

**CREOLE CITIZENS OF FRANCE:
THE TRANS-ATLANTIC POLITICS OF ANTILLEAN EDUCATION AND THE
CREOLE MOVEMENT SINCE 1945**

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Marty and Lotus, and my husband, Kevin

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This project is the culmination of a seven-year journey. When a journey takes this long to complete, there are many people to thank. While it is impossible for me to sufficiently express my gratitude in such a format, I hope my limited words will express how truly grateful I am for everyone who has helped me complete my graduate studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	xiii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
From Colonization to Departmentalization: the Antilles’ Political and Cultural Relationship with France.....	6
The Importance of Antilleans’ Role in Shaping Postcolonial France.....	15
Inclusion and Exclusion in the French Republic.....	21
Making French Citizens: Republican Education and the Politics of Language....	28
Chapter Overview.....	36
CHAPTER I. Assimilation Through Migration: BUMIDOM and the Vocational Education of Antillean Migrants.....	42
Part I. Departmentalization and BUMIDOM’s Construction of French Citizenship.....	49
Selecting and Training Proper French Citizens.....	65
Crouy-sur-Ourq: The Domestic Education of Antillean Women in Metropolitan France and the Making of Female French Citizens.....	78
Simandres: The Training of Antillean Men for Second-Class Citizenship.....	83
Part II. Acts of Citizenship: Antillean Migration and New Ways of Being French.....	87
“Spontaneous” Migration and Antilleans’ Struggle for Inclusion.....	92

BUMIDOM’s False Promises.....	100
CHAPTER II. The “right to difference”: the Forging of Antillean Ethnic Activism and French Multiculturalism before Mitterrand.....	110
Part I. Public Criticism of BUMIDOM and the Creation of an Antillean Creole Identity.....	122
Political Pamphlets and Newspapers.....	123
Regionalization and the Antillean Popular Press.....	130
Autonomy and “the right to difference”.....	136
The Failure of BUMIDOM.....	142
The “New” BUMIDOM.....	149
<i>France créole</i>	159
Part II. Antillean Ethnic Activism and the France-Based Creole Movement....	165
Guadeloupean and Martinican Cultural Groups and the Performance of Creole Identity in Metropolitan France.....	166
The Development of Antillean Ethnic Activism in the Hexagon.....	170
<i>Théâtre Noir</i> and the Forging of a French Creole Identity.....	177
CHAPTER III. From Militant Nationalists to Ethnic Minority: The Antillean Creole Movement in Metropolitan France and the Antilles after Departmentalization.....	186
Part I. Creole and the Antillean Cultural Awakening.....	194
Part II. The Nationalization of Creole.....	198
The Beginnings of the Antillean Independence Movement.....	198
Nationalists’ Appropriation of Creole.....	202
GEREC and the Creation of a Nationalist Creole Writing System.....	212
Educating the People.....	220
CIEC and the Assimilationist Creole Movement.....	225

Part III. The French Response: the Regionalization of Creole.....	237
Part IV. From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Créolité and the “right to difference”.....	245
CHAPTER IV. The Creole Question in Republican Education: Gérard Lauriette and the Regionalization of the Antilles.....	259
Part I. Gérard Lauriette and the Ministry of Education’s Struggle for Control of Antillean Education.....	264
National Unity Through French Literacy.....	264
Lauriette’s Creole Pedagogy.....	268
Elementary French and the Social Problem of Creole.....	276
Part II. Lauriette and the Regionalization Debates.....	288
Part III. Regionalization’s False Promises for Creole.....	300
CHAPTER V. From Assimilation to Intercultural Education: Immigrant Education Policy and the Exclusion of Creole, 1970-1983.....	330
Part I. French Literacy and the Assimilation of Immigrants and Antilleans, 1946-1970.....	336
Creole & the “Problem” of Antillean Assimilation.....	336
French Literacy and the Immigration “Problem”.....	338
Part II. The Divergence of Immigrant and Antillean Education Policy: <i>Classes d’Initiations, Langues et Cultures d’Origines</i> , and “Intercultural Education”, 1970-1981.....	351
<i>Classes d’initiation</i> for Immigrant Children in France.....	352
<i>Langues et Cultures d’Origines</i> in Metropolitan France and the Exclusion of Creole.....	363
Part III. Creole Challenges to Republican Education: The “Right to Difference” and the “Creole Bomb”.....	375
Creole as a Solution to the “Problem” of Antillean Education.....	376
Creole and the Meaning of the “Right to Difference” in Antillean Public Schools.....	381

The Ministry of Education’s Cooptation of the Creole Question.....	395
CHAPTER VI. “ <i>On sèl pèp, on sèl chimen</i> ”: The Pan-Creole Movement, 1959-1989.....	400
Part I. The Academic Creole Studies Movement: Cooperation and Dissent Between British and French Linguists.....	406
Part II. Bannzil Kréyòl: A Native Pan-Creole Movement.....	421
Part III. Intellectuals’ and Nationalists’ Struggle for “the people’s language”.....	444
Part IV. Créolité: the Answer to Pan-Creole Divisions?.....	449
CONCLUSION.....	459
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	476

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the debates about Creole's place in the French nation and public education in late twentieth-century France. In 1946, Antilleans became French citizens when the French government decided to change Guadeloupe and Martinique's political status from colonies to overseas departments (DOM). Republican education and the dissemination of French was the means through which DOM and education officials sought to protect France's national culture and assimilate Antilleans' Creole culture and language into the nation. In contrast, Antillean Creole activists envisioned a culturally diverse France. They struggled to reshape the national curriculum, and ultimately the French nation, so that it included their Creole culture and language.

Through an examination of Antilleans' specific case and how they used the Creole debates to argue for the right to difference, this dissertation explores the complexities of the discussions about diversity in France. Recently, historians have challenged the myth of a colorblind Republic, arguing that questions of race and ethnicity have shaped the French nation. While one group of scholars argues that exclusion occurred from the failure of state officials to live up to the lofty ideals of republican equality, the other group claims that inequality and exclusion developed as a part of republicanism.

This dissertation argues that republican assimilation was not a monolithic policy that either entirely included or excluded difference from the nation. Rather, Antillean activists and the Ministries of the DOM and Education negotiated the terms of Antilleans' assimilation and the extent to which the Creole culture and language was included in public classrooms and the nation. Antilleans' demands for cultural inclusion forced DOM and education officials to carve out a space for difference, and more specifically, Creole, in the nation. I argue that it was these debates about the "Creole question" that challenged the republican definition of a French citizen as an individual divested of all particular and group affiliations. In highlighting Antilleans' struggle to be both French *and* Creole, I contend that government policies concerning the right to difference were not only shaped by state ministries, but also by the actions of Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic.

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2005, Souria Adèle, a Martinican mother whose son wanted to learn Creole, organized an Antillean parents' group to place pressure on the Ministry of Education to permit Creole language instruction in metropolitan France's public schools. In a letter to the Minister of Education, Gilles de Robien, Adèle and her supporters reminded him that Creole had been an official regional language of France since 1983. They argued that in spite of this, Creole still did not have the same legal and cultural status as France's other regional languages. Adèle's son and other students had the opportunity to learn languages, such as Basque, Breton, and Occitan, but they did not have the right to learn Creole. Adèle insisted that Creole language classes also needed to be offered as a part of France's national curriculum.¹

The Ministry of Education promptly refused Adèle's request, arguing that according to the current legislation, "the teaching of regional languages and cultures", such as Creole, "may only be provided...in the local communities where the languages are in use."² In other words, according to Robien, Creole classes could only be offered in Guadeloupe and Martinique where it was a part of daily communication. With this statement, the Ministry of Education implied that Creole was exclusively spoken in the

¹ Letter from Le Collectif des Parents Antillais, Guyanais, Réunionnais to Gilles de Robien, Ministre de l'Éducation, August 31 2005, accessed November 6, 2011, published on Kapes Kréyol website, <http://www.potomitan.info/atelier/pawol/mango.php#a>.

² Letter from Jean-Marc Goursolas, for the le Directeur de l'Enseignement Scolaire to Souria Adèle, January 10, 2006, accessed November 6, 2011, published on Kapes Kréyol website, <http://www.potomitan.info/atelier/pawol/mango.php#a>.

Antilles, and not in metropolitan France. In doing so, the Ministry of Education ignored the nearly three hundred and forty thousand Antilleans living in metropolitan France, placing them and their Creole culture and language outside of the French nation.³

How did state officials perceive of and construct Antilleans' cultural and political relationship to France? Why was the Ministry of Education so concerned about Creole's place in public education? How did Antilleans interact with education officials to carve out a space for their Creole culture and language in public schools and ultimately, the French nation? My dissertation seeks to answer these questions by exploring the debates about Creole's place in republican education and the nation in late twentieth-century France.

Historians have argued that during the main period of decolonization (1956-1962), France became an increasingly diverse nation. As migrants and their families from former French colonies in Africa and Asia settled in the metropole, France was forced to deal with integrating this new wave of culturally and religiously distinct immigrants into the nation.⁴ However, this dissertation contends that a decade prior to decolonization, France had already begun to work through the political and cultural implications of incorporating a diverse group of peoples and their cultures into metropolitan France. In 1946, the French government transformed Guadeloupe and

³ In his 2004 work *Black Skins, French Voices*, David Beriss estimated that 337,000 Antilleans resided in metropolitan France. David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

⁴ For scholarship on postcolonial immigration see: Alec G. Hargreaves and Marck McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995); Maxim Silverman, *Race, Discourse, and Power in France* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Avebury, 1991); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Dan Abbeele, eds., *French Civilization and its Discontents: nationalism, colonialism, race* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2003); Steven Ungar and Tom Conley, eds., *Identity Papers: contested nationhood in twentieth-century France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Martinique from colonies to overseas departments of France (DOM).

Departmentalization granted French citizenship to Antilleans, making them and metropolitans a part of the same nation. The newly formed Ministry of the DOM had to make sense of how Antilleans as France's new culturally and racially distinct citizens fit into its national vision for a culturally and politically unified France.⁵ An important tool for constructing this national unity was education, and in particular, the French language. Republican education and the dissemination of the French language were the means through which DOM and education officials sought to protect France's national culture and assimilate the Creole culture and language into the nation. In contrast, Antillean activists envisioned a culturally diverse French nation. They struggled to reshape the national curriculum, and ultimately the French nation, so that it included their Creole culture and language.

Through an examination of DOM officials' and Antilleans' differing visions for Creole's place in a postcolonial nation, I explore how the inclusion and exclusion of diversity worked in late twentieth-century France. According to the ideals of

⁵ For scholarship on Antillean migration to France following the Second World War see: Alain Anselin, *L'émigration antillaise en France: de bantoustan au ghetto* (Paris: Anthropos, 1979); Alain Anselin, *L'émigration antillaise en France: La troisième île* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1990); Chantal Madiner, "Les originaires des départements d'outre-mer," *Population* 6 (November-December 1993): 1855-1868; Stephanie A. Condon and Philip E. Ogden, "Afro-Caribbean Migrants in France: Employment, State Policy and the Migration Process," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no.4 (1991): 440-457; Fred Constant, "La politique française de l'immigration antillaise de 1946 à 1987," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 3 (1987): 9-30; Michel Giraud and Claude-Valentin Marie, "Insertion et gestion socio-politique de l'identité culturelle: le cas des Antillais en France," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 3, no.3 (1987): 31-48; Michel Giraud, "The Antillean in France: Trends and Prospects," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, no.4 (July 2004): 622-640; Marc Tardies, *Les Antillais à Paris: d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Monaco: Rocher, 2005).

For histories of the departmentalization of Guadeloupe and Martinique see: Kristen Stromberg Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 177-190; Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France's Overseas Frontier: Départements et territoires d'outre-mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Henri Deschamps, *La politique aux Antilles Françaises de 1946 à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie generale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1981); Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: history and subjectivity in French Caribbean literature* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003); Arvin Murch, *Black Frenchmen: the political integration of the French Antilles* (Morristown, NJ: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1972).

republicanism, French citizens are abstract individuals without differentiation or particular identifications. This means that French citizens are expected to embrace a universal “civic identity” divorced from all other cultural and group affiliations. Scholars of France have tended to characterize republicanism as a static set of ideals that was either entirely inclusionary or exclusionary of difference. Those who support republicanism as a bastion of equality have argued that it was inclusionary in that all French citizens regardless of their racial and cultural differences possessed the same rights and privileges. They contend that because the government does not recognize racial and cultural difference, racism and inequality do not exist in France.⁶ Others have criticized republicanism as a flawed ideal that is exclusionary in its promotion of assimilation. These scholars argue that in requiring citizens to disassociate from their racial and cultural particularities, republicanism systematically excludes difference from the nation.⁷

⁶ This group of scholars argues that inequality in France is a result of class, not race. See: Dominique Schnapper, *La France de l'intégration: sociologie de la nation en 1990* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991); Dominique Schnapper, *L'Europe des immigrés: essai sur les politiques d'immigration* (Paris: Editions F. Bourin, 1992); Christine Bard et al., *Intégration et exclusion sociale: d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Anthropos, 1999); Pierre Geroge, *L'immigration en France: faits et problèmes* (Paris: A. Colin, 1986).

⁷ For scholarship that has analyzed the exclusionary nature of French republicanism see: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France, XIXe-XXe siècle: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

For more general scholarship on republicanism and diversity see: Adrian Favell, *Philosophies of Integration: Citizenship, Republicanism and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998); Dominique Schnapper, *Q'est-ce que la citoyenneté? France de la intégration* Paris: Gallimard, 2000); Dominique Schnapper, *La Communauté des citoyens: sur l'idée moderne de nation* (Paris : Gallimard, 1994) ; Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *Citoyenneté, Nationalité et Immigration* (Paris: Arcantère, 1987); Jeremy Jennings, “Citizenship, Republicanism and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France,” *British Journal of Political Science* 30 (2000): 575-598; Pierre Birnbaum, *La France imaginaire: Declin des rêves unitaires* (Paris: Fayard, 1998); Serge Paugam, *L'Exclusion: L'État des savoirs* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996); Jean-Paul Fitoussi and Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Nouvel Âge des inégalités* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); Christian Jelen, *Les Casseurs de la République* (Paris: Plon, 1997); Joël Roman, “Pour un multiculturalisme tempéré,” *Hommes et Migrations* 1197 (1996): 18-22; Joël Roman, “Un

My examination of the “Creole question” tells a different story about the relationship between republicanism and diversity in postcolonial France. I argue that republicanism created neither an entirely exclusionary nor a completely inclusionary nation.⁸ Rather, diversity’s place in the French nation was determined by a set of negotiations between state officials and Antilleans concerning Creole’s place in public classrooms and more broadly, the nation. The Ministries of the DOM and Education responded to Antilleans’ demands for cultural inclusion with a set of education policies that were simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary of the Creole culture and language. Inclusion and exclusion were inseparably linked in the debates about Creole’s place in republican education because of the fundamentally incompatible goals of the Ministry of Education and Antillean activists who argued for Creole’s incorporation into public classrooms. The Ministry of Education wanted to preserve the universalist ambitions of the republican curriculum, but it insisted that the language of universalism was French. Antillean teachers and activists argued that Creole was an autonomous

multiculturalisme à la française,” *Esprit* 212 (1995): 145-160; Michel Wieviorka, “Le multiculturalism,” *Les Cahiers du CEVIPOF* 20 (1998): 104-129; Michel Wieviorka, *Commenter la France* (Paris: Editions de l’aube, 1997).

⁸ In their histories of Algeria and West Africa, Todd Shepard and Gary Wilder have also addressed the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of culturally distinct French citizens and colonial subjects. They have argued that republicanism offered moments of inclusion for Algerians and West Africans in the French nation. However, ultimately, the French government articulated new policies—decolonization in Algeria, and “colonial humanism” in West Africa, to exclude these culturally distinct groups from the nation. See: Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006). Similarly, Mary Dewhurst Lewis and Clifford Rosenberg have argued that France’s immigration policies were both inclusionary and exclusionary. In comparing how officials in Lyon and Marseille implemented national immigration policies at the local level, Lewis argues that the dividing line between citizens and foreigners was much more malleable than previous assumed. She contends that the national laws on citizenship were not fixed. Rather, they were molded to meet the perceived needs of the French administration at both the national and local levels. In his work on policing immigrant labor during the interwar period, Rosenberg examines how greater police control accompanied increased state welfare benefits to immigrants. See: Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Clifford Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control between the Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

culture with its own linguistic legitimacy; yet, they also wanted to retain their French citizenship. My dissertation argues that it was these debates about the “Creole question” that challenged the narrow perception of a French citizen as a individual divested of all particular and group affiliations. In highlighting Antilleans’ struggle to be both French *and* Creole, I contend that government policies concerning the right to difference were not only shaped by state ministries, but also by the actions of Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic.

From Colonization to Departmentalization: the Antilles’ Political and Cultural Relationship with France

Before we can begin to explore how the “Creole question” shaped the processes of inclusion and exclusion in late twentieth-century France, we must first understand the longer historical relationship between France and the Antillean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁹ The complexities of Antilleans’ place in the French nation did not emerge when the National Assembly transformed the islands from colonies to departments in 1946. France, Guadeloupe, and Martinique had been intertwined for over three centuries before departmentalization officially legalized what already existed: a

⁹ For general histories of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and their relationship to France see: Josette Fallope, *Esclavages et citoyens: les noirs à la Guadeloupe au XIXe siècle dans les processus de résistance et d’intégration, 1802-1910* (Basse-Terre: Société d’histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1992); Oruno Lara, *La Guadeloupe dans l’histoire: La Guadeloupe physique, économique, agricole, commerciale, financière, politique et sociale, 1492-1900* (Paris: Harmattan, 1999); Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *France’s Overseas Frontier: Départements et territoires d’outre-mer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Henriette Levillain, ed., *La Guadeloupe, 1875-1914: les soubresauts d’une société pluri-ethnique ou les ambiguïtés de l’assimilation* (Paris: Ed. Autrement, 1994); Jean-Pierre Sainton, ed., *Histoire et civilisation de la Caraïbe: Guadeloupe, Martinique, petites Antilles: La construction des sociétés antillaises des origines au temps présent, structure et dynamique* (Paris :Editions Maisonneuve et Larosse, 2004); Lucien René Abenon, *Petite histoire de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992); Louis Abénon et al., *Histoire des Antilles et de la Guyane* (Toulouse: Privat, 1982); Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises: XVIIe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Perrin, 2002); Liliane Chaleau, *Dans les îles du vent la Martinique: XVIIe-XIXe siècle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993); Richard Burton, *La famille coloniale: la Martinique et la mère patrie, 1789-1992* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994); Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel: a story of colonialism and resistance in the Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

cultural, political, and economic union between France and the Antilles. At the center of this close relationship was the question of Antilleans' political status and how they would be culturally and politically integrated into French society.

Guadeloupe and Martinique are a part of the small arc of islands that constitute the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea, reaching from the U.S. Virgin Islands in the north to Trinidad and Tobago in the south. France's relationship with Guadeloupe and Martinique began in 1635 when the Cardinal Richelieu charged the Company of the American Islands with colonizing and settling Guadeloupe and Martinique for France's economic gain. The early history of the islands follows closely the general narrative in Caribbean history of European colonial and mercantilist expansion in the New World. French colonialists exterminated the indigenous Carib population, imported slave labor from Africa, and developed plantation economies.

