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FREE WOMEN OF COLOR AND SLAVEHOLDING IN NEW ORLEANS, 1810-1830

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
The Department of History

by
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May 2007

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DEDICATION

In memory of my grandmother, Claudette Delage.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My major professor, Tiwanna Simpson, and my committee members, David Culbert and Mark Thompson, provided a cogent critique of my work that was very much appreciated.

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ABSTRACT

Many free women of color lived in antebellum New Orleans. Free women of color tried hard to improve their lives, and engaged in a wide range of economic activities, including slaveholding. Numerous records show that free women of color owned slaves. It is hard to determine why free women of color engaged in such business. Free women of color's relations with their slaves is controversial as it is difficult to assess why free black women would own slaves, but also buy, sell, and mortgage slaves.

Free women of color's status was exceptional due to specific patterns of manumission in Spanish Louisiana, and to their unique relations with white men. These women expanded and exploited the opportunities that were available to them, achieving a unique social and economic status in New Orleans. Thus, they came to own substantial amounts of property including slaves.

Notarial acts—sales of slaves, wills, mortgages, successions, petitions for emancipation, etc.—help give an accurate description of these women's social and economic status. These acts extensively document free women of color's position as regards slaveholding, and allow to give a powerful and fresh outlook on free black female slaveholding.

These acts not only reflect the affluence of free women of color in New Orleans, but they also show the impact of the arrival of the refugees from Saint Domingue and Cuba. Hence, free women of color from Saint Domingue constituted an important proportion of slaveholders in New Orleans. Their lives resembled free women of color's in Louisiana as they formed a diverse group with a unique and distinct culture.

Free women of color sometimes bought slaves for benevolent reasons, and occasionally emancipated some of them. However, it seems that most of free women of color were aware of the commercial advantages they could get from slaveholding. Therefore, the latter should not be underestimated. The economic potential of slaves seemed to have been constantly on their

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minds whether they owned significant property, or experienced precarious situations. Thus, it is difficult to ignore evidence that free women of color engaged in slavery for commercial purposes—and prospered.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Originally published in French in 1911 and translated into English in 1973, Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire is one of the pioneer works dealing with free persons of color in New Orleans. Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, himself a Creole, recorded the lives of fifty prominent Creoles who lived in New Orleans at the end of the nineteenth century. He describes black doctors, lawyers, teachers, musicians, artists, and writers who are powerful evidence of the extraordinary role that Creoles played in the cultural and political history of Louisiana. Although Desdunes' work played a great role in the Creole community's pride, resistance and advancement, Desdunes only focuses on Creoles from New Orleans and his various portraits of them are not exhaustive.

Also, centering on Creoles and the Creole heritage of Louisiana is Sybil Kein's Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color. Kein provides an invaluable history of Louisiana's Creole people, examining the ethnic roots of the Creoles and their mixed descent, analyzing their history and contributions, and helping define their ethnic heritage. From the use of Creole in language and literature to popular individuals of color, this provides an excellent coverage of the history of Louisiana Creoles.

Carl A. Brasseaux is the first to consider this multiracial group's history and culture through a close study of primary resource materials in Creoles of Color in the Bayou Country. Brasseaux brings valuable information of Creoles from South Louisiana. In The Creoles of Louisiana, George Washington Cable knowledgeably addresses the question "What is a Creole?" with assurance. Originally published in 1884, The Creoles of Louisiana builds on earlier explorations of the lives of the white descendants of early French and

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Spanish immigrants during the transitory post-Civil War period. Cable wrote faithful portrayals of the Creoles. This work established his reputation as an important *local color* writer portraying aspects of southern life. Cable tackled subjects that had been largely ignored by historians—for example, the *Code Noir*, slaves' revolts, and the brutality of slavery. Using the Louisiana Creoles as a case study, Virginia R. Dominguez shows the manipulation of racial identity in nineteenth and twentieth century Louisiana in White by Definition Social Classification in Creole Louisiana. She demonstrates that the classification of races—Creole, Cajun, etc—did not consider changing boundaries and social, economic and political criteria. In Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall focuses on the reasons why New Orleans is the most Africanized city in the United States, and claims that the Afro-creole culture had a considerable impact in Louisiana and New Orleans. Hall uses sources from three countries, France, Spain and colonial Britain to document the African presence in Louisiana. She finds that most of the Africans brought to Louisiana in the early 1770s were Bambara from the Senegambia region of West Africa. Consequently, the Africans brought with them their way of life and were able to exercise much of it in Louisiana. She notes the difference in French/Spanish colonization and the contribution of African language, food and cultural practices in Louisiana. She puts West Africans directly in the middle of that development. These works are very informative and present a distinct Creole heritage and history. However, they do not reveal a broad picture of the history of free people of color, their social status as a whole, their economic and civil rights, and the role they played in antebellum Louisiana.

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In The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana, H.E. Sterkx offers an extensive work on free persons of color's role in Louisiana in the antebellum period. He covers a broad geographical area and conveys a thorough analysis of free persons of color and their role in society. Ira Berlin's Slaves without Masters gives an overall picture of the status of the free black population. Berlin is the first to distinguish free persons of color from the Upper South from those in the Lower South. The latter group was wealthier, better educated, more skilled and had better relations with whites than the former. Therefore, there was a contrast between free blacks from New Orleans from free blacks from Virginia for example. Other authors focused on free persons of color in Virginia such as Luther Porter Jackson with Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia, 1830-1860 and James Hugo Johnson with Race Relations in Virginia and Miscegenation in the South. Jackson focuses on the economic role of free blacks and how they impacted the regional economy as a whole. Some other works deal with North Carolina such as John Hope Franklin's The Free Negro in North Carolina, 1790-1860. Franklin tackles the anomalous position of the free black in a slaveholding society, and thus was considered as a threat to the system.

Finally, some authors brought valuable information of free people of color from a local and micro-analytical perspective. In The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color (1977), Gary B. Mills aimed at correcting the over-simplified views we have of the *gens de couleur libre* in American history. Focusing on free persons of color from the Cane River area in Northwestern Louisiana, Mills argues that the term "free people of color" was a generic term for "non-white" and not synonymous for those who supposedly carried the dreaded "black blood." Also, elite mixed-race Creole families were endogamous, French-

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speaking and Roman Catholic. Mills tries to place the history of this small community in the larger context of Louisiana's unique racial structure.

Moreover, recent scholarship has focused on the slave plantation in the Old South and women's place in it. Catherine Clinton with The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South centers on white southern women's work, marriage patterns, education, sexuality, etc. Clinton argues that white women were victims of the planter's patriarchy, just as slaves were, and did not enjoy much more freedom. However, Clinton's hypothesis seems scant. On the other hand, Deborah Gray White, with Ar'n't I A Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South, deals with slave women, their daily life, occupations, family roles, and female networks. She tackles the victimization and various images of black women, and speaks about the double burden of being female and black in the South.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese deals with gender relations in the South, and also challenges the assertion that southern women—black and white—were dominated by men. Indeed, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South shows that these women were not passive or victims, but resourceful and resistant. Fox-Genovese focuses on both white and black women and offers a new perspective on southern women. Therefore, these studies document heavily black and white women's experiences in the South. They also bring some information on relations between black and white women.

Some historians have emphasized free women of color's role in antebellum Louisiana. Most works on this subject focused on their relations with white men. These women were usually described as seductresses or voodoo queens, and had no control over their own lives. Basically, they had no choice over their lives and were not active actors in the society. However, a lot of free colored women prospered thanks to their relations with white men as

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they succeeded in navigating within the exploitative system which was in place in Louisiana. Therefore, free women of color defined their lives in relation to slavery, but they defined unique identities of their own. Even if several laws tried to curtail their rights and freedom over the time, free women of color always put a great emphasis on their free status and looked for preserving it no matter what.

Recent research is especially thematic. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine's More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas and Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas are extremely valuable works. Both of them offer a diverse variety of essays on black women in slavery that covers America's peculiar institution from its inception to shortly after the Civil War. More than Chattel seeks to create a fuller picture of the lives of African American women during this time. However, it has a difficult time representing black women as empowered individuals with their own culture and as victims of a vicious system that presses unwanted physical and cultural contact on them. Beyond Bondage explores women's experiences of race, gender, and class in the slaveholding societies of the United States, the Caribbean, and South America. It describes the conditions under which women achieved freedom and their economic and social adjustment to freedom. This book shows that these women's lives were very complex and that they enjoyed various degrees of mobility.

Others scholars focus on the lives of specific women and their families. Virginia Gould, in Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black & Female in the Old South, catches a glimpse of what shaped the contours of daily life for free women of color through the private letters written to Ann Battles Johnson, a free woman of color from Natchez, Mississippi, and her oldest daughter, Anna Johnson, also of Natchez. Along with common

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subjects of nineteenth-century women's correspondence are the concerns that were unique to free women of color who lived in a society where race, gender, and slavery defined all people's lives. Kent Anderson Leslie with Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege and Adele Logan Alexander with Ambiguous Lives, Free Women of Color in Rural Georgia, 1789-1879 focus on specific families in the South and reveal valuable information of free women of color's status in the South.

Suzanne Lebsock also greatly contributed to women's history with The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860. Lebsock focuses on women's work in an antebellum southern town. Lebsock claims working women enjoyed a certain amount of freedom and independence. She shows some of the ways in which black women built their own community, family, church, and informal labor networks as means for survival. Therefore, Lebsock shows how and why women's status changed from the antebellum period to the Civil War, and documents black women's economic agency in a small Southern town.

All these works give significant information on the lives of these women. However, they do not deal extensively with free women of color who achieved prominent roles in the antebellum South and/or free women of color who owned slaves. Free black women slaveholders existed in surprising numbers in the South, and especially in early nineteenth century New Orleans. The authors cited earlier deal with some unique cases of women who engaged themselves in the slaveholding business. However, there is limited information on the reasons why free women of color traded slaves, but also about their relations with their slaves in the antebellum South.

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When Eugene D. Genovese's Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made was published in 1974, it represented a critical departure from previous historians' understanding of relationships between slaves and masters in southern slave society. Genovese's approach differed fundamentally from Kenneth M. Stampp's The Peculiar Institution, Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South. Roll, Jordan, Roll is not an analysis of the institution of slavery itself, but an understanding of the dynamics of class relations. Genovese offered a nuanced and sophisticated interpretation of the planter class and the paternalistic relationship they maintained with their slaves. Genovese used paternalism as the overarching framework of his analysis.

James Oakes was one of the beneficiaries of Stampp and Genovese's pathbreaking works. In Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South, Oakes acknowledged Genovese treatment of the master/slave relationship, and the political significance of slaves' resistance. However, Oakes placed his argument within the context of liberal capitalism. Oakes focused on the negotiations between masters and slaves as being essential to the economic survival of the institution of slavery. Thus, Oakes' interpretation reinforced the economic value of slavery rather than the relationship between masters and slaves, and slaves' agency. Therefore, these works offer an interesting framework as regards free women of color who were slaveowners in the antebellum period.

Hence, I will try to shed new light on the lives of free women of color and explore the nature of free black female slaveholding in early nineteenth century New Orleans. In 1810, the free black population reached its largest number since the 1769. New Orleans had been successively in the hands of the French, the Spanish, and the Americans. For New Orleans, American annexation brought population growth and economic development. Yet, New

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Orleans was essentially European in its physical shape and design, and in human orientation at this period. Furthermore, New Orleans' society was ruled by a strong slaveholding class system. Thus relations categorized people as regards their skin color, and their social status. However, some free persons of color, men and women, came to hold prominent roles in the economy of New Orleans during the antebellum period, and controlled a substantial amount of the black economy. Free persons of color, and especially free women of color, were found in great majority in antebellum New Orleans. Free women of color tried hard to improve their lives, and engaged in a wide range of economic activities, including slaveholding. Numerous records, such as sales of slaves and mortgages, show that free women of color owned slaves. It is hard to determine why free women of color engaged in such business.

First, this study examines the early presence of free person of color in New Orleans, the various patterns of growth of this population, and especially the increasing number of free women of color from the colonial period to the 1850s. Free women achieved a unique social and economic status in New Orleans during this period. Therefore, the next chapter looks at these women's social and economic status, and opportunities that were available to them in New Orleans. It appears that free women of color conducted successful businesses, and owned slaves as early as the colonial period. Free women of color's relations with their slaves is controversial as it is difficult to assess why free black women would own slaves, but also buy, sell, and mortgage slaves. Notarial acts—sales of slaves, wills, mortgages, successions, petitions for emancipation, etc.—help give an accurate description of these women's origin, as well as their social and economic position. My research focuses on these acts—all of them in French and dating from the 1810s to the 1830s—and the unique and significant information they provide on free women of color. They extensively document free women of color's

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position as regards slaveholding, and allow to give a powerful and fresh outlook on free black female slaveholding.

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CHAPTER 2
ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS AND THE FREE COLORED POPULATION

The free colored population grew steadily along the decades due to various patterns of emancipation and the arrival of thousands of refugees from Saint Domingue. Free persons of color achieved a unique status in New Orleans society. Within this context, slave women were more likely to gain their freedom than men. Interracial liaisons, in particular, provided slave women and free women of color with unique opportunities and possibilities of social and economic advancement. Free persons of color developed an acute sense of class constantly seeking to protect their distinctive social status. Free women of color were definitely aware of the opportunities that were available to them, and looked for achieving a significant social and economic status.

New Orleans Ethnic Composition and Early Presence of the Free Colored Population

As a port city, New Orleans had a varied ethnic composition. Native Americans, Spanish, French, Irish, Germans, "Acadians," and then Anglos made up the bulk of the population for most of the eighteenth century. Africans were first brought to New Orleans as early as 1719 and sold as slaves—mainly to planters. In the nineteenth century large numbers of European immigrants, refugees from Saint Domingue, and white and black migrants from the Atlantic seaboard contributed to this diverse population.[1]

The fragility of the port offered inhabitants benefits of established, nucleated communities with town and urban social relations. Colonial and early antebellum settlers brought with them and established early modern European social customs and relations; these were greatly altered by the harsh nature of the frontier life. Therefore, they were tied to protect

[1] James H. Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), p. ix. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 57.

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their social system, but skewed by necessity with dealing with hostile Indian and the slave force, and had also to deal with an extreme demographic imbalance.

Even though until the late eighteenth century whites were more numerous than blacks in New Orleans, African and Indian slaves from nearby plantations frequently traveled to the city to market goods and play, but also lived together, residing in adjacent homes or within the same household. This trend continued into the antebellum period. Blacks constituted the majority of the population from 1746 until the 1830s.

Free people of color were the racially-mixed descendants of the early African, Spanish and French population. During the Spanish regime, the free colored population not only grew in numbers, but some free persons of color – both men and women – prospered and achieved a significant social, political and/or economic status. Free persons of color constituted a social class of their own in Louisiana, and benefited from special rights and privileges.

The free colored population seems to have existed from the first introduction of slaves in Louisiana. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall claims that the "earliest record encountered of a free black in New Orleans dates from 1722."[2] In the French colonies, the condition of slaves and free persons of color were governed by the *Code Noir* (Black Code). It was enacted by Louis XV in 1724 and enforced in Louisiana the same year. The Black Code regulated slaves' freedom, their rights and treatment. For instance, it attempted to undue cruelty by their masters; it made religious education and baptism compulsory, it also encouraged slaves' marriages. Nevertheless, not only sexual intercourse and cohabitation between whites and slaves were strictly forbidden, but also marriages between people of different races. The *Code Noir* also encouraged freedom procedures. Kimberly S. Hanger finds that the first slave emancipation

[2] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century, p. 129.

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was recorded in Louisiana in the early 1720s.[3] At first, the *Code* Noir allowed manumission of slaves by any owner older than 20 years and "for any reason they deemed appropriate."[4] In 1736, however, the age requirement changed and "slaves could only be manumitted by owners at least 35 years of age and only when the *Conseil Supérieur* found the master's motives legitimate."[5] Furthermore, it explicitly cited that *"les affranchis"* (freed men) had the same rights and privileges as people who were born free.

These stipulations against miscegenation had little effect in the colony. The slave population began to lighten in color with a great increase of a population of "mulattoes" which formed the basis of a new class, the *"gens de couleur libre*." Hence, a distinctive and complex caste developed of Creoles of African descent: according to the amount of "white blood" or "black blood" that each non-white possessed, there was a special classification found in colonial and antebellum Louisiana. Gary B. Mills offers a common classification found in colonial and antebellum Louisiana[6] with "each term meaning one degree's further transfiguration toward the Caucasian standard of physical perfection."[7]

Negro..applied usually to one of full Negro blood
Sacatra..7/8 Negro - 1/8 white
Griffe...3/4 Negro - ¼ white
Mulatto..1/2 Negro - ½ white
Quadroon or *Quarteron*...............1/4 Negro - ¾ white
Octoroon or *sang-mele*.................1/8 Negro - 7/8 white

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[3] Kimberly S. Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in James H. Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), p. 5.
[4] Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans" (Manuscript to be presented at the XXIX Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians, 7-12 April, 1997), p. 3.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Gary B. Mills, The Forgotten People: Cane River's Creoles of Color (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), p. xiii. Mills claims that this classification was "most commonly found in colonial and antebellum records of Louisiana." Kimberly Hanger claims that *pardo* (light-skinned) and *moreno* (dark-skinned) are preferred over the terms *mulatto* and *Negro*. See Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, p. 23.
[7] Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana," in Sybil Kein, ed., Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p. 4.

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Free persons of color were a small number during the French era (from 1723 to 1769). Censuses are too inconsistent for a thorough evaluation of the number of free colored persons during the French period. However, in 1771, it was recorded that there were only 97 free persons of color in the city of New Orleans (see figure 3, p. 14). This number represented roughly 3% of the total population.[8] Moreover, Virginia Meacham Gould states that freedom was not easily granted to slaves. Below, figure 1 shows that there were very few acts of emancipation during the French period, unlike in the Spanish era. Also, it is interesting to note that female slaves were more likely to be manumitted than male slaves (see figure 2, p. 13). Over the period 1720-1820, women constituted 58% of slave emancipations.

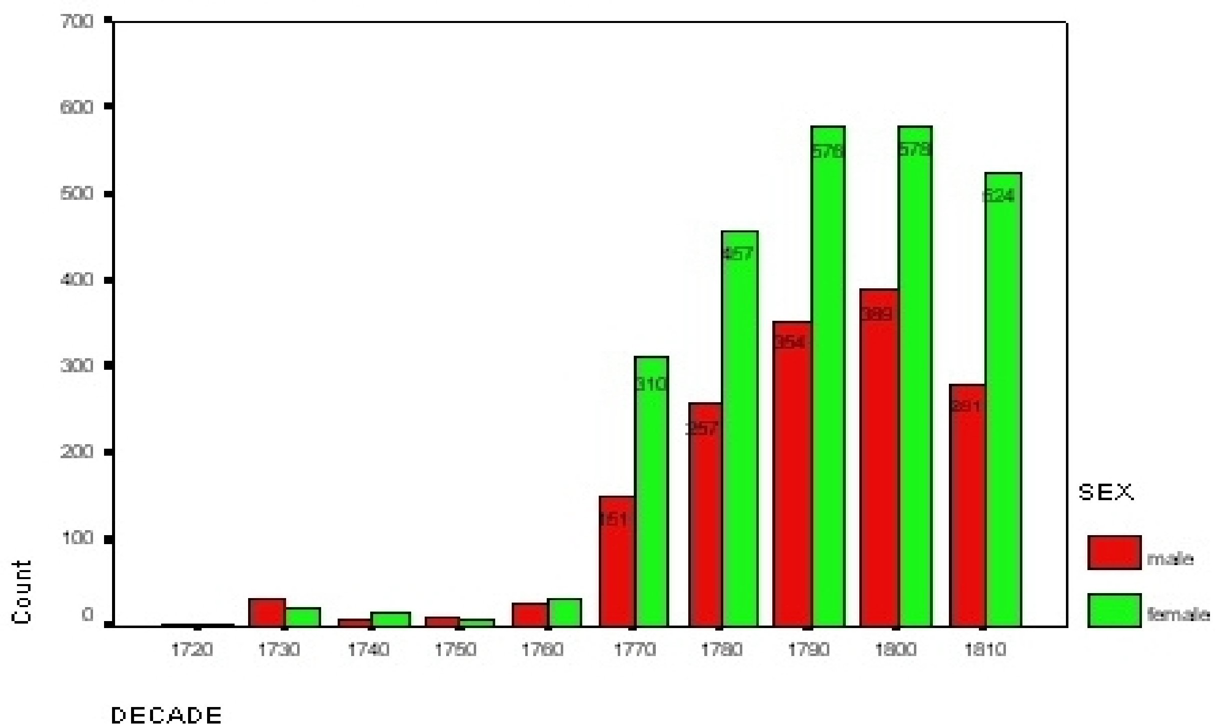

Figure 1: Emancipation of Slaves in Louisiana, 1720-1820

Source: Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820. *Dr. Hall's Calculations*, in http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/index.html.

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[8] By "total population," I mean whites, slaves, and free persons of color.

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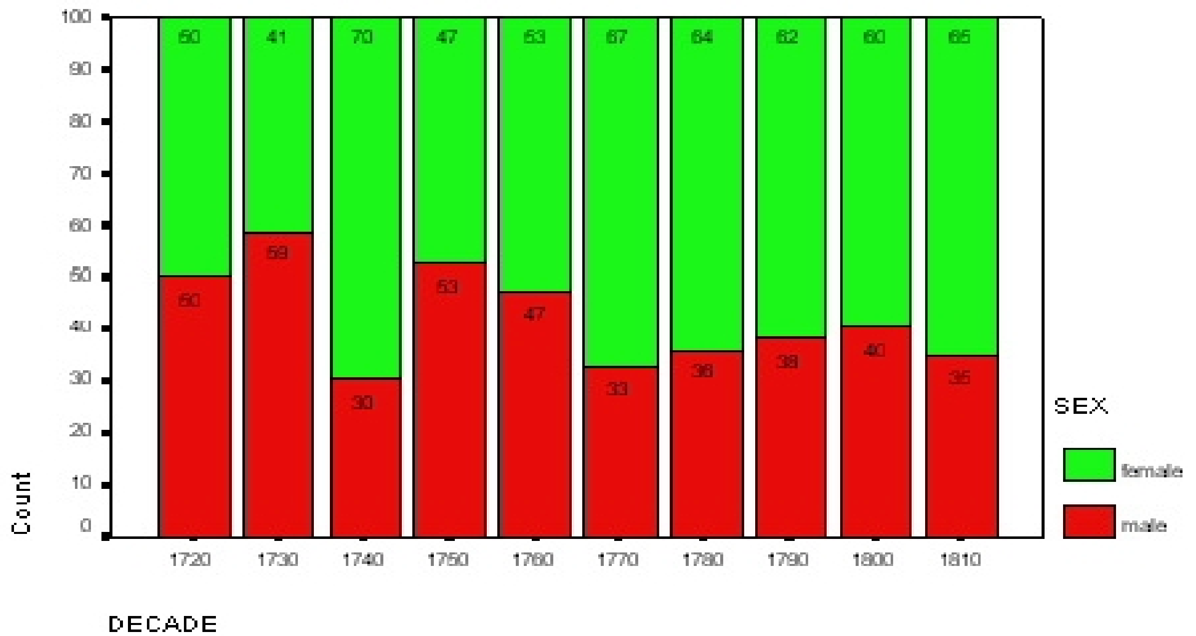

Figure 2: Emancipation of Slaves in Louisiana by Gender, 1720-1820

Source: Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820. *Dr. Hall's Calculations*, in http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/index.html.

Indeed, the person of color constituted, in Spanish Louisiana, an integral part of its social system—although it is also difficult to determine the exact number of free persons of color in antebellum Louisiana.[9] Their population grew tremendously during the Spanish era of colonial rule.

Figure 3 (p. 14) shows the proportion of free persons of color compared to whites and slaves in New Orleans during the colonial era. The free colored population grew steadily over the decades reaching 1,566 persons of color in 1805 – being half of the whites' and slaves' populations.

[9] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, p. 5. Hanger states that census takers either undercounted free persons of color or did not distinguish slaves from free black persons during the French and Spanish era.

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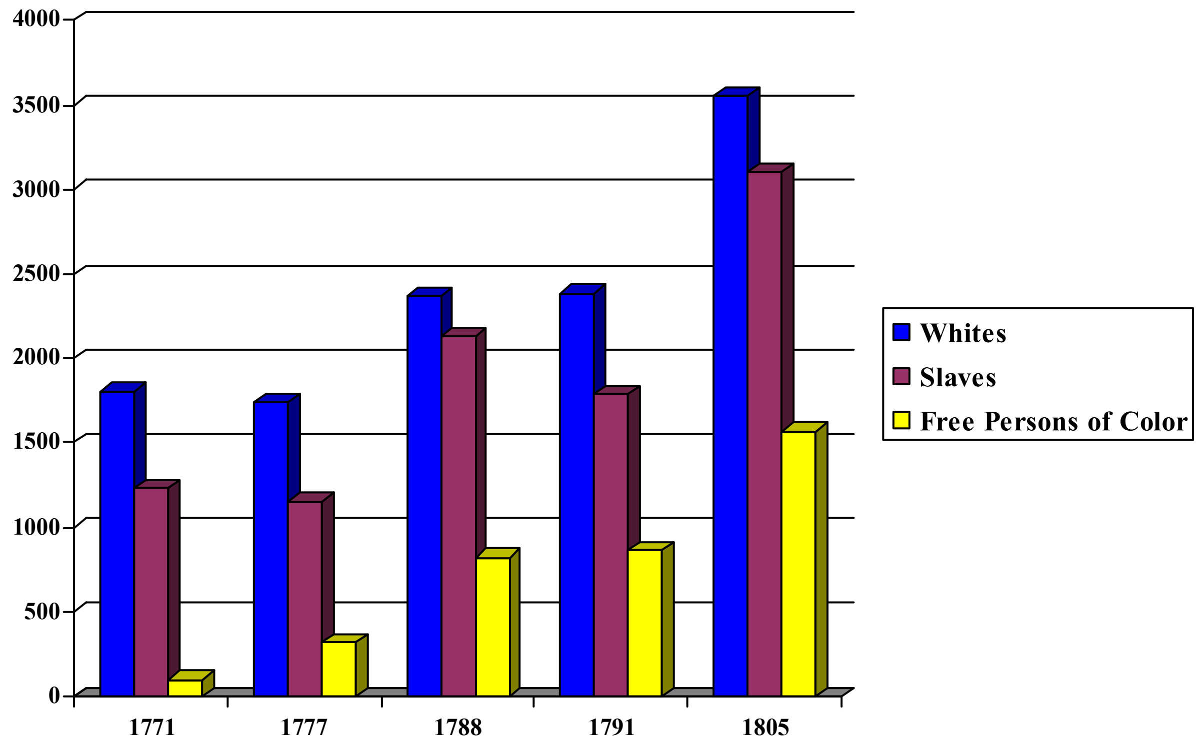

Figure 3: New Orleans Population during the Spanish Era

Source: Kimberly S. Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in James H. Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1996), p. 5.

Growth of the Free Colored Population

Coartación

Various reasons can explain the growth of the free black population. When Louisiana became Spanish, the *Code Noir* was modified and eased manumission and the possibility to buy one's freedom. Gould claims that "the restrictiveness of French law and custom stands in contrast to that of the Spanish who took control of the colony."[10] Spanish Louisiana was

[10] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 5.

