

Reverberations of Haiti in the American North: Black Saint Domingueans in Philadelphia

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In 1791, two black independence movements began a thousand miles apart; within a matter of months their paths would intersect. On lush, green Saint Domingue (the western portion of the island of Hispaniola), black rebellion erupted after nearly two centuries of killing plantation labor had swallowed up the lives of thousands of slaves, who on one-sixth of the land area of Virginia produced nearly half of the world's sugar and coffee. In Philadelphia, at the same time, a group of free blacks, who had worked their way out of bondage only a few years before, published plans for the first free black church in the United States, thereby planting the seed of a black Christianity unregulated by ecclesiastic authorities and relatively free from the social and psychological domination of white churches.

In a ringing broadside appeal for support in July 1791, the founding trustees of the African Church of Philadelphia, as the black leaders called it, argued "the necessity and propriety of separate and exclusive means, and opportunities of worshipping God, of instructing their youth, and taking care of their poor."¹ Such an act of self-assertiveness signaled the pivotal role in the life of emancipated slaves that the black church would assume. The first historian of the church, its later minister William Douglass, described this creative striving for dignity and self-generated power. It was an "age of a general and searching inquiry into the equity of old and established customs," a time when "a moral earthquake had awakened the slumber of ages" and caused "these humble men, just emerged from the house of bondage . . . to rise above those servile feelings which all their antecedents were calculated to cherish, and to assume, as they did, an attitude of becoming men, conscious of invaded rights."²

Just eight weeks after launching their church plan, Philadelphia's black leaders heard for the first time that in Saint Domingue, among other men "conscious of invaded rights," African sugar and coffee workers rose en masse to ignite the greatest black rebellion ever seen in the Americas.³ Shortly, black Philadelphians would see how the path of their non-violent revolution in Philadelphia crossed that of the epochal revolution in the Caribbean. For two years Absalom Jones, Richard Allen, and other leaders of the black church plan gathered small donations for their church. Assisting them was Philadelphia's generalissimo of reform, Dr. Benjamin Rush—called "Mr. Great Heart" by the Reverend Jeremy Belknap of Boston after the character in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* who battled every hydra, hobgoblin, and giant blocking the way to the Celestial City. Working behind the scenes, Rush opened

the pocketbooks of many whites who began to make small donations to the black church building fund. Then late in 1792, a wealthy white Philadelphian, the land speculator John Nicholson, offered a considerable loan. Finally, in March 1793, with reports of spreading black rebellion in Saint Domingue reaching the city, Richard Allen turned the first shovelful of earth for building the church. Allen remembered the moment vividly a quarter of a century later. "As I was the first proposer of the African Church, I put the first spade into the ground to dig the cellar for the same. This was the first African Church or meeting house to be erected in the United States of America."⁴

By June 1793, with Saint Domingue a furnace of black rebellion and the capital of Le Cap Français in smoking ashes, French planters and merchants began a mass exodus. About 600 émigrés had reached Philadelphia in the previous year, but now they came in much larger numbers—to many cities along the seaboard as well as to Philadelphia.

The arrival of the terrified French islanders had an immediate effect on the building of the African Church of Philadelphia as white philanthropists campaigned to aid the stricken planters, merchants, and artisans. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, writing his friend James Monroe from Philadelphia, captured the mainstream white attitude perfectly: "The situation of the St. Domingo fugitives (aristocrats as they are) calls aloud for pity and charity. Never was so deep a tragedy presented to the feelings of man." Jefferson urged state legislatures to appropriate money for the French slave owners and hoped the amounts would be liberal.⁵ Many whites in Philadelphia agreed. Reneging on their pledges to the African Church of Philadelphia, they gave instead to a relief fund for the French refugees flooding into the city. Philadelphia's black citizens, who had spent two years trying to raise \$3,500, must have watched in dismay as \$12,000—enough to build three black churches—was raised in a few days.⁶ Additional funds poured in from benefit performances of "The Clandestine Marriage," "The Romp," and "The Agreeable Surprise" at the Southwark Theatre.⁷ Thus, African Americans learned that even the most sympathetic white Philadelphians placed the distress of white slave owners, even those from outside the United States who drew their wealth from managing the hemisphere's most brutal slave regime, ahead of the aspirations of those who had been slaves. Saint Domingue's black revolution reverberated in Philadelphia by siphoning off sympathy for the religious revolution among the city's recently freed blacks.

While free African Americans struggled to build independent black churches, they were simultaneously trying to fabricate the ligaments of community in a city awash with new immigrants. Arriving in staggering numbers in the 1790s were Irish, English, Germans, and more than 900 black Saint Domingans. Fleeing a cauldron of mass killing, about 15,000 islanders, roughly two-thirds white and one-third black, reached American seaports.⁸ At

least 750 white French West Indian families chose Philadelphia, the nation's capital, over alternate ports such as New York, Boston, Baltimore, Charleston, and Norfolk, all of which received sizable contingents of refugees.

In one critically important way, Philadelphia was the most unlikely American port of refuge, at least for the large number of escaping French families bringing slaves with them. It was no secret that more than a decade before, Pennsylvania had enacted a gradual abolition law that guaranteed freedom after six months to any slave brought into the state by an owner establishing residence.⁹ Yet like most laws, it had its loopholes. French islanders also had the advice of Philadelphia's transplanted Frenchman, the rising merchant Stephen Girard. Girard himself had lived in St. Domingue, his brother owned a plantation there with fifty slaves, and Girard had become the city's most important conduit to the sugar- and coffee-rich French colony. When M. Aubert, his trading partner asked whether there would be any difficulty in bringing his personal slaves to the United States, Girard assured him: "you will have an absolute right to dispose of them as slaves for the space of six months counting from the day of your arrival in this city. After that time they will be free unless you have made some arrangement with them by which they bind themselves to serve you for a certain limited time."¹⁰

Apart from the trickiness of dealing with their chattel slaves, white Saint Domingans had many reasons for seeking refuge in the Quaker city. They knew that Philadelphia was the foremost center of French culture in the United States. It hosted hundreds of refugees from revolutionary France (later including future king Louis Philippe and his two brothers) and was a city where French influence extended even to the boarding house where Vice-President John Adams and members of Congress lived under the genial hospitality of Monsieur Francis. Moreover, the French Minister to the United States, Citizen Genêt, represented the revolutionary government in Philadelphia and was seen as a potential benefactor. Also, the French islanders, both planters and merchants, had longstanding ties to Philadelphia's merchants who imported much of the sugar and coffee consumed in Pennsylvania from Saint Domingue. It is not surprising, then, that the French refugees regarded Philadelphia as a Noah's ark in a terrible storm.¹¹ By 1793, it became the center of French refugee life in America.¹²

Slave-owning French islanders, most of them royalists at heart, received the warm welcome they hoped for. Invited to the sumptuous gatherings of the high-flying Philadelphia aristocracy, they met in the mansions of Philadelphians such as Mr. and Mrs. William Bingham. At these soirees, the French émigrés had plenty of time to mingle with famous diplomat Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand; Volney, the polymath; French noblemen such as the Duc de Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Albert Briois de Beaumetz, and the Vicomte de Noailles; General Collot, exiled Governor of Guadeloupe; Jean-Nicholas

Demeunier, former President of the Constituent Assembly; as well as with President Washington, Vice-President Adams, and leading members of the United States Congress and the state government of Pennsylvania.¹³

By examining the passenger lists for ships arriving in Philadelphia from 1791 through 1794 much can be learned about nearly 800 black Saint Dominguais who arrived at the sides of their masters and mistresses.¹⁴ Augmenting the city's black population by about 25 percent, they would come face-to-face with resident African Americans. Lacking documentary evidence, the character of these encounters is very difficult to ascertain. However, the composition and condition of these French-speaking black migrants provide clues to their interaction with Philadelphia's black residents.

A small stream of émigrés from France had been arriving in Philadelphia since the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, but for several years the ships from the French West Indies unloaded only sugar and coffee at the Delaware wharves.¹⁵ That changed in the spring of 1791 after the National Convention in Paris shocked Caribbean planters with a decree enfranchising propertied free blacks born of free parents. On May 19, 1791, waterside Philadelphians watched fifteen Saint Domingue refugees step off Captain Robert Lillibridge's sloop *Charming Sally*. Little could they know that this was the advance guard of more than 3,000 French-speaking islanders who would flood the city over the next thirty months. Five more ships brought in 39 passengers in the next six weeks. From July through December 1791 eight more merchantmen with 82 passengers reached the Delaware docks, including Girard's *Polly* which arrived on November 5 with eight refugees.¹⁶

By spring 1792, the spreading rebellion convinced more white Saint Dominguais to look elsewhere for the future. Nine vessels arrived in March and April from Port-au-Prince and Le Cap Français with 37 passengers. In May 16 ships with 179 refugees sailed up the Delaware River. From June through August another 24 merchantmen disgorged 244 Saint Dominguais. Then a massive slave rebellion in Saint Domingue's Plaine du Nord in late August 1792 spread to the south and west provinces of the island and brought Le Cap Français under tremendous pressure. In the ensuing struggle for power among slaves, white provincials, and the *gens de couleur*, white Frenchmen uneasily held their ground, hoping that concessions to the free mulatto population would help them squelch the furious black insurgency.¹⁷ While some took courage from the arrival of three Commissioners and 6,000 French troops dispatched by the National Convention in Paris in September 1792 to restore order in Saint Domingue, many threw in the towel. Between September and November, 21 ships bearing 114 passengers docked in Philadelphia.¹⁸ For the next four months, during the winter season, the number slacked off with only ten ships carrying 40 passengers arriving. Philadelphia by now had received 739 San Dominguais.