In Guadeloupe and Martinique, the introduction of sugarcane cultivation had widespread ramifications for the history and settlement of the islands. Sugarcane was an extremely labor intensive crop. To meet this demand for labor, French settlers and landowners imported African slaves in large numbers to work in the fields, which by this time were almost exclusively dominated by sugarcane. With the installation of sugar plantations, a new social and economic order was created. Plantation society gave rise to two groups with extraordinarily unequal statuses: the dominant group of white settlers or plantation owners, known as *habitants*, and the subservient masses of black slaves who labored the land and were indispensable to sugarcane cultivation. By the early eighteenth century, the number of African slaves living in Guadeloupe and Martinique was nearly double that of the French settler population. Yet, the white minority held all of the power

and control. The plantation owners were content with the unequal social hierarchy they had created; it afforded them great wealth and thus, a great amount of local political power.¹⁰

However, across the Atlantic in metropolitan France, a number of prominent Republicans were beginning to question the morality of slavery and colonialism. In 1789, the body of elected representatives in Paris set forth “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen”, proclaiming the liberty, equality, and universal rights of all men. Despite this declaration, France continued to enslave Africans in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The slaves responded by using the language of rights to pursue equality and freedom. In a series of revolts and insurrections that broke out in the early 1790s, the slaves forcibly integrated themselves into the French Republic. They insisted that the rights of man were equally applicable in the metropole and the colonies.¹¹

In 1794, the National Convention applied the universal rights of man to its colonies. It abolished slavery throughout the empire, establishing a new juridical order in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The people and territory of these colonies were to be integrated equally into the French nation with no distinctions between colonial and metropolitan law. In theory, France and its colonies had become one nation-state, and all those living in Guadeloupe and Martinique, including the ex-slaves were now French citizens. However, these principles of universal inclusion quickly became layered with practices of racial exclusion. Colonial officials excluded former slaves from full

¹⁰ Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004), see especially chapter 2, “The Island Context.” For more on the importance of sugar in Caribbean history see: Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

¹¹ For more on how slaves in the French Caribbean shaped and expanded the meaning of republican equality and principles of universalism to include all people in the nation regardless of race, see: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

citizenship by arguing that they were not yet capable of possessing the rights and privileges of a French citizen. They argued that slavery had damaged slaves' moral and intellectual capacities and therefore, they could not be immediately included in the nation as citizens. Former slaves possessed the potential to become citizens, but first, they needed to learn how to be French.¹²

This radical experiment integrating France and its Antillean colonies abruptly ended in 1804 when Napoléon Bonaparte came to power, overthrowing the Republic and reestablishing slavery. Guadeloupe and Martinique were once again colonies of France. The former slaves and potential citizens became slaves once again. Napoleon had stripped them of the possibility of attaining full French citizenship. In 1848, a transformation in the French state brought about yet another change in the Antilles' and the slaves' political relationship to France. With the establishment of the Second Republic (1848-1952), slavery was definitively abolished in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Shortly thereafter, universal male suffrage was also instituted in France and its colonies. In theory, the former slaves were once again French citizens with full political rights.¹³

However, enfranchisement was fleeting. The abolition of slavery opened up new possibilities for colonial oppression. With the establishment of a colonial administration in Guadeloupe and Martinique, state officials and the white settlers asserted their domination in new ways. They sought to limit former slaves' freedom and rights by controlling all aspects of local administration, including the judiciary system, the police, education, and the press. When former slaves exercised their freedom and left the

¹² Laurent Dubois argues that former slaves' exclusion from French citizenship was the result of a particular form of "republican racism." See: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

¹³ Oruno D. Lara, *Guadeloupe: Faire Face à l'Histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).

plantations in search of better economic opportunities, colonial officials put in place a series of laws requiring *noirs* (blacks) to have interior passports with their employers' signatures. Colonial officials contained former slaves' freedom by insisting that they needed their employers' permission to move freely about the islands.¹⁴ These laws effectively tied the *noirs* to the plantation, and ensured that they remained economically and socially subordinate to the white settlers.

With the end of the Second Empire (1852-1870), and the rise of the Third Republic, the question of Antilleans' political status and the islands' relationship to France was once more at the center of state policies aimed at building a sense of nationhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While state officials created republican institutions in metropolitan France, such as public schools and universal military conscription, to build a sense of national belonging among its citizens, colonial administrators also worked to integrate the Antilles and its newly acquired African and Asian territories into the larger French Empire. With the founding of the Third Republic, republican officials also restored black Antilleans' right to vote. The former slaves were theoretically represented in the National Assembly in Paris, yet they continued to endure oppression at the hands of the wealthy white settlers. This contrast between a liberating government and a repressive local social hierarchy created a sense of fierce loyalty to France among black Antilleans. They viewed the Republic as their protectors against the white settlers who wanted to keep them in subordination. The former slaves believed in the republican ideals of equality and that true political and

¹⁴ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Oruno D. Lara, *Guadeloupe: Faire Face à l'Histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).

social liberation could only be achieved if Guadeloupe and Martinique remained politically united with France.¹⁵

As France's "old colonies" (*vieilles colonies*), Guadeloupe and Martinique were the success stories of the "civilizing mission". Under the Third Republic, France made it its mission to bring civilization to the colonies. Colonial officials believed that the colonized had the potential to possess equal rights and be assimilated as citizens of France. Yet, they simultaneously argued that the acquisition of French citizenship was dependent on the colonized's transformation from tradition to modernity and the adoption of French culture.¹⁶ In the late nineteenth century, colonial officials began to recognize the Antilles as more inherently French than the lands being colonized under the Republic's "new imperialism" expansion in Africa and Asia. In the colonial imagination, Guadeloupe and Martinique were "evolved" territories that had become economically and socially integrated into metropolitan France during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The emergence of an educated and assimilated black elite that was loyal to France proved to colonial officials that the civilizing mission worked, and that the Antilles had in fact become French.¹⁷ Guadeloupe and Martinique became colonial officials' models for politically and culturally uniting France's new empire and the newly colonized to metropolitan France.

¹⁵ David Berriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004), see especially chapter 2, "The Island Context."

¹⁶ For histories of France's "civilizing mission" see: Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Raymond Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory, 1890-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960); Raymond Betts, *Tricolore: the French overseas empire* (London; New York: Gordon & Cremonesi, 1978); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Josette Fallope, "La politique d'assimilation et ses resistances," in *La Guadeloupe, 1875-1914: Les soubresauts d'une société pluri-ethnique ou les ambiguïtés de l'assimilation*, ed. Henriette Levillain (Paris: Autrement, 1994), 249.

Assimilation was also demanded from within the Antilles. On three separate occasions in 1890, 1915 and 1918, Antillean deputies introduced bills in the National Assembly to change Martinique and Guadeloupe's political status from colonies to departments. They pressured state officials to live up to the ideal of republican equality and politically integrate Guadeloupe and Martinique into the Republic as full-fledged departments of France. From 1918 to 1939, Antillean veterans who had fought in the First World War invoked the "blood tax" they had paid to France. They argued that in dying for the mother country, they had earned departmental status for the Antilles and the right to be French citizens.¹⁸

The interwar years were also a time of cultural awakening for certain Antillean intellectuals, like Aimé Césaire, who discovered in Paris their cultural and political connection to the black community. Antillean and West African intellectuals found solidarity in a common black identity, and formed the *Négritude* movement. They believed that their shared black heritage as members of the African diaspora was the best tool for fighting French political and cultural domination. The leaders of the *Négritude* movement did not envision political independence for Guadeloupe and Martinique. Rather, they criticized slavery and French colonialism for destroying Antilleans' African heritage and called upon Antilleans to demand cultural and political equality under French rule.¹⁹

¹⁸ Arvin Murch, *Black Frenchmen: The Political Integration of the French Antilles* (Morristown, NJ: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1972).

¹⁹ For more on the *Négritude* movement see: Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Isabelle Constant and Kahiudi C. Mabana, eds., *Négritude: legacy and present relevance* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2009); Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: history and subjectivity in French Caribbean literature* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003); Abiola Irele, *The Negritude Moment: Explorations in Francophone African and Caribbean Literature and Thought* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011).

This history of making demands for equality as a part of the French nation shaped the Antilles' political future following the Second World War. As France's newer colonies claimed their independence, Guadeloupe and Martinique strengthened their political and cultural ties with France. On March 19, 1946, the National Assembly unanimously voted to transform the islands' political status from colonies to overseas departments of France (*départements d'outre-mer* or DOM). This meant that Guadeloupe and Martinique were now under the jurisdiction of the department of the interior, and were subject to the same administrative laws as metropolitan regions. Departmentalization dissolved the body of local colonial officials. It eliminated the position of the colonial governor and replaced it with a prefect appointed by the French government. The prefect was the primary representative of France in the Antilles. He held the same authority as his counterpart in mainland France, but he also assumed a wide range of powers previously held by the local assembly (*Conseil Général*). In addition to extending the highly centralized French administrative structure to Guadeloupe and Martinique, departmentalization also meant that Antilleans elected national officials to represent them in the National Assembly in Paris.²⁰

Departmentalization was not an abrupt or unexpected modification. Rather, Antillean and metropolitan leaders viewed this change in the islands' political status as the culmination of a centuries-long process of progressive incorporation into the French state that had begun with the abolition of slavery in 1848. Departmentalization, also known as the "law of assimilation", merely accelerated the comprehensive transplantation of French political, social, and economic institutions to the newly created

²⁰ Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: history and subjectivity in French Caribbean literature* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003); Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004).

DOM. As a part of this process of departmentalization, Antilleans' political status was also transformed from colonial subjects to French citizens. In 1946, the National Assembly granted all Antilleans the same rights and privileges as French citizens residing in the Hexagon.²¹

Most Antillean leaders were supportive of departmentalization. Aimé Césaire, who at the time was Martinique's deputy to the National Assembly, envisioned political assimilation as the final stage in Antilleans' long struggle for political and social equality. Césaire encouraged the Antillean people to welcome departmentalization as a kind of liberation from the stronghold of colonial officials and white settlers who had kept Antilleans in a position of subordination for centuries. According to Césaire, admission into the "French family" was the best means for ending the inequalities of colonialism. He supported the ideal of departmentalization as an equalizer, but the reality of the "law of assimilation" was much different than he had envisioned.²²

Departmentalization ushered in widespread social changes. The installation of French institutions in the DOM, including the national education system, the social service structure, and communication and transportation networks, was accompanied by a visible influx of metropolitan French who filled positions in islands as top administrators, civil servants, and technocrats. Modernization and urban growth quickly ensued, contributing to a decline in agriculture, rural-to-urban migration, and the expansion of the service sector. These sweeping social and economic transformations in Guadeloupe and Martinique were followed by a rise in unemployment that disproportionately affected the youth. This precipitated a large-scale migration of young Antilleans to metropolitan

²¹ Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004), 1-3.

²² *Ibid.*

France in search of education, training, and employment. These dual migratory flows created new tensions between Antilleans and the French on both sides of the Atlantic.²³ As the islands' social and economic problems persisted and became worse under departmentalization, certain Antillean activists began to question the benefits of assimilation and whether or not integration into France was desirable for the Antilles. Simultaneously, in the wake of decolonization, France was trying to make sense of how its former colonial subjects from Africa and Asia fit into the nation as culturally diverse immigrants. Once again, metropolitan officials looked to its former "model colonies" for a precedent regarding how to assimilate culturally diverse populations into a politically and socially united French nation.

This history of Guadeloupe's and Martinique's relationship with France demonstrates that the Antilles have played a formative role in shaping the French nation. As slaves, colonial subjects, and French citizens, Antilleans have always been at the forefront of the processes of exclusion and inclusion in France. Their changing political status and relationship with France provides insight into the government's shifting views regarding who was excluded from the nation and who had the potential to be included as French citizens. My dissertation seeks to understand how Antilleans' interactions with these policies of inclusion and exclusion shaped what it meant to be French at a time when France was struggling with becoming an increasingly diverse nation in the second half of the twentieth century.

The Importance of Antilleans' Role in Shaping Postcolonial France

Why is it important to highlight Guadeloupe's and Martinique's political and

²³ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*, 1-3.

cultural relationship to France when these islands were just two of France's many colonial possessions across the world? Why should scholars examine how Antilleans have shaped what it meant to be French? My dissertation is part of the work within colonial studies that has followed Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler's call to bring the metropole and its colonies into one analytical framework in order to demonstrate how the nation was constructed through and within the empire.²⁴ Scholars of this "new imperial history" have shown how the meaning of universal French citizenship developed within the larger imperial context. The late nineteenth century was a key moment when Republican officials implemented social reforms, such as universal education and mandatory male conscription, in an effort to create French citizens.²⁵ At the same time, colonial officials were developing new methods of colonial management for assimilating the colonial subjects of its newly acquired territories in Asia and Africa. As a part of what scholars have termed France's "civilizing mission", colonial officials forcibly modernized its colonial possessions under the guise of helping the colonized achieve

²⁴ Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Catherin Hall's edited volume also provides a good overview of the new imperial history's historiographical interventions. See: Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000). See also: Antoinette Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking through and with the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds., *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Veneral Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Philippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Antionette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 1998); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

²⁵ See: Eugen Joseph Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977); James R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

assimilation and French citizenship.²⁶ Colonial officials believed that the colonized had the potential to become assimilated citizens of the Republic. However, this political assimilation was dependent upon colonial subjects' adoption of French culture and the French way of life. Therefore, while citizenship was possible for some elite colonial subjects who had been educated to serve as a part of France's colonial administration, citizenship was deferred for the majority of the colonized.²⁷

During the interwar period, as citizens in metropolitan France gained more social rights under the new welfare programs, colonial subjects began to agitate for greater access to political and social rights in Africa and Asia.²⁸ This struggle forced French colonial officials to reconcile their republican principles of equality with the differentialist practices of governance that were central to colonial rule. In this way, they were compelled to reconsider the meaning of citizenship and the degree to which colonial subjects were French.

While this earlier scholarship was mainly concerned with how the nation was constituted in France's second colonial empire, recently, historians have explored how the meaning of French citizenship was first developed in the "old colonies" of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Historian Laurent Dubois has demonstrated the ways in which slaves shaped the meaning of equality and universal citizenship in Republican

²⁶ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005); Alice Conklin, Sarah Fishman, Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁷ See: Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

political culture.²⁹ In addition, Gary Wilder has explored how Antillean intellectuals and the Negritude movement challenged France's assimilationist ideology and pushed the boundaries of French citizenship to include their transnational black aesthetic.³⁰ Despite this recent attention given to the history of the French Caribbean, historians have yet to seriously examine Antilleans' role in shaping French citizenship and the right to difference following the Second World War.³¹

There exists a large body of work underscoring how postcolonial immigrants in France have used the concepts of difference and multiculturalism to challenge a narrow perception of French citizenship that demands assimilation.³² However, Antilleans are largely absent from this story about the struggle for the right to difference in France. The contemporary public debates surrounding the headscarf affair have made French Muslims, specifically Algerians, and the history of their relationship to France the salient object of study.³³ In 2004, President Jacques Chirac signed a law banning the display of

²⁹ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, "La République Métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History," *Cultural Studies* 14 (2000): 15-34.

³⁰ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

³¹ Anthropologist David Beriss had done the only book-length study on Antilleans' role in shaping French citizenship in the postcolonial period. See: David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

³² Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); For studies of British postcolonial cultures, see: Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": the Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

³³ For scholarship on the headscarf affair in France see: Saïd Bouamama, *L'affaire Du Foulard Islamique: La Production D'un Racisme Respectable* (Roubaix: Geai bleu, 2004); John Richard Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard et La République* (Paris: Découverte, 1995), Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), Bronwyn Winter, *Hijab and the Republic: Uncovering the French Headscarf*

“conspicuous religious symbols and apparel” in public schools. The law purportedly applied to all students, but in practice, it was directed at female French Muslim students, and prohibited them from wearing headscarves in school. Officials justified the headscarf ban, arguing that such religious and cultural symbols violated republican principles of secularism (*laïcité*) and universalism.³⁴ According to the French constitution, citizens are abstract individuals without differentiation or particularities. Supporters of the headscarf ban argued that in displaying their particular affiliation to Islam, French Muslim women were obscuring their universality and claiming their right to difference, an action that fundamentally violated what it meant to be French.³⁵ Recent scholarship has highlighted how French Muslims are using concepts of difference and multiculturalism to challenge this narrow definition of French citizenship.³⁶

These current debates about secularism and its role in shaping what it means to be a French citizen have prompted scholars to look more closely at the historical relationship between Algeria and France, and how the State incorporated Muslims into the nation

Debate (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

³⁴ For a discussion of the construction of secularism (*laïcité*) in the French Republic see: Jean Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France* (Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 2003); Jocelyne Cesari, *Musulmans et républicains: les jeunes, l'islam et la France* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1998); Franck Frégosi, *Penser l'islam dans la laïcité: les musulmans de France et la république* (Paris: Fayard, 2008); Rémy Levau and Gilles Kepel, eds., *Les Musulmans dans la société française* (Paris: Presse de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1998); Tariq Ramadan, *Les musulmans dans la laïcité: responsabilités et droits des musulmans dans les sociétés occidentales* (Lyon: Tawhid, 1998); Olivier Roy, *La laïcité face à l'islam* (Paris: Stock, 2005).

³⁵ For a discussion of republican citizenship and the abstract individual see: Dominique Schnapper, *La Communauté Des Citoyens: Sur L'idée Moderne De Nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Dominique Schnapper, *Qu'est-ce que la citoyenneté* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000).

³⁶ Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Postcolonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, ed., *Memory, Empire, and Postcolonialism: Legacies of French Colonialism* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2005); Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Dan Abbeele, eds., *French Civilization and its Discontents: nationalism, colonialism, race* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2003); Steven Ungar and Tom Conley, eds., *Identity Papers: contested nationhood in twentieth-century France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

during colonialism and decolonization.³⁷ This work has foregrounded religion as the most important category of exclusion in France today. While it is important to understand how the French state has constructed Muslims' religion as a marker of difference that threatens national unity, this privileging of religion in discussions about race and multiculturalism in France has obscured other processes of exclusion that have existed and continue to persist in France. Guadeloupe and Martinique's current departmental status is similar to that of Algeria before it became an independent nation. From 1946 to 1962, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Algeria were administratively and legally a part of the French nation. Antilleans and Algerians were French citizens. In July 1962, France severed its political ties with Algeria, arguing that independence was an inevitable outcome in the advancing "tide of History." However, in 1946, France had yet to "invent" decolonization.³⁸ Instead, it strengthened its political union with Guadeloupe and Martinique by making the islands departments of France. Complete integration was the National Assembly's strategy for resolving Antilleans' demands for more political rights. In contrast to its more recently acquired African and Asian territories, metropolitan and colonial officials believed Guadeloupe and Martinique were more assimilated. Antilleans were "model colonial subjects" in that they had embraced the institutions, language, and religion of France. Because of Antilleans' purported

³⁷ See: René Gallissot, *La république française et les indigènes: Algérie colonisée, Algérie algérienne, 1870-1962* (Paris: Atelier, 2006); Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1830-1954* (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester University Press, 2002); Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1997); Jo McCormack, *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War, 1954-1962* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2007); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Todd Shepard argues that France "invented" decolonization and the notion that culturally distinct peoples should govern themselves and their own nation as a way to sever the over one-hundred-and-thirty year political union between France and Algeria. See: Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

assimilation, and the islands' long historical ties to France dating back to the seventeenth century, the French government deemed Antilleans worthy of French citizenship.³⁹ Despite this, the extent to which Antilleans were in fact French remained in question. Antilleans were politically included as French citizens, but because of their racial and cultural particularities as black Creoles, they were also excluded from the nation.

My examination of Antilleans' simultaneous inclusion and exclusion suggests that decolonization and the subsequent migration of former colonial subjects, particularly those of the Muslim faith, to France was not the only event that forced France to redefine the meaning of French citizenship in the late twentieth century. The event of decolonization did not effectively sever France's ties with its former colonies and place difference outside of the nation. During this period, metropolitan and DOM officials were also struggling with how to assimilate Antilleans' cultural differences into the nation. I contend that only in exploring Antilleans' unique political and cultural status, can historians begin to understand how inclusion and exclusion worked in France. I argue that French citizenship was neither entirely inclusionary nor was it completely exclusionary. Rather, the meaning of what it meant to be French was changing as state officials negotiated with Antilleans to determine how they would be politically and culturally incorporated into the nation.

Inclusion and Exclusion in the French Republic

Under the French constitution, citizens are abstract individuals without differential identification or particularistic affiliations. Accordingly, the government

³⁹ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, "La République Métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History," *Cultural Studies* 14, no.1 (2000): 15-34.

interacts with its citizens as universal individuals, each of whom is purportedly equal before the law. The state does not acknowledge the ways in which particular groups of citizens have been constructed and treated as racially and culturally different. In theory, this erasure of difference ensures that all citizens are treated equally. These republican ideals have produced a national myth of a colorblind France that has successfully and effortlessly assimilated multiple waves of culturally and racially diverse immigrants.⁴⁰

Most of the scholarship on immigration and postcolonial France is focused on examining how France's unique republican tradition has affected the cultural and political integration of former colonial subjects who migrated to France following decolonization. More specifically, it scrutinizes the saliency of the myth of a colorblind Republic, and considers whether or not questions of race and ethnicity have shaped the nation.⁴¹ This body of work is divided between scholars who argue that the republican

⁴⁰ For scholarship that has contributed to this myth of an assimilatory Republic, see: Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: l'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991); Patrick Weil, *La république et sa diversité: Immigration, intégration, discrimination* (Paris: Seuil, 2005); Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français?: histoire de la nationalité française depuis la révolution* (Paris: Grasset, 2002); Patrick Weil, *Liberté, égalité, discriminations: l'identité au regard de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 2008); Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Michèle Tribalat, *Cents ans d'immigration, étrangers d'hier, français aujourd'hui: apport démographique, dynamique familiale et économique de l'immigration étrangère* (Paris: Presse universitaires de France, 1991), Vincent Viet, *La France immigrée: construction d'une politique, 1914-1997* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

Gérard Noiriel's earlier work, *The French Melting Pot*, celebrated the Republic's assimilation and integration of successive waves of immigrants into the French nation. However, in his more recent study (*Immigration, antisémitisme, et racisme en France, XIXe-XXe siècle*), Noiriel recognizes how the Republic has excluded particular groups of people. See: Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme, et racisme en France, XIXe-XXe siècle: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris: Fayard, 2007).

