UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

‘Buccaneers Became Ballet Masters’:

The Emergence of New Racial Identities in Saint-Domingue, 1763-1777

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In the late 1760s, responding to the Seven Years' War, French imperial administrators imposed a host of reforms on colonial society in Saint-Domingue. These reforms aimed – and succeeded – in forging a new colonial culture and new racial attitudes in the kingdom's most valuable territory. But a controversial book published in 1776 illustrated how the changes Versailles intended were strikingly different from those that actually occurred. In *Considérations sur Saint-Domingue*, Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil combined pre-existing Creole notions of a local patriotism with Versailles's vision of an Enlightened colonial public that could unite French and island-born colonists. Hilliard's text shows how post-war reforms produced the idea that "white purity" was the key to reinvigorating the colony. This racial vision, in turn, played central role in destabilizing Saint-Domingue's master class during the early years of the French Revolution.

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The Seven Years' War affected France's relationship with Saint-Domingue in two major ways: it illuminated the colony's importance to the imperial economy, and it suggested how tenuous France's grip on this valuable territory really was.

Sugar and plantation slavery had taken off in Martinique and Guadeloupe around the 1680s. France's early claims to Saint-Domingue, however, lay in the arrangements royal officials made after 1650 with that territory's international population of freebooters, hunters, and pirates. During the Nine Years' War (1688–97) the French navy was still using Saint-Domingue's buccaneers as a military force in attacks against Spanish and English colonies. It was only when that conflict ended that Spain formally recognized French possession of the western one-third of

Santo Domingo. Although enslaved men and women were working in sugar fields in Saint-Domingue from the 1660s, the colony's sugar "take-off" only occurred after 1715.

The years between 1748, when the War of Austrian Succession ended, and 1756, when the Seven Years' War began, witnessed an explosion in French trade with West Africa and the West Indies. These were the years when Saint-Domingue emerged as France's most important colony. Even in the period 1750-55 it had only 38 percent of French shipping to the colonies. Before 1756 France's largest Atlantic port, Bordeaux, still sent more ships to Martinique than to Saint-Domingue. After the Seven Years' War, however, the larger colony absorbed the majority of French Antillean shipping and became the primary colonial destination of Bordeaux captains.[1]

The war virtually stopped the Atlantic trade that was France's most vibrant commercial sector. In a series of raids in 1755, before the war formally began, the British navy had cut French colonial shipping by 70 percent. By 1758 Bordeaux had lost 200 ships and Nantes 90. The British blockade raised the price of maritime insurance from 3 percent of a cargo's value to as high as 60 percent. The war cut deep into industries like sugar refining, textile manufacturing, as well as the re-export of colonial products which was at the heart of France's trade with the rest of Europe. In 1763, therefore, the restoration of commerce underscored how vital the Antilles were to the kingdom.[2]

During the Seven Years' War, colonial resentment of French imperial policies, including mercantilism, was a major source of concern for Versailles. Saint-Domingue was France's only major American possession that did not fall to the British but that was because it was never seriously attacked. Imperial officials saw how quickly nearly all France's other Caribbean territories surrendered to British forces, and noted the way planters profited from joining the

[1] Pierre H. Boulle, "Patterns of French Colonial Trade and the Seven Years' War," *Histoire Sociale/ Social History* 7, no. 3 (1974): 50, 57, 60.
[2] Ibid., 53.

British Empire, even temporarily. In April 1759, for example, Guadeloupe surrendered to a British attack after only 3 months of siege. At the time they surrendered, Guadeloupe's planters were well protected in the mountainous interior, while their British adversaries were falling victim to tropical diseases in the lowlands.[3]

But Guadeloupe's colonists were especially aggrieved by French commercial policy, which required them to channel all their trade through nearby Martinique. This lowered the price they received for sugar and coffee and made it more difficult to replenish their workforces with enslaved Africans. The surrender changed that. The terms of capitulation allowed the island's planters to keep their estates. In four years under British control, they purchased nearly as many slaves from British merchants, as the French had imported in 70 years' time. And they sold their sugar to London. After 1761 Guadeloupe, the backwater of the French Antilles, became a leading source of sugar and coffee imports to Great Britain.[4]