By the time news reached Saint Domingue that revolutionary France had declared war on England and Holland in February 1793 and on Spain a month later, the world of white Saint Domingans was careening toward utter collapse. In May 1793, Le Cap Français was awash in blood as the royalist city's merchants struggled with Sonthonax and Polverel, the Commissioners of the French revolutionary government; as sailors of the French fleet in the harbor battled free mulattoes; and as the grip of nearby black insurgents on the Plaine du Nord waxed and waned. Fifty-one American merchantmen, carrying 289 whites, four free blacks, and 135 slaves, sailed into Delaware Bay in May and June. Included were Girard's *Sally* and *Polly*, bringing nineteen passengers who clambered ashore to see Philadelphia for the first time.¹⁹

These were the lucky ones—at least those who were white—because they barely escaped the bloodbath on June 20-22. When General Francois Galbaud led a counter-revolutionary movement of local whites with the support of 2,000 mulatto troops on June 10, the city descended into wanton killing. One witness described how “whites destroyed whites and blacks destroyed blacks throughout the night, and one constant and incessant firing of musketry, with incessant roaring of cannon, was heard in every direction and even at our own door till daylight.”²⁰ Resisting the newly-arrived General Galbaud on June 21, Commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel promised freedom to all insurgent slaves outside the city who would fight for France's revolutionary government. Pouring in from the Plaine du Nord, the black rebels fell upon whites and mulattoes alike. “A great brightness lit the black skies,” wrote one French observer. “From the summit of the mountains down the road to the plain, came immense hordes of Africans. They arrived with torches and knives and plunged into the city. From all sides flames were lifted as in a whirlwind and spread everywhere.”²¹ An American sea captain thought only one-fourth of the city remained by the end of June and was “entirely deserted by the white inhabitants, who had fled in every direction to avoid the melancholy scene.”²² Another French observer wrote: “For four days and nights we watched the fire consume this rich and famous city, the glory of the French colonies . . . During the first two days we did not know the meaning of this terrible spectacle. Deep in our own thought, therefore, we whites, mulattoes, and free negroes who made up the post instinctively ranged ourselves by colors—each against the others, each prepared to sell life dearly.”²³

Thousands of whites, with as many slaves as they could control, frantically sought room on French naval vessels and 137 square-rigged merchantmen in Le Cap Français's harbor. Most of the flotilla headed for the Chesapeake Bay where they disembarked about two thousand passengers in Norfolk. Fifty-three of the ships proceeded up the Bay to Baltimore, depositing another one thousand whites with half as many slaves.²⁴ Hundreds of others took passage for Charleston and New Orleans in ships equipped for cargoes of sugar and

coffee but fitted out in makeshift fashion to accommodate human cargo. Still others fled the burning city on ships bound for Philadelphia. In three days, from July 8-10, seven ships arrived with 97 whites and 56 blacks. In the next three weeks, fifteen merchantmen dumped another 405 whites and 148 blacks ashore.²⁵

Through August and September of 1793 still more arrived—682 whites and 193 blacks or mulattoes. Most arrived not from Port-au-Prince and Le Cap Français but from other ports to which the white French islanders had fled with such slaves as they were able to control. There they found American ships to whisk them to the United States.²⁶ In the scramble for sea passage to North American seaports, these French families arrived with many fewer enslaved Africans. Before the destruction of Le Cap Français on June 20-22, 660 white refugees and 352 slaves disembarked in the city. Thereafter those reaching Philadelphia for the remainder of 1793 included a smaller ratio of slaves—998 whites and 275 slaves. This probably reflected the difficulty of white masters in restraining their slaves from joining the black insurgents, who controlled Le Cap Français and the Plaine du Nord almost entirely by the end of June and the utter chaos in Le Cap Français when burned-out whites were leaping into the harbor to save their lives.²⁷ Girard's correspondents described the terrified French scurrying to escape the sacking of their opulent colonial city. Asking Girard for a loan, one described fleeing "with an ordinary duck coat and trousers that I happened to have on at the time. I abandoned 30 negroes and my place in order to save my life." Another related that "we have been forced to take ship without a moment's reflection and with nothing but the clothes we had on our backs. . . . We had to abandon our oldest brother, the mother-in-law of our M. DuBourg, Sr. and three children of our sister Madame De Bonneze, Jr. who had wandered about in the hills near the city." Still another wrote that he arrived in Charleston "almost naked, with my wife and children whom I saved from Le Cap. . . . The draft which I enclose and the schooner which I bought here are the only resources which I have left after 26 years of labor in San Domingo. . . ."²⁸

After the peak months of emigration from Saint Domingue passed in September 1793, the flow of refugees to Philadelphia receded. The British invasion of Saint Domingue, giving the surviving white Frenchmen some hope for the future, stanching the exodus. Word of the murderous yellow fever epidemic, which killed at least 140 Philadelphians in August, more than 1,400 in September, and 4,400 before it exhausted itself in November, also warned off many others who might have chosen Philadelphia.²⁹ Still, 21 merchantmen brought in 266 whites and 90 blacks in October and November. Then, during the winter months, small ships deposited 52 whites and 15 blacks. By April 1794, the water-bourne migration was nearly at an end. More than 3,000

Saint Dominguans had walked ashore in Philadelphia, and at least 848 of them were of African extraction (Table 1).

Table 1: French West Indies Arrivals in Philadelphia, 1791-1794

Year	Number of Ships	White Passengers	Free Negroes	Slaves	Total
1790	6	2			2
1791	13	[93]		[31]	124
1792	74	[449]	1	[149]	599
1793	158	1,659	29	629	2,317
1794*	13	33	2	7	42
Total	262	2,236	32	816	3,084

*Does not include arrivals after April 28, 1794 when extant passenger lists end. Extrapolated figures in brackets extend the ratio of black and white passengers from October 1792-April 1794 to the pre-October 1792 data. A small stream of French slave owners made their way to Philadelphia, either directly from Saint Domingue or from other American locations, over the decade. The PAS Manumission Books record the release of 65 slaves by fifty owners between 1796 and 1810.

Who were the hundreds of black Saint Dominguans arriving in Philadelphia? One historian of the exodus believes that mostly creole and loyal household slaves arrived on American shores.³⁰ By combining the passenger lists submitted to the Port Officer in Philadelphia and the manumission and indenture records of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, we can test this hypothesis and arrive at an approximate profile of the black émigrés that suggests otherwise. First, the passenger lists show that they were overwhelmingly enslaved, with only about thirty of 848 black Saint Dominguans arriving as free Negroes. Though the 28,000 free blacks of Saint Domingue fought bloodily against the insurrectionist slaves on many occasions, few of them abandoned the island to judge by their minuscule flow to Philadelphia. Second, the black émigrés were about equally divided by gender and were mostly children or young adults.³¹ As shown in Table 2, males were concentrated between age nine and twenty and females between age nine and twenty-nine. The median age for males was 14.1 and for females 15.5. Especially notable for their absence are adult males. Less than one sixth were twenty-one or older, suggesting that most young and middle-aged men had escaped their masters or that their owners were unable to wrestle them aboard the ships bound for North American ports. The larger number of female slaves in their

teens and twenties can perhaps be accounted for by their greater difficulty, with young children under their care, in joining the black insurgents and perhaps in some cases the willingness of their masters and mistresses to transport their female slaves' infants with them to Philadelphia.³²

Table 2: Age and Gender of Manumitted French Slaves, 1791-1804

Age	Male	Female	Total
0-2	5	9	14
3-4	4	4	8
5-6	7	6	13
7-8	14	13	27
9-10	24	23	47
11-12	37	30	67
13-14	58	53	111
15-16	51	70	121
17-18	43	48	91
19-20	27	31	58
21-22	16	15	31
23-24	5	8	13
25-29	6	12	18
30-34	3	6	9
35-39	4	5	9
40-49	1	2	3
50+	2	0	2
No age given	8	9	17
Total	315	344	659

Third, the black Saint Dominguans arrived in Philadelphia as fragments of enslaved families. Their age composition alone signifies this. The startling absence of children under ten indicates that many fleeing slave owners ruthlessly left enslaved black infants behind, though from the master's and mistress's point of view the liquidation of their assets by black insurgents made it unthinkable to entertain the notion of supporting unproductive slaves. The extent of this paucity of infants can be seen in a recent study showing that more than 320 children below five years of age were present for every thousand women aged 15 to 44 on Saint Domingue plantations, whereas in the Philadelphia refugee contingent the figure was 112 young children per thousand child-bearing women.³³ At the other end of the age spectrum, the remarkable

absence of slaves over age 24 shows that few slave families were brought to Philadelphia intact. Among the manumission papers recorded by the Abolition Society, only a handful show young children still attached to their mothers and virtually none accompanied by fathers. Among the 24 masters and mistresses who brought four or more slaves to Philadelphia, only three arrived with what appears to be a two-headed slave family. Five others brought slaves where a mother and at least one child were still united.³⁴ The black Saint Domingans, we might say, came overwhelmingly as parentless children and childless parents.

