Citoyens, mes Compatriots,” “Citoyens Indigènes,” “Indigènes d’Hayti!” Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “Liberté ou la Mort,” [Haitian Declaration of Independence], 1 January 1804, MFQ 1/184, The National Archives of the United Kingdom. Available at: <https://haitidoi.com/2015/12/08/dessalines-reader-1-january-1804-4/>; Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “The Haitian Declaration of Independence 1804,” trans. Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus (6 May 2010). Available at: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/haitiandeclarationofindependence1804.htm>.

² “frères.” Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “Jean-Jacques Dessalines to the Inhabitants of Haiti,” (28 April 1804). Available at: <https://haitidoi.com/2013/08/02/i-have-avenged-america/>; “le père de mes concitoyens.” “No. 9. Proclamation du Gouverneur général qui accepte le titre d’empereur,”

In doing so, Dessalines continued a long trend of colonial politicians and administrators intertwining ideas of citizenship with concepts of the ideal family, and particularly with concepts of the father as the ideal active citizen. By the 1790s, the connection between citizenship and the family was well-established; during the eighteenth century and the revolution of 1789, citizenship in France had come to be defined primarily by values of duty and devotion to the citizenry, as well as by an overarching sense of 'brotherly' equality. Marriage and family life was thought to foster a responsible citizenry, by creating men able to control the passions of their wives (and themselves) in a just and loving manner, whilst instilling loyalty into children.³ In Saint-Domingue, where the propensity for concubinage and association of free women of color with 'vice' had given the colony a reputation for the corruption of family life, these ideals had particular resonance. The association between virtuous family and civic life was deployed in petitions and addresses by politicians, rebels, and administrators throughout the revolutionary period, in order to promote ideas of civic virtue and devotion to the state, or to argue for equality within the brotherhood of citizens.

During the revolutionary period in Saint-Domingue/Haiti, administrators frequently used this rhetoric in response to an urgent need for unity, stability, and security. During a period of revolution, invasion, and violent social fragmentation, French administrators such as Civil Commissioners Étienne Polverel and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, and Governor-General Toussaint Louverture, were confronted with the task of re-establishing

in Le B[ar]on L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil Général des Lois et Actes du Gouvernement d'Haïti: Depuis la Proclamation de son Indépendance Jusqu'à Nos Jours*, I, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1886), 14-15.

³ John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York, 2006), 153; Michael P. Fitzsimmons, "The National Assembly and the Meaning of Citizenship," in Renee Waldinger, Philip Dawson, and Isser Woloch, eds., *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship* (Westport, Conn., 1993), 29; David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 37; Garrigus, 151; Keith Michael Baker, "Representation Redefined," in Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, 235-236.

social order and maintaining a plantation system founded on enslaved labor during a period of mass emancipation. In many respects, these were the same problems faced by Dessalines – albeit with the added prospect of a French invasion – after 1803. In their efforts to meet these goals, all used the metaphor of the citizenry as a family in proclamations which appealed to the Haitian people for duty and unity. In addition, all passed legislation that intervened directly in family structures, and which sought to prioritize the male citizen and contain the “corrupting potential” of women of color, which was often justified by references to the importance of the family for stable civic life. Throughout the revolutionary period into the Dessalinien period, therefore, the establishment of stable families and of a united citizenry were seen as mutually reinforcing, and both attempted in order to achieve the larger goals of stability, economic productivity, and national security.

In addition to this connection between citizenship and the family, however, Dessalines also used a new concept of Haitian group identity – that of “indigeneity” – in order to reinforce civic duty to the state, as well as to form the basis for a new, distinctly Haitian, national identity. Rooted in ideas of the Haitian people as *indigènes* (indigenous), in opposition to the invading French *barbares* (barbarians), this concept was designed to establish a direct connection between the Haitian people and the land. The deployment of this new concept in speeches and legal texts was a deliberate attempt to create a new group identity, separate from colonial French influence. However, it was also like citizenship, it was also tied to concepts of family, and was flexible enough to be used in a range of contexts, in order to encourage similar forms of duty to the state that had traditionally been associated with citizenship.

In this paper, I will argue that despite Dessalines’s stated desire to divest Haiti from all French influence, he continued a trend of combining the concepts of citizenship and

family in order to gain status, civic obedience, and unity. I will begin by discussing the usage of the rhetoric of citizenship and family in the colony by agitators for access to citizenship immediately prior to Haitian Revolution, and will examine the links between their rhetoric and the social realities of colonial life. Next, I will examine the ways in which this combination of citizenship and family was used by Commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel, and Toussaint Louverture, in their efforts to establish order, unity, and economic productivity after emancipation. Finally, I will discuss Dessalines's use of these concepts in attempts to strengthen national unity, security, and his own authority via proclamations, legislation, and the 1805 Haitian Constitution, before examining the concept of indigeneity as a foundation for Haitian group identity, and as a means to further compel civic duty to the state.

Citizenship and Family Prior to Emancipation

The years immediately prior to the 1791 insurrection were marked by increasing debate of the issue of citizenship, and particularly the issue of the expansion of full civil rights to the *gens de couleur* class, whose nominal freedom had been steadily undermined during the late eighteenth century.⁴ Petitioners and campaigners arguing for and against the expansion of full citizenship rights grounded their arguments in proving their civic virtue and devotion to the French Revolutionary cause, as well as in appeals to the French Revolutionary principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. When making these cases, colonists regularly discussed citizenship in the language of family connections, in particular citing the importance of ties between fathers and sons, calling to mind not only the metaphorical relationship between family and citizenry, but also the

⁴ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 60-71.

complex social realities of family life in the colony. In doing so, *gens de couleur* colonists loaded their arguments with connotations of virtue, vice, and filial devotion, enabling them to portray themselves as devoted citizens whilst undermining the claims of their opponents. From the late eighteenth century, concepts of citizenship in Saint-Domingue were closely linked to concepts of family.

During the period immediately before and after the outbreak of insurrection in 1791, arguments over the citizenship and civil rights were fought over questions of civic virtue and devotion to the French Revolutionary cause. Agitators for the rights of *the gens de couleur* emphasized their civic virtue and devotion to France; in a 1789 petition, for example, wealthy colonists Julien Raimond and Vincent Ogé aimed to demonstrate the ability and eagerness of the *gens de couleur* to provide financial and military support for the French Revolution.⁵ In an address to the National Assembly, *gen de couleur* colonist Michel Mina highlighted the civic devotion and moderation of his peers, arguing; “These are not, Gentlemen,...slaves...who seek to trouble society with unjust pretensions, or with the fanaticism of ill-conceived liberty; these are Citizens....who ask to participate in the happiness of the regeneration of their country.”⁶ The *gens de couleur* also attempted to undermine their white opponents by framing them as anti-Revolutionary; in 1789, Raimond used a letter from the Saint-Domingue deputies, which voiced concern over the impact of talk of liberty on the slave population, to “expose” the white planters as “enemies of the Revolution, afraid of the world ‘liberty’ itself.”⁷ When white colonists formed an unauthorized colonial assembly in 1790, *gens de couleur* petitioners used the

⁵ Garrigus, 236-237.

⁶ “Ce ne sont point, Messieurs, des esclaves...qui cherchent a troubler la societé par l’injustes prétentions, ou par le fanatisme de la liberté mal conçue; ce sont des Citoyens...qui demandent à participer au bonheur de la régénération de leur Patrie.” Michel Mina, *Adresse a l’Assemblée Nationale par les Hommes de Couleur Libres de Saint-Domingue* (1791?), 3. Available at: <http://www.llmcdigital.org/docdisplay.aspx?textid=44725985&type=PDF>.

⁷ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 76.

controversy to highlight their own patriotism and devotion to the metropole by accusing the assembly of working towards independence, proclaiming their opposition, as “good Frenchmen, proprietors, and full citizens,” to its activities, and vowing to “die as Frenchmen.” For their part, the white colonists attempted to deflect these accusations by styling themselves the “Patriots.”⁸ From these assertions of devotion to the French nation, it is clear that a strong sense of civic loyalty was seen as an essential requirement of citizenship.

Debates over citizenship were also fought via direct appeals to the principles of the French Revolution, which were used both to justify the actions of the agitators, and to remind French legislators of the hypocrisy of racial discrimination in a nation committed to equal rights. Often, these appeals directly equated the oppression of the ancien regime with that of the colonial racial hierarchy; Michel Mina’s address, for example, began, “Oh you! True French who have had the noble courage to risk everything in order to re-enter into the sacred rights of man...of which you have so long been deprived.... It’s to you that a class of French-born men, degraded again by the most cruel, the most degrading of prejudices and laws, address themselves.”⁹ After the eruption of slave insurrection in 1791, the rebel leaders framed their initial demands as an appeal to French Revolutionary principles, claiming to emulate, in their ascension to the “temple of liberty...those brave Frenchmen who are our models,” and demanding their liberty by via asserting their adherence to French revolutionary principle: “You, gentlemen, who pretend to subject us to slavery – have you not sworn to uphold the French

⁸ Garrigus, 244-245.

⁹ “O vous! vrais Français, qui avez eu le noble courage de tout hasarder pour rentrer dans les droits sacrés de l’homme...dont on vous avait privés Depuis si long-temps.... C’est a vous qu’une classe d’hommes et nés Français, mais dégradés encore par le plus cruel, comme le plus avilissant des prejugsés et des lois, s’adresse pour faire connaître son sort affreux et desesperant.” Mina, *Adresse a l’Assemblée Nationale*, 1-2.

Constitution?”¹⁰ The state language of rights, equality, and liberty which emerged after 1789 gave free and enslaved groups a new vocabulary with which to protest their freedom, whilst maintaining their loyalty to the French state.

Throughout these arguments over citizenship, the vocabulary of the family, and particularly of citizenship as filial and patriarchal devotion, played a prominent role. Mina, who largely relied on the metaphor of the family to give symbolic and emotional weight to his address, is a good example of this. When emphasizing the upstanding civic virtue of the *gens de couleur*, he described them as “suffering fathers of families....they are zealous Patriots who, by the sole love of their fathers, whom disregard them and reward them so badly, have voluntarily, and with no other self-interest than this brotherly impulse, devoted themselves to maintaining good order amongst those who have treated them so inhumanely.”¹¹ Later, he appealed to the “paternal kindness” of the Assembly members, concluding; “Finally, Gentlemen, don’t leave us any longer in oppression and despair...the French who deserve your fatherly regard, as French and as free men.”¹² This emphasis on family ties, so effectively articulated by Mina, advanced his aim of full colonial citizenship in several ways.

Firstly, Mina’s appeal to the Assembly’s “paternal kindness” can be read as a direct reference to the complex family ties of the colony. The racial and gendered hierarchies of Saint-Domingue meant that a majority of the *gens de couleur* population would,

¹⁰ Georges Biassou, Jean-François Papillon, and Charles Belair [Toussaint Louverture] to the General Assembly, July 1792 [English translation], in Toussaint Louverture, *The Haitian Revolution: Introduction by Jean-Bertrand Aristide*, ed. Nick Nesbitt (London, 2008), 7.

¹¹ “des pères de famille passibles...ce sont des Patriotes zèles qui, par le seul amour pour la prospérité de leurs pères qui les méconnaissent et les recompenent si mal, se sont dévoués volontairement et sans nul autre intérêt personnel que cet élan filial, pour le maintien du bon ordre parmi ceux qui les traitent si inhumainement.” Mina, *Adresse a l’Assemblée Nationale*, 3-4.

¹² “En effet, Messieurs, c’est en votre bonte paternelle que nous fondons notre espoir.” Mina, *Adresse a l’Assemblée Nationale*, 17. “Enfin, Messieurs, ne laissez pas plus long-temps dans l’oppression et le désespoir...des Français qui méritent vos regards paternels, comme tels et comme hommes libres.” *Ibid.*, 19.

however indirectly, have been descended from a white father and a black mother. This reference to filial devotion, therefore, was also a direct reference to the white French colonists, many of whom had direct connections to the Assembly, with family ties to the *gens de couleur* population. In calling for “paternal kindness,” Mina rooted his call for legal equality in an acknowledgement of the complex realities of colonial society. A neat mirroring of this rhetoric can be found in a 1789 petition, drawn up by a group of free blacks and calling for full citizenship. The petition, in criticizing the *gens de couleur* for forgetting their plight, characterized them as “ungrateful children, disrespectful of free blacks who were ‘the authors of their being,’” calling to mind the direct role of black women as the mothers and relatives of the free people of color.¹³ These social connections between race, gender, family, and citizenship can be seen as one of the key reasons for the resonance of the metaphor of the citizenry as family in revolutionary Saint-Domingue.