By this time during the Seven Years' War, French imperial officials were aware that they needed to strengthen the loyalty of Antillean colonists. In 1759, the Ministry hired Emilien Petit, a Creole from Saint-Domingue and a judge there, to develop ideas for colonial reform. On July 23 of that year, the Ministry suppressed the unpopular 2 percent duty on slave imports that provided monies for colonial administrators; governors and intendants would now draw their budgets from France and not from colonists. That same year, Versailles established special Councils of Agriculture and Commerce in Saint-Domingue and Martinique to give local elites an

[3] Charles Frostin, *Histoire de l'autonomisme colon de la partie française de St-Domingue aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles contribution à l'étude du sentiment américain d'indépendance* (Service de reproduction des thèses, Université de Lille III, 1973), 632.

[4] Ibid., 635.

advisory voice in imperial affairs. In February 1761, as the Duc de Choiseul took over the Naval Ministry, he created a Colonial Council to pursue colonial reform.[5]

The prospective of post-war changes in the organization of the empire did not stem France's losses in Antilles. Grenada capitulated to the British in 1760, Dominica in 1761, and St. Lucia in 1762. Martinique, which in 1759 had repelled the attack that later took Guadeloupe, surrendered in 1762 after a struggle that many believed was far from exhausting.[6]

Saint-Domingue was Britain's logical next target, and French colonial authorities there faced a far more unruly colonial population than in the Lesser Antilles. In 1748, during the War of Austrian Succession, the British had attacked Saint Louis in the colony's southern peninsula, one of Saint-Domingue's best defended harbors. Militia forces at the fort laid down their arms after only 85 minutes of British cannon fire. Local indigo planters, who smuggled much of their crop to Jamaica during peacetime, then concluded a massive transfer of dye to British ships. To top it off, down the coast at Tiburon the Jamaica governor Trelawny accepted planters' invitation to come ashore for tea.[7]

In 1762, official efforts to prepare for a British siege drove Saint-Domingue planters to new levels of frustration. Although the Atlantic blockades hurt colonial merchants and smaller planters, some large planters were able to prosper by selling sugar, coffee, indigo and cotton to Dutch, Danish, and North American smugglers. Defensive preparations disrupted their plantation schedules, as authorities commandeered field slaves to build fortifications and military

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[5] Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l'ancien régime: l'évolution du régime de l'exclusif de 1763 à 1789 (P*aris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972), 73, 79-80; Jean Tarrade, "L'administration coloniale en France à la fin de l'Ancien Régime: Projets de réforme," *Revue Historique 22*9 (March 1963): 104; Gabriel Debien, "Gouverneurs, magistrats et colons : l'opposition parlementaire et coloniale a Saint-Domingue (1763-1769)," Rev*ue de la société haïtienne d'histoire, de géographie, et de géologie (O*ctober 1958): 22.

[6] Pierre Pluchon, *Histoire de la colonisation française* ([Paris]: Fayard, 1991), 235.

[7] Frostin, *Histoire de l'autonomisme colon*, 631-32; Richard Pares, *War and trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763*, 1st ed. (Cass, 1963), 183; John D. Garrigus, "Blue and Brown: Contraband Indigo and the Rise of a Free Colored Planter Class in French Saint-Domingue," *The Americas* 50, no. 2 (1993): 233-263.

roads. And after Guadeloupe's example, many Dominguans were galled by France's assumption that they would rather have their estates destroyed rather than surrender to the British.

French colonial planters were spared this choice when Spain entered into the war and the British attacked Cuba, rather than Saint-Domingue. Havana fell in October 1762, and in ten months British merchants sold thousands of enslaved Africans into the island, helping transform the economy, much as they had done in Guadeloupe.