That mostly shards of slave families arrived in Philadelphia is also discernible by the small number of slave owners stepping ashore with more than several slaves. Madame Chambrun and her daughter arrived with eight slaves from Pt. Agan on May 18, 1793; Monsieur Loubieré chartered Nicholas Martin's schooner *Le Legeren* to bring his sixteen slaves with him to Philadelphia just after the conflagration at Le Cap Français; Madame Godet arrived from St. Kitts with seven slaves on August 22, 1793; Mademoiselle Charlotte Ladie freed Julie, age 16 and four males age 12, 14, 16, and 17.³⁵ Jean Baptiste Reynard Barbarian arrived from St. Marc with 23 slaves in Philadelphia, none of them older than 19 and three-quarters under 17. But these were exceptions. Of 310 manumitting French slave owners, 185 (60 percent) owned only one slave and another 97 (32 percent) possessed only two or three slaves. For fleeing slave masters with large numbers of slaves in tow, slave territory lay close at hand across the Delaware River in New Jersey, twenty miles south in Delaware and Maryland, or in Virginia, South Carolina, or Georgia.³⁶

The age composition and fractured family structure of the arriving slaves taxes the notion that slaves arriving from Saint Domingue came as loyal domestic servants. Whatever allegiance may have existed must have been severely compromised by the nature of the flight from the smoldering island. In a few cases, the manumission papers signal some allegiance to masters or some humane commitment on the slave owner's part. For example, François Testas freed seven slaves outright, including Joseph L'Esperance, age 55; Pelagie, age 45, presumably his wife; and Joseph's two sons, Pierre Paul Dondont and Jacques Geraud, age 22 and 20 respectively. John Baptist, age 35, may have faithfully served his master Antoine Etienne Rouotte, Chancellor of the Superior Council of Le Cap Français, and thereby received unconditional freedom.³⁷ A few slave owners specifically mentioned an emotional bond. For example, Laurent DeSaxy emancipated Victoire, a mulatto woman, outright "in consideration of her having faithfully taken care of my child which I had entrusted to her and for having served me with attachment and fidelity."³⁸

Far outnumbering such slave families were single boys and girls, some with brands burned into their chests that would hardly have inspired loyalty. Widow Cammeau Bourgne had no hesitation in selling the indenture of

thirteen year-old Julian “of the Congo nation” whose right breast was burned with LR. Similarly, Bernard Sallenave, freed 12-year old Arsenne, a girl, and 12-year old Placide, a boy, each with BSA burned into their chests, indentured them immediately, and then sold their indentures. The brothers Moline sold the indenture of their slave Lundy “of the Senegal nation” with MOLINE Fs “stamped on his breast.”³⁹ Even apart from such mutilated slaves whose loyalty must be suspect, the available evidence suggests that many of the black Saint Dominguais brought to Philadelphia were wrested aboard the flotilla of ships that left Le Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, and other ports after June 22, 1793 rather than loyally accompanying their masters up the gangplanks.

We can only imagine how arriving Saint Dominguais interacted with Philadelphia’s growing free black community. At first, concourse between them must have been difficult. Language was a formidable barrier since many of the young slaves, recently arrived from Africa, were still acquiring French and knew not a word of English. The youth of a majority of them—86 percent of the males and 85 percent of females under twenty one years of age—may also have made contacts difficult.⁴⁰ Yet the incentive to surmount these disadvantages was great because outwitting white masters and mistresses turned in part on making contact with the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and finding supporters among Philadelphia’s resident African Americans. For example, late in 1792, the earliest contingent of French slaves faced the possibility that they would not gain freedom at all because the white French émigrés quickly turned to the Pennsylvania legislature to seek relief from the 1780 and 1788 gradual abolition laws. A decade before, Philadelphia’s small free black community had to fend off a similar attempt to nullify the gradual abolition act of 1780.⁴¹ Now the arriving French slaves found their prospects of freedom jeopardized. The most knowledgeable among them may have believed that they were entitled to immediate and unconditional freedom under the general emancipation decree issued by the Jacobin commissioners in Saint Domingue for the North Province on August 29, 1793, an edict that was extended by the National Convention in Paris when it outlawed slavery in all French colonies on February 4, 1794. Rumors had already reached Philadelphia the previous August that the National Convention had abolished slavery. Philadelphia’s black community (which at this time had fewer than 100 slaves in a black population of over 3,000) no doubt welcomed this, though their attention may have been riveted on building the African church. Perhaps they were among the group of “citizens of color of Philadelphia” that drafted a letter to the National Convention in September 1793 praising the Commissioners in Saint Domingue for “breaking our chains” with “the immortal Decree [of August 1793] wiping out all traces of slavery in the French colonies.”⁴²

Addressing the National Convention in Paris was one way for “citizens of color” to build a case against the emigré slave owners in Philadelphia, who

emphatically denied that these French decrees extended to slaves brought to a neutral country. Noel Jean Baptiste, arriving from Port-aux-Paix, Saint Domingue with two adult female slaves, was the only slave owner entering Philadelphia who freed his slaves "by the Proclamation of General Liberty decreed by the National Convention of France."⁴³ Not at issue, however, were the provisions of the gradual abolition acts of 1780 and 1788. Six months before the Le Cap Français bloodbath of June 1793 émigré French slave owners already in Philadelphia were petitioning the Pennsylvania legislature for relief from the law.

The new black Philadelphians with French names had every reason to seek the support of the city's English-speaking blacks and their white supporters. The sympathy for the French émigrés was widespread enough that the legislature might have been swayed had it not been for the forceful protests of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Regarding it as outrageous to exempt French royalists who stood at the apex of the wealthiest and most brutal slave regime in the world from the first legislative act in the western world against slavery, Philadelphia Quakers and PAS officers beat back the opposition by mounting a vigorous argument before the legislature. They pointed out that just three years before, the revised constitution of Pennsylvania included the language that "all men are born equally free and independent, and have inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty."⁴⁴ The Abolition Society's work was rewarded not only with legislative denial of the French petitions but the recommendation of the legislature's committee to consider that slavery was "obviously contrary to the . . . Constitution of this state" and therefore ought to be abolished outright.⁴⁵ Ironically, the attempt of French slave owners seeking refuge from insurrectionist slaves almost precipitated the complete abolition of slavery in the place where they wanted the freedom to keep their slaves unfree. The Pennsylvania legislature, following up on the December 1792 committee recommendation, considered a bill in the summer of 1793 to abolish slavery entirely, only to disband in the face of the yellow fever catastrophe in late summer.⁴⁶

The legislative rebuff of the French petitions may have encouraged some white Saint Domingans to leave the city, which in any case was the intention of the French Benevolent Society organized in Philadelphia. But their slaves now had assurances that they could pursue post-slavery lives in Pennsylvania since the law prohibited their masters and mistresses from carrying slaves out of the state and blocking their legal right to emancipation beyond six months.⁴⁷

Thus more than 800 French Caribbean slaves began to work their way out of slavery's grasp in a city already containing more nearly three thousand free African Americans. The names of those released from bondage are recorded systematically in the manumission books kept by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. A decade before, the Society had begun copying the freedom papers

of every slave freed in Philadelphia as a safeguard against the loss of the valuable documents that would help protect them from re-enslavement at the hands of body stealers. Now the PAS scribes were busy filling the manumission books with French names.

While legally released from slavery, most of these Afro-Caribbean sojourners in Philadelphia were not yet truly free because nearly all of the masters and mistresses who manumitted them immediately signed their former slaves to lengthy indentures.⁴⁸ In this way former slave owners retained the labor of their slaves until they were 28 years old or, if they were older than age 21, for seven years, as allowed under Pennsylvania law. This assured French slave owners of commanding the labor of ex-slaves for much of their physically productive years, while obviating the need to support such servants after their physical resources dwindled.⁴⁹ Pulled by their desire to remain in Francophilic Philadelphia yet faced with losing valuable labor, the displaced French masters and mistresses made the best of their situation. A large majority simply retained the services of their manumitted slaves through indentures. Given the youth of most of the slaves, these indentures guaranteed many years of service. Only a very small minority of French slave owners resisted the opportunity to retain the labor of manumitted slaves. Among 659 slaves released between 1787 and 1810, only 45 received their freedom outright. Many French manumitters, particularly those in need of cash, recouped their investment in chattel property by quickly selling the indentures of manumitted bondsmen and bondswomen.⁵⁰

Not one scrap of documentary evidence has been discovered to gauge the feelings of the hundreds of young slaves as their masters and mistresses escorted them to the Philadelphia magistrates who certified their release from slavery and signed their lengthy indentures. The French visitor, François La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, described the process: "Having conducted them before magistrates, they engage them till the time when they shall attain the age of twenty one or twenty-eight; but the consent of the negro to this effect is necessary, without which they are declared free."⁵¹ It might be imagined that black Saint Domingans, arriving in a city filled with free African Americans, would have refused to indenture themselves to their former slave masters or mistresses. But the majority of incoming slaves probably believed that no other road forward was possible. Nearly two-thirds of them were sixteen years of age or younger, and most arrived bereft of any family members. Finding themselves in a new city, a strange culture, a severe climate, and a foreign linguistic environment, they must have viewed an indenture as an unwelcome but unavoidable transition from bondage to freedom. This would have been especially true if their masters promised good treatment and freedom dues at the end of their labor contract, though evidence of this cannot be recovered. Many may have signed the indentures sorrowfully, for they knew it meant marriage—and, for women, childbearing—would be foreclosed for most of

them until age 28, and their masters and mistresses could sell them to a new owner exactly as if they were slaves.⁵²

Such a bittersweet release from slavery was intensified in 1794 when the PAS lost a case before the Supreme Court where the plaintiffs argued that the same law governing the indenturing of white children ought to apply to blacks, that is, that boys should be bound only to age 21 and girls to age 18. Spurred by the large number of French slave owners binding their recently released slaves until 28 years of age, the PAS argued that such a practice was exploitative and illegal. The PAS's Committee of Guardians had persuaded many white owners in the greater Philadelphia region to indenture manumitted male slaves to 21 and females to 18, but they had almost no success with French manumitters, as the committee reported in September 1794. If the famous diarist Moreau de St. Méry was correct that "these unfortunates are usually so unhappy as indentured servants that they never draw a happy breath until they know the joy of being their own masters," we can imagine how the hearts of hundreds of French slaves sank when Pennsylvania's Supreme Court denied the plaintiff's argument.⁵³ As a result, scores of young black children released from bondage in Philadelphia in the mid-1790s would not become their own masters until the early 1820s.