Secondly, Mina’s language had added symbolic significance in the colonial context. Even prior to the insurrection, Saint-Domingue society had not been viewed by residents of the metropole as a source of civic or moral virtue. Criticized for a perceived combination of personal ambition, pride, and “tropical sexuality” fueled in part by the climate, the colony was seen as a place in which the institution of marriage, and of the family, had been fundamentally distorted and undermined. Of particular concern to commentators was the presence of free women of color, many of whom made a living as the companions of white men, who were fetishized as being uniquely desirable and criticized for their ‘corrupting’ influence.¹⁴ The colony was often described as a hotbed of

¹³ Lorelle D. Semley, “To Live and Die, Free and French: Toussaint Louverture’s 1801 Constitution and the Original Challenge of Black Citizenship,” *Radical History Review* 115 (Winter 2013), 68.

¹⁴ Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 56-57. King and Rogers have noted that, whilst many women of color were companions to free white and colored men, this was often in the role of ‘housekeeper,’ as opposed to sex worker. The number of female sex workers in the colony may

vice - Cap Français was called as the “Babylon of the New World,” whilst Moreau de Saint Méry stated that in Saint-Domingue, “one is not protected...by the public decency that preserves morality [even] in...the depravity of [Europe’s] capitals.”¹⁵ The perceived prevalence of vice, and its corrosive effect on the family, was implicitly associated with the degradation of the values deemed essential not only for stable family life, but also for responsible citizenship.¹⁶ In reiterating the importance of family bonds in Saint-Domingue, therefore, colonists such as Mina were also emphasizing their willingness to embody virtue and moral responsibility, not only as fathers or sons, but also as conscientious citizens.

By the beginning of the revolutionary period in Saint-Domingue, then, we can see that citizenship, according to those agitating for its expansion, required a commitment by colonists to the French nation, in particular to the French revolutionary project and to the authority of the French metropole. Moreover, free and enslaved colonists regularly drew on the language of the French Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man in order to make their case, enabling them to assert patriotic loyalty whilst claiming their rights by highlighting the hypocrisy of the colonial racial hierarchy after 1789. In making a case for full citizenship, colonists frequently used the metaphor of the citizenry as family in order to add emotional and moral weight to their arguments. In doing so, they drew on the complex realities of Saint-Domingue family structures, the reputation of Saint-Domingue as a place of family corruption, and the association between civic and

well have been exaggerated by contemporary commentators. For on this, see Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, “Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentieres: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Colonial Saint-Domingue,” in Douglas Catterall and Jodi Campbell, eds., *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500-1800* (Leiden, 2012), 361.

¹⁵ Garrigus, 153-155, Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, C.A., 1995), 56-57.

¹⁶ Garrigus, 152-153.

domestic values, in order to portray themselves as virtuous, responsible citizens. From the start of the Haitian Revolution, civic values and family values were closely entwined.

Emancipation, Citizenship, and Family

After the proclamation of emancipation in the summer of 1793, in its eventual ratification by the National Convention in February 1794, this emphasis on familial devotion and loyalty to the nation continued in Saint-Domingue. This is perhaps unsurprising; as Jacobins, the civil commissioners responsible for emancipation, L ger-F licit  Sonthonax and  tienne Polverel, not only shared a general belief in importance of the family to the health of the civic body, but also the convictions of their political faction; in particular, an emphasis on the supremacy of national authority, and condemnation of all opposition as counterrevolutionary royalists.¹⁷ Saint-Domingue, as a colony characterized by vice and degradation, and now also insurrection, war, and complex sociopolitical fracturing, was “a hotbed of counterrevolutionary resistance to the national will that needed to be brought back to obedience.”¹⁸ Moreover, they were now tasked with the challenge of maintaining a plantation system, based on enslaved labor, in the context of mass emancipation. In order to achieve this fundamentally contradictory goal, it is unsurprising that they turned to the metaphor of the family as a means to promote civic duty, national unity, and order.

This emphasis on the connection between family and citizenship is evident the Proclamation of July 11, 1793, which extended emancipation to the wives and children of freed men. Sonthonax and Polverel justified their decision by making a direct link

¹⁷ Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York, 2010), 92-93.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

between the 'civilizing' effect of marriage and the creation of dutiful citizens, stating, "the free man who has neither wife nor children can be no more a savage or a brigand...we want to make them all citizens, who, in the manner of familial affection, will become accustomed to cherish and defend the great family which is comprised of all citizens."¹⁹ Indeed, the commissioners argue, this civilizing impact has already been proven; "those who were spouses and fathers were the most faithful, the most affectionate to their masters, the most hardworking, the least corruptible."²⁰ After emancipation, it was understood, these civic values would shift in direction from the master or the family to the nation. Love of family and love of nation would become mutually reinforcing; "They will have no other master than their country; their love for her will become all the more energetic, and they will have more tenderness for their women and for their children."²¹ In a later proclamation, which eased the financial cost of marriage on the newly freed, the commissioners made this link explicit: "Our proclamation of the 11 July has tended to increase the number of marriages. After having made you free, we want to make you citizens."²² Now that emancipation had been decreed, marriage was seen as an

¹⁹ "L'esprit de famille est le premier lien des sociétés politiques; l'homme libre qui n'a ni femme ni enfants, ne peut être qu'un sauvage ou un brigand...nous voulons faire d'eux tous des citoyens, qui, par l'habitude des affections de famille, s'accoutument à cherir et a défendre la grande famille qui est composée de l'ensemble de tous les citoyens." Étienne Polverel and Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, "Proclamation. Nous, Étienne Polverel et Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, Commissaires civils de la République, délégués aux Îles françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent, pour y rétablir l'ordre et la tranquillité publique," (Cap-Français, July 11 1793). Available at Brown University Library, <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:13050/>.

²⁰ "ceux qui étaient époux et pères, étaient les plus fidèles, les plus affectionnés à leurs maîtres, les plus laborieux, les plus incorruptibles," Polverel and Sonthonax, Proclamation (July 11, 1793).

²¹ "ceux qui étaient époux et pères, étaient les plus fidèles, les plus affectionnés à leurs maîtres, les plus laborieux, les plus incorruptibles...Ils n'ont plus d'autres maîtres que la patrie; leur amour pour elle deviendra d'autant plus énergique, qu'ils auront plus de tendresse pour leurs femmes et pour leurs enfans." Polverel and Sonthonax, Proclamation (July 11, 1793).

²² "Notre proclamation du 11 juillet dernier tend à multiplier les mariages. Après avoir fait des libres, nous avons voulu en faire des citoyens," Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, "Proclamation. Nous Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, Commissaire Civil de la République, délégué aux Îles françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent pour y rétablir l'ordre et la tranquillité publique," (Cap-Français, August 21 1793). Available at World Digital Library, <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/14721/>.

essential means by which to instill the values necessary for citizenship, such as unity and a sense of personal devotion to the state.

This focused on marriage also emphasized a heavily gendered concept of freedom and citizenship; women were now only able to achieve emancipation via their relationship with a responsible male citizen. In large part, this was due to the commissioners' initial need for emancipation as a means to create (male) French soldiers. However, it also hints at a deep anxiety around female liberty, in particular that of black women and women of color, who were seen as a dangerous, 'corrupting' influence on white men.²³ By containing this disruptive influence, therefore, male citizens were not only acquiring the skills required of good citizens, but were also ensuring the order and stability of colonial society. The stability of the family unit and of the new free society were intimately linked in the emancipation decrees of Sonthonax and Polverel. Moreover, the establishment of these family units would help to re-establish the duty and industriousness of former plantation workers. In their attempt to regain order and control in the colony, Commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel placed great emphasis on values associated with the family, in order to establish duty, order, and loyalty amongst the newly emancipated population. For the new French citizens of Saint-Domingue, citizenship meant duty, loyalty, and unity, above all else.

Unsurprisingly, the Commissioners' emphasis of these duties did little to create peace or unity in the colony. One of the main duties required of a good new citizen was to return to work on the plantations; however hopeful the commissioners may have been that citizenship would instill a sense of obedience, this demand was too much for many

²³ For more on the significance of female sexuality, and in particular the sexuality of 'mulatto' women in Saint-Domingue, see Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1998), and Krista White, "Espousing Ezili: Images of a Lwa, Reflections of the Haitian Woman," *Journal of Haitian Studies* V/VI (1999-2000), 62-79.

of the insurrectionists, who departed for the towns or the mountains, or requisitioned land for their personal use.²⁴ The enforcement of this plantation regime would remain one of the key concerns of the government until at least 1806, and was a priority under the colonial leadership of Toussaint Louverture from 1797-1802. In his efforts to achieve this, and to establish civic order in the colony, Louverture strengthened the ability of the administration to restrict individual civil liberties, such as freedom of movement.

Ghachem, following the analysis of Claude Moïse, has portrayed this shift as a response to the urgent need for colonial unity against foreign and domestic threat, ultimately requiring the subordination of “individual liberty’ to the demands of Haiti’s [Saint-Domingue’s] ‘general liberty.’”²⁵ This is particularly apparent in Toussaint Louverture’s audacious 1801 Constitution, in which he frequently couched restrictions of individual liberties in justifications of protecting the citizenry as a whole. One article, for example, stated that “the law will particularly supervise any occupation which may be injurious to the public morals, or to the security, the health, or the fortune of the citizens; another declared that “every citizen owes his services to the country which gave birth to him, to the soil which nourishes him, to the maintenance of liberty and equal inheritance of property, whenever the law calls him to its defense.”²⁶ Other laws passed by Louverture

²⁴ ‘Documents aux origines de l’abolition de l’esclavage: Proclamations de Polverel et de Sonthonax, 1793-1794’, in Laurent Dubois and John D. Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (2006), 141-142; Alex Dupuy, *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (1989), 55

²⁵ Malick W. Ghachem, “Law, Atlantic Revolutionary Exceptionalism, and the Haitian Declaration of Independence,” in Julia Gaffield, ed., *The Haitian Declaration of Independence: Creation, Context, and Legacy* (Charlottesville, V.A., 2016), 99.

²⁶ Title XIII Article 69: “La loi surveillera particulièrement [sic] toute espee d’occupations qui peut porter atteinte aux mœurs publiques, ou à la sûreté, à la sante et à la fortune des citoyens.” Toussaint Louverture, “Constitution Française des Colonies de Saint Domingue, et Soixante-Dix-Sept Articles...” (Cap-Français, 1801). Available at Brown University Library, <https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:573681/>, 7. Title XI Article 76: “tout citoyen doit ses servises, au pays qui lui donné naissance, au sol qui le nourrit, au maintien de la liberté et partage egal des propriétés, toutes les fois que la loi l’appelle à le defense.” Ibid., 8.

enforced severe restrictions on the movement and labor of the former slaves; cultivators were forced to remain on the plantations, and faced severe punishment if they refused.²⁷

When attempting to reinforce these laws, Louverture frequently equated citizenship with membership of a family. In his proclamation of August 29, 1797, for example, the new military Commander-in-Chief called for unity via the creation of “a people of brothers, one single family” of people who “love [their] country.”²⁸ Moreover, Louverture extended this familial rhetoric directly to the plantation, improbably equating the plantation in the 1801 Constitution with “the peaceful refuge of an industrious and well-ruled family, in which the proprietor of the soil, and its representative, is necessarily the father. Each cultivator is a member of this family...Any change which takes place on a plantation on the part of the cultivator will lead to its ruin.”²⁹ Louverture further emphasized the civic importance of the family by outlawing divorce, explicitly due to its importance for the civic body: “marriage, as a political and religious institution, tends to purify public morality; those who practice these virtues which it makes obligatory will always be distinguished and especially protected by the government.”³⁰ Whilst this language is clearly continuous with the familial rhetoric used by Sonthonax, Polverel, and the petitioners of the pre-emancipation period, it also represents a subtle shift in emphasis, regarding the role of the citizen after emancipation. By enshrining familial duty, whether in the family or on the plantation, in legislation, Louverture had changed

²⁷ Ghachem, “Law and Atlantic Revolutionary Exceptionalism,” 102-103.

