**Natchez in Saint Domingue, 1731-1791**

In 1731, a French army in colonial Louisiana and their Choctaw allies attacked Natchez towns along the banks of the Mississippi River, one hundred and seventy miles north of New Orleans. After days of battle, hundreds of Natchez fled the area but four hundred and thirty eight Natchez surrendered to the French, who then proceeded to enslave them and send them to Saint Domingue.[1] This paper explores the process of Natchez enslavement by the French and examines trace archival sources from Saint Domingue about Natchez and other indigenous slaves.

This paper comes out of my larger project on Natchez history, which is primarily focused on what I'm calling a Natchez diaspora spread across the colonial southeast. My dissertation research shows how Natchez communities stayed connected through an indigenous diasporic network in which they adapted to living with other Native Americans such as the Creeks and Cherokees during the eighteenth century.[2] While much of my study of the Natchez is about how they survived as self-identifying communities of Natchez people in North America to the 21st century, this paper focuses on the enslaved Natchez in Saint Domingue, who, over time, no longer identified as Natchez.

This study of the Natchez in Saint Domingue adds to our general understanding of the history of the French Atlantic, early modern slavery, and specifically to Natchez history. After hundreds of Natchez were enslaved and sent to Saint Domingue and never returned, the Natchez never forgot this injustice of French violence. Even in the late

[1] Charles E. O'Neill, ed., *Charlevoix's Louisiana: Selections from the History and the Journal of Pierre F. X. Charlevoix* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 121-122. The French enslaved a total of 438 Natchez but fifty-one Natchez died before boarding the boat bound for Saint Domingue. Exactly how they died is not noted, see: Unknown author, "Recapitulation of the Natchez who were killed…" 1731, ANOM, F3/24, 209-209v.

[2] Noel E. Smyth, "A Natchez Diaspora: A History of Indigenous Displacement and Survival in the Atlantic World," PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2016. 10169267.

eighteenth century, some Natchez in Tennessee requested the British superintendent of Indian Affairs to arm them so they could attack the French and take back their homeland.[3] The sense of loss for the Natchez is profound, both for the enslaved and those who escaped, and this sense of loss constitutes their own understanding of themselves in North America as survivors despite the genocidal violence of the French colonists.

In a more general context, the Natchez sent to Saint Domingue reveal that Europeans not only dispossessed indigenous peoples of their lands, they also stole indigenous bodies to feed the labor demands of the colonies. The story of European occupation and dispossession of Native American land, often through violence, is an established and familiar narrative in Native American history.[4] The connection between the dispossession of Native American land *and* the enslavement of Indigenous bodies for labor was integral to the making of the Atlantic World. Rather than thinking about Native American history as "outside" of developments in Atlantic World history (i.e. the continental perspective), the example of Natchez slaves in Saint Domingue is another example of how Native American slaves moved around the Atlantic World, and how their history was intertwined with larger historical processes beyond the continent of North America.[5] The impact and condition of violence in the enslavement of Native American

[3] John Stuart, letter to the Board of Trade, 1766, CO/323/24, UKPRO.
[4] The literature on this topic is vast. For a recent synthesis, see: Walter L. Hixon, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
[5] On Native Americans who traveled the Atlantic World as free people, see: Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000-1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 66; Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Matthew R. Bahar, "People of the Dawn, People of the Door: Indian Pirates and the Violent Theft of an Atlantic World," *Journal of American History* 101:2 (September 2014), 401-426. For more on the continental perspective, see: Paul W. Mapp, "Atlantic History from Imperial, Continental, and Pacific perspectives," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No 4 (Oct. 2006), 713-724. Peter H. Wood has also posited the of a "continental" approach in Peter H. Wood, "From Atlantic History to a Continental Approach," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 279-298.

bodies across the Americas is a recent trend in the scholarship.[6] There is also some new research being done specifically about the history of Native American slaves in the Caribbean, but this is the first study of Natchez slaves in Saint Domingue.[7]

This paper, then, contributes to our growing understanding of Native American enslavement in the Atlantic World and how the enslavement of Native Americans led to the creation of Indigenous Diasporas around the Atlantic, similar in some ways to the African Diaspora.[8] Similar to the concerns of scholar's of the African diaspora, the condition of the Natchez diaspora must be understood as shaped the broader conditions of slavery, imperialism and colonialism. Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D.G. Kelley argue that, "as a condition, [diaspora] is directly tied to the process by which it is being made and remade. In other words, the African diaspora itself exists within the context of global race and gender hierarchies."[9] The richness of African diaspora studies have shown that, "racial capitalism, imperialism, and colonialism—the processes that created

[6] For a recent review of this literature, see: Arne Bialuschewski and Linford D. Fisher, "Guest Editor's Introduction: New Directions in the History of Native American Slave Studies," *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 64, No 1 (January 2017), 1-19. See also: Nancy E. van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016); Margaret Ellen Newell, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of Ameican Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); Wendy Warren, *New England Bound: Slavery and Colonization in Early America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016); Alan Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire In the American South, 1670-1717* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Christina Snyder, *Indian Slavery in Indian Country* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); James Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Linford D. Fisher, "'Why shall wee have peace to bee made slaves': Indian Surrenderers during and after King Philip's War," *Ethnohistory* 64, no. 1 (2017): 91-114; Alejandra Dubcovsky, "Defying Indian Slavery: Apalachee Voices and Spanish Sources in the Eighteenth-Century Southeast," *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 75, No. 2 (April 2018), 295-322.

[7] Carolyn Arena, "Indian Slaves from Guiana in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *Ethnohistory* 64, no. 1 (2017): 65-90.