⁴¹ The English language scholarship on postcolonial France tends to focus on how questions of race and ethnicity have created exclusion and produced inequalities in France. In contrast, French language scholarship argues that problems of exclusion are the result of social inequalities, not racial discrimination. For English language scholarship that uses race as a category of analysis see: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Herman Lebovics, *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Postcolonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995); Sue Peabody and Tyler Edward Stovall, eds., *The Color*

tradition has been and can be inclusionary⁴², and those who contend that republicanism is an exclusionary ideal in that it has failed to create an equal society.⁴³

Scholars who celebrate France's history of assimilation argue that the contemporary "immigration problem" is not a new phenomenon. In the past, France has confronted the issue of inassimilable "others" and therefore, it will eventually succeed in

of Liberty: Histories of Race in France (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003); Maxim Silverman, *Race, Discourse, and Power in France* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Avebury, 1991); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Dan Abbeele, eds., *French Civilization and its Discontents: nationalism, colonialism, race* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2003); Steven Ungar and Tom Conley, eds., *Identity Papers: contested nationhood in twentieth-century France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). For French language scholarship that characterizes exclusion in France as a social problem see: Christine Bard et al., eds., *Intégration et exclusion sociale: d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Anthropos, 1999); Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Milena Doytcheva, *Une discrimination positive à la française: ethnicité et territoire dans les politiques de la ville* (Paris: Découverte, 2007); Philippe Dewitte, ed., *Immigration et integration: l'état des savoirs* (Paris: Découverte, 1999); Didier Fassin and Eric Fassin, eds., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?: représenter la société française* (Paris: Découverte, 2006); Gilles Ferréol, ed., *Intégration et exclusion dans la société française contemporaine* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1992); Patrick Weil, *La République et sa diversité: immigration, intégration, discrimination* (Paris: Seuil, 2005); Patrick Weil, *Liberté, égalité, discriminations: l'identité nationale au regard de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset, 2008).

⁴² Patrick Weil's work represents the group of scholars who argue that the republican tradition can be inclusionary. He characterizes republicanism as a coherent set of policies that has the capacity to effectively include all universal individuals in the French nation regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, etc. Weil defends what is good about republican traditions of citizenship. However, he does recognize that the exclusion of particular groups has occurred at key moments in the history of republican citizenship. For example, women did not obtain full political citizenship and the right to vote until after the Second World War. See: Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français?: histoire de la nationalité française depuis la révolution* (Paris: Grasset, 2002); Patrick Weil, *La république et sa diversité: Immigration, integration, discrimination* (Paris: Seuil, 2005); Patrick Weil, *Liberté, égalité, discriminations: l'identité au regard de l'histoire* (Paris: Grasset 2008). See also Gérard Noiriel's early work on French citizenship and nationality: Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). For scholarship that celebrates the republican tradition's assimilatory powers see: Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Michèle Tribalat, *Cents ans d'immigration, étrangers d'hier, français aujourd'hui: apport démographique, dynamique familiale et économique de l'immigration étrangère* (Paris: Presse universitaires de France, 1991).

⁴³ More specifically, recent scholarship has demonstrated how constructions of race have historically excluded particular groups from the French nation. See: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference*; Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

incorporating this new wave of postcolonial immigrants.⁴⁴ Others contend that the postwar restructuring of the labor market and the subsequent economic recession in the 1970s is to blame for the marginalization of postcolonial immigrants. In other words, this group of scholars insists that the inequalities present in French society are the result of social and economic problems, not racial ones.⁴⁵

More recently, scholars have challenged this narrative of inclusion and assimilation. In using race as a category of analysis to understand how exclusion works in France, they have demonstrated that social inequalities in France are also racial problems.⁴⁶ Within this body of scholarship, there are two main arguments for explaining how republican policies of equality coexisted with forms of exclusion. The first group of scholars claims that exclusion occurred from the failure of state officials to live up to the lofty ideals of republican equality.⁴⁷ For example, historian Todd Shepard

⁴⁴ See: Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français?: histoire de la nationalité française depuis la révolution* (Paris: Grasset, 2002); Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: l'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991); Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Michèle Tribalat, *Cents ans d'immigration, étrangers d'hier, français aujourd'hui: apport démographique, dynamique familiale et économique de l'immigration étrangère* (Paris: Presse universitaires de France, 1991), Vincent Viet, *La France immigrée: construction d'une politique, 1914-1997* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

⁴⁵ Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995), 147-176.

⁴⁶ See: See: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference*; Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003). For scholarship that uses race as a category of analysis for understanding exclusion in other European nations see: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, ed., *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982); Rita C. K. Chin et al., ed., *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Rita C.K. Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Paul Gilroy, 'There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack': The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Heide Fehrenbach, *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴⁷ See: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

asserts that the French state turned its back on its republican principles when it revoked thousands of Algerian Muslims' French citizenship during the process of decolonization. Shepard characterizes French Algeria as a kind of experiment in multiculturalism, and argues that republicanism was not a coherent set of policies. Legal pluralism and many categories of citizens and colonial subjects existed in Algeria prior to decolonization. Republicanism had the capacity to include and adapt. However, in 1962, at the moment of decolonization, the French government used racial categories to exclude Algerian Muslims from French citizenship. Unlike Algerians of European descent, Muslims were stripped of their French nationality. The government "invented" decolonization to effectively erase the post-1944 integration and positive discrimination policies that had sought to include French Algerian Muslims in the nation. In characterizing decolonization as an inevitable step in the "tide of history", France absolved itself of all responsibility in upholding its policy of universalism, which had made Algeria a legal part of France and transformed Algerians in French citizens.⁴⁸ Similarly, Laurent Dubois argues that former slaves in the Antilles were denied the full rights and privileges of French citizenship not because of the failures of republicanism, but because colonial officials failed to fully implement the ideals of republican equality. According to Dubois, republicanism freed the slaves and granted them citizenship; it was colonial officials who insisted that the former slaves were not yet ready to be French citizens.⁴⁹

A separate group of scholars contends that inequality and policies of exclusion developed as a part of the French republican tradition. For example, Maxim Silverman

⁴⁸ Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁴⁹ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

challenges the founding myth of the universal modern French nation-state. He argues that France has a long history of being restrictive and particular. The notion of universal rights forged by the French Revolution was never universal. Rather, Silverman contends that republican universalism was constructed within the particularistic framework of the nation. The nation hijacked the republican ideal of the universal individual, and quickly subsumed it within distinctions between nationals and non-nationals.⁵⁰

In addition, Alice Conklin claims that policies of exclusion developed as a part of the republican colonial project. According to Conklin, colonial officials' commitment to republican universalism justified the violent acts of modernization and assimilation that occurred under France's "colonizing mission". The authoritarian nature of colonial rule and republicanism were not contradictory. Rather, they developed together. Conklin claims that colonial officials believed authoritarian measures were necessary in order to help colonial subjects assimilate and achieve their potential as French citizens.⁵¹

On the one hand, historians' celebration of French republicanism has characterized France as completely inclusionary of difference in its commitment to assimilation. On the other hand, scholars' critical analyses of the practice of republican ideals have highlighted France's exclusionary nature in its insistence that citizens conform to some imaginary ideal of what it means to be French. For both groups of

⁵⁰ Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992). In *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, Joan Wallach Scott also contends that the idea of republican universalism, which first developed during the revolutionary period, was inherently exclusionary in that it was not applied equally to all groups of people, especially with respect to women who were not accorded equal citizenship and the right to vote until after the Second World War. According to Scott, from the inception of the Republic, the rights-bearing universal individual was simultaneously coded as a white male. In other words, French Republicanism was constructed so that it only included white males in the nation and excluded all particularized groups, including women and those with distinct racial and ethnic identities. See: Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

⁵¹ Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

scholars, inclusion is synonymous with the attainment of citizenship while exclusion is some other marginal political status.⁵² They assume that political inclusion necessarily signifies cultural inclusion and the existence of equality.

My consideration of Antilleans' political *and* cultural status in the French nation reframes the debate about republicanism's inclusionary and exclusionary nature. Instead of analyzing republicanism in terms of its successes and failures in creating political equality and granting French citizenship to racially and ethnically distinct individuals, I examine how the Ministries of Education and the DOM have used republican ideals to construct a French nation that politically included Antilleans while culturally and socially excluding them. When metropolitan officials granted Antilleans full political rights as citizens of France, their cultural and social inclusion remained in question. Antilleans benefitted from French citizenship and were politically included in the nation; yet, culturally, they remained distinct and subject to discrimination on these grounds. With respect to social and cultural rights, including equal access to housing and employment, as well as the right to learn Creole, the Republic continued to exclude Antilleans from obtaining the same rights and privileges as metropolitan citizens. My examination of metropolitan and Antillean education policy suggests that although Guadeloupeans and

⁵² For example, DuBois, Shepherd, and Wilder examine how the metropolitan and colonial officials legalized different categories of citizenship in order to politically exclude Antilleans, Algerians, and West Africans from the nation. They argue that the French state used the discourse of "new citizens", "refugees", and "colonial humanism" respectively to codify and exclude racial differences while simultaneously upholding the ideal of Republican equality. See: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

Martinicans were politically included, they were culturally excluded from the national curriculum, and more broadly, the nation. I demonstrate how political inclusion and cultural exclusion occurred simultaneously as a set of processes in which metropolitan and DOM officials sought to reconcile their commitment to assimilation with Antilleans' demands for cultural recognition and inclusion.

Making French Citizens: Republican Education and the Politics of Language

Education provides a particularly useful lens through which to examine how inclusion and exclusion worked in postcolonial France. First, France has historically used public education in both the metropolitan and colonial contexts to promote assimilation and make republican citizens.⁵³ The dissemination of French was at the

⁵³ For scholarship on how the state used education to make French citizens in the metropolitan context see: Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2004); Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Robert Gildea, *Education in Provincial France, 1800-1914: a study of three departments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Raymond Grew and Patrick Harrigan, *School, State & Society: The Growth of Elementary Schooling in nineteenth century France* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991); Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: primary schooling as nation building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb, I.L.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998); James R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling for the People: Comparative Local Studies of Schooling in History in France and Germany, 1750-1850* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985); Mona Ozouf, *L'école, l'église, et la République: 1871-1914* (Paris: Cana/J. Affredo, 1992); Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ronald Wardhaugh, *Language in Competition: Dominance, Diversity, and Decline* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Eugen Joseph Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977); For the colonial context see: P. Blakemore, "Association and assimilation in French educational policy and practice: 1903-1939," *Comparative Education* 29 (1988): 85-103; Thomas Clayton, "Restriction or Resistance? French Colonial Educational Development in Cambodia," *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 3 (December 1, 1995): 1-14; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); David H. Kelly, ed., *French Colonial Education: Essays on Vietnam and West Africa* (New York: AMS Press, 2000); Linda Lehmil, "French Colonial Education: the Empire of Language, 1830-1944" (PhD diss., Tulane University, 2007); Linda Lehmil, "L'édification d'un enseignement pour les indigènes: Madagascar et l'Algérie dans l'Empire français," *Labrynth* 24 (2006): 91-112; Dalila Morsly, ed., *L'Enseignement du Français en Colonies: Expériences inaugurales dans l'enseignement primaire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010); Spencer D. Segalla, *The Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860-1900)," *Comparative*

heart of this expansion of republican education. State officials viewed the mastery of the French language as the first step in the process of assimilation. Therefore, education policies, particularly those concerning French language instruction, provide insight into what the state thought it meant to be French. In particular, changes in these policies enable us to understand the transformations in the meaning of French citizenship, as well as who was included and excluded from the nation. Second, there is a large body of education policies that explicitly addressed diversity's place in public schools and the nation. These policies and the debates surrounding them provide detailed information concerning the ways in which Antilleans' Creole language and culture were included and excluded. For these two reasons, I have chosen to explore how debates about Antillean education, and more specifically Creole's place in the public classroom, have transformed French citizenship and the right to difference during the late twentieth century.

Before we can explore how education and Creole language policy shaped the meaning of citizenship in postcolonial France, we must first examine the history of republican education as a tool of assimilation. Historians have pinpointed the late nineteenth century as a moment of nation building in France. They have argued that prior to the Third Republic, there was no singular French national identity. Rather, people living in the provinces were more likely to identify with their particular region. French officials implemented mandatory and universal education as a strategy for instilling in peasants an awareness of being French and belonging to the nation of France. They

Education 32 (1996): 9-25; Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

contended that by introducing schoolchildren to the nation's language, history, and culture, public education fostered the development of a national consciousness.⁵⁴

More specifically, the establishment of French as the unifying national language of France was central to state officials' nation-building project. According to the state, the French language was the essential marker of Frenchness that signified national belonging. They argued that the ability to speak French gave people in the provinces the linguistic tools they needed to be full participants in the national culture.⁵⁵ It was the revolutionaries of 1789 who first set forth the idea that the dissemination of a standardized French language was essential for establishing a strong and unified Republic. The republicans encouraged an active campaign to spread French to the masses and to rid France of its various patois and regional languages. The many successive regimes of the nineteenth century were also favorable to idea of solidifying national unity and loyalty through the universalization of French language. The 1833 Guizot law stated that French was to be the only language used in schools. In practice, regulation was ignored, but in 1850 the Falloux law, followed by the Ferry laws of 1881 and 1882, reaffirmed that only French was to be used in public classrooms.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ See: Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); Donald N. Baker and Patrick J. Harrigan, eds., *The Making of Frenchmen: current directions in the history of education in France, 1679-1979* (Waterloo, Ont.: Historical Refelctions Press, 1980). Scholars of France's regions have debated the extent to public education succeeded in making "peasants into Frenchmen", arguing that people in the provinces did not passively accept the state's assimilatory policies. They infused their own languages and cultures into the national curriculum, and maintained a sense of regional identity. See: Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); James R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: Cultural Contact in Rural France During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996);

⁵⁵ Mona Ozouf, *L'école, l'église, et la République: 1871-1914* (Paris: Cana/J. Affredo, 1992).

⁵⁶ Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2004).

While the French state was using compulsory, free, and secular public education to disseminate the French language and create a sense of national belonging in the provinces, it was also struggling with how to assimilate its newly acquired colonial territories in Africa and Asia. Jules Ferry, the architect of French public education, also orchestrated France's colonial expansion in the 1880s as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He used the same national school system that he had developed in France to spread Republican ideology to the colonies and foster colonial subjects' loyalty to France. According to Ferry, republican education was the best way to "establish France's territorial domination and penetrate the souls of the conquered."⁵⁷

Universal education, and the dissemination of the French language that accompanied it, was an important part of France's "civilizing mission". The goal of colonial education was to bring colonial subjects into the modern world of France, and make them a part of the French family.⁵⁸ However, this did not mean that colonial education policy was uniform and transplanted directly from metropolitan France. While the purpose of universal education was the same for each colony—to assimilate the colonized and make them French—colonial officials implemented different education and language policies according to the particular circumstances of each colonial territory.⁵⁹

In the Antilles, colonial officials purportedly implemented the same national school system that it was employing in metropolitan France to spread Republican ideology and create French citizens out of the diverse peoples of the provinces. When

⁵⁷ Linda Lehmil, "L'édification d'un enseignement pour les indigènes: Madagascar et l'Algérie dans l'Empire français," *Labryinth* 24 (2006): 91.

⁵⁸ Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860-1900).

⁵⁹ Lehmil, "L'édification d'un enseignement pour les indigènes," 91-112.

slavery was abolished in 1848, the provisional republican government also decreed that a free elementary school for boys was to be established in each commune. Application of this law lagged until 1886 when France passed legislation enabling the state's financial support for the development of primary education in the islands. While republican officials supported the implementation of universal public education in Guadeloupe and Martinique as an integral part of their assimilation policy, white settlers fought against the creation of public schools as a threat to their authority. This internal struggle over the place of public education in the islands encouraged Antillean leaders' belief that greater assimilation into French society would lead to more freedom and power for people of color. For Antilleans, this distinction between local whites who sought to perpetuate their domination, and representatives of the Republic who provided them with the tools to achieve social mobility, was sharpened over the course of the nineteenth century. Equal access to education became an important part of the political agenda for the group of Antillean elites that favored greater political and cultural assimilation into France.⁶⁰

At the same time, the establishment of French republican schools meant that Antillean history, culture, and language were absent from the curriculum. Schoolteachers taught Antillean children that they were French, erasing the history of their Creole culture and identity. Education officials privileged French language instruction as a tool of assimilation, and forbade the use of Creole, the maternal language of most Antilleans, in classrooms. For metropolitan and colonial officials, successful education was measured by Antilleans' identification with French cultural models, their ability to speak proper

⁶⁰ See: David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004); Arvin Murch, *Black Frenchmen: The Political Integration of the French Antilles* (Cambridge, M.A.: Schenkman Pub. Co., 1971).

French, and most importantly, their loyalty and attachment to the French nation.⁶¹

These efforts to use republican schools to make Antilleans into Frenchmen continued throughout the Third Republic. By then, public education had created a small class of elite Antilleans of color who dominated local assemblies. French became the new language of this social class, and its acquisition was a marker of social prestige. To speak French indicated a strong association with French culture, as well as a close identification with French values. These elite Antilleans sought to exercise their political and social power to contain white settlers' economic and social domination. Dependent upon the Republic for their education and the legitimacy it had given them, the bourgeoisie of color in the Antilles was more interested in greater assimilation into France than independence. Efforts to gain complete political integration as a department of France was the political goal of this group of Antillean leaders before the Second World War.⁶²

This goal was achieved in 1946 when Guadeloupe and Martinique became departments of France. Departmentalization brought about the expansion of the French national school system to the Antilles. Previously, only a small number of elite and middle-class Antilleans benefitted from public education. After 1946, education was made compulsory for all Antillean children until the age of sixteen. To achieve this goal, secondary and technical education was added to the primary school infrastructure that had been implemented under colonial rule. In addition, new schools were built in rural areas so that more Antillean children had access to education. Prior to departmentalization, schools were generally limited to urban areas. The Antillean elite

⁶¹ Lehmil, "L'édification d'un enseignement pour les indigènes," 91-112.

⁶² David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

who supported departmentalization had gained their social mobility through republican education. They therefore believed that its popularization was the most important aspect of their efforts to improve the economic and social circumstances of the Antillean masses.⁶³

However, shortly after departmental status was achieved in 1946, the same Antillean leaders who had supported political assimilation realized that they had simply replaced one form of domination with another. Departmentalization precipitated a huge increase in labor costs. This, coupled with the growing competition for European markets by tropical products from African and Latin American countries, meant that most of the Antillean plantations could no longer compete. Antillean leaders argued that in exchange for partial liberation from the power of local whites, departmentalization had destroyed the local economy and culture, making both Guadeloupe and Martinique largely French-controlled service-based economies and consumer societies.⁶⁴

This destruction of Antillean institutions and the local economy precipitated a “cultural awakening” among educated Antillean elites. This particular group of Antilleans began to perceive of Guadeloupe’s and Martinique’s social and economic problems as a cultural problem. They argued that the islands’ widespread unemployment and poverty were a result of departmentalization and its assimilation policy, which had destroyed Antilleans’ Creole language and culture. For these Antilleans, assimilation kept the Antillean people in a place of subordination and prevented them from achieving social and economic advancement. They argued that the only way to gain power and

⁶³ Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 2004).