²⁸ “Si le bien public vous touchent, si vous aimez encore votre patrie, hâtez-vous de vous réunir d’esprit et d’affection, et oubliant tout ce qui a pu vous diviser, ne formez plus entre vous qu’un peuple de frères, une seule famille.” Toussaint Louverture, “Proclamation. Toussaint Louverture, Général en Chef de l’Armée de Saint-Domingue, a ses Concitoyens de la ville du Cap, aux Militaires de sa Garnison et aux Cultivateurs de la Plaine.” (Cap-Français, August 29 1797). Available at: <https://archive.org/details/proclamationtous00tous>.

²⁹ “C’est l’asyle tranquille d’une famille industrieuse et bien réglée, dont le propriétaire du sol ou son representant est nécessairement le père. Chaque cultivateur est un member de cette famille... Tout changement qui s’opère sur une habitation de la part du cultivateur, en entraîne la ruine.” Louverture, “Constitution Française,” 2.

³⁰ Ibid.

what had been a civic responsibility into a legal obligation, which often overrode individual liberty, and which could be enforced by law if necessary. By 1801, the urgent political need for unity and loyalty had resulted in a definition of citizenship which was based far more on required duty than on virtuous responsibility.

Dessalines and citizenship

Despite the apparent radicalism of Dessalines's program for government – outlined in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the 1805 Constitution, and Dessalines's proclamation accepting the title of Emperor – there remained marked similarities between pre- and post-independence Haiti. Dessalines was as convinced of the need to maintain the plantation system as Sonthonax, Polverel, or Louverture, and established punitive laws which restricted freedom of movement and occupation, in an attempt to achieve this. The fundamental economic basis of society – coerced plantation labor – remained much the same. The key difference between Dessalines and his predecessors lay in the sheer novelty of the Haitian state, and especially in the urgency of not only securing political power in a divided nation, but also of maintaining the independence of the new nation in a hostile Atlantic. Both of these goals required the establishment of political order, popular unity, and economic productivity. In this context, the Declaration of Independence has been seen as equivalent to a declaration of a “state of exception,” in which a national leader is able to assume exceptional control in order to guide a country out of crisis; it is clear that, in a nation riven by political and social factions, and facing international threat, Dessalines saw himself as the sole arbiter of the law required to maintain Haitian independence.³¹ In order to achieve this, he

³¹ Ghachem, “Law, Atlantic Revolutionary Exceptionalism, and the Haitian Declaration of Independence,” 106.

continued to deploy the rhetoric of citizenship and family, not only in order to encourage civic duty, but also in an attempt to secure his own authority. Dessalines's articulation of the new Haitian 'family' placed far greater emphasis on 'masculine' civic virtues and patriarchal authority than had been the case during the revolutionary period. Despite his relaxation of family law, Dessalines's focus on national economic and military security, and on reinforcing his own authority, resulted in an articulation of Haitian citizenship which was primarily focused on filial duty to Dessalines, as the virtuous, protective patriarch of the Haitian family of citizens.

In legal texts authorized by Dessalines, discussions of citizenship are notable both for their lack of emphasis on individual civil rights, and for their corresponding focus on civic duties. This is perhaps most prominent in the 1805 Constitution, which stresses the standards which need to be met in order to remain a citizen. According to the Constitution, Haitian citizenship could be lost not only via emigration, but also because as the result of receiving "physical or dishonorable punishment," of "bankruptcies and failures," and of an inability to be "a good father, a good son, a good husband, and, overall, a good soldier." Citizens were also required to "possess a mechanical skill," presumably primarily in order to support the plantation economy and promote national self-sufficiency.³² Judging from the prominence and specificity of these articles, it is clear that Dessalines saw civic responsibility and duty as essential to securing the independent state. In contrast, there is little direct mention of active or civil rights, excepting the right to a fair trial, the right to an inviolable home, and freedom of

³² "La qualité de citoyen d'Haïti se perd par l'émigration et par la naturalisation en pays étranger, et par la condamnation à des peines afflictives ou déshonorantes." "La qualité de citoyen est suspendue par l'effet des banqueroutes et faillites." "Nul n'est digne d'être haïtien, si l n'est bon père bon fils, bon époux; et surtout, bon soldat." "Tout citoyen doit posséder un art mécanique," in "Constitution Impériale d'Haïti" (1805), 3-4. Available at: <http://modern-constitutions.de/HT-00-1805-05-20-fr-i.html>.

worship.³³ Elsewhere in legislation passed under Dessalines, individual rights are mentioned rarely and in passing, in texts, such as the military penal code or the law governing the court system, in which the citizen is not the main focus of the legislation.³⁴ There is no evidence to suggest that a Haitian declaration of rights was ever promulgated. It is clear that Dessalines thought it necessary to prioritize civic duty and obedience over individual liberties and civil rights, in order to secure national independence and general liberty.

In the laws and acts which Dessalines used to establish this focus on general liberty, it is clear that Dessalines saw the family as the basis for a stable, united, and dutiful citizenry. This is apparent in his liberalization of family law, which enabled more families to become legitimately established under Haitian legislation. The law on children born out of wedlock, for example, passed in 1805, enabled illegitimate children to inherit the property of their father; the preamble to the law stated explicitly that it was needed in part out of “the political interest of the State.”³⁵ In country disrupted by enslavement and war, it is clear that Dessalines was keen to re-establish stable family structures, particularly in the form of patrilineal property ownership, as a basis for Haitian society. However, loosening of the legal requirements for a legitimate family was coupled with a tightening of gendered restrictions on Haitian citizens. It is notable, for example, that one of the key requirements of a Haitian citizen was that he (for women were not active citizens) was “a good father, a good son, a good husband, and, overall, a good soldier.”³⁶ Despite Dessalines’s overarching emphasis on the necessity of a strong

³³ “Constitution Impériale d’Haïti” (1805), 14, 15.

³⁴ “No. 5. Loi sur l’organisation des conseils spéciaux militaires (1),” in Haiti, *Lois et Actes*, 82-90’ “No. 8. Loi sur l’organisation des tribunaux,” in *Lois et Actes*, 109.

³⁵ “l’intérêt politique de l’État.” No 4 – Loi sur les enfants nés hors mariage (1),” in Haiti, *Lois et Actes*, 77-78.

³⁶ “Nul n’est digne d’être haïtien, si’l n’est bon père bon fils, bon époux; et surtout, bon soldat.” in “Constitution Impériale d’Haïti” (1805), 3-4. Available at: <http://modern-constitutions.de/HT-00-1805-05-20-fr-i.html>.

Haitian military, he still saw the role of 'good' male family members as essential for Haitian society.

Conversely, some of Dessalines's laws display a clear sense of anxiety regarding the social role of women in Haiti. One law, passed almost immediately after the declaration of independence, attempted to return people to the plantations on the grounds that many "young creole women" had been "fleeing the land...to take refuge in the towns and boroughs, and claiming to be merchants."³⁷ Prior to emancipation and independence, mercantilism was one of the few colonial trades which offered any opportunity for social and economic advancement for women, and particularly for women of color. In prerevolutionary Cap-Français, for example, a significant number of free women of color had owned or managed small businesses, whilst a handful of these *marchandes* had been able to amass a significant amount of wealth, such as shop owner Geneviève Dupré, who in 1778 gave her daughter a dowry of almost 15,000 livres.³⁸ It is easy to see how, after emancipation and independence, the possibility of success as an urban *marchande* would have been more appealing to young women than remaining on the plantation. Whilst Dessalines's law was aimed at people of all genders –wanting to leave the plantation was clearly not a uniquely female trait – his singling-out of young potential *marchandes* in the law's preamble suggests deep concern about the possibility of women owning property, and operating in the public and business spheres. Dessalines's simultaneous relaxation of family law and tightening of the gendered expectations

³⁷ "beaucoup de bras ont été arrachés à la Culture, notamment les jeunes femmes Créoles, pour se réfugier dans les villes et bourgs, se disant Marchands ou Marchandes," Jean Jacques Dessalines, "Ordonnance, du 20 Janvier 1804, an 1^{er} de l'indépendance D'Hayti." Available at: <https://haitidoi.com/2015/12/08/dessalines-reader-20-january-1804-3/>.

³⁸ Dominique Rogers, "Réussir dans un Monde d'Hommes: les Strategies des Femmes de Couleur du Cap-Français," *Journal of Haitian Studies* IX, no. 1 (2003), 44-46.

governing citizenship suggests that he still saw traditional family structures as crucial for establishing a stable, productive society.

Dessalines also played on the link between family and citizenry in his attempts to secure his authority as Governor-General, and then Emperor, of the new state. Initially, Dessalines emphasized his status as a fellow citizen, implying that his status was merited due to his heroism and devotion to the nation. In the 1805 Constitution, for example, Dessalines described himself as “the avenger and liberator of his fellow citizens,” whilst in his proclamation accepting the imperial title, Dessalines highlighted his duty in leading the continuing revolution “quickly to its end, and by wise laws...ensure that every citizen go forward in freedom.”³⁹ Dessalines even characterized himself as deferring to the will of the citizenry, describing the imperial title as “the rank to which you [the citizens] have elevated me in imposing this new burden.”⁴⁰ However, Dessalines also characterized his role as a paternal one. This is most evident in his proclamation accepting the imperial title, in which Dessalines describes himself as “the father of a family of warriors,” talks of the citizenry as his “descendants,” and states, “the supreme rank to which you raise me tells me that I have become the father of my fellow citizens.” The proclamation ends with a promise to remain devoted, and never hold “feelings other than those of the father of a family”⁴¹ This simultaneous description of

³⁹ “le vengeur et le libérateur de ses con-citoyens.” “No. 23. Constitution impériale d’Haïti,” in Le Baron Linstant de Pradine, *Recueil Général des Lois et Actes du Gouvernement d’Haïti, Depuis la Proclamation de son Indépendance Jusqu’à nos Jours*, 2nd ed., I (Paris, 1886 [1851]), 50. Available at: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/UF00074014/00006>. “je dois conduire rapidement notre entreprise à son but, et, par des lois sages...faire que chaque citoyen marche dans sa liberté.” “No. 9. Proclamation du Gouverneur général qui accepte le titre d’empereur,” in *ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁰ “le rang auquel vous m’élevez en m’imposant ce nouveau fardeau.” “No. 9. Proclamation du Gouverneur général qui accepte le titre d’empereur,” in Linstant de Pradine, *Recueil Général des Lois et Actes*, 14.

⁴¹ “Le rang suprême auquel vous m’élevez m’apprend que je suis devenu le père de mes concitoyens...mais que le père d’une famille de guerriers ne laisse jamais reposer son épée s’il veut transmettre sa bienveillance à ses descendants.” “malheur à celui qui portera sur les degrés d’un trône élevé par la reconnaissance de son peuple, d’autres sentiments que ceux d’un père de

Dessalines as a citizen and as a father of citizens seems to be a major source of tension in the proclamation. However, given the well-established link between fatherhood and the development of civic virtues, it is possible to see a clear link between the two roles. In portraying himself as a father figure, Dessalines invoked concepts of humility and burgeoning civic virtue, as well as concepts of a loving, nurturing patriarch.⁴² The close connections between the family, as a site where civic virtues could be fostered, and the citizenry, as a family in which these virtues could be exercised, enabled Dessalines to refer to himself as a citizen, and as a father of citizens, without having to significantly distort the meaning of fatherhood or of citizenship.