[8] Like other "middle passages", the Natchez slave diaspora adds to our understanding of historic processes of slavery, capitalism and the creation of the modern world, see: Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus, and Marcus Rediker, eds., *Many Middle Passages: Forced Migration and the Making of the Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[9] Tiffany Ruby Patterson, and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 20.

the current African diaspora—shaped African culture(s) while transforming Western culture itself."[10] Patterson and Kelley argue that the African diaspora is conditioned by "the same ideologies that forced so-called coolie labor from China and the Asian subcontinent to work on the plantations, mines, railroads of European empires and of the Americas." [11] I argue that the contours of Native American diasporas in the Atlantic were also conditioned by racial capitalism, imperialism and colonialism that shaped the African diaspora and the making of the modern world. And in this way, the same processes of European expansion, the slave trade, and emerging capitalism that devoured so many African lives also destroyed two to five million indigenous people from 1492 to the late nineteenth century.[12]

Finally, this paper argues that the existence of indigenous slaves in Saint Domingue and across the Atlantic suggests that there might be important indigenous contributions to African-American cultures developed in the Americas under slavery. Indeed, my project suggests that with future research, African diasporic cultures in some areas such as Saint Domingue, could be refigured as Afro-Indigenous diasporic cultures, particularly in Haiti.[13]

One of the conditions of Natchez enslavement in 1731 was the escalating level of violence in the southeast caused by the slave trade in Native peoples. To address the

[10] *Ibid.*, 14.
[11] *Ibid.*, 24-5.
[12] Bialuschewski and Fisher, "Guest Editor's Introduction," 2; Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, 9; Reséndez, *Other Slavery*, 5; van Deusen, *Global Indios*, 2. Linford D. Fisher is also the principal investigator currently compiling a database of enslaved indigenous peoples throughout the Americas (https://indigenousslavery.org/).
[13] Jack D. Forbes has argued that the "replacement of Americans by Africans and African-European mixed-bloods" was not accurate portrayal of the West Indies; a more likely scenario was that the African and Native American slave populations grew together over time, even though the nature of the documentary evidence makes his argument hard to prove either way. Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 269. My research supports Forbes hypothesis.

violence inherent in the colonial situation, I draw from the work of Ned Blackhawk, who uses violence as "both a subject and a method" for analyzing colonial contact zones. Blackhawk argues that Great Basin Indians existed within a Native world already transformed by European colonialism in North America before actual contact with Europeans in the Great Basin. The most important transformation colonialism caused in the region was the dramatic increase in violence due to slave raiding, disease, and land encroachment through European settlement and aggression. Blackhawk argues that "only through analyses of the shifting relations of violence that remade the mountain West during the Spanish colonial era" can one access post-contact great Basin history.[14] Much like in the Great Basin, European-driven "shifting relations of violence" among Native American groups transformed the Lower Mississippi Valley.

Europeans had enslaved indigenous Americans from when Columbus landed on Hispaniola to the nineteenth century and the combination of disease, enslavement and violence devastated indigenous peoples throughout the Americas.[15] During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the colonial southeast, the English demand for Native American slaves increased significantly and amplified the level of violence in the Lower Mississippi Valley. English traders and agents intentionally tried to instigate conflict between different groups of Native peoples in order to increase instability in Indian country, to secure the English foothold in the south, and to help pay for the South Carolina colony with profits garnered from the slave trade. André Pénicaut, a French

[14] Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5-10.
[15] For example, see the well-known chronicler of the Spanish enslavement of Indigenous people: Bartolomé Las Casas, *An Account, Much Abbreviated, of the Destruction of the Indies*, ed. by Franklin W. Knight (London: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003). See also: van Duesen, *Global Indios*; and Reséndez, *Other Slavery*.

carpenter who lived next to the Natchez in the early 1700s, related how the English "had incited the nations [of the area] to war among themselves so that by this means they might find a good number of slaves to buy and take back to Carolina."[16] Antoine de Lamothe de Cadillac, a governor of Louisiana, corroborated Pénicaut's account when he reported that English traders from Carolina were seen in the Louisiana colony and were trying to create conflicts between the French and their allies.[17] Indeed, French fears were accurate because the English were successful at sewing discord between Native American groups and reaping profits from the trade in Native American slaves out of the Lower Mississippi Valley. From 1600-1715, Alan Gallay estimates that the English purchased around six to nine thousand enslaved Native Americans from the Lower Mississippi Valley.[18] Due to the slave trade, the Natchez initially welcomed French colonists to the area in the early eighteenth century because the French supplied guns that could be used to ward off slave traders.

While the French in North America did not enslave or purchase nearly as many Native peoples as the English in the Lower Mississippi Valley, they were not innocent of the desire to duplicate the profits made by the British. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century, perhaps five hundred Native Americans from Louisiana and Canada had been enslaved and sent to Saint Domingue.[19] This is not surprising considering that even before the French established a permanent foothold in colonial Louisiana at Biloxi in 1699, French imperial designs included enslaving the Native peoples of the region for

[16] Andre Pénicaut, "Pénicaut's Narrative" in Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, ed. and trans. *Fleur de Lys and Calumet: Being the Pénicaut Narrative of French Adventure in Louisiana* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1988), 149.
[17] Caddillac's Memoir, May 13, 1710, ANOM, F3/241, 32-34.
[18] Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 299.
[19] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 61-62.

financial gain. In 1695, a letter by an unknown author to the Minister of the Marine promoted the enslavement and sale of Native Americans to help pay for establishing the Louisiana colony.[20] In the early years of the colony, the French had a policy of trading guns for scalps or slaves, although they preferred slaves to accumulate the labor needed to establish the plantations they desired. However, the French Crown only sent about twenty guns a year to offer in trade, so colonists in Louisiana could never acquire a large number of Native American slaves like the English.[21]

The French ability to enslave indigenous peoples in colonial Louisiana was also limited because most French colonists did not want Native American slaves on their plantations; instead, they preferred slaves taken from Africa. In 1706, the governor of Louisiana—Jean Baptiste le Moyne Sieur de Bienville—wrote to Jérôme Phélypeaux Pontchartrain—the Minister of the Marine and Colonies—that, "the colonists eagerly ask for negroes to clear the land. They will pay cash for them." The French preferred African slaves to Native American slaves because "the Indian allies of the French bring [Indian] slaves who are very good for cultivating the earth but the facility that they have in deserting prevents the colonists from taking charge of them."[22] Thus most French concessionaires wanted African slaves because they thought Native slaves could run away far too easily**.**

Due to concerns with enslaving the local Native population, various Louisiana officials wanted to replicate the English practice of exchanging Indian slaves from North

[20] Unknown author (Hubert?) to Council, 1695, duplicate of original letter, ANOM, C/13A/1, 32-39v.
[21] Gallay, *The Indian Slave Trade*, 310.
[22] Abstract of letters from Bienville to Pontchartrain, July 28 1706, ANOM C/13A/1, 524-544. "Les habitans demandens des Negres avec empressemens pour defricher les Terres. Ils les payerons argens comtans. Les Sauvages alliez des francois amenens des Esclaves quis on fors propres pour le travail de la terre mais la facilité qu'ils on a desertir empesche les habitants de s'en charger."