Although Saint-Domingue's loyalty to France was never put to the test, imperial officials were keenly aware of the tensions the war had generated. Already on May 21, 1762, the Naval Ministry had limited the power of colonial governors over judicial officers. From this point on, intendants in the Caribbean colonies would be drawn from judicial rather than military backgrounds, as had previously been the case. Then, on March 24, 1763, only a month after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, Versailles installed a far-reaching but poorly thought-out package of reforms for the colony.[8]

The post-war reforms in France's established colonies were closely related to the influence of two Creole colonists hired during the war to work on colonial affairs in the Naval Ministry. Both men had been prominent critics of imperial policy and the Duc de Choiseul, Naval Secretary from 1761 to 1766, used them to understand and address the causes of colonial disloyalty. Emilien Petit, mentioned above, had published a book entitled *Patriot américain* in 1750 that encapsulated Saint-Domingue's complaints about colonial government, and suggested reforms.[9] Jean-Baptiste Dubuc, whom Choiseul named *premier commis* in 1764, the most

[8] Pluchon, *Histoire de la colonisation française*, 631; Tarrade, "L'administration coloniale," 106.

[9] John D. Garrigus, "Le patriotisme américain : Emilien Petit and the Dilemma of French-Caribbean Identity Before and After the Seven Years' War," in *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History: Selected Papers of the 2002 Annual Meeting* (Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004), 18-29.

important post in the ministry available without a royal appointment[10], was a Creole from Martinique. Dubuc's father had helped lead a rebellion against imperial authority in 1717 and his brother had been a leader of the group that pressed for the island's surrender to the British in 1762. The fact that Choiseul appointed Dubuc to a position with day-to-day oversight of French colonial policy illustrates how concerned Versailles was about addressing colonial grievances.[11]

The March 1763 decision to dissolve Saint-Domingue's unpopular militia was Versailles's most radical post war idea. Although responsibility for the measure is unclear, it was the sort of strong measure that both Petit and Dubuc advocated. Saint-Domingue's colonists hated militia service not only because of the time and effort it required, but because the parish militia commander was the central figure in local government. Petit had argued that as long as this abusive system remained in place, colonists would never develop the patriotic attachment to Saint-Domingue that was necessary for the colony's prosperity and the security of the empire.

"Patriotism" was a key word at the ministry in 1763. Before the 1750s, in France the term had been associated with opposition to absolutist government. But Choiseul believed that Britons' patriotic support for the war, and the lack of such feeling in France, explained why his kingdom had been defeated. He began to try to develop similar sentiments among French subjects, and Saint-Domingue was a prime candidate.[12] As Petit had advocated, Saint-Domingue's 1763 reform not only eliminated militia units, it reformed local government. In each of the colony's parishes, an elected *syndic* or "trustee" would replace the appointed militia

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[10] The importance of this office is examined in J. F. Bosher, "The Premiers *Commis* des Finances in the Reign of Louis XVI," *French Historical Studies* 3, no. 4 (Autumn 1964): 475.

[11] Frostin, *Histoire de l'autonomisme colon*, 621; Alfred Martineau and Louis May, *Trois siècles d'histoire antillaise, Martinique et Guadeloupe, de 1635 à nos jours* (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1935), 236.

[12] David Avrom Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 45-49; 63-66; Edmond Dziembowski, *Un nouveau patriotisme français, 1750-1770: la France face à la puissance anglaise à l'époque de la guerre de sept ans* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1998), 448-449.

commander. Colonists hailed this as the coming of the 'rule of law', an end to the "arbitrary" and "tyrannical" power of the local commander over all aspects of parish life.

In exchange for this long-solicited reform Versailles levied a one-time tax of 4 million livres on Saint-Domingue. In February 1764 Saint-Domingue's two Conseils, the high colonial courts-of-appeal in Cap Français and Port-au-Prince that claimed a right to register all colonial laws, gladly agreed to pay it. Then the following month Saint-Domingue's first post-war governor, Charles d'Estaing arrived from France with new orders. The Ministry had given d'Estaing the power to rescind the militia reform. Choiseul and Dubuc were proceeding cautiously; they did not order d'Estaing to re-establish the hated militia in as many words. But this was clearly his mandate. He was to name district commanders, meet with the colonial Conseils, and convene colonial notables about the problem of defense. Colonists soon began to write each other that he had been sent to prepare the way for a new despotism.[13]