Ultimately, of course, Dessalines's attempts to secure his authority were unsuccessful; he was assassinated in October 1806, having failed to quell the social tensions over land, plantation labor, and political inequality that had existed since before the revolution.⁴³ Rhetoric of citizenship and family wasn't enough to unite a fractured country, nor to suppress dissent. Dessalines's language of citizenship and family, like Haiti's socioeconomic problems, was in many ways a hold-over from the pre-independence period. In emphasizing the importance of the family as the basis for citizenship, and his concern about the place of women in Haiti, he echoed the rhetoric of the proclamations issued by Sonthonax and Polverel immediately after emancipation. Similarly, Dessalines's call for the citizenry to unite as a family under his leadership was similar to Louverture's appeals for unity and civic duty amongst the emancipated population. Whilst he emphasized the role of patriarchal authority and the importance of national security in Haiti to a far greater extent than his predecessors, much of

famille." "No. 9. Proclamation du Gouverneur général qui accepte le titre d'empereur," in L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil Général des Lois et Actes*, 14-15.

⁴² For more on the idealization of the loving, nurturing father (as opposed to the stern, repressive patriarch) in eighteenth century France, see Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), 21.

⁴³ Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York, 2012), 49-50.

Dessalines's language around citizenship and family was largely continuous with that of the pre-independence period.

Haitian *Indigènes* and French *Barbares*

Despite this continuity, however, Dessalines also used a radically new taxonomy, that of indigeneity, to articulate and create a new facet of Haitian group identity. A skilled and dramatic orator since his time as a military general in the war of 1802-1803, Dessalines seems to have recognized the need for a new basis for group identity after independence, based on a sense of connection to the land, and of opposition to the French. The language of citizenship, associated with the language of the French state, must have seemed insufficient; Dessalines rejected an initial draft of the Independence Proclamation – written by “an admirer of the work of Jefferson,” who had laid out Haitian grievances in the style of the U.S. Declaration of Independence – and approved a final, fiery version.⁴⁴ In this, the Haitian people are addressed as *indigènes* (indigenous people), in contrast to the French *barbares* (barbarians). Dessalines is first thought to have used the label of “indigenous” during the war of 1802-1804, when he christened the anti-French forces the “Indigenous Army,” after apparently trialing other names, including “Army of the Incas” and “children of the sun,” showing the painstaking care and attention with which he considered the impact of his rhetoric.⁴⁵ In using this language, and creating a dichotomy between Haitian *indigenes* and French *barbares*, Dessalines attempted to create a sense of group identity which could reinforce the concepts of

⁴⁴ Beaubrun Ardouin, in Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (London, 2014), 298.

⁴⁵ David Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington, I.N., 2002), 214; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 22; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 299.

family and citizenship, but which also stood as an alternative, distinctly Haitian form of group identity.⁴⁶

When referring to the people of Haiti as “indigenous,” Dessalines drew specifically from several connotations of the word. Although *indigène* is given somewhat cursory treatment by the 1798 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française* – defined merely as referring to “people who have always been established in a country”⁴⁷ – Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* offers some insight into the meanings of *indigène* in late eighteenth century France. Whilst the *Encyclopedie* agrees with the definition of the *Dictionnaire*, describing *indigènes* as “the first inhabitants of a country; which are not believed to have come there from another place,” it also suggests a more earthy connotation, stating, “The peasants, ignorant of their primary origin, imagined that the first men had been begotten by the earth, and consequently believed themselves to be a production of that land which they inhabited.”⁴⁸ Indigeneity, therefore, suggested connotations of original inhabitation of, and even literal birth from, a native land. This idea of connection to the land already had resonance for ordinary Haitians, many of whom had argued that as they had worked the land whilst enslaved, it was rightfully theirs. Dessalines also played on this concept of a natural Haitian connection to the land in some of his more dramatic rhetoric; referencing the impact of the rainy season on French troops, for example, Dessalines noted the island’s “avenging climate,” whilst in the “I have avenged America” speech in May 1804, he warned that, if attacked, “the laws

⁴⁶ For copies of this speech in French and English, see <https://haitidoi.com/2013/08/02/i-have-avenged-america/>.

⁴⁷ “Des peuples établis de tout temps dans un Pays.” *Dictionnaire de L’Académie Française*, 5th ed. (1798), 723. Available at: <http://dictionnaires.atilf.fr/dictionnaires/ACADEMIE/CINQUIEME/search.form.fr.html>.

⁴⁸ “les premiers habitans d’un pays; que l’on croyait n’être point venus s’y établir d’un autre lieu.” “Les payens ignorant leur premier origine, se figurerent que les premiers hommes avoient été engendrés par la terre; et en conséquence, ils se virent une production de cette terre qu’ils habitoient.” Diderot and D’Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, 585.

of nature obey [Haiti's] formidable voice."⁴⁹ In evoking indigeneity, Dessalines suggested that the Haitian citizens were the original and rightful inhabitants of the land, and were directly and intimately connected to it.

In contrast, the connotations of the word *barbare* are detailed at length in the 1798 *Dictionnaire*. None of them are favorable. *Barbare* is defined as denoting savagery and cruelty; someone "neither with laws, nor with civility." The sentence example given by the dictionary is, "Do not expect mercy or grace from these people, they are barbarians" – which in itself sounds like a phrase that could have been lifted directly from the Haitian Declaration of Independence. Interestingly, another dictionary definition cites *barbare* as referring to "all those who they [the ancient Greeks and Romans] treated as not of their Nation," implying that *barbares* were also potentially invasive and threatening.⁵⁰ The *Encyclopédie* continues this theme, describing *barbare* as "the name which the Greeks gave contemptuously to all nations who didn't speak their language."⁵¹ In describing the French as *barbares*, therefore, Dessalines designated them an uncouth, cruel, and foreign people, who not only existed outside of the bounds of civilized society, but who posed this society a potential threat.

After the French defeat, Dessalines primarily used this rhetoric of Haitian *indigenes* versus French *barbares* in public speeches and proclamations, in order to perform and

⁴⁹ Dessalines, in Jenson, *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (Liverpool, 2011), 101; Le Baron L'Instant de Pradine, *Recueil général des lois et actes du gouvernement d'Haïti depuis la proclamation de son indépendance*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1886), I, 24.

⁵⁰ "Cruel, inhumain." "N'attendez aucune miséricorde, aucune grâce de ces gens-là, ce sont des gens barbares." "Les anciens Grecs et les Romains traitent de barbares tous ceux qui n'étaient pas de leur Nation." Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française, 5th ed. (1798), 121. Available at: <http://dictionnaires.atilf.fr/dictionnaires/ACADEMIE/CINQUIEME/search.form.fr.html>.

⁵¹ "c'est le nom que les Grecs donnoient par mépris à toutes les nations, qui ne parloient pas leur langue, ou du moins qui ne la parloient pas aussi-bien qu'eux." Diderot et D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, II (Paris, 1751), 28. Available at: https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Encyclop%C3%A9die/1re_%C3%A9dition/BARBARE_S.

reinforce ideas of Haitian unity and commitment to a new national project which could not easily be contained in law. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Independence Proclamation, in which Dessalines repeatedly reaffirmed Haitian unity via the rhetoric of indigeneity, addressing his listeners as “Natives [Indigènes] of Haiti!,”⁵² portraying the French as “an inhumane government” of “*barbares* who have bloodied *our* land,” and lamenting that “*our* laws, *our* habits, *our* towns, everything still carries the stamp of the French” [emphasis added].⁵³ This emphasis on connection to the land could also be used similarly to the language of civic duty, in order to emphasize the need for citizens to commit themselves to the land to which they were connected. Whilst references to *indigènes* are rare in Dessalinien legislation, there are notable exceptions; one is a law forbidding the emigration of “personnes indigènes” on foreign boats, whilst another example is found within an ordinance on foreign trade, which sets up the dichotomy of “étrangers ou indigènes.”⁵⁴ Both of these references emphasize the political connotations of the term *indigène*, suggesting, in the case of the latter, that all Haitians are designated indigenous, and, in the case of the former, that indigenous ties to the

⁵² “Indigènes d’Hayti!” Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “Liberté ou la Mort,” [Haitian Declaration of Independence], 1 January 1804, MFQ 1/184, The National Archives of the United Kingdom. Available at: <https://haitidoi.com/2015/12/08/dessalines-reader-1-january-1804-4/>; Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “The Haitian Declaration of Independence 1804,” trans. Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus (6 May 2010). Available at: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/haitiandclarationofindependence1804.htm>.

⁵³ “Indigènes d’Hayti!” “au gouvernement inhumain.” “Ce n’est pas assez d’avoir expulsé de votre pays les barbares qui l’ont ensanglanté depuis deux siècles.” “nos lois, nos mœurs, nos villes, tout encore porte l’empreinte française.” Ibid. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “Liberté ou la Mort,” [Haitian Declaration of Independence], 1 January 1804, MFQ 1/184, The National Archives of the United Kingdom. Available at: <https://haitidoi.com/2015/12/08/dessalines-reader-1-january-1804-4/>; Jean-Jacques Dessalines, “The Haitian Declaration of Independence 1804,” trans. Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus (6 May 2010). Available at: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/haitiandclarationofindependence1804.htm>.

⁵⁴ “Ordonnance portant défense aux Haïtiens de sortir du pays (2),” in Haiti, ed., *Lois et actes sous le règne de Jean Jacques Dessalines* (Port-au-Prince, 2006), 39-40; “Ordonnance qui défend aux capitaines de bâtiments étrangers de détailler eux-mêmes leurs cargaisons,” in Ibid., 39.

Haitian land meant that emigration could be construed as unnatural or subversive. It is clear Dessalines used the concept of Haitian indigeneity to try to create a single group identity in the fractured country, and to create a sense of natural imperative behind his calls for civic duty.

As a means to create a sense of group identity and unity, the term *indigène* could be applied in surprising contexts. The address given by Dessalines after his failed assault on the Spanish half of the island provides a particularly interesting example. In justifying the attack, Dessalines refers to the “indigènes espagnols,” who, “preferring to the sweetness of a free and independent life the masters who tyrannize them, made a common cause with the French.”⁵⁵ This language justifies Dessalines’s attack in the simplest terms: the Spanish are allies of the French. However, it simultaneously creates a shared identity between the Haitian and Spanish *indigènes*, presenting both as part of the same community of oppressed natives. In doing so, Dessalines created an image of the Spanish *indigènes* not only as political enemies, but as traitors to the common cause of all indigenous people. The language of indigeneity enabled Dessalines to justify the attack on Santo Domingo in terms of ethnic and even national betrayal, and not simply as an attack on a hostile foreign power. Whilst Dessalines’s primary focus was national unity and security, this example shows the potential power of the language of indigeneity as a force for exclusion and expansion.

Although he continued to draw on a rhetoric of citizenship and family which was largely continuous with the pre-independence period, Dessalines also created a distinct, new rhetoric of Haitian *indigènes*, based on connotations of a natural connection to the

⁵⁵ “les indigènes espagnols...préférant aux douceurs d'une vie libre et indépendante, des maîtres qui la tyrannisent, fit cause commune avec les Français.” “Adresse de l'Empereur au peuple, à son retour du siège de Santo-Domingo (1),” in *Lois et actes sous le règne de Jean Jacques Dessalines*, 43.

land, in contrast with the savage, foreign, French *barbares*. Like the language of citizenship and family, the term *indigène* could be deployed to create a sense of unity, civic duty, and commitment to the land. It was also flexible enough to provide rationale for policies as diverse as a ban on emigration and the invasion of Spanish Santo Domingo, so long as they could be spun as avenging or defending the land and its *indigènes*. However, unlike the language of citizenship, the rhetoric of *indigene* versus *barbare* was also clearly designed to energize and inspire a Haitian crowd. Dessalines is well-known for his dynamic, lively rhetorical style, and it is clear that he intended the language of *indigènes* to inspire a sense of pride and unity amongst a fractured populace, as well as to encourage a sense of civic duty.

Conclusion

Despite Dessalines's use of this new rhetoric, however, the durability of the rhetoric of citizenship and family, in a period of war, revolution, and nation-building, is striking. Despite its origins in French discourse, the concept of the family of citizens clearly held as much resonance for the leader of a nation opposed to French rule as it had for Louverture and the civil administrators during the colonial period. As a shorthand for civic devotion, fraternity, and unity, the metaphor of the citizenry as family was apparently too useful, or too ingrained in political discourse, to discard as merely another remnant of French influence. It is also apparent that, regardless of Dessalines's rhetoric of indigeneity and divestment from French influence, he was struggling to deal with many of the same social, economic, and political problems of his colonial predecessors; a divided population, an unworkable yet supposedly necessary plantation system, and the threat of foreign invasion. The urgent need for national unity and civic devotion to state policy in a time of instability was still the overriding priority of the administration. In

order to achieve this, appealing to a deeply engrained discourse of family loyalty and civic virtue must have seemed obvious, urgent, and necessary.