America for enslaved Africans from Saint Domingue and Martinique. In 1706, Bienville reported back to France that the "colonists ask permission to sell these [Indian] slaves in the American islands in order to get negroes in exchange since the English follow the same practice with the Indian allies of the French who are captured, and this commerce is quite necessary."[23] Bienville tried to encourage the establishment of a slave trade with the West Indies in 1708 when "a small French boat from Santo Domingo has arrived at this port to attempt to open a traffic in Indian slaves with the colonists at this place. I… proposed to them that they should bring us some negroes here for whom we would give them two Indians for one."[24] Despite Bienville's intentions, a steady slave trade where enslaved Africans brought from French sugar islands would be exchanged for enslaved Native peoples taken from colonial Louisiana never fully developed.

Some colonial leaders in Saint Domingue also sought to establish an inter-colonial trade with Louisiana, but one not so focused on slavery.[25] In 1731, Monsieur le Gentil proposed the creation of a trade with Louisiana from which they could export

[23] *Ibid.*, "Les habitants demandens permission de vendre des esclaves aux Isles de l'amerique pour avoir des negres en eschange. Les anglois ensemble mesme pour les sauvages alliez des francois quis ons pris, esc e commerce est tous a faire necessaire."

[24] Bienville to Pontchartrain, October 12, 1708, ANOM C/13A/2, 165-175. "Il'en arrivé à la Louisianne ou petis bastiment francois de la coste St. Domingue pour y negoires de la Sauvages Esclaves… et il luy a proposé d'apporter dans la suite des negres pour chacun desquels on donnerois deux sauages esclaves." For another, slightly later reference to the proposed trade of enslaved Native Americans for African slaves, see: Mandeville, Memoir on Louisiana, April 29, 1709, ANOM C/13A/2, 457-477.

[25] Many scholars have examined the connections between Louisiana and Saint Domingue during the colonial period. See Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Dawdy describes Louisiana as part of a "Mississippi-Caribbean World", 107-115. Others who have pointed to the connections between the French Caribbean colonies and Louisiana include, Jacques Mathieu, *Le commerce entre la Nouvelle-France et les Antilles au XVIII^e siècle* (Montreal: Fides, 1981) 6,15; Nathalie Dessens, *From Saint Domingue to New Orleans: Migrations and Influences* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2007) and Dessens, *Myths of the Planation Society: Slavery in the American South and the West Indies* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003); Caryn Cossé Bell, *Revolution, Romanticism, and the Afro-Creole Protest Traditions in Louisiana, 1718-1868* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997); Priscilla Lawrence and Alfred Lemmon, eds., *Common Routes: Saint Doimingue-Louisiana* (New Orleans: New Orleans Historic Collection; Somogy Art Publishers, 2006).

sugar from Saint Domingue and import wood and foodstuffs from Louisiana.[26] Three years later, the governor, Pierre the Marquis de Fayet, wrote in a letter that he sought to increase "seafaring knowledge between Saint Domingue and Louisiana" in order to facilitate more trade between the colonies.[27] During that same year, Monsieur Duclos, intendant to M. de Fayet, proposed a plan similar to Bienville's that sought to establish an official trade with Louisiana.[28] The fact that in 1734, Duclos proposed a very similar plan to the one proposed by Gentil in 1731 suggests that the plan still had not taken off by 1734.[29] While the French did not establish a steady slave trade between the Caribbean and Louisiana, the marginal trade that did develop clearly prepared the French to ship the enslaved Natchez to Saint Domingue in 1731 without much trouble.

In addition to the marginal trade between Louisiana and Saint Domingue, there is anecdotal evidence of enslaved Native Americans from North America in the French Caribbean. Indeed, it appears that enslaving and selling indigenous enemies to distant locations throughout the French Atlantic was a strategy that some colonial governors in North America tried to employ.[30] In a 1708 letter from Saint Domingue, the unknown author mentions that some Native American slaves from *Guyane* [French Guiana] were sold in Saint Domingue. It is unclear how many were sold and who bought them.[31] In 1719, two "*indienes du Mississippi*" [Mississippian Indians] arrived in Martinique. Since

[26] M. le Gentil to Council, September 23, 1731, ANOM, C/9A/35.
[27] Fayet to Minister of the Marine, August 24, 1734, ANOM F/3/270, 443-444. "*cabotage entre Saint Domingue et la Louisiane.*"
[28] M. Duclos to Council, July 5, 1734, ANOM, C9A/40.
[29] Napoleon's Bonaparte's vision for Louisiana, before selling the colony to the U.S., was to use the colony to grow supplies for France's Caribbean colonies rather than be supplied by the British North America. This is similar to the desires of the French colonial Governors as early as the 1730s. See: Dubois, "The French Atlantic" 144.
[30] This strategy was not used solely against Native Americans. The French sometimes also forced white criminals to relocate to different colonies in the French Atlantic. For example, in 1721, a convicted criminal from Saint Domingue was sent to Louisiana as punishment. See: Order from the Council (of Saint Domingue), August 4, 1721, ANOM F/3/270, 29-30.
[31] Unknown author, 1708, ANOM 8/B/211.

they were called "Indians" from Mississippi, they probably came from colonial Louisiana, but it is unclear who they were exactly. The colonial administrators conscripted the two men into the army, along with another 110 men and "Of the new arrivals, one was a mulatto and two were Indians from Mississippi and monsieur le Fauquierre had already issued a notice that these would not be allowed to be soldiers like the rest of the men." It is unclear from the document if the other 110 men were indigenous, African or European. Shortly after conscription, the governor of Martinique dismissed the two Mississippians and "a mulatto" because he thought it would be unwise to have them be part of an armed force on the island. The fear of arming these three men but not the other 110 men, could be because the other 110 men were "beautiful and good" Europeans and he did not seem them as a threat to the colonial order. In addition, since he singled out only three men, two as "Indians" and one a "mulatto" and he did not designate the ethnicity or color of the remaining men, they were most likely Europeans.[32] Like many individual African slaves, these two Native American slaves disappear from the historical record.