⁶⁴ David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

overcome oppression at the hands of both local whites and the Republic was to reclaim their Creole language and culture.⁶⁵

In the decades following departmentalization, Creole became the symbol of Antillean cultural and political revival. The Creole language first appeared during the period of French colonial expansion in Guadeloupe and Martinique in the seventeenth century. Creole developed from the mixing of white settlers' French vocabulary, the syntax and grammar of the multiple African languages spoken by slaves, as well as the language of the indigenous Carib people that populated the Antilles prior to colonization. Creole emerged as a necessary form of communication between French settlers and the slaves they imported to work on their plantations. Following the abolition of slavery and continuing through departmentalization, metropolitan officials banned Creole from public instruction, arguing that Antilleans' assimilation was dependent upon French language acquisition. Republican schoolteachers taught Antillean children that they were completely French, ignoring their Creole culture that had emerged from the Antilles' history of colonization and slavery. Therefore, in revalorizing their Creole language, Antilleans were also reclaiming their black African culture that republican education had tried to erase.

Beginning in the 1950s, Antillean elites forged a Creole movement in the Antilles, as well as in metropolitan France. This movement was a quest for the reclamation of Creole as a part of Antilleans' true cultural identity; it was intrinsically linked to the elevation of Creole's role and status in public education, and more generally, Antillean society. For supporters of the Creole movement, republican education was the site of assimilation where French officials had attempted to destroy Antilleans' Creole identity.

⁶⁵ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*.

For this reason, they argued that the most effective way to fight assimilation was to regain control of public education and infuse it with their Creole culture. These Creole activists chose education as the forum of the Creole movement not only because of its importance to the republican assimilation project, but also because it was an institution where French officials had articulated concrete policies to erase Antilleans' Creole language and culture, and make them into French citizens. Education, and in particular, language policy, offered Antilleans a substantive set of ideas about French citizenship that they could challenge and interact with in order to achieve their goal of cultural equality.

Chapter Overview

The first chapter, entitled “Assimilation Through Migration: BUMIDOM and the Creation of a Trans-Atlantic French Nation, 1963-1982”, explores the creation of the Office for Migration from the Overseas Departments (BUMIDOM), the government agency tasked with regulating and organizing Antillean migration from Guadeloupe and Martinique to metropolitan France. It argues that state officials used BUMIDOM and the process of migration as an opportunity to educate Antilleans about what it meant to be French. Upon arriving in France, BUMIDOM placed Antillean men and women in technical education programs designed to provide them with the professional skills they needed to secure employment. In practice, however, these training programs taught Antilleans the everyday skills that BUMIDOM believed were essential for living in metropolitan France. Women learned how to cook, clean, and care for children according to the ideals of French domesticity, and men learned the importance of punctuality and hard work in the workplace. I argue that in the process of educating Antilleans about

how to conduct themselves in French society, BUMIDOM defined what it meant to be a proper French citizen. However, Antilleans were not passive participants in their assimilation. I contend that in private letters to government officials, Antillean migrants challenged the policy of assimilation and argued for a definition of French citizenship that included their Creole culture. It was in these exchanges between Antilleans and republican officials regarding BUMIDOM's technical education programs that the meaning of French citizenship was redefined.

Chapter two, "The 'right to difference': the Forging of Antillean Ethnic Activism and French Multiculturalism before Mitterrand", examines how Antilleans' private claims discussed in the first chapter became public criticisms of BUMIDOM and the beginning of a political movement to gain official recognition of their Creole culture. It contends that ultimately, it was the Antillean community who influenced public opinion, and put pressure on BUMIDOM to reexamine its assimilation policy. In 1975, BUMIDOM responded to Antilleans' demands and officially began to financially support their cultural associations. The conventional narrative of the French anti-racism movement claims that the introduction of Mitterrand's "right to difference" in the 1980s marked a complete break in policy from assimilation to multiculturalism. This second chapter claims that the "right to difference" was not a uniform policy brought on by a homogenous anti-racism movement. Rather, Mitterrand's articulation of the "right to difference" was the culmination of a gradual move toward a tentative cultural plurality in which Antilleans played a formative role.

The third chapter, "From Militant Nationalists to Ethnic Minority: The Antillean Creole Movement in Metropolitan France and the Antilles after Departmentalization",

explores the movement to promote, develop, and popularize Antilleans' Creole language and culture in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France. I argue that the Creole movement was a kind of reeducation in which the Antillean elite taught the Guadeloupean and Martinican people to value their Creole culture and language as an important part of their identity. Supporters of the Creole movement argued that in ignoring Creole, republican education had erased Antilleans' culture and language from the history of the French nation. These Creole activists used the Creole language to fight against the policy of assimilation and argue for a particular kind of multicultural education in France.

While chapter three provides a foundation for understanding the politics of Creole and the cultural movement surrounding it, chapter four looks more closely at Antilleans' efforts to make the Creole language and culture a part of republican education. In chapter four, "The Creole Question in Republican Education: Gérard Lauriette and the Regionalization of the Antilles", I examine Antillean education as a site of conflict between one of the most outspoken Creole activists, Gérard Lauriette, and the Ministry of Education. Lauriette was a teacher and activist who struggled to overturn the Ministry of Education's ban on the use of Creole in schools from 1946 through the 1980s. This chapter claims that Lauriette and his vocal role in the debates about Creole's place in public education put pressure on the French government to rethink the Antilles' political and cultural relationship to France. I argue that the French government's decision to consider the regionalization of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and the possibility of granting Antilleans more control of their local affairs, was a direct result of the debates about Creole and republican education.

Chapter five, entitled “From Assimilation to Intercultural Education: Immigrant Education and the Exclusion of Creole, 1970-1983”, examines these debates about Creole’s place in public schools in relationship to the Ministry of Education’s policies on immigrant education in French schools. While the Ministry of Education debated the place of immigrant languages and cultures in the metropolitan education system, it was also embroiled in political struggle with Antillean activists concerning Creole’s role in the Antillean classroom. From 1946 to 1970, the Ministry of Education treated Antilleans and immigrants similarly, and adhered to a policy of assimilation for both groups. This changed in 1970 when the Ministry of Education gradually introduced immigrants’ cultures and languages into the metropolitan curriculum while continuing to prohibit Antilleans’ Creole language and culture from entering Guadeloupean and Martinican classrooms.

Chapter five seeks to understand why the Ministry of Education officially introduced immigrants’ languages and cultures into the national curriculum nearly a decade before it would do the same for Antilleans. Historians of France have characterized exclusionary policies such as this as either a failure of republicanism to live up to its inclusionary ideals or as an inherent flaw of an exclusionary republicanism that only purported to be inclusionary. However, I argue that the divergence in education policy for immigrants and Antilleans reveals that republican assimilation was not entirely exclusionary or completely inclusionary. Rather, it simultaneously included and excluded different cultural and political groups, such as immigrants and Antilleans.

In the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Education incorporated immigrants’ languages and cultures into republican education as a part the government’s repatriation programs.

Education officials argued that instruction in immigrants' languages of origin helped prepare them and their families for an eventual return to the homeland. In contrast to immigrants, Antilleans were French citizens and thus, permanent members of the nation. Therefore, the Ministry of Education contended that Creole language instruction threatened Antillean children's ability to learn French and assimilate into the nation. Education and state officials used immigrants' and Antilleans' particular political statuses to justify the Ministry of Education's decision to implement differential language policies for immigrant and Antillean children.

Whereas the previous five chapters focus on how Antilleans interacted with republican assimilation, particularly those policies pertaining to education and language, to make claims about the French nation, chapter six explores Antilleans' more global position in the Creole-speaking world. This chapter contends that Antilleans did not limit their political activities to France or the French Caribbean. In addition to carving out a space for Antillean culture within the French nation, Creole activists also formed political and cultural networks with other Creole activists across the Caribbean and Europe. They created a broader international movement that united all Creole-speakers in their struggle against European domination. I argue that Antilleans used this movement to propose an alternative to their French citizenship: a pan-Creole identity.

Together, these chapters place Antilleans at the center of the debates about diversity and the right to difference in late-twentieth century France. Scholarship on postcolonial France tends to focus on the role of immigrants in shaping a multicultural France. Because Antilleans are legally French citizens, they are largely absent from this

work on postcolonial immigration.⁶⁶ Conversely, those scholars who recognize the ways in which Antilleans have been excluded from the nation, tend to assume that because of their racial and cultural differences, Antilleans were excluded from the nation in much the same way as postcolonial immigrants.⁶⁷ In doing so, they have overlooked the particular ways in which Antilleans have used their French citizenship and invoked the history of their cultural and political ties with France to challenged republican assimilation.

My dissertation argues that debates about Creole's place within public schools shaped metropolitan and DOM officials' position regarding the place of cultural diversity in the nation after the Second World War. From 1946 to 1983 Antilleans sought to reform France's national curriculum so that it included their Creole language and culture. Antilleans' demands for cultural inclusion forced DOM and education officials to carve out a space for difference, and more specifically, Creole, in the nation. I argue that it was these debates about the "Creole question" that challenged the republican definition of a French citizen as an individual divested of all particular and group affiliations.

⁶⁶ For example, see: Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l'immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995); Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racism en France, XIXe-XXe siècle: discours publics, humiliations privées* (Paris: Fayard, 2007); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Maxim Silverman, ed., *Race, Discourse and Power in France* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Avebury, 1991).

⁶⁷ For example, see: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Sue Peabody and Tyler Edward Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003).

CHAPTER I

Assimilation Through Migration: BUMIDOM and the Vocational Education of Antillean Migrants

Introduction

On March 22, 1960, crowds of cheering Martinicans greeted their president in Fort-de-France, prompting him to spontaneously affirm their loyalty to France: “My God, you are so French!”¹ With this statement, President Charles de Gaulle highlighted Antilleans’ and French metropolitans’ shared sense of belonging to the same national entity. Fourteen years earlier, in 1946, both French and Antillean leaders had unanimously legalized this common attachment to the French nation when they voted to make Guadeloupe and Martinique overseas departments of France. Departmentalization granted French citizenship to Antilleans, and gave them all of the same rights and privileges of their metropolitan counterparts. Antilleans and metropolitans were both French; they belonged to same nation.

At the time of President de Gaulle’s visit, Antilleans’ legal status as French citizens was not in question. Why then, did President de Gaulle seem so surprised when Martinicans expressed their patriotism by warmly receiving their president? In contrast to other former colonial subjects who were renouncing their status as French subjects, and claiming their independence from France, Antilleans were openly asserting their allegiance to France. Yet, decolonization alone cannot explain de Gaulle’s surprise. In

¹ Quoted in Kristen Stromberg Childers, “Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean,” *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 181.

late twentieth-century France, what it meant to be French was determined by more than just legal status; Antilleans' membership in the French nation was also predicated on their cultural assimilation. This meant that Antilleans were expected to give up their Creole culture and language in favor of French citizenship. In 1960, French officials were unsure about the extent to which this assimilation had occurred, and thus the extent to which Antilleans were in fact, French.

Antillean political leaders had supported departmentalization under the assumption that it would bring social and economic equality to Guadeloupe and Martinique. French officials promised that the transplantation of French institutions and the extension of social welfare programs to the islands would accelerate economic development, allowing Antilleans to enjoy the same standard of living as their metropolitan counterparts. However, after nearly a decade and a half of departmentalization, disparities between citizens in the Antilles and in France persisted, and were only growing larger. Legal integration did not create the parity Antilleans had hoped for. Social welfare payments, as well as minimum wage, were significantly lower in the Antilles than in France. Antilleans pointed to these inequalities as evidence of their status as second-class citizens.²

Throughout the 1950s, Antillean civil servants went on strike, protesting the government's preferential treatment of metropolitan civil servants. Workers joined in these strikes, demanding that their wages match those of metropolitan workers. Left-

² For scholarship on the departmentalization of Guadeloupe and Martinique see: Marc Tardieu, *Les Antillais à Paris: d'hier à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 2005); Jacques Dumont, *L'Amère patrie: Histoire des Antillais français au XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2010); Marie-Hélène Léotin, *Habiter le Monde Martinique, 1946-2006* (Paris: Ibis Rouge, 2008); Henri Bangou, *La Guadeloupe et sa décolonisation ou un demi-siècle d'enfance* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001); Renée Larrier, "Sont-ils encore gens de Guadeloupe? Departmentalization, migration, and family dynamics," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 11 (September 2008).

wing political groups gained popularity among these groups of disaffected Antilleans. They characterized departmentalization as a continuation of colonialism that kept Antilleans in a subordinate position and inhibited the islands' economic development. Inspired by other French colonial subjects' demands for autonomy, leftist political leaders called for Guadeloupe's and Martinique's independence as the only solution to Antilleans' continued oppression at the hands of the French government.³ The metropolitan press widely covered this rhetoric of Antillean independence, along with the social unrest created by multiple strikes. This caused metropolitans to question whether or not Antilleans held the same allegiance to the French nation, prompting debates about whether or not Antilleans were in fact French.

Were Antilleans French citizens, or were they just another group of discontented former colonial subjects? Following the Second World, colonial subjects' calls for sovereignty forced the French government to forge a new kind of French nation that no longer included vast colonial holdings. At the Brazzaville conference in 1944, General Charles de Gaulle had tried, to some extent, to meet the aspirations for sovereignty of those peoples of the Empire who had shown solidarity with Free France during the Nazi-allied Vichy regime. He hesitantly suggested that France would grant parts of French Africa more control over of their own affairs. However, decolonization was not a peaceful process. During the Fourth Republic (1946-1958), colonial subjects became discontented with France's false promises, and began to use force to claim their independence first in Indochina and then, in Algeria. These colonial uprisings created

³ For scholarship on the Antillean left and the Guadeloupean and Martinican independence movements see: Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004); Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *The Last Colonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Richard Price, *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

political instability in France, and induced the dissolution of the Fourth Republic. In 1958, de Gaulle forged the Fifth Republic and redefined the relationship between France and its Empire. He revised the constitution to allow French-ruled territories to unilaterally change their own constitutions and political relationship with France. The majority of these territories opted for and obtained independence that same year.⁴

While France was granting political autonomy to its colonial subjects across the globe, it was also trying to bring Antilleans into a closer union with French nation. France accepted decolonization on the grounds that its former colonies had different histories and cultures and thus, constituted separate nations; but Antilleans were different. Metropolitan officials had always asserted that Antilleans were inextricably linked to France, citing their shared history that dated back to the seventeenth century. Despite this insistence that Antilleans were French, an increasing number of supporters of Guadeloupean and Martinican independence argued that Antilleans possessed their own unique history and culture: they were Creole. As the last of its colonies became independent in the 1960s, France was faced with the task of how to assimilate Antilleans—French citizens who claimed to be culturally distinct—into the nation.

This chapter argues that Antilleans were at the heart of these debates about who would be included and excluded from the French nation following decolonization. At a crucial moment when it seemed assimilation had failed in its colonial territories, France

⁴ For histories of decolonization see: Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); Marie Demker, *Colonial Power and National Identity: Pierre Mendès and the History of French Decolonisation* (Stockholm, Sweden: Santérus Academic Press, 2008); Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford: Berg, 2002).

clung to its Antillean departments and sought new ways it could fulfill the republican ideal of assimilation and make Antilleans into Frenchmen. Migration became a strategy for doing just that. France wanted to affirm Antilleans' cultural and political union with the French nation by literally bringing them to metropolitan France. In 1963, the French government created a new state agency—the Office for Migration from the Overseas Departments or BUMIDOM—to facilitate and organize Antilleans' migration to France. Metropolitan officials encouraged Antillean migration as a solution to the Antilles' economic and social problems. They hoped that large-scale Antillean migration would improve the standard of living in the islands by reducing unemployment and overpopulation. Metropolitan officials argued that these social and economic improvements would alleviate discontent among Antilleans, diminishing popular support for the Guadeloupean and Martinican independence movements.

The first part of this chapter examines Antillean migration as a government strategy to assimilate Antilleans. I argue that state officials used BUMIDOM and the process of migration as an opportunity to solidify the Antilles' political ties with France, and to educate Antilleans about what it meant to be French. Upon arriving in France, BUMIDOM placed Antillean men and women in technical education programs designed to provide them with the professional skills they needed to secure employment. In practice, however, these training programs taught Antilleans the everyday skills that were purportedly essential for living in metropolitan France. Women learned how to cook, clean, and care for children according to the ideals of French domesticity, and men learned the importance of punctuality and hard work in the workplace. I argue that in the process of educating Antilleans about proper conduct in French society, BUMIDOM

defined what it meant to be a proper French citizen. In doing so, they culturally excluded Antilleans from the French nation.

Antilleans were not passive participants in the government's construction of French citizenship. The second part of this chapter explores how Antilleans interacted with BUMIDOM to shape the migration process and carve out a space for themselves in the French nation. Antillean migrants had fully internalized the Republican rhetoric that they enjoyed the same rights and privileges as metropolitan citizens. Yet, when they arrived in the "Hexagon", BUMIDOM controlled their access to housing and employment by placing them in technical education programs that only trained them for unskilled and low-paying jobs. This disconnect between the discourse of equality and the realities of migration forced Antilleans to actively rethink the parity of their French citizenship. Antilleans asserted their belonging to the French nation by writing letters to government officials demanding equal employment opportunities; however, the content of these letters also questioned how and if Antilleans fit into the nation. I argue that Antilleans used these letters to challenge republican assimilation and argue for a definition of French citizenship that included their Creole culture. It was in these exchanges between Antilleans and metropolitan officials regarding BUMIDOM's vocational education programs that the meaning of French citizenship was defined.

This chapter builds upon the work of historians who have shown how the meaning of French citizenship was defined in the colonial project, which sought to assimilate France's colonial subjects and make them into Frenchmen.⁵ In their studies on

⁵ See: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell

how inclusion and exclusion worked in France and its Empire, scholars have focused on political definitions of French citizenship. They have characterized the attainment of French citizenship as the marker of inclusion in the nation; conversely, exclusion was signified by the denial of full-fledged citizenship rights. For example, Laurent DuBois has argued that in creating the category of “new citizens” for former slaves who were purportedly not yet ready to possess all of the rights and privileges of French citizenship, colonial officials continued to exclude former slaves from the nation despite claims that they upheld republican equality in abolishing slavery.⁶ This emphasis on moments of political inclusion has obscured the ways in which the Republic has continued to culturally and racially exclude particular groups of citizens.

My examination of Antilleans’ precarious position in the French nation suggests that this was not the case. Antilleans were politically included in the nation as French citizens; the government encouraged them to exercise their right as citizens to migrate to and settle in metropolitan France. Yet, at the same time, state officials limited Antillean migrants’ citizenship rights by using BUMIDOM to control where they worked and lived. In doing so, they created a category of second-class citizenship that was linked to Antilleans’ racial and cultural differences. I argue that in politically including Antilleans in the French nation, metropolitan officials created state agencies, such as BUMIDOM, to facilitate their assimilation. In the process, they created a definition of French citizenship that culturally excluded Antilleans. In other words, political inclusion and cultural

University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

⁶ Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, “La République Métissée: Citizenship, Colonialism, and the Borders of French History,” *Cultural Studies* 14 (2000): 15-34.

exclusion were a part of the same process of assimilating Antilleans and making them into Frenchmen.

Part I. Departmentalization and BUMIDOM's Construction of French Citizenship

On March 19, 1946, the French National Assembly voted to make Guadeloupe and Martinique overseas departments (DOM) of France. Under the law of departmentalization, Guadeloupe and Martinique were presumably as integral to France as its other metropolitan departments.⁷ Legally, Guadeloupe and Martinique were a part of the French nation, and Antilleans were French citizens. Aimé Césaire, mayor of Fort-de-France, Martinique and deputy to the National Assembly, was one of the principal drafters of departmentalization, which was also known as the “law of assimilation”. He believed that a closer union with metropolitan France would end the racial hierarchy of the colonial regime, and bring social and economic equality to the Antilles. He perceived of the Republic as a liberating force that had abolished slavery, granted Antilleans the right to vote, and provided all Antilleans with access to public education. It was the white settlers (*békés*) who sought to limit Antilleans’ freedoms in order to reinforce the islands’ racialized social hierarchy and keep Antilleans in a position of subordination.⁸ Admission in the “French family” seemed to be the best means for containing the white settlers’ stronghold and ending the inequalities of colonialism.

The *béké* elite opposed departmentalization for the same reason Césaire supported it: legal assimilation would give metropolitan officials more control of Guadeloupe and Martinique, threatening their position of power in Antillean society. Historically, *békés*

⁷ France is divided into one hundred different departments, all of which have identical legal status as integral parts of France. Together, these one hundred departments make up the French nation.

