

“We will see our neighbors, our friends, our wives, our children with their throats cut and their bodies mutilated; the slave will raise the standard of revolt, and the island (of the Caribbean) will be but a vast and baleful conflagration; commerce will be ruined, France will receive a mortal wound, and a multitude of honest citizens will be impoverished and ruined; we will lose everything.”

Vincent Ogé was born in 1757 in the parish of Dondon, Saint-Domingue (Redpath, 1863). He was a mixed-race man and the son of wealthy butcher. He received the title of Lieutenant-Colonel whilst serving his time in the army (Redpath, 1863). It is unknown how Ogé came into the possession of a coffee plantation. He married a free woman of colour with a valuable colonial property (Garrigus and Morris, 2010).

Due to Ogé's colour of skin and race, he could relate to the slaves however, he had a background of a wealthy businessman with slaves of his own. There is an undertone in this text that suggests that perhaps Ogé was doing it for self-interested rather than for the slaves. Although, after Ogé's execution in 1791 by beheading, he was perceived as a martyr of the Haitian Revolution.

Originally, the audience for this piece would be those of the Assembly of Colonists, which consisted of Ogé's fellow mulatto property owners and the white planter delegates who had come to Paris from Saint Domingue (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, 2019). The source's key features are the fact throughout Ogé's speech there is an undertone of fear of revolt and revolution from the slaves in Saint-Domingue, modern day Haiti. There was a fear of systematic revolt resulting in independence.

Aspects that stand out the most are the fact that Ogé argues that the Rights of Man should apply to all men, not just those of elite whites. However, the rights of black people had not been extended to them. There is an undercurrent of Ogé doing this not for the slaves but for himself and his peers. The idea of slowly giving slaves their rights and adjusting how the system worked would avoid a slave revolution and keep their businesses alive and running. France needed Saint-Domingue for financial support therefore, there would be no chance of letting any slave free or dissolving the slave trade.

The most quotable lines in this piece is “France will receive a mortal wound” which is Vincent's way of saying if France lost Saint-Domingue, to lose a colony, would be an embarrassment to the Nation and could start a revolt in other colonies that France owned or in France itself. Also, the words, “lose everything” suggests that the connection between Paris and Saint-Domingue would be lost and that France needed to take this threat of a revolt as a serious one otherwise, they will be overthrown, be brutal bloodshed and the loss of income.

The historical significance of this source is that it demonstrated the acknowledgement of the unrest of the slaves in Saint-Domingue and the turmoil uprising against their masters. This piece represents the concern of yet another revolution, that could be the beginning of the loss of goods, colonies and the loss of national pride.

This speech by Vincent Ogé to the Assembly of Colonists in 1789, played a huge historical role in events as it highlighted the ignorance, selfishness and lack of foresight and comprehension. This source tells us about the specific events depicted during the period and the concern for the future of their businesses, slave trade and French colonies. Of

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course, at the time, the fear was only about themselves and money rather than about the human rights, respect and freedom the slaves deserved.

In conclusion, from this source it can be said that Vincent Ogé did this speech to save both himself and his associates, any trouble or a revolt by the slaves. However, it can not be denied that Ogé’s speech predicted what would and did happen in the Haitian Revolution. He warned others of the loss that France would face if nothing was done. The inspiration that Ogé gave slaves must be noted as well, as it could have affected what was done and his death perhaps symbolized the beginning of the most successful slave revolution in history.

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