When the French enslaved over three hundred Natchez in 1731, the Natchez became the largest group of indigenous peoples enslaved by the French from North America and sold to the Caribbean, but they were not the last. After 1731, colonial administrators from other French colonies sought to use the same strategy of enslavement

[32] Béilan(?) to M. Fauquierre, June 21, 1719, ANOM, 8/A/26, 1-3. The text concerning the Mississippian Indians is brief and it reads as follows: "On the 6th of June, 110 men arrived on the *Elephant* and entered the fort. Of the new arrivals, one was a mulatto and two were Indians from Mississippi and Monsieur le Fauquierre had already issued a notice that these men would not be allowed to be soldiers like the rest of the men. The rest of the recruits were very beautiful and good and were allocated successfully." "*Le 6. descendirens a terre et entrerens dans ce fors le 110 hommes de recrüe venu par* l'Elephant, *au nombre des que la un mulastre et deux indienes du Mississipi que M. le fauquierre a aussy tous congediez ne convenant point de se serais icy de pareils soldats. Du reste la recrüe est tres belle et bonne es la repartition en ce esté faitte."*

and displacement against their Native enemies. For example, after the French defeated the Foxes[33] in the Illinois country over access to the fur trade, the governor general of New France, Marquis de Beauharnois, wrote about his plans to send the conquered Foxes to Saint Domingue or Martinique to sell as slaves. Beauharnois put his plans into action and on the 19th of October 1734, the administrators of Martinique anticipated the arrival of two Fox "chiefs" and "a woman of the same nation."[34] The Fox leaders finally arrived in Martinique during March of 1735. However, the concessionaires in Martinique refused to purchase them for fear that they would revolt and wage war against the whites like they had in Upper Mississippi Valley. Ultimately the colonial administrators decided to put them on another boat bound for Guyane to sell as slaves in another colony.[35]

By the 1730s, the French had established a pattern of enslaving Native war captives in North America, particularly leaders, and sending them to French colonies in the Caribbean. At the end of the eighteenth century, perhaps five hundred Native Americans from Louisiana and Canada had been enslaved and sent to Saint Domingue by the French.[36] However, the Natchez are a unique example in the French North American colonies because the French did not just enslave Natchez leaders, instead, they enslaved hundreds of men, women and children who had surrendered.[37] This act can be explained

[33] The Sauk and Fox people actually call themselves the Meskwakis, but I use "Fox" in the essay since this is the term the French used in the documents, "*Renard.*"
[34] M. Dorgueville to the Council, October 19, 1734, ANOM 8/A/45, 39-40.
[35] For evidence about the Foxes arrival in Martinique, see: M. Dorgueville to M. de Fayet, March 12, 1735, ANOM 8/A/46, 1-2. I could find no record of these individuals in the colonial archives of Guyane and I am not sure what their fate ultimately was. Another twenty years later, another boat came from New France and stopped in Martinique by way of Louisiana. This boat carried six Native Americans but it is unclear where they came from and if they were slaves or not. See the annual statement of trade in the French colonies in 1755, ANOM F/2C/4, 118-121.
[36] James E. McClellan III, *Colonialism and Science: Saint Domingue in the Old Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 61-62.
[37] This is a phenomenon that could have been common throughout the Americas, for example, see: Fisher, "'Why shall wee have peace,'" 92.

by an examination of the particular context of French and Natchez contact from 1682-1731.

From the first moment that the French made contact with the Natchez, they lusted after Natchez land that they found particularly beautiful and reminded them of home. For example, in 1682, the explorer Iberville was one of the first Europeans to view Natchez country when he wrote that the Natchez "countryside is very much like France."[38] In 1704, Pénicaut remarked that "the village of the Natchez is the most beautiful that could be found in Louisiana."[39] Thus it is no surprise that the largest number of colonists outside of New Orleans eventually settled on Natchez lands to create a plantation economy.

In addition to the aesthetic appeal of the land, Frenchmen coveted Natchez lands for militaristic and environmental reasons. The Natchez lived above bluffs that tower over the Mississippi River and the French were jealous of the natural advantage the bluffs provided against riverine attacks. The bluffs also protected the lands from annual flooding and the land became known throughout colonial Louisiana as having some of the best soil for growing plantation tobacco.[40] Both these interests, military and economic, eventually raised the level of French aggression towards the Natchez over time. From the time of first contact in 1682, the Natchez began to trade with French explorers and colonists. The relationship between the French and Natchez was largely peaceful over the next thirty-five years. With typical Mississippian hospitality to outsiders who had valuable trade goods, the Natchez invited small numbers of French

[38] Iberville, Journal of 1682, in Richebourg Gaillard McWilliams, trans. and ed., *Iberville's Gulf Journals* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 126.
[39] Andre Pénicaut, "Pénicaut's Narrative," in *Fleur de Lys and Calumet*, 83.
[40] Daniel Usner, *Indians, Settlers, Slaves in A Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley Before 1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 46.

into their communities. However, starting in 1716, the relations between the French and Natchez began to break down and violent encounters between the two groups increased over the next fifteen years.[41]

In order to transform the struggling colony into a successful plantation economy, in 1717 the Crown gave the administration of the colony over to John Law and his Company of the Indies. Under the new direction of Law's Company, the population of the colony grew from only four hundred to seven thousand French colonists, including prisoners, from 1717-1721.[42] The increase in the colony's population required the establishment of new colonial outposts including the construction of Fort Rosalie in late 1716 next to Natchez towns in order to protect their trading outpost.[43] In 1718, the French founded New Orleans, which quickly became the new center of the colony. The arrival of so many colonists altered the balance of power between the French and their Native American neighbors. Additionally, an increasing number of colonists began to move to Natchez country to establish plantations there. The increased population of colonists as well as the newfound and steadily growing French desire for prime agricultural land led to increased hostilities between the Natchez and the French.