⁸ Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004).

had perceived of metropolitan officials as a meddling force whose policies interfered with their economic interests. However, white settlers could do little to stop departmentalization. Césaire and members of black Antillean elite dominated the local assemblies in Martinique and Guadeloupe. They argued for departmentalization as the fulfillment of republican equality; it was the culmination of a centuries-long process of progressive incorporation into the French state that had begun with the abolition of slavery in 1848. This kind of reasoning appealed to the leftist majority in the National Assembly. Communist and Gaullists, imagining themselves as the moral upholders of republicanism, unanimously supported and passed the law of departmentalization.⁹

Césaire and the National Assembly supported the ideal of departmentalization as an equalizer, but the reality of political integration was much different than they had envisioned. Departmentalization and assimilation—both political and cultural—were a part of the same process. The goal of departmentalization was to secure the Antilles’ political union with France by granting Antilleans French citizenship, and making them loyal to the nation. The decision to make Guadeloupe and Martinique departments of France was made in the wake of the 1944 Brazzaville conference. During the Vichy regime, many of France’s Western African colonies aligned with the Free French movement to liberate France from Nazi control. In exchange for their loyalty to France, colonial subjects demanded more political autonomy. At Brazzaville, President de Gaulle recognized the need for reform, and granted colonial subjects limited rights, such as the ability to vote for representatives in the National Assembly. However, de Gaulle adamantly insisted that the French Empire would remain united and that there was no

⁹ See: David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

possibility of full political sovereignty for the West African colonies. For de Gaulle, the colonies were French and they would remain so. Assimilation was the solution to colonial subjects' demands for autonomy. In order to secure their loyalty, de Gaulle argued that metropolitan officials simply needed to politically and culturally assimilate them into France. Departmentalization was meant to be the highest achievement of this policy of assimilation.

When Guadeloupe and Martinique became departments of France, the French government set out to literally export metropolitan France to the Antilles. The "law of assimilation" called for the whole-scale transplantation of French institutions to the islands, including schools, courts, social services, and the French political structure. A prefecture and its accompanying ministerial departments were established in the capital cities of both Guadeloupe and Martinique. In addition, political divisions, such as *arrondissements* and *circonscriptions* were added in order to replicate the metropolitan model of local governance and electoral process. The implementation of France's highly centralized administrative structure in the Antilles created a large local bureaucracy with the need for trained personnel. This prompted improvements in the public education system to meet the growing demand for educated civil servants. Guadeloupe's and Martinique's urban centers also experienced limited economic development as metropolitan bureaucrats settled on the islands to administer the various social welfare programs that departmentalization had brought to the Antilles. In terms of social

services, Antilleans won social security benefits, including healthcare, workers' insurance, pensions, and guarantees for minimum wage.¹⁰

Along with these social improvements, departmentalization also put in place a form of economic assimilation that threatened Antilleans' local institutions. The transfer of the French welfare state to the DOM, while markedly improving Antilleans' quality of life, actually contributed to the decline of the local economy. Social legislation and economic aid largely focused on developing tertiary economies, not local means of production. While agricultural and industrial production in Guadeloupe and Martinique declined steadily throughout the twentieth century, the service sector (commerce, transportation, and administration) grew dramatically following departmentalization. This underdevelopment reinforced Guadeloupe's and Martinique's dependence on France for consumer goods, and made the State the major employer of the region. Unemployment grew exponentially as former agricultural workers moved to the urban centers in search of bureaucratic jobs for which they had no training.¹¹

An even more menacing form of cultural assimilation accompanied these social and economic changes. It was not enough for the Antilles to become politically and economically integrated into France; departmentalization was also about making Antilleans culturally French. In 1946, local radio stations were subsumed within the national organization, *Office de Radio-Télévision Française* (ORTF), and began to exclusively broadcast French programs. The government subsidized the importation of French newspapers and magazines, making them more affordable. The local popular

¹⁰ See: Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003); Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004).

¹¹ Nick Nesbitt, *Voicing Memory: History and Subjectivity in French Caribbean Literature* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2003).

press struggled to compete as it was replaced by cheaper French publications. When television was introduced to the Antilles in 1964, the State used it as a tool to disseminate information about metropolitan life and culture. Departmentalization vastly improved Antilleans' access to education, but at the same time, the transplantation of the French education system to the Guadeloupe and Martinique excluded local Antillean history and culture from public education. DOM officials even went so far as to ban the use of Creole, Antilleans' maternal language, in political meetings and addresses, the media, as well as within public schools.¹²

Despite these sweeping efforts to make the Antilles culturally, economically, and socially equal to metropolitan France, Guadeloupe and Martinique continued to lag behind metropolitan France. Since departmentalization, unemployment in the Antilles hovered around twenty-five to thirty percent, and economic production sharply decreased as Antilleans became dependent upon imported French goods and the State for service sector jobs.¹³ In 1961, only thirty-five percent of Antillean children had scored within the "average" range on the national exam for an elementary school diploma.¹⁴ From 1960 to 1964, an average of nearly six (5.8) children were born to Guadeloupean women between the ages of 15 and 49. This high fertility rate contributed to a large population growth of three percent, which would have doubled Guadeloupe's population in twenty years.¹⁵ Following the Second World War, France experienced its greatest population growth in history as policymakers implemented social welfare programs designed to encourage

¹² Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ R. Courtoux, Inspecteur Général de l'Instruction Publique to Moulins, Secrétaire Général pour le Département d'Outre-Mer, "Objet: Rapport de mission aux Antilles et à la Guyane", February 7, 1962, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

¹⁵ Huguette Dagenais, "Women in Guadeloupe: the paradoxes of reality," in *Women and Change in the Caribbean: a Pan-Caribbean perspective*, ed. Janet Henshall Momsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 97.

women to have more children.¹⁶ However, when compared to its Caribbean departments, metropolitan France's population growth paled in comparison: its fertility rate was less than half of Guadeloupe's (2.7), and population growth peaked at one percent.

Overpopulation in the Antilles was of particular concern to metropolitan officials charged with implementing departmentalization. In 1950, Guadeloupe's total population was approximately 210,000 and around 222,000 people resided in Martinique.¹⁷ Officials feared that if the current Antillean fertility rates persisted, then nearly one million people would be living in Guadeloupe and Martinique by 1970.¹⁸ These small islands, which together totaled just under 1100 square miles or one half percent the size of metropolitan France did not possess the economic and social infrastructures to support its current population, let alone the projected population of one million Antilleans. Welfare officials were concerned about the financial burden of such a large Antillean population on France's nascent social security system. Moreover, with approximately 4200 miles separating metropolitan France from Guadeloupe and Martinique, officials worried that they would not be able to effectively govern a growing population that would continue to make even more social and economic demands on a remote centralized government.

¹⁶ For histories of the pro-natalist movement in France see: Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Fathers, families and the state in France, 1914-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Marie-Monique Huss, "Pro-Natalism in the Inter-War Period in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (January 1990): 39-68; Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II* (Cambridge, MA: The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2011).

¹⁷ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Ageing 1950-2050, Martinique," accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050>.
United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Ageing 1950-2050, Guadeloupe," accessed December 2, 2011, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050>.

¹⁸ Dagenais, "Women in Guadeloupe: the paradoxes of reality," 97.

For metropolitan officials, high fertility rates and uncontrolled population growth were the social problems that had caused and would continue to contribute to Guadeloupe and Martinique's economic underdevelopment, high unemployment, and widespread poverty.¹⁹ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the French government commissioned several investigations into how to solve overpopulation in the Antilles. Report after report scrutinized Antillean family life, concluding that the rarity of nuclear families, consisting of a husband/father, wife/mother, and children living in one discrete household, was the main cause of overpopulation. Population experts noted the "casual" nature of romantic unions and the "irresponsibility" of Antillean fathers who claimed they did not have the financial resources to marry; they argued that it was these moral shortcomings that had created a large number of illegitimate children in the islands. One report claimed that sixty to eighty percent of all Antillean children were illegitimate and lived in households in which a woman was the sole caregiver and provider for multiple children fathered by different men.²⁰ This kind of negative discourse asserted that family life in Guadeloupe and Martinique was not the same as in metropolitan France where the nuclear family was the accepted norm.

In the process of constructing Caribbean family life as distinct and inferior to that of metropolitan France, these reports created a definition of French citizenship that excluded Antilleans. Following the Second World War, the government put in place a series of social welfare programs designed to give citizens equal access to healthcare,

¹⁹ For scholarship on the construction of the Antillean family as social problem see: Christine Barow, *Family in the Caribbean: Themes and perspectives* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Rand Publishers, 1996); Richard D.E. Burton, *La Famille coloniale: La Martinique et la mère-patrie, 1789-1992* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994); Myriam Cottias and Annie Fitte-Duval, "Femme, famille et politique dans les Antilles françaises de 1828 à nos jours," *Caribbean Studies* 28 (1995): 76-100.

²⁰ Rapport sur l'Économie Menagère, Commission des Caraïbes, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940180, Art. 18.

housing, employment, and education. One of the most popular of these social welfare programs was family allowances (allocations familiales), which gave families a fixed amount of money for each dependent child. In theory, when Guadeloupe and Martinique became French departments, the family allowance program was supposed to be equally applied in the Antilles and metropolitan France. In practice, welfare officials had a different standard of compensation for families in the Caribbean departments. They cited the “dysfunctional” nature of Antillean families to justify smaller social subsidies for citizens of its overseas departments. They argued that families in the form of a male-headed nuclear household, such as those in metropolitan France, did not exist in the DOM. Antillean “families” were more likely to be composed of a single mother and her numerous illegitimate children, each of whom had a different father.²¹

For these reasons, welfare officials claimed that the application of equal social benefits in the Antillean departments would do more harm than good. It would encourage Antillean women to have more illegitimate children so that they could receive more financial support from the state. The result would be even more overpopulation and an increase in matrifocal families. According to welfare officials, children born into these kind of unstable families were more likely to be bound to a life of poverty and crime, which would only fuel the Antilles’ economic and social problems. In justifying their unequal treatment of Antillean and metropolitan families, welfare officials made the nuclear family consisting of a breadwinner father, a mother, and their children a requirement for obtaining equal social subsidies. Antilleans were legally French citizens,

²¹ Historian Kristen Stromberg Childers has argued that the government justified smaller social subsidies to citizens of the new overseas departments by citing the supposedly problematic nature of the Antillean family and its difference from the French norm. See: Kristen Stromberg Childers, “Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean,” *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 177-190.

but their different domestic arrangements excluded them from obtaining equal social rights and the full status of French citizenship that accompanied it. This exclusion created a definition of French citizenship that only included those who adhered to the nuclear and patriarchal family model. In doing so, French citizenship became associated with white middle-class ideals of domesticity, further excluding Antilleans from the nation.²²

For metropolitan and DOM officials, the decision to provide Antilleans with smaller social subsidies did not mean that Antilleans were not full-fledged French citizens. It simply meant that they would need to assimilate the domestic ideals of the French nation before they could enjoy equal social rights.²³ This policy of assimilation in the Antilles was informed by nineteenth and early twentieth century French colonial policy, which stipulated that colonial subjects could become French citizens as long as they adopted the French language, culture, and customs. DOM officials applied this link

²² For more on the link between French citizenship, race and middle-class ideals of domesticity see: Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Fathers, families, and the state in France, 1914-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1998); Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

²³ Laurent Dubois has argued that since the inception of the Republic, policies of equality have coexisted with forms of racial and cultural exclusion. In 1794, the first republican government abolished slavery and granted citizenship to slaves in the colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique. However, it simultaneously contained the effects of this equality by arguing that as “new citizens”, former slaves could not be granted full citizenship and legal rights until they assimilated French cultural norms and were transformed into “proper” Frenchmen. See: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). For more discussion concerning the ways in which the French government has simultaneously granted and deferred citizenship rights to colonial subjects, see also: Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

between assimilation and French citizenship to the Antilles, arguing that Antilles would be granted the same rights and privileges as metropolitan citizens as soon as they adopted the nuclear family model.

One of the first ways the French government envisioned transforming Antillean families into French families was through the proper example of metropolitan life. To accomplish this task, it sent civil servants and functionaries, along with their wives and children, to Guadeloupe and Martinique. The government encouraged esteemed senior administrators with experience in the colonies as well as young officers (*cadres*) who had not received a post in the Hexagon to consider a career in the overseas departments. They and their families were to act as cultural models of French citizenship to which Antilleans could and should aspire. Many of these metropolitan bureaucrats had attended the prestigious *École Coloniale de la France d'Outre-Mer*. They were not only trained in administration, but also in classical French literature and culture. Their broad education was designed to prepare them to be leaders of disparate peoples, as well as ambassadors of French culture overseas. It was also assumed that these functionaries' wives would set up proper, nuclear households, consisting of a mother, a father, and their children living under one roof. Upon their husbands' appointments, wives were given directives to set up well-maintained and clean homes furnished with all of the modern conveniences of a metropolitan household.²⁴

However, these functionaries only succeeded in gaining Antilleans' disdain. Metropolitans who accepted posts in the islands received various monetary bonuses (*primes*) and extended paid leaves that the government did not grant to Antillean-born

²⁴ Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," 182-184.

civil servants. They were also awarded higher cost of living allowances so that they could import higher quality foods and goods from the Hexagon. These various advantages were meant to compensate for the hardship of living and working in a tropical climate far from home.²⁵ Metropolitan functionaries also argued that their wives needed this extra income to import the metropolitan goods required to set up the proper French households that were to function as models of French family life. This unequal treatment of metropolitan and local civil servants confirmed for many Antilleans that racism and the colonial system still persisted in the new departments. It caused an enormous amount of social tension, leading to significant strikes in both Guadeloupe and Martinique that often ended in violent clashes between the French police and Antillean workers. For example, on February 14, 1952, during a labor strike at the Gardel sugar mill in the Guadeloupean town of Le Moule, the French military police opened fired on striking workers, resulting in four deaths and fourteen injuries.

By the early 1960s, it had become apparent that the presence of metropolitan bureaucrats had not produced the desired social and economic harmony in the Antilles. Instead, they had failed to serve as positive examples of French family life. Jacques Brunel, one of Guadeloupe's first Prefects, had a scandalous reputation. It was rumored that Brunel had set up house with a woman who was not his wife and their four illegitimate children.²⁶ With such poor models of domesticity, metropolitan officials were not surprised that the number of illegitimate births in Guadeloupe and Martinique continued to increase exponentially throughout the 1950s. White metropolitan civil servants turned cultural emissaries had failed to transform Antillean family life into the

²⁵ Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," 183-184.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

ideal of the proper French household consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children.²⁷ Female-headed households and absentee fathers continued to plague the Antillean departments, fuelling poverty and underdevelopment. Departmentalization had legitimized the political union between France and the Antilles; yet in terms of Antilleans' social and cultural assimilation, officials worried that thousands of kilometers of ocean still separated Antilleans and metropolitan citizens.

Back in Paris, the Ministry of the DOM decided that it needed to act quickly to avoid the potentially volatile situation being created by the high birth rate and unstable family life in Guadeloupe and Martinique. It developed a new approach to assimilation that did not rely upon metropolitan civil servants to be models of French family life: emigration. More specifically, the implementation of a government-funded program to organize Antillean migration to France was at the heart of this new strategy to assimilate Antilleans. As early as 1958, the Central Commission of Economic Planning for the Overseas Departments recognized that migration was the necessary solution to Guadeloupe and Martinique's economic problems of underdevelopment and a high rate of unemployment. The large-scale departure of young Antilleans would lower the islands' working population, alleviating unemployment and the widespread poverty that accompanied it. Most importantly, supporters of migration argued that emigration would expose Antilleans to French culture, and encourage them to absorb the norms of French family life in the Hexagon. Ideally, Antillean women would cease to have illegitimate children and Antillean men would begin to value hard work as a means through which to support their families. This process of assimilation through migration would solve the

²⁷ Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," 184.

dysfunction of Antillean families, which for the Commission, was as integral part of the solution to the Antilles' social and economic problems.²⁸

The French state's decision to organize migration from the Antilles to the Hexagon offers insight into the goals and practices of departmentalization, as well as how officials envisioned bringing Guadeloupe and Martinique into the French nation. On April 6, 1960, the Secretary of State for the Overseas Departments (DOM) created a specific government body to oversee the settlement of Antillean families in France. One year later, in 1961, the Minister of the DOM decided that "in the name of national solidarity", the Ministry of the DOM was going to "facilitate the implantation in the Metropole of Antillean workers desiring to come and install themselves here."²⁹ Although DOM officials insisted on the voluntary nature of these migrations, they actively promoted and encouraged migration as the means through which Antilleans could achieve economic success. In official documents, administrators frequently affirmed that Antillean migration policy was to be understood within the framework of social advancement (*promotion sociale*).³⁰ Antilleans who could not find work in the islands could come to France to receive job training and employment. Organized migration was purportedly the solution to the disparity in social and economic opportunities between metropolitan France and the islands. At the same time, the Ministry of the DOM hoped that the migration process would facilitate Antilleans' adoption of French cultural norms, particularly the nuclear family structure. In order to

²⁸ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Projet de budget pour DOM pour 1968", juillet 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

²⁹ Yvon Gouguenheim, Directeur de la Recherche, "Etude-Intervention. Pour une amelioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles", octobre 1974-janvier 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

³⁰ Ibid.

ensure that migration would ultimately lead to assimilation, DOM and metropolitan officials set out to organize and control the entire process.

From the outset, the Ministry of the DOM framed its involvement in Antillean migration as an economic and social obligation to help “our fellow citizens of the overseas departments” and “facilitate their adaptation [to France].”³¹ For DOM officials, “adaptation” or “integration” meant securing for Antillean migrants the basic necessities for success in metropolitan France, which included education, housing, and employment. Adaptation or integration was of the utmost importance because it provided the crucial foundation for cultural assimilation. It was an integral part of the government’s assimilationist policy toward Antillean migrants. Upon their arrival at the airport in Paris, an official welcoming committee greeted the young Antilleans. The committee placed each migrant in either a vocational training program or a job, and helped him find adequate housing. Over half of all migrants were placed in temporary government-funded housing where they attended daily classes to learn to read and write French. They were also introduced to the wonders of modern French life, such as refrigerators and washing machines.³²

In April of 1963, the government decided to make this provisional migration program an official state organization. The state funded the Office for Migration from the Overseas Departments or BUMIDOM from its social welfare budget. This fiscal decision reflected the government’s perception of Antillean migration as a necessary social program for the social and economic advancement and most importantly, the

³¹ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Problèmes de la Migration”, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 9.

³² Marc Tardieu, *Les Antillais à Paris; d’hier à aujourd’hui* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 2005).

assimilation of Antilleans. In a published report of the Bureau's activities for 1966, Jean Emile Vie, the General Secretary of the DOM and the President of BUMIDOM, emphasized that Antillean migrants held the same rights as metropolitans, and like all French citizens, they could migrate freely; however their situation was unique in that they would have to face the exceptional difficulties in adapting to their new life in the France. "They leave their islands, their sun, their rhythm of work and their style of life to find themselves, without a transition period, in a very different environment...from the one in which they have lived. The landscapes are no longer the same, the sky is no longer as luminous, the temperature is colder; efficiency and exactness have become the most important elements [of their lives]. They are shocked and have a very difficult adaptation [to metropolitan France]."³³

From a political point of view, Vie recognized the equal rights of Antilleans as fellow citizens. However, Vie's physical description of the Antilles as a completely different environment from France reveals that from a cultural and racial standpoint, he was not quite sure if Antilleans were suited to life in metropolitan France. His questioning of Antilleans' ability to assimilate drew upon classic scientific theories of race that argued that cultural and physical variation was the result of differences in environments.³⁴ Vie used the discourse of environment as a stand in for Antilleans'

³³ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu d'activités", 15 novembre 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

³⁴ Most notably, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* (1748) elaborated a racial theory which argued that physical and cultural variation among peoples was the result of environmental differences. Montesquieu contended that national character was shaped by environmental influences. For example, Europeans who were accustomed to colder climates were vigorous and hard working. In contrast, those in warmer climates, such as Indians and Africans, were lazy. The heat prevented them from performing any laborious work. Montesquieu concluded that each people was adapted to its own environment and therefore, everyone should stay where they were. Montesquieu did not explicitly use the word "race", but his theory of environment and difference would be used by the far-right in France to argue against immigration.

racial and cultural differences. For Vie, it was these unnamed racial particularities that threatened Antilleans' ability to assimilate and become culturally French. For this reason, Vie argued that Antilleans required particular treatment. A specific organization, like BUMIDOM, needed to step in and provide Antilleans with a unique form of social aid that would ensure assimilation by managing and controlling every step of the migration process.