If their circumstances dictated long periods of service for the *boundées*, as the French called them, it is clear from Philadelphia's Prisoners for Trial Dockets and Vagrancy Dockets that many manumitted French blacks did not serve as model servants. Like fractious servants from Ireland and Germany, whose names also dot the vagrancy dockets, the Saint Dominguan ex-slaves bore their yokes uneasily. For example, Monsieur DeCrabon had Adonis, "stubborn and refusing to obey his lawful commands," committed to the workhouse for thirty days in June 1792. Two months later, Monsieur Robersot du Desert charged Hector with absconding and embezzling twelve pounds of his master's money. In February 1793, Madame Magnan Cabeait threw up her hands and had all four of her servants—Andre, Amades, Bunno, and Zemire—committed to hard labor for thirty days for being "disobedient, stubborn, and untractable; and utterly refusing to obey their said mistress."⁵⁴

In the aftermath of the black Haitian onslaughts of 1792-93, the restiveness of black Saint Dominguans leaps off the pages of the vagrancy dockets. For example, Monsieur Lufferest, Consul General of France, had Louisville and Caesar committed to the workhouse without bread for "very insolent and unbecoming manner to the Mistress" in March 1792. Lufferest's successor, Monsieur DuPont, had his hands full with Briand, Marce, Chrete, and Morand, whom he charged with insubordination the next summer.⁵⁵ By spring of 1794, when the flood of slaves brought into Philadelphia in the previous summer would have been released from slavery in compliance with the law, the vagrancy docket began to fill up with recalcitrant servants in their first year of indenture:

Sophia absconds from Master John Baptiste Cercier; Crispin repeatedly absents himself from Monsieur D'Artois; Alexis runs away from Madame Chambrewin in Burlington, New Jersey and heads for Philadelphia; Peine Louis flees Master Payen Boisneuf; Antoine elopes from Monsieur Caradeaux and refuses to return; Claudine disobeys her master James Gardette and associates with "people of infamous character and in the night time admits them into her master's house without his leave and knowledge;" Magdalene flees her master, serves thirty days in the workhouse, and five days after being released is disobedient and refuses to serve Master Dietrich.⁵⁶

While most of the cases in the vagrancy docket document the insubordination or flight of servants, the Prisoners for Trial Dockets show more serious cases, particularly property theft—the classic crime of the poor and disaffected. Twelve such cases in 1795 and five in 1796 leave a trail of the rebelliousness that French masters faced from their ex-slaves. Many kept to petty theft such as Delphin, charged with stealing clothes from his master Fiette LaGarde; La Violette, held for trial for stealing a "Danish breed puppy"; and Françoise, servant of Pierre Antoine Brocuret, accused of stealing four cheeses. Others stole more grandly: Figaro entered the chamber of Fiette La Garde and stole a watch; Noel stood trial for stealing a gold watch and chain from John Baptiste le Roux; Amity stole a check for \$65 from Monsieur Liot; and Copraine pilfered banknotes worth \$900 from Monsieur Bugnaire. Though not common, others escalated their rebelliousness to assault; Ambroise violently abused and insulted Madame Marie le Seneschal; Brazile caused an uproar in the street; Clarissa assaulted her mistress Madame Boulogne with a knife "and other enormities"; and Madame Maria LeGrand charged Louis, a boy, with beating Louisa Paquet.⁵⁷

Others stole themselves. Even knowing that the law required their release from slavery within six months, many slaves took flight without waiting. Toupet fled from his French master several months after arriving in Philadelphia in an act of premature self-emancipation.⁵⁸ Philadelphia newspapers, including the bilingual French-American *American Star/L'Etoile Americaine*, carried at least 43 advertisements for runaway French slaves from April 1791 through 1797.⁵⁹ After agreeing to long indentures, others fled as well. Sophia fled her master Monsieur Gobert; Etienne called it quits from her master Marquis Namier; LaViolette, Azor, Jean Baptiste, and Magdalene took flight from master John Dietrick.⁶⁰ Overall, the Vagrancy Dockets list ninety French slaves and servants in Philadelphia among 244 cases of flight from masters between 1792 and 1797, indicating a truculence even greater than that of Irish and American-born African Americans.⁶¹

Indicating their knowledge of Pennsylvania's six-month law, others absconded when they thought they were held illegally in slavery. Francis fled Mr. Delarue in December 1792, alleging he had been the slave of Mr.

DeCaeadour but was “entitled to his freedom.” Azor, Elina, Figaro, Sanité, and Victoire, fleeing their masters and mistresses, argued similarly in 1794 and 1795. A year later, Olive refused to go with her master, Monsieur St. Sommières, and his family to Delaware, perhaps afraid that she would be sold south into slavery, once taken beyond the protective watch of the PAS.⁶² As late as 1797, Philadelphia magistrates held two French female slaves in prison for their own safety. Convinced that Louisa and Susanna had been in Pennsylvania “long enough to entitle them to their freedom,” the authorities put the women beyond the reach of their deceased master’s executors, who were trying to remove them from Pennsylvania where they could be sold as slaves.⁶³ In another case, more than a decade after her arrival, the black servant of Louis Tousard enlisted the help of the PAS to rescue her eight-year-old son, Azor, who Tousard bound to 28 years without her consent and now planned to take to Baltimore.⁶⁴

How did the arrival of French slaves affect Philadelphia’s black community, and how did the resident black Americans affect the Afro-Caribbeans? Much has been written about how their French *masters* influenced American culture—through men such as James Audubon, later the famous ornithologist, and the writer Moreau de St. Mery, and through French cuisine, fashions, literature, artists, dancing masters, and even wallpaper designers. But the effect of black Santo Domingans is far more difficult to trace, and our historical consciousness on this topic is only now dawning.

Some effects were immediate. Along with their masters, black Saint Domingans immediately added French as well as several African languages to the language of the streets. Philadelphia’s African-American community was already linguistically diverse because many former slaves had served under German and a small number under French, Spanish, and Dutch masters. Hence, bilingual and trilingual black Philadelphians were not uncommon. The Saint Dominguan Revolution replenished this linguistic diversity. In doing so, it also added to the stock of names that were commonly heard on the city’s streets and docks, in the markets and stores: Desirée, Télémaque, Sanité, Félix, Félicité, Zaire, Zéphir, Victoire, Figaro, Jean Baptiste, Cazimir, Noel, Dauphin, Gaspar, Azor, Geneviève, and so forth. But this was a linguistic two-way street. Many slaves changed their names after obtaining freedom—at the very least adding surnames but in many cases adopting English forenames—and in this self-redefinition they must have taken many cues from resident black Philadelphians.⁶⁵ Although learning English was a vital part of adapting to their new place of residence, black Saint Domingans spoke French in Philadelphia for many years, and they doubtless facilitated the French instruction taught to the children of well-do-do black Philadelphians such as James Forten.⁶⁶

For Philadelphia's three Catholic churches, all near the waterfront area where most of the French refugees found lodgings, the effects were more profound. These small congregations, especially St. Joseph's and Holy Trinity, were now almost instantaneously transformed into biracial and bilingual bodies of worshipers. To judge by marriage and confirmation records, St. Joseph's and Holy Trinity, especially the former, became the religious and social gathering places of Saint Domingue's former slaves, and it appears that many of them married former island-mates.⁶⁷ At St. Joseph's, Laurence Phelan's command of French made him particularly important as the black parishioners struggled to learn English.⁶⁸ Even twenty years after the uprisings of 1792-93 drove most of the white French colonizers out of Le Cap Français and other parts of the island, the records of St. Joseph's tell of black marriages such as that between Nicholas Laupair and Anisette Auguste, witnessed by Joseph Clause Barras, Jean Michel, and Marie Claude; or the marriage of Christophe Antoine and Marie Thérèse Princesses witnessed by Monique Jean and Marie Charlot.⁶⁹ Dozens of such marriages between French-named partners conducted before witnesses with French names, indicate a strong degree of solidarity and language maintenance well into the nineteenth century among the black émigrés of the early 1790s.

Saint Dominguan black refugees also influenced the economic and social life of Philadelphia, but during long periods of indentured service most of them had to watch and wait, learning, it would seem, from the success of black businessmen such as James Forten. For the small number of black émigrés who came as *gens de couleur* or were freed outright, at first the quest for economic security went hard. Perhaps seventy in all, it was these free French-speaking blacks to whom a Philadelphia newspaper referred in 1797, just four years after the main influx of Santo Dominguais: "the most afflictive and accumulated distress" in Philadelphia was to be found among two recent groups of immigrants—"the Irish emigrants and the French Negroes."⁷⁰ Juliet, one of the free black French émigrés, had been in the city of freedom for only months before she was obliged to indenture her seven-year-old daughter Magdalen for eleven years to a white French refugee. At least Juliet's term would end at age eighteen instead of age 28, and her indenture specified five quarters of schooling while allowing no transfer of the child to another master without the mother's consent.⁷¹

By the early nineteenth century, when scores of former French slaves had fulfilled their indentures, many secured a foothold in the city's economy. The annual city directories from the 1790s through the 1820s, which designate black Philadelphians and give their residence and occupation, yield evidence that many of the Caribbean black refugees gradually became successful entrepreneurs in Philadelphia. The degree of success cannot be systematically traced because many black émigrés from the Caribbean Anglicized their

names—or had them Anglicized by census takers whose records provided the raw material compiled by publishers of city directories. Nonetheless, the black refugees clearly made substantial contributions to the self-employed black middle class that emerged in the early nineteenth century. For example, John Baptiste and Peter Augustine became food caterers of renown, challenged only by the near legendary Robert Bogle, who for years served at the homes of Philadelphia's wealthiest families. Saint Dominguan caterers, in demand among both white and black Philadelphians, prepared and served food and libations at a black marriage, funeral, or dance on one night and a lavish ball or fête for foreign dignitaries hosted by wealthy white Philadelphians on the next. Their descendants have carried on the tradition to the present day. The successful beer bottler Robert Montier and the carter John Volair were also Saint Dominguans. So was Arthur Fausett who, while listed as a laborer in the city directories of the early nineteenth century, accumulated real estate and started a Philadelphia family that would produce two of the noted black intellectuals of the twentieth century—Arthur Fauset, pioneering African-American sociologist and his sister Bessie Fauset, an important writer of the Harlem Renaissance. Joseph Cassey, part of the French West Indian migration, made a fortune in Philadelphia as a wigmaker, hair dresser, perfumer, money lender, and real estate investor. About 65 black Philadelphians with French names appear in the 1811 directories with occupations ranging from confectioner, cigar maker, oysterman, mariner, jeweler, and tinplate worker to barber, shoemaker, shingle shaver, chimney sweep, and boardinghouse keeper. Among the women were fruiterers, seamstresses, and laundresses.⁷²

Until more research is done, the reasons for what appears to be the relative success of the Saint Dominguans can only be hinted at.⁷³ First, most of the black émigrés were from Le Cap Français, Port-au-Prince, and other towns and consequently were accustomed to urban commercial life, unlike so many of the released slaves from Philadelphia's hinterland and from the South who migrated to the city in this period. Second, most had been domestic servants with middling to well-to-do French masters and mistresses. This may have allowed many of them to acquire literacy, and it also spared most from the frightful impairments of body, mind, and spirit that afflicted so many of the enslaved Africans who worked in the deadly regimen of sugar and coffee production.