I will now offer a critical reading of the most important written source about the Natchez slaves in Saint Domingue, which comes from the writing of Bienville, the newly reappointed governor of Louisiana. In 1733, he stopped in Cap Français, the largest town in Saint Domingue, on his return to trip to Louisiana from France. In Cap Français, Bienville encountered enslaved Natchez in the port city. In a letter from January 28, 1733, Bienville wrote the last European account of Natchez slaves in Saint Domingue:

[41] I discuss this in more depth in chapter 1.
[42] Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 5-8; Usner, *Indians, Settlers, & Slaves*, 27-28, 32.
[43] Usner, "French/Natchez," 21.

> I have seen here, my lord, the chiefs of the Natchez who are slaves, among others the man named St. Cosme, who had been made to hope that they would be able to return with me. They assured me that it was only their nation that had entered into the revolt and that the harsh treatment that had been given them had forced them to it and that they had decided upon it without taking council of other nations, and if I am willing to believe them about it, my arrival in the colony will restore to it the tranquility that I had left there.[44]

When Bienville writes that they "had been made to hope that they would be able to return" to Louisiana with him, he does not say who had led them to believe this, but it is likely that these Natchez had known Bienville when he was the governor of Louisiana and felt their personal connections could save them from enslavement.

Throughout most of the colonial encounter with the French from 1680 to the 1720s, three Natchez villages favored peaceful trade and relations with the French, while three other villages favored trade with the English. The towns that favored developing relations with the French had been the most dominant in Natchez politics until 1729, when the Natchez coordinated a surprise attack and killed over two hundred French colonists who lived near the Natchez towns.[45]

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[44] Rowland, Dunbar, and Albert G. Sanders, eds. and trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1704-1743, French Dominion, Vol III* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1932), 581. A copy of the original letter is held in Moreau de Saint-Méry's personal collection. See: Bienville to Minister of the Marine(?), copy of letter dated January 28, 1733, ANOM F3/95. I did not write this quote in French because I found it difficult to read in the orignal. Therefore I used the English translation from the *Mississippi Provincial Archives* instead of my own translation.

[45] Dunbar Rowland and Albert G. Sanders, eds. and trans. *Mississippi Provincial Archives, 1729-1740, French Dominion, Vol. I.* (Jackson: Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1927), 62; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the*

The increasingly violent confrontations between French colonists and Natchez people during the 1720s explain why the Natchez attacked neighboring French colonists in 1729. Throughout most of 1723, French antagonism towards the Natchez amplified due to an increasing number Natchez raids on French livestock and much of the "friction" was due to different conceptions of property ownership. The French felt they had purchased the land from the Natchez, but the Natchez saw the same property lines as more nebulous.[46] In response to a number of livestock raids in the summer of 1723, Bienville left New Orleans on September 29 with four boatloads of soldiers.[47] On first arrival, Bienville spoke to the Natchez leader, Tattooed Serpent, who complained that he no longer had control over three Natchez communities who favored peace with the English and war with the French.[48] Without further delay, Bienville with the help of Tunica, Choctaw, and Yazoo allies, proceeded to attack the three pro-English communities of White Apple, Jenzenaque, and Grigra. Without warning, Bienville's army initially caught the Natchez of White Apple by surprise and they killed and scalped the men in the first house they came upon and captured the women to sell into slavery in the colony.[49] Most of the other Natchez who lived in White Apple, Jenzenaque and Grigra escaped before the army could catch them in their homes. After discovering these villages to be mostly empty of people, the French proceeded to burn all the buildings and farms to the ground. After Bienville finished his mission of destruction, he returned to the

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*Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 8; Daniel H. Usner Jr., "French-Natchez Borderlands in Colonial Lousiana" in *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 16.

[46] Barnett, *The Natchez*, 90.

[47] MPAII, 374.

[48] Swanton, "Indian Tribes," 212.

[49] These surprise tactics employed by Bienville and the French to destroy the Natchez villages remarkably resembles the mode of surprise attack the Natchez use in 1729. Perhaps the Natchez learned this military technique from the French.

Grand Village of the Natchez and threatened to destroy the Grand Village and Flour districts unless Tattooed Serpent could produce six Natchez leaders who the French wanted to punish. Miraculously Tattooed Serpent avoided the destruction of his home community and in a few days provided Bienville with the requested leaders.[50] Shortly thereafter, Bienville returned to New Orleans. The severity of the attack by Bienville shows a shift from the earlier method of using local mediation to solve problems to an attempt at direct control over the Natchez through force of arms.

The reference to the "harsh treatment that been given" to the Natchez by the French most likely is a reference to when Bienville had ordered the burning of three Natchez villages 1723. It seems that the Natchez in Saint Domingue tried to remind Bienville of his ill treatment of them. And, just in case blaming Bienville for the violence did not work, the Natchez added that other Natchez "had decided upon it without taking council of other nations". The "it" is likely referring to the violence in 1729 when the Natchez killed hundreds of French colonists in a surprise attack. These Natchez in Saint Domingue appear to try to distance themselves from those Natchez who had been antagonistic to the French in order to gain some sort of pardon or amnesty from Bienville since they had been allies in the past.

St. Cosme, the only Natchez "chief" mentioned by name, was probably the son of a powerful Natchez woman, Bras Piqué, and a French missionary also named St. Cosme.[51] St. Cosme (Jr.) had become an important leader for the Natchez communities who had desired cultivating strong relations with the French in the 1720s. Indeed, he

[50] MPAIII, 386-7; MPAII, 421-422.
[51] Barnett, *Natchez Indians*, 56, 97, 108-9, 124-27; Gordon Sayre, *The Indian Chief as Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of American, from Moctezuma to Tecumseh* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 237-40.

knew Bienville and had worked with him to resolve conflicts between the French and Natchez during the 1720s. He was also likely a key figure in convincing the Natchez to surrender to the French, probably hoping for leniency, not enslavement. But it had not mattered: he was punished as a leader of the Natchez intent on destroying the French and he was enslaved nonetheless. In fact, most of the Natchez who had surrendered to the French in 1731 were likely the same Natchez who had been France's best allies in Natchez country.