D'Estaing, on the other hand, saw himself as encouraging colonial "patriotism" and took important steps to nurture the development of a colonial "public", a concept that was integral to contemporary discussions of patriotism. The colony's first permanent printing press arrived with him and was soon publishing a commercial broadsheet. His administration inaugurated an ambitious program of road- and bridge-building, and an improved postal system. Like postwar governors in Guadeloupe, d'Estaing and his successors began to rebuild colonial cities into more rational and sociable places through the construction of parks, promenades, public fountains and monuments. Post-war governors approved the construction of new theatres, coffee houses, Vauxhalls and other gathering spots, places where sociability and discussion could flourish. Reformers believed these activities would promote the sense of a colonial and imperial community, building local and transatlantic patriotism.

[13] Debien, "Gouverneurs, magistrats et colons," 10-12.

At the same time, d'Estaing attempted to convince colonists to accept the militia re-establishment. He did not see a conflict between colonial patriotism, and the broad authority of military commanders over local government. Petit, drawing on anti-court writers in France, had described patriotism as a sentiment that arose naturally from living in a country free of despotic rule. D'Estaing, like other members of Choiseul's circle, envisioned a patriotism based on classical models, in which individuals subordinated their desires to the needs of the community.

This classical model informed D'Estaing's ideas about Saint-Domingue's free population of color. He met with decorated black veterans and proclaimed that free men of color were natural patriots. . He lowered manumission taxes from 800 to 300 livres and offered to supply official freedom papers to those who had lost theirs.[14] He proposed to transform the colonial constabulary, whose rank and file members were mostly men of color, into a permanent military institution. Service in this Legion de Saint-Domingue would be obligatory for free men of color. Free black and free colored militia units in Saint-Domingue had almost always been led by members of this class, but d'Estaing believed the prestige of being an officer would entice colonial whites to support the militia. So the new Legion would have an all white officer corps. But colonists, including free men of color, claimed the Legion was a tool to increase the governor's despotic power. In Saint-Domingue's North province d'Estaing had to imprison free men of color for refusing to serve.[15]

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[14] Alfred Nemours, *Haïti et la guerre de l'indépendance américaine* ([Port-au-Prince] Haiti: H. Deschamps, 1952), 29-31; M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, L*oix et constitutions des colonies françoises de l'amérique sous le vent (P*aris: Chez l'auteur, 1784), 4:820-824.

[15] AN $C^{9B}17$, d'Estaing's memoir entitled "Observations particulières" dated 14 June 1765, N^{o}20bis; AN $C^{9B}17$bis, 18 August 1765, letter from d'Estaing to Choiseul, the colonial minister; AN Col. $C^{9B}17$b.

D'Estaing wanted to convince Saint-Domingue's highest law court, the Conseil of Port-au-Prince, to order the militia re-establishment. But the judges would not cooperate. By September 1765 he had become such a target of colonial outrage that Versailles was forced to recall him, after less than two years in office.

D'Estaing had been Saint-Domingue's first governor to come out of high court nobility, and his successor, the Prince de Rohan Montbazon, was cut from the same cloth. Rohan also tried to cultivate the colonial public, but after three years he failed to convince local representatives or colonial judges to accept the militia reform. He eventually had to ask Versailles for a royal decree re-establishing the militia. Saint-Domingue would have accept as this document as law.

The decree arrived in October 1768 and was registered by the Councils. [16] In December Rohan issued new militia commissions and ordered these officers to begin regular musters. With weeks, part of the colony was in revolt. In the West and especially the South provinces of Saint-Domingue – the center of smuggling and the most creolized region of the colony, as far as whites were concerned – refused to muster. Prominent colonists created their own armed forces, drawing together white plantation employees and free men of color, telling them that Rohan was attempting to impose a "new slavery." These men refused to assemble under new militia officers and intimidated those who did, including planters who had accepted militia commissions. In Torbec parish, in the southern peninsula, men of color met with one new militia officer and got him to pledge that he would travel to Port-au-Prince, meet with the Governor and personally

[16] AN Col. $F^3$180, 340 "Lettre du Ministre à M. Le Chevalier Prince de Rohan sur le rétablissement des Milices, 14 juin 1767"; AN Col. F^3 180, 363-4, "Lettre de M. le Prince de Rohan au ministre sur les milices ... 10 Novembre 1767"; AN Col. $F^3$181, 142-44.