Finally, the influence of Saint Domingue on the political consciousness of Philadelphia's black community needs to be considered. However, the matter must also be studied with regard to how black revolution in the Caribbean affected white consciousness concerning the role of free blacks in white northern society during the years of the early republic. This, like so much else in early black urban history, is difficult to trace. Yet clues abound.

Although the issue of slave rebellion in Philadelphia was largely irrelevant—by 1797 all but a handful of slaves had been freed—the issue of black resentment and assertiveness was highly pertinent. In the early stages of the Haitian insurgency, many white Philadelphians fully endorsed black revolution. When the state's legislature considered sending appropriating money for the relief of beleaguered white planters in 1791, one legislator huffed that "it would be inconsistent on the part of a free nation to take measures against a people who had availed themselves of the only means they had to throw of the yoke of the most atrocious slavery." Black Philadelphians must have applauded his statement that "if one treats the insurrection of the negroes as rebellion, what name can be given to that insurrection of Americans which secured their independence?"⁷⁴ A year later, with white French planters losing their grip, Philadelphia's *American Museum* similarly supported the breaking of slavery's chains. The black Saint Dominguans were "asserting those rights by the sword which it was impossible to secure by mild measures." Americans who fought their own Revolution should "justify those who in a cause like ours fight with equal bravery."⁷⁵

However, the influx of black Saint Dominguans in the summer of 1793 muffled the anti-slavery voices and marked the beginning of a disavowal of black independence that would characterize white American opinion for many decades.⁷⁶ When three slaves set a fire in Albany, New York in November 1793 that destroyed 26 houses and incinerated an estimated £100,000 of property, newspaper reports spread the word and associated black arson with the Caribbean overthrow of white rule.⁷⁷ Many whites in northern cities began to fear that the contagion of liberty originating in Saint Domingue was transforming all blacks, free as well as slave, into internal enemies.

By late 1796, an outbreak of fires up and down the seaboard intensified these fears. On November 29, fire raged through Savannah, destroying about two-thirds of the city in probably the worst urban conflagration known on the continent. On December 9, a fire in New York City destroyed about fifty buildings with damages running to a million dollars. "Tis really a serious consideration, the many terrible fires that have lately occurred in several different cities and towns &c. on this continent," wrote Philadelphian Elizabeth Drinker in her diary.⁷⁸ But this was only the beginning. On December 18, arson erupted in Philadelphia, and a day later a report arrived that New York City's Common Council offered five thousand dollars for discovering the "incenderies" setting new fires after "the great conflagration" of December 9.⁷⁹

White urban dwellers soon connected these terrifying blazes to the insurrectionary spirit of Saint Domingue. In Charleston, white authorities suspected a series of fires in June 1796 to be the work of "French Negroes" who "intended to make a St. Domingo business of it."⁸⁰ A few months later, in New York City, newspapers implicated "French negroes" for a series of fires.⁸¹

Distressed by the many cities “lately conflagrated by fire,” Elizabeth Drinker wrote in her diary that December there was “reason to apprehend that some of those fires took their rise from the incendiary proceedings of evil disposed persons, a combination of whom we are inform’d exists, by frequent communications between the Cities of Philadelphia, New-York, and Baltimore, and perhaps throughout the seaports of the union.”⁸² Like many other white urban dwellers, she trembled at the report that a conversation had been overheard between two French and three American blacks in New York City about torching the urban centers of slaveholding Americans from north to south. An attempt to disprove the report by “A Citizen but no Alarmist,” who complained that the story of the plot had been “servilely copied into every newspaper,” had little effect.⁸³ Further concern arose upon hearing from Baltimore, as 1796 ended, that “repeated attempts have been made by individuals to burn the town,” that city authorities had arrested a black woman who confessed that she set her master’s house on fire in retaliation for brutal treatment, and that almost daily “great numbers [of arsonists] are detected and confined for trial.”⁸⁴ By March 1797, one newspaper warned of cities torched by black Saint Domingans—“some of those missionaries of hell who have long made the southern States the scene of their incendiary efforts.”⁸⁵

Philadelphians tried to ward off black arson by beefing up night patrols. But nocturnal fire-setters were hard to catch. Fire broke out again on January 4, 1797 with circumstantial evidence of arson.⁸⁶ Six weeks later, an arsonist fired the house of Jolliff, Simkins, and Co. on Front Street.⁸⁷ Up and down the coast, towns large and small redoubled patrols. Reflecting on newspaper reports of fires in New Haven, Albany, Schenectady, Waterford, Boston, Hartford, New London, Norwich, Elizabethtown, Charlotte, Williamsburg, and Norfolk, Elizabeth Drinker copied into her diary from a New London newspaper report: “Never since the existence of the world has any nation witnessed the devastations of fire in so strikeing a manner as we do at present.”⁸⁸

In the minds of white Philadelphians, the image of black assertiveness was conjured up not only by repeated acts of arson but simply by the fast-growing number of free African Americans in their city. The arrival of hundreds of Saint Domingans was part of a rapid increase in the city’s black population, which doubled in the 1780s and then more than tripled—from about 2,000 to more than 6,500—between 1790 and 1800. The specter of black militancy also owed something to the far-flung black network of communications. Several hundred of Philadelphia’s free black males plied the seas in a period when a merchant ship without at least one black sailor was an oddity and about one quarter of all mariners shipping out of the city in 1803 were black.⁸⁹ Philadelphia’s trade with the West Indies was a foundation of the economy, and black sailors returned to the city almost weekly with news of black rebellion as it spread throughout the Caribbean. With two churches of their own, several

black schools, and a number of newly established mutual aid associations, Philadelphia's black community by the late 1790s was gaining internal cohesion and was well-informed of events at the smoking center of the Caribbean.

How touchy white Philadelphians had grown on the matter of black assertiveness became apparent in the summer of 1798, eighteen months after a wave of arson had alarmed city dwellers from New England to Georgia. On the eve of the British evacuation from Saint Domingue, which removed the last prop of the French slave system, most of the remaining French families, with slaves in tow, left the island. Four shiploads landed at Philadelphia in mid-June, and two weeks later other vessels arrived down river at the Delaware Capes.⁹⁰ "Considerable alarm has been raised at Philadelphia," one newspaper reported, "on account of a disposition manifested by the negroes on board of the vessels lately arrived there from Port-au-Prince, which the British evacuated, to mutinize, leave the ships, and march to Philadelphia."⁹¹ Wary of admitting another wave of French royalists amid the threatened war between the United States and France and alarmed at the arrival of French-speaking blacks infected with the virus of insurrection, Governor Thomas Mifflin prohibited the landing of "any French negroes." He requested authority from President John Adams to stop the landing of the French blacks in adjacent states and to prevent their masters from entering Pennsylvania as well.⁹² For the first time, Pennsylvania attempted to erect a barrier against incoming blacks.

The crisis over landing the last black émigrés from Saint Domingue dissipated after letters from the French émigrés, printed in the press, assured Philadelphians that only 55 slaves were aboard, that none were armed or had ever carried arms, and that their masters were no different than earlier French slave owners driven out of the smoking Caribbean by black rebellion.⁹³ Moreover, President Adams refused to cordon off the country to prevent the French contagion of black liberation from spreading. But fear of black militancy reappeared two years later, in 1800, when Gabriel, a slave in Richmond, Virginia, organized a full-fledged rebellion intended to trigger slave revolts throughout the South. Although Richmond authorities stepped in to nip Gabriel's revolt in the bud, Americans widely believed that the spirit of rebellion, born in Saint Domingue and nurtured by the Jacobin radicalism of the French Revolution, was still spreading and would leave untouched no part of the black population, slave or free, North or South.⁹⁴

White Philadelphians certainly had evidence close at hand to trace the rise of black assertiveness from the early 1790s forward. They could see that their city's growing black population was aware of the volcanic eruptions in the French Caribbean and of the spread of insurrection to Puerto Rico, Grenada, Jamaica, Venezuela, Louisiana, and other strongholds of racial bondage. It was also obvious that black Philadelphians linked their cause with that of fellow Africans who were creating the first black republic in the hemisphere. In 1794,

when Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, ministers of the city's first two black churches, co-authored a defense of black behavior during the ghastly yellow fever epidemic of 1793—itself attributed by many to French-imported germs—they included an explicit attack on slavery, the first penned by black Americans after the ratification of the Constitution. We can surmise that in part they were inspired by their knowledge of what was happening in Saint Domingue. Three years later, led by Jones, Allen, and James Forten, Philadelphia's successful black sailmaker, black Philadelphians for the first time petitioned the national government to end slavery and revoke the detested 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed claimants of fleeing slaves to seize their putative property without a court warrant.