In BUMIDOM's founding statutes, Vie summarized the organization's main objective as "assuring the settlement of Antillean workers and their families". Helping migrants settle in France was not as simple as securing employment and housing. The Ministry of the DOM created BUMIDOM as a comprehensive administrative body that closely monitored migrants' progress from the time they inquired about migration in the Antilles to one year after they settled in the Hexagon. BUMIDOM's social aid included "the realization of programs [in the Antilles] that help prepare future migrants with information about migration, the professional selection of candidates for migration, the organization of their travels and their welcome, and eventually, the creation of welcome centers and places of transition for migrants."³⁵ BUMIDOM envisioned these "places of transition" as temporary housing facilities where it could provide Antilleans with vocational training, as well as more general education about life in France. In this sense, BUMIDOM was a part of the paternalistic heritage of the colonial state, as well as

These staunch nationalists claimed that immigrants posed a threat to national unity because they were not well suited to France's environment and thus, could never become assimilated French citizens. For more discussion about the relationship between environment and unspoken racial difference see: Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁵ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Problèmes de la Migration", n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 9.

paternal nature of the welfare state that was expanding during this period.³⁶ In much the same way that colonial and welfare officials perceived of themselves as the caretakers of those who could not provide for themselves, the Ministry of the DOM viewed BUMIDOM as benevolent organization that helped Antilleans, France's less fortunate citizens. For the Ministry of the DOM, BUMIDOM, like any other social welfare program, was essential for national stability and unity. It ensured that Antillean migrants had the necessary economic resources so that they could successfully assimilate to France.

Selecting and Training Proper French Citizens

Selection was the first step in this process of assimilation through migration. Shortly after its inception, BUMIDOM opened satellite offices in both Guadeloupe and Martinique. Administrators assigned to these overseas offices recruited, selected, and prepared the best candidates for migration. Antilleans could legally migrate without going through the Bureau; however, the high cost airfare and the uncertainty of finding employment in France meant that most Antilleans needed the Bureau's financial support. BUMIDOM required Antilleans to register their migration requests at the office in their island of residence. This application consisted of the potential migrant's level of education and training, employment history, and the type of profession that the migrant wished to seek in the Hexagon. After filing the necessary paperwork, the potential

³⁶ For scholarship on paternalism and the French welfare state see: Paul V. Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State: the Struggle for Social Reform in France, 1914-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Donald Reid, "Industrial Paternalism: Discourse and Practice in Nineteenth-Century French Mining and Metallurgy," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27 (1985): 579-607. For scholarship on paternalism and French colonial policy see: Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonel citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Julia Clancy-Smith and Frances Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1998).

migrant underwent medical and professional aptitude evaluations. The Ministry of the DOM financed metropolitan doctors to work with the Bureau's Antilles-based offices, and perform these health assessments, which included general medical and dental exams, x-rays, and blood tests.³⁷ BUMIDOM officials used these examinations to verify whether or not the candidate was in sufficient health to migrate and work in France. The government wanted to avoid having to incur the medical and social welfare expenses of unhealthy migrants after they arrived in the Hexagon.

The Bureau used several different methods and government organizations to determine the professional aptitude of the potential migrant. For the candidate who already possessed the specific qualifications needed for his intended profession in France, the selection process was straightforward. The Bureau verified the candidate's training with the Office of Employment Services, and then placed him in a job for which he had been trained. A large number of Antilleans, particularly women, migrated with the hopes of obtaining employment as a paramedical professional; it was commonly assumed that the health sector provided long term career opportunities and therefore, upward social mobility. The Bureau required Social Services to evaluate migrants who wished to be employed in the health services. BUMIDOM placed migrants in this field only if they had the proper qualifications.³⁸

Direct placement in skilled jobs, such as those in the healthcare field, was limited. The majority of migrants possessed limited education and did not have specific

³⁷ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu d'activités", 15 novembre 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

³⁸ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu d'activités", 31 octobre 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

professional skills. Instead, they sought the Bureau's help in financing their migration, as well as their training once they arrived in France. The Bureau put this more common type of migrant through a vigorous selection process to ensure that it was choosing the right kind of individual with the physical and moral qualities to succeed in metropolitan France. The staff of the Bureau's overseas offices included several psycho-technicians (*psychotechniciens*) or a type of social worker who was purportedly trained in discerning a candidate's character. The psycho-technician's evaluation provided the Bureau with information on the migrant's aspirations, education level, and job skills so that it could direct him into the appropriate employment. Most importantly, it assessed the migrant's proclivity for full assimilation into metropolitan life.³⁹ Those who expressed traits of assimilability were deemed more desirable migrants and were selected by BUMIDOM to receive full financial support in their journey across the Atlantic.

What were these character traits of assimilability? What did it mean to possess the ability to assimilate? It is illustrative to compare a psycho-technical examination that recommended migration and one that strongly discouraged it. In the spring of 1964, Miss T, a single thirty-eight-year-old woman from Martinique, filed an application, requesting the Bureau's help in migrating to France. The psycho-technician who reviewed Miss T's case noted that she was a housekeeper and possessed adequate skills to continue this profession in the metropolitan France. More importantly, Miss T had a favorable upbringing and current socio-economic situation. She came from a modest, but intact and respectable family. She currently lived in her employer's home, which the psycho-

³⁹ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu d'activités", 31 octobre 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

technician described as a grand and beautiful house. Unlike more humble homes in the Antilles, it contained modern furniture and conveniences. The psycho-technician praised Miss T's impeccable maintenance of the home. She received excellent recommendations from her employer who described her as hardworking and honest. Miss T appeared to be in good physical condition and mental health. She also spoke perfect French. Lastly, the psycho-technician noted that Miss T was eager to work hard and adapt to a new life in France. She was the perfect candidate for migration, and the Bureau should be able to help her.⁴⁰

In contrast, Mr. P, a forty-one-year-old male from Guadeloupe, was not recommended for migration. Unlike Miss T, Mr. P had a very unstable work and family life. The psycho-technician noted that Mr. P did not live with his wife and six children. He occasionally worked in construction, but did not make enough money to support his family. This meant that his wife was forced to leave the children at home alone while she took irregular work as an agricultural laborer. Mr. P was not in good physical or mental health. He did not know how to read or write, was an alcoholic, and had a congenital defect in one of his eyes. The psycho-technician concluded that Mr. P's lack of education, lazy character, and physical defects would make him a burden to French society. Although Mr. P was legally a French citizen and could migrate freely to the Hexagon, he did not possess the social and cultural characteristics deemed necessary for life in metropolitan France. Therefore, the psycho-technician recommended that he

⁴⁰ Demande de migration, enquête effectuée par M. Marquès, 29/5/64. Archives départementales de la Martinique, For-de-France, 16627 75/16 N°51. Quoted in Kristen Stromberg Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 186-187.

should not be offered assistance from the Bureau. In addition, he should be discouraged from migrating on his own.⁴¹

These contrasting recommendations reveal that BUMIDOM was looking for a particular kind of candidate. In carefully choosing the Antilleans it would financially fund for migration, Bureau officials were determining the cultural characteristics of those who could be a part of the French nation. In other words, BUMIDOM was defining what it meant to be French. Those, like Miss T, who had good hygiene, spoke French, valued hard work, and lived in a clean household with modern appliances such as a refrigerator and washing machine, were welcome in metropolitan France. They belonged in the French nation. Migrants, such as Mr. P, who were uneducated, could not hold a stable job, had failed to support their family, and were physically deformed, did not possess the proper character traits of an individual who had the potential to succeed in the Hexagon. They were excluded from the French nation. BUMIDOM denied migrants like Mr. P their right as French citizens to migrate freely in France. Without the Bureau's economic and social aid, Mr. P would be forced to remain in the departments where he did not enjoy the same opportunities for economic advancement as his metropolitan counterparts. Through its vigorous selection process, the Bureau defined what it meant to be French against what it perceived to be the negative characteristics of Antillean culture and society. In doing so, it created a definition of French citizenship that excluded Antilleans on the basis of their cultural differences.

At the same time, cases like that of Miss T proved to BUMIDOM that Antilleans, if placed in the right environment, could adopt the cultural traits deemed necessary for

⁴¹ Enquête sociale, R. A. Charron, Préfecture de la Martinique, Service Médico-social départemental, 25 Aout 1964. Quoted in Kristen Stromberg Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 187.

migration to metropolitan France. In order to prepare potential migrants for life and work in the Hexagon, the Bureau implemented technical education programs in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Once selected, BUMIDOM required migrants to obtain professional training before they migrated to France. In the early 1960s, most Antilleans had not completed primary school and therefore, did not have the minimum level of education to enter technical education programs in France. The Bureau solved this problem by establishing pre-training programs (*préformation professionnelle*) in the islands. These provided migrants with the basic skills they needed to successfully complete their professional education in metropolitan France. Antilleans willingly participated in these programs, believing that such training would help them obtain the high-status positions and economic advancement unavailable to them in the overseas departments. However, more often than not, the Bureau shuttled Antilleans into low-paying jobs in domestic services, sanitation, and the postal service.⁴² This type of employment rarely required the complex technical skills that were purportedly taught in the Bureau's pre-training programs. The reality was that BUMIDOM used pre-training to prepare Antilleans for specific types of low-status jobs that metropolitans did not want.

Pre-training also had a more important purpose: to teach migrants the cultural values and skills that the Bureau believed were essential for a successful life in metropolitan France. BUMIDOM officials were particularly concerned about the instruction Antillean women received before crossing the Atlantic. While there were a number of pre-training programs for men in both Guadeloupe and Martinique, the Bureau created more programs specifically for women. Nearly a third of all of female Antillean

⁴² Stephanie A. Condon and Philip E. Ogden, "Afro-Caribbean Migrants in France: Employment, State Policy and the Migration Process," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 4 (1991): 450-451.

migrants received pre-training prior to their arrival in the Hexagon; in contrast, the Bureau only trained approximately six percent of all male migrants.⁴³ BUMIDOM officials designated more resources to the education of Antillean women because they were simultaneously more vulnerable to vice in metropolitan France, as well as the upholders of morality. The Bureau feared that untrained Antillean women would resort to prostitution to make a living, threatening the stability of the nuclear family, a cultural value, which for the Bureau, defined what it meant to be French. Conversely, properly educated Antillean women would act as a moralizing factor in Guadeloupe and Martinique, instilling in Antillean men the value of hard work and providing for their families.⁴⁴ As previously discussed, these were cultural characteristics BUMIDOM required of Antilleans for migration and thus, belonging in the French nation.

Recently, scholars have begun to give more attention to how notions of gender and race, such as those influencing the Bureau's selection process, have shaped national identity. Laura Briggs has argued that the United States government used "scientific findings" regarding Puerto Rican women's perceived overt sexuality and high reproduction to establish Puerto Ricans' racial difference.⁴⁵ Lora Wildenthal has shown how German women living in the empire leveraged their sexual morality and role as mothers to distinguish themselves from the allegedly overly sexual and promiscuous indigenous women.⁴⁶ In both cases, white female sexual morality became inextricably linked to national identity. In mid-twentieth century France, the image of the moral and

⁴³ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), Comité de Direction, "Rapport: exécution du budget 1966", 9 décembre 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁴⁶ Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

sexually pure mother was also on the minds of politicians and social reformers. When the Bureau announced that it was going to be organizing Antilleans' job placement in the metropole, it immediately began to receive a steady stream of requests from metropolitan families who were looking to hire Antillean women to work in their homes. French families often preferred Antillean housekeepers and nannies to Southern European immigrants, who often demanded higher wages and did not speak French.⁴⁷

BUMIDOM officials recognized that Antillean women could fill this specific niche in France's developing service economy, and began to direct female migrants almost exclusively toward employment in domestic services. The Bureau explicitly stated that the main goal of pre-training was to provide Antillean women with a "basic qualification for domestic work that will permit direct placements as household employees."⁴⁸ Ann Stoler, a historian of colonialism, has shown that definitions of "European" and the "other" were defined in the "intimate" spaces of the home where interactions between the colonizer and the colonized blurred racial boundaries and classifications. Colonial rulers made it a priority to educate indigenous women in the European methods of childrearing and housekeeping. This ensured that the children of European fathers and indigenous mothers were brought up in proper European homes and became recognizably "European."⁴⁹ The case of Antillean migration demonstrates that when the racial blurriness of the empire came to the metropole, former colonial officials who were now a part of the Ministry of the DOM, were no longer interested in defining

⁴⁷ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Rapport d'activités. Annexe XXVI, Centre Féminin de Crouy-sur-Ourcq", décembre 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

⁴⁸ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte rendu d'activités", 30 juin 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

⁴⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Power and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

the boundaries between the former colonial subjects and French citizens. After all, Antilleans—the formerly colonized—were now French citizens. Rather, they were focused on bringing Antillean women into the nation by instructing them in metropolitan childcare and household tasks. The Bureau used the “intimate” space of the French home not to distinguish Antillean women from French women, but to define what it meant to be a French woman in late twentieth-century France.

BUMIDOM officials were sensitive to the role Antillean women would play in uniting Guadeloupe, Martinique, and metropolitan France into one nation. As potential nannies and housekeepers who would have intimate relationships with metropolitan families, it was essential that Antillean women possess the cultural values that the Bureau believed was befitting of a French citizen.⁵⁰ As previously discussed, government-commissioned studies on Antillean family life had defined what it meant to be French against what it perceived to be the social dysfunction of its overseas departments’ “loose familial organization”, high illegitimate birth rate, female-headed households, and absentee fathers.⁵¹ In order to ensure that Antillean migrants would not carry these social problems with them to the Hexagon, the Bureau set out to reeducate Antillean women.

In 1964, BUMIDOM’s leaders used a large portion of the Bureau’s government funding to build a training center specifically for women in both Guadeloupe and Martinique. Together, these two centers had the resources to train 157 Antillean women

⁵⁰ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Promotion sociale au sein de la migration féminine,” 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

⁵¹ Commission des Caraïbes, “Rapport sur l’Économie Menagère”, n.d.; Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940180, Art.18.

each year for jobs in the domestic services.⁵² Correspondence between Max Moulins, the Secretary of State for the Overseas Departments, who was also the president of BUMIDOM, and the Prefects of Martinique and Guadeloupe reveals the sense of urgency concerning Antillean women's education: "It is a recognized fact that the pre-training of Antillean women (*préformation féminine*) in the overseas departments is indispensable; it constitutes the necessary support for female migration, which can only be contemplated for young girls who have already achieved some sort of qualification, even if it is minimal, but nonetheless sufficient to permit their placement in and assimilation to metropolitan life."⁵³ In a separate report on female migration, Bureau officials also argued that pre-training in the departments was essential for Antillean women's successful assimilation: "All hopes for social advancement lie within pre-training. Consistent and well-adapted training courses will direct competent young [Antillean] women toward the metropole who are honestly informed about the difficulties they will encounter [in France] as well as the advantages that they can they can draw upon from their new way of living."⁵⁴

In order to prepare as many Antillean women as possible for their new lives in metropolitan France, the Bureau allocated a part of its government funding to finance private organizations dedicated to training Antillean women for employment in domestic services. By December 1966, *l'Entraide Féminine* (Mutual Aid for Women) had trained

⁵² Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), Comité de Direction, "Rapport: exécution du budget 1966", 9 décembre 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

⁵³ Max Moulins, Président, BUMIDOM & Ministre d'État chargé des départements et territoires d'outre-mer à Monsieur le Préfet de la Martinique, "Préformation féminine en vue de la migration", 5 août 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

⁵⁴ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Bulletin d'information du BUMIDOM. Promotion sociale au sein de la migration féminine. Quelques renseignements chiffrés sur l'activité du BUMIDOM en 1966", 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

210 women in Guadeloupe, and the *Centre d'Orientation et de Promotion Educative et Sociale* (The Center of Guidance and Social and Educational Advancement or COPES), located in Fort-de-France, Martinique, had trained 500 young Antillean women.⁵⁵ The Bureau's correspondence with metropolitan officials and its reports on female migration made it clear that it was committed to providing "consistent and well-adapted" domestic training courses for Antillean women. Yet, it did not have a clear vision of exactly what would be taught in these courses. This became apparent in the Bureau's examination into how private organizations in the Antilles were using its funds to educate and train Antillean women.

In a letter dated August 5, 1965, Moulins, BUMIDOM's president, informed the Prefect of Martinique that private organizations were not sufficiently preparing Antillean women for their intended occupation as domestic workers in French homes. According to the Secretary of Public Health's evaluation of domestic training in Martinique, "too much time was spent on general education", such as basic reading and math skills.⁵⁶ The content of the training courses resembled "remedial classes", and did not teach any pertinent domestic skills. This placed additional financial strain on the Bureau, which was forced to finance additional training for Antillean women once they arrived in France. Moulins informed Martinique's Prefect that this was not acceptable; he must impose "strict control of female pre-training." He demanded that the Prefect give the leaders of *l'Entraide Féminine* and COPES specific directives "to define the conditions in

⁵⁵ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), Comité de Direction, "Rapport: exécution du budget 1966", 9 décembre 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

⁵⁶ Max Moulins, Président, BUMIDOM & Ministre d'État chargé des départements et territoires d'outre-mer à Monsieur le Préfet de la Martinique, "Préformation féminine en vue de la migration", 5 août 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

which domestic education must be conceived, achieved, and taught to young girls who plan to migrate, as well as for those who will remain in the Antilles, but can also benefit from domestic training.”⁵⁷

Four months later, on December 1, 1965, Moulins sent another letter to the Prefect of Martinique. This time, he gave a detailed description of the content that should be taught in BUMIDOM-financed education programs for Antillean women. He notified the Prefect that he was to reshape female professional training and education according to this curriculum so that it focused exclusively on household and childrearing skills. Moulins argued that even if the migrants would not be working as a domestic or nanny, as women, they still needed to know how to run a household and care for children. Domestic training was indispensable for “gain[ing] a minimum understanding of the social and family order in France.”⁵⁸ Moulins insisted that Antillean women needed to be familiar with French family life in order to properly run their future employers’, as well as their own metropolitan households. But, what was the “correct” way to run a household and care for children in the Hexagon? What were the cultural characteristics of a French family? In 1960s France, what it meant to be French was in the process of being defined as Antilleans migrated to the metropole. The Bureau’s domestic services curriculum for Antillean women was a part of this process, laying out the expectations for how women in the Hexagon were to care for their homes and families.

⁵⁷ Max Moulins, Président, BUMIDOM & Ministre d’État chargé des départements et territoires d’outre-mer à Monsieur le Préfet de la Martinique, “Préformation féminine en vue de la migration”, 5 août 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

⁵⁸ Max Moulins, Président, BUMIDOM & Ministre d’État chargé des départements et territoires d’outre-mer à Monsieur le Préfet de la Martinique, “Programme de préformation féminine”, 1 décembre 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

Antillean women's domestic training consisted of thirty hours of classes per week. Twenty of these hours were dedicated to the following classes: family education and psychology, family health and cooking, sewing and darning, hygiene and infant care, general maintenance of the house, laundry, and ironing. First, Antillean women learned household "safety, order, cleanliness, [and] economy."⁵⁹ These basic skills formed the foundation of domestic education, and were meant to promote an understanding of the daily life of families in France. Second, Antillean women received instruction in the "modern conveniences" of a French home, which the Bureau found lacking in Antillean homes. In its evaluations of candidates for migration, the Bureau noted that most Antillean women had no knowledge of how to use the essential household appliances present in modern French homes.⁶⁰ Instructors demonstrated how to use and maintain a refrigerator, water-heater, vacuum, iron, and pressure-cooker. Family nutrition was the third component of domestic training. The migrants took classes on how to shop in French grocery stores and markets, the quantity and type of food that a French family consumed, as well as how to prepare French meals.⁶¹ Together, these classes "help[ed] trainees [Antillean women] understand the favorable conditions" for a metropolitan home and "made them cognizant of their responsibility in this [domestic] domain."⁶²

⁵⁹ Le Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Population à Monsieur le Secrétaire Générale de l'Administration des Départements Outre-Mer, "Préformation féminine", n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

⁶⁰ Demande de migration, enquête effectuée par M. Marquès, 29/5/64, Archives départementales de la Martinique, Fort-de-France, 16627 75/16, N°51. Quoted in "Kristen Stromberg Childers, "Departmentalization, migration, and the politics of the family in the post-war French Caribbean," *History of the Family* 14 (2009): 187.