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governed by Spanish laws such as *Las siete partidas*[11] and the *Recopilación de leyes de los reinos de las Indias*.[12] Also, the Spanish crown fostered the growth of the free colored population implementing a system known as *coartación*. This system had first been created in Cuba in the eighteenth century, and was then implemented in Louisiana when the Spanish bought the colony.[13] *Coartación* meant that any slave had the right to acquire his freedom, without requiring the consent of his master.[14] Indeed, suing for freedom was the only right slaves had--though some tried to initiate lawsuits for other reasons. In Louisiana, slaves could sue directly which was not the case in other states and which made Louisiana law unique.[15] The owner would receive the amount, or the partial amount, required for the self-purchase and issue a *carta de libertad*. It was more common that owners required slaves to pay the entire amount for their freedom, but some allowed their slaves to pay them back gradually.[16]

Donald E. Everett also suggests that slaves could petition the court for their freedom at the price of their appraisement. For example, when Mrs. Derruisseau "refused to set the payment for the manumission of her slave Miguel, he petitioned the court to appoint a disinterested party to determine a fair value."[17] Slave appraisers (*tasadores*) would then be appointed and estimate the slave's value. Some slaves also petitioned the court to claim a *carta de libertad*. Again, slave appraisers would estimate the slave's value enabling slaves to

[11] *Las Siete Partidas* is considered Spain's most important contribution to the history of law. Its contents encompass almost all aspects of life, from political law to civil to criminal, continuing on to family law, succession, legal matters, and legal proceedings.
[12] *Recopilación de leyes de los reinos de las Indias* is a compilation of the legislation enforced by Spanish monarchs in their Spanish and Philippines colonies.
[13] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, p. 17.
[14] Ibid., p. 7.
[15] Judith Kelleher Schafer, Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), pp. 221-2.
[16] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, pp. 17-18.
[17] Donald E. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in Colonial Louisiana," Louisiana History 7, no. 1 (Winter, 1966): p. 45.

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demand their freedom.[18] Judith Kelleher Schafer claims that hundreds of suits for freedom were filed in New Orleans between 1846 and 1862. Masters sued to emancipate their slaves, the slaves themselves petitioned the court for their freedom, or free persons of color petitioned the court to prove their freedom status.[19] According to Schafer, judges would "often [rule] in favor of freedom."[20]

Manumissions

Furthermore, many slaves were legally freed by their masters. Masters could manumit their slaves *inter vivos* (meaning that the donor was still living during the manumission process). Indeed, this was the most common type of manumission in Louisiana (see figure 4, below). During the period 1771-1803, there were 330 emancipations *inter vivos* namely 34% of all types of emancipations.

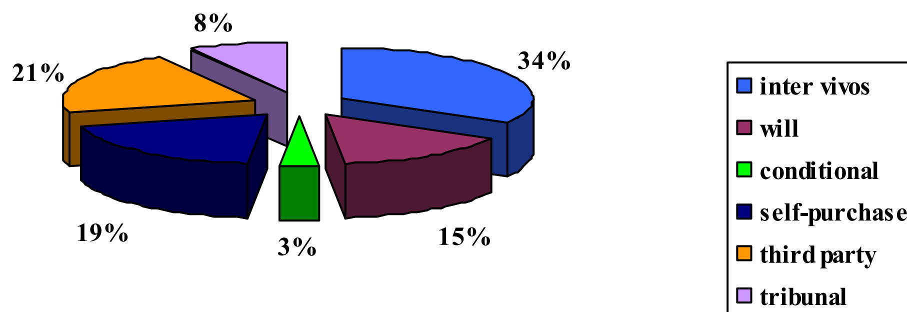

Figure 4: Types of Manumission in New Orleans, 1771-1803

Source: Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, p. 8.

[18] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, p. 21.
[19] Judith Kelleher Schafer, Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846-1862 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), p. 15.
[20] Ibid., p. 32.

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Slaveholders would mainly manumit women and children "without compensation to themselves"[21] meaning that they granted their slaves' freedom gratis. These manumissions usually revealed white men's unions with free women of color, and their strong desire to confer them their liberty, although there was no "allusion to informal sexual relationships or common law unions.[22] Also, the term "for services rendered" certainly reveals a much "closer relationship than master/slave"—especially when it is the case with children.[23] Furthermore, according to Hanger, white men would admit paternity in their wills.[24] Sometimes, white men chose a more 'direct' way to emancipate their children. Hanger gives the example of a white man, Thomas Reed, who bought directly his children's freedom from a New Orleans slaveholder.[25]

Masters could emancipate their slaves by testament. In this case, personal affection was "in many cases a reason for freeing a slave."[26] In addition, just as it was the case for *inter vivos* emancipations, slave owners sometimes donated items or a sum of money to their slaves.[27] They would also provide for "the training and care of young slaves."[28] Hanger also includes manumissions which were "conditioned upon additional service." In this case, the freed slave would continue to serve his/her former master for a specific amount of time.[29] For instance, Francisco Demezellière emancipated the *parda* Fanchon "with the condition that she serves

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[21] Judith Kelleher Schafer, Becoming Free, Remaining Free, p. 12.
[22] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," Louisiana History 31, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): p. 249.
[23] Ibid., p. 250.
[24] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," in Dormon, Creoles of Color of the Gulf South, pp. 13 and 15.
[25] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 250.
[26] Everett, "Free Persons of Color in Colonial Louisiana," p. 45.
[27] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 14-15.
[28] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 251.
[29] Ibid., p. 255.

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him for the remainder of his stay in Louisiana.[30] Slaves could also be manumitted at their master's death.[31]

A third party (a relative or a friend—white, free black or slave) could also request the manumission of a slave. Many free persons of color started the manumission process.[32] For example, the *morena libre* Angelica petitioned the court to emancipate her granddaughter María Antonia, and had a slave appraiser estimate the girl's price.[33] Hanger says that manumissions by a third party prevailed in the early 1800s.[34] Moreover, this might have been more frequent than the documents revealed because "many documents did not specifically state the source of funds."[35] As a result, more and more slaves became free. Also, natural growth played a great part in the increase of the free colored population.

Voluntary manumissions tended to favor *pardos*. On the contrary, *morenos* had to buy their freedom.[36] Nicole Ribianszky, referring to Berlin and Schweninger's works, says that, indeed, there was not a large-scale emancipation of dark-skinned African Americans. There was a "selective" manumission based on phenotype in the Lower South.[37] Also, in Saint Domingue, it was easier for a mixed-blood slave to have access to his/her freedom rather than for a black slave. David P. Geggus says that "the majority of slaves so freed were mulatto children," and adds that "a black slave's prospects for manumission were even more remote, as over half the slaves freed each year were of mixed racial descent."[38]

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[30] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 255.
[31] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 7.
[32] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 263.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 9.
[35] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 261.
[36] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 10.
[37] Nicole Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone: Property Holding Free Women of Color in Natchez, Mississippi, 1779-1865" (MA thesis, Michigan State University, 2003), p. 37.
[38] David P. Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene

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Figures 5 and 6 (p. 19) show that free women and men of color under 16 years old were more likely to be manumitted than purchase their freedom. On the contrary, women and men aged between 16 and 49 years old were more inclined to purchase their freedom than to be emancipated by their masters. Finally, older slaves—men and women—aged over 49 years old would also have to purchase their freedom. Thus, young slaves had more opportunities than older slaves. Finally, figure 7 (p. 20) reveals that, at the end of the eighteenth century, more slaves would purchase their freedom. Indeed, New Orleans slaves and interests acting on their behalf became more aware and took greater advantage of privileges the Spanish administration offered."[39] Therefore, these figures show that adult slaves had several potential avenues to freedom, and that they followed them.

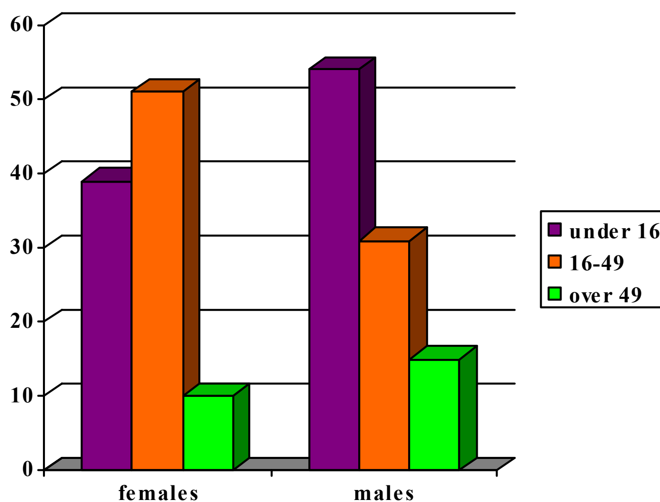

Figure 5: Manumission by Master: Age Group and Gender, New Orleans, 1769-1779

Source: Kimberly S. Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," Louisiana History 31, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): p. 252.

Clark Hine, eds., More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 268.

[39] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 247.

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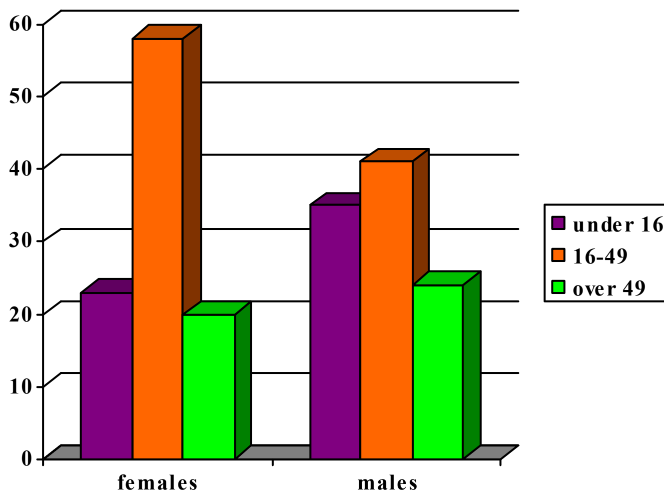

Figure 6: Self-Purchase or Third Party: Age Group and Gender, New Orleans, 1769-1779

Source: Ibid.

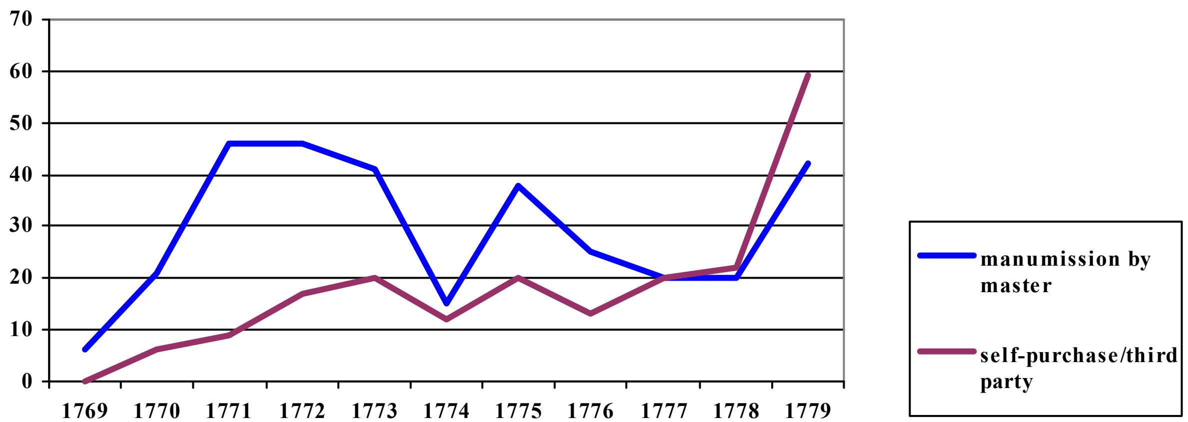

Figure 7: Manumissions in New Orleans by Year, 1769-1779

Source: Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 246.

Emphasis on Emancipation of Female Slaves

Female slaves were more likely to gain their freedom through manumission or self-purchase. (see figure 8, p. 21). Likewise, in Saint Domingue, access to freedom was easier for slave women

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than for men through manumission.[40] So not only was manumission based on race, but it was also based on gender. Also, from the perspective of "age groups," all age groups included, women were more likely to be freed or purchase their freedom. Above all, free women of color aged between 16 and 49 years old were especially inclined to be freed, or purchase their freedom, compared to free men of color. Hanger says:

> This trend was attributed in part to the fact that female slaves could more readily acquire the necessary funds by selling services and goods and by begging. In addition, females, deemed less valuable than males, were able to collect their purchase price in a shorter time span, and masters were more willing to part with them than with male slaves. Most important, female slaves outnumbered male slaves in urban areas like New Orleans where self-purchase was more common.[41]

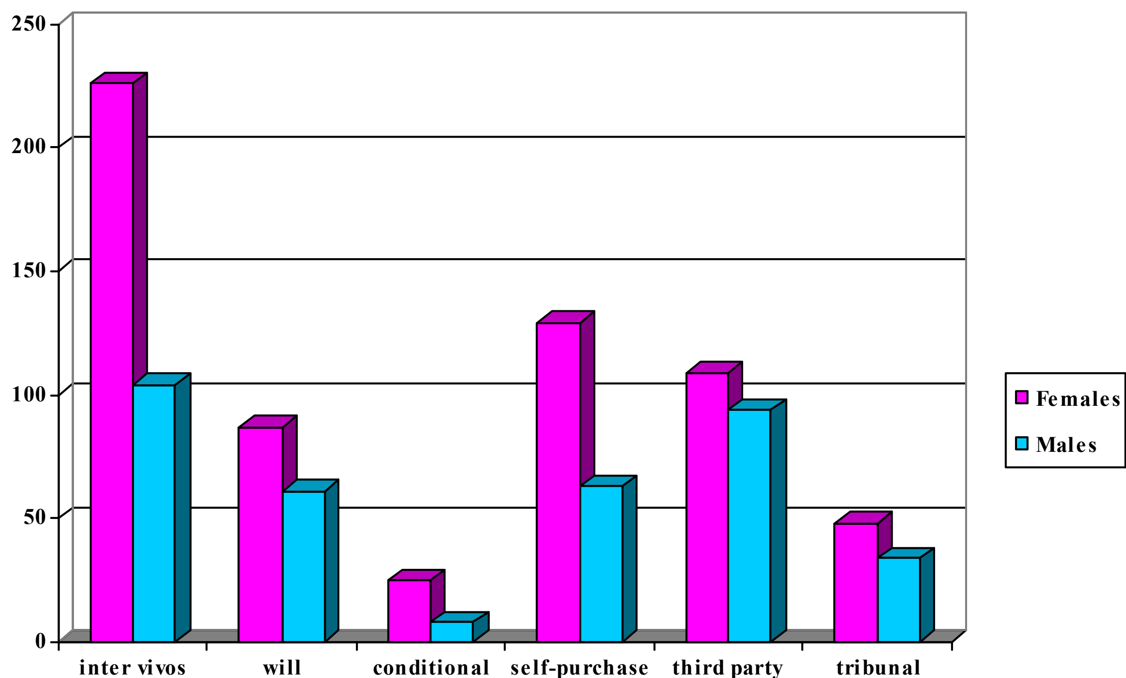

Figure 8: Type of Manumission by Gender, New Orleans, 1771-1803

Source: Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 10.

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[40] Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 268.
[41] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 10.

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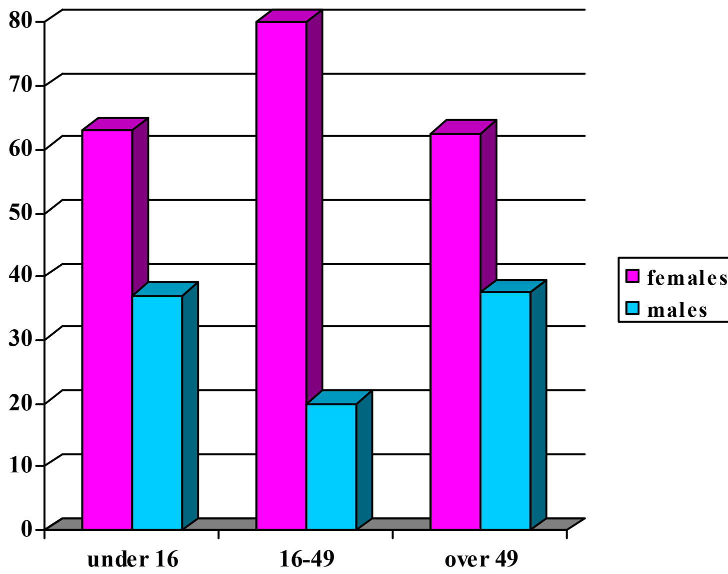

Figure 9: Manumission by Master (%): Proportion of Females/Males and Age Group, New Orleans, 1769-1779

Source: Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 252.

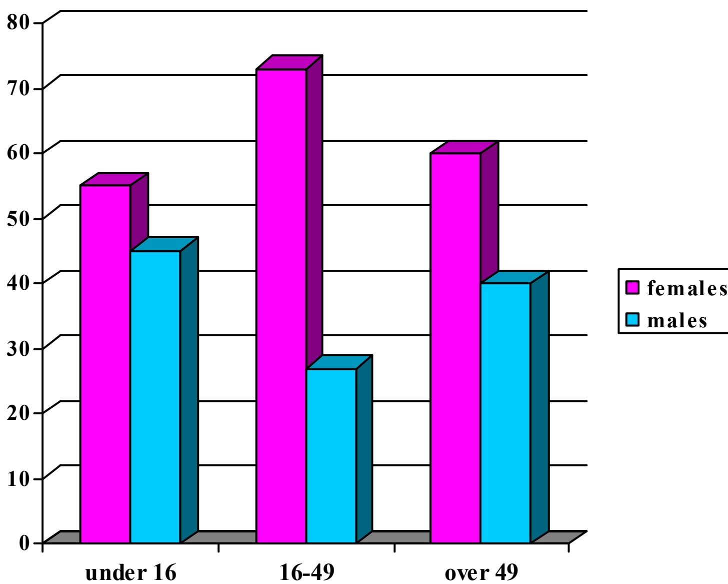

Figure 10: Self-Purchase or Third Party (%): Proportion of Females/Males and Age Group, New Orleans, 1769-1779

Source: Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 252.

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Often, these freed slaves women cohabited with white men. Indeed, concubinage between white men, slave women, and free women of color was practiced and accepted in Louisiana. The frontier conditions partly explain this "social fluidity" in colonial Louisiana. The population developed close ties as people were isolated and often subject to possible attacks from the exterior. Hall claims that the colony "had little to offer [as it] was poor, unhealthy, dangerous, and uninviting,"[42] and the colony suffered many hardships—famines, corruption, brutality, etc. Also, this frontier society was deemed "sans religion, sans justice, sans ordre, et sans police."[43] Indeed, the population of the colony was very diverse. It was made up of officers, soldiers, Indians, black slaves, prisoners, deserters, vagabonds, prostitutes, and some women accused of debauchery or irreligion.[44] Therefore, this social chaos favored interracial relations. Hall argues that Louisiana "socio-racial hierarchy was ill defined and hard to enforce," but also that Louisiana society was an "extremely fluid society."[45]

It was also true that, in some areas, "the specter of early death" was close, but gender imbalance also prevailed. There was a scarcity of white women, and as a result, white men would choose black women. As early as 1722, a census of the population in New Orleans showed that there were two times more white men than white women.[46] Later, in 1771, there were 1,034 white males for 769 (white) females.[47] In 1777, there was a ratio of 175 males per 100 females, 162 in 1791, and 115 in 1805.[48] However, in some communities, for example, at the Pointe Coupée post, white marriageable

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[42] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 11.
[43] Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue" Louisiana History 3, no. 4 (Summer, 1970): p. 409. "Without religion, justice, order, and police."
[44] Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana, p. 5-7.
[45] Ibid., p. 128.
[46] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 409, fn. 13. Foner says that there were "293 men, 140 women, 155 French servants, 51 Indian slaves, and 514 Negro slaves."
[47] Virginia Gould, "In Defense of Their Creole Culture: The Free Creoles of Color of New Orleans, Mobile and Pensacola," Gulf Coast Historical Review 9.1 (Fall 1993): p. 31.
[48] Kimberly S. Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World: Free Black Women in Colonial New Orleans," in Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds., The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 220.

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women outnumbered white men.[49] So the shortage of white women was not necessarily a criterion when settlers got involved in interracial relations. Indeed, it was often a preference. According to Hall, wealthy white men frequently preferred liaisons with slaves or free women of color. Virginia Gould claims that this was the major reason for the increase of the free colored population. Travelers in the colony frequently noticed those interracial liaisons,[50] and they wrote especially about their fascination with *Quadroon Balls*.[51] Also, the demographic conditions concerning free persons of color and slaves were the opposite of whites'. Therefore, interracial unions were not exceptional due to these circumstances.

Gould suggests that these interracial liaisons "began as an extension of the exploitative nature of slavery" and that it was very much noticeable along the Gulf Cost.[52] Hanger says that concubinage "was definitely exploitative."[53] Other scholars, such as James Hugo Johnston, demonstrated that, even if these interracial liaisons were often abusive, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between abuse and consent. On plantations, planters took slave women as their mistresses. Walter Johnson claims that slaveholders had their "fancies" or "mistresses," but they were "unspeakable."[54] Slave narratives indicate that it was customary for masters to choose black women as partners: [55]

> "he [my master] loved colored women."
>
> "He (my master) liked some of the nigger womens too good to have any other white man playing around them. He had his sweethearts among his slave women. I ain't no

[49] Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana, p. 240.
[50] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 410-11.
[51] For further discussion on *Quadroon Balls*, see Violet Harrington Bryan, "Marcus Christian's Treatment of *Les Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Sybil Kein, ed., Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color, p. 50-1.
[52] Virginia Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty: The Free Women of Color of the Gulf Ports of New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola, 1769-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1991), p. 330-1.
[53] Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World," in Clinton and Gillespie, eds., The Devil's Lane, p. 226.
[54] Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul, Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 113-5. Johnson says that these "fancy" women were sold through auctions; they were selected according to their physical appearance, and were intended as sexual partners for white men.
[55] Belinda Hurmence, My Folks Don't Want Me To Talk About Slavery (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair Publisher, 1984), pp. 30, 41 and 17.

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> man for telling false stories. I tells the truth, and that is the truth. At that time, it was a hard job to find a master that didn't have women among his slaves. That was a general thing among the slave owners. One of the slave girls on a plantation near us went to her missus and told her about her marster forcing her to let him have something to do with her, and her missus told her, Well, go on, you belong to him."
>
> "why didn't they let us stay where we was, they never wouldn't have been so many half-white niggers, but the old marster was to blame for that."

Some slave women were willing to "take on the role of mistress."[56] Indeed, these liaisons could pull them out from an oppressive system. These women were often emancipated as a result of their sexual liaisons with white men. They were usually manumitted for "good and loyal service and for the love and care they had shown to the masters, without any allusion to informal sexual relationships or common-law unions."[57] Hall says that these women were then often listed as white in the censuses "regardless of their color."[58] White men sometimes purchased their children's freedom. Such manumissions where quite complex as masters had to meet with usual requirements of Louisiana succession law, and relatives often sued to void the wills' manumissions to protect their own financial interests.

Such relationships in New Orleans mirrored those throughout the Atlantic. For example, in Saint Louis and Gorée, Sénégal, some slave women also formed liaisons with white men, and "hoped thereby to acquire some European commodities for trade, besides learning a European language and European ways."[59] These women were called *signares*, a word derived from the Portuguese *senhoras*. From the seventeenth century to the early decades of the nineteenth century, a great number of European men would marry these women and free them after their weddings.[60] Marriages included numerous obligations among which the groom had

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[56] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," p. 59.
[57] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 13.
[58] Hall, Africans in Colonial Louisiana, p. 240.
[59] George E. Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003), p. 212.
[60] Ibid., p. 213.

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to provide the bride with a house, or provide slaves for their children's well-being.[61] Furthermore, due to their privileged status, signares engaged themselves in savvy business carrying on "most of the local commerce," possessed slaves to assist them, and became very wealthy.[62] George E. Brooks makes reference to "marital and commercial alliances" between signares and European men from which both parties benefited.[63] Indeed, men could marry well-off women who knew the culture and customs of the country, and these women could prosper and achieve a unique status in Senegalese society.

In New Orleans, Creole mothers encouraged their daughters to accept relationships with white men, who would care for them financially. Mothers accompanied their daughters to *Quadroon Balls* where they could meet, dance and talk with white men—who frequented these places alone. When a man desired to form a liaison with a free woman of color, "he makes a bargain with the mother, agrees to pay her a sum of money, perhaps 2000 dollars, or some sum in proportion to her merits, as a fund upon which she may retire when the liaison terminates."[64] The daughter was then "*une placée*." *Quadroon Balls* took place between 1780 and the 1850s and enabled these women, "*les placées*," to survive, and in some cases, to become quite wealthy. Hence, the white man would move his "concubine" into a home of her own, rear a family, and live the life of a married man. "Plaçage" was not only "pragmatic, but … [also] ingenious"[65] as it allowed these women to achieve an important status. Access to property or business for free people of color in Louisiana frequently came from their mothers and grandmothers. As a result, as Arlette Gautier puts it, "Les relations entre les hommes

[61] George E. Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa, p. 220.
[62] Ibid., pp. 210-11.
[63] Ibid., p. 206.
[64] Violet Harrington Bryan, "Marcus Christian's Treatment of *Les Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 50.
[65] Joan M. Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*: How Race and Sex Defined the Lifestyles of Free Women of Color," Sybil Kein, ed., Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color, p. 64.

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blancs et les femmes noires sont un élément essentiel du rapport spécifique des femmes à l'esclavage, que ce soit en tant qu'élément supplémentaire d'oppression ou que possibilité de sortie du sort commun" meaning that relations between white men and black women are an essential element of the specific relation of these women to slavery, either as an additional element of oppression, or as a way out of common fate.[66]

In New Orleans, liaisons between white men and slave women were particularly encouraged by the physical arrangement of the city, the pattern of urban households, and the nature of urban slavery. Gould claims that "most urban slaves lived in the same house with their master/mistress or in a small cabin enclosed by high walls within the back yard"[67] and that the "urban facility or compound … provided a means of social control—slaves where under constant watch—as well as shelter." In fact, "it embodied the servile relationship between whites and blacks and a style of living appropriate to its setting." This type of setting/arrangement intensified intimacy between masters and slaves, and it could either lead to affectionate relationships or cruel ones. In Loudoun County, Virginia, Brenda Stevenson finds that free people of color sometimes lived in white households, and that the majority of them were women. She assumes that they may have been white men's "mulatto offspring," domestics, apprentices or farm laborers.[68]

Therefore, slave women and free women of color were aware of the unique opportunities that were available to them, and looked to improve their status.

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[66] Arlette Gautier, Les sœurs de Solitude : La condition féminine dans l'esclave aux Antilles du XVIIème au XIXème siècle (Paris : Editions Caribéennes, 1985), p. 152.
[67] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," pp. 49-50.
[68] Brenda Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 303-4.