reject the commission.[17] Rohan brought royal troops and loyal militia units and was able to end the revolt. He interrupted the March 7, 1769 meeting of the Port-au-Prince Conseil, and put the rebellious judges on a ship bound for France. The following month he installed new, more compliant judges. The rebels could not contest the Governor's power, but the divisions among those who supported and opposed the revolt reverberated in colonial society for years to come.[18]

Although Versailles badly mismanaged militia question, in the cultural arena new royal policies fared better at soothing the tension between colonial and imperial patriotism. The urbanization of colonial ports continued into the 1770s and 1780s, aided by the postwar commercial boom and a dramatic increase in immigration from France. The well-connected courtiers who succeeded d'Estaing and Rohan as governors expanded the colonial bureaucracy and the size of their own military and administrative entourages. Remarking on the post-war changes, one colonist wrote in 1769,

> All fashions are found in the colony today: plays, concerts, libraries, sumptuous parties where gaiety and wit oppose irksome boredom.... Pirates have given way to dandies with embroidered velvet jackets and fancy dressing is so common it has passed to women of color. A love of learning accompanies this love of luxury. Those who previously could not read or write are today poets, orators, and scientists. The printing press, that useful institution and source of national pride, crowns all this luster, and from it come the public papers, factums and memoirs.[19]

For colonists bitter about the militia re-establishment, these "civilizing" changes had important political ramifications. After all, part of Versailles's justification for military government was that Saint-Domingue was full of uncouth freebooters and anarchic planters.

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[17] AN Col. F^{3}182, d'Argout to Versailles, 24 February 1769; AN Col. F^{3}182, d'Argout to Rohan, 2 March 1769; AN Col. F^{3}182, d'Argout to Rohan, 5 March 1769; AN Col. F^{3}182, undated "Copie d'une requête presentée par des mulâtres à Monsieur d'Argout."

[18] M.L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, D*escription topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint Domingue.*, Nouv.éd. (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1958), 1000, 1269.

[19] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science : Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press , 1992), 189; Jean Fouchard, *Plaisirs de Saint-Domingue: Notes sur la vie sociale, littéraire et artistique* (Port-au-Prince: H. Deschamps, 1988), 53.

Yet the events of 1769 illustrated that "civilizing" the Antilles required more than new theatres and the latest Parisian fashions. The anti-militia revolt showed how Creoles could mobilize other colonial groups that had even less attachment to France: vagrants, frustrated immigrants, and free people of color.

In 1750 Emilien Petit had described the dangers of an "over familiarity" among colonists and free people of color. Saint-Domingue's origins as a buccaneer society, and the isolation of many colonial districts meant that the colony had a long history of free black and free colored soldiers and farmers. While whites outnumbered free people of color in many of the smaller Caribbean islands, in Saint-Domingue these two populations were of equivalent size in the second half of the 18th century. Petit meant his warning about "over familiarity" to be taken literally, for many colonial families had free colored relatives. In some parts of Saint-Domingue, unions between whites and free women of color constituted 20 percent of church marriages.[20] Petit believed that if colonists allied with families of even partial African descent, they would lose their loyalty to the Empire. He advocated sending French women to Saint-Domingue, but administrators had trying this since the mid-1600s with little success. Petit also recommended physically separating free people of color from colonists, by banishing them from colonial cities and plantations into the hills. This policy, he believed, would open jobs and marriage beds for immigrants.[21]

After 1769 a host of new laws promulgated in Saint-Domingue separated free people of color from whites. Many of the new urban spaces – theatres and dancehalls – were segregated. Some old Creole families faced lawsuits designed to remove them from white institutions. After

[20] Jacques Houdaille, "Le métissage dans les anciennes colonies françaises," *Population* 6 (1946): 1087-1100; Jacques Houdaille, "Trois paroisses de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle. Étude démographique?," *Population* 18, no. 1 (1963): 93-110; Jacques Houdaille, "Quelques données sur la population de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIe siècle," *Population* 28 (1973): 859-872.