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, black Philadelphians picked up the beat. In 1799, they dispatched another petition to the President and Congress calling for revocation of the Fugitive Slave Law. A year later, shortly after Jefferson won the presidency, Absalom Jones carried another petition through the black community deploring slavery and denouncing attempts to renew the slave trade in Maryland. The black petitioners asked Jefferson to ponder whether “the efforts of Men driven almost to desperation by deprivation of a right implanted by the Author of their existence . . . is either more atrocious or unjust than our Struggle with Great Britain for that National Independence to which we conceiv'd ourselves entitl'd.”⁹⁵ America's revolutionary credo, as in earlier black petitions, became the standard against which black Philadelphians judged their present state. Was not a government that “unjustly detain'd” blacks “under the Gallig Yoke of Slavery . . . contrary to the Declaration of Independence which expressly declares All Men to be Created equal”? But they had another standard of freedom-seeking, born in the Afro-Caribbean world to which Philadelphians, white and black, had intensely close links. The withdrawal of the British from Saint Domingue in 1798, which seemed to end forever the slave plantation system there, provided an epochal moment that black leaders, in whatever American city, could hardly have ignored.⁹⁶

By 1801, with the advent of Jefferson's presidency, the widespread white fear of black insurrection made it necessary for black petitioners to “totally disavow being concerned either directly or indirectly” with Gabriel's Rebellion in Richmond or with another insurrectionary outbreak at Patapsco, Maryland. But this should not be taken to indicate that black Philadelphians were not in political sympathy with these struggles. Indeed we may surmise that they saw their own struggles as one part of a multi-pronged attack against slavery throughout the hemisphere. That American-born black Philadelphians thought of themselves differently because of the Haitian Revolution, as more consciously a part of an Afro-Atlantic people attempting to overpower white supremacy, became manifest when in 1808 Absalom Jones and other black ministers in

Philadelphia began delivering annual thanksgiving sermons on New Year's Day, the date abolishing the American slave trade but also the date of Haitian independence in 1804. This black equivalent of the white Fourth of July was a way of expressing a feeling of diasporic peoplehood that in Philadelphia involved both black Saint Domingans and African Americans. It also served to remind whites that, since they would not extend the privileges that the Declaration of Independence had called inalienable for all human beings, black Americans must find a national day of thanksgiving and celebration that had relevance to their lives.

If white Philadelphians had suspected such a linkage in 1798 or 1800, their notions were confirmed on July 4, 1804. For years, Philadelphians of all classes and colors had gathered in the square between Fifth and Sixth streets facing Independence Hall, where the nation's birth certificate had been signed. There they feasted, toasted, and listened to harangues by politicians about the blessings of liberty and the prospects of national greatness. But on the evening of July 4, 1804 several hundred black Philadelphians, who had reasons not to commemorate the nation's twenty-eighth birthday during the day, celebrated Haitian independence, which had been accomplished earlier that year with the final expulsion of Napoleon's French forces in the last attempt to preserve the island's tottering slave system. Assembling in Southwark, the southern part of the city where many blacks lived, they elected officers and organized themselves into military formations. Then, armed with bludgeons and swords, they marched through the streets. Whites who crossed their paths were subjected to rough treatment, and at least once the black marchers entered the house of a hostile white and pummeled him and his friends.⁹⁷ We have no surviving evidence of who their leaders were or how they defined their goals. But we can be relatively certain that they were showing their frustration and anger with the rising tide of white racism, the increasing friction between free blacks and Irish immigrants for employment at the lower levels of the job market, and the growing white sentiment to pass discriminatory legislation that would seal the state off from incoming black migrants, fasten a special tax on black householders for the support of indigents of their race, and even force free black citizens to carry freedom certificates when moving about.⁹⁸

However the sources of their anger mingled, little doubt remained about their inspiration on the following night. Gathering after the workday ended, they formed again into their self-created military units and marched through the streets. As on the night of July 4, they terrorized whites who dared to stand in their way, this time, according to *Freedom's Journal*, one of the city's newspapers, "damning the whites and saying they would shew them St. Domingo." With slight rephrasing, Philadelphians might well have muttered the litany of Jamaica planters over the last decade: "Save us from the example of Saint Domingo and from the daggers of our slaves."⁹⁹

Race relations in Philadelphia worsened steadily during the ensuing decades as white hostility to blacks grew, as the energy of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society waned, as former leaders in the cause of biracial democracy abandoned their posts, and as Irish immigration increased. National leaders disavowed and attempted to undermine black Haitian independence.¹⁰⁰ But black Philadelphians never forgot Saint Domingue. During the 1820s and 1840s Haiti became the focus of emigrationist movements of black Philadelphians. After all, Haiti was the first place in the Americas where slavery had been outlawed entirely and the first black republic where full rights to non-whites took hold. In the 1820s, the black emigrationist movement was led by Richard Allen and James Forten, pillars of the African American community. To the end of his long life, Forten kept abreast of Haitian politics, receiving news directly from correspondents there. Though the several hundred black Philadelphians emigrating to Haiti became disillusioned, most of them returning home to Philadelphia, Haiti would continue to stand as a symbol of black autonomy and equal rights for many decades.

Notes

*Michael Zuckerman provided a valuable critique of an early version of this essay and Samantha Holtkamp rendered excellent research assistance.

1. "Address of the Representatives of the African Church," in *Extract of a Letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Philadelphia, to Granville Sharp* (London, 1792), pp. 6-7.

2. William Douglass, *Annals of the First African Church in the United States of America, now styled The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas* (Philadelphia, 1862), p. 11.

3. Organizers of the black church issued the plan on July 25, 1791; the city first heard of the August 22, 1791 slave revolt in Saint Domingue in mid-September. See Julius Sherrard Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (unpublished Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, 1986), p. 208.

4. Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), pp. 109-21; the quotation from Richard Allen is in *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* . . . (Nashville, 1960), p. 28.

5. Jefferson to Monroe, July 14, 1793, John Catanzariti, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 27 (Princeton, NJ, 1995), p. 503.

6. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, pp. 120-21.

7. Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the 18th Century* (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 200, cited in Susan Janney Branson, "The Influence of Black Refugees from St. Domingue on the Philadelphia Community in the 1790s," paper delivered at the Association of Caribbean Historians, April 1, 1992, p. 9; copy of paper at Library Company of Philadelphia.

8. No accurate census of French West Indies refugees exists and most estimates are based on the chaotic flight of Saint Dominguais after the destruction of Le Cap Français in June 1793. The commonly cited estimate of 10,000 is most likely considerably short of the total number.

9. In describing the arrival in Hampton Roads, Virginia of a flotilla of 113 sail from Saint Domingue in July 1793, the famous diarist Moreau de St. Méry noted that hundreds of those who arrived with slaves took up residence in Norfolk because they knew that "the laws of Virginia permit slavery." Kenneth Roberts

and Anna M. Roberts, *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey [1793-1798]* (New York, 1947), pp. 49-50.

10. Quoted in John Bach McMaster, *The Life and Times of Stephen Girard: Mariner and Merchant* (2 vols. Philadelphia, 1918), I, 132. McMaster's biography of Girard is a valuable source of information on the Saint Domingue rebellion and a mine of information on the arrival of French refugees. Unfortunately, letters quoted from the copious Girard correspondence are not footnoted or dated. Girard's letter books are at the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. Girard's advice, as French slave owners would soon discover, was not entirely accurate since once in Pennsylvania slave owners could not sell slaves outright, only "dispose of them as slaves" by indenturing them after giving them freedom and then selling their indentures.

11. "Les refugies francais marquants que Philadelphia renfermait, comme l'arche de Noe." C. A. Moré, *Mémoires de Comte de Moré, 1758-1837* (Paris, 1898), quoted in Frances Sergeant Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800* (Baltimore, 1940), p. 103.

12. Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States*, is the best book on the white refugee experience but offers almost nothing on black Saint Dominguais. Childs is emphatic that Philadelphia was the cultural center of French refugee life.

13. See "Aspects of Refugee Life in Philadelphia" (Chapter V) in Childs, *French Refugee Life*, for the most authoritative account of successful French assimilation in Philadelphia.

14. Captain's Reports to Health Officer, Sept. 30, 1789-May 3, 1794 list all ships entering Philadelphia with name of vessel, captain, point of origin, and number of passengers. Two "Registers of the Names of Passengers and Servants Arrived in the Port of Philadelphia . . . from Oct. 25, 1792 to April 28, 1794" give the names of each white passenger, including some free blacks, and specify the number of slaves brought in by each slave owner. All of these records are in Philadelphia Port Records, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pa. By the spring of 1794, the exodus of French islanders to North America tapered off and by the late fall of 1795 had nearly ended.

15. The Captain's Reports show that from Oct.

7, 1789 through Dec. 31, 1790, the six ships arrived in Philadelphia from the French West Indies carried only two passengers.

16. How many of the 136 Saint Domingueans arriving in 1791 were black cannot be determined because extant passenger lists do not begin until October 21, 1792. Philadelphians got chilling eyewitness accounts of the August 22 uprising on the large plantation of the Plaine du Nord by way of Stephen Girard's correspondents in Le Cap Français. "From Pt. Margot to Limonade, a level plain of about 20 leagues," wrote one, "these maniacs have set fire to all the plantations and massacred all the whites they could find. Words fail me in trying to describe all the horrors they have committed. . . . These brigands are too numerous for us to think of attacking them as they have forced all the laboring men to follow them, although against their wills. Those who attempted to get away have been massacred like the whites." Another informed Girard: "All the negroes are in revolt, many of them have been killed and the armed forces in pursuit of them are slaughtering them daily without suffering much loss themselves . . . [However], We are in a very bad way here. Some of the slaves in the mountains have revolted and a number of whites have been killed in various attacks. Our position will be dreadful unless we get help promptly." Quoted in McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 127, 132. For the *Polly*, see *ibid.*, p. 133. Girard sent the *Polly* back to Port-au-Prince on December 20, 1792; it returned to Philadelphia on May 21 with four passengers.