This connection between family and citizenship also continued to have a direct impact on the ways in which the 'ideal' Haitian family was constructed. Dessalines's emphasis on masculine authority as soldiers, husbands, and fathers, and his corresponding concern about the autonomy of young women, echoed Sonthonax's and Polverel's emphasis on the importance of patriarchal family structures for the cultivation of civic virtues and the control of women's corruptive potential, which in turn called to mind the concern about the distortion of family structures by the 'vice' represented by women of color. This continuing belief in the family as the basis for a healthy citizenry resulted in a continuance and strengthening of French familial gender roles in Haiti. The connection between patriarchal authority and civic virtue also provided Dessalines with a useful rhetorical shorthand when calling for obedience from the Haitian people. In a neat mirroring of the discussions, as articulated by Michel Mina, of patriarchal authority and filial loyalty that took place during the colonial period, Dessalines's deployment of this language enabled him to justify his authority as based on civic virtue and paternal devotion to the Haitian state. Despite Haiti's radical break from French political influence, the metaphorical links between the patriarchal family, citizenship, and political authority continued to have a significance influence, both on Dessalines's rhetoric and on the legal and social structuring of the Haitian family. In contrast, Dessalines's identification of Haitians as *indigenes*, as opposed to French *barbares*, represents a conscious attempt to create a sense of Haitian group identity which, whilst flexible enough to be used to reinforce calls for duty to the state, was also intended to be the focus for the creation of a new Haitian group identity. Whilst the metaphorical 'family of citizens' remained a

dominant concept in Dessalines's Haiti, it was supplemented and superseded by a new rhetoric, intended to form the basis for a new, distinctly Haitian civic identity.

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“Thrown into this Hospitable Land:” French Refugees in Virginia, 1793-1810⁵⁶

In October 1809, a Frenchman named Alexander Burot wrote to Thomas Jefferson. Burot was a refugee from colonial Saint-Domingue, who had fled the insurrection that would become known as the Haitian Revolution; arriving in Virginia in 1796 with his wife, children, and nine enslaved “negro and mulatto domestics” he bought a plantation in Chesterfield County near Richmond, and had three more children, the first of whom may have been named Virginia.⁵⁷ However, he left Virginia for Saint-Domingue in 1801, in hope of a French victory in the colony, and, when he returned to Virginia in 1809, found that his slaves had been freed and, with his wife left unable to pay their mortgage, that the family had been evicted. Burot appealed to the recently retired president as a fellow “Virginia planter and father of a family” for help in restoring his slaves, his plantation, and his status as a new member of the Virginian elite. He was out of luck; whilst Jefferson’s reply is unknown, Burot did not regain what he had lost. However, the letter’s description of the household’s experience in Virginia; of the opportunities, hardships, and unexpected obstacles faced both by Alexander, and, implicitly, by his nine “enslaved domestics,” provides a valuable starting-point for a study of the experiences of French refugees from Saint-Domingue in Virginia. French refugees were received in the Early Republic with a mixture of enthusiasm, suspicion, and fear; enthusiasm for the arrival of fellow planters was tempered with suspicion of subversive political activity and fear of the “contagion” of slave revolt. As the refugees made decisions about their travels, residence, income, and social relationships, it is possible to speculate on the ways in which they capitalized on their connections, experience, and good fortune in order to

⁵⁶ Alexander Burot, “Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson” (Richmond, October 23 1809), available at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-01-02-0489>; Ashli White, *Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic* (Baltimore, M.D., 2010), 176; *Lynchburg Press* (Lynchburg, Va., October 27, 1814), 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

address the obstacles they faced in Virginia, and ultimately achieve a degree of success in their new circumstances.

The Haitian Revolution, which broke out in 1791 in the north of the French colony of Saint-Domingue, has only recently been resituated in the historiography as perhaps the most significant revolution of the period. Resulting in French emancipation in 1793-1794, and the declaration of Haitian independence in 1804, the revolt was the only revolution to seriously challenge the institution of slavery; as such, it represented an arguably “unthinkable” realization of the worst fears of the Atlantic slaveholding classes.⁵⁸ Moreover, the economic and geopolitical significance of the colony meant that, at one point or another, every major imperial power became involved: at various points, the colony was attacked and occupied by British and Spanish forces, whilst French (and later Haitian) forces invaded Spanish Santo Domingo on several occasions. The violence and upheaval of the revolution prompted refugees to flee the colony from 1791 onwards, and whilst many travelled to France, a significant number made the shorter journey to the United States.⁵⁹ As early as 1792, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “The news from the French West Indies is more and more discouraging. Swarms of the inhabitants are quitting them and coming here daily.”⁶⁰ However, the first sizeable convoy of refugees to arrive in the U.S. departed in 1793, shortly after the second burning of the southern city of Cap Français, and disembarked in Norfolk, VA.⁶¹ The refugees continued to enter in steady numbers until 1809, when a second wave, including

⁵⁸ For the conception of the Haitian Revolution as “unthinkable,” see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Mass., 2015 [1995]), 70-107.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Sullivan-Holleman and Isabel Hillery Cobb, *The Saint-Domingue Epic: The de Rossignol des Dunes and Family Alliances* (Bay St. Louis, MS., 1984), 313.

⁶⁰ Thomas Jefferson, “To Martha Jefferson Randolph, Philadelphia June 8. 1792,” in Edwin Morris Betts and James Adam Bear, eds., *The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson* (Columbia, Miss., 1966), 101.

⁶¹ The refugees arrived in over 100 vessels. Winston C. Babb, “French Refugees from Saint Domingue to the Southern United States, 1791–1810,” Ph.D diss., University of Virginia, 1954. ProQuest (0009631), 54; Sullivan-Holleman and Cobb, 315.

Alexander Burot, were expelled from Spanish Cuba. All told, around 20,000 refugees arrived in U.S. ports between 1791 and 1810.⁶²

Despite Norfolk's status as the first U.S. port to take in such a large number of refugees, the scholarship on French refugee experiences in Virginia is sparse. Indeed, it has so far only been addressed in the context of larger, more general works; in Darrell Meadows' dissertation on migration in the revolutionary French Atlantic, for example, or in Winston C. Babb's 1954 dissertation on the refugee experience in the southern United States. In contrast, there are multiple studies of French refugees in Louisiana, in large part due to the large volume of refugees in the state, and the broader influence of French culture in Louisiana. These works include Brasseaux and Conrad's edited volume, *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792–1809*; Dessens' *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans: Migration and Influences*; Lachance's "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration, and Impact;" and Scott and Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation*. Further north, Reid and Cofield have both conducted studies of the refugees in Maryland, whilst Gillikin, and Hagy and Ruymbeke, have examined the refugee experience in Charleston, S. C. Several scholars, including Childs, Spaeth, and Potofsky, have also analyzed the experiences of refugees who travelled to Philadelphia.⁶³ The Virginian refugees also appear, albeit often tangentially, in more

⁶² Gillikin states that between 15,000 and 20,000 refugees arrived in the U.S. during this period, whilst Spaeth estimates the figure to be slightly higher, at "nearly 25,000." Margaret Wilson Gillikin, "Saint Dominguan Refugees in Charleston, South Carolina, 1791-1822: Assimilation and Accommodation in a Slave Society," Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 2014. ProQuest (3672858), 1; Catherine Therese Christians Spaeth, "Purgatory or Promised Land? French Emigres in Philadelphia and their Perceptions of American During the 1790s," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1992. ProQuest (9222481), iii.

⁶³ Darrell Meadows, "The Planters of Saint-Domingue, 1750–1804: Migration and Exile in the French Revolutionary Atlantic." Ph.D. diss., Carnegie Mellon University, 2004. ProQuest (3120207); Babb, "French Refugees from Saint Domingue to the Southern United States;" Carl A. Brasseaux and Glenn R. Conrad, eds., *The Road to Louisiana: The Saint-Domingue Refugees, 1792–1809* (Lafayette, LA, 1992); Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint-Domingue to New Orleans:*

recent work on the geopolitical and diplomatic impact of the French and Haitian revolutions on the Early Republic; in particular, scholars such as White, Gaffield, and Dun have all discussed the refugees in this wider political context.⁶⁴ Similarly, researchers of slave resistance during the period have frequently highlighted the impact of the migration of black refugees, as well as news of the revolution more generally, on slave resistance in the states.⁶⁵ However, there remains very little scholarship on the specific experiences of French refugees, both white and black, in Virginia. This paper will hopefully go some way towards filling that gap.

In part, this lack of attention seems to be due to a lack of primary sources. References by local Virginians to the refugees abound: from mentions in debates in the House of Delegates, legislative acts, newspaper opinion pieces, personal diaries and letters, and notices in the commercial papers, it is clear that the status of the refugees was of

Migration and Influences (Gainesville, FL, 2007); Paul F. Lachance, "The 1809 Immigration of Saint-Domingue Refugees to New Orleans: Reception, Integration, and Impact," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 29, no. 2 (Spring 1988), 109-141; Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Patricia A. Reid, "The Haitian Revolution, Black Petitioners, and Refugee Widows in Maryland, 1796-1820," *The American Journal of Legal History* 50, no. 4 (2008-2010), 431-452; Sara Rivers Cofield, "French-Caribbean Refugees and Slavery in German Protestant Maryland," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 10, no. 3 (Sept. 2006), 273-287; Gillikin, "Saint Dominguan Refugees in Charleston, South Carolina," James W. Hagy and Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, "The French Refugee Newspapers of Charleston," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 97, no. 2 (Apr. 1996), 139-148; Frances Sergeant Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800* (Baltimore, MD, 1940); Spaeth, "Purgatory or Promised Land?"; Allan Potofsky, "The 'Non-Aligned Status' of French Emigrés and Refugees in Philadelphia, 1793-1798," *Transatlantica: Revue d'Études Américaines/American Studies Journal* 2 (2006). <http://translatlantica.revues.org/1147>.

⁶⁴ White, *Encountering Revolution*; Julia Gaffield, *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World: Recognition After Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015); James Alexander Dun, *Dangerous Neighbors: Making the Haitian Revolution in Early America* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016).

⁶⁵ Sidbury has paid particularly close attention to this in the Virginian context: see James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, rebellion, and identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (Cambridge, 1997), 39-41 and *ibid.*, "Saint-Domingue in Virginia: Ideology, Local Meanings, and Resistance to Slavery, 1790-1800," *The Journal of Southern History* 63:3 (Aug., 1997), 531-552. Ward, Bone, and Link's edited volume also provides more information on the movement of black refugees during the Age of Revolution, and the impact of the Haitian Revolution in Baltimore, via chapters by Jennifer K. Snyder and Martha S. Jones. Brian Ward, Martyn Bone, and William A. Link, *The American South and the Atlantic World* (Gainesville, F.L., 2013).

pressing interest to most people in the state. However, far fewer records were left by the refugees themselves. Most appear only as passing references in marriage or death records, or remain unidentified, as dubiously French names in censuses and county deed books. Occasionally, they make an appearance in the record by writing letters to more prominent local figures; Thomas Jefferson's papers include several letters from French refugees pleading for aid, for example, including Alexander Burot's, who is one of the key subjects of this essay for that reason.⁶⁶ This scarcity is also the chief motive for this article's focus on a single household; in tracing the few remnants left by the Burots in the archive, I hope it will be possible to gain a more intimate picture of Virginian refugee life than could be achieved via a more general overview of statistics and political opinions.