[21] Garrigus, "Le patriotisme américain ."

a century of Creolisation, the racial identity of some families was not easily determined and genealogy became a colonial obsession.[22] In 1773, colonial administrators tried to "de-familiarize" the white and mixed ancestry populations by ordering free people of color with "white names" to adopt new names of "African origin." [23] Free people of color had to prove they were free in all public documents, which had to contain specific racial labels.

French officials appear to have believed that this new insistence on racial "purity" within an emerging colonial public would strengthen the bond among white creoles, Frenchmen, and imperial administrators. Their goal was for Saint-Domingue to enter the next war against Great Britain with a more patriotic colonial elite. But the strategy failed.

The imposition of white officers on the free colored militia units did increase the numbers of whites serving as militia officers. But most colonists did not shed their contempt for militia service. Rather, the postwar reform pushed more militia duties on these free colored units, and whites' growing racial contempt for these men, only reinforced their contention that the militia was a kind of despotic institution.[24]

For their part many free men of color were willing to accept the sacrifices of militia duty. But in return, they expected to be recognized as "patriots." As I argue elsewhere, their dissatisfaction peaked with the 1790 "revolt" of Vincent Ogé, which prefigured the Haitian Revolution.[25]

The best textual evidence of the new colonial attitudes that emerged out of Saint-Domingue's postwar reconfiguration can be found in a book published by Michel René Hilliard

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[22] Yvan Debbasch, *Couleur et liberté. Le jeu de critère ethnique dans un ordre juridique esclavagiste* (Paris: Dalloz, 1967), 69-75.

[23] Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Loix et constitutions*, 5:448-49.

[24] John D. Garrigus, "Catalyst or Catastrophe? Saint-Domingue's Free Men of Color and the Savannah Expedition, 1779-1782," *Review/Revista Interamericana* 22 (1992): 109-125.

[25] John D. Garrigus, "The Many Identities of Vincent Ogé," in *Race and Identity in the New World* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

d'Auberteuil in 1776: *Considérations sur Saint-Domingue*.[26] Hilliard had arrived in Saint-Domingue from Brittany in 1765 at the age of 14.[27] Eleven years later, he received the approval of the Naval Ministry for his *Considérations*, a collection of economic, legal and political observations about how the colony might be reformed. The book illustrates the success of some aspects of Versailles's post-war changes; *Considérations* is based squarely on the idea of "public" discussion and "patriotism". In its preface the physiocrat Mercier de la Rivière, Martinique's intendant during the Seven Years' War, extolled the book as an example of the virtues of the new public discussion. *Considérations* also embraced – and extended – the idea of segregating free society into white and non-white sectors. At the same time, Hilliard also absorbed key elements of the older colonial culture: resentment of French military government, and the idea that Saint-Domingue's true utility to France was commercial and not military. The original manuscript contained a section on the anti-militia revolt of 1769 which the Ministry insisted be removed.[28]

The book was instantly controversial when it arrived in the colony in summer of 1777. Within six months the governor d'Ennery and intendant de Vaivre convinced the Naval Ministry to suppress the work, claiming it was an attack on the reputation of specific administrators. Pierre Dubuisson published a book-length rebuttal in 1780. And the book played a role in convincing a prominent free colored planter, Julien Raimond, to appeal to Versailles for reforms that would end the post-war segregation. [29]

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[26] Michel-René Hilliard d'Auberteuil, C*onsidérations sur l'état présent de la colonie française de Saint-Domingue: ouvrage politique et législatif présenté au ministre de la marine (Paris:* Grangé, 1776).

[27] The best treatment of Hilliard and the various interpretations of *Considérations* is Gene E. Ogle, ""The Eternal Power of Reason" and "The Superiority of Whites": Hilliard d'Auberteuil's Colonial Enlightenment," *French Colonial History* 3 (2003): 37-39.

[28] Ibid., 37.

[29] Ogle, ""The Eternal Power of Reason"," 38; Pierre Ulric Dubuisson, *Nouvelles considérations sur Saint-Domingue en répons a celles de H.D.* (Paris: Cellot et Jombert, 1780); John D. Garrigus, "Opportunist or Patriot? Julien Raimond (1744–1801) and the Haitian Revolution," *Slavery & Abolition* 28, no. 1 (2007): 1-21.

