WHY DID ONE SOLDIER FIGHT IN THREE DIFFERENT REVOLUTIONS?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Louis-Marie, Viscount de Noailles, was a French soldier who fought in the American, French and Haitian Revolutions. As a young aristocrat, he joined the American fight against Britain and became a friend of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and the Marquis de Lafayette. During the French Revolution, he helped persuade nobles to give up their special legal privileges. But later he led French troops against formerly enslaved people who had revolted in the French colony of Saint-Domingue. The rebels won and created Haiti, the first Black republic, in 1804. Noailles's life shows a major contradiction in the Age of Revolutions. Many European revolutionaries spoke about liberty and equality, but they did not always support freedom for enslaved people. At the time, some leaders mainly meant freedom from kings and aristocrats. The Haitian Revolution pushed the idea of human freedom much further.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Revolutions are often described as fights for freedom, but freedom was not always meant for everyone. Noailles's career shows how the same person could support independence in one place and help suppress a rebellion in another. The Haitian Revolution forced the world to ask who should count as free.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why did ideas about freedom mean different things to different people?”

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-marquis-de-lafayettes-brother-in-law-participated-in-three-revolutionary-wars-supporting-american-independence-but-l