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Saint Domingue Refugees

The free population of color also grew due to the arrival of immigrants coming from Saint Domingue in the 1790s, and from Cuba in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Indeed, between 1791 and 1804, black revolutionaries won control of the colony of Saint Domingue, and renamed it Haiti. About 10,000 refugees—whites, slaves and free persons of color—of the Haitian Revolution came to the United States in the 1790s and many settled in New Orleans.[69] Other mass departures from Saint Domingue took place in 1803 when thousands settled in Jamaica, and about 30,000 whites, slaves and free persons of color fled to Cuba.[70] Many of these Cuban refugees trickled into New Orleans during the following years,[71] and several refugees expelled from Jamaica arrived in 1803 and 1804.[72] The largest number of Saint Domingue refugees arrived between 1809 and 1810. Indeed, Cuba deported many of the refugees who had settled there. Paul Lachance says that "Louisiana was the preferred destination of those leaving from the ports of Baracoa and Santiago de Cuba."[73] About 9,059 Saint Domingue refugees from Cuba arrived between May 1809 and January 1810,[74] growing to 10,000 refugees. These refugees, Lachance claims, chose to settle in Louisiana because they had a limited choice of other refuges, New Orleans was one of the closest ports, and they hoped that the ban on importation of slaves into the United States would not be enforced in Louisiana.[75]

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[69] Paul F. Lachance, "The Foreign French," in Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon, eds., Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), p. 103.
[70] Ibid., p. 103.
[71] Ibid., p. 104.
[72] Ibid. These refugees had been expelled by the British from the island.
[73] Ibid., p. 105.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., pp. 106-7.

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The refugees, especially free persons of color, were not welcomed in New Orleans. Tension surrounding Louisiana's social and racial structure was already perceptible, and the Saint Domingue refugees did not reduce it. Indeed, the transfer of the colony to the United States in 1803 brought some apprehension. Foner claims that "[t]he Americans were generally nervous about taking over a territory whose population had seen frequent changes of government, with loyalties torn between France, Spain, and the United States."[76]

Governor William Claiborne thought that the city should take precautions regarding the entry of slaves and free persons of color. Several restrictions were placed on colored persons. For instance, free persons of color were required to prove their status as free, or they would be classified as fugitive slaves.[77] Also, there were some restrictions upon manumission, or admission of free blacks into Louisiana.[78] However, these laws did not prevent the massive flux of immigrants to Louisiana, who impacted the growth and increasing wealth of the free colored population.

Most of these refugees were *gens de couleur libres*, and they doubled the number of free persons of color in Louisiana.[79] About half of them were mulattoes, children of white Frenchmen and slave women. Just as in Louisiana, the frontier conditions, the scarcity of white women, the increasing number of slaves, and the patterns of emancipation favored the growth of a free colored population in Saint Domingue.[80] Laura Foner states that the manumission of mulatto slave children led in majority to the growth of the free colored

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[76] Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 421.
[77] Donald E. Everett, "Emigres and Militiamen: Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1815," Journal of Negro History 38, no. 4 (Oct., 1953): p. 385.
[78] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 422.
[79] C.E. Richard, Louisiana: An Illustrated History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Public Broadcasting, 2003), p. 20.
[80] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 411.

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population.[81] In spite of some restrictions (*Code Noir*), these manumissions and concubinage persisted over the years in the colony.

Gens de couleur libres from Saint Domingue were experienced craftsmen, could own plantations, and some owned slaves, and were "unusually prosperous."[82] The free colored population in Louisiana, and New Orleans in particular, experienced greater freedom than free persons of color in Saint Domingue. Yet, free persons of color in Saint Domingue performed important roles in the society, just as in Louisiana. Free men of color were also used in the militia and the *marée chaussée*[83], and acquired significant wealth. Foner claims that the government's policy towards them was "flexible and had a very definite purpose."[84] Thus, free persons of color had a unique status in Saint Domingue apart from slaves and whites. The size of the free colored population is unclear, as well as the number of free colored women in the colony, but their number constituted a significant portion of the overall population.

Free women of color were "certainly" numerous in towns.[85] Some were often prostitutes and mistresses to white men. There were also women who were "legitimately married" and who conducted business in towns, such as retail trade or housing. Indeed, a large number of free women of color in Cap Français were actively engaged in various business ventures that allowed them to purchase luxury items such as fine linens and clothing without resorting to prostitution.[86] They were domestics, housekeepers, shopkeepers, grease dealers, or

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[81] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 412.
[82] Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 269.
[83] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 418. The *marée chaussée* is a "mounted police organization which captured runaway slaves, patrolled the highways, and fought maroon colonies."
[84] Ibid., p. 419.
[85] Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 270.
[86] Susan M. Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Francais," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 281-2.

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greengrocers, worked as managers of retail shops, operated stalls in marketplaces, and were peddlers.[87]

Some women were also landowners and owned slaves. Geggus claims that "Women landowners varied from solitary ex-slaves living in ram shackle cabins on an acre of land to the proprietors of coffee plantations with large families and forty or more slaves.[88] Susan M. Socolow claims that, in Cap Français, they regularly bought and sold slaves.[89] It seems that they engaged themselves in this business for "economic profit" and "chose not to identify with their heritage of slavery."[90] Buying and selling slaves was a real business, and free women of color had their preferences. For example, they sometimes preferred to purchase African rather than Creole slaves, or men rather than women. Whatever their occupations, they bought them for their own use, as it was a mark of economic and social standing.[91] Overall, they did not have any extra consideration for their slaves, who were for them a source of profit. They bought, trained, sold, rent, branded them, and did not hesitate to separate families.[92] Socolow also mentions that it was unusual for free women of color to manumit slaves.[93] So some free women of color became very affluent in Cap Français, and contributed to the local economy. Finally, women played diverse roles during the great revolution and the war of independence. Some participated in the slave uprisings, others acted as spies or prostituted themselves to

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[87] Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Francais," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, pp. 281-2.
[88] Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 270.
[89] Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Francais," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 285.
[90] Ibid., pp. 285-6.
[91] Ibid., pp. 286-7.
[92] Ibid., pp. 287-289.
[93] Ibid., p. 289.

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obtain munitions or whatever information they needed, and others protected whites and fled with them.[94]

Most of the free persons of color immigrated to the United States with their slaves. However, in 1804, the federal government outlawed the external slave trade in Louisiana, and the United States Constitution forbade the importation of slaves after January 1808. The French, Spanish, and Anglo-Americans were offended when the United States Congress prohibited the continued importation of slaves from other countries. Though the United States withdrew from the international slave trade, the internal slave trade between slaveholding states grew during the nineteenth century. Paul Lachance also claims that Congress voted not to apply the 1808 ban on the importation of slaves to slaves which belonged to the Cuban refugees.[95]

Free Blacks from northern states and other areas of the South also emigrated to New Orleans.[96] In 1820, the free colored population rose to 6,237; in 1830, it had practically doubled with 11,562 free persons of color; finally, in 1840, it reached 15,075.

From the 1830s to the 1850s, tensions towards free persons of color in New Orleans grew progressively, and restrictions on manumissions prevailed. H. E. Sterkx claims that "slaveholders became convinced that the practice of manumitting slaves constituted a serious menace to the institution of slavery [… and] it would operate to reduce the number of free Negroes whose presence, it was felt, had a tendency to make slaves restless and

[94] Geggus, "Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, pp. 272-3.
[95] Lachance, "The Foreign French," in Hirsch and Logsdon, eds., Creole New Orleans, p. 107.
[96] H.E. Sterkx, The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana (Rutherford: Associated University Press, 1972), p. 95.

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insubordinate."[97] The Legislature also prevented free blacks from emigrating to Louisiana, and made it mandatory for slaves to leave the state once emancipated.[98]

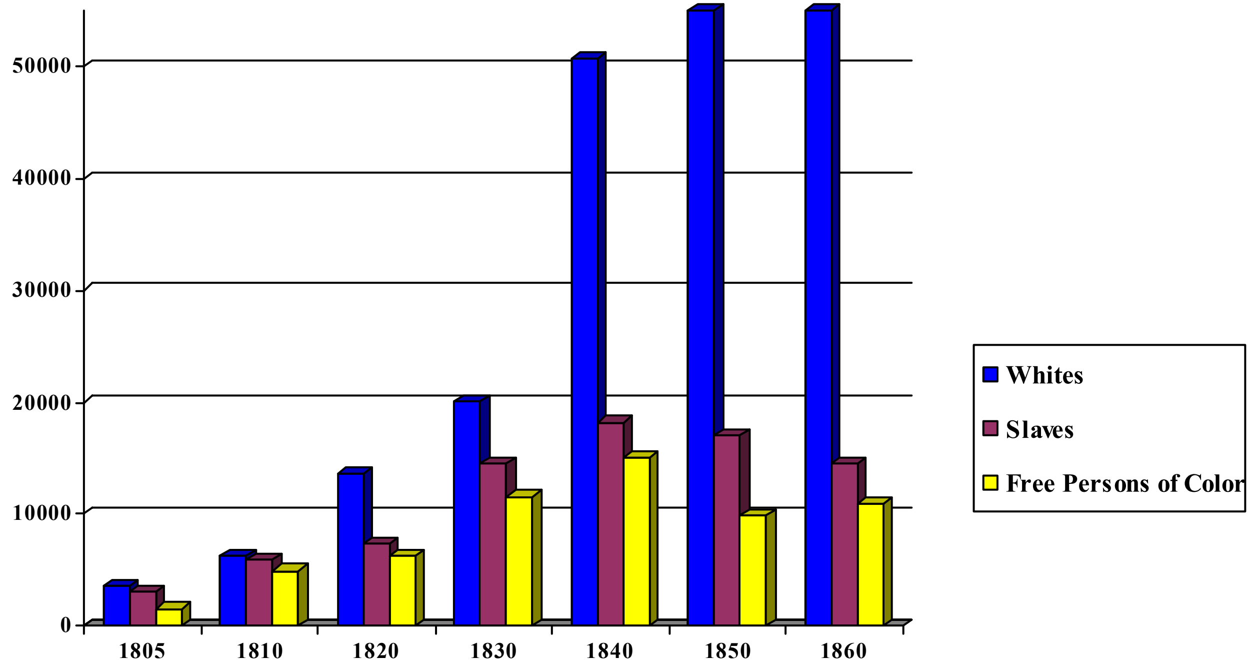

Figure 11: New Orleans Population, 1805-1860

Source: Joseph Logsdon and Caryn Cossé Bell, "The Americanization of Black New Orleans, 1850-1900," in Hirsh and Logsdon, eds., Creole New Orleans, p. 206.

This explains the sudden decline of free persons of color in New Orleans in 1850 and 1860 (9,905 and 10,939 respectively). Still, a substantial number of free blacks remained in Louisiana, and especially in New Orleans, in the pre-Civil War period.

Free Persons of Color: A Distinct Class

Free people of color recognized that they shared unique identities which united them together, and took great pride in their heritage. Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes' Nos Hommes et

[97] H.E. Sterkx, The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana, p. 141.
[98] Ibid., p. 143.

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Notre Histoire—Our People and Our Heritage—is probably the most vibrant tribute paid to *Creoles of color*.[99] They constantly sought to protect their identities, and as a result family ties were paramount to them. They protected their identities through kinship and endogamous marriages, achieving exclusivity; they put a great deal upon selecting their mates. For instance, Creoles from Cane River usually practiced group intermarriage, and arranged marriages between their offspring.[100] Schweninger claims that endogamous marriages were "almost universal."[101]

Race was the most obvious criterion in choosing a peer: blacks were excluded from forming alliances with mixed raced families of color. Class consciousness was also very important. For example, Marie-Suzanne (one of Marie-Thérèze Coincoin's children) waited to marry a white man rather than a black man, and three of her brothers married free women of color. At the beginning of the Civil War, there were seventeen different families on Isle Brevelle and there was no recorded case of concubinage with a person who was not mixed race in ancestry. Mills claims "All spouses were chosen from the category known as *gens de couleur libre*, men and women of part-white ancestry and/or part-Indian ancestry."[102] Concerning the different families who settled on Cane River, some people of color from New Orleans "who carried old and proud French names and were well educated" were assimilated to the population of Isle Brevelle. Most of them were the "*placées*" and their offspring.[103] The Cane River Creoles of color also accepted some refugees from Saint Domingue in their

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[99] Rudolphe Lucien Desdunes, Our People and Our Heritage (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, translation, 1973).
[100] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. xxviii-xxix.
[101] Loren Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," The American Historical Review 95, no. 1 (Feb., 1990): p. 37.
[102] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. 102.
[103] Ibid., p. 79.

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colony, and immigrants from France.[104] Loren Schweninger also recalls that a free person of color would choose a partner according three criteria: "economic position," "cultural status," and "free, mixed-blood ancestry."[105] As a result, creoles would select a peer very carefully.

Creoles also organized themselves into exclusive organizations. Gould mentions records of fraternal organizations in New Orleans and Pensacola. These free people of color associations included "The Creole Fire Company" and "The Creole Social Club."[106] The former was founded in 1819, and was part of the fire companies in Mobile. They held regular meetings often attended by a local priest. They also "paraded at Mardi-Gras, organized balls, picnics, and other social functions to raise money for their company and their equipment."[107] The latter also held regular meetings; their main purpose was to provide insurance for their members. For example, when a member was sick, he could rely on the organization for living expenses, or burial expenses when it was necessary. Similar organizations were founded in Barbados, for example, which would care for the poor.[108]

Education also played a great role in free people of color's lives. In most Southern states, Mills states that teaching a free or non-free person of color was a crime, but in Louisiana, it was tolerated to a certain degree.[109] Education was a priority for all free families of color: children were sent to private schools set up in homes, or educated by Catholic churches of the region. Moreover, in New Orleans, some institutions provided primary education "in the French style" from the 1810s and the 1820s. These schools were run by free men of color or by French people. Free people of color usually sent their children to these institutions, and

[104] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. 79.
[105] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 37.
[106] Gould, "In Defense of Their Creole Culture," p. 38.
[107] Ibid., pp. 38-40.
[108] Janette Elice Gayle, "Ann Gill: Free Woman of Color at the Nexus of Politics and Religion in Nineteenth Century Barbados" (MA thesis, University of California, 2004), p. 21.
[109] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. 183.

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after graduation, some even sent their sons to France to pursue their education.[110] Edmond Dédé, a composer, and Norbert Rillieux, an engineer, are among famous free men of color who received French educations.[111] Writers such as Armand Lanusse, Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes or Michel Séligny are great contributors to New Orleans cultural and artistic life. Thus, free people of color greatly contributed to the literary, cultural and artistic life in New Orleans in the XIXth century.

One of the first educated blacks was Marie Bernard Couvent, a free woman of color who had been a slave in her youth. According to her will (1837), she bequeathed her legacy for the creation of a school for colored children.[112] According to the Creole historian, Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, the Couvent school was the best attended school during the time of slavery. It also boasted an all-black faculty.[113]

Free blacks performed a wide range of occupations in Spanish Louisiana. According to Mary Gehman, "[t]rades, skills and businesses were often handed down from parent to child going back generations into slavery."[114] The occupations most often noted were cigar maker, mason, barber, carpenter, tailor, shoemaker, bricklayer, pastry maker, carter, cooper, sailor, and navigator. Whites were usually reluctant to perform these kinds of occupations, which profited free blacks.[115] Free persons of color were high-skilled workers and some became very wealthy thanks to their skills. Therefore, free persons of color played an important economic role in New Orleans.

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[110] Michel Fabre, "New Orleans Creole Expatriates in France," in Sybil Kein, ed., Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color, p. 179.
[111] Rillieux discovered the multiple evaporation process of making sugar; Edmond Dédé was conductor of L'Alcazar Orchestra in Bordeaux.
[112] Gould, "In Defense of Their Creole Culture," p. 40.
[113] Desdunes, Our People and Our Heritage, pp. 104-5.
[114] Mary Gehman, "Visible Means of Support," in Sybil Kein, ed., Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color, p. 209.
[115] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 241.

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Moreover, free blacks were soldiers. Hanger claims that they "performed vital defense and public service acts" during the French and the Spanish period. Furthermore, they were often "preferred" by colonial leaders.[116] Indeed, during "political division among the whites," a need to control the slave population, or attacks from Indians, whites relied heavily on free black soldiers. Foner says that, after the Natchez Massacre of 1729, officials recommended the formation of a regular company of free black soldiers in case of further potential attacks—this was also the case in Saint Domingue.[117] Additionally, after the Spanish took control of Louisiana, the Spanish administration had to deal with opposition from whites who "remained loyal" to the French crown. Therefore, the Spanish preferred relying on free blacks to uncover plots or serve as "slave-catchers."[118] In Barbados, Gayle claims that being a militiaman was "a status marker between free and enslaved status."[119] Thus, the militia allowed free men of color to be an integral part of the society.

Free people of color appeared to be a distinct class as regards their trades, business, education and social status, and constantly sought to protect and maintain their distinctiveness and to protect their identities. Mills claims that "the preservation of this third racial class in Louisiana was contingent upon strict adherence to the caste system by its members."[120] Free persons of color believed they were different from blacks as blacks were assimilated to slaves. In South Carolina, Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark claim that free men of color would absolutely not consider slave women as potential spouses.[121] Joan M. Martin talks about a

[116] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom," p. 242.
[117] Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue," p. 415.
[118] Ibid., p. 415.
[119] Gayle, "Ann Gill: Free Woman of Color at the Nexus of Politics and Religion in Nineteenth Century Barbados," p. 21.
[120] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. xiv.
[121] Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), p. 208.

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"schism" between blacks and free persons of color due to the fact that free colored persons were of mixed ancestry.[122] They were told to be proud of their European heritage and to identify with the white population rather than the black population. Also, distancing themselves from slaves would protect their social status.[123]

On the other hand, whites also looked for preserving this caste system. In Spanish Louisiana, all settlers were welcomed and Louisiana was fairly tolerant compared to other states. However, there were some restrictions put on free people of color. For instance, free blacks could be reenslaved. Also, free women of color had to compel to a dress code, the *tignon law*, which prevented them from wearing fine clothes and jewelry, feathers or jewels in their hair, and they also had to cover their hair with kerchiefs. Governor Miró enacted this law in 1786 in order to curb free women of color's social aspirations, as one's dress was associated with one's status.[124]

Mills claims that "[j]ust as whites entertained feelings of superiority to Negroes, so did Louisiana's *gens de couleur libre*.[125] The development of a caste system separated slaves from free people of color. In such a strict social and racial hierarchy, free persons of color were color conscious just as whites were.[126] Above all, social status (legal condition, cultural heritage, skin color, religion, wealth and education) for free persons of color was not "just social status for any, but reflected their specific social circumstances and their values."[127] Free persons of color referred to each other as "our" people who "shared a common identity, a

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[122] Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 59.
[123] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 119.
[124] Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 62.
[125] Mills, The Forgotten People, p. xiv.
[126] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 248.
[127] Ibid., p. 245.

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common fate, and a common humanity."[128] In this respect, one case is revealing. After emancipation, the family of William Johnson (barber of Natchez, Mississippi) changed their names to 'Johnston' "seeking a separation or continuation of a distinction between themselves and the newly freed."[129]

Free women of color's status was exceptional due to their unique relations with white men, and specific patterns of manumission in Spanish Louisiana. Thus, they expanded and exploited the possibilities that were offered to them which allowed them to achieve not only some property but also slaves. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

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[128] Johnson and Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South, p. 207.
[129] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," p. 99.

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CHAPTER 3
EMPHASIS ON FREE WOMEN OF COLOR IN ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS

Free women of color expanded the opportunities that were available to them, and achieved a unique social and economic status in antebellum New Orleans. They challenged racial and gender conventions, and came to own substantial amounts of property including slaves. Some were astute businesswomen and owned large estates.

Social Status: Seizing and Expanding Opportunities

Free women of color challenged the boundaries of race and gender with unique advantages that were available to them. Kimberly Hanger, for instance, claims that they enjoyed some degree of freedom and independence as they "were not expected to marry."[130] The *Code Noir,* which was implemented in Louisiana in 1724, did not prevent interracial relations, although there were strict regulations. Free women of color could maintain formal or informal relations with white men, free men of color, or slaves. There was, as Hanger claims, a "degree of social fluidity" in colonial Louisiana.[131] Yet, as Gould claims, a free woman of color's independence was vulnerable in a society which subordinated women to men, blacks to whites.

Free women of color's relationships with whites were of a particular nature: whites served as guardians and women could sometimes rely on them as a reference—to find a job for instance, or even for protection and assistance.[132] Yet, free women of color did not benefit

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[130] Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World," Clinton and Gillespie, eds., The Devil's Lane, p. 219. Hanger specifies that married white women from the elite class enjoyed a "material standard of living, degree of legal protection, and social status" which was higher than any colored women.
[131] Ibid., p. 220.
[132] Loren Schweninger, "The Fragile Nature of Freedom: Free Women of Color in the U.S. South," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 113.

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from the same protection as white women. Therefore, they "did not assume the need for protection," and rather strove for their autonomy and well-being.[133]

New Orleans society was defined by a hierarchy which created "distinct societal class and race conventions."[134] Free women of color, in particular, were trapped in this kind of social pattern, but some chose not to define themselves in relation to it. For example, some challenged the established patriarchal society with their substantial property and wealth. Gould finds cases of women who defied these boundaries by passing for white, and others who formed ties with white women.[135] Relations between free women of color and white women were influenced in complex ways by social conventions. They often met during marketing activities, household chores, or church. Also, free women of color sometimes worked for white women as cooks or domestics, or they were neighbors. Moreover, men exerted dominance over both groups. Gould also states that there are some cases in which white women worked for free women of color.[136]

When these women shared gender conventions, they were separated by race due to social customs and legal restrictions. Diaries, letters, or court cases show that free women of color and white women did not share bonds of gender.[137] Gould also discovers "tensions and antagonisms" between these women.[138] Scholars such as Jacqueline Dowd Hall and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese showed that women of color and white women did not share bonds of gender because they were "profoundly" divided by class and by race.[139]

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[133] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 318.
[134] Ibid., p. 136.
[135] Ibid., p. 146.
[136] Ibid., p. 150.
[137] Ibid., p. 153-4.
[138] Ibid., p. 156.
[139] Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Mind That Burns in Each Body: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, & Sharon Thompson (eds.), Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White

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Suzanne Lebsock says that women were divided by race in the labor force. For example, seamstresses were both black and white, but washerwomen were all black. Another example shows that factory labor (till the 1850s) was cleanly divided by race: tobacco factories employed black women, whereas cotton factories employed white women. Furthermore, free women of color were more likely to enter the paid labor force than were white women as they needed money to support their families. Lebsock states that feminism "requires a consciousness that all women share similar problems." Thus, identification between white women and black women was complicated by social and racial status. She says:

> It may have been that the single greatest barrier to the development of an indigenous southern feminism was the difficulty for both white and black women had in seeing something of themselves in one another.[140]

Concubinage heightened these tensions. Joan M. Martin finds that a free woman of color was considered "a woman without honor or morals solely because of her skin color"[141] since free women of color did not meet the European idea of beauty. Their features were associated with sensuality, seductiveness, exoticism, and thus with immorality. This was intensified by stereotyping that exaggerated African women's sexuality.[142] Free women of color did not find themselves morally questionable;[143] however, white women often disapproved of those who engaged in sexual relationships with white men.[144] *Limpieza de sangre*—purity of blood—introduced during the Spanish period in Louisiana, made the distinction between those of "pure blood" from those of African descent, and limited contact between the two.[145] Liaisons

Women of the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).
[140] Suzanne Lebsock, The Free Women of Petersburg (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), p. 241.
[141] Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 63.
[142] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 189-92.
[143] Ibid., p. 230.
[144] Ibid., p. 155.
[145] Martin, "Plaçage and the Louisiana *Gens de Couleur Libre*," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 64.

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between white men and free women of color threatened the social hierarchy of the colony. This made relationships between white and black women difficult.

The impact of the model of white southern womanhood was strong. Gould asserts that "In racially divided slave societies […] where racial exclusivity and status, or family honor, depended upon the chastity of women, elite families sought to protect their women, generally by suppressing and controlling those women's sexuality."[146] Marriage and fidelity were imposed on women, and the importance of virtue was greatly stressed. Southerners inherited this concept, as well as the emphasis on family, and the fact that women's lives had to be centered in the household, where men dominated the household and women. Interestingly, Gould states that "Southern men and women recognized the domination of women by men, but couched it in terms of protection."[147]

White women were associated with delicacy and purity. Numerous accounts of travelers underlined white women's respected qualities.[148] Indeed, southern white men sharply drew the lines of identity for southern white women by prescribing that they embody the ideals of purity, virtuousness, and chastity. Meanwhile, both southern white men and women constructed black slave women's identity as being in direct opposition to that of the virtuous white "southern lady." Whites believed that slave women's "tainted" status touched that of free black women, who were thus "deemed to be incompatible with the ideals associated with white women."[149]

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[146] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 201.
[147] Ibid., p. 274.
[148] Pierre-Louis Berquin-Duvallon, Vue de la colonie espagnole du Mississippi ou des provinces de Louisiane et Floride Occidentale, en l'année 1802, par un observateur résidant sur les lieux (Paris : Imprimerie expéditive an XI, 1803. LOUISiana Digital Library Collections Online), p. 245.
[149] Virginia Gould, ed., Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free, Black & Female in the Old South (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. xxii.

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It is not surprising that free women of color were cast apart the white southern model of womanhood. Free colored women had to overcome the double oppression of race and gender. Forming liaisons with white men was a way to counter the established society. According to Gould, white men "expected free women of color to at least aspire to that ideal." If free women of color did not attempt to fulfill such ideals, they also would have "brought disdain and degradation upon themselves and their families."[150] According to Gould, caught between an idealized identity which could not be achieved and the reality of their place within the dominant culture's dictated social order, free women of color "constructed a discreet identity that reflected neither that of black slave women nor of free white women. In response to their unique roles within southern society, they created instead another identity."[151]

Some white fathers assumed full responsibility for their offspring: they freed the mothers of their children, and emancipated and legitimated their children, thus making them eligible for inheritances. As a result, many free women of color became heirs at their white partners' deaths and obtained significant property. In Mobile, a court record mentions the case of a free woman of color, Louison Chastang, who inherited from her white partner all of his real estate and dwellings on one side of the Mobile River.[152] According to Gehman, the number of free women of color who acquired property as Chastang is "not certain."[153] Nicole S. Ribiansky's study of free women of color in Natchez, Mississippi, shows that they tended to inherit property mostly from white men—a former owner, a friend, a lover.[154]

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[150] Gould, ed., Chained to the Rock of Adversity, p. xxii.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Gould, "In Defense of Their Creole Culture," pp. 29-31.
[153] Gehman, "Visible Means of Support," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 212-3.
[154] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," p. 55.

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The story of Amanda, daughter of a 13-year-old Georgia slave who was raped by David Dickson, the white plantation owner in whose household she worked, is also revealing.[155] Although legally a slave until 1864, Amanda was raised in luxury by Dickson and his mother. After her marriage to a white man failed, Amanda returned with her two children to live with Dickson until his death in 1885. He bequeathed most of his fortune to her, angering his white relatives, who contested the will. Despite the legal and social sanctions against interracial families in the post-Civil War South, the court upheld Dickson's will. Thus, Amanda Dickson became the largest landowner in Hancock County, Georgia, and the wealthiest black woman in the post-Civil War South.