Considérations was built around the idea of re-organizing Saint-Domingue to be a more productive and humane society. Its tone is pragmatic; though Raimond condemned Hilliard's racism, the book used skin color as a marker of social class, not morality the way other authors did.[30] In examining the colonial economy *Considérations* described slavery in terms that are deliberately anti-racial. Hilliard claimed to see no difference between Africans and Europeans in terms of intelligence or virtue. If anything, Africans were more virtuous than Europeans because they were "natural men" uncorrupted by society. Following Rousseau, Hilliard described Europeans as "enslaved" in their own fashion, by society, ambition, and passion. For Hilliard slavery was a profitable system that could only be defended on pragmatic, not moral, grounds.[31]

As for slavery's inhumanity, he maintained that well-treated slaves were better off, even richer, than French peasants. But many masters were unable to understand that "prosperous" slave were more productive. They oppressed their workers, and this cruelty led naturally virtuous Africans to acquire vices, creating dangerous conditions for the entire colony. Slave should be under the authority of civil justice to weaken the tyranny of cruel masters.[32]

If this section of the book was inspired by Enlightened European critics of Caribbean slavery, Hilliard soon reverted to the ideas of Creole patriots like Petit. Ultimately, he wrote, government oppression caused the kind of short-term thinking that made slavery unnecessarily cruel. Desperate to escape colonial tyranny, planters thought only of escaping to France, and gave little attention to Saint-Domingue's long-term prosperity.

Drawing on Creole writers, Hilliard described Saint-Domingue as fundamentally different from France's Lesser Antilles colonies. It was not settled by government colonists, but

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[30] See the analysis of Moreau de Saint-Méry and others in John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 141-170.

[31] Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations*, 1:130-133.

[32] Ibid., 1:130-136; on justice, 1: 143.

by free buccaneers whose leaders entered into an agreement the French Crown. Like these writers he argued that the France had not maintained its obligation to protect the colonists from attack. On the other hand, France's commercial monopoly prevented planters from making their full contribution to the prosperity of mainland France. Hilliard's adoption of this Creole anti-imperial discourse was strong enough that Charles Frostin, among other historians, saw him as a spokesman for Dominguan autonomy.[33]

But Hilliard was in fact speaking from an imperial point of view and his patrons in the Naval Ministry seemed to recognize this. Even after suppressing his book, Versailles appointed him to a legal position in Martinique and then a better one in re-captured Grenada.[34] *Considérations* emphasized that changing Saint-Domingue would require focusing on the capabilities of the Creole population, by which he meant island-born whites, and not free people of color or island-born slaves. Like other writers, he described the distinct personality and style of life of these Creoles but did not see their identity as biological.[35] Reforming the government, creating schools, and encouraging the arts, would bring out the inherent virtue of this population. Promoting colonial marriage and reproduction would increase their numbers. Critically, he advocated that the government reserve important administrative positions for Creoles. But, he specified, virtuous French immigrants should also be eligible for this "Creole" designation.[36]

With this proposed relabeling, Hilliard illustrated the post-1769 racial vision of the colonial government, theoretically unifying the distinction between Creole and French. Yet to connect Creoles and France, Hilliard, like other reformers, needed to remove the colony's free

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[33] See Ogle, ""The Eternal Power of Reason"," 41 for a discussion of this interpretation.

[34] Ibid., 39.

[35] His discussion of tropical disease, for example, attributed the deaths of immigrants to the bad location of colonial cities. Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations,* 1:54; On the biological differences between Europeans and Creoles, see Antonello Gerbi, *The dispute of the New World the history of a polemic, 1750-1900.*, trans. Jeremy Moyle, Rev. and enl. ed. ([Pittsburgh]: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 280.

[36] Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations,* 36, 47-48.

people of color, since they too were creoles. Like Petit in 1750, he described the free population of color as an obstacle to white settlement, because they took work and marriage partners away from immigrants.