While the Natchez who were alive in 1733 in Saint Dominuge had probably been those who had desired peace with the French, it is not clear that only those who had been close to the French had surrendered. For example, some of the enslaved Natchez families who surrendered eventually revolted on the slave ships to Saint Dominuge. After being shipped to New Orleans, Natchez prisoners had waited for the arrival of two ships which would transport them to Cap Français. The first ship, *Le Gironde*, left New Orleans in January of 1731 with only a small number of enslaved Natchez aboard. The Natchez revolted during the voyage but the captain and the ship's crew killed most of them. There is no mention of what happened to any survivors, although it is likely that they were sold as slaves in the West Indies.[52] The second boat that shipped Natchez slaves to Saint Domingue was called *La Vénus* and it left New Orleans in May 1731, with 291 enslaved Natchez. However, only 160 were alive when the ship anchored at Cap Français only a few days later. There is no mention as to why so many Natchez died on the voyage to the Saint Domingue.[53] However, from what we know of the Middle Passage for African slaves, it is highly plausible that the horrors of disease and malnutrition could have been

[52] Letter from the captain of the *Gironde*, January 14, 1731, ANOM C/13C/4, 17. Also see: Giraud and Pearce (trans.), *A History of French Louisiana, Volume Five*, 428.
[53] Letter from the captain of *La Vénus*, January 14, 1731, ANOM C/13C/4, 17.

the cause of the many Natchez deaths on that ship from Louisiana to Saint Domingue.[54] Or perhaps Natchez who had surrendered realized that they would receive no mercy from the French and revolted on *Le Gironde* and *La Vénus*. Likely, by the time that Bienville had reached Cap Français in 1733, he encountered Nachez survivors who still clung to a hope that their earlier connections and positive relations with French colonists like Bienville would give them a chance of restoring their freedom and reclaiming their homelands. Those who had already given up hope and violently resisted onboard the slave ships had been killed or defeated. It would be up to those who had not surrendered to continue Natchez traditions in North America while their enslaved brethren in Saint Dominuge toiled and adapted to the violent world of slavery on the sugar island.

The parting comment that Bienville's "arrival in the colony will restore to it the tranquility that I had left there" is probably entirely self-serving because Bienville wanted the administrators in France to know what a good a job he had done. And Bienville often did this sort of thing in other letters. In this account, he seems to imply that if he had been the governor of Louisiana in 1729, the violence might have been averted. Indeed, the pro-French Natchez had often gotten along very well with Bienville throughout the early 1720s. Furthermore, Bienville had more skill at diplomacy with many Native American groups in Louisiana compared to other governors of the colony. Therefore, perhaps it is possible that St. Cosme would praise Bienville's leadership because of their past relationship. However, the idea that the colony experienced "tranquility" during Bienville's previous tenure downplays the violence of the colonial encounter and

[54] The mortality rates of the intercolonial African slave trade were higher than the transatlantic African slave trade, see: Gregory O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 70-72. O'Malley discusses the causes of the high mortality rates, including disease, malnutrition, and sexual violence, 72-84.
70-84.

suggests he might be stretching the truth in other areas of the letter. Finally, since Bienville makes no mention of returning any Natchez to Louisiana, he clearly was not moved by the pleas of his former political allies.

This letter also reveals that two years after their arrival, some Natchez lived as slaves in the urban port city of Cap Français. They apparently had not been sold to sugar planters and probably were forced to work in the bustling port city.[55] Cap Français was the largest town in Saint Domingue, and while it was not the administrative capital in the 1730s, it was the "New York" of Saint Domingue, meaning that it was the largest town and a major commercial center.[56] It is likely that Bienville encountered the Natchez near where he docked his ship because the early urban growth of Cap Français centered on the dock area. In later years the town would expand greatly, but in 1733, most of the town huddled close to the harbor. In addition to working as domestic slaves, the Natchez could also have been put to work at a number of urban institutions found only in the largest towns of Saint Domingue. For example, they could have been forced to work in one of Cap Français's twenty five bakeries, or in the large abbatoir, where thousands of pounds of meat was butchered daily.[57] Marisa Fuentes has shown how urban slavery in Barbados had particular methods of control and violence that made urban slavery particularly horrific.[58] There were similar methods of violence and control in Cap Français, and this is an area I am currently developing for this paper. More to come soon!

[55] Throughout much of the French Antilles, men and women slaves did domestic labor, particularly in urban areas. Cooking was often done by men, while women were employed as servants, seamstresses, nurses and midwives, see Bernard Moitt, "Women, Work, and Resistance in the French Caribbean during Slavery, 1700-1848" in Verene Shephered, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey, eds., *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 167-172.
[56] James McClellan calls Cap Français, "New York" in McClellan, *Colonialism and Science*, 41.
[57] *Ibid.,* 83-90.
[58] Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 13-45.

One last clue in Bienville's letter hints to Natchez diasporic identity. Bienville writes that the Natchez "chiefs hoped to return" to Louisiana. Much of the current work on diasporic communities analyzes the ways that displaced communities create identities that span across national or colonial boundaries. Scholars explore the way that diasporic identities are constructed around notions of the displaced "homeland"—mythic or real—and the "host" society and how these identities are created, maintained, and altered by diasporic communities.[59] The Natchez desire to return home suggests that their identity as Natchez in Saint Domingue was shaped by their memories and relationship to their homeland. This is not too surprising since the Natchez had only been in Saint Domingue

[59] The use of the term "diaspora" is new to Native American history but has long been applied to Jewish history and more recently to African history, for example: Sami Lakomaki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Stephen Warren, *The Worlds the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, (2014); Laura Keenan Spero, "'Stout, bold, cunning and the greatest travellers in America'": The Colonial Shawnee Diaspora" (January 1, 2010). Dissertations available from ProQuest. Paper AAI3429170. http://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3429170. In addition to the literature on the Shawnee diaspora, the term is getting used more frequently. At the 2015 Ethnohistory Conference in Las Vegas, there were many papers that talked about Native American diasporas, see: http://www.ethnohistory.org/meetings/. Also see: Kathryn M. Labelle, *Dispersed but not Destroyed: A history of the Seventeenth-Century Wendat People* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013). Labelle does not use the word "diaspora" but uses a similar concept. For an excellent historiographical overview of the field of African Diaspora, see: Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review*, vol. 43, No. 1 (April 2000), 11-45. For reference of African diasporas in "Indian Country" see: Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). A representative sample of some important scholarship on the African Diaspora includes: Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800 (Studies in Comparative World History)*, 2 ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Joseph E. Harris, ed. *Global Dimensions of The African Diaspora*, 2 ed., (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993); Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish, eds. *The African Diaspora* (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1996); Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies, and Ali A. Mazrui, eds. *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999). The term "diaspora" has started to be used by scholars of Asia and Asian American history even more recently than the scholars of the African diaspora, see: Rhacel S. Parreñas and Lok C.D. Siu, eds., *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007; Papiya S. Ghosh, *Partition and the South Asian Diaspora: Extending the Subcontinent* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Grace M. Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Judith M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

for a couple of years, but does suggest the beginning of a diasporic identity constructed in a similar fashion to many other diasporic communities throughout history.