⁶¹ Le Ministre de la Santé Publique et de la Population à Monsieur le Secrétaire Générale de l'Administration des Départements Outre-Mer, "Préformation féminine", n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*

The above analysis of preparatory courses for female migrants reveals what BUMIDOM believed to be the skills and personal characteristics required of Antillean women for assimilation: the capacity to run a household with modern appliances, a neat and clean physical appearance, and the ability to speak French. In making this kind of education a prerequisite for migration and entry into metropolitan society, the Bureau constructed a particular ideal of what it meant to be a French citizen. In postwar metropolitan France, women were encouraged to return to the home and have children in an effort to rebuild the nation following the devastating losses of the Second World War. During this period, modern household appliances, such as refrigerators and vacuums became readily available to middle-class families for the first time. The poverty and underdevelopment of its new overseas departments contrasted sharply with the government's vision for a prosperous and modern French nation. The Bureau defined metropolitan families against its perception of Antillean woman as unclean, un-modern, and poor. In doing so, it constructed a definition of Frenchness that was very much connected to the ideal of the middle-class nuclear household and the woman who used modern conveniences to run it.

Crouy-sur-Ourq: The Domestic Education of Antillean Women in Metropolitan France and the Making of Female French Citizens

Antillean women's preparation for metropolitan life did not end when they left Guadeloupe and Martinique. Upon their arrival in France, the Bureau continued to monitor female migrants' education, placing them in domestic training centers in various parts of the country. In these centers, BUMIDOM continued to encourage and train female migrants to enter the "noble profession" of a domestic, which provided good

working conditions in a “family environment”.⁶³ Bureau officials were concerned about the instability Antillean women experienced during the migration process. They were particularly worried about the development of a disaffected and unassimilated Antillean population residing in France. The Bureau’s “centers for adaptation to metropolitan life” solved this potential problem by providing migrants with a place to transition from their lives on a small island to their new surroundings in a large French city.⁶⁴

Crouy-sur-Ourcq, located about a forty-five minute train ride from Paris, was one of the largest adaptation centers that received female migrants. In March 1965, the Bureau opened Crouy’s doors to “young girls who have received training in overseas departments, but who [still] need[ed] an adaptation to metropolitan life.”⁶⁵ When the Bureau began to receive complaints from French families who were dissatisfied with Antillean domestics who either performed unsatisfactorily or failed to come to their homes, it concluded that the departmental domestic training courses had failed to successfully teach Antillean women how to conduct themselves in metropolitan France. BUMIDOM officials reported that young Antillean women who had received domestic training in the Antilles still lacked the metropolitan values of “discipline”, “regular attendance”, and “maintaining a schedule”, all of which were necessary for obtaining employment.⁶⁶ Employers “demand[ed] responsibility and a respect for timeliness”,

⁶³ Condon and Ogden, 453.

⁶⁴ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, décembre 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

⁶⁵ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités. Annexe XXVI, Centre Féminin de Crouy-sur-Ourcq”, décembre 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

⁶⁶ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, décembre 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

characteristics which the Bureau believed Antilleans did not possess because of the “nonchalance of the warm climate” in which they lived.⁶⁷

Crouy was the Bureau’s answer to this particular problem of undisciplined migrants. Instructors at Crouy encouraged Antillean women to adopt the practices of hard work, order, and timeliness. These were behaviors that Antillean women needed to embrace in order to obtain a job, achieve social advancement, and assimilate into French society. The Bureau saw no room in metropolitan France for what it perceived to be Antilleans’ lack of discipline and work ethic. These characteristics were not native to metropolitan France; rather they were prevalent in warmer climates, such as those found in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The Bureau linked Antillean women’s personal behaviors to tropical climates, something entirely outside the reality of metropolitan France. In doing so, BUMIDOM officials placed Antillean women outside of the definition of who could be included in the French nation. The Bureau’s designation of Antillean migrants’ actions as “un-French” conflated metropolitan practices with French culture, and categorized French nationals living in the overseas departments as second-class citizens. Although Antillean women were legally French citizens, they did not share the same behaviors as metropolitan French women and thus, did quite fit into French society.

A detailed examination of Crouy’s curriculum uncovers the Bureau’s main focus: teaching Antillean women to adopt what it perceived to be metropolitan practices. This would ensure that metropolitan culture would continue to define what it meant to be

⁶⁷ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Bulletin d’information du BUMIDOM. Promotion sociale au sein de la migration féminine. Quelques renseignements chiffrés sur l’activité du BUMIDOM en 1966”, 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

French. The Bureau's president, Max Moulins, created two types of adaptation programs at Crouy. The curriculums for both programs were similar; the only major difference was the amount of time the young women lived at the center. Migrants who had not participated in a domestic training program in the Antilles needed approximately six weeks to learn how to work and live in France. Three weeks of "adaptation classes" was sufficient for those who had already received domestic training, but who, according to BUMIDOM, had failed to embrace metropolitan practices.⁶⁸

The Bureau described Crouy as a "socioeducational" experience, "providing these young women with training and complete integration into the social life [of France]."⁶⁹ "Complete integration" began with the transformation of Antillean women's outward appearances. Moulins characterized hygienic practices in the Antilles as "incorrect", implying that Antillean women were unclean and unkempt. For this reason, he insisted that every Antillean woman receive instruction on how to wash their faces and style their hair, as well as how to eat and breathe properly.⁷⁰ The Bureau went so far as to require migrants to use 250 francs of their 300 franc allowance to purchase quality French clothing from salespeople that the Bureau brought to Crouy.

While it is certainly true that a neat physical appearance was essential for obtaining employment, the Bureau's focus on Antillean women's personal hygiene and fashion suggests that what it meant to be French was closely linked to outward physical appearance. French women were neatly groomed and fashionably dressed. This

⁶⁸ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Bulletin d'information du BUMIDOM. Promotion sociale au sein de la migration féminine. Quelques renseignements chiffrés sur l'activité du BUMIDOM en 1966", 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Max Moulins, Président, BUMIDOM & Ministre d'État chargé des départements et territoires d'outre-mer à Monsieur le Préfet de la Martinique, "Programme de préformation féminine", 1 décembre 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940379, Art. 3

contrasted sharply with the Bureau's description of Antillean women as dirty and unkempt. Yet, the Bureau never mentioned the most obvious indicator of Antilleans' difference: their black skin. It refused to recognize how race contributed to the difficulties Antilleans faced in adapting to France. In doing so, the Bureau made Antilleans' racial difference invisible—at least on paper. Recently, scholars of race in France have argued that despite the fact that race remains unnamed in public discourse, it still has been a significant factor in shaping and structuring French society.⁷¹ The Bureau used other unspoken indicators of race that did not match its perception of a French citizen, such as Antillean women's curly and coarse hair, to exclude Antilleans from the French nation. Although the Bureau frequently emphasized Antilleans' political status as French citizens, in terms of their behaviors and physical appearance, Antillean women were somehow not quite “French” enough.

The Bureau also used differences between Antillean and French households to define French citizenship so that it excluded Antillean migrants. In the early 1960s, small household appliances, such as ovens, refrigerators, electric kettles, and vacuum cleaners were becoming common conveniences of everyday family life in metropolitan France. The production of consumer goods was not only a strategy of economic recovery following the Second World War; modern household appliances and the ability to purchase such goods were also becoming a part of middle-class metropolitan identity.⁷²

⁷¹ See: Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003). Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004).

⁷² For scholarship on consumerism and French national identity see: Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995); Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998); Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2001); Leora

In contrast, Antillean homes had no such technology; nor did the majority of Antilleans have the capacity to purchase these modern appliances. Therefore, it was not surprising that Antillean women were completely unaware of how to use such machinery. In classrooms lined with sewing machines and washing machines, Antillean women familiarized themselves with how to run a modern French household.⁷³ For the Bureau, using a machine to wash and sew clothes was the modern way to run an efficient household. Antillean women's unfamiliarity with electric household appliances marked them as "un-modern" and "backwards", and thus outside of the Bureau's vision of France as a modern and technologically advanced nation.

Simandres: The Training of Antillean Men for Second-Class Citizenship

The Bureau was also concerned with male migrants' lack of experience with modern technology. The Second World War had created demands for more advanced weaponry and aircraft, leading to the development of new production technologies dependent on the operation of heavy machinery. In postwar France, these industrial advancements were the key to rapidly producing consumer goods to rebuild a prosperous and modern nation. Across the Atlantic, Guadeloupe and Martinique's economies were still very much connected to agricultural production and the extraction of raw materials for exportation. Antillean men, therefore, were unfamiliar with large factory settings and did not possess the technical skills for jobs in which the Bureau hoped to place them when they arrived in France. In 1968, the Bureau opened the Simandres Center and

Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1996); Adam C. Stanley, *Modernizing Tradition: gender and consumerism in interwar France and Germany* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

⁷³ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Bulletin d'information du BUMIDOM. Promotion sociale au sein de la migration féminine. Quelques renseignements chiffrés sur l'activité du BUMIDOM en 1966", 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

Boardinghouse near Lyon specifically designed to educate young Antillean men about modern machinery and their new work environments. One year later in March 1969, the Bureau obtained property near Marseille on which it built another training center for male migrants. Both the Simandres and Marseille centers prepared young Antillean men for employment in the construction trades, metallurgy, or the machine industry.⁷⁴

However, training for these kinds of professions did not offer Antillean men the social mobility promised by the BUMIDOM. An examination of Simandre's program reveals that the Bureau was preparing young Antillean men to be a particular type of French citizen: a second-class one who filled low-status jobs. The construction industry used the Bureau as an intermediary to recruit lowest-level workers into jobs rejected by the native French population. The majority of men who signed the Bureau's contract for training in France at Simandres received five to six month training courses in construction trades. Most other migrants received training for the most dangerous and lowest-paying positions in the metallurgy or machinery industries. Although the Bureau claimed that its "adult vocational training courses offered workers the indisputable opportunity of social advancement", employment records show that virtually all migrants received the lowest level of training and almost none were found to have specialized at a higher level.⁷⁵ Simandres amounted to a means to produce an employable low-level workforce.

The Bureau envisioned postwar France as a technologically advanced society in which men possessed the technical skills required to create a modern and prosperous

⁷⁴ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte rendu d'activités", 31 octobre 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 27.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

For statistics on Antillean men's employment see: Condon and Ogden, 450-451.

nation. Life in the Antilles did not match this perception of what it meant to be French. Following departmentalization, report after report linked the Antilles' social and economic problems to Antillean men's lack of discipline and efficiency. The overseas departments' high unemployment rate and large number of single-mothers and female-headed households demonstrated Antillean men's weak character traits. Guadeloupe and Martinique's economies were underdeveloped because Antillean men did not have the same strong work ethic that metropolitan men possessed.⁷⁶ For the Bureau, these negative stereotypes of Antillean men justified their placement in low-level jobs. Lack of behaviors that the Bureau believed were characteristic of metropolitan workers precluded them from full participation in the nation and greater economic opportunities.

At Simandres, social workers and instructors sought to modify Antillean men's conduct. They carried out a specific "adaptation" program that taught migrants the social behaviors the Bureau believed young Antillean men needed to possess in order to live and work in the Hexagon. Training courses at Simandres lasted for six weeks. During the first two weeks, instructors introduced or "initiated" migrants to everyday metropolitan life. Initiation classes "alleviated the difficulties encountered by natives of the overseas departments in changing from an overseas work environment to a factory job in the metropole, while also bringing their attention to the professional knowledge that will enable them to be hired."⁷⁷ This "professional knowledge" consisted of the technical skills that Antillean men needed to become manual laborers in factories. One of the most important initiation classes, known as "psycho-gestural training" (*formation*

⁷⁶ For example, see: Aaron Segal, "Politics and population in the Caribbean. Special Study No.7, Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, 1969.

⁷⁷ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Rapport d'activités", 31 décembre 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

psychogestuelle) taught Antillean men how to adjust and develop their body movements to perform machine work in factories. They learned “refinement of touch”, “precision of gestures”, “steadiness of hands”, “rapidity of movements”, and “independent movement of each hand”. The migrants spent four weeks of the six-week training program “practicing the correct gestures on the machines...while respecting the imposed rhythms and safety rules [of a factory]”.⁷⁸ The Bureau literally impressed a certain notion of Frenchness on Antillean men’s bodies.

In addition to training Antillean men’s bodies, BUMIDOM also used Simandres to prepare migrants for their low-level jobs. As occupants of the lowest positions in the factory hierarchy, Antillean men needed to be disciplined, as well as passive. At Simandres, Antillean men learned the importance of “accepting rules”, “respecting others”, “taking charge of one’s own actions”, “sound judgment”, and “cordial relationships with others.”⁷⁹ Young Antillean men also received instruction in “diet”, “hygiene”, “personal upkeep”, “rules of social life”, and “discipline”.⁸⁰ This type of instruction was similar to Crouy’s “personal comportment” course; it taught Antillean men how to change their outward appearance and grooming habits so that they were more physically agreeable and employable. “Physical and bodily adaptation to work, to life, to the [French] mode of life, follows psychological adaptation, which is indispensable for

⁷⁸ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, 31 décembre 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Yvon Gouguenheim, “Etude-Intervention. Pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles,” octobre 1974-janvier 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

professional and personal advancement.”⁸¹ In other words, for the Bureau, personal hygiene was a requirement for access to employment and thus, social mobility. In making the above behaviors and practices essential for obtaining the full rights of French citizenship, the Bureau created particular definition of French citizenship that privileged hard work, control of the body, discipline, and a clean physical appearance.

Part II. Acts of Citizenship: Antillean Migration and New Ways of Being French

While the first section of this chapter addressed how the Bureau used the process of Antillean migration to create a particular definition of French citizenship, the second part considers how Antilleans interacted with and challenged the Bureau’s construction of Frenchness to create their own meaning of what it meant to be French. For BUMIDOM officials, the goal of its domestic and technical education programs was to teach Antillean men and women about metropolitan life. Yet, these purportedly metropolitan behaviors and practices were merely constructed ideals of what the Bureau thought it meant to be French. Antillean migrants did not always conform to the Bureau’s expectations of how they should conduct themselves as French citizens. They had their own vision for what it meant to be French: French citizenship afforded them the right to freely migrate, as well as equal access to high-status employment and social mobility. It was not the process of assimilation that the Bureau had envisioned. The case of Ms. Pierrette Nampri, a woman selected by the Bureau for migration, is particularly illustrative of these differing constructions of French citizenship. Whereas the Bureau interpreted Nampri’s misconduct as a marker of her difference and thus grounds for her exclusion from

⁸¹ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, 31 décembre 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

BUMIDOM's social services, Nampri believed she was simply exercising her right as a French citizen to social and economic advancement.

On February 27, 1979, a representative of BUMIDOM, Albert Bros, sent a letter to the Secretary of State for the Overseas Departments concerning Nampri, an Antillean woman residing in Paris who had recently solicited the Bureau to finance her repatriation to Guadeloupe. Nampri's interaction with BUMDIOM began in 1965 when she applied for migration. A psycho-technician reviewed Nampri's application, and concluded that she had "sufficient professional qualifications", a "healthy and well-maintained physical comportment", and "stable family connections" in the Hexagon.⁸² These distinctions made Nampri an ideal candidate. The Bureau decided to finance her migration based on its belief that such characteristics closely resembled that of metropolitan woman, making it easier for her to assimilate into French society.

Like most BUMIDOM-sponsored female migrants, Nampri signed a contract with the Bureau, agreeing to receive domestic training at Crouy-sur-Ourq before being placed in a French family's home as a housekeeper. However, the Bureau's records show that "as soon as she arrived at Crouy, she refused the domestic job for which she had migrated and for which she had been contracted."⁸³ Instead, Nampri expressed to the Bureau her desire to work in a hospital as a nurse's aid, a profession she felt provided her with more avenues for economic and social advancement. Despite her objections, the Bureau insisted that Nampri's level of education was not sufficient for this type of work, and sent her to work as a domestic in the home of a French family. The Bureau required migrants

⁸² Albert Bros, L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM au Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'Intérieur DOM-TOM, "Situation de Mme Pierrette NAMPRI", 27 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁸³ Ibid.

to sign employment contracts so that it could control migration and the kinds of individuals it welcomed to French metropolitan society. In hand-selecting migrants, such as Nampri, who exhibited desirable qualities, the Bureau hoped to create a particular kind of French citizenry. However, as BUMIDOM officials discovered, Antillean migrants did not always act according to their physical appearance and professional qualifications.

When Nampri arrived at her employer's house, she protested her placement, and refused to work. The dissatisfied employer sent Nampri back to Crouy, where the Bureau could deal with her stubborn behavior. It decided to lodge her at the Rush boardinghouse, where Nampri continued to be uncooperative. The Bureau reported that Rush's director had to continuously reprimand Nampri for poor conduct. At least three nights per week, Nampri did not return to the boardinghouse until the next morning. She telephoned her friends at Crouy, encouraging them to abandon their domestic training in favor of coming to live with her at Rush. The director was so fed up with Nampri that she decided to expel her. For Nampri, migration was not about exhibiting the behavior that the Bureau expected of her. She had her own ideas about what French citizenship afforded her, which did not include being controlled by social workers or being forced into low-status jobs. Her signed contract with the Bureau was merely a free ticket to France where she could seek out higher-status and higher-paying work.

On March 19, 1965, only 17 days after arriving in Paris, the Bureau gave into Nampri's demands and found her a job outside of a French household at Nigy Laboratories. It also secured a place for her at Nigy's employee boardinghouse. Nampri was still not satisfied with the work at Nigy Laboratories, which largely consisted of janitorial services and did not provide a path to social advancement. She refused this job

as well, and within days, she was expelled from the Nigy boardinghouse. After being discharged from two separate residences, Nampri informed the Bureau that she did not want to live in a group home; she preferred to live on her own. The Bureau agreed to lend her 400 F for the security deposit for an apartment. Shortly thereafter, Nampri found what she was looking for—employment in a Parisian hospital; but the head of staff terminated her contract when she failed to show up for work on three separate occasions without any prior notification.⁸⁴

Ms. Nampri then solicited CASODOM—a social welfare organization for migrants from the overseas departments—for financial aid. However, due to her record of misconduct with the Bureau, CASODOM refused to help her. It cited Nampri’s defiance and her inability to maintain a job as justification for its decision to deny Nampri social aid.⁸⁵ In this way, CASODOM made compliance with the Bureau’s expectations a requirement for social services. Those, like Nampri, who failed to do so were precluded from receiving the social welfare benefits that were purportedly available to all French citizens. This denial of social rights created a definition of French citizenship that only included those Antilleans who conformed to the Bureau’s expectations and accepted their directives.

Nampri did not accept this definition of French citizenship that excluded her from obtaining the social aid she felt was rightfully hers. She continued to exercise her right as a French citizen to solicit the government for social services. On November 1, 1966, a year and a half after migrating to Paris, she gave birth to a baby boy, who she placed in

⁸⁴ Albert Bros, L’Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM au Secrétaire d’Etat auprès du Ministre de l’Intérieur DOM-TOM, “Situation de Mme Pierrette NAMPRI”, 27 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

the care of *Aide à l'Enfance*, a social welfare organization for children. On February 11, 1968, she again contacted the Bureau to ask for money to pay her rent. At this time, the Bureau learned that she had given birth to a second child, who she had also placed in the care of *Aide à l'Enfance*. Two years later in 1970, she contacted the Bureau yet again to help her find employment outside of Paris. She assured BUMIDOM officials that she had reformed her behavior. The Bureau directed her to its branch office in Rouen, which placed her in a job in Havre.⁸⁶

Shortly thereafter, the Bureau received information that Nampri had returned to Guadeloupe on her own expenses; but, in 1973 she wrote the President of the Republic requesting financial help to return to Paris. The President's office forwarded her letter to the Bureau. "I am asking for help, because I am not married. I have three children. Jacques was born in Paris in 1966, Eddie in 1968, Cristelle in 1969. . . . I would like to know what I must do [to return to Paris]...if it is possible."⁸⁷ BUMDIOM officials refused to help Nampri re-migrate to Paris. However, Nampri was a French citizen; she was free to move between France and Guadeloupe, and she would exercise this right. Like many Antilleans whom the Bureau had refused financial help, Nampri took matters into her own hands; she used her own resources to cross the Atlantic and establish herself in France. In February 1979, Nampri contacted the Bureau one last time, seeking to be repatriated to Guadeloupe because she could not find adequate employment in France. The Bureau's social workers counseled Nampri to present herself at the national

⁸⁶ Albert Bros, L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM au Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'Intérieur DOM-TOM, "Situation de Mme Pierrette NAMPRI", 27 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁸⁷ Pierrette Marianne Nampri au Président de la République, 20 janvier 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

employment agency so that she could find a job in the Hexagon and support her children.⁸⁸

The case of Nampri illustrates how Antillean migration shaped the meaning of French citizenship. Nampri's behavior embodied the cultural characteristics of Antillean society against which the Bureau constructed French citizenship in the late twentieth century. She represented Antilleans' purportedly underdeveloped notions of discipline and hard work. For the Bureau, Nampri was also a classic expression of the "problem" of the Antillean family: promiscuous Antillean women who had multiple children out of wedlock with absentee fathers who could not support their families. For these reasons, BUMIDOM social workers attempted to deny Nampri her status as a French citizen in refusing her social aid on several occasions. Yet, Nampri asserted her French citizenship when she repeatedly insisted that the Bureau help her find desirable employment and social aid for her children. Nampri managed to use the welfare system to attempt to achieve her goal of social mobility. In doing so, Nampri insisted upon her place in metropolitan France and the nation. She was French despite the fact that she did not act according to the Bureau's perception of what it meant to be a French citizen.