Free women of color rarely married, and did not necessarily live with their partners.[156] Some legal restrictions, but also negative stereotypes, prevented free women of color from becoming married. Also, the church did not recognize these marriages.[157] Still, Gould says that "their relations appear to have been just as stable [and long lasting] as those of their white neighbors who did not cohabit unless married."[158] As a result, a lot of free women of color were heads of households, and could enjoy some degree of economic independence. Table 1, below, clearly shows that free women of color outnumbered white women as heads of households. Over the period 1791-1850, the percentage of free women of color who headed households was almost five times greater than white women's.

Spanish law established and protected property rights of all women, regardless of their race, status and class. As a result, they could exercise more control over their property. The

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[155] Kent Anderson Leslie, Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995).
[156] Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World," in Clinton and Gillespie, eds., The Devil's Lane, p. 223.
[157] Ibid., p. 225.
[158] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 322.

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Spanish also secured laws as regards inheritance so that every child—black or white, slave or free—could receive a part of his/her parents' estate.[159]

Table 1: Percentage of Women Heads of Households, in New Orleans

	1791	1820	1850
% white women	16.2	11.2	15
% free women of color	75.5	73.5	48.6

Source: Virginia Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 319.

Annie Stahl claims that the free person of color was capable of "contracting." Free persons of color could acquire by inheritance and transmit property by will. In so doing, they could employ any of the common methods of affecting transfers employed by whites. Stahl says that "courts of record and probate were open to them for recording legal evidences of sales or transfer property."[160] Yet, Gehman claims that, as "illegitimate heirs," free black children could only inherit one tenth of their fathers' property. However, she also suggests that "ways were apparently found in quite a few cases to circumvent the courts."[161]

Moreover, they were competent witnesses in all civil suits. Also, if they committed an offence against the laws, they were to be tried with the same formalities and by the same tribunal as whites.[162] Louisiana differed materially from other slave states in her attitude towards the economic rights of the free person of color. A comparative study of the legal status of free blacks in the slave states tends to show that free persons of color in Louisiana

[159] Hanger, "Coping in a Complex World," in Clinton and Gillespie, eds., The Devil's Lane, p. 221.
[160] Annie Lee Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana" (MA thesis, LSU, 1939), p. 20.
[161] Gehman, "Visible Means of Support," in Kein, ed., Creole, p. 212.
[162] Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana" (MA thesis, LSU, 1939), p. 15.

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had more rights and privileges than did free blacks in other southern states.[163] In spite of growing limitations placed upon the free person of color's acts and powers throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—especially under the American rule—free persons of color held a unique status in Louisiana.

Women were particularly aware of these possibilities and exploited them. The case of Marie-Thérèze Coincoin is relevant in this matter. She was born a slave, and was to be the nucleus of the Cane River dynasty.[164] As a slave, she met Claude Thomas Pierre Métoyer, a native of La Rochelle, France, in 1767 and they started an open concubinage. Coincoin embodied what was common at this time making a French gentleman providing her with opportunity for social and economic advancement. In the twenty years that followed, Coincoin bore ten children to this man. Métoyer freed Coincoin and some of their children. Even had they both decided to put an end to their relationship, Métoyer provided Coincoin with a lifetime stipend to support her and her children. She then progressively bought all her children's freedom. Indeed, during the first years of her freedom, Coincoin labored primarily to purchase her offspring from the bondage of slavery.[165] Later, she was successful in acquiring some land, and developing a "prosperous plantation empire."[166] The plantation that Coincoin and one of her sons acquired developed into one of the most flourishing cotton plantations in the region. The plantation is still intact today, including two colonial buildings,[167] which, according to the tradition, were built by Coincoin. When she died, she left

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[163] Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana," p. 46. Also, Louisiana placed few restrictions upon the free person of color's right to earn a livelihood and to compete with the white man in industry. Furthermore, as regards lawsuits, Stahl adds that "in no other state was the free man of color permitted to give testimony against a white man."
[164] Cane River is situated in Natchitoches Parish.
[165] Gary B. Mills, "Coincoin: An Eighteenth-Century "Liberated" Woman," Journal of Southern History 42, no. 2 (May 1976): p. 217.
[166] Ibid., p. 218.
[167] Yucca House and the African House. Yucca House, the oldest building on Melrose Plantation, was built circa

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a comfortable estate. It was said that her holdings were equivalent to some whites' and exceeded other free people of color's.[168] She was eventually successful in turning herself and her family from slaves to free people. Marie-Thérèze Coincoin took advantage of her "concubine status," and was then savvy enough in her way to conduct her own business and use the law to live comfortably and make her business prosper.

Another interesting example is that of Jacqueline Lemelle.[169] Jacqueline Lemelle was a woman of color who was born in New Orleans during the French colonial period. There is no personal account of her life, but property records, manumission records, inventories of estates, census records, and sacramental records help define her life. It is possible to catch a glimpse of what it was to be a slave, and then a free woman of color in colonial Louisiana. Lemelle may have been born in about 1730, and may have been a "mulatress" as she is described as such in the records. Therefore, she was not one of the slaves directly imported from Africa, but may have had a slave mother and a white father. As long as she was a slave, there is no record of her presence, as slaves were denied any personal identity—they had no last names, and there was no effort to preserve family ties. The first record which indicates her presence shows that she was an urban slave, a domestic. Jacqueline Lemelle—as Marie-Thérèze Coincoin—formed a liaison, willingly or not, with her master, Santiago. She was then freed, and this new legal status gave her and her children a legitimate identity, which had been denied to them before. She now had the right to inherit property, and had legal protection under the law.

1795-1800. The house is made of bousillage—a mixture of river mud, deer hair and moss. The African House is a puzzle to architects, area residents and tourists. How did this early 1800s African structure come to exist in central Louisiana?

[168] Mills, "Coincoin," p. 220.

[169] Virginia Gould, "Urban Slavery - Urban Freedom: The Manumission of Jacqueline Lemelle," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 298-314.

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Also, Cecile Bonille was a free woman of color from New Orleans who accumulated a great amount of property. Gould claims that Bonille's estate was worth 31,443 piastres in August 1841—after her death.[170] Her property included some furniture, a lot with buildings, but also two slaves. Bonille was another example of free women of color who would acquire property "through inheritance, donation, and outright purchase," and would pass it down to their offspring.[171]

These examples show that women of color were aware of the social and economic advancement they could achieve. Thus, they took advantage of the unique possibilities that were available to them. These women acquired their freedom and sometimes property. Some free persons of color came to own plantations and owned slaves just as white people did. Gould claims that it is quite obvious "how successful [these] free women of color were at accumulating property during the years of the Spanish regime."[172]

Censuses indicate how these free women of color would acquire some property. Free women of color benefited from their ties to the white community, and acquired some property from whites. Also, censuses reveal that free women of color listed as "racially mixed" tended to own houses and slaves.[173] Loren Schweninger claims that "the vast majority of free people of color who reached the upper economic levels [...] was of mixed racial ancestry [... and] had received land, slaves, and other property from their white relatives."[174]

However, the assertion that free women of color commonly received property from whites may be partially correct. It seems that this was not always customary. According to

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[170] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 2.
[171] Ibid., p. 3.
[172] Ibid., p. 8.
[173] Ibid., p. 15.
[174] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 35.

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Gould, “the majority of [whites] left nothing.[175] Therefore, free women of color frequently worked diligently to purchase and accumulate property. Sometimes, free women of color would acquire property from other free blacks. Free mothers of color, in particular, cared for their children’s future. Their wills reveal that they bequeathed them houses, furniture, clothing, etc.[176] As a result, free blacks passed their property to family and/or friends, and contributed to their safety and prosperity. Still, free women of color had to work to make a living and performed a wide range of activities in New Orleans.

Occupations and Economic Status

Most free women of color chose to live and work in an urban center such as New Orleans where they performed various types of activities. Marketing was the most important economic, social and political activity of enslaved and free women of color. Women of color as “marketers” constituted a predominant group in New Orleans; they mostly sold “beer, cakes and fruit at street corners, or with baskets of fancy goods which they carried to the houses of patrons.”[177] Gould also deals with the “Sunday market” and its importance in New Orleans. Benjamin Moore Norman also stated in 1845:

> The markets are a prominent feature in a description of New Orleans. They are numerous and dispersed, to suit the convenience of citizens […] The greatest market day is Sunday, during the morning. At break of day the gathering commences–youth and age, beauty and not-so-beautiful–all colors, nations and tongues are commingled in one heterogeneous mass of delightful confusion […] The traveller, who leaves the city without visiting one of the popular markets on Sunday morning, has suffered a rare treat to escape him.[178]

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[175] Gould, “Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans,” p. 16.
[176] Ribianszky, “She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone,” p. 67-9.
[177] Gould, “In Enjoyment of Their Liberty,” p. 54.
[178] Benjamin Moore Norman, Norman’s New Orleans and Environs (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), p. 135-6.

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Free women of color and slave women participated alongside in marketing activities. Free women of color held a remarkable role. They used to sell all kind of goods including rugs, fabrics, shawls, head kerchiefs, and coffee. For instance, Rose Nicaud was a slave who bought her freedom, and in the early 1800s, she set up a portable stand and sold coffee in New Orleans. Other free women of color followed her footsteps: they had permanent stands at the French Market and offered seating to their customers. There are some examples of free women of color who managed and succeeded in establishing their own businesses.

Peddling was an important part of these women's lives. It gave them some kind of economic freedom, and therefore power over their lives. Gould says slave women "were left much to their own devices. Accounts describe them freely roaming the streets and alleyways of the ports and even the countryside."[179] They used to return their profits daily to their owners and some only weekly or monthly. Also, free women of color competed with slave women: they were either employed to sell goods, or purchased/produced their own goods. Gould adds that some of them even hired slave women or free women of color who peddled for them. One of the most interesting facts is that some of them gained a lot of money through this type of trade.

Free women of color performed a wide range of occupations in New Orleans. They were washerwomen, seamstresses, nurses, midwives, day laborers, domestics. They also rented out rooms and accommodated boarders, rented and owned stores. Usually, women did not perform skilled jobs, they earned less compared to men, and were subject to racial discrimination—their skin color was a criteria in hiring them (black/mulatto).

[179] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 57.

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Some women "hired themselves out on an annual basis like slaves."[180] Stevenson also adds that most of them had several jobs to live on, and moreover, some families relied on elders and adolescents and single women's pay. Women were very vulnerable: it was hard for them to conduct business, they had very limited occupational choices, often lived in poverty and it was tough to own property. Free people of color and free women of color, in particular, faced hostile and restrictive laws, thus making their status more fragile than ever. Loren Schweninger focuses on the way these women fought for their freedom so they could achieve a decent status, and preserve their families. In the U.S. South, free women of color were mostly found in low occupations, such as laundresses, maids, seamstresses, cooks, venders, etc. It was rare that they possessed businesses.[181] It was also striking to come across the fact that these women constantly feared being brought back into slavery. Indeed, the author mentions cases of women kidnapped and sent back to plantations as slaves. Some other women chose to return to slavery. Schweninger talks about "voluntary enslavement."[182] Indeed, some women, having to face continuous social and economic difficulties, looked for (re)enslavement.

Some elite women turned their efforts to charitable work—teaching, nursing, bringing comfort—"to bring relief to those less fortunate than themselves."[183] Indeed, religion was very important in their lives. In 1842, Henriette Delisle founded the religious order of nuns, the Sisters of the Holy Family. They have staffed many schools and orphanages and homes for the elderly in Louisiana as well as in other parts of the world.[184]

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[180] Brenda Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South, p. 294-5.
[181] Loren Schweninger, "The Fragile Nature of Freedom," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 107.
[182] Ibid., pp. 111 and 115.
[183] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 281.
[184] Desdunes, Our People and Our Heritage, p. 99.

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Fortunately, some free women of color gradually acquired property. Loren Schweninger states that some of them controlled "a significant percentage of the black wealth."[185] This fact echoes Leonard Curry's statement,[186] as well as Kimberly Hanger's: both of them state that some free women of color came to control "a substantial portion of the economic resources of New Orleans"[187] during the colonial period due to inheritances or purchases. Free women of color owned more property than free men of color, and their property was more valuable. Whites definitely owned much more property, except with a few cases—for example, Marie-Thérèze Coincoin and her descendants.

The 1795 census gives some clues about how much property they held at that time in New Orleans.[188] 22% of the city's free women of color owned real estate, which was slightly more than the percentage of free men of color (20%), and considerably above the percentage of white women (13%). Also, 18% of free women of color owned houses which is somewhat the same for white women (16%), but which is extremely high compared to the percentage of free men of color (5%). Finally, free women of color owned more houses than free men of color. As Gould claims, free persons of color "owned more than one house each."[189] Free women of color owned more houses than free men of color, but they owned fewer than whites.

These women were very much concerned with advancing their social status, and their family's. As we have noted earlier, free people of color achieved a certain amount of wealth and were a striving community. They enjoyed the same rights as whites – as regards property,

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[185] Schweninger, "The Fragile Nature of Freedom," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 107.
[186] In The Free Black in Urban America. Curry says that "a large proportion of Negro women owned considerable property," p. 44.
[187] Kimberly S. Hanger, "Landlords, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and Slaveowners: Free Black Female Property-Holders in Colonial New Orleans," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 219-236.
[188] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 8. Gould is being careful by mentioning that the 1795 census did not include the whole parish, but "the first three "Quartiers" and the new Quartier (…) [which] included the overwhelming majority of the population.
[189] Ibid., p. 10.

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donations, suits, etc - except in case of local regulations which could curtail some of their rights.

Table 2: Property Owners from the 1795 New Orleans Census

	# of owners	% same sex/race adult population	# houses owned	Houses per person	% of total houses (T= 781)
WM	193	29.7%	471	2.44	60.3%
WF	60	12.9%	127	2.12	16.3%
FMC	32	20.3%	40	1.25	5.1%
FWC	74	22.0%	143	1.93	18.3%

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 8.

Women could be found in diverse occupational areas such as landlords, for example. Again, the New Orleans 1795 Census is helpful to determine the proportion of landlords within the population. Table 3 (p. 52) shows that free women of color rented half of the houses they owned--with slightly the same percentage for white men and women. On the contrary, free men of color rented only 20% of the houses they owned. Gould claims that "[i]t is not only obvious that rental property represented a significant amount of the income producing property in the city but that free people of color, and especially women, found that a lucrative way in which to produce income."[190] A great number of women would purchase houses and derive income from them.

The rental activity was especially successful due to the nature of New Orleans as a port city. Indeed, as Gould claims, "[T]he transient nature of the white population made rental

[190] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 11.

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property, boarding houses, and the letting of rooms a lucrative business."[191] Table 4 (p. 52) shows that free women of color would rent houses to any segment of the population, and especially to white men. Also, free women of color were concentrated in the rental activity rather than free men of color.

Table 3: Landlords by Race and Gender from the 1795 New Orleans Census

Owners	# of rented houses	% rented	% of rental poll (T= 422)
WM	278	59%	66%
WF	67	53%	16%
FMC	8	20%	2%
FWC	74	52%	16%

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 11.

Table 4: Rentors by Race and Gender from the 1795 New Orleans Census

	WM	WF	FMC	FWC
WM	188	27	17	45
WF	39	12	6	10
FMC	0	0	6	2
FWC	29	8	9	23

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 14.

[191] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 14

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Some free women of color would also enter the hotel and boarding house business. Schweninger gives the examples of Ann Deas, and later Eliza Seymour Lee, who welcomed and accommodated guests at the *Burrows-Hall Inn* in Charleston.[192]

Some free women of color were also shopkeepers**.** Free women of color "dominated local retail activity."[193] They were specialized in the buying and selling of food in New Orleans. They held prominent roles in town markets. The New Orleans market was created in 1784, but it was rare that free women of color would rent stalls there; they would continue to sell goods in the streets–some shopkeepers and retailers actually enacted some petitions against this practice.[194] Some women chose to start a "partnership" with white people as they could run businesses together. They would run a business with a male counterpart, or be aided by a white benefactor.[195] For example, Schweninger demonstrates that Eulalie Macarty (also known as Madame Cécée McCarty), mistress of a white businessman named Eugene Macarty (the Macartys were an old family of high profile in New Orleans), was an astute New Orleans businesswoman. Indeed, she "established a wholesale mercantile and dry goods store, purchasing various manufactured items from abroad, housing them at her depot in Plaquemines Parish, and distributing them through a network of slaves to various retail outlets in the state."[196] As seen earlier, free women of color in Sénegal created "commercial alliances" with European men.[197] Also, in Mahé, Seychelles—a colonial slaveholding society—it was not unusual for free persons of color, and especially women, to start partnerships with men. A free

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[192] Loren Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," The Journal of Women's History 1, no. 3 (Winter, 1990): p. 17.
[193] Hanger, "Landlords, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and Slaveowners," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 221.
[194] Ibid., p. 222.
[195] Ibid., pp. 222-3.
[196] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 17.
[197] Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa, p. 206.

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woman of color named Marie-Reine Volamaeffa contracted a *société*—a partnership—on May 18, 1814, with a white man named Elie Martin. The partnership consisted of two lots and twenty six slaves. This document filed on January 20, 1816, is a *résiliation de société*—a termination of partnership.[198] Volamaeffa lived in Mahé, Seychelles, in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. She was one of the largest slave owners in Mahé—"richer than the King."[199]

Some free women of color were farmers, possessed some land, and cultivated it. In Metairie, the 1796 census listed some free black women who owned eleven arpents of land and ten slaves.[200] Indeed, some of them were slaveholders. Hanger says that it was "customary throughout the Americas."[201] Wilma King claims that free women of color possessed slaves as early as the 1650s in Virginia.[202] In other colonial societies, such as Barbados, slave ownership among free people of color was deemed "a legitimate and *desirable* form of property."[203] In Gorée, Sénégal, women established trade networks and owned slaves, men and women, to help them out.[204] Nevertheless, it was uncommon that they possessed more land, and/or slaves, than white people, and the nature of their relations with slaves was of a different kind – for instance, they would manumit them more easily. In the early years of the Spanish period, Hanger shows that more free women of color bought slaves than free men of color. They

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[198] Résiliation de société entre Volamaeffa et Elie Martin, 20 janvier 1816. Archives de Mahé, Seychelles.
[199] Deryck Scarr, Seychelles since 1770: History of a Slave and Post-slavery Society (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1999), p. 10.
[200] Hanger, "Landlords, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and Slaveowners," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 224.
[201] Kimberly S. Hanger, "The Fortunes of Women in America, Spanish New Orleans' Free Women of African Descent and Their Relations with Slave Women," in Patricia Morton, ed., Discovering the Women in Slavery, Emancipating Perspectives of the American Past (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), p. 161.
[202] Wilma King, "Out of Bounds: Emancipated and Enslaved Women in Antebellum America," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 130-1. Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 131.
[203] Gayle, "Ann Gill: Free Woman of Color at the Nexus of Politics and Religion in Nineteenth Century Barbados," p. 18.
[204] Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa, p. 270.

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would also buy more females than males whereas free men of color would prefer buying male slaves (slave occupations and prices had to be taken into account). Furthermore, free women of color owned more slaves than free men of color.[205]

As well as it was the case with land, free people of color could acquire slaves through wills and deeds.[206] Also, Schweninger says that free colored artisans "purchased black apprentices, hod carriers, and helpers; merchants and business people bought haulers, carters, and stock boys; plantation owners purchased house servants, cooks, mechanics, and field hands."[207] Hanger claims that free blacks owned "primarily" these slaves to "help them in their trades and work."[208]

Others would own slaves only for monetary reasons. For example, the Meullion Family Papers[209] show that free people of color owned substantial property and slaves - even if some of them were former slaves or if one of their relatives was. Slaves were listed just as any other goods: they had a certain value depending on their sex and age, and probably skills. The Meullion family was a free black family of Saint Landry Parish, Louisiana. Louis Augustin Meullion and his son Jean-Baptiste (whose mother was a slave) were slaveholders. Jean-Baptiste owned a plantation on Bayou Tèche. Some papers indicate that they owned land and its location. For example, one document shows that Baptiste Meullion, a free man of color, bought some property from Jean Fortier, in 1796, including a lot about eight acres wide and one league deep.[210] Furthermore, some papers include slaves' receipts. For instance, in 1808, a

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[205] Hanger, "Landlords, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and Slaveowners," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 225.
[206] Ibid., p. 226
[207] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 36.
[208] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," p. 241.
[209] Meullion Family Papers (1776-1906), # 243, 294, Folders 1-4, U: 230, Louisiana State University Library, Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Hill Memorial Library.
[210] Meullion Family Papers (1776-1906), Folder 1. 1796. *"cession d'habitation de Jean Fortier à Baptiste Meullion 'mulâtre libre'; 'une terre de 10 arpens de … sur une lieue de profondeur …, cuves à indigo, et*

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document demonstrates that Meullion bought two slaves for 1,200 piastres.[211] Also, one document reveals that Meullion bought some "children" for 500 piastres in 1809 (no names and no age mentioned).[212] Several other receipts testify that Meullion bought and sold slaves. Finally, Meullion would also mortgage his slaves. Indeed, it appears that Meullion wanted to subscribe a loan, and therefore he offered some goods—among them, slaves—as a mortgage. Twelve slaves are mortgaged along with some lots, various buildings—houses and slave quarters—and a sugar-refinery.[213] These documents show that Meullion was a prosperous planter and he was fully engaged in the slaveholding business.

The New Orleans 1795 Census reveals that 15% of free women of color were slave owners representing approximately the same percentage as free men of color's, and slightly above white women's (see Table 5, below). Moreover, free women of color would own more slaves than free men of color. If we do not take the number of slaves in households, free women of color owned as many slaves as white women did, and owned twice more than free men of color did. Also, looking at the number of slaves that women owned, free women of color generally tended to own four slaves or less.[214]

These numbers show that free women of color did acquire some property in the city of New Orleans, with a certain degree of uniqueness. They owned as much property as white

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clôtures qui se trouvent dessus? située sur le Bayou Tech (...) en outre tous les outils et ustensils servant à l'exploitation de la même habitation (...)."

[211] Meullion Family Papers (1776-1906), 1808, 4 juillet. "J'ai recu de Batis Meillon la somme de six cent piastres à valoire sur sel? de douze cents quil me devait pour deux nègres brute à lui vendre à ? de Mr Balthazard mark de la quel somme de six cent piastres je lui donne plain?e décharge? sans préjudice du six cents autre piastres à échoire le huite juillet mille huit cent neuf. Aux Oppeloussas le 4 juillet 1809, Alexdre De Clouty."

[212] Meullion Family Papers (1776-1906), # 243, 294, Folders 1-4, U: 230, Louisiana State University, Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Hill Memorial Library. 1809, Déc 9. Intitulé "Copie." *"Je soussigné certiffie que Baptiste Meullion m'a payé la somme de cinq cens piastres qu'il me devait pour les enfants que je lui ai vendu donc je lui? tiens quitte aus allemands. Ce 9 Dbre 1809. (Meullion)."*

[213] Meullion Family Papers (1776-1906), Folder 2. 26 Avril 1893, Opelousas.

[214] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 12-13.

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women did, and they owned three times more property than free men of color. Therefore, the laws governing emancipation and the distribution of property in Spanish Louisiana had particular consequences for free women of color, and these women benefited from these unique opportunities.

Table 5: Slave Ownership in 1795 New Orleans

	WM	WF	FMC	FWC
# Adults in Census	650	465	158	337
# Slave Owners	273	59	22	52
% of Slave Owners	42%	12.6%	14%	15.4%

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 12.

Table 6: Distribution of Slaves in Households

	1-2 slaves	3-4 slaves	5-10 slaves	> slaves	Sums	% Owned
WM	120	61	73	20	274	67%
WF	17	21	17	4	59	14%
FMC	14	4	4	0	22	5%
FWC	36	13	3	0	52	13%

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 13.

Free persons of color who acquired property during the colonial period tended to keep it after the Louisiana Purchase. Indeed, in spite of local discriminatory regulations which curtailed some of their rights in Louisiana (and in other states) and the decline of the free

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colored population, free persons of color would still "experience economic progress."[215] Schweninger noticed the same fact claiming that free blacks would not decline.[216] Their inventories of estate were worth $22,131 in 1810; $115,437 in 1830; and $53,562 in 1860.[217] Gould emphasizes the fact that the 1860 decline still represented "an increase of more than 50% throughout the period"[218] for free persons of color. However, within the total population, the value of free persons of color's inventoried property was clearly below whites'. Finally, free women of color again occupied a unique position compared to free men of color. Indeed, they had more property and their property's value was higher than free men of color's.

According to Loren Schweninger, such unique economic standing was made possible because free persons of color "did not pose a threat to the South's 'peculiar institution'."[219] Actually, whites seemed to think of free blacks as persons of high quality. They described free blacks from the Lower South as industrious and respectable people.[220] Moreover, whites appreciated the endogamous nature of the free colored population as they would not mingle with blacks. Schweninger quotes: "[they] abhor the idea of association with blacks in any enterprise that may have for its object the revolution of their condition."[221] Finally, whites were aware of the fact that free persons of color's work was an asset within their communities providing "valuable services."[222]

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[215] Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 17.
[216] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 38.
[217] Ibid., p. 18.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid., p. 40.
[220] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 48. This was not the case in the Upper South. Indeed, whites tended to see free blacks from the Upper South as "indolent," "thieving," "ungovernable," and "depraved."
[221] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 40.
[222] Ibid.

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Table 7: Average Value of Inventoried Property, by Race, Gender and Decade

	WM	WF	FMC	FWC
1810	15,275	6,124	3,075	2,581
1820	16,848	24,405	599	2,385
1830	11,223	7,393	1,496	2,818
1840	33,875	24,918	2,416	3,554
1850	23,682	9,491	1,835	2,377
1860	18,605	18,490	2,003	2,007

Source: Virginia Meacham Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 19.

Larry Koger notes that in Louisiana, Maryland, South Carolina, and Virginia, free blacks owned more than 10,000 slaves, according to the federal census of 1830.[223] Many of the black masters in the lower South were large planters who owned a lot of slaves and planted large quantities of cotton, rice, and sugar cane. Koger describes black slave ownership as widespread.

Leonard Curry gives some numbers concerning free people of color as slaveholders in New Orleans in 1830.[224] There were 753 individual free black slaveholders at that time in New Orleans, and they owned 2,363 slaves. This provides a proportion of nearly three slaves per free person of color. Within the free black population, 6½ percent were slaveholders.[225]

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[223] Larry Koger, Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1958), p. 1.
[224] Curry, The Free Black in Urban America, p. 270. Curry looked at Carter G. Woodson's study of the 1830 manuscript census carried out in the 1920s in which he examined urban black slaveholding. Curry specifies that there is a potential for error, "perhaps of considerable magnitude" that it is worth noting.
[225] Ibid., p. 45.