17. The best accounts in English are Thomas Oliver Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville, TN, 1973); Carolyn E. Fick *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville, TN, 1990); and C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963).

18. Jean Girard, Stephen's brother, reported from Le Cap Français in November 1792 of the growing discouragement of French colonials: "I must tell you that the colony is in as bad and deplorable a state as could be imagined. All the whites are disgusted and feel outraged by the vexations of the creatures who are now governing this wretched colony, and whom we tolerate in hope of at last coming into our own. But this will not be accomplished for many a day, for a third of

the troops are sick and the rest not much better." Quoted in McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 169.

19. McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 184-85; Passenger Lists, May 21, 1793.

20. Samuel G. Perkins, *Reminiscences of the Insurrection in St. Domingo* (Cambridge, MA, 1886), p. 37, quoted in Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, p. 70.

21. Althea de Puech Parham, *My Odyssey: Experiences of a Young Refugee from Two Revolutions, By a Creole of Saint-Domingue* (Baton Rouge, 1959), p. 90, quoted in Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, p. 71.

22. Newport *Mercury*, July 30, 1793, quoted in Ott, *Haitian Revolution*, p. 71. Stephen Girard heard from one of his merchant correspondents in Saint Domingue that after the firestorm of June 22 only 300 houses remained in Le Cap Français, all of them looted. L. Aubert to Girard, Stephen Girard Papers, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, cited in Childs, *French Refugee Life*, p. 50.

23. F. Carteau, *Soirees Bermudiennes: ou Entretiens sur les Evenements qui ont opéré la Ruine de la Partie française de Saint-Domingue* (Bordeaux, 1802), quoted in T. Lothrop Stoddard, *The French Revolution in San Domingo* (Boston, 1914), p. 221. For a vivid report from Girard's correspondent Monsieur Aubert on July 6, 1793 see McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 195-96.

24. Although many sources speak of "the French fleet" extricating the Saint Domingueans from the nearly destroyed capital city, the Dunkirk-like evacuation was mostly accomplished by a motley assortment of American and French merchantmen. Moreau de St. Méry reported that only two French ships-of-the-line and six small gunboats accompanied the convoy. *American Journey*, p. 50. The *Virginia Chronicle and Norfolk and Portsmouth General Advertiser* reported on July 13 that eight French gunships and 137 merchant vessels arrived in Hampton Roads. For the Baltimore arrivals, see Walter Charlton Hartridge, "The Refugees from the Island of St. Domingo in Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 38 (1943), 103-07; for those taking up residence in Norfolk see Thomas C. Parramore with Peter C. Stewart and Tommy L. Bogger, *Norfolk: The First Four Centuries* (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), pp. 102-18.

25. Most of the passengers arrived from Le Cap Français with only a handful from smaller Saint Domingue ports such as Port-au-Prince, Jérémie, St. Marc, and Aux Cayes, as well as from the nearby island of St. Thomas. The first ships to reach Baltimore arrived on July 9, while the first of the contingent sailing for Philadelphia arrived a day earlier.

26. Of the 27 ships arriving in August, eight were from Le Cap Français and three from Port-au-Prince; the other sixteen sailed in from St. Eustatia, St. Croix, St. Kitts, Antigua, and Providence. Twelve of the 31 ships arriving with French refugees and slaves from September through November sailed from English ports, especially New Providence on Providence Island and St. Croix. This became possible after the English invasion of the island on September 20, 1793. The authoritative account of the English invasion is David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue 1793-1798* (Oxford, 1982). For the island's port towns see Geggus, "The Major Port Towns of Saint Domingue in the Later Eighteenth Century," in Franklin Knight and Peggy Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Society, and Culture* (Knoxville, 1991), pp. 87-116.

27. Norfolk's mayor, seeking relief funds, reported that "Many were taken out of the water & thrown on board the vessels without clothes or any subsistence whatever." Quoted in Parramore, *Norfolk*, p. 103.

28. M. Losier to Girard, M. Goutier to Girard, Messrs. Dubourg freres & Carrere to Girard, July 1793, quoted in McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 197-98.

29. The standard account of the 1793 yellow fever conflagration is J. H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (1949; reprint Philadelphia, 1965).

30. Alfred Hunt, *Haiti's Influence on Antebellum America* (Baton Rouge, 1988), p. 40.

31. Gender can be determined on the passenger lists from the first names given for many of the slaves, but on the larger ships, such as the *Charming Betsy* arriving on July 25, slaves were lumped together in the captains' reports. Therefore, the age analysis is based on 659 manumissions of Saint Domingue slaves released within six months of their arrival in Pennsylvania. These manumissions are

recorded in Manumission Books A-F in the Papers of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The microfilm edition of the PAS Papers has been used for this essay. The Manumission Books are on Reels 20-21.

32. Of the 22 children under five listed in the PAS manumission books, six were under one year of age, indicating that their mothers were pregnant upon arrival in Philadelphia. For example, Agathe, slave of Jean Baptiste Reynard Barbarin from St. Marc, was manumitted on July 1, 1795 with her four year old daughter Claire and her 6 month old daughter Rose. Another of Barbarin's slaves, Marion, was freed at age fifteen and a half with her 3-month old son Victoire. Manumission Book C, pp. 31-32; Book B, pp. 262-65.

33. David P. Geggus, "Sugar and Coffee Cultivation in Saint Domingue and the Shaping of the Slave Labor Force," in Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan, *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville, VA, 1993), p. 91, Table 2.12.

34. Typical of the majority of slave groups of four or more were Annette Lachicotte's five slaves: Marie Rose, 18; Marguerite, 18; Zaire, 16; Egle, 14; and Dianene, 10; or Marie Jean Dunivier's five slaves: Celestine, 17; Celestin, 13; Madeline, 16; Lucille, 13; and Susanna, 19. Manumission Book C, pp. 169-70; Book D, pp. 42, 44.

35. Passenger Lists, May 18, Aug. 22, July 17, 1793; Manumission Book C, p. 200.

36. Barbarin's release of his 23 slaves is detailed in Manumission Book A, pp. 72-73, 81, 87-88, 97-98; Book B, pp. 262-65; Book C, pp. 31-32, PAS Papers, Reel 22.

37. Three additional slaves in the Testas group—Pierre, age 19, Modeste, age 22, and Prince, no age indicated—are not specified as the children of Joseph L'Esperance in Manumission Book B, p. 176, as are the two sons with full names. Testas freed his slaves in his last will and testament, signed July 13, 1795; there is no way of knowing whether he had promised freedom to his slaves as they boarded ship in Saint Domingue. The release of Rouotte's slaves is in Manumission Book B, p. 243. Most of the many slaves of Stephen Girard's brother in Saint Domingue fled their master, but Jean Girard wrote Stephen in 1791 that "I shall keep a following, for my personal service, of several negro servants whom I

believe are attached to me, both men and women." McMaster, *Stephen Girard*, I, 132.
38. Manumission Book D, p. 283.

39. Manumission Book A, pp. 160, 189; Book B, pp. 239-40. For free women of color branding their own slaves in Saint Domingue, see Susan Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Français," pp. 288-89 in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, IN, 1996).

40. Some of the manumission and indenture papers mention "of Mozambique nation," "of Senegal nation," "of Congo nation," and so forth. Given the ferocious slave mortality rate in Saint Domingue, it is reasonable to assume that a large fraction of teenage slaves were African-born and only recently brought to Saint Domingue. See David Geggus, "The Demographic Composition of the French Caribbean Slave Trade," in Philip Boucher, ed., *Proceedings of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Meetings of the French Colonial Historical Society* (Lanham, MD, 1990); and *The Making of Haiti*, p. 25 where Carolyn Fick estimates that "two-thirds of the . . . slaves in Saint Domingue were African-born" in 1789. However, domestic slaves, who apparently bulked large among the black émigrés from La Cap Français and Port-au-Prince, were more likely to be creoles. For domestic slaves in Saint Domingue, see Socolow, "Free Women of Color of Cap Français," and David P. Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in *More Than Chattel*, pp. 259-78 and 279-97.

41. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, pp. 62-65.

42. "Les citoyens de couleur de Philadelphie a L'Assemblée Nationale," September 24, 1793, in *Journal de Révolutions de la partie Française de Saint-Domingue*, quoted in Scott, "Common Wind," p. 282. This address anticipated the later proclamation of the National Assembly in 1794 abolishing slavery in all French colonies.

43. Manumission Book D, p. 235.

44. Francis Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies . . .* (7 vols.; Washington, D.C., 1909), V, 3099.

45. Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York,

1991), pp. 131-32.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 132. It is not clear why the legislature failed to take up the unconditional abolition bill again in 1794, but the answer may lie in the PAS's changed tactics in that year to obtain a judicial rather than legislative abolition of slavery.

47. Distributing \$14,600 raised in the summer of 1793, the Committee intended to subsidize the journey of 200 whites to France, 150 back to Saint Domingue (if circumstances allowed), and others to western lands. See Childs, *French Refugee Life*, pp. 65, 85. However, the 1788 amendment to the 1780 gradual abolition act specifically provided that "Slaves or indentured servants [were] not to be removed out of the state without their consent testified by two justices." *Laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania From . . . 1781 to 1799* (4 vols.; Philadelphia, 1803), II, 586-90. Some French slave owners may have secreted slaves out of the state, but the number was not large because this would have been brought to the attention of the Abolition Society, which served avidly as a watchdog on such evasions of the law.

48. The Abolition Society systematically kept records of these indentures through which this process can be minutely traced. The indentures studied here, from Indenture Books C and D, are on Reels 23-24 of the microfilm edition of the PAS Papers.

49. A discussion of the advantages of recapturing bonded labor in this way is in Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, pp. 173-82.