After Bienville's letter in 1733, no other European mentions the Natchez in Saint Domingue until over 60 years later when the prominent historian, Moreau de *Saint-Méry*, noted a Natchez presence on the island. In 1796, he argued that the enslaved population was not only from Africa, indeed, "one finds the mixed descendants of some Carib, some Indians from Guyane, some Savage Foxes from Canada, some Natchez from Louisiana."[60] He argued that "one finds" descendants of Natchez from Louisiana but he thought that it was impossible to phenotypically differentiate between "mulattos" or those of mixed African and European heritage and those of mixed European, African and indigenous descent. He argued that while he was sure that some of the enslaved population had indigenous backgrounds, "There are neither nuances nor exterior characteristics that can reveal what their roots are."[61] In other words, he argued that it was impossible to determine whether a person had Native ancestors or not by a person's appearance. However, I doubt that he tried because in other sources, such as runaway advertisements, slave owners noted physical "characteristics" that marked some slaves as "Indian."

[60] Saint-Méry, *Description topographique*, 83. "*Je bornerai pour ce moment, à ce que j'en ai dit, ce qui concerne la classe des nègres, qui comptend en quelque sorte tous les esclaves à Saint-Domingue. Parmi ceux-ci, se trouve mêlée la descendance de quelques Caraïbes, de quelques Indiens de la Guyane, de Sauvages Renards du Canada, de Natchez de la Louisiane, que le gouvernement ou des hommes violateurs du Droits de Gens, jugeaient nécessaire ou lucratif de réduire à la servitude.*" Likely, Saint-Méry knew of the Natchez arrival on the island because there is a copy of Bienville's letter in his personal archival collection see: Bienville to Minister of the Marine(?), copy of letter dated January 28, 1733, ANOM F3/95.
[61] Médéric-Louis-Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie Française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, Revised and expanded edition, edited by B. Maurel and E. Taillemite. Volume 1 (Paris: Société de l'histoire des Colonies Françaises et Librairie Larose, 1958), 95. "*il n'y a point de nuances ni de caractères extérieurs, qui fassent reconnaître les individus qui doivent les avoir pour tige.*"

Runaway advertisements published in the main gazette of Saint Domingue, the *Affiches américaines,* provide some hints that Natchez might have survived, and some even might have re-attained their freedom. There are numerous slave runaway advertisements that speak of "Indian", "Black Indian" and "Mulatto Indian" slaves that escaped from Cap Français.[62] For example, in early 1785, a man named Philippe ran away with five others, all who were "from Mississippi". His skin color is described as "a little red".[63] Two teenage "Indians", named Manuel and Pardieu, escaped slavery near Cap Français in 1769 and 1771, respectively.[64] In 1773, a young "black Indian" called André ran away from his owners in Cap Français.[65] Another Andrè, described as having skin "red like an Indian" ran away with another slave in 1775. In 1775, an unnamed "Indian" ran away from the Cap to find a surgeon to treat his syphilis.[66] One slave from Senegal ran away to meet up with his "mulatta Indien" lover in Cap Francais.[67] While the description of "red" is problematic and that none of the runaway slaves advertisements ever identified a particular Native American identity, let alone any specific mention of the Natchez, it does seems possible that some of these escaped slaves had indigenous ancestors, and maybe some were even Natchez.

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[62] Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec and Léon Robichaud, "Marronage in Saint-Domingue", *Affiches américains*, http://www.marronnage.info. See slave runaway advertisements on: 7/18/1778, an "Indian" named André ran away from the Cap; 8/10/1779, a "Mulatto Indian" from the Isle de France, ran away to the Cap for 3 weeks; 2/22/1780, an "Indian" named Papillote ran away from habitation near the Cap; 2/13/1781, "an Indian with a beautiful figure" ran away from the Cap when he was sent to go to the hospital, the owner thought he would try to board a ship and sail to New England or Curacao; 3/13/1781, a young Indian named Ceasar ran away near the Cap; 7/17/1781, a "black Indian" ran away near the Cap; 5/1/1782, "a black named Aly, creole Indian" ran away from the Cap; 2/25/1790, a black Indian, unnamed, ran away from the Cap; 6/12/1790, an Indian named Philosophe ran away near the Cap.
[63] *Ibid.*, 1/19/1785.
[64] *Ibid.*, 9/18/1769 and 9/14/1771.
[65] *Ibid.*, 3/13/1773
[66] *Ibid.*, 5/6/1775
[67] *Ibid.*, 6/24/1775

While it is unclear if any Natchez ever found freedom again on the island, if they had, their lives would likely have improved. In 1769, Guillaume Levaque, "of Indian blood" tried to marry a French woman in Port au Prince, even though this was a crime punishable by death. He eventually paid a huge fine and got married. During the trial, Levaque was said to be the "son of a chief" on his maternal side.[68] Could this be the enslaved son of Tattooed Serpent—the great Natchez chief? It is impossible to say whether Levaque had Natchez parents or some other Native North American ancestry. Regardless, it seems that the descendants of some enslaved Native Americans acquired freedom in the 18th century. By the 1780s, freedmen and women could own, buy and sell rural and urban property, they could buy and sell slaves as agents for others, the most prosperous could lend credit to others, and some bought slaves to grew coffee on small plantations outside of the city.[69]

While Natchez slaves could have spent their lives around Cap Francais, it is possible that they were sold and were forced to move about the island. Outside of Cap Français, there are many examples of "Indians", "black Indians" and "mulatto Indians" that ran away. For example, in Port-au-Prince, there are six runaways that are identified as having some "Indian" ancestry or ethnicity.[70] Across the colony of Saint Domingue, slaves identified as "Indian", "black Indian" and/or "mulatto Indian" ran away throughout