As with his treatment of slavery, Hilliard did not equate race with virtue. He proposed segregation by skin color purely as a utilitarian device. Even the passage that Raimond quoted to show Hilliard's racism, if read literally, refutes the "one-drop" rule of African descent. "Among all peoples who have held slaves, the son or grandson of a freedman was held to be completely free; but in Saint-Domingue interest and security dictate that we hold the race of the blacks in such scorn that whoever descends from that race, until the sixth generation, be covered with an indelible stain." Unlike other writers, most notably the Creole Moreau de Saint-Méry, Hilliard recognized that at some point African ancestry was no longer visible. In the sixth generation of descent, he maintained, an individual should be regarded as "white." [37]

Yet behind its pragmatic tone, *Considérations* offered a radical race-based proposal to produce equality among all whites, and also among all blacks and among all people of mixed ancestry. For Hilliard, one of the chief defects of Saint-Domingue's government was the way that commanders' "arbitrary" power and favoritism created inequalities among whites. The great power of masters over slaves, he believed, produced similar inequalities in the enslaved population. To remedy this, Hilliard proposed making it nearly impossible for a master to free a slave. Instead, skin color would determine social status. Although Saint-Domingue had thousands of free blacks, under Hilliard's reform, all blacks would be enslaved. All people of mixed ancestry, including the tens of thousands currently in bondage, would be free. The only occasion in which a master could free a slave was if he or she saved the master's life. And in these cases, the ex-slave would be obligated to marry person of mixed ancestry, to maintain the

[37] Hilliard d'Auberteuil, *Considérations* 2: 73, 82.

non-blackness of the free population. All intermarriage between whites and non-whites would be illegal.

In this vision, white purity would unify Frenchmen and Creoles, over-riding differences of wealth, social origin, or regional culture. Similarly, all free people of color would share mixed European and African ancestry; the rising population of wealthy free colored planters would be no better than the poorest mulatto laborer. All would be subject to the immediate authority of all whites, without recourse to the courts. Enslaved workers would be easily recognizable by the darkness of their skin and they would have access to the court system, since this would reduce the power and moral corruption of the planter class.[38]

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Hilliard's *Considérations* shows how colonists absorbed Versailles's post-war reforms, but they interpreted them in a unique way – one that did NOT resolve the problem of imperial loyalty as authorities had hoped. Developing a new kind of patriotism, based on white purity, *Considérations* showed how the new racism might unite Creoles and French immigrants, but his attack on the arbitrary and tyrannical nature of colonial government was so harsh that it provoked the Naval Ministry to ban the book in the colonies.

Moreover, although Hilliard eschewed biological or moral condemnations of non-whites, his discussion of the free population of color illustrated the assumptions beneath his proposal. While asserting that slaves should be under the authority of the courts, he advocated that whites be allowed to mete out punishment to insolent free people of color themselves, on the spot. Involving royal justice was too costly to men of color, he asserted, so on-the-spot punishment by

[38] Ibid., 2: 80-88.

an aggrieved white was effectively more humane.[39] Without denying the virtue of the men of color, Hilliard wanted to institute a system in which social class would be completely replaced by racial identity, which explains the fierce protests his book raised among wealthy free people of color in Saint-Domingue.

Hilliard's *Considérations* illustrates how the postwar reforms had created a new colonial culture but not one that corresponded to Versailles's vision. Although he was a postwar immigrant, Hilliard argued for the same reform of the militia system and local government that the Creole writer Emilien Petit had advocated in 1750. In 1776, however, Hilliard's vision of what Petit had called "American patriotism" was even more radical. A truly reformed Saint-Domingue would be one which all whites were socially equal, no longer divided by access to despotic power, or by culture. Rejected by colonial officials and other wealthy figures in the colony, including free colored planters, Hilliard offered the ideas that animated Saint-Domingue's radical white "Patriots" during the early years of the French Revolution. His vision of post-war made skin color so central to social status that white "Patriots" rejected the minor racial reforms suggested by Paris in 1790, 1791 and 1792, refusing to acknowledge citizenship of free men of color, even during the early years of the slave rebellion.

[39] Ibid., 2:74-75.