In particular, accessing the experiences of the non-elite groups, especially the enslaved and their descendants, presents a critical challenge. First-person records of slavery remain very rare; the enslaved refugees who travelled from Saint-Domingue are often barely mentioned in the record. Alexander Burot brought nine enslaved "domestics" with him to Virginia, where they were freed; with the exception of one name, "Julia Ann," in a later marriage record, we know nothing more about them. This lack of sources makes it difficult even to track their movements, let alone access their experience of settling in Virginia. In part, this is the reason why Virginia Ann Burot, who was Julia Ann's daughter, provides my second case study; she was free at birth, and as a result she simply left more traces in the archive. However, I also intend to use methods employed by scholars such as Rebecca Scott and Jean Hébrard, and in particular those proposed by Marisa J. Fuentes, in order to attempt to counteract these archival

⁶⁶ See, for example, "From Madame Deshay, de Baltimore le 18 aout, 1809," in Susan Holbrook Perdue and Robert F. Haggard, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Retirement Series*, I (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 450; Burot, "Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson."

silences.⁶⁷ As a result, sections of this project will take a somewhat speculative approach, focusing less on the refugees' subjective experiences, and more on the implications of their legal, social, and cultural context in Virginia.

The Virginian Response

By all accounts, the initial influx of large numbers of refugees to Norfolk in 1793 placed a strain on local resources. In 1794, wealthy French émigré Moreau de Saint-Méry expressed surprise that, “in spite of the great number of French in Norfolk, the prices are not high,” whilst the anonymous author of *My Odyssey*, another refugee, described the initial scramble for accommodation: “Those who had saved money crowded into inns; others sought out the canopies of the market-places, which gave some shelter from the inclemencies of the night.”⁶⁸ Despite the burden they posed, however, the refugees seem to have been willingly accommodated by the town, and more broadly by the state. In 1793 the Virginia House of Delegates granted 2,000 pounds to the Norfolk mayor, to be put towards the “support and relief of the French emigrants, from the island of St. Domingo,” and funds to aid the refugees were raised in Williamsburg, Portsmouth, Petersburg, York, and Richmond.⁶⁹ They also seem to have had popular support amongst the town residents: in one incident, locals insisted on punishing a man who had spoken disrespectfully of the French by forcing him to spend “a day confined in a cart, traversing the streets of the town,” despite the mayor begging them to “cease this

⁶⁷ Scott and Hébrard; Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016).

⁶⁸ Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, eds. and trans, *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey [1793-1798]* (New York, NY, 1947), 54; Althéa de Puech Parham, ed., *My Odyssey: Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions, by a Creole of Saint Domingue* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1959), 99.

⁶⁹ Sullivan-Holleman and Cobb, 314; *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia; Begun and Held at the Capitol, in the City of Richmond, on Monday, the Twenty-First Day of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Three* (Richmond, VA, 1793), 11, 93.

popular punishment.”⁷⁰ Whilst Moreau de Saint-Méry also noted that some Norfolk traders capitalized on the influx by exploiting the French in the town marketplace, they were generally given a warm welcome, in all probability due to a shared race and class solidarity between incoming white French planters, and those of Virginia.⁷¹

Despite the welcome received by refugees in Norfolk, however, concern about French émigrés began to spread in the United States. During the 1790s-1800s, the dominant narrative of the insurrection in Saint-Domingue was that it had been instigated either by white abolitionists or white counterrevolutionaries in opposition to the reforms of the French Revolution. The French planters, who were frequently described as “aristocrats” in the U.S., had previously been accused of harboring royalist sentiments – indeed, many had some sympathy for the counterrevolutionary cause – and the theory that the “aristocrats” had created political chaos in order to “subvert the republican cause” fueled suspicion that the refugees intended to cause similar disruption in the states.⁷² Indeed, the rumors of French disruption were apparently so plausible that even the French minister to the United States, Edmond Charles Genet, was suspicious, and wrote several urgent letters to Thomas Jefferson insisting that counterrevolutionary French émigrés were plotting to launch military expeditions to Saint-Domingue from the United States coast. Some of these allegations may have been plausible – in 1793, a group of French refugees actually approached Genet for funding for such an expedition – but it is probable that the majority were unfounded, based on rumor or misinterpretation.⁷³

⁷⁰ Sullivan-Holleman and Cobb, 314; Roberts and Roberts, 59.

⁷¹ Roberts and Roberts, 59.

⁷² Robert Alderson, “Charleston’s Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793,” in David P. Geggus, ed., *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia, S.C., 2001), 95; White, 90.

⁷³ See, for example, Edmond Charles Genet, “To Thomas Jefferson From Edmond Charles Genet, 25 November 1793.” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-27-02-0410>, in which he states, “J’ai entre les mains les preuves d’une Conspiration qui a éclaté en Septembre dernier par la reddition du Mole.... Les Conspirateurs adroitement cachés, se reclamaient de la République à l’instant où ils

By the time Franco-American tensions had reached fever-pitch, in the “Quasi-War” of 1798-1800, new suspicions of French republican subterfuge also began to emerge.⁷⁴ Ports were closed by several state governors against French passengers, whilst the passage by Congress of the Alien and Sedition Acts whilst in 1798 was a clear response to the tension.⁷⁵ In Virginia, where the acts were debated by the House of Delegates in December, French relations were at the crux of the issue. One delegate, arguing in favor of the Acts, directly connected the violence of the Saint-Domingue insurrection with French refugees, arguing “that the fertile plains of that island had been deluged with seas of blood...and that if the alien law had not passed, by which all dangerous aliens were excluded, the same fate might have befallen the Southern states.”⁷⁶ Conversely, his opponent in the House complained that “[t]he jealous friends of the constitution and the liberties of the people, if they had fortitude to oppose the impulse of the moment [the Acts] were branded with the approbrious epithets of being disorganizers, French partizans and enemies to all order.”⁷⁷ Whilst the House eventually opposed the legislation, it was clear that Virginian political and popular opinion had become less favorable towards the refugees. In a marked contrast to the generous donations given to the Norfolk refugees in 1793, in 1798 the Virginia House was forced to reject a petition

traitaient avec le Ministère anglais,” and Genet, “To Thomas Jefferson From Edmond Charles Genet, 6 September 1793.” *Founders Online*, National Archives, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-27-02-0041>, in which Genet states, “Les traitres...not contents D’avoir fait verser à St. Domingue le Sang d’un peuple immense...concertaient ici, à baltimore, et à philadelphie le projet de faire concourir nos forces à l’affreux plan...De retourner à St. Domingue pour y renouveler les horreurs et les massacres qu’ils y ont déjà fait commettre.”

⁷⁴ White, 121.

⁷⁵ *Alexandria Advertiser*, II no. 384 (Alexandria, VA, July 3, 1798), [2]; White, *Encountering Revolution*, 122; *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States; With an Appendix, Containing Important State Papers and Public Documents, and All the Laws of a Public Nature; with a Copious Index*, VII (Washington, DC, 1851), 593; “Philadelphia, June 28,” in *Alexandria Advertiser*, II no. 385 (Alexandria, VA, July 4, 1798), [2].

⁷⁶ *Debates in the House of Delegates of Virginia, Upon Certain Resolutions Before the House, Upon the Important Subject of the Acts of Congress Passed at their Last Session, Commonly Called, the Alien and Sedition Laws* (Richmond, VA, 1798), 59.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

from “John Campbell, praying that the sum of fourteen pounds, nine shillings and five pence, which he hath advanced towards the support of French migrants from St. Domingo, may be repaid to him by the public.”⁷⁸ In February 1810, a second bill “For the relief of the French exiles from the island of Cuba, in the West-Indies” failed to pass the House.⁷⁹ Although it has been argued that few of the French refugees faced serious consequences or scrutiny as a result of this tension, it is clear that it did have material effects, which would likely have affected many of the refugees who arrived in Virginia during and after the Quasi-War.⁸⁰

In particular, it seems likely that anxieties about the arrival of French refugees was disproportionately aimed at refugees of color, and in particular the enslaved, who were feared to be bringing slave revolt with them to the U.S. Since the beginning of the exodus, white refugees had brought slaves with them on their voyage, and slaves were allowed in out of sympathy for their owners: in one incident, prominent Virginia John Tyler wrote to President Madison to ask permission to admit the slaves of refugees recently arrived in Norfolk, stating, “many of these unfortunate people having arrived at the port of Norfolk in great distress,” and describing the white refugees as “these objects of charity.”⁸¹ Moreover, the unpredictability of the refugees’ arrivals often meant that restrictions on the arrival of non-white refugees were very difficult to enforce, particularly in southern ports.⁸² Frequently, however, they were barred from entering. Fear of

⁷⁸ *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Begun and Held at the Capitol, in the City of Richmond, on Monday, the Fourth Day of December, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-Seven* (Richmond, VA, 1798), 74.

⁷⁹ *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia; Begun and Held at the Capitol, in the City of Richmond, on Monday the Fourth Day of December, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Nine*” (Richmond, VA, 1810), 97.

⁸⁰ White, 121.

⁸¹ Robert A. Rutland, Robert J. Brugger, Jeanne K. Sisson, Thomas A. Mason, Susannah H. Jones, and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, I (Charlottesville, VA, 1984), n220.

⁸² White, 149-150.

“French negroes” was often fueled by a certain amount of paranoia: one anonymous letter in a New Orleans newspaper declared, “mulattoes and negroes are now recognized in our streets, who were executioners for [Haitian generals] Dessalines and Christophe.”⁸³ In 1802, the Virginian *Commercial Advertiser* was forced to print several corrections to persistent false stories that French ships had been spotted dropping “brigand Negroes” on U.S. shores.⁸⁴ These fears, however, were seen as credible enough to be translated into legislation, and it is particularly notable that several 1798 laws limiting refugee arrival were specifically aimed at removing French refugees of color – “any negroes, indians, mulattoes, mestizoes, or other persons of colour, which may have arrived...from the French West Indies.”⁸⁵ Eventually, in 1806, Virginia banned all importation of slaves to the state, with an exception made in 1809 for slaves brought by those refugees who had been “forcibly expelled” from Cuba.⁸⁶ When they were allowed to disembark, enslaved refugees were overwhelmingly met in Virginia with hostility, fear, and suspicion.

Alexander Burot and his Family

Before his flight to Virginia, Alexander Burot had the advantage of being a relatively wealthy planter in Saint-Domingue. In his letter to Jefferson, Burot described himself as

⁸³ “Extract of a Letter Dated New-Orleans, 13th November, 1809,” *Alexandria Daily Gazette, Commercial and Political* 10, no. 2699 (Alexandria, VA, Jan. 25, 1810), [3].

⁸⁴ In a hint at the potential violence of the period, one of these corrections continued, “we feel it our duty further to state...that the savage order said to have been issued...directing...that they should be indiscriminately put to death...is also false, malicious, and groundless.” *The Commercial Register*, no. 38 (Norfolk, VA, Nov. 8, 1802), [3]; *ibid.*, no. 34 (Norfolk, VA, Nov. 1, 1802), [3].

⁸⁵ Governor Mifflin’s order regarding the Port of Philadelphia used similar language, prohibiting “the landing of any French negroes coming from Port au Prince or any other port now or lately in the possession of the French in the West-Indies.” *Alexandria Advertiser* 2, no. 384, [2]; “Philadelphia, June 28,” in *ibid.*, no. 385, [2].

⁸⁶ John Tyler, “From John Tyler, Richmond June 1st. 1809,” in Rutland et al, 219-220.

having owned “plantations” in the plural, and traces of his commercial activity appear in the notary records of Jérémie, the province in south-west Saint-Domingue in which he seems to have lived.⁸⁷ In 1783, for example, he is recorded as having sold a plantation to a M. Nicolas Barrabino; in 1794, he sold around 25 acres from the Brisson plantation to a M. Leonard Dury. Someone else with the Burot name, if not Alexander himself, also owned a shop at Trou Bonbon in Jérémie, and in 1784 bought the shop, and a slave named Framane, from M. J. B. Ledan.⁸⁸ Judging from these records, we get the impression of an ambitious planter, buying and selling frequently in an effort to increase his wealth. After leaving for Virginia in 1796, Alexander may have expected to eventually return, with his family and his nine slaves, to Saint-Domingue. However, his purchase of a plantation in Chesterfield County suggests that the Burots were hedging their bets; regardless of any hope of returning, they seem determined to establish themselves as a prosperous planter family in Virginia.