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Schweninger also specifies that among these 753 individual free black slaveholders, 25 owned at least ten slaves, and 116 owned five to nine slaves.[226]

Curry's study also provides a relevant figure concerning free black families who held slaves:[227] of a total of 1,645 slaveholders (families), almost 46% owned slaves. This scale of black slaveholding is quite amazing. As regards free women of color, they constituted an even larger percentage of black slaveowners, almost 50%, in New Orleans.[228] For example, Cécée Macarty was the largest slaveholder among free people of color in New Orleans. In 1830, she owned 32 slaves, and her fortune was worth $155,000.[229] Macarty was listed among the wealthiest black entrepreneurs between 1820 and 1865.[230] Outside of New Orleans, sugar planters Ricaud, mother and son, owned 152 slaves and an estate worth $221,500 by 1860.[231] Larry Koger also claims that, in Charleston, the majority of urban black slaveholders were females. Also, in Natchez, Mississippi, free women of color and their families "held the bulk of the property among free blacks" including slaves.[232]

During the decades before the Civil War, some free women of color were able to manage successful plantations in the Lower South. Schweninger names a few: Margaret Mitchell Harris, from South Carolina, who owned 21 slaves and produced 250,000 pounds of rice in 1849. Planter Ann Johnson, wife of William Johnson (a free man of color from Natchez, Mississippi, barber and slaveowner) owned a few slaves, and Marie-Suzanne Métoyer (daughter of Marie-Thérèse Coincoin), was a planter in Natchitoches. According to

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226 Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 36.
227 Curry, The Free Black in Urban America, p. 46.
228 Ibid., pp. 269 and 271.
229 Ibid., p. 47.
230 Juliet E. W. Walker, "Racism, Slavery, and Free Enterprise: Black Entrepreneurship in the United States before the Civil War," The Business History Review 60, no. 3 (Autumn, 1986): p. 350.
231 Ibid., pp. 350 and 354.
232 Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," 1779-1865," p. 54.

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Schweninger, they "owned rice, sugar, and cotton estates, large herds of livestock, and valuable farm machinery."[233]

Thus, free women color possessed considerable amounts of property, and conducted successful businesses—notably engaging themselves in the slaveholding business. Several cases of women demonstrate the significant status they achieved during the antebellum period. But few of them show how they carried out their businesses and the nature of their relations with their slaves. The next chapter attempts to illuminate these relations.

[233] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 17.

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CHAPTER 4
RELATIONS BETWEEN FREE WOMEN OF COLOR AND THEIR SLAVES

Nature of Free Women of Color's Relations with Their Slaves

The nature of free women of color's relations with slaves is a subject of controversy. It is difficult to assess the nature of the relationship between free women of color and slaves, and determine the reasons why free women of color would own slaves. However, some records sometimes help determine their relations. A general knowledge of the wealth of free women of color and the extent to which they resorted to legal transactions, may be derived from wills, successions, sales of slaves, and mortgage records.[234] Such records not only assess the amount of land and slaves free women of color possessed, but also show the nature of free women of color's relations with slaves, whites and other free people of color.

Loren Schweninger claims that "the debate concerning the extent of 'benevolent' versus 'commercial' ownership has generally focused on the entire South and thus minimized the diversity among black slaveowners in different regions during different time periods."[235] Therefore, it is important to take regional differences into consideration as prosperous free blacks' economic and social status tended to differ according to where they lived. Schweninger distinguishes free women of color living in the Lower South[236] and those living in the Upper South.[237] Indeed, they did not experience the same economic and social advantages. In the Upper South, free women of color did not benefit from cordial relationships with whites as it was the case in the Lower South. They would also face more rigid local

[234] Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana," p. 30.
[235] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 36, footnote 12.
[236] Note that the Lower South included Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas.
[237] Note that the Upper South included Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

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restrictions, and did not benefit from the large scale manumission process which happened in the Lower South.[238]

Free women of color in the Lower South, and especially in Louisiana and New Orleans, experienced unique situations. Furthermore, Ira Berlin contends that free colored men and women in the Lower South were "not only more urban and light-skinned, but better educated, more skilled, and more connected with whites."[239] In Charleston, for example, free blacks were high skilled workers who "surpassed most of the whites."[240] Although, there were few free women of color who were large slaveholders, those who owned real estate and slaves still represented a significant portion of the population. In Louisiana, free women of color managed profitable businesses and were able to improve significantly their social and economic position. Therefore, they acquired slaves largely for economic reasons.

On the contrary, in the Upper South, prosperous free blacks would create close ties with the slave population.[241] Due to the small number of free affluent persons of color and the economic hardship they encountered in the Upper South, free persons of color "mingled with other blacks" who were "less affluent free owners, propertyless free blacks, and slaves."[242] Berlin argues that free blacks from the Upper South and Lower South's characteristics "reflected and influenced white racial attitudes."[243] Thus, regional differences played a significant role in the relations between slaves and free persons of color.

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[238] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 16.
[239] Ira Berlin, Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South (New York: The New Press, 1974), p. 181.
[240] Ibid., p. 221.
[241] Loren Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 45.
[242] Ibid., p. 45.
[243] Ira Berlin, Slaves without Masters, p. 181.

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According to Schweninger, free women of color's attitude and relations with their slaves "differed little from their white neighbors."[244] Indeed, they "purchased, sold, mortgaged, willed, traded, and transferred fellow African-Americans, demanded long hours in the fields, and severely disciplined recalcitrant blacks."[245] Wilma King, quoting Eliza Potter, says that free women of color were among the harshest as "those who have been oppressed themselves, are the sorest oppressors."[246] Some free women of color would not hesitate to sell off slaves "for a quick profit." Others would sell slaves to pay some debts.[247] They were clearly aware of the value of slaves, and what they could derive from such business. Amy Johnson (William Johnson's mother, barber of Natchez) and Harriet Battles (his mother-in-law) bought and sold slaves frequently.[248] Another free woman of color from Memphis, Tennessee, Milly Swan, possessed several lots and slaves in the city, and only freed two of them during her lifetime.[249] Gould hardens the picture claiming that some women would not hesitate to sell kin to slavery.[250] However, as Ribiansky suggests, "The reasons for this were as diverse as the women themselves, and depended on the humaneness of each."[251]

In Western Africa, signares owned numerous domestic slaves who served as cooks, washerwomen, nurses, skilled smiths, carpenters, etc. Also, their slaves helped them out in their trading activities.[252] Brooks specifies that signares were not willing to their slaves back once they "belonged to the community" and treated slave children as "members of the

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[244] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," p. 37.
[245] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 18.
[246] Wilma King, "Out of Bounds," pp. 130-1. Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," pp. 131-2.
[247] Schweninger, "Property Owning Free African-American Women in the South, 1800-1870," p. 18.
[248] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," p. 53.
[249] Beverley Greene Bond, "The Extent of the Law, Free Women of Color in Antebellum Memphis, Tennessee," in Janet L. Corryel, eds, Negotiating Boundaries of Southern Womanhood: Dealing with the Powers That Be (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 20.
[250] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 162.
[251] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," pp. 49 and 51.
[252] Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa, pp. 211 and 270.

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signares' extended families." Teenage slaves were taught domestic skills and put in apprenticeship.[253] Therefore, signares maintained ambiguous relationships with their slaves. They exploited them for commercial purposes, but they were also treated as members of their family, and as a result, as human beings.

Volamaeffa, a free woman of color from Seychelles, specified in her will that her slaves, Germain and Bienaimé, must be emancipated on account of personal affection and valuable services. Volamaeffa wished that the cost for their emancipation should be deducted from her estate.[254] She ran a business exploiting slave labor, but also wanted to free her slaves after her death.

Free persons of color and slaves shared some degree of racial oppression. Moreover, free women of color and slave women shared "the double oppression of race and gender."[255] Some created real and fictive kinship networks. Newly freed people had more friends and family among slaves, therefore they were close to the slave population. Wilma King, quoting Whittington B. Johnson, claims that "social lines between free African Americans and slaves were "blurred."[256] Also, the towns' geography and economy more or less favored interaction between the two groups. Free women of color and slave women usually shared daily activities–such as going to church, for instance; moreover, free women of color often performed the same jobs as slave women—laundresses, seamstresses, domestics, cooks, or *marchandes*.[257] However, King says that little is actually known about that the relationship between free colored women and their slaves.

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[253] Brooks, Eurafricans in Western Africa, p. 271.
[254] Testament de Marie-Reine Volamaeffa, 2 décembre 1819. Archives de Mahé, Seychelles.
[255] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 159.
[256] Wilma King, "Out of Bounds," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 129.
[257] Ibid., pp. 53-4.

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Some of them failed to identify with slaves. Free persons of color tended to distance themselves from slaves in slaveholding societies like Louisiana. Indeed, as Gould puts it, free colored persons "were, more than anything, loyal to the dominant structure superimposed by the whites."[258] Socializing with a slave was badly considered from a white person's point of view, and free people of color feared they would lose some of their rights and privileges, even their freedom, if they mingled with slaves. In a way, one cannot blame free colored persons who wanted to distance themselves from slavery. Indeed, Gould claims that "The further removed from slavery […], the more social worth one had."[259] Distancing themselves from slaves was "an essential attribute of a sign of social advancement or upward mobility."[260]

Moreover, economic opportunities were enviable. As Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark suggest, "The possibility of economic progress within existing society gave free Negroes a stake in maintaining the distinction between themselves and slaves."[261] Also, laws which regulated the lives of slaves had incidences on their relations with free people of color. For instance, it was illegal for a slave and a person of color to live in concubinage, to assemble in a place of amusement, or to house a slave overnight. Gould talks about a feeling of "estrangement" between the two groups.[262] Gould further claims that "not all of New Orleans's free people of color accepted the racially based caste system, but many did."[263] The case of Euphemie Lemelle, a slave living as a free woman in New Orleans, reveals that a free woman of color (Lemelle's sister-in-law) intended to sell Lemelle and her children to

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[258] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 167.
[259] Ibid., p. 166.
[260] Virginia Gould, "Urban Slavery - Urban Freedom: The Manumission of Jacqueline Lemelle," in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 308.
[261] Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), p. 65.
[262] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," pp. 167-9.
[263] Gould, "Urban Slavery - Urban Freedom: The Manumission of Jacqueline Lemelle," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., More than Chattel, p. 308.

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slavery.[264] In this case, greed seems to have been stronger than blood relations. Therefore, social and legal condition defined relations between slaves and free persons of color.

Most of the time, free women of color owned family members. Indeed, slaves were frequently the slaveholder's own spouse, children, or other relatives.[265] For example, Leonard Curry says that, this way, the status of free colored people's children (or other relatives) gave them more effective protection, rather being free colored persons. Indeed, some free people of color could be kidnapped and sold to slavery. Also, some could not emancipate their kin immediately. Moreover, slaves were sometimes put up as security. It was also the case that several "simply did not wish to involve themselves and their families in the legal process necessary to obtain freedom papers" as it was a complex process.[266] Some free persons of color would sometimes purchase slaves to allow them to accumulate enough money so as to purchase their own freedom.

Hanger suggests that free persons of color would primarily buy slave non-kin during the Spanish period. Table 8, below, is edifying. Hanger also found out that free blacks were more likely to buy female slaves (two-thirds), and that more free women of color than free men of color would buy slaves.

Some women sheltered slaves exposing themselves to great danger. Gould gives an example of women who harbored slave women; this was seen as an act of resistance.[267] Some women also decided to teach boys and girls regardless of their status, which was a good reason to have their rights and privileges cut off at that time. Some were also active abolitionists.[268]

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[264] Ribianszky, "She Appeared to be Mistress of her Own Actions, Free from the Control of Anyone," p. 86.
[265] Curry, The Free Black in Urban America, pp. 44-45.
[266] Ibid., p. 45.
[267] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," p. 160.
[268] King, "Out of Bounds," in Gaspar and Hine, eds., Beyond Bondage, p. 137.

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These stories show that some women of color chose to fight, either openly or covertly, for the manumission of slaves. They eventually transcended racial and gender boundaries.

Table 8: Free Blacks Purchases of Non-kin and Kin Slaves

	Purchase of Non-kin		Purchase of Kin	
Years	**FW**	**FFB**	**FW**	**FFB**
1771-1773	7	_	3	_
1781-1783	58	3	12	_
1791-193	106	11	15	_
1801-1803	92	7	_	_

FW= From Whites and FFB= From Free Blacks

Source: Hanger, "The Fortunes of Women in America, Spanish New Orleans' Free Women of African Descent and their Relations with Slave Women," in Morton, ed., Discovering the Women in Slavery, p. 162.

Some free women of color who showed devotion to their slaves and/or emancipated their own slaves.[269] It happened that free women of color would purchase their relatives and manumit them. In this respect, Marie-Thérèze Coincoin bought all her children's freedom, as well as that of some of her relatives. In 1820, Madeleine Carpentier, a free woman of color, bought a mother and her five children from Barthelemy Macarthy.[270] These purchases and manumissions clearly showed the feelings of love and affection that free women of color had for their slave relatives. For instance, the *morena* Francisca, alias Domdaine, purchased her

[269] Gould, "In Enjoyment of Their Liberty," pp. 145-8.
[270] Katy Frances Morlas, "La Madame et la Mademoiselle: Creole Women in Louisiana, 1718-1865" (MA thesis, LSU, 2005), p. 112.

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daughter Victoria for 250 *pesos*, and manumitted her the same day.[271] Also, some free persons of color would charge a third party to manumit a slave, purchase a *carta de libertad* for slave kin, or even "exchanged their services for the freedom of loves ones."[272] For example, Juan Bautista Hugón, a *pardo libre*, gave the slaveholder Lorenzo Bailly 250 *pesos* to emancipate two slaves (his children), Henrique and Constanza.[273] Also, the *pardo libre* Estevan served for five years Don Francisco Langlois in exchange of his mother's freedom.[274]

Free colored slaveholders also manumitted slave kin and property *inter vivos*[275] or wrote wills in which they specified the emancipation of their slaves. Hanger claims that it was sometimes not easy for them to gather the sums required for the emancipation of slaves. Occasionally, some would buy their slaves on credit.[276] When free persons of color wished to emancipate their slaves by will, they sometimes put their testamentary executor in charge of the emancipations. For instance, the *morena* Magdalena Naneta, alias Lecler, wished that her executor free two of her three slaves and her slave husband.[277] Also, some free persons of color stipulated in their will that funds from their estate would be used to buy *cartas de libertad*.[278] For example, the *parda libre* Margueritte wanted that funds from her estate should be used to buy a *carta de libertad* to her brother Luis.[279]

Therefore, free women of color wished to manumit their kin and friends, but they also exploited other women and men. Many worked hard to emancipate their slaves, but in a patriarchal hierarchical society such as New Orleans', it seems that these women also wanted

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[271] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," p. 251.
[272] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 20.
[273] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," p. 250.
[274] Hanger, "Origins of New Orleans' Free Creoles of Color," p. 20.
[275] Ibid., pp. 14-15
[276] Ibid., p. 14.
[277] Ibid., p. 15.
[278] Hanger, "Avenues to Freedom Open to New Orleans' Black Population, 1769-1779," p. 262.
[279] Ibid.

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to improve their social and economic status. As a result, they acquired slaves just as white New Orleanians.

Preliminary Research

Overview of Notarial Acts

First, in order to evaluate the nature of slaveholding as regards free women of color, I have looked at various types of notarial acts involving free women of color who were trading slaves during the year 1810. In other words, I have looked at acts which recorded transactions concerning free women of color, who were purchasing and selling slaves, putting slaves on mortgage, bequeathing slaves, and legally authorizing another person to claim slaves. Identifying free women of color is possible because of the annotation f.c.l., standing for *femme de couleur libre* (free woman of color),[280] or n.l., standing for *négresse libre* (free Negro). The Territorial Legislature of 1808 provided that all notaries or other public officials should insert in their acts after the name and surname of free blacks, the words "free man of color" or "free woman of color."[281] Therefore, this status is precisely specified by the initials f.m.c. and f.w.c.

1810 was a pivotal year. The number of free persons of color was significant in New Orleans, and had grown steadily over the decades thanks to various patterns of growth (a greater number of manumissions, a substantial number of refugees from Saint Domingue, etc.). Furthermore, free women of color were numerous in New Orleans, and took an active part in the economy of the city. Thus, their number and status during this period allows me to comment on their activities and give an accurate description of their lives.

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[280] All the documents that I looked at were in French.
[281] Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana," p. 17.

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In New Orleans, the Notarial Archives have compiled a listing of notaries—which is available either in New Orleans or online. The listing includes each notary's name, years of service, and "novols," which indicates the number of volumes that the notary has in the collection. The listing is alphabetical, based on the notaries' last names. According to the listing, there were seven notaries[282] who were practicing during the year 1810. I examined the activities of two of them, Michel de Armas and Pierre Pedesclaux as they totaled a great number of acts during this period.

The types of acts include wills, mortgages, sales of slaves and powers of attorney.[283] They are either "single-party acts" or "two-party acts." This means that some acts require one or two (or even several) "appearers." Wills are usually "single-party acts." Sales of slaves, mortgages and powers of attorney are usually "two-party acts." Sometimes, when a debtor encumbers property to guarantee a debt to a creditor, the former may not appear in the act. I found 56 different types of acts: six mortgages, four wills, one power of attorney, and forty-five sales of slaves.

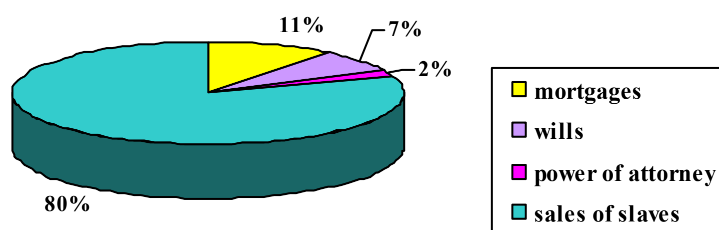

Figure 12: Percentage of Types of Acts

[282] Marc Lafitte, Hugues Lavergne, John Lynd, Estevan Quinones, George T. Ross, Michel de Armas and Pierre Pedesclaux (also listed as Pedro Pedesclaux).
[283] These numbers are for both notaries.

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This graph shows that slave slaves made the bulk of the transactions. Indeed, more than ¾ of the legal transactions in 1810 were sales of slaves in New Orleans in 1810. Some purchases of slaves show that some free women of color bought mothers and children. For instance, Amaranthe Lasize, fwc, bought a 45-year-old slave Benebale with her three children, aged from 9 to 15.[284] It seems that Lasize bought an entire family. We do not know her intentions behind this purchase but buying an entire family could be seen as an act of benevolence; Lasize perhaps intended to free them. Arsène Lajalousière was also a free woman of color who bought mother and children during 1810 in New Orleans.[285]

Moreover, some free women of color specified in their wills that they wanted to emancipate their slaves. In New Orleans for the year 1810, out of four wills, two free women of color specified that they wanted some of their slaves to be emancipated. Thus, Marianne Guillamette wanted her six-year-old slave Adelaïde to be emancipated at her death.[286] Hélène Michel wanted her 30-year-old slave Jean Latulippe to be manumitted after her demise.[287] Also, Larry Koger claims that the purchasing of slave relatives was a regular feature of free black slaveholding in South Carolina.[288] Free blacks not only struggled to purchase slave

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[284] M. De Armas, act n° 106, 26 avril 1810. *"Une négresse nommée Benebale âgée d'environ 45 ans ensemble ses trois enfants nommés Marie Marthe negrite âgée de 15 ans, François négrillon âgé de 12 ans, et Félicité negritte âgée de 9 ans.":* a slave named Benebale, age 45, and her three children named Marie Marthe, age 15, François, age 12, and Félicité, age 9.

[285] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 568, 28 novembre 1810. *"Une négresse nommée Rosette âgée d'environ 28 ans, et ses 2 enfants nommés Sophie âgée de 10 ans et Fanie de 7 ans.":* a slave named Rosette, 28, and her two children, named Sophie, 10, and Fanie, 7.

[286] M. De Armas, act n° 63, 24 mars 1810. *"Je veux que sitôt mon décès la liberté soit donnée à la dite griffonne nommée Adelaïde, mon esclave pour par elle en jouir aussitôt qu'elle sera en âge; en attendant je prie mon frère Jean Guillamette d'en avoir soin comme je pourrais le faire moi-même. Les frais qu'il faudra faire pour procurer la dite liberté seront à la charge de mon dit frère.":* after I die, I want the *griffe* named Adelaïde to be manumitted, and enjoy her liberty as soon as she'll reach adulthood; before that I ask my brother Jean Guillamette to take care of her just as I would. He will be in charge of providing her freedom.

[287] M. De Armas, act n° 32, 15 février 1810. *"Je veux qu'après mon décès le nègre de ma propriété nommée Jean Latulippe, âgé d'environ 30 ans, soit affranchi et mis en liberté par mon exécuteur testamentaire.":* after I die, I want the slave named Jean Latulippe, age 30, to be manumitted by my executor.

[288] Koger, Black Slaveowners, p. 45.

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relations and friends but also strove to provide freedom for those purchased, and this often involved years of hard work.

Several free persons of color saw slaveholding as a commercial venture, and the attitudes and actions of colored masters appeared to be similar to those of the white slaveowners. Koger claims that, in South Carolina, many of the mulatto slaveowners were commercial masters and aligned themselves with the white community to preserve the system of slavery.[289] Some treated their slaves as mere commodities. Free persons of color would purchase slaves for profit and labor as they would use the labor of their slaves in their trades and businesses.[290] Koger claims that "many ex-slaves making their way up in the world of business considered the acquisition of slaves to fulfill their demands for workers."[291] He gives the example of Sally Martin, fwc, who worked as a pastry cook. As the demand for her trade increased, Martin acquired slave workers. Koger adds that she used slave labor with "little remorse or guilt," and she later bought and sold slaves.[292] Annie Stahl also claims that it was not uncommon for some free women of color to own their own slaves, who brought them comfortable incomes from their work as hairdressers, washerwomen, and seamstresses.[293]

It is difficult to assert why free persons of color traded slaves. Even if some records show some act of benevolence towards slaves, the information that we can get from some records shows a different side of the slaveholding business. For example, Modeste Bordier did not hesitate to sell a nineteen-year-old slave to Bernard Marigny[294] born on her property and

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[289] Koger, Black Slaveowners, p. 30.
[290] Ibid, p. 29.
[291] Ibid., p. 38.
[292] Ibid., p. 38-9.
[293] Stahl, "The Free Negro In Ante Bellum Louisiana," p. 102.
[294] The Marigny family was a prominent family of Louisiana, owning nearly 1/3 of the city of New Orleans. The city of Mandeville was founded in 1834 by Bernard Xavier de Marigny de Mandeville (1785-1868).

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whose mother was also a slave of hers.[295] Félicité Saulet[296], Marie Perault[297], Françoise Pegnin[298], and Vénus Lahoussaie[299] purchased slaves from various ages during this period. Victoire Wiltz even purchased a twelve-year-old girl.[300] Free women sold slaves along the same patterns. Cécile Saint Martin sold a ten-year old slave girl to another free woman of color.[301] Also, Magdelaine Lalande and Lise Borme Lalande sold adult slaves.[302]

Also, both wills that I described earlier, even if they mention the emancipation of slaves, give some contradictory information. Indeed, Marianne Guillamette also stated in her will that she bequeathed one of her slaves, Marie-Catherine, to her brother, for him to dispose of as his property. Guillamette said that she owned a 12-year-old slave in Saint Domingue, Véronique, and that she bequeathed her to Adelaïde (the slave she emancipated).[303] These slaves were not meant to be emancipated. It seems obvious that Guillamette considered them as property. Furthermore, Hélène Michel specified in her will that Jean Latulippe would be freed only eight

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[295] M. De Armas, act n° 219, 9 juillet 1810. "Un nègre nommé Louis âgé d'environ dix-neuf ans créol de St Domingue, appartenant à la venderesse pour être né chez elle de la négresse Victorine son esclave dont elle a eu plusieurs enfants, laquelle négresse elle achetée au Cap, venant de la côte de Guinée."

[296] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 544, 12 novembre 1810. Une négresse nommée Héloïse âgée d'environ 27 ans, bonne marchande et servante

[297] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 357, 20 juillet 1810. Une négresse nommée Peggy âgée d'environ 26 ans.

[298] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 426, 30 août 1810. Un nègre nommé François âgé d'environ 32 ans.

[299] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 513, 22 octobre 1810. Une négresse nommée Geneviève âgée d'environ 35 ans.

[300] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 1, 2 janvier 1810. Une négresse nommée Françoise, créole de St Domingue âgée de douze ans appartenante à la venderesse pour être née chez elle.

[301] M. De Armas, act n° 363-4, 12 octobre 1810. Une jeune négresse créole âgée d'environ 10 ans appartenante à la Dame Marthe Harang veuve Idlinger pour être née chez elle au Cap Français à St Domingue.

[302] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 473, 26 septembre 1810. Une négresse de nation Congo nommée Adelaïde âgée d'environ 21 ans, acquise par la vendeuse le 28 novembre 1809. P. Pedesclaux, act n° 163, 5 avril 1810. Une négresse nommée Rozitte âgée d'environ 30 ans appartenante à la vendeuse pour l'avoir acquise de Mr (…) le 12 sept 1808. P. Pedesclaux, act n° 280, 1 juin 1810. Lise Borme Lalande, fcl, à Martin Dubois. Une négresse nommée Adeline âgée d'environ 18 ans acquise de Mr (…).

[303] M. De Armas, act n° 63, 24 mars 1810. *"Je donne et lègue à mon dit frère Jean Guillamette la susdite négresse mon esclave nommée Marie-Catherine dite Julime pour par lui en jouir après mon décès comme de chose à lui appartenante en pleine propriété … Et quant aux autres biens que je puis avoir à St Domingue je les donne et lègue à mes héritiers de droit, à la réserve de la petite négresse nommée Véronique qui peut avoir maintenant douze ans, et dans le cas qu'elle se retrouve lors de la rentrée des Français à St Domingue j'entends qu'elle soit délivrée à la petite griffonne Adélaïde ci-dessus mentionnée à laquelle je la donne et lègue.":* I bequathed to my brother Jean Guillamette my slave, named Marie-Catherine *dite* Julime, for him to consider her as his property … Concerning my property that I own in Saint Domingue, I bequeathed it to my heirs, except the slave Véronique, age 12, in case she is in Saint Domingue when the French return, I want her to be given to the *griffe* Adelaïde mentioned above.

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months after her death, and within this amount of time, Jean Latulippe would work for Charles Menier Touranjou.[304] Therefore, Michel was aware of the economic potential of Latulippe, and the benefits that Touranjou would get from the acquisition of this slave.[305] It seems that slaves were seen as commodities.

Mortgages provide good examples of the materialistic side of black slaveholding. Some free women of color mortgaged their slaves, sometimes one, sometimes several. For instance, Elizabeth Aubert, fwc, mortgaged four of her slaves.[306] Marie-Madeleine Guérin *dite* Pouponne, fwc, mortgaged five slaves, including a mother and her three children aged from two months to 10.[307] Charlotte *dite* Villars also mortgaged her slave Jean-Louis in 1810.[308]

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[304] M. De Armas, act n° 32, 15 février 1810. *"Le dit nègre Jean Latulippe ne commencera à jouir de la dite liberté que 8 mois après mon décès pendant lequel temps je veux qu'il soit au service du sieur Charles Menier Touranjou, qui pourra jouir de son travail et de ses services, pendant les huit mois spécifiés ci-dessus comme et ainsi que j'aurais pu le faire moi-même, tous les frais de l'affranchissement devant être à la charge du dit sieur Charles Menier Touranjou.":* Jean Latulippe will only enjoy his liberty eight months after my death, during which I want him to work for sieur Charles Menier Touranjou; Touranjou will benefit from his labor during the eight months mentioned above as I would have benefited from it myself; Touranjou will be in charge of emancipating Latulippe.