50. To take a few examples of slave owners converting chattel property to ready cash, see Louise Elisabeth Alexandrine Minette's assignment of indenture for Champaigne, age 14, to William Jones for \$320 five weeks after Madame Minette reached Philadelphia from Charleston in May 1795; and J. Philip Belzons's sale of the indenture of Florine, age 12, to spinster Loretta Welch on November 11, 1793 for fifty pounds. Manumission Book B, pp. 255-56; Manumission Book A, p. 157.
51. *Travels through the United States . . . 1795-97*, 2 vols. (London, 1799), II, 335. It is likely that the PAS counseled the young slaves to agree to indentures, although I have not found specific references to this in the PAS committee minutes. In citing indentures extending to age 21 or 28, Liancourt was misleading. Although the PAS argued on behalf of shorter terms of indentured service, a large majority of French

manumitters turned a deaf ear to their arguments.

52. St. Méry observed that "an indentured servant cannot marry without the consent of his master. If he does so, he must serve an additional year beyond the agreed term." *American Journey*, p. 296. For the life of indentured servants in Pennsylvania, see Sharon V. Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully: Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge, 1987).

53. Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, pp. 194-95; St. Méry, *American Journey*, p. 295; *Respublica v. Gaoler*, Jasper Yeates, *Reports of Case Adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania* (4 vols.; Philadelphia, 1871), I, 368-69; Report of Committee of Guardians, Sept. 25, 1794, p. 99, Minute Book, 1790-97, PAS Papers, Reel 6.

54. Vagrancy Docket, June 21, August 31, 1792; February 11, 1793, Philadelphia City Archives, Philadelphia. I am indebted to Billy G. Smith, Montana State University, for a computerized printout of the vagrancy docket entries.

55. Vagrancy Docket, March 18, August 31, 1792.

56. Vagrancy Docket: Sophia, March 15, 1794; Crispin, April 20, 1793, March 17, 1794; Alexis, April 7, 1794; Peine Louis, May 2, 1794; Antoine, June 23, 1794; Claudine Dec. 27, 1794; Magdalene, Aug. 13, 1795, Sept. 18, 1795.

57. The case of Clarissa is in Vagrancy Docket, Nov. 16, 1797; all the others are from the Prisoners for Trial Docket, Philadelphia City Archives: Delphin, Feb. 7, 1795; LaViolette, Sept. 7, 1795; Francoise, March 21, 1796; Figaro, Aug. 19, 1795; Noel, Jan. 1, 1798; Amity, Feb. 7, 1798; Coprairie, April 10, 1797; Ambroise, Sept. 3, 1795; Brazile, June 5, 1796; Louis, June 23, 1796.

58. Vagrancy Dockets, Nov. 7, 1793.

59. For example, *American Star*, March 4, April 1, April 10, May 1, 1794. Forty-three runaway advertisements, gleaned from Philadelphia newspapers, are reported in Nash and Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees*, p. 228, note 93.

60. Vagrancy Dockets, entries for Feb. 15, 1792; March 24, 1794; and Aug. 13, 1795. When John Louis Chamayou, gentleman of Port-au-Prince arrived in Philadelphia in 1796, his slave, Joseph, eighteen years old, immediately "absconded and remained absent

for a considerable time." Manumission Book D, p. 99.

61. This is based on an analysis of names that appear to be French and, in most cases, can be correlated with the PAS manumission and indenture books where the French slaves are easily identified. The ninety French absconders among all Philadelphia runaways (36.9 percent) can be found in the Vagrancy Docket entries from 1792 to 1797. Considering the flood of indentured Irish servants entering Philadelphia in the 1790s, this has to be regarded as unusual chafing under the conditions of indenture.

62. Vagrancy Dockets, Dec. 7, 1792; June 29, 1794; Aug. 1, 1794; Oct. 31, 1794; July 29, 1795; April 12, 1796. When their cases were brought before judges, Elina and Sanite were successful in winning their freedom.

63. Prisoners for Trial Docket, Sept. 26, 1797, City Archives, Philadelphia.

64. When the case ended up in court, the judge ruled that since Azor was born free, he was illegally indented to 28 years, rather than the 21 allowed for free-born children. The judge ordered Azor discharged, and his mother placed him with a new master. PAS Acting Committee Minute Book (1798-1810), pp. 10-12, entry for Sept. 20, 1810, PAS Papers, Reel 4.

65. For example, the slave Mars became John Mars as soon as his master manumitted him. (Manumission Book C, p. 52). Zanga became Henry Zanga in 1795 when his master, "minister of the gospel," freed him at age 12. (Manumission Book D, p. 488). Anthony, nineteen when manumitted by Joseph LaForrest, was "hereafter to be called and known by the name of Anthony Forrest." (Manumission Book D, p. 101). Calypso, born in Guinea, became Mary Claudia Calipso (*Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* XVII, 466 for baptism in St. Joseph's Church).

66. For the French fluency of Forten's children, see Julie Winch, *James Forten: A Biography* (forthcoming).

67. See, for example, the records of marriages and baptisms in "Sacramental Registers of St. Joseph's Church," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XV-XX (Philadelphia, 1904-09). The records of St. Mary's Church were destroyed, but this was principally the church of the immigrant Irish. For a discussion of voodoo in Saint Domingue,

see Fick, *The Making of Haiti*, and David Geggus, "Haitian Voodoo in the Eighteenth Century: Language, Culture, Resistance," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 28 (1991), 21-51. Widely practiced in Saint Domingue, voodoo played an important role in the black revolution. If brought to Philadelphia, voodoo left no traces that I have discovered.

68. Joseph L. J. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1909), p. 129.

69. *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, XX, 137, 139.

70. *Gale's Independent Gazetteer*, Jan. 3, 1797.

71. Committee of Guardians Minute Book (1790-1796), pp. 95-96 (August 18, 1794), PAS Papers, Reel 6.

72. Capturing the full range of black occupations requires using both *The Philadelphia Directory for 1811 . . .* (Philadelphia: James Robinson, 1811) and *Census Directory For 1811 . . . A Separate Division Being Allotted to Persons of Colour . . .* (Philadelphia: Jane Aitkin, 1811).

73. By 1811, most of the manumitted French slaves signed to indentures until age 28 in the mid-1790s would have left bound labor behind them. Because many must have died by 1811 and many others had Anglicized their names it is impossible to establish the number of black Philadelphians from Saint Domingue still living in the city.

74. J. P. Martin, "Rights of Black Men," quoted in Jordan, *White Over Black*, p. 378.

75. *American Museum*, 12 (November 1792), pp. 299-300.

76. For a case study, focused on the nation's third president, see Michael Zuckerman, "The Power of Blackness: Thomas Jefferson and the Revolution in St. Domingue," in Zuckerman, *Almost Chosen People: Oblique Biographies in the American Grain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 175-218.

77. For black assertiveness in New York, the Albany arson, and chilling reports spread up and down the Atlantic seaboard, see Don R. Gerlach, "Black Arson in Albany, November 1793," *Journal of Black Studies*, 7 (1977), 301-12, and Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (Athens, Ga., 1991), pp. 144-46, 155-56.

78. Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* (3 vols., Boston, 1991), II, 865-66. Drinker's diary, filled with reports on

fires and worries about them, is a good gauge of what Philadelphians heard about black aggression in other cities.

79. *Diary of Drinker*, II, 868-69; *Gazette of the United States*, Dec. 17, 18, 1796.

80. Scott, "The Common Wind," p. 290.

81. White, *Somewhat More Independent*, pp. 145-46.

82. *Diary of Drinker*, II, 869-70.

83. *The American Minerva*, Dec. 19, 1796.

84. On December 23, Drinker reported another costly blaze in Savannah; on December 26 and 28 she recorded news arriving that repeated attempts had been made to fire the cities of Baltimore and Savannah. *Ibid.*, II, 871-74.

85. *American Mercury*, March 6, 1797.

86. *Diary of Drinker*, II, 877; *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 5, 1797.

87. *Diary of Drinker*, II, 892.

88. *Diary of Drinker*, II, 893 (Feb. 25, 1797). Drinker reported new fires, with suspicions of arson, in New London, Boston, Elizabethtown, Norwich, and Norfolk in March 1793 and recorded a report from the latter town that "We sleep very little and our situation is distressing beyond conception." *Ibid.*, II, 895, 898-99, 900-01, 905.

89. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, pp. 136-37; Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), p. 156. For a more general account of the political consciousness of black mariners, see Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

90. The arrival of four ships on June 11 from Le Cap Français, was reported in *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, June 12, 1798.

91. [Newark] *Centinel of Freedom*, July 3, 1798. Philadelphians, according to this report, believed that "many of the planters with vast numbers of their negroes have left Port-au-Prince, and are on their way to America."

92. Governor Mifflin to President John Adams, June 27, 1798, in *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, June 28, 1798.

93. *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, June 29, July 2, 1798; *Brown's Gazette*, June 28, 1798.

94. For Gabriel's Rebellion and the Saint Domingue connection see Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel's Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993), pp. 45-48, 168-72; and James

Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion, and Identity in Gabriel's Virginia, 1730-1810* (New York, 1997), pp. 39-48.

95. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, pp. 186-89, where the quoted passages in this paragraph are cited.

96. See Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords*, pp. 39-46 for a discussion of how the Haitian Revolution served as "a powerful symbol of Black liberation and helped to transform 'frenchness' into a trope with which Virginians communicated ideas about freedom and revolution." The quotation is from p. 46.

97. *New York Evening Post*, July 10 and 12,

1804, reprinting report in [Philadelphia] *Freeman's Journal*.

98. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, pp. 172-81.

99. Two black Philadelphians, Benjamin Lewis and Simon Fox, were arrested in the incident but were later released. Prisoners for Trial Docket, 1802-05, City Archives of Philadelphia.

100. For full accounts, see Zuckerman, "The Power of Blackness," and Tim Matthewson, "Jefferson and the Nonrecognition of Haiti," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. 140 (1996), 22-48.