[68] See: Unknown author, "Extrait des minutes au Greffe du Port au Prince", June 17, 1769, ANOM AC/F3/95, 16-22.
[69] Susan M. Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Français" in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 279-293.
[70] Glaunec and Robichaud, "Marronage in Saint-Domingue," *Affiches américains:* 4/4/1770 George, an "Indian"; 10/14/1777, an "Indian" named François; 8/18/1778, Zamore, an "Indian"; 9/1/1778, a "black Indian"; 7/22/1786, a "Mulatto Indian" named Jeannot; 8/28/1788, a "Mulatto Indian" named Benjamin.

the 1770s to 1790.[71] Some "Indian" slaves ran away more than once, such as the man named "Zéphir" or "Zephyr" who could speak Spanish and French. He escaped once to Havana, where he posed as a freedman until he was caught and sent back to Saint Domingue.[72] Was Zephyr a Natchez? I do not think we will ever know. For the slave owners of Saint Domingue, it was important to note the skin color or physical characteristics of their slaves, but they had no interest in recording their pasts or their ethnic histories. So the records provide some hints, but they leave us mostly with historical silence.

Most of the censuses done before the 1730s distinguish slaves of African descent from those of indigenous descent.[73] However, starting in the 1730s, the census makers no longer distinguished between African and indigenous populations on the island, slave or free. When the Natchez entered the world of Saint-Domingue in 1731, they came at the exact moment when the colonial authorities no longer found it useful to distinguish between slaves from Africa and from slaves from the Americas. To the administrators of Saint-Domingue, the most important characteristic was not if one was African or Native American. Rather, the definition of whether one was a slave or not became the fundamental characteristic to define people of color during this time. This makes it even

[71] *Ibid.* For example, in 6/20/1770, an "Indian" named Depardieu ran away from Fort Dauphin; 7/15/1777, two "black Indians" ran away from Jacmel; 9/30/1777, François, an "Indian" living ran away from the Coromandel Coast; 12/29/1778, Julien, a "mulatto Indian" ran away near Gonaves; 11/19/1785, an Indian named Marseille ran away from an undisclosed location; 8/22/1780, an Indian named Laurent ran away a Saint-Simon; 3/10/1784, a mulatto Indian ran away from a habitation near Grand Riviere; 10-18-1787, a "Mulatto Indian," called Jean-Louis ran away from a habitation near Saint-Marc; 5/1/1790, a "black Indian" ran away near Petit-Gouave. For more examples, see: 9/18/1776; 11/23/1779; 6/18/1783; 12/31/1783; 4/14/1784; 7/23/1785; 7/15/1786; 4/24/1788; 5/15/1788; and 5/3/1769.
[72] *Ibid.,* 1/31/1776; 10/24/1780; 2/6/1781; 5/7/1783; and 12/27/1788.
[73] General Census of Saint Domingue, 1703, ANOM D/1/59. In the general census of 1703, there are different categories for Native Americans ["Indes"] and Africans ["Negres"].

harder to identify the Natchez in the archives as the colonial record keepers implicitly erased Natchez history.

For the slave owners of Saint Domingue, it was sometimes important to note the skin color or physical characteristics of runaway slaves, but they had no interest in recording their pasts or their ethnic histories. So the records provide some hints, but they leave us mostly with historical silence about specific Natchez experiences. The runaway adds could be read productively with a strategy like Marisa Fuente's methodology of reading sources "along the bias grain" to eke out more information about enslaved Native Americans in general, or the experiences of slaves in general in Saint Domingue.[74] This archival silence is part of the Natchez story. Like enslaved Africans, their point of origin and home cultures were not recorded and have been erased in the archive by the violence of those who recorded the slave trade. For Natchez history, part of the story of the Natchez diaspora is one of silence, death and destruction. While the communities of Natchez in Oklahoma and South Carolina still identify as Natchez today, for the Natchez who were forced to Haiti, their descendants likely identify as Haitian. The story of the enslaved Natchez is one of dispossession, social death, and archival erasure. Like many enslaved Africans, the enslaved Natchez must have been forced to adapt to their new situations, contributing to the hybrid African and indigenous cultures conditioned by the processes and violence of slavery across the Atlantic World. While the total numbers of enslaved indigenous people is smaller than those enslaved from Africa, the result was the same for humans who were enslaved, regardless of what continent they were taken from.

[74] Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Women: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2016): 7.

Shortly after the French defeated the Natchez in 1731, French habitants from Louisiana, Saint Domingue and Martinique began to populate the area that became Natchez, Mississippi. Within ten years of the war, the French had replaced the Natchez and 450 years of continuous indigenous occupation on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River with plantations and slave labor.[75] The Natchez sat in the path of French colonial and imperial desire as French colonists lusted for Natchez land and labor. The process of French colonialism replaced the Natchez and their way of life with a new plantation society buttressed on slave labor that was to be replicated later by both the Spanish and the United States.[76] At the same time that the French appropriated Natchez land for the French colonial enterprise, the French also took their bodies and enslaved them to aid in the profits of plantation agriculture in the Caribbean. The very act of enslaving the Natchez also helped the French to expand their settler colonialism in Louisiana. This history of violence and enslavement, causing the Natchez to become a diasporic group, has impacted the Natchez to the present day and they continue to pay the cost.

[75]Archaeological research suggests that the Natchez were one of many Mississippian chiefdoms that existed before contact with Europeans. Unlike all the other Mississippian chiefdoms that had dispersed from historic areas of residence by the time of French contact in 1682, archeological evidence suggests that the people we have come to know as the Natchez lived in same area from 1350-1731. Ian W. Brown, "Natchez Indians and the Remains of a Proud Past" in *Natchez before 1830*, ed., Noel Polk (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 13-15.

[76] For example, M. de Vienne brought a couple of families from Saint Domingue to Louisiana to establish tobacco plantations on the newly vacant Natchez land in 1741. In a letter from the same year, the Commissary General of Louisiana, M. Salmon, remarked that two families brought to the Natchez area from Saint Domingue were doing well growing tobacco, see: AC F3 no. 143, letter dated 29 7bre 1741. In this same letter, M. Salmon talks about an Englishman who wanted to start a tobacco plantation in Natchez.