By arriving in Virginia with nine slaves as his property, Burot already occupied an unusually advantageous economic position amongst the refugees. No matter their previous wealth, French refugees invariably arrived in Virginia in a state of poverty.⁸⁹ Indeed, Moreau de Saint-Méry, who met several of his old colonial acquaintances in Virginia, described the plight of the colonists with some scorn, noting the comparative fortune of one whom he heard “bemoaning the fate that had reduced him to only two Negro servants.... [W]hereas I had seventeen when I left Cap Francois, and now had none at all.”⁹⁰ “[T]hose charming people,” he noted, “who were perhaps too proud of their

⁸⁷ Burot, “Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson.”

⁸⁸ Keith A. Manuel, “A Guide to the Jérémie Papers,” (Gainesville, FL, 2007), 4:13, 19:100-101, 19:89. <http://www.library.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/guides/jeremiefull.htm>.

⁸⁹ The author of *My Odyssey*, whose family had sufficient funds to travel to Baltimore in search of further economic opportunity, is another example. Parham, ed., 100; Dessens, 46.

⁹⁰ Roberts and Roberts, 42.

wealth...are now the very picture of misery.”⁹¹ Many of the refugees were now in very weak financial circumstances, regardless of their former status. One such refugee summarized the trauma of her journey, and her resulting tumble down the social ladder, in a desperate plea to Thomas Jefferson for aid: formerly, like Alexander, the owner of several “properties in Saint Domingue,” she was now a widow “in a country that is foreign to me; stripped of everything, very elderly, without relatives, without friends.”⁹² Some found life in the U.S. so difficult that they decided to leave altogether: in September 1809, refugees in New Orleans, recently arrived from Cuba, petitioned President James Madison to be given a ship in order to return to France.⁹³ In contrast with the experiences of many refugees, Alexander and his family, by virtue of their slave ownership, were already in an unusually favorable position upon their arrival in Virginia.

The mention, in Alexander’s letter to Jefferson, of the Burot plantation mortgage being paid for by the profits of slave labor is indicative of the advantages provided by slave ownership. It also suggests that the Burots were probably using the practice of “hiring out” their slaves as a source of income, especially given that nine slaves would probably have been insufficient to produce a profit through plantation labor. Under the hiring-out system, which was widespread in the Richmond area during this period, slaves were typically hired to perform contractual labor or domestic work, at an average price of \$7 per year for a female slave, and \$16-17 for a male slave.⁹⁴ Whilst hardly any information remains in the record about the slaves owned by Burot, if we assume that all of them were hired out, and that there was a roughly equal gender split of four women and five

⁹¹ Ibid., 34.

⁹² “Forcée d’abandonner mes proprietes de St domaingue, obligée de sortir de l’isle de cuba ou je m’ettais refugiée et ou je pouvois sufir a mon existence, me voici maintenant ici dans un pays estrangé pour moi; Dénué de tout, tres agée sans parents sans amis.” “From Madame Deshay, de Baltimore le 18 aout, 1809,” in Perdue and Haggard, eds., 450.

⁹³ Lejeune Malherbe et al., “From Chevalier Lejeune Malherbe and Others, New Orleans 5th. Sept. 1809,” in Rutland et al., *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series*, 352-353.

⁹⁴ Sidbury *Ploughshares into Swords*, 190.

men, they would have earned around \$110 per year for the family. It is also possible that the slaves' Frenchness may have decreased their price, given the mistrust of "French negroes" amongst white slaveowners. This income may have been enough to support the family, albeit modestly. It may well have been sufficient to cover the plantation mortgage. However, it seems likely that it was not the Burot family's sole income, and that Alexander supplemented this whenever possible through his business as a merchant.

During his residence in Virginia, Alexander was firmly embedded in Atlantic and Saint-Dominguan commerce. He is mentioned in a marine insurance court case as the supercargo and part-owner of the brig *Hope*, which was joint-owned by two Richmond merchants, and in September 1799 was captured by the British on returning from Saint-Domingue to the Chesapeake with a cargo of mahogany.⁹⁵ As a major trade hub, the James River was an ideal place for Alexander to continue to operate as a merchant. Whilst Richmond only boomed industrially after the arrival of the Virginia General Assembly in 1780, it was an important for local planters to "meet, do business, and socialize" from at least the mid-eighteenth century.⁹⁶

After 1780, it grew rapidly into a center of commerce and industry. In addition, ports like Norfolk and Manchester were major slave trading centers, and were home to communities of wealthy merchants; on arriving in Norfolk, noted Moreau de Saint-Méry seeing "an imposing brick house that looks like a public building" topped by a "brilliantly gilded" weathervane, which was in fact a merchant's shop.⁹⁷ It seems that Alexander

⁹⁵ "Hodgson v. Marine Insurance Company of Alexandria," in Frederick C. Brightly, ed., *Reports of Cases Argued and Adjudged in the Supreme Court of the United States, in February Term, 1809*, V, 3rd ed. (New York, NY, 1909), 58. <https://archive.org/details/reportscasesarg06petegooq>; "The Marine Insurance Company of Alexandria, Appellants, v. Hodgson, Appellee," in Richard Peters, ed., *Condensed Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of the United States*, II (Philadelphia, PA, 1830), 518-519.

⁹⁶ Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, 154.

⁹⁷ Roberts and Roberts, 46.

was not alone in making the decision to stay in Virginia for commercial reasons: it is notable that, according to town records, the vast majority of free refugees in Norfolk were categorized as merchants.⁹⁸ As someone already heavily involved in Atlantic commerce, Virginia provided important opportunities to Burot and others who were keen to profit from mercantile activity.

In this commercial context, it is also likely that Burot's connections to Saint-Domingue would have worked to his advantage. Even after the outbreak of insurrection, U.S. merchants were keen to trade with the colony: in 1795, for example, over 600 American ships travelled to Saint-Dominguan ports, whilst in 1796, one French émigré based in Philadelphia, keen to ingratiate himself with the new revolutionary leadership, sent a merchant ship to Gonaives with a note which described him as "a good French citizen, good patriot...[and] owner of one of the best commercial houses in this city."⁹⁹ It is clear that merchants saw any link to Saint-Domingue as desirable, and many saw the colony as a commercial gold mine.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, some took this literally: in 1802, the Norfolk *Commercial Register* published an article entitled "Gold and Platina in the Island of St. Domingo," which somewhat breathlessly described finding large stores of the metals, "often times large enough to be picked up by the fingers," in the Saint-Domingue mountain rivers, and concluded, "[t]hese quantities of precious metals, added to the fertility of its soil, make St. Domingo an object of double importance."¹⁰¹ Even after Haitian Independence – and in the face of Jeffersonian opposition – American merchants continued to celebrate trade with the new state.¹⁰² As a merchant from the

⁹⁸ Babb, 110.

⁹⁹ White, 155.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 157.

¹⁰¹ "Gold and Platina in the Island of St. Domingo," *The Commercial Register*, no. 6 (Norfolk, August 27, 1802), [2].

¹⁰² White, 164.

colony, Burot's ties to Saint-Domingue would have been potentially very profitable in Virginia.

Another key reason that the Burot family and others stayed in Virginia was its convenience as a base from which to return to the colony. Many refugees assumed that their stay in the U.S. would be temporary, and showed a clear intention to return, whether by delaying the process of naturalization, or by actually doing so prior to 1804.¹⁰³ When Alexander returned to Saint-Domingue in 1801, he did so several years after British withdrawal from Jérémie, and after hearing of the arrival of French military force with the suspected intention of re-establishing slavery. In this context, it seems likely that he was probably hoping not just to make commercial connections, but also to lay the groundwork for his family's return. Indeed, he delayed the sale of his Jérémie property until 1803, shortly before his final departure, when it was clear that the French military were losing the war against the former-slave insurgency.¹⁰⁴ In another example, French refugee Benjamin Chaigneau delayed his naturalization until 1804, immediately after Haitian independence, despite having lived in Philadelphia since 1795.¹⁰⁵ Until 1803, the move to Virginia made strategic sense to the Burots for personal as well as commercial reasons.

In addition to forging new commercial links, the Burots were also able to exploit his pre-existing business and personal relationships to his advantage in Virginia. In 1809, the year the family were evicted, Alexander's daughter, Josephine Burot, married the aforementioned refugee-turned-citizen Benjamin Chaigneau.¹⁰⁶ Chaigneau was almost certainly known to the Burot family prior to their migration: both had embarked from the

¹⁰³ Dessens, 19.

¹⁰⁴ Manuel, "A Guide to the Jérémie Papers," 4:112.

¹⁰⁵ *Pennsylvania, Federal Naturalization Records, 1795-1931*. Ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ *Virginia, Compiled Marriages, 1740-1850*, Ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 1999).

same region of Aux Cayes, Jérémie, and must have been part of the same community of planters and merchants in area.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Chaigneau's arrival in Philadelphia in 1795, shortly before the Burots' voyage, suggests that he may have actually travelled with the family, or relayed information to them from the U.S. in order to assist with their journey. This close relationship is evidence of the solidarity that often existed between the refugees, and of the importance of close personal bonds.¹⁰⁸ The marriage was typical of the early French refugee population; Dessens notes that refugees overwhelmingly tended to marry other refugees during the first decade or two after arrival.¹⁰⁹ The family connection with Chaigneau also aided the Burots in other ways: in 1813, Alexander appeared in a chancery court case represented by an "administrator" reportedly named "Benjamin Caignan," and it seems likely that both partners in this marriage were keenly aware of the strategic benefits, as well as personal preference, of marrying another successful refugee.¹¹⁰

Finally, refugees from upper-class or wealthy backgrounds, such as the Burots, were also able to capitalize on the benefits of their social class. Their integration into upper-class American life enabled them to advocate for their own interests in ways which were often impossible for poor and enslaved refugees. Alexander's letter to Jefferson is a clear example of this: by appealing to the politician's empathy as a fellow planter and father, Burot was able to emphasize his status as a member of the slave-owning elite, and, implicitly, of the Chesterfield planter community, which included the Eppes family, Jefferson's relatives by marriage.¹¹¹ Similarly, the Widow Deshay based her own appeal for aid on a family connection to a French colonel, Jacques Le Maire, who was well-

¹⁰⁷ *Pennsylvania, Federal Naturalization Records.*

¹⁰⁸ Dessens, 47.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁰ *Alexandria Gazette, Commercial and Political* 13, no. 3098 (Alexandria, VA, July 15 1813), [4].

¹¹¹ "planteur de Virginie et pere de famille." Burot, "Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson."

known to Jefferson as an importer of weapons for Virginia during the American Revolution.¹¹² In his bid to become a naturalized US citizen, Chaigneau had benefited from the patronage of Charles de Grofey, a prominent French merchant who had himself become naturalized in Pennsylvania in 1786.¹¹³ In making these appeals, white, educated, connected refugees had a unique ability to counter perceptions of them as untrustworthy French aristocrats, and present themselves as peers of the Virginian elites, deserving of sympathy and aid.¹¹⁴

Whilst we do not know the precise outcome of Alexander's letter, it seems unlikely to have had the desired effect. In the 1810 Federal Census he is listed as living in Richmond, apparently plantation-less. Despite his plea to Jefferson, however, it is clear that he was not "reduced to beggary" by this loss. His Richmond household contained twelve residents, including four slaves, and at least one free person who may be a servant.¹¹⁵ Whilst he may have descended the social ladder, Alexander's wealth upon arrival, his experience in commerce, and his mercantile and personal connections meant that, unlike many of the refugees, he became relatively prosperous in Virginia.

Julia Ann and Virginia Ann

It is impossible to retrieve the exact decisions which led to nine slaves accompanying the Burot family to Virginia in 1796. In place of this lack of knowledge, however, we can instead attempt to evaluate the possible factors in their departure, in order to gain a

¹¹² "From Madame Deshay, de Baltimore le 18 aout, 1809," in Perdue and Haggard, 450.

¹¹² Roberts and Roberts, n34.

¹¹³ *Pennsylvania, Federal Naturalization Records, 1795-1931*; Thompson Westcott, *Names of Persons Who Took the Oath of Allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania, Between the Years 1777 and 1789, with a History of the 'Test Laws' of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, PA, 1865), 117.