[305] The slave, Jean Latulippe, was eventually emancipated. A petition was registered in 1814. VCP320, 1813-1843, Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, Index and Petitions 85A-108D, Michel, Helene, Widow Breton, fwc, Latulisse Jean, 1814, 107B. Petition of Augustin Bellanger, of this city, humbly *sheweth.* That Helene Michel, widow Breton, fwc, made her last will and testament by act before Michel de Armas, notary public in and for this city of New Orleans, bearing the of date the 15th day of February in the year 1810, and died on the 24th of the same month of February; that by her said last will and testament she appointed Charles Menier Touranjou her testamentary executor commanding him to fulfil after her decease all the formalities required by law in order to emancipate her negro slave Jean Latulipe, then of about 30 years of age, and who was to enjoy of his liberty only 8 months after the decease of the testatrix, during which time he was to remain at the service of the said Charles Menier as a compensation of the expenses which were to be incurred by the said Charles Menier in the said emancipation (…) that since the death of the said testatrix the said Charles Menier has entirely neglected to comply with this part of the said will till few months ago that the said Charles Menier became insolvent and died; that there being no person to carry into effect the will of the said testatrix as relates to emancipation of the said Jean Latulisse, you petitioner has been applied to by the said Latulisse in order to fulfil the formalities required by law to obtain the emancipation contemplated (…) that the said Lean Latulisse as far as your petitioner knows, has always led an honest conduct, without having ran away, and without having committed any robbery nor having been guilty of any other criminal misdemeanour.

[306] M. De Armas, act n° 183, 15 juin 1810. *"Les quatre négresses nommées Sanite 17 ans, Emilie 22 ans, Gertrude 16 ans, Rosine 13 ans.":* four slaves named Sanite, 17, Emilie, 22, Gertrude, 16, Rosine, 13.

[307] M. De Armas, act n° 443, 22 décembre 1810. *"Les esclaves ci-après dénommés savoir Aglaë mulâtresse âgée d'environ seize ans, la négresse Rosetta âgée de vingt six ans et ses trois enfants nommés Joseph dit Joujounotte âgé de dix ans, Gattine âgée de huit ans, et un (bébé) n'ayant point encore de nom âgé de deux mois et demi et à la mamelle.":* the slaves named Aglaë, age 16, Rosetta, 26, and her three children named Joseph *dit* Joujounotte, 10, Gattine, 8, and an infant, who has no name yet, age two months and a half, and breast-fed.

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Several free women of color, in other words, did not hesitate to mortgage slaves and sometimes entire families possibly in an attempt to save their business or their property.

Free women of color were selling or buying slaves from whites but also from other free persons of color, sometimes free women of color. Free women were buying slave men and women, children and adults. The reasons why they were buying or selling slaves remain obscure. However, some sales of slaves[309] provide information. Out of 45 sales of slaves, two occurred between a free woman of color and a free man of color,[310] and two other involved free women of color. The rest of the transactions were between free women of color and whites—men and women.

Transactions between free colored persons could be seen either as commercial or not. It is more probable that the slaves who were traded were relatives or friends. For instance, Marie-Claire Boutte, fwc, sold a 2-year-old slave to Marthe Vatry, fwc.[311] Also, free women of color were conducting business with free men of color. Marie Bodaille, fwc, bought a slave from Henry Bricou, fmc.[312] The slave sales show an interesting case between a free woman of color and a free man of color. On May, 14, 1810, Sophie Bénédicte, fwc, sold a 22-year-old slave woman to Joseph Duplessis, fmc.[313] On May, 17, 1810, Bénédicte bought the same slave from Duplessis for the same amount of money.[314] Why would Bénédicte buy this slave back?

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[308] M. De Armas, act n° 365, 13 octobre 1810**.** Un nègre nommé Jean Louis âgé d'environ 45 ans à elle appartenant et pour l'avoir acquis de la dame Piernas.
[309] This includes both sales and purchases.
[310] In fact, there are 3 of those, but two of them involve the same "appearers."
[311] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 405, 20 août 1810. *"Un petit quarteron âgé d'environ 2 ans et demi enfant de la griffonne Fany se soumettant les parties à ne pas séparer le dit quarteron de sa mère qu'à l'âge prévu par la loy.":* a quadroon, about 2 years old, son of the griffe Fany, with the guarantee by the law that he will not be separated from his mother till the legal age.
[312] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 140, 27 mars 1810. *"Une négresse nommée Catherine âgée d'environ 20 ans.":* a slave named Catherine, 20.
[313] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 245, 14 mai 1810. *"Une négresse nommée Fanny âgée d'environ 22 ans.":* a slave named Fanny, 22.
[314] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 252, 17 mai 1810.

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It is possible that Bénédicte may have been concerned with the slave's welfare, and therefore bought it back. She could have also bought the slave back for monetary purposes. Finally, another example demonstrates the ambiguity of slave sales. Henriette Millon, fwc, bought a slave from another free woman of color Charlotte Thomas, in the name of her daughter.[315] What is interesting here is that Millon bought the slave, ten years old, for her 4-month-old daughter. What were Millon's intentions? It seems that she bought this young slave for being a servant, or some company to her child.

It is not always possible to determine why free women of color were buying slaves from whites. It could be either for commercial purposes or "humanitarian" purposes. However, selling slaves to white men or women can be seen as a mere commercial venture. Free women of color sold slaves to whites in eighteen instances. They purchased slaves from whites in twenty-two instances. Therefore, almost half of the transactions implied selling slaves to whites. It appears that free women of color were trading slaves for monetary benefits. In this respect, some cases are illuminating. Louise Campan, a refugee from Cuba, fwc, sold a mother and her seven-year-old child to John Davis.[316] Free women of color were selling both slave men and women of various ages.

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[315] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 251, 17 mai 1810. *"... faisant au nom et pour sa fille Félicité Rosella âgée environ de 4 mois et demi ... Une négritte nommée Françoise âgée d'environ dix ans appartenante à la dite vendeuse pour être née chez elle d'une de ses esclaves."*

[316] M. De Armas, act n° 10, 12 janvier 1810. *"Une négresse et son enfant, la première nommée Claire âgée d'environ 38 ans, et son enfant nommé Gaspard âgé d'environ 7 ans.":* a slave and her child, the first one named Claire, 38, and her infant named Gaspard, 7.

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Description of Slaves

The age of the slaves who were traded indicate that slaves of any age—from infants to 50 years olds—were sold or bought. The chart below shows that children[317] and young adults are mostly represented in the transactions.

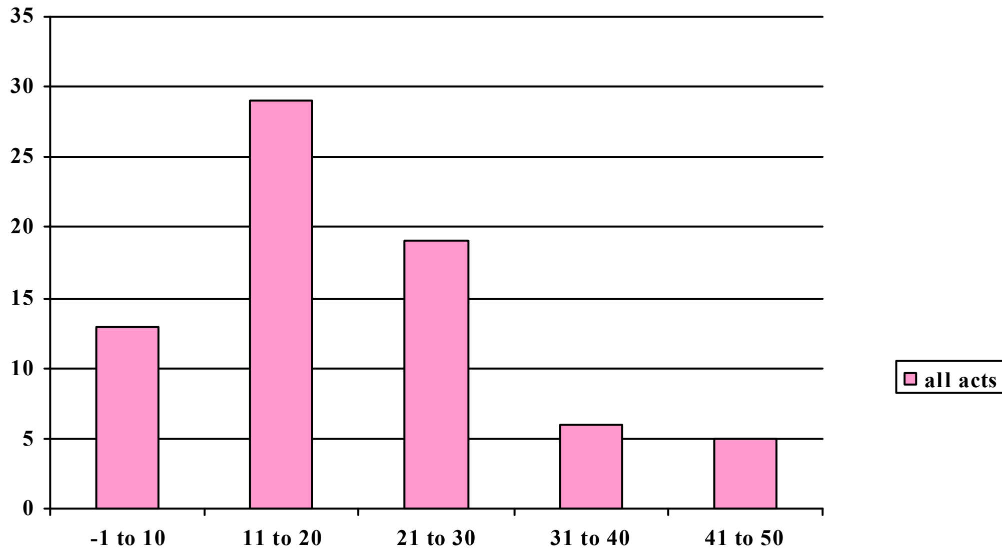

Figure 13: Age of Slaves for All Acts

The following chart gives more details about the age of slaves who were traded. It gives the age of slaves for each category, mortgages, wills, power of attorney, sales of slaves, and purchases of slaves.

[317] Children correspond to the category under 1 year old to 10 years old. The French *Code Noir* forbade the sale of young children separately from their mothers. The Code Noir underwent some changes over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By 1808, the Louisiana slave law, protected slave children under 10 from sale away from their mothers (Judith Kelleher Schafer, Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), pp.1 and 8).

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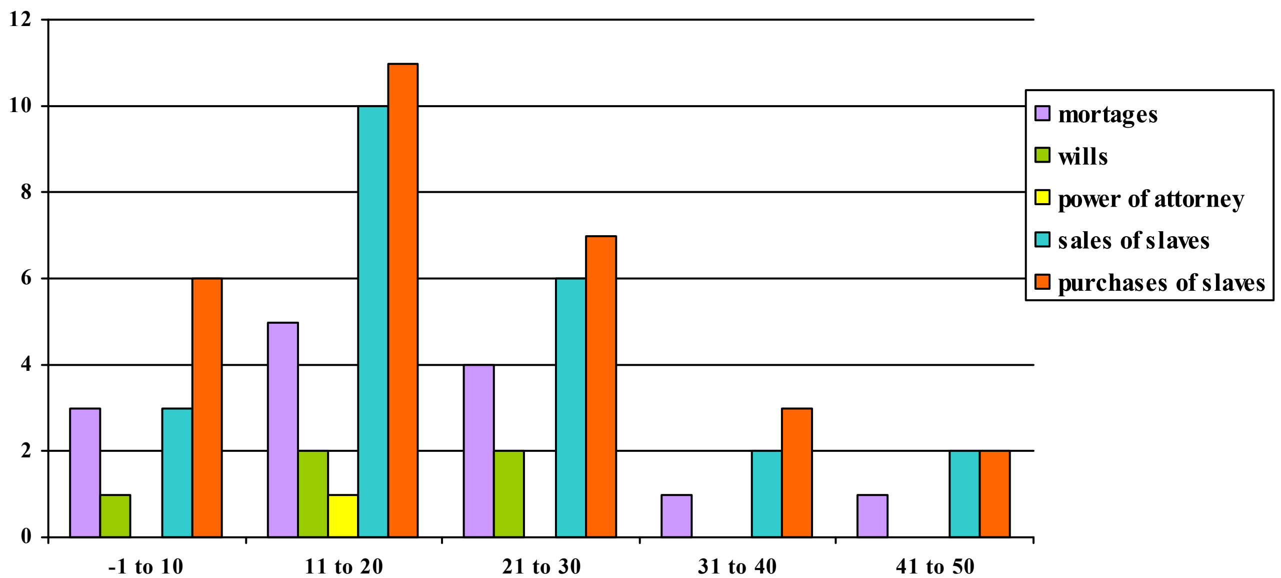

Figure 14: Age of Slaves According to Each Type of Act

This chart shows that free women of color were purchasing a significant number of children—under 1 year old to 10. This indicates that free women of color were buying these children to ease their lives and manumit them. Free colored women were buying important numbers slaves from the other age categories. However, free women of color were selling a significant proportion of slaves from 11 to 30 years old. Given the fact that slaves were the most valuable at this age, it seems that free women of color were selling them for profit. One can not deny the financial benefits that could be derived from slaveholding.

Carter G. Woodson, in his study of the 1830 census, argued that the majority of free blacks purchased relatives and friends who were slaves to white owners, and then allowed them a greater degree of freedom. He claimed that the small number of slaves held by black masters when compared to the large number of slaves owned by white planters suggested that free blacks purchased family members. Woodson stated that the census demonstrated these

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first two points, proving that free blacks slaveowners were benevolent of philanthropic.[318] Some other scholars agreed with these arguments, and it is true that free persons of color bought relatives and friends.

However, it would be erroneous to minimize the size and nature of the commercial side of slaveholding. Free women of color's intentions were sometimes ambiguous. David Rankin states:

> Historians have traditionally assigned noble and generous motives to colored slaveholders. They have argued that the great majority of Negro masters owned relatives, and the New Orleans conveyance records provide ample evidence of fathers and mothers buying their offspring. They have argued that the small size of Negro slaveholding supports their picture of the paternal masters … If many free coloreds bought slaves for their own good, others sold them for a profit.[319]

It is possible to say that free women of color were aware of the monetary benefits of slavery, and were sometimes deeply involved in chattel slavery just as their white counterparts.

Origins of Free Women of Color

The origins of the 56 free women of color I have traced are specified in but four instances. One woman was born in Cuba,[320] and four others were from Saint Domingue.[321] The wills held at the Notarial Archives list four women from Saint Domingue. For instance, Louise Anne Batailler, born Lilavois,[322] fwc, was born in Port-au-Prince, and Hélène Michel,[323] fwc, was from Cap Français. The other wills give more details about the women.

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[318] Koger, Black Slaveowners, p. 80.
[319] Ibid., p. 81.
[320] M. De Armas, act n° 10, 12 janvier 1810. Campan Louise, fwc, a refugee from Cuba.
[321] I chose to use the term "Saint Domingue" as it is referred as such in the notarial acts.
[322] M. De Armas, act n° 269, 10 août 1810.
[323] M. De Armas, act n° 32, 15 février 1810.

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Marianne Guillamette,[324] fwc, was born in the "île à Vaches," an island situated a few miles away from Saint Domingue in the Caribbean Sea. In her will, Guillamette stated that she owned some property in Saint Domingue, including a 12-year-old slave. Guillamette must have immigrated to Louisiana some years earlier, although she still owned some property in Saint Domingue. Marie-Elizabeth Baubin,[325] fwc, was born in Port-au-Prince, and also owned some property there. She stated that her property included two houses and various slaves.[326]

Even if there is not much information concerning the origins of these free women of color, the acts sometimes mention the origins of their slaves. The acts give the origins of fifteen slaves. Africa, Cuba and Saint Domingue are the origins specified.

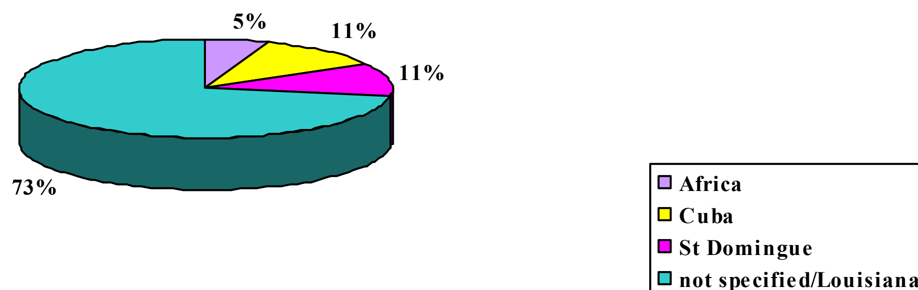

Figure 15: Origins of the Slaves

This graph shows that slaves born in Cuba and Saint Domingue represent a significant percentage—22%.

It is sometimes specified that the slaves were born on the free women of color's property. Thus, when it is specified that one slave is from Saint Domingue or Cuba, and was

[324] M. De Armas, Notary, act n° 63, 24 mars 1810.
[325] M. De Armas, act n° 206, 29 juin 1810.
[326] *"Mes biens consistent en une maison située au Port au Prince, rue du réservoir, sur le morne Bélair; en une autre maison située rue du centre et des miracles, dans la même ville; plus en divers esclaves.":* I own a house located in Port au Prince, on réservoir street, on the morne Bélair; another house located rue du centre et des miracles, in the same town; plus various slaves.

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born on a seller's property, we can presume that the property was located either in Saint Domingue or Cuba, and therefore that his/her mistress was from Saint Domingue or Cuba.

If the origins of the slaves inform of the origins of their mistress (except for slaves from Africa), the percentages of women of color from Cuba and Saint Domingue the following:[327]

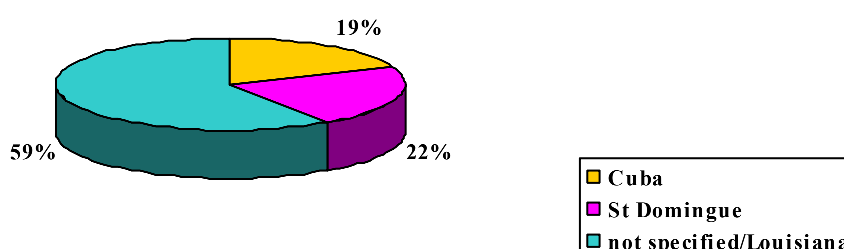

Figure 16: Origins of Free Women of Color

This chart show that 41% of free women of color were from Saint Domingue and Cuba. Therefore, 4 women out of 10 were from Saint Domingue and Cuba and were slave owners in New Orleans in 1810.

For example, the case of Françoise Dunand, fwc, is revealing. She engaged in two transactions during 1810.[328] Dunand sold two slaves during this time. Both slaves were bought in Santiago de Cuba several years before. In one case, the slave was bought in 1805[329] and the other one in 1804.[330] Therefore, we may conclude that Dunand was from Cuba. This is quite common throughout the acts. Women who bought slaves either in Saint Domingue or Cuba

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[327] These percentages exclude free women of color who were buying slaves. The number of free women of color is therefore 32 out of 56.
[328] M. De Armas, act n° 317, 5 septembre 1810; M. De Armas, act n° 318, 6 septembre 1810.
[329] *"Un nègre nommé Louis de nation Congo âgé d'environ 25 ans, acheté à St Iago de Cuba le 19 décembre 1805"*: a slave named Louis, from Congo, age 25, bought in Santiago de Cuba on December, 19, 1805.
[330] *"a slave ... acheté à Sts Jago de Cuba déjà environ six ans."*: a slave … bought in Santiago de Cuba six years earlier.

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must have been from these islands. For instance, Julienne Daroman, fwc, bought two slaves in 1806 in Santiago de Cuba.[331] Also, Aimée Copman, fwc, bought a slave in Baracoa, Cuba.[332] There is also the case of Marie-Claudine Fouquet, fwc, who bought a slave in Santiago de Cuba.[333] As a result, while these acts give some details about the origins of these slaves, we also have some information about their mistresses. Sales of slaves are not the only documents which reveal this trend. For example, Marguerite Vatel, widow Boyer, fwc, put a mortgage on her slave Marie Jeanne, who was born in Saint Domingue. The act specifies that Vatel brought the slave from Saint Domingue.[334]

Some acts do not prove conclusively that these free women of color were either from Saint Domingue or Cuba. Indeed, even if a slave was from Saint Domingue and born on a woman's property, this slave could have been brought to Louisiana before having been transferred to a woman's property. For instance, Lucie Dechenere, fwc, sold a slave from Saint Domingue, who was born on her property.[335] Also, Modeste Bordier, fwc, sold a slave from Saint Domingue, who, it is specified was born on her property.[336] Still, these examples could prove that these free women of color were also from Saint Domingue.[337]

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[331] M. De Armas, act n° 5, 6 janvier 1810. *"Deux nègres l'un nommé Saporteur âgé d'environ 17 ans et l'autre nommé Frank âgé de 23 à 24 ans, acquis le 9 octobre 1806 à St Iago.":* two slaves named Saporteur, age 17, and Frank, age 23 or 24, bought on October, 9, 1806.
[332] M. De Armas, act n° 344, 21 septembre 1810. *"Une négresse nommée la ... âgée d'environ 36 ans appartenante à la venderesse pour l'avoir achetté à Baracoa le 10 janvier 1807.":* a slave named …, age 36, bought in Baracoa on January, 10, 1807.
[333] M. De Armas, act n° 344-5, 21 septembre 1810. "*Une négresse nommée Lucette âgée d'environ 15 ans, acquise à St Iago de Cuba le 26 août 1807.":* a slave named Lucette, age 15, bought in Santiago de Cuba on August, 26, 1807.
[334] M. De Armas, 272-3, 13 août 1810. *"une négresse nommée Marie Jeanne âgée d'environ 22 ans a elle appartenante pour l'avoir acheté à Saint Domingue d'où elle l'a amenée en ce pays.":* a slave named Marie Jeanne, age 22, bought in Saint Domingue from where she brought her to this country.
[335] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 1, 2 janvier 1810. *"Une négresse nommée Françoise, créole de Saint Domingue âgée de douze ans appartenante à la venderesse pour être née chez elle.":* a slave named Françoise, a creole from Saint Domingue, age 12, belonging to the seller and born on her property.
[336] M. De Armas, act n° 219, 9 juillet 1810. *"Un nègre nommé Louis âgé d'environ dix-neuf ans créol de Saint Domingue, appartenant à la venderesse pour être né chez elle de la négresse Victorine son esclave dont elle a eu plusieurs enfants, laquelle négresse elle achetée au Cap, venant de la côte de Guinée":* a slave named Louis,

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Also, when we take a look at the massive immigration of free persons of color from Saint Domingue and Cuba to Louisiana from the 1790s to 1810—especially between 1809 and 1810—it is possible to conclude that most of these women were either from Saint Domingue or Cuba. The large immigration from St Domingue and Cuba could explain why free women of color owned slaves born in Cuba. Indeed, the history of these refugees from St Domingue and Cuba corroborates the information contained by the notarial acts. The influx of tens of thousands of free persons of color to Louisiana, and especially New Orleans, shows that a great proportion of free women of color who purchased or sold slaves in 1810 were from Saint Domingue or Cuba.

Additional Research

Slaveholding as a Commercial Venture

Further research as regards some of these free women of color[338] tends to confirm that most of them saw slaveholding as a commercial venture, buying and selling slaves over the years and accumulating goods and property. Indeed, records of their wills, successions, and inventories, but also suit records and emancipation petitions give significant information about these women after 1810.[339] The New Orleans Public Library holds microfilms and original manuscripts which bear witness to this fact.

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age 19, creole from Saint Domingue, belonging to the seller and born of her property from the slave Victorine, her slave, from whom she had several children, bought in Le Cap, and coming from the coast of Guinea.

[337] Further research will show that Modeste Bordier was, indeed, from Cap Français, Saint Domingue. Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Bordier, Modeste, p. 418, 19 décembre 1832.

[338] There is no extensive record concerning some women; on the contrary, some left a lot of information behind them; and some others do not appear on any record.

[339] I found some records concerning Aramanthe Lasize, Arsène Lajalousière, Modeste Bordier, Hélène Michel, Elizabeth Aubert, Marie-Madeleine Guérin *dite* Pouponne, Charlotte Villars, Marie Bodaille, Sophie Bénédicte, Victorie Wiltz, Félicité Saulet, Marie Perault, Magdelaine Lalande, Lise Bonne Lalande, Venus de la Houssaye, and Françoise Pegnin.

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Elizabeth Aubert, fwc, mortgaged four of her slaves in 1810.[340] When Aubert died in 1815, the inventory of her estate stipulated that she owned eight slaves at this time.[341] Furthermore, there is a note from Pierre Laporte (Aubert and Laporte may have been business partners, or related) which is very interesting. Laporte claims that two of Aubert's slaves, Philippe and Sam,[342] were his, although he confidentially sold them to Aubert at a time he intended to go to Cuba. Also, he states that he sold two female slaves belonging to Aubert a few years ago for 1000 *piastres*. He spent this sum of money some time ago, but he wishes to give this money back to Aubert's heirs in order to have *his* slaves (Philippe and Sam) back.[343] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database confirms that Aubert did buy Sam and Philippe from Laporte in 1812.[344] This note reveals the nature of slaveholding. Indeed, in this case, slaves were treated as mere property. It seems that Aubert and Laporte purely engaged in such business for commercial reasons—not to mention Laporte's dishonesty.

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[340] M. De Armas, act n° 183, 15 juin 1810.

[341] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. A, 1807-1839, Elizabeth Aubert's Inventory, September 12, 1815. "Inventaire et estimation des esclaves : Timat, nègre créole de St Domingue, âgé d'environ vingt ans, apprenti chapellier, Rosine, négresse de nation Ibo, âgée d'environ dix-sept ans, domestique, avec son enfant petite griffonne d'environ 1 an, Gertrude, négresse de nation Ibo, âgée d'environ dix-neuf ans, domestique, amant mulatre d'environ deux ans, Philippe, nègre de nation Clamente, âgé d'environ trente deux ans, marin, Sam, nègre américain âgé d'environ quarante ans, marin, Jean-Louis, nègre de nation Congo âgé d'environ cinquante ans, fesant des journées."

[342] When Elizabeth Aubert mortgaged her slaves in 1810, so did Laporte. He mortgaged two slaves, Philippe and Sam. M. De Armas, act n° 183, 15 juin 1810. Hypothèque de nègres présentée par Pierre Laporte et Elizabeth Aubert, fcl, en faveur de Jacques Joly. Philippe âgé d'environ vingt-six ans, Sam âgé d'environ 28 ans (propriété de Pierre Laporte) ; les 4 négresses nommées Sanite 17 ans, Emilie 22 ans, Gertrude 16 ans, Rosine 13 ans (propriété de Elizabeth Aubert).

[343] Ibid. "Mr Pierre Laporte nous a déclaré que les deux derniers nègres inventoriés nommés Philippe et Sam sont de sa propriété quoiqu'il en ait payé une vente à la défunte au rapport de Mr de Armas dans un temps où il comptait partir pour l'isle de Cuba, laquelle vente est purement confidentielle, que cependant il doit déclarer ici qu'il y a quelques années il vendit deux négresses appartenant à la défunte pour prix et somme de mille piastres, de laquelle somme il s'est servi depuis, pour quoi il espère qu'en restituant aux héritiers de la défunte la dite somme de mille piastres ils lui feront remise des deux nègres surmentionnés, de tout quoi le déclarant nous a requis de lui donner acte à lui octroyé et a signé."

[344] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database.

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A suit recorded in 1817 reveals that another free woman of color, Victoire Wiltz, treated slaves as mere commodities. Wiltz bought a twelve-year-old slave, named Françoise, from another free woman of color in 1810.[345] The suit filed in 1817 shows that Wiltz sold Françoise to John W. Smith (a lawyer) on February 17, 1817.[346] In this case, Smith sued Wiltz over the charge that Françoise, now 19, was not "healthy and sound" when he purchased her, contrary to what Wiltz claimed. Smith had Françoise examined by a doctor, who revealed that she was incurable. Smith accused Wiltz of knowing her former slave's disease and hiding this fact to him.[347]

This suit also contains another document, an answer from Wiltz to Smith's file. She claims:

> That the sold to the plaintiff, the slave Françoise in the year 1817, that the said slave was healthy and sound.
> That the said disease was curable, but that, to the plaintiff's own negligence may be attributed its increase in the flaw of the slave is truly affected by said disease which the respondent denies
> And further this respondent says that the plaintiff is not to be heard by this court because his action is prescribed.
> Wherefore, this respondent prays that said plaintiff be dismissed with costs.[348]

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[345] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 1, 2 janvier 1810. Lucie Dechenere, fcl, à Victoire Wiltz. Une négresse nommée Françoise, créole de St Domingue âgée de douze ans appartenante à la venderesse pour être née chez elle, 350 piastres.
[346] Louisiana. First Judicial District Court (Orleans Parish). Suit Records, 1813-1835. Smith, John W. against Wiltz, Victoire (fwc), Docket n° 7458. Petition over slave sale. 17 février 1817, Vente d'esclave. Victoire Wiltz, fcl à John W. Smith (avocat).
[347] Ibid., Pétition : "Achat (…) la dite esclave étant par la dite acte de vente expressément garantie comme saine et ne possédant aucunes maladies ou défauts rédhibitoires. Que la dite esclave avant la dite vente a été affectée d'une maladie incurable : c'est-à-dire une espèce de lèpre quelquefois nommée maladie de *joints.* Que l'existence de la ditte maladie dans la dite esclave fut dans la connaissance de la dite venderesse et qu'elle ne l'a pas déclaré ni faite connaître à votre pétitionnaire et au moment de la dite vente a été un peu supprimée ou avait un peu cédée ainsi qu'elle n'était pas apparente sur une simple inspection, et n'a pas été alors apparue, ou connue par notre pétitionnaire. Qu'après en apprenant l'existence de la dite maladie de la dite esclave votre pétitionnaire qui ignorait la vraie nature de cette maladie a employé l'aide médicale pour la guérison de la dite esclave mais en vain car elle en a toujours été affligée et elle en est incurrissable et si absolument inutile que s'il eut comme avant ou au moment de la dite vente et ne l'avait pas achetée tout le quel paraîtra par la dite acte de vente (…) A ces causes il prie que (…) Victoire Wiltz reprenne la dite esclave (…) [et] le repaye la dite prix avec intérêts et frais (…)."
[348] Ibid. Answer of Victoire Wiltz to the petition filed against her by J. W. Smith.