"Spontaneous" Migration & Antilleans' Struggle for Inclusion

By the early 1970s, it was becoming apparent to the Bureau that it was not firmly in control of Antillean migration. Cases like that of Nampri confirmed to BUMIDOM officials that it could not dictate Antilleans' actions. In 1965, the Bureau had characterized Nampri as the "ideal" candidate, but this quickly changed upon her arrival

⁸⁸ Albert Bros, L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM au Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'Intérieur DOM-TOM, "Situation de Mme Pierrette NAMPRI", 27 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

in the Hexagon. Antillean men and women had their own goals for migration that did not match the Bureau's vision of Antilleans' role in metropolitan society. This compelled the Bureau to reconsider its organization of the migration process and its expectations for how Antilleans fit into the French nation.

Throughout the 1960s, when France was experiencing an economic boom, the Bureau encouraged Antillean migration to fill the high demand for unskilled and low-level workers. Beginning in the 1970s, France began to experience an economic recession, and employers no longer demanded Antillean labor. In 1974, this shift in France's economy was a big factor in the French government's decision to put a ban on immigration. Officials believed France had reached its "threshold of tolerance"; the government needed to focus on integrating immigrants already established in France before it could accommodate any more immigrants.⁸⁹ This policy did not directly affect Antillean migrants because they were French citizens, and therefore could reside in the Hexagon if they wished. Nonetheless, the government used the same reasoning to justify why it needed to reduce the number of Antillean migrations sponsored by BUMIDOM. The Bureau needed to spend its resources on integrating the Antilleans that were already established in metropolitan France before it could welcome more migrants.

Public officials did their best to discourage Antilleans from establishing themselves in France without the Bureau's financial help. On September 23, 1975, Mrs. Françoise Kancel Dampierre wrote a letter to the wife of President Valéry Giscard

⁸⁹ The "threshold of tolerance" is a level of immigrant concentration beyond which the process social incorporation and assimilation cannot be achieved. It is claimed that if this threshold is crossed, the native population's capacity to absorb immigrant and ethnic minority groups is pushed to its breaking point, resulting in conflict. In his work, Alec Hargreaves has demonstrated how the French government has used the concept of "seuil de tolerance" or "threshold of tolerance" discriminate against immigrants in areas such as employment and public housing. Alec G. Hargreaves, "Immigration, 'race', and ethnicity in contemporary France" (London: Routledge, 1995).

d’Estaing pleading for financial help so that she could migrate to France. “Please grant me what I ask of you, my children are hungry. I prefer to go to Paris to work. I would especially like to be employed at the University of Paris—in any type of job or at Air France....I can pay my own fare, but I would like for you to provide housing for the five children...”⁹⁰ Mrs. Giscard d’Estaing’s personal secretary forwarded the letter to the Maurice Gérard, the Secretary of State for the DOM. He responded to Kancel Dampierre, informing her that she needed to present her request to the local BUMIDOM office in Guadeloupe. He then vigorously discouraged her from migrating to France without the Bureau’s support. “I strongly counsel you not to leave your place of residence [Guadeloupe] without actually having obtained from BUMIDOM the necessary consent for your departure, as well as a guarantee of employment in the Metropole. This warning is even more important because you must care for a large family and your departure is not urgent.”⁹¹

On February 7, 1979, another Gaudeloupean woman, Miss Marie Caby, pleaded for the government’s help: “Mr. President, I’m asking you if you could help me pay for a one-way plane ticket [to Paris]. My parents can truly not help me, we are all poor....I know that you will not refuse me this little help. Mr. President, Help me, Mr. President, to pay for this plane ticket, and I will always remember that you have helped me...”⁹²

Again, the government tried to dissuade young Antilleans from migrating. The Secretary of State for the Home Office informed Caby that she needed to present her request to the

⁹⁰ Madame François Kancel Dampierre à la Présidente Valérie Giscard d’Estaing, 23 septembre 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁹¹ Maurice Gérard, le Secrétaire d’Etat aux Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer à Mme. Françoise Kantal Dampierre, 12 octobre 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁹² Mademoiselle Marie Caby à Monsieur le Président de la République, 7 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art.23.

local BUMIDOM office in Guadeloupe. This was the proper procedure, and her only option for help. Without the Bureau's help "the actual employment situation in the metropole is very difficult, I advise against installing yourself here [in France] without the certainty of employment."⁹³

The government's responses to Mrs. Kancel Dampierre and Miss Caby indicate that officials were most concerned with ensuring that the Bureau remained in control of the migration process. It sought to do so by describing migration without the Bureau's help as a very arduous process. In all likelihood, they would not be able to find employment or lodging. The government recognized that Antilleans' had the right to migrate to France without going through BUMIDOM; but it warned that migration facilitated by the Bureau was the only option that would lead to social advancement. Government-controlled migration ensured that all Antilleans would benefit from a period of adaptation and job training in the Bureau's vocational centers. Without this, government leaders feared that they would not be able to instruct Antilleans in metropolitan behaviors and practices, making them unemployable, without access to housing, and a burden on the nation's social welfare system.

Despite the government's efforts to dissuade Antilleans from migrating without the Bureau's aid, Antillean migrants refused to allow the Bureau to dictate who could and could not migrate to France. They were set on seeking out a life for themselves in the metropole regardless of what the Bureau said. One of the greatest obstacles to migration was affordability of plane tickets. During the 1960s, high airfares effectively limited the number of migrants who could afford to migrate to France on their own without the

⁹³ Le Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'Intérieur à Mademoiselle Marie Caby, 13 mars 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art.23.

Bureau's financial help. Dissatisfied with being at the Bureau's mercy, Antilleans began to campaign for lower airfares. They framed the debate in terms of their French citizenship, arguing that high prices limited their right as French citizens to freely travel between the Antilles and France. Affordable airfare would enable Antilleans to migrate to the Hexagon, where they could enjoy equal access to education and employment. Migrants convinced Air France that if it lowered its prices, more and more Antilleans residing in both the Antilles and the Hexagon would take advantage of the cheaper fares, ultimately increasing Air France's business.

Air France's decision to implement a "tarif pour tous" or "airfare for all" program made the flights between overseas departments and France much more affordable. This caused a substantial increase in the number of "spontaneous" migrations, which quickly began to surpass those facilitated by the Bureau. "Spontaneous" migrants were individuals whom the Bureau had not sponsored; it was not responsible for providing them with job training or placement. At the same time, the Bureau began to finance fewer and fewer migrations. In the 1970s, France's economy was also suffering from economic recession. The Bureau did not have sufficient funds to finance Antilleans' migration, and there was no longer a great demand for their labor. Although economic recession had decreased the number of jobs available in France, there were still more employment opportunities in France than in the Antilles. This disconnect between Antilleans' increasing demand for migration, and the number of migrants that the Bureau could afford to sponsor transformed Antillean migration from a process controlled by the government to a more unstructured phenomenon dictated by Antilleans' desires. Antilleans used the airfare debate to insert themselves into the nation as legitimate

consumers who contributed to France's economy. They skirted the Bureau's attempts to control migration and claimed their right as French citizens to move freely between the Hexagon and the overseas departments.⁹⁴ In doing so, they carved out a space for themselves in metropolitan France that was neither dictated nor controlled by the Bureau.

Once "spontaneous" migrants arrived in metropolitan France, they continued to invoke their citizenship to create opportunities for social and economic advancement. They were aware that the Bureau's statutes stipulated that "spontaneous" migrants could not benefit from the Bureau's financial and social aid. In circumventing the Bureau's selection process, "spontaneous" migrants had supposedly given up their right to government aid. However, Antilleans refused to accept these limits that the Bureau placed on their access to training, employment, and social welfare. In letters addressed to either the Bureau or other public officials, Antillean men and women used their political status as French nationals to demand the full benefits of citizenship enjoyed by their metropolitan counterparts. For many Antillean migrants, this meant equal access to higher-status and higher-paying jobs.

On March 19, 1976, Miss Annie-Fleur Danican wrote to Olivier Stirn, the Secretary of State for the Overseas Departments, requesting the government's help in finding a job. "I am from Guadeloupe, [and] of French Nationality. I have a child [and] not finding any work in my country, I went to France four months ago. Since my arrival I have done nothing but look for a job and up until now I have had no results. I live with

⁹⁴ For example, see the case of Pierrette Nampri discussed earlier in this chapter. When the Bureau refused to help Nampri re-migration to Paris, she took matters into her own hands. She used her own resources to cross the Atlantic and establish herself in France for the second time. Albert Bros, L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM au Secrétaire d'Etat auprès du Ministre de l'Intérieur DOM-TOM, "Situation de Mme Pierrette NAMPRI", 27 février 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

a cousin who does not have a job either. Do you think that you could find me something and that you could come to my aid.”⁹⁵

On March 10, 1974, Miss Clotilde Pétan also wrote a letter to Stirn, appealing for his help. In the spring of 1974, Pétan, a migrant from Guadeloupe, was living at the Bureau’s adaptation center in Crouy. The Bureau claimed that adaptation centers provided Antillean migrants with the necessary education and training so that they could achieve the same economic and social success enjoyed by metropolitan citizens. However, Miss Pétan described an entirely different reality to Mr. Stirn. “Our lives are intolerable here. The instructors are racist, but it appears that they are afraid of the Guadeloupeans and Martinicans because they answer back....We freely traveled 13, 000 kilometers, we took on the risks, we are big enough to look after ourselves, we do not need bodyguards. I only have one wish to leave Crouy and its wards.”⁹⁶ Three days later, Pétan pleaded with Mr. Stirn, asking for the government’s help in rescuing her from the Bureau’s control. “I am on the brink of a nervous depression. I no longer understand. I no longer know what to do. . . . I am in a trap like all the other girls. I’m fed up with Crouy and its horrors and its hypocritical instructors and directors. Creoles have an insupportable life here. . . . I cannot live here. I want to leave here...please come get me. If not, I will end up in a psychiatric hospital.”⁹⁷ Like a lot of Antillean migrants, Pétan had embraced republican notions of equality, and expected to be treated as full-fledged French citizens in metropolitan France. When Pétan realized that the Bureau was more

⁹⁵ Annie-Fleur Danican à Monsieur Olivier Stirn, Secrétaire d’Etat, 19 Mars 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

⁹⁶ Mlle Clotilde Pétan au Secrétaire d’Etat, 10 Mars 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

interested in controlling her actions than providing her with vocational training, she began to rethink the meaning of her French citizenship.

In their letters, both Danican and Pétan clearly stated their French nationality to demand their rights as French citizens. For Danican, this meant equal access to employment, and for Pétan this meant freedom from the Bureau's control. By the 1970s, Antillean migrants were becoming disillusioned with the Bureau's promises for a better life in France. They began to perceive of the Bureau as a repressive organization that sought to control how and when they migrated to France, as well as their access to education and employment. They questioned whether or not the Bureau really promoted Antilleans' best interests. Pétan informed Stirn that Antillean women's "lives are intolerable" at the adaptation center in Crouy because "the instructors are racist."⁹⁸ In a letter to a close girlfriend, Pétain complained that the center's teachers and social workers treated Antilleans "worse than dogs"; they perceived of the migrants as "animals" who needed to be "rendered docile". She described "Crouy" as a kind of perpetual "prison" from which she could not escape.⁹⁹ In using this kind of language, Pétan was invoking Antilleans migrants' past as slaves, a period during which Antilleans' black skin color stripped them of all rights and made them the property of French plantation owners.

For Pétan, it was Antilleans' race that made them second-class citizens in the eyes of the Bureau. Unlike white metropolitan white citizens, Antilleans were forced to endure vocational training at adaptation centers where they were watched over and controlled. Pétan argued against this definition of French citizenship that excluded

⁹⁸ Mlle Clotilde Pétan au Secrétaire d'Etat, 13 Mars 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁹⁹ Letter from Clotilde Pétan to "Chère amie," 13 Mars 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

Antillean migrants on the basis of their race. She claimed that Antilleans' skin color did not preclude them from being included in the nation as first-class French citizens. Like all citizens, Antilleans possessed the right to migrate and reside in the metropole, and they exercised this right by freely "[taking] on the risk" of migration. Therefore, like all French citizens, they should be free from the Bureau's oppressive control.

In their letters, Danican and Pétan simultaneously claimed their equal rights as French citizens and affirmed their cultural differences, as well as their particular circumstances as migrants. Danican referred to Guadeloupe as her "country"; Pétan identified the women at Crouy as "Guadeloupeans", "Martinicians", and "Creoles". In other words, they drew attention to their racial and cultural particularities as Guadeloupean and Creole women. In doing so, Danican and Pétan created a definition of French citizenship that conflicted with the Bureau's understanding of French citizenship. The Bureau perceived of itself as an upholder of France's republican ideals. This meant that it refused to acknowledge how Antilleans' racial and cultural differences affected their experiences in the metropole. Instead, BUMIDOM officials chose to interact with Antillean migrants as universal individuals, arguing that this abstraction of difference ensured equal treatment. In choosing to highlight their French citizenship alongside their race and Creole identity, Danican and Pétan were creating a new type of French citizenship—one that encompassed universal rights, as well as cultural and racial difference.

BUMIDOM's False Promises

Antillean migrants' ideas about migration contrasted sharply with the Bureau's. BUMIDOM encouraged young Antillean men and women to migrate, promising that life

in metropolitan France offered economic and social advancement. It reassured them that as French citizens, they would have equal access to education, training, and employment. However, Annie-Fleur Danican's story illustrates that the Bureau's promises of equal citizenship did not match the reality of the circumstances in which Antillean migrants found themselves. In the spring of 1976, Albert Bros, the president of BUMIDOM, and Olivier Stirn, the Secretary for the DOM, exchanged several letters regarding Danican, an unemployed "spontaneous" migrant from Guadeloupe who needed help securing employment.¹⁰⁰ Danican's case exemplified the Bureau's fears concerning spontaneous migration. Bros informed Stirn that Danican "is a single mother who traveled alone [to France], leaving her child with her mother, who herself has 12 [children]."¹⁰¹ After arriving in France, Danican went to live with her cousin, who "has only one room in the 18th district, and had to entrust her two children to Social Welfare because she is unemployed."¹⁰² As more and more Antilleans migrated to France without the Bureau's help, officials worried that an increasing population of unassimilated Antillean migrants, like Danican and her cousin, were becoming a burden on France's social welfare system.

In order to solve this "problem" of spontaneous migration, Stirn requested that the Bureau help migrants like Danican. "Although this situation has to do with a 'spontaneous' migrant, I would greatly appreciate it if you would carry out a social

¹⁰⁰ Note pour Monsieur Bros, Administrateur délégué auprès du BUMIDOM, "Demande d'emploi présentée par Melle Annie-Fleur Danican, originaire de la Guadeloupe, résidant à Paris," 31 Mars 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹⁰¹ L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM à Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat aux Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, "Situation de Mlle Annie-Fleur Danican", 15 avril 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹⁰² Ibid.

investigation on Miss Danican, and inform me of the possibilities for helping her...”¹⁰³

After some investigation, the Bureau confirmed that Annie-Fleur was “unknown” to the Bureau, and was indeed a “spontaneous” migrant, who three months ago, in December 1975, had financed her own trans-Atlantic passage.¹⁰⁴ Ms. Danican had supposedly forfeited her right to BUMIDOM social aid when she financed her own migration, but the Bureau informed Stirn that it would nonetheless help her.¹⁰⁵ The Bureau recognized Antilleans’ right as French citizens to have access to employment and social welfare. It hoped that this type of aid would promote assimilation, and prevent the development of a large disaffected Antillean population.

Yet, at the same time, the Bureau chose to offer Antillean migrants a particular kind of help that directed them toward low-status jobs rejected by other French citizens and immigrants. According to Bros, the Bureau offered Danican what it described as an “excellent” job as a housekeeper, which provided her with room and board and a salary of 1000 F.¹⁰⁶ The Bureau’s records indicate that officials placed the majority of Antillean women in the domestic services either within a French home or a hotel.¹⁰⁷ In 1982, the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) reported that the majority of Antillean women residing in France still worked in the domestic services and had

¹⁰³ Note pour Monsieur Bros, Administrateur délégué auprès du BUMIDOM, “Demande d’emploi présentée par Melle Annie-Fleur Danican, originaire de la Guadeloupe, résidant à Paris,” 31 Mars 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹⁰⁴ M. Albert Bros, l’Administrateur Délégué du BUMIDOM à M. Denis Valfort, le Secrétariat Général des DOM, “Situation de Mlle Annie-Fleur Danican,” 15 avril 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹⁰⁵ L’Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM à Monsieur le Secrétaire d’Etat aux Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer, “Situation de Mlle Annie-Fleur Danican”, 15 avril 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Condon and Ogden, 452-454.

experienced limited social mobility.¹⁰⁸ Bureau officials pushed migrants toward these types of low-status jobs by threatening to withdraw their help if the migrant did not accept the position. In a letter, the Secretary of State for the DOM sternly advised Danican that her acceptance of the job as a domestic at Villa Saint-Roman was the “condition under which the BUMIDOM can continue to help you, particularly with respect to bringing your child, who still lives in Guadeloupe, to the Metropole.”¹⁰⁹ The Bureau used this type of conditional social aid to coerce Antilleans into accepting their place in French society as second-class citizens. Antillean migrants were not under any obligation to the Bureau, but it used the promise of social aid to treat Antilleans as second-class citizens who needed to be controlled and guided toward what it perceived to be suitable professions for migrants.

However, Antillean migrants did not just passively accept the position of second-class citizens that the Bureau had carved out for them. Instead, they asserted their French citizenship to demand their right to social advancement, and created their own economic opportunities. Some Antilleans claimed their equal status as French citizens by simply refusing to work at the low-level job the Bureau had placed them in. Danican did exactly that. When she refused to work as a domestic in a French family’s home, the Bureau found her two additional posts as a maid in the hotels “Avenir” and “Villa Saint-Romain”. Danican also declined these jobs, informing the Bureau that she preferred a

¹⁰⁸ Condon and Ogdén, 446.

¹⁰⁹ Le Secrétaire d’Etat aux Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer à Mademoiselle Annie-Fleur Danican, no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art.23.

more respectable position as a nurse's aide in a hospital. She had no desire to work as a low-status housekeeper or hotel maid.¹¹⁰

Like Danican, most Antillean migrants' expectations for life in metropolitan France did match the Bureau's understanding of migration as a kind of economic solution to France's need for unskilled and low-status workers. Antilleans perceived of migration as an opportunity for socio-professional and personal advancement, which in their minds, had little to do with cleaning house, serving French families, and operating industrial machinery on factory lines. Employment records show that migrants left domestic and factory work relatively quickly and tried to find employment in other jobs that were seen as less demeaning, often as nurses' aides in hospitals or as low-level civil servants.¹¹¹ Public service employment held a great attraction for migrants. It provided certain employment advantages, such as easier access to public housing and a clearly defined career path. It was also reported that the public sector was especially welcoming to Antilleans.¹¹²

In order to revive France's economy following the Second World War, the government nationalized several large industries, arguing that the state needed to be in control of sectors of the economy vital to the country's recovery. By early 1946, several major banks, the bulk of the insurance industry, the gas and electric networks, and the Paris public transportation system had been nationalized. The result was an increasing need for workers in low-level employment in France's new public service sector; but other migrants could not fill these positions because civil servant jobs were only available

¹