¹¹⁴ White, 89.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*; Burot, "Alexander Burot to Thomas Jefferson;" *1810 United States Federal Census*, Ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2010).

deeper understanding of the context in which they made their decisions. The power of the Burot family would, most likely, have been of prime importance. Despite the declaration of general emancipation in 1793, liberty was not guaranteed in Saint-Domingue. In many areas of the colony, the daily reality of plantation labor changed little, and for this reason alone it seems unlikely that the slaves' relationship to Burot, their work, and their freedom would have changed significantly either. Jérémie, where the Burot plantations were located, was also under occupation from the British, meaning that the nine slaves were also under the jurisdiction of an empire which had no intention of abolishing slavery. Any choices that the nine could make regarding their departure must have been severely constrained. That said, it is worth weighing up the factors that may have influenced what little autonomy they had, and their feelings towards the move.

On one hand, leaving Saint-Domingue would have meant parting with friends and family and leaving a familiar world; moreover, it would have meant one in which, in contrast to Saint-Domingue, there were few opportunities for freedom, and it should be assumed that they would have expected to remain in slavery when travelling to Virginia. However, the fact that they were eventually freed also raises questions about how much they knew of the legal and political wrangling over the status of black refugees in the U.S., and the extent to which this entered into their calculations. In addition, the violence and uncertainty of the Haitian Revolution may have provided incentive enough to leave for the U.S., as a more stable, if equally oppressive, society. Some of the slaves may have been members of the same family, and moved to stay together; alternately, they may have been encouraged by family or friends to leave the violence of Saint-Domingue. They may even have been in the position to ask for favors from the family in exchange for travelling; in one case, a refugee residing in Baltimore had apparently persuaded "his black domestic" to travel with him by offering him ten dollars per month

for his service.¹¹⁶ And in addition to the Alexander's ability as an owner to force the nine to leave, it is also possible that he had access to more personal forms of coercion: one of the slaves, Julia Ann, later had a daughter who is described in Virginia records as "mulatto," suggesting the possibility that Alexander, or one of his children, was the father.¹¹⁷ Either way, in travelling with the Burots, the enslaved refugees can be seen as potentially making pragmatic decisions, albeit highly constrained ones, in order to capitalize on the some of the opportunities that leaving Saint-Domingue may have offered.

Upon arrival in Virginia, the enslaved refugees would have encountered a range of reactions to their "French negro" status. On one hand, they would have faced a widespread fear of their potential as importers of revolt from Saint-Domingue. Indeed, the fears of the "contagion" of revolt were not entirely unfounded: slave plots were discovered in the U.S. with increasing regularity after 1791, in which there were often rumors or hints of black French influence. The investigation of the 1793 Charleston plot, for example – an audacious inter-state plan with links to groups in Virginia and North Carolina – was sparked by a note found in Virginia, whose author stated, "I supposed there may be two hundred or more Negroes brought from Cape Francois by the unfortunate French people. These I have no doubt would be ready to operate against us with the others."¹¹⁸ Shortly before the plot was discovered, a group of blacks were overheard in Richmond, saying, "you see how the blacks has killed the whites in the French Island and took it a little while ago."¹¹⁹ French émigrés were reportedly involved

¹¹⁶White, 139-140.

¹¹⁷ "Burot, Virginia Ann (18), Free Negro Register," December 9, 1831. African American Narrative Digital Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi04037.xml>; *Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940*, Ancestry.com (Provo, UT, 2014).

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Alderson, 94.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

in the trial of Gabriel, the alleged leader of what would have been Virginia's largest slave revolt, in 1800; two years later, a Frenchman's house in Norfolk was reportedly set ablaze, possibly in an attempt at revolt, by some "evil-minded persons, or, rather, Devils."¹²⁰ Restrictions began to be placed on those already in the country. As of December 1793, Virginia free blacks were required to carry their freedom papers on their person at all times. After 1795, the administrators in Norfolk began to clamp down on illicit tippling-houses which sold alcohol to blacks.¹²¹ Although fear of French-inspired insurrection never reached fever pitch, it was nevertheless sufficient to have real consequences for those black French refugees already in the country.

Whilst political opponents of French migration seized on these fears, however, it is probable that many Virginian slaves took inspiration from news of the Haitian insurrection.¹²² Sympathy may have been expressed through articles of clothing; in Baltimore and Philadelphia, for example, several runaway advertisements described slaves as wearing French symbols: the "striped ribbon" of the tricolor, or a homemade cockade.¹²³ After execution of Gabriel in Richmond in 1800, "persistent legends" circulated about his plan to flee to Saint-Domingue, despite there being no evidence of

¹²⁰ It is worth noting that this was by no means carried out by slaves or insurrectionists. However, given the widespread use of arson as a tactic throughout the Haitian Revolution, and the welcome given to white French refugees, this is certainly a possibility. Ruth Henshaw Bascom in A. G. Roeber, "A New England Woman's Perspective on Norfolk, Virginia, 1801-1802: Excerpts from the Diary of Ruth Henshaw Bascom," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 88, no. 1 (Oct. 1978), 296; Dessens, 114.

¹²¹ Roberts and Roberts, 60; Tommy L. Bogger, *Free Blacks in Norfolk Virginia, 1790-1850: The Darker Side of Freedom* (Charlottesville, Va., 1997), 135.

¹²² In one example of this political opportunism, a Virginia house delegate urged support for the Alien and Sedition Acts by painting a lurid picture of the consequences on unchecked immigration: "the ranks of society would be confounded: the ties of nature would be cut asunder: the inexorable and blood-thirsty negro would be careless of their father's groans, the tears of the mother, and the lamentations of the children. The loudest in their wailings would be their wives and daughters torn from their arms, with naked bosoms, out-stretched hands and disheveled hair, to gratify, the brutal passion of a ruthless negro, who would the next moment murder the object of his lust. He then asked how all that was to be prevented? By vesting the general government with that power to remove such Aliens." *Debates in the House of Delegates of Virginia...*, 22.

¹²³ White, 147-148.

this.¹²⁴ Whilst such support may not have always extended from the idea of revolution to the refugees themselves, sentiment may have provided some form of solidarity for the refugees, in the face of such widespread hostility.

After some years in Virginia, the apparent legal fluke which led to their freedom created new possibilities for the former slaves. Whilst they left few records in the archive, it is possible to trace the movements of Julia Ann's daughter, who was recorded in the Free Negro Registers for Chesterfield County in 1831, aged eighteen. Described as "born free," she would have arrived only a couple of years after her mother's freedom was granted, and was aptly named Virginia Ann Burot.¹²⁵ In late 1851 or early 1852, Virginia Ann married Robert Logan, a free black bricklayer, in Chesterfield County.¹²⁶ Bogger notes the particular social and economic factors which shaped free black marriage in Virginia during this period: in a similar manner to the Burot-Chaigneau marriage, it would have been "a concern to all relatives, because the family could easily lose what little respectability or social distinction it enjoyed."¹²⁷ In particular, Bogger notes that factors such as occupation and skin color were especially important, and this sheds light the social maneuvering that engineered Virginia Ann and Robert's marriage; she was lighter-skinned, being consistently identified as "mulatto," whilst he, although darker, had a comfortable income.¹²⁸ This was clearly a strategic match, probably designed as much by Virginia Ann's French-born mother as by Virginia Ann herself, in order to maximize her social and economic capital. Indeed, it seems that it paid off: by 1870, Robert owned real estate estimated at \$900, and the family were prosperous

¹²⁴ Dessens, 114.

¹²⁵ "Burot, Virginia Ann (18), Free Negro Register".

¹²⁶ *Virginia, Select Marriages, 1785-1940*.

¹²⁷ Bogger, 103.

¹²⁸ *1870 United States Federal Census*, Ancestry.com (Provo, UT., 2009); "Burot, Virginia Ann (18), Free Negro Register."

enough to hire a domestic servant, presumably in part to take care of their three-year-old son, William.¹²⁹

By marrying a Chesterfield bricklayer, Virginia Ann seems to have made a particularly canny move. In the early nineteenth century, Richmond, and the area surrounding it, was one of the most quickly industrializing areas in the South; between 1850 and 1860, Richmond's factory workforce increased by 581 percent.¹³⁰ Logan's skills would have been in constant demand to build the factories, warehouses, and tenements of the burgeoning industrial city. It is clear, too, that Logan located himself to gain full benefit of this industrial boom: in 1880, Logan is recorded as living in the busy port town of Manchester with William, who was now aged twelve. Whilst it is unclear whether he moved after Virginia Ann's death (their place of residence is not recorded in the 1870 census), Manchester, which sat opposite Richmond on the south bank of the James, would have been an ideal place in which he could make a profit.¹³¹ By living in an urban area, the family would also have been part of a burgeoning black community, whose more prosperous members prided themselves on their economic success and self-sufficiency. In 1865, shortly after the fall of Richmond to the Union Army, a group of local black men petitioned President Andrew Johnson, a group of local black men petitioned President Andrew Johnson, highlighting their community's achievements: "We represent a population...who have ever been distinguished for their good behavior...as well as for their high moral and Christian character.... Among us there are at least 2,000 men who are worth from \$200 to \$500; 200 who have property valued at from \$1,000 to \$5,000, and a number who are worth \$5,000 to \$20,000. None of our people are in the

¹²⁹ *1870 United States Federal Census*.

¹³⁰ Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia, PA, 1984), 4.

¹³¹ *1880 United States Federal Census*, Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (Provo, UT, 2010).

almshouse, and...our benevolent societies supported [former slaves] while they lived, and buried when they died.”¹³² With property worth \$900, the Logan family can be placed squarely in the middle of this emerging middle class. From her initial status as a suspicious “French negro,” a combination of chance and careful social maneuvering had enabled Julia Ann to secure her daughter’s place in a comfortable free household, and her family’s status as part of the industrial black Virginian middle class.

Given the lack of records for the other freed slaves, or for Alexander’s other children, it is difficult to conclusively state the success of the Burots in Virginia. However, it is clear from the case studies above that the refugees drew on all available resources in order to increase their status in the U.S. Despite their relative loss of wealth, Alexander’s family were able to use their remaining assets – their slaves – to secure a plantation residence. Alexander’s experience in commerce, and his close connections with Saint-Domingue, enabled him to embed himself in the commercial world of the James River, making money and connections whilst also laying the groundwork for a potential return to Saint-Domingue. The networks of friendship, solidarity, and allegiance formed by the refugees enabled Josephine Burot to marry a French refugee with the added security U.S. naturalization, whilst Alexander could use his social standing, as a planter and as a resident of Chesterfield, to appeal to Thomas Jefferson for assistance after the loss of his slaves. Despite the adverse circumstances of the refugees, the Burots were able to use their economic standing, commercial skill, and social status to take full advantage of all of the opportunities available to them.

In spite of her very different circumstances, it is also clear that the success of Virginia Ann Burot was in large part due to legal and social strategizing, both by herself and by

¹³² *New York Tribune*, 17 June 1865, quoted in Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*, 14.

her mother. Despite having little option to leave Saint-Domingue, it is possible that Julia Ann was able to exploit her circumstances, legally and socially. Once free, Julia Ann was eventually able to secure the prosperity and social mobility of her daughter, by ensuring her marriage to a prosperous bricklayer in the industrializing county. In the context of the limitations and suspicions faced by black French refugees, Julia Ann and Virginia Ann both used social and economic strategies to maximize the benefit of every decision they made, with significant results.

These conclusions may make it tempting to assume that the barriers faced by the refugees, whilst difficult, were surmountable. In contrast with the majority of refugees, however, it seems that these two case studies are probably the exception, not the norm. Instead, their success is more accurately understood as evidence of a combination of economic advantage (in Alexander's case), social maneuvering, and sheer fortune. Many of the Burot's achievements, whether maintaining a comfortable lifestyle on a plantation or in Richmond, or maintaining socially advantageous marriages, relied upon their ability to negotiate all of these factors, and exploit all of the opportunities with which they were presented to their full ability. Without this, it is unlikely that the Burot refugees would have been able to achieve the success they did.

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