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It does not matter who is right and who is not in this case—even if Smith seems to prove his honesty contrary to Wiltz. This case clearly shows that Françoise was treated as a mere commodity by Wiltz and Smith, revealing that Wiltz, as a free woman of color, did not consider her slave's well-being as paramount, and did not hesitate to being involved in the slaveholding business just as whites were.[349] Aubert and Wiltz are clear examples that free women of color considered slaves as a valued property.

Some other women bequeathed their slaves to their children without any intention to emancipate them. Sophie Bénédicte died in 1827. Her inventory included some furniture, a lot, and three slaves named Charlotte, Jean-Louis, and Sophie.[350] Fanny is not mentioned—Fanny was the slave she sold and purchased back the same day. There is no further information on what happened to Fanny.[351] Bénédicte's will reveals that she had six children and bequeathed them all her belongings.[352] Hence, Bénédicte left her children her slaves without any intention to manumit them.

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[349] Hall's database also reveals that Wiltz bought another twelve-year-old slave, Marie-Louise, in 1815, from the sale of an estate of a free person of African descent. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database.

[350] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. B, 1823-1828, Sophie Bénédicte's Inventory, May 28, 1827. Armoire; slaves : a negro woman named Charlotte, African born, aged about fifty years, somewhat of a cook, with her son named Jean-Louis, a mulatto boy about ten years old, A negro woman named Sophie, African born, aged about fifty-five years, a tolerable washer and somewhat of a cook; landed property: a lot of ground in the (?) Faubourg Marigny.

[351] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 245, 14 mai 1810. P. Pedesclaux, act n° 252, 17 mai 1810.

[352] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Bénédicte, Sophie, p. 143, May 24, 1827. "Suis âgée d'environ 48 ans, je suis venue d'Afrique à la Louisiane dans un âge très faible et je n'ai pas connu ma mère, je n'ai jamais contracté mariage. Je suis mère de six enfants, tous de couleur, ils se nomment Louis, âgé de 18 ans, Joséphine âgée de 12 ans, Elmire âgée de onze ans, Delphine âgée de huit ans, Gaethon âgé de sept ans, et Magdelaine ayant quatre ans. Je les reconnais pour les enfants naturels, et à ce titre, je leur donne et lègue pour être partagé entre eux par portions égales, la généralité des biens en toute nature que je délaisserais au jour de mon décès.": I am about 48 years old, I was born in Africa and brought to Louisiana when I was very young and I have never known my mother, I have never been married. I have six children, all of color, named Louis, 18, Joséphine, 12, Elmire, 11, Delphine, 8, Gaethon, 7, and Magdelaine, 4. They are my natural children, and I bequeathed them all my belongings after my demise and should share these between them.

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In 1810, Lise Borme Lalande (also referred as Lise Bonne Lalanne/Lalande) sold two of her slaves, Rozitte and Adeline.[353] It seems that Lalande was one of these free women of color who saw slaveholding as a business venture. Her will, written in 1816, listed two slaves, Babet and Rosette. Lalande wished to bequeath all her belongings to her seven children (all minors), and specified that her executor should rent her slave Babet's services, and keep Rosette as a servant to take care of her children.[354] This shows, again, that Lalande was aware of the monetary potential of her slaves.

Vénus Lahoussaie (also mentioned as Venus de la Houssaye) bought a slave, Geneviève, from Auguste Somparayc in 1810.[355] Lahoussaie died in 1821 bequeathing her property to her sister, Esther de la Houssaye.[356] The slave Geneviève does not appear in Lahoussaie's inventory. There is no record concerning Geneviève (sale or emancipation). Lahoussaie's property consisted of some clothes, crockery, a lot and a house, and a slave named Rosalie.[357] Lahoussaie did not wish to emancipate her slave but considered Rosalie's economic potential.

Finally, the case of Aramanthe Lasize also proves that slaves were passed down from parent to child with no desire to emancipate them. Lasize probably died in 1815. Her

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[353] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 163, 5 avril 1810. Lise Borme Lalande, fcl, à Charles Olivier. Une négresse nommée Rozitte âgée d'environ 30 ans appartenante à la vendeuse pour l'avoir acquise de Mr (…) le 12 sept 1808. P. Pedesclaux, act n° 280, 1 juin 1810. Lise Borme Lalande, fcl, à Martin Dubois. Une négresse nommée Adeline âgée d'environ 18 ans acquise de Mr (…).

[354] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2 1815-1817, Lalanne, Louise Bonne, p. 218. 22 Avril 1816. Ma propriété consiste en deux esclaves nommés Babet âgée d'environ vingt-quatre ans, acquise d'adelaïde en votre étude il y environ six ans, et Rosette âgée d'environ trente ans, acquise de Mr Fournier également en votre étude il y a environ quatre ans (…) Je prie mon exécuteur testamentaire ci après nommé de louer la négresse Babet, et de conserver la negresse Rosette pour surveiller et prendre soin de mes enfants.

[355] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 513, 22 octobre 1810. slave sale. Auguste Somparayc à Vénus Lahoussaie, fcl. Une négresse nommée Geneviève âgée d'environ 35 ans. 500 piastres.

[356] Recorder of Wills, Will books, v. 3 1817-1824, Lahoussaie, Vénus, p. 232, 1821.

[357] Orleans Parish, La, Court of Probate, Succession and Probate Records: 1805-1848, Pt. 105 H, 1820-1826, Succession of Venus de la Houssaye, Inventory, 23 novembre 1821.
Rosalie, négresse de nation Congo, âgée d'environ quarante ans, laquelle en raison d'une enflure dont elle est pour le moment atteinte aux jambes a été estimée 100.

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inventory[358] and succession[359] were recorded on September, 22, 1815 and August 11, 1815 respectively. These records bring more information as regards Aramanthe Lasize's relationship with her slaves. Indeed, in her will, she stipulates that she has six natural children, Athanage, Dorothée, Julie, Valfroy, Valery, and Jean-Baptiste.[360]

Her succession contains a petition from Jean-Baptiste who, as a minor (he is nineteen), would need a curator in order to inherit from his mother. He asks for the nomination of Charles Chiapella and specifies that the latter is his natural father[361]—in 1810, Lasize bought four slaves from a person named Charles Lachiapella.[362] This information suggests that Charles Lachiapella/Charles Chiapella is the same person. As a result, Lasize bought her four slaves from her present or former concubine. Then, her relationship with Charles Lachiapella-Chiapella might have influenced her purchase; but in what way?

Furthermore, her inventory, in 1815, included three of the four slaves she bought from Chiapella, Benebale, Marie-Marthe (Lasize's will also reveals that Marie-Marthe had a

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358 Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. L, 1809-1820, Amaranthe Lafsize' Inventory, 22 septembre 1815.

359 Orleans Parish, La., Court of Probate, Succession and Probate Records: 1805-1848, Pt. 122 L, 1805? 1809?-1815, 11 août 1815.

360 Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2, 1815-1817, Lasize, Aramanthe, p. 178, 3 décembre 1813. "Je déclare avoir six enfants naturels nommés Athanage, garçon âgé d'environ trente-huit ans, Dorothée fille âgée d'environ trente six ans, Julie fille âgée d'environ trente ans, Valfroy âgé d'environ vingt-huit ans, Valery âgé d'environ vingt-deux ans, et Jean-Baptiste âgé d'environ dix-sept ans ; tous mes enfants susnommés *résident* dans cette ville, à l'exception de Jean-Baptiste qui se trouve actuellement à Lisbonne:" I have six natural children named Athanage, 38, Dorothée, 36, Julie, 30, Valfroy, 28, Valery, 22, and Jean-Baptiste, 17.

361 Orleans Parish, La., Court of Probate, Succession and Probate Records: 1805-1848, Pt. 122 L, 1805? 1809?-1815. 11 août 1815. Pétition de Jean Baptiste Chiapelle, h. de c. l. "Représente humblement qu'il est enfant naturel et héritier mineur de la défunte Amaranthe Lassize f. de c. l. comme il … par le testament de la dite défunte, sa mère ; qu'il est âgé de dix-neuf ans et à le droit de se nommer un curateur ad bona et un ad lites, pour administrer l'héritage qui pourra lui échoir de la dite succession et défendre ses droits et intérêts dans *icelle*. Pourquoi il vous prie de vouloir bien agréer la nomination qu'il fait maintenant à votre *homme* de Monsieur Charles Chiapella (père naturel du Pétitionaire) pour son curateur ad bona etc.:" Declares that he is the natural child of the late Aramanthe Lasize, fwc, (…) ; he is 19 and has the right to name a curator "ad bona" and "ad lites" to administrate his inheritance (…).

362 M. De Armas, act n° 106, 26 avril 1810. "Vente d'esclaves par sieur Charles Lachiapella à Amaranthe Lasize, fcl:" Slave sale from sieur Charles Lachiapelle to Amaranthe Lasize, fwc: *"Une négresse nommée Benebale âgée d'environ 45 ans ensemble ses trois enfants nommés Marie Marthe negrite âgée de 15 ans, François négrillon âgé de 12 ans, et Félicité negritte âgée de 9 ans.":* a slave named Benebale, age 45, and her three children named Marie Marthe, age 15, François, age 12, and Félicité, age 9.

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sixteen-month-old baby named George) and Félicité.[363] There is no mention of François. We can raise several questions about this record. What happened to François? Was he manumitted? Was he sold? Or he may have died. Some further investigation reveals that François was sold to a Jean Chesse on December 20, 1815.[364] Therefore, François was sold into slavery as a mere commodity.

Also, at her death, why would Lasize still possess four slaves? Lasize may have held them as slaves to protect them, or she may have used their services. Again, Lasize's relations with her slaves are not clear. Her will mentioned the fact that she wanted her property to be shared between her children but she did not give any details about what she meant by 'property.'[365] Given the fact that these slaves were her property, we could suggest that she did bequeath them to her children. This is confirmed thanks to Hall's database which recorded the sales of Marie Marthe and Félicité (and their two children) to Dorothée Lasize, fwc, in 1816—Benebale is not listed.[366] Thus, Lasize bequeathed her slaves to her daughter, and did not wish to emancipate them.

Lasize's case, but also Aubert's, Bénédicte's, Lalande's and Houssaye's, show that slaves—adults as well as children—were to be handed down from parent to child just like any other possessions. These slaves were also bequeathed to other relatives or friends, and

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[363] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. L, 1809-1820, Amaranthe Lafsize' Inventory, 22 septembre 1815. "Une négresse nommée Benebale, âgée d'environ cinquante ans, blanchisseuse et cuisinière, Marie-Marthe, négresse créole, âgée d'environ vingt ans, cuisinière, avec son enfant George mulatre d'environ seize mois, Félicité, négresse créole, âgée d'environ quinze ans, domestique: " A slave named Benebale, 50, a waherwoman and a cook, Marie-Marthe, 27, a cook, and her child George, 16 months ols, Félicité, 15, a servant.
[364] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database.
[365] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2, 1815-1817, Lasize, Aramanthe, p. 178, 3 décembre 1813. "Je donne et lègue à chacune des filles de Dorothée ma fille la somme de cent piastres, ce qui fait la somme de 300 piastres pour être partagées entre trois petites filles nommées Euphémie, Eugénie et Jeranie. Je donne et lègue à mes filles Dorothée et Julie tant mon armoire de mérisier que tout le linge à mon usage généralement ; quand au surplus de mes biens il sera partagé par portions égales entre tous mes enfants:" I bequeath to my daughters Dorothée and Julie my closet and my clothing (…) and all my other goods should be shared between all my children.
[366] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database.

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were not meant to be emancipated. These records do not tell if slaves were treated well or not, but they inform about the commercial side of slaveholding as regards free women of color.

Ambiguous Relations

Some other women maintained more or less ambiguous relations towards their slaves. For example, Marie Perault (also listed as Marie Noël Perrault) died in 1816, and her will and inventory stipulated that she owned six slaves, Thérèse and her children Victoire, 5, and Jeannette, 11 months, Flore, Anne, and Babet. She wished to emancipate one of them, Flore, for her good services. Nevertheless, she bequeathed two other slaves—Thérèse and her daughter Jeannette—to a free woman of color, Françoise Greffin.[367] What is interesting as regards this case is that her slave Thérèse had another daughter, Victoire, but Perault does not mention this child. Then, what happened to Victoire? In this case, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy* Database reveals that Victoire was sold to Agathe Fanchon, fmc, in October 4, 1816—manifestly without her mother.[368] Anne, 60, was sold to François Loiseau in 1817.[369]

Also, Perault did not mention what would happen to her other slave Babet. There is no record concerning Babet. Also, Perault had previously bought a slave, Peggy, in 1810 who is

[367] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2 1815-1817, Perault, Marie, p. 250-1, 16 juillet 1817. "Thérèse âgée de 24 ans avec ses deux enfants nommés Victoire de cinq ans et Jeannette d'environ 11 mois, Babet âgée de 30 ans, Flore 60 ans. Après mon décès, je donne la liberté à la dite négresse Flore gracieusement en récompense de ses loyaux services. Je donne et lègue à Françoise Greffin fcl ma maison et la négresse Thérèse avec sa fille Jeannette.": Thérèse, 24, and her two children named Victoire, 5, and Jeannette, 11 months old, Babet, 30, Flore, 60. After my demise, I wish to emancipate Flore rewarding her for her loyal services. I bequeath Thérèse and her daughter Jeannette to Françoise Greffin, fwc.
[368] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database. Marie Perault is referred as Marie Perrant.
[369] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. P, 1809-1824, Marie Perrault Inventory. "Une négresse nommée Anne âgée d'environ 60 ans, malade depuis longues années d'une fistule invétérée à l'anus. 14 juillet 1817. Vente de Anne à Mr François Loiseau.": A slave named Anne, 60, sick for a long time (…).

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not listed in her inventory in 1816.[370] Therefore, it seems that Perault was aware of the monetary value of slaves, wishing to emancipate one indeed, but bequeathing all others-adults and children.

Magdelaine Lalande, fwc, also shows that slaveholding among free women of color was ambiguous. Lalande died in 1815. Her property included some furniture, crockery, clothes, a lot and buildings, and two slaves, Marie-Joseph and Mélincourt.[371] Her inventory also listed some papers such as slaves' manumissions. For instance, the manumission of a slave named Charles on February 22, 1776.[372] Among these papers was also a donation act for two slaves from Jacques *Mixuer* to Lalande.[373] There is no further information on these two slaves—the reason why Lalande acquired these slaves and what happened to them is unknown. Lalande's implication to the slaveholding business seems unclear.

Her will gives some insight into her relationship with her slaves. She wished her fifteen-year old slave Mélincourt was emancipated after her demise.[374] She also stipulated that 400 piastres should be bequeathed to Mélincourt. Moreover, she named a person (whose name is illegible) who would serve as Mélincourt's father when he will be freed. This shows that Lalande cared about Mélincourt and that she took legal steps towards ensuring his well-

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[370] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 357, 20 juillet 1810. Etienne Greffin à Marie Perault, fcl. **"**Une négresse nommée Peggy âgée d'environ 26 ans. 500 piastres.": A slave named Peggy, 26.
[371] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. L, 1809-1820, Magdelaine Lalande's Inventory, August 15, 1815.
[372] Ibid., "L'expédition de l'acte de liberté d'un mulâtre nommé Charles fils de Marie Sabotte, à lui donnée par Mr Carlos Groudel par devant François Broutin le 22 février 1776.
[373] Ibid., L'expédition de la donation de deux esclaves par Mr Jacques *Mixuer* à la défunte par acte reçu Massicot notaire, 24 mai 1787.": Donation of two slaves from Jacques *Mixuer* to the deceased, Massicot notary, May 24, 1787.
[374] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v.2 1815-1817, Lalande Madelaine (Magdelaine), p. 188, 15 juillet 1815. "Je veux qu'après ma mort, mon exécuteur testamentaire fasse passer l'acte de liberté à mon nègre Mélincourt ci-dessus nommé ce conformément aux lois de cet état à cet effet, et que les frais de la dite liberté seront relevés de la masse de mes biens, car telle est ma volonté. Je donne et lègue au dit Mélincourt la somme de quatre cent piastres une fois payé, car telle est ma volonté.": I want, after my demise, my executor to manumit my slave Mélincourt (…), and I will pay his manumission. I bequeath Mélincourt 400 piastres.

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being. Finally, her will also specifies that she bequeathed 600 piastres to a slave named Joséphine for her to purchase her freedom.[375]

Nevertheless, her will also mentioned the slave Marie-Joseph whom she bequeathed to Joséphine Jassi, a free woman of color.[376] Lalande also indicates that Jassi should use Marie-Joseph as her own property after her demise. As a result, this shows that Lalande cared about some slaves, but she was also aware of their monetary value and that they could be useful to other persons.

Arsène Lajalousière was a free woman of color who bought mother and children, Rosette, Sophie and Fanie, in 1810 in New Orleans.[377] Lajalousière died in 1824, and her inventory listed seven slaves including Rosette and her children, Sophie and Fanie.[378] Lajalouisière's will specified that she wanted two of her slaves, Blaise and Fanie, to be emancipated.[379] A petition was indeed registered in July 1824 asking for the emancipation of Blaise.[380]

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[375] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v.2 1815-1817, Lalande Madelaine (Magdelaine), p. 188, 15 juillet 1815. "Je donne et lègue à Joséphine, fille de Joseph Cabaret et de la mulâtresse Clarisse, la somme de 600 piastres pour lui aider à obtenir sa liberté conformément aux lois de cet état, voulant également que les frais de la dite liberté seront relevés de la masse de mes biens. ": I bequeath Joséphine, daughter of Joseph Cabaret and the slave Clarisse, 600 piastres to help buy her freedom (…) also under my charge.

[376] Ibid., "Je donne et lègue à Joséphine Jassi femme de couleur libre ma négresse Marie-Joseph pour qu'elle en jouisse en toute propriété à compter du jour de mon décès.": I bequeath Joséphine Jassi, free woman of color, my slave Marie-Jospeh for her to benefit from her labor as from my demise.

[377] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 568, 28 novembre 1810.

[378] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. L, 1821-1832, Arsène Lajalousière's Inventory, 2 septembre 1824. "Une négresse nommée Rosette, âgée d'environ quarante cinq ans, cigarière, une mulâtresse nommée Sophie, âgée d'environ 23 ans, domestique, Florestine âgée d'environ 3 ans, un nègre nommée Louis, âgé d'environ 45 ans, cigarier, un nègre nommé Edouard dit Coco, âgé d'environ 15 ans, créole, domestique, un nègre nommé Jean-Blaise âgé de plus de 30 ans (…) et une négresse nommée Fanie, âgée d'environ 23 ans (…):" Slaves named Rosette, 45, a cigar maker, Sophie, 23, a servant, Florestine, 3, Louis, 45, a cigar maker, Edouard aka Coco, 15, servant, Jean-Blaise, 30, and Fanie, 23.

[379] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Lajalousière, Arsène, p. 11, 19 juin 1824. "Je veux que mon exécuteur testamentaire émancipe mon nègre Blaise et remplisse à cet effet toutes les formalités nécessaires. Je veux aussi que ma négresse Fanie soit émancipée aussitôt qu'elle aura atteint l'âge requis par la loi (…):" I want that my executor emancipates my slaves Blaise (…) and Fanie (…).

[380] Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves 1813-1843, 67B, Lafalouisiere, Arsene, Estate of, Blaise, juillet 1824. "A petition by Manuel Borges, exécuteur testamentaire. To emancipate a Negro man slave named Blaise, aged of more than 30 years. Has always led an

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Also, no petition was recorded for the emancipation of Fanie. In fact, Lajalousière specified in her will that Fanie should be emancipated when she would qualify for it. Fanie was 23 in 1824. The state's laws concerning manumission in Louisiana were unique. The age requirement was 30 years old (a remnant of the Roman law of slavery). Judith Kelleher Schafer specifies that, in 1826, the Louisiana legislature "softened the age requirement." Indeed, a slave who was under 30 could be emancipated with the judge and police jury of the parish of the owner's permission.[381] In Fanie's case, Lajalousière did not wish to emancipate her before she had reached the legal age requirement as she stipulated that Fanie would remain a slave to her children until then.[382] On the contrary, Lajalousière made no provision concerning Rosette and Sophie (respectively Fanie's mother and sister), and for the slaves Florestine, Louis, and Edouard *dit* Coco. Slaves' emancipations were therefore very unlikely, and free women of color like Lajalouisière did not bother filing petitions for all of their slaves.

Marie Bodaille (also listed as Marie Bondaille and Marie Baudaille) also emancipated her slaves selectively. She died in 1819, with her inventory listing five slaves, some furniture and a lot.[383] In her will, she bequeathed some money to her goddaughters for them to be able to buy a "young slave."[384] Her wish reveals clearly the fact that she considered slaves as mere

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honest conduct, without having ran away, and without having committed any robbery, or having been guilty of any other criminal misdemeanor."

[381] Judith Kelleher Schafer, Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), p. 181.

[382] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Lajalousière, Arsène, p. 11, 19 juin 1824. "Je veux aussi que ma négresse Fanie soit émancipée aussitôt qu'elle aura atteint l'âge requis par la loi, et que jusqu'à cette époque mes deux enfants ci-après nommées en jouissent:" I also want that my slave Fanie will be emancipated when she will have reached the legal age requirement, and until then, my children will benefit from her services.

[383] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. B, 1816-1820, Marie Bondaille, Inventory, July 1819.

[384] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 3 1817-1824, Baudaille, Marie, p. 81, 1819. *"Je donne et lègue (...) à ma filleule Marianne fille de Louis Gallau h d c l la somme de 400 piastres pour que son dit père lui achète immédiatement une petite négresse d'environ cette somme et lui passe l'acte de propriété (...). Je donne et lègue de la même façon à ma nièce et autre filleule nommée Marie fille de Etienne Saulet h d c l une autre somme de*

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commodities. At the same time, she also specified that she wanted two of her slaves—a mother and her child—to be emancipated on account of good services.[385] Indeed, a petition to emancipate Charlotte and her son Augustin was recorded in July 1819.[386] Therefore, Bodaille's consideration of slaveholding seems ambiguous. Some of her slaves were good enough to be emancipated, but others were deemed to remain in slavery.

Schafer claims that emancipation cases heard by the Louisiana's highest court reflected "bonds of conjugal or filial love between slaveowner and slave."[387] In 1835, 63 % of slaves emancipated by free blacks were their own family members, and between 1827 and 1851, 37 % of petitions to free slaves in New Orleans involved free blacks attempting to free their relatives by marriage or blood.[388] However, Schafer also states that emancipations by will were not that frequent. She says that "emancipation by will was practiced often enough during the antebellum period that the Supreme Court of Louisiana heard a few appeals of such cases each year" involving both whites and free persons of color.[389] Schafer also claims that cases involving emancipation of slaves involving free persons of color were less numerous than those involving whites, and therefore wonders why this number was that low "considering the fact that many free blacks owned members of their own family."[390]

She gives several explanations to this number. For example, free persons of color would emancipate their relatives with *inter vivos* donations; many manumissions were not

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400 piastres afin que son dit père lui achette une petite négresse d'à peu près cette somme et lui passe l'acte de propriété en faveur de la susdite sa fille Marie (...)."

[385] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 3 1817-1824, Baudaille, Marie, p. 81, 1819. *"Donne la liberté à Charlotte et son fils, pour bons et loyaux services."*

[386] Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, 76B, Baudaille, Marie, Estate of, Charlotte, juillet 1819. Petition of Louis Gaillaud, executor, for the manumission of her slave Charlotte and of a son of said Charlotte also a slave.

[387] Schafer, Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), pp. 215-6.

[388] Ibid., p. 216.

[389] Ibid., p. 214.

[390] Ibid., p. 215.

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recorded as they had not been contested; also, slaves could simply hope for emancipation after ten years of good service. Free persons also failed to free their slaves before their demise because of "the disapproval of family members, an optimistic belief that survivors would carry out the will of the deceased, or simply ignorance of the legal obstacles to emancipation and the complexities of Louisiana's succession laws were the cause."[391] Finally, Schafer claims that "Greed thwarted more manumissions by will than did jealousy or fear of public opinion. And in several cases heard by the Supreme Court of Louisiana, the avarice of free black relatives of slaves emancipated by will and their disregard of succession law matched that of their white counterparts."[392]

Modeste Bordier was also aware of the economic value of her slaves, and emancipated them along very selective criteria. Bordier was born in Cap Français, Saint Domingue; she arrived in New Orleans "sometimes before 1811" and stayed in the city until her death.[393] Her inventory recorded on December 18, 1832, listed a considerable amount of property—her estate was valued at $9,932.50. Among her property holdings were nine slaves.[394] Bordier bequeathed her slaves to various persons, her executor (Charles Kosselius), a Balsain l'Epinasse, and a free woman of color named Annette Lair. Bordier stipulated in

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[391] Schafer, Slavery, the Civil Law, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana, pp. 214-5.
[392] Ibid.
[393] Sally Kitteridge Evans, "Free Persons of Color," in The Friends of the Cabildo, New Orleans Architecture, Vol. IV: The Creole Faubourgs (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 1974), p. 27.
[394] Court of Probates, Bordier, Modeste, fwc, Estate of, 1832. Petronille Monsignac alias Modeste Bordier. Inventory, B-1833 – original manuscript, 18 décembre 1832. A negro slave named Coutou maimed in one of his arms good cook, Abelard a negro aged 45 years cigar maker, Chalinette a Creole negresse, good cook, aged about 35 years with her child named Roselia aged 2 years and her infant child aged about 3 months, a Creole negro named *Joutou*, aged 45 years, mattress maker, Stéphanie a Creole negress aged 11 years daughter of Chalinette, Ulysse a creole negro aged 15 years son of Chalinette, Victoire alias Cathou negress aged about 90 years.

