

and sixty percent of all the coffee consumed in Europe. This single colony at the time produced more sugar and coffee than all of Great Britain's West Indian colonies combined.

The society of Saint-Domingue was divided up between four classes of people. The first class was the grand blancs who were the class of rich white planters on the island. The second class was the petit blancs who represented the small planters and the poor white sector of society. The third class was the mixed-race mulattoes and free coloreds who owned and held land on the island. African slaves made up the final class.

Within this structure there was a significant amount of tension between all classes. The grand blancs held most of the financial power on the island. They refused to abide by the laws and regulations on the island set forth by the Governor and Intendant sent by way of France. They were located on the northern side of the island, which was the richest in terms of land and property. These groups held down to a slighter extent petit blancs, but on a larger scale the mulattoes, free coloreds and slaves.

Grand blancs yearned for a desire to have their own separate government. They felt that the French bourgeoisie interfered too often in their affairs on the island and with the amount of money they were accumulating from sugar cultivation they could afford to have independence from the authority of France. The Mulattoes shared the grand blancs yearning for absolute sovereignty from France because they owned land as well in Saint-Domingue. But they were treated like second-class citizens due to the black pigment in their skin and thus had no engagement with the higher rank and file of Saint-Domingue government. The slaves and petit blancs were on the same scale of society but the only exception was skin color. Petit blancs had a voice, albeit, a small voice in governmental affairs as opposed to a slave under the Code Noir of 1685 had rights but the law was more theory than practice. All of these roles in Saint-Domingue



Jean-Jacques Dessalines
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society would change once the French Revolution arose.

Prior to the French Revolution, the economy of Saint-Domingue experienced gradual growth due to exporting of dominant crops sugar and coffee. After the war, the colony underwent expeditious accretion. In 1767, it exported 72 million pounds of raw sugar and 51 million pounds of refined sugar, one million pounds of indigo, and two million pounds of cotton. The labor for these plantations was provided by an estimated 790,000 African slaves and the brutality they faced on a daily basis was inhumane. It was through this incomprehensible brutality that the only successful slave uprising took place.

The French Revolution had an incredible impact on the minds of the "gens de couleur" (colored people)



Saint Domingue Battle - Photo courtesy of Montages