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her will, recorded in December 19, 1832, that her slaves should be emancipated from one year to four years after her demise:[395]

> I emancipate my slave Abelard on account of long and faithful services; he should be emancipated four years after my demise, and until then, he will serve Balsain L'Epinasse, and the latter will emancipate him … I emancipate my slaves Peter, Chalinette and her three children Ulysse, Stéphanie and Rosélia … fours years after my demise, and until then, they will serve my executor (Charles Kosselius) … I emancipate my slave Victoire *dite* Cathou on condition that she serves my legatee (Kosselius) for one year … Instead of giving my slave Stéphanie to my executor, I beaqueath her to Annette Lair, fwc, for four years.

Bordier does not mention Coutou, a Negro slave, who is listed in her succession. However, Bordier's executor, Charles Kosselius, filed a petition for the emancipation of Coutou in 1834.[396] Some slaves' lot remains unknown. A Creole Negro named Joutou is not mentioned in Bordier's will, and so is Chalinette's infant child.

Bordier was a wealthy free woman of color. She owned nine slaves which was a significant number for a free woman of color. Also, the value of her estate was considerable. Virginia Gould's figures of the average value of inventoried property by free women of color in 1830 were $2,818 and $3,554 in 1840. Bordier's estate ($9,932.50) was three times

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[395] Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, p. 418, Modeste Bordier, 19 décembre 1832. "Au …, je donne et lègue la jouissance pour et devant le terme de quatre années, à partir du jour de mon décès, les services de mon nègre esclave nommé Abelard. A mon nègre esclave nommé Abelard, je donne et lègue la liberté, en récompense de ses longues et fidèles services, cette liberté devra lui être accordée dans les termes de quatre ans à partir du jour de mon décès, et par devant le terme, il devra servir comme esclave le sous nommé Balsain l'Epinasse *(Valsain Despinasse, Lespinam)*, et la liberté lui sera accordée de la manière voulue par la loi aux frais de ce dernier, à la fin du terme ci-dessus énoncé. A mon nègre Peter et à ma négresse Chalinette et ses trois enfants, Ulysse, Stéphanie et Rosélia, je donne et lègue la liberté, pour leur être accordée aux frais de ma succession à l'expiration du terme de quatre années après mon décès, et jusqu'à cette époque, ils devront servir comme esclaves mon exécuteur testamentaire ci-après nommé. A ma négresse Victoire dite Cathou, je donne et lègue de même la liberté à condition d'une année de service à mon légataire universel ci-après nommé, aux frais duquel elle sera alors légalement affranchie. Exécuteur testamentaire, légataire et héritier universel : Charles Kosselius. Au lieu de donner comme ci-dessus énoncé à mon dit Exécuteur testamentaire, les services de mon esclave Stéphanie, je la donne et lègue pendant le dit terme de quatre années à Annette Lair, fcl."

[396] VCP320, 1813-1843, Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, Index and Petitions 1A-28K. Bordier Modeste, Coutou, 1834, 20D. Petition of Charles Kosselius praying for notices for the emancipation of the slave Coutou. Février 1834. Age 35.

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larger.[397] Bordier also owned a house on Esplanade, and she "was literate … and had connections in France as well as in New Orleans."[398] Therefore, these records show that Bordier was a prosperous free colored woman who, even if she considered the value of freedom, exploited slave labor extensively.

As a result, these examples show that free women of color maintained an ambiguous relationship towards their slaves. They were definitely aware of their economic potential, and therefore, they did not wish diminish the value of their estate. At the same time, they were also concerned with emancipating their slaves—not all of them, however. Yet, these women, Lajalousière, Bodaille, Perault, Lalande and Bordier, did not show any pure act of benevolence towards their slaves unlike Françoise Pégnin, fwc, who performed an obvious act of benevolence in 1819. She filed herself a petition to emancipate her slave, François—Pégnin had bought François in 1810[399]— "who has always led an honest conduct, without having run-away, and without having committed any robbery, or having been guilty of any other criminal misdemeanour."[400]

However, unlike Pégnin, all these women owned significant property. Aubert, Bénédicte, Lise Bonne Lalande, Lasize, Houssaye, Bodaille, Bordier, Lajalousière,

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[397] Reminder, Table 8: Average Value of Inventoried Property, Free Women of Color, in Gould, "Free Women of Color and Property Holding in New Orleans," p. 19.

Year	$
1810	2,581
1820	2,385
1830	2,818
1840	3,554
1850	2,377
1860	2,007

[398] Kitteridge Evans, "Free Persons of Color," in The Friends of the Cabildo, New Orleans Architecture, Vol. IV: The Creole Faubourgs, p. 27-8.
[399] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 426, 30 août 1810. Jean-Louis Rabaud à Françoise Pégnin, fcl. Un nègre nommé François âgé d'environ 32 ans, 1200 piastres (payé 200 piastres, 400 dans 6 mois, 600 dans un an, et hypothèque sur l'esclave).
[400] Louisiana, Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, Petitions 54A-84H, 74 I, Pegnin, Francoise (fwc), François, November 17, 1819.

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Magdelaine Lalande and Perault held an average of $2,580 each. This included houses and lots, slaves and furniture. Given Gould's figures, these women well illustrate the value of inventoried property free women of color held in New Orleans in the early nineteenth-century. Bordier and Lajalousière were the wealthiest with $9,932.50 and $8,050 respectively. Lajalousière owned seven lots in Faubourg Sainte Marie.[401] Therefore, it seems that their economic and social status influenced their relationship with their slaves. These women, given their economic position, chose not to emancipate their slaves and pass them down to their children or other relatives. When they wished to emancipate some of their slaves, these emancipations were conditional—upon further years of services for the most part.

Slave Ownership and Precarious Living Conditions

Three other women represent another category of women—those who lived in precarious conditions, and had to secure their way of living through entering into the slave business. For example, Marie-Madeleine Guérin *dite* Pouponne seems to have been a singular person. She died in 1826 leaving a few items of clothing and some furniture.[402] Her succession specified that these items would have to be sold shortly in order to pay for her rent.[403] Indeed, it seems that Guérin had significant long-term financial difficulties. Two lawsuits contracted against Guérin in 1811 and 1823 show that she had been either unable to

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[401] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. L, 1821-1832, Arène Lajalousière's Inventory, 2 septembre 1824.

[402] Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. G, 1826-1836. Pouponne Guerin, Inventory, November 17, 1826. Un peu de mobilier et linge pour la somme de 213,75 piastres.

[403] Orleans Parish, La., Court of Probates. Succession and probate records: 1805-1848, Pt. 96 G, 1825-1830, Guerin Pouponne, novembre 1826. That said property consist only in house furnitures and clothes to the use of the deceased, which our petition (…) sale in short delay in order to avoid to pay any longer the rents of the house occupied by the deceased.

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pay for her rent[404] or had been unable to pay a mortgage.[405] The latter—this suit took place in 1811—follows Guérin's mortgage on five slaves in 1810. This suit reveals two things. First, Guérin had previously contracted a mortgage on two of these slaves[406]—this mortgage had been solved. Second, this suit reveals that Guérin owed François Pernot $1,273.60 (amount of the mortgage).[407]

This suit also shows that Guérin contested it on May 3, 1811, but Pernot persisted in suing her. As a result, these suits show Guérin's precarious living conditions. She probably mortgaged her slaves in 1810 to avoid a life of misery—but was finally unable to get through. Therefore, it seems that she used her slaves as commodities which could have saved her from financial hardship.

Another suit contracted on January 26, 1810, shows Guérin as the plaintiff this time.[408] This suit reveals that Guérin used to live in Cuba and owned a slave named Simonne.

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[404] Louisiana. First Judicial District Court (Orleans Parish). Suit Records, 1813-1835. Nott, William against Guerin, Pouponne (fwc), Docket n° 5503. 17 septembre 1823. This document is a petition from William Nott claiming that Guérin has refused to pay for her rent for six months for a house located on St Ann, and therefore, she owes 566 dollars.

[405] Louisiana. City Court of New Orleans. Inventory, Suit Records #2501-2750. François Pernot against Marie M. Guerin (called Pouponne, Free Daughter of Color), Docket n° 2660, 1 mai 1811. Doit 1273,60 (montant de l'hypothèque). Pouponne conteste le 3 mai 1811. Pernot réplique le 7 mai 1811.

[406] Ibid. "Une hypothèque préexistante de 600 piastres sur Rosette et Joseph en faveur de François Aymé (Narcisse Broutin, notaire) ; payée." A 600 dollar pre-existing mortgage on Rosette and Joseph in favor of François Aymé (Narcise Broutin, notary).

[407] Ibid.

[408] Territory of Orleans. Superior Court. Suit Records #2501-2999. Marie Madelaine Ehestis Théotis (called Pouponne Guerin) against Sanite Gourde (FWC), Simonne, Madame Capelle, n° 2778, 26 janvier 1810. Doc tronqué… Qu'elle a demeuré à Baracoa dans l'isle de Cuba où elle possédait une négresse à elle appartenante, nommée Simonne, créole de Saint Domingue. Qu'ayant quitté Baracoa, votre pétitionnaire y laissa la dite négresse aux soins de Madame Capelle. Que vers la fin de l'année 1808, la nommé Sanite Gourde mulatresse libre, résidant actuellement en cette ville et qui se trouvait alors à Baracoa, s'empara sous de faux prétextes et sans aucun titre de la negresse Simone, appartenante à votre pétitionnaire et qui était alors âgée de 18 ans. Que trois ou quatre mois après, au moment de l'évacuation, la dite Sanite Gourde vendit la négresse Simone au S. Benito habitant Espagnol de Baracoa pour la somme de trois cent cinquante piastres. Que votre pétitionnaire depuis son arrivée en cette ville, s'est adressée plusieurs fois à la dite Sannite Gourde pour en obtenir le payement de la susdite négresse Simonne qui était la légitime propriété de votre pétitionnaire ; mais que la dite Sannite Gourde s'est constamment refusé et de refuse encore doc tronqué nature du cas le pourra requérir ainsi qu'avec intérêts légaux et aux frais de cette instance. Et attendu que votre pétitionnaire croit véritablement que la susdite défenderesse est sur le point de s'éloigner pour toujours de ce territoire avant que jugement sur la

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In 1808, a woman named Sanite Gourde, fwc, took Simonne away from Guérin and sold Simonne for 350 piastres. At the time of the suit, both Guérin and Gourde lived in New Orleans. Thus, Guérin claims her money back. The suit tells: "(Guérin) spoke to Gourde several times to get back the amount of money she earned for Simonne's sale–Simonne was indeed Guérin's legitimate property." However, Gourde refused to pay her back. Guérin, fearing that Gourde would leave the territory, decided to sue her right away. Therefore, this suit, again, shows that Guérin was preoccupied with securing her way of living through entering into the slave business.

Finally, Guérin's insolvency was revealed in 1811. Hall's database shows that Guérin sold Rosetta and her daughter Gattine and infant (no name) to Pernot in 1811; Joseph dit Joujounotte was sold to a Jean Labadie. Finally, in 1811, Narcisse Broutin, notary, recorded Guérin's insolvency revealing that she had "many" creditors.[409]

Charlotte Villars, fwc, failed to reimburse a sum of money for the purchase of a slave named Jean-Louis. A petition was filed against her in 1809 summoning her to appear before the court.[410] Indeed, although Villars had previously promised to reimburse this sum, she

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présente pétition puisse être obtenu, et que la dite défenderesse, autant que votre pétitionnaire puisse le savoir et croire, ne possède pas dans le territoire des propriétés suffisantes, si elles étaient saisies, pour satisfaire au jugement que votre pétitionnaire espère d'obtenir, votre pétitionnaire supplie votre honneur d'ordonner, que la dite Sannite Gourde,ici défenderesse soit tenue sous cautionnement. Donc réclame 350 piastres.

[409] Louisiana. City Court (New Orleans). Index to Insolvents' Docket, 1807-1813. Docket n° 233. Guerin, Pouponne (fwc), 1811.

[410] Louisiana. City Court of New Orleans, Inventory, Suit Records #2251-2500. Jacob, T. F. against Villans, Charlotte [fwc], Docket n° 2314. 1809. That a certain Charlotte Villars a free negro woman of this city was on the 28th of March 1809 indebted towards Madame LeComte Piernas in the sum of two hundred and fifty dollars (…) That for the better security of the said sum of money the said Villars give her promissory note to said Madame LeComte Piernas payable on the 28th of March last past, which note is hereunto annexed and which your petitioner prays your honor to consider as a part of this petition. That Madame LeComte Piernas for and in consideration of a sum of money due by her to your petitioner did transfer (...) on the 3rd of April 1809 (…) the said promissory note (…) That by virtue of this transfer and assignment, your petitioner became the lawful creditor of the said Charlotte Villars. That he has applied to the said Charlotte Villars for the payment of the above said note but the said Charlotte Villars has not yet paid the same, and still now owes the same. Wherefore your petitioner prays your honor to order that the said Charlotte Villars shall be summoned to appear before

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failed to do so:[411] "That he has applied to the said Charlotte Villars for the payment of the above said note but the said Charlotte Villars has not yet paid the same, and still now owes the same."

In October 1810, Villars mortgaged her slave Jean-Louis—probably in order to pay her debt.[412] Unfortunately, a suit recorded in May 1811 indicates that Villars failed to solve her mortgage owing 325 piastres.[413] Moreover, this suit includes an order notifying that the slave Jean-Louis has been seized by the court on May 17, 1811. On May 22, 1817, Jean-Louis was sold to a Pierre Rene St. Germaine.[414] Even if Villars bought a slave either for monetary purposes or benevolent ones, she failed to pay for this purchase, and had to mortgage her slave.

Félicité Saulet bought two slaves respectively in 1810 and 1834.[415] A suit recorded in 1835 reveals that Saulet failed to pay for the slave she bought in 1834—this slave had previously been mortgaged by the defendant.[416] The suit says:

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your honor within the delay prescribed by law to be condemned to pay your petitioner the said sum of money with interests and costs.

[411] Louisiana. City Court of New Orleans, Inventory, Suit Records #2251-2500. Jacob, T. F. against Villans, Charlotte [fwc], Docket n° 2314. 1809. "Bon pour la somme de deux cent cinquante piastres que je *laisse* à Madame Le Comte Piernas, valeur reçu en un nègre nommé Jean-Louis qu'elle m'a vendu et livré en ce jour, Nouvelle Orléans, le 28 mars 1809.": A bond for the sum of two hundred and fifty piastres that I leave to Madame LeComte Piernas, a sum received for a slave named Jean-Louis that she sold and delivered me on this day, New Orleans, March 28, 1809.

[412] M. De Armas, act n° 365, 13 octobre 1810. Hypothèque. Charlotte dite Villars, fcl, à Pierre René de St Germain. "Un nègre nommé Jean Louis âgé d'environ 45 ans à elle appartenant et pour l'avoir acquis de la dame Piernas.": A slave named Jean-Louis, 45, belonging to her after having purchased him from dame Piernas.

[413] Louisiana. City Court of New Orleans. Inventory, Suit Records #2501-2750. Pierre René de St. Germain against Charlotte Negress Libre dite Villars, Docket n° 2675, 15 mai 1811. Hypothèque non honorée. An order notifying that the slave has been seized, May 17, 1811.

[414] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database.

[415] P. Pedesclaux, act n° 544, 12 novembre 1810. Ambroise Garidel à Félicité Saulet, fcl. "Une négresse nommée Héloïse âgée d'environ 27 ans, bonne marchande et servante. 550 piastres.": A slave named Héloïse, 27, good peddler and domestic. Louisiana. First Judicial District Court (Orleans Parish). Suit Records, 1813-1835. Syndics of J.B. Ory against Saulet, Felicite f.w.c., Docket n°12,421. 20 mai 1835. Slave sale. 22 janvier 1834. Octave de Armas, notaire. Syndics de Jean Baptiste Ory à Félicité Saulet, fcl. Vente publique. "Zémire négresse africaine de 18 ans.": Zémire, 18 year-old African slave.

[416] Louisiana. First Judicial District Court (Orleans Parish). Suit Records, 1813-1835. Syndics of J.B. Ory against Saulet, Felicite f.w.c., Docket No. 12,421. 20 mai 1835. Payment note for slave sale. "Not paid; although

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> "Not paid; although the said Félicité Saulet was amicably requested to pay the sum, she has hitherto refused or neglected so to do. Wherefore you petitioner pray that the said slave Zémire be seized and sold to pay them the sum of 775 with interests and costs."

These examples show that when some free women of color suffered from economic hardship, they relied on their slaves' value to help them get through these difficult times. For this reason, they mortgaged or sold their slaves. Therefore, whether free women of color were affluent or not, they clearly took slaves' economic potential into consideration.

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the said Félicité Saulet was amicably requested to pay the sum, she has hitherto refused or neglected so to do. Wherefore you petitioner pray that the said slave Zémire be seized and sold to pay them the sum of 775 with interests and costs" (this slave had previously been mortgaged).

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CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Free women of color represented a large proportion in the New Orleans population of 1810, and came to control a substantial portion of the economic resources of the city. They were aware of the social and economic advancement that they could achieve. Thus, they took advantage of the unique and various possibilities that were available to them. These women acquired their freedom, and sometimes came to own some property. Some others came to own plantations and owned slaves just as white people did. Free women of color's status was exceptional not only due to their unique relations with white men, but also to the fact that they were performed various successful occupations in the city and were astute businesswomen. Thus, they challenged racial and gender conventions.

Black slaveholding was significant in the Lower South. However, there is no extensive record of how free women of color viewed themselves in relation to their slaves, and why they would engage themselves in the slaveholding business. Black slaveholding is a paradox. Were moral issues overridden by the economic motive of profit? Various scholars have dealt with the issue. Some argue that the commercial side overrode the benevolent one. Some argue the opposite.

Notarial acts such as sales of slaves, mortgages, records of wills and successions, petitions for emancipation, etc. show that free women of color traded slaves, men and women, children as well as adults. They sometimes bought slaves on a benevolent basis, and occasionally wished to emancipate some of them. However, it seems that most of free women of color were aware of the commercial advantages they could get from slaveholding. Mortgages, sales of slaves and wills definitely show the commercial side of slavery. Therefore

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the latter should not be underestimated. Free women of color passed their slaves down to their children, relatives, and friends. They also emancipated their slaves following additional years of service, or simply did not make any provision to emancipate them.

The economic potential of slaves seemed to have been constantly on their minds whether they owned significant property, or were in financial need. Indeed, slaves were either a way to secure their status or that of their relatives and friends, or represented a way to get through economic crises.

These acts not only reflect the affluence of free women of color in New Orleans, but they also show the impact of the arrival of the refugees from Saint Domingue and Cuba. The latter constituted an important proportion of slaveholders in New Orleans. The significant proportion of free women of color from Saint Domingue and Cuba, coupled with those from New Orleans, shows that free women of color constituted a large proportion of slaveholders in New Orleans. Also, the free colored population of Saint Domingue, and particularly the lives of free women of color resembled the ones in Louisiana as they formed a diverse group with a unique and distinct culture.

Thus, it is difficult to ignore evidence that free women of color engaged in slavery for commercial purposes—and prospered.

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Orleans Parish, Louisiana, Old Inventories, Vol. A, 1807-1839, Elizabeth Aubert's Inventory, September 12, 1815.

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Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Bénédicte, Sophie, p. 143, May 24, 1827.

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Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2, 1815-1817, Lasize, Aramanthe, p. 178, 3 décembre 1813.

Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 2 1815-1817, Perault, Marie, p. 250-1, 16 juillet 1817.

Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v.2 1815-1817, Lalande Madelaine (Magdelaine), p. 188, 15 juillet 1815.

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Recorder of Wills, Will Books, v. 4 1824-1833, Lajalousière, Arsène, p. 11, 19 juin 1824.

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Orleans Parish, La, Court of Probate, Succession and Probate Records: 1805-1848, Pt. 105 H, 1820-1826, Succession of Venus de la Houssaye, Inventory, 23 novembre 1821.

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VCP320, 1813-1843, Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, Index and Petitions 85A-108D, Michel, Helene, Widow Breton, fwc, Latulisse Jean, 1814, 107B.

VCP320, 1813-1843, Louisiana. Parish Court (Orleans Parish), Petitions for the emancipation of slaves, 1813-1843, Index and Petitions 1A-28K. Bordier, Modeste, Coutou, 1834, 20D.

Notarial Archives

Notarial Archives Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana.

MICHEL DE ARMAS, Notary
Index of Official Acts
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Notaries

NO.3, JAN. AUG. 1810

act n° 5, 6 janvier 1810, vente d'esclaves, Lange Soulary et Julienne Daroman, fcl, à Henri Dukeilus.

act n° 10, 12 janvier 1810, vente d'esclave, Campan Louise, réfugiée de l'île de Cuba, fcl, à John Davis.

act n° 20, 2 février 1810, vente d'esclaves, Marie-Madeleine Davis, fcl, à Jean Rondeau.

act n° 32, 15 février 1810, testament, Hélène Michel, veuve Breton, fcl.

act n° 63, 24 mars 1810, testament, Marianne Guillamette, fcl.

act n° 106, 26 avril 1810, vente d'esclaves par sieur Charles Lachiapella à Amaranthe Lasize, fcl.

act n° 122, 4 mai 1810, vente d'esclave, Jacques Dacqueny à Victoire Bernard, fcl.

act n° 151, 30 mai 1810, procuration, Bonne Marsan, fcl, à Jean Boudenil.

act n° 183, 15 juin 1810, hypothèque de nègres présenté par Pierre Laporte et Elizabeth Aubert, fcl, en faveur de Jacques Joly.

act n° 206, 29 juin 1810, testament, Marie-Elizabeth Baubin, fcl.

act n° 211, 3 juillet 1810, hypothèque, de Héloïse Delahogue, fcl, en faveur de Jean-Baptiste Labatut et Jean Blanque.

act n° 219, 9 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, Modeste Bordier, fcl, à Bernard Marigny.

act n° 228, 13 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, John Lynd à Iris Lacoste, fcl.

act n° 233, 17 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, par Nicolas Godefroy à Marguerite, fcl.

act n° 233, 17 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, par Madeleine Hardy, fcl, à Bernard Marigny.

act n° 235, 19 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, par Elizabeth Prudhomme, veuve Aubert, à Marie Etiennette, fcl.

act n° 303, 27 août 1810, vente d'esclave, par Joseph Cazenave à Marie-Louise Delay, veuve Vignaud, fcl.

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NO.4, AUG. 2 - OCT. 31, Pages 251-391.

act n° 269, 10 août 1810, testament, Louise Anne Batailler, née Lilavois, fcl.

act n° 317, 5 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Françoise Dunand, fcl, à Valerien Allain.

act n° 272-3, 13 août 1810, hypothèque, Marguerite Vatel, veuve Boyer, fcl à Henri Gabory.

act n° 277-8, 22 octobre 1810, hypothèque, par Bonitte Loulay, fcl, en faveur de Marie-Nicole Beauvais, fcl.

act n° 318, 6 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Françoise Dunand, fcl, à Pierre Martel.

act n° 344, 21 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Aimée Copman, fcl, à Joseph Martelly.

act n° 344-5, 21 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Marie-Claudine Fouquet, fcl, à Jean Taurel.

act n° 363-4, 12 octobre 1810, vente d'esclave, Cecile St Martin, fcl, fondée de pouvoir ad hoc de Marthe Harang veuve Idlinger à Marianne D'Orléans, fcl.

act n° 365, 13 octobre 1810, hypothèque, Charlotte dite Villars, fcl, à Pierre René de St Germain.

NO.4B, REGULAR ACTS M. DE ARMAS, NOV.1, 1809 - DEC.1810, PAGES 392-463

act n° 443, 22 décembre 1810, hypothèque, Guérin Marie-Madeleine dite Pouponne, fcl, à François Pernot.

PIERRE PEDESCLAUX, Notary

This notary's acts were listed in Dr. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719-1820* Database. This database is freely accessible online. Hall started working on this database in 1984. http://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/*

**Poring through documents from all over Louisiana, as well as archives in France, Spain and Texas, Dr. Hall designed and created a database into which she recorded and*

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calculated the information she obtained from these documents about African slave names, genders, ages, occupations, illnesses, family relationships, ethnicity, places of origin, prices paid by slave owners, and slaves' testimony and emancipations.

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act n° 1, 2 janvier 1810, vente d'esclave, Lucie Dechenere, fcl, à Victoire Wiltz.

act n° 28, 20 janvier 1810, vente d'esclave, Eugène Macarty à Monique Maxant, fcl.

act n° 44, 30 janvier 1810, vente d'esclave, Antoine Remy à Marie Lawrence, fcl.

act n° 72,16 février 1810, vente d'esclave, Marguerite Montégut, fcl, à François Villafranca.

act n° 140, 27 mars 1810, vente d'esclave, Henry Bricou, hcl, à Marie Bodaille, fcl.

act n° 155, 3 avril 1810, vente d'esclave, Marianne Thomas, fcl, à Edmond Fortier.

act n° 163, 5 avril 1810, vente d'esclave, Lise Borme Lalande, fcl, à Charles Olivier.

act n° 167-8, 7 avril 1810, vente d'esclave, Paul Lanusse et Barthélemy Macarty à Rosette Beaulieu, fcl.

act n° 168, 7 avril 1810, vente d'esclave, Dame Françoise Dussuau, à Perrine Fauché, fcl.

act n° 169, 7 avril 1810, vente d'esclave, François Robert Avart, à Perrine Fauché, fcl.

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act n° 245, 14 mai 1810, vente d'esclave, Sophie Bénédicte, fcl, à Duplessis Joseph, hcl.

act n° 251, 17 mai 1810, vente d'esclave, Charlotte Thomas, fcl, à Henriette Millon, fcl.

act n° 252, 17 mai 1810, vente d'esclave, Joseph Duplessis, hcl, à Sophie Bénédicte, fcl.

act n° 279, 1 juin 1810, vente d'esclave, Dominique Espinard à Heloise Saulet, fcl.

act n° 280, 1 juin 1810, vente d'esclave, Lise Borme Lalande, fcl, à Martin Dubois.

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act n° 341, 11 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, Jamé Jorda à Maria Jorda, fcl.

act n° 357, 20 juillet 1810, vente d'esclave, Etienne Greffin à Marie Perault, fcl.

act n° 389, 9 août 1810, vente d'esclave, Marie *Magile* veuve Metoyer à Rosette Girod, fcl.

act n° 405, 20 août 1810, vente d'esclave, Marie-Claire Boutte, fcl, à Marthe Vatry, fcl.

act n° 408, 20 août 1810, vente d'esclave, Marie-Catherine Victoire dite Divine, fcl, à Joseph Canovas.

act n° 426, 30 août 1810, vente d'esclave, Jean-Louis Rabaud à Françoise Pegnin, fcl.

act n° 432, 3 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Augustin Macarty à Victoire Martineau, fcl.

act n° 473, 26 septembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Magdelaine Lalande, fcl, à Jaimé Jorda.

act n° 513, 22 octobre 1810, vente d'esclave, Auguste Somparayc à Vénus Lahoussaie, fcl.

act n° 544, 12 novembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Ambroise Garidel à Félicité Saulet, fcl.

act n° 544-5, 12 novembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Rosette Toultan, fcl, à Christophe Glapion.

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act n° 568, 28 novembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Jean Gramont à Arsène Lajalousière, fcl.

act n° 593, 17 décembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Marie Joseph Auditeau, fcl, à Louis LeBourgeois.

act n° 599-600, 21 décembre 1810, vente d'esclave, Pierre David à Marie Magdelaine Corbé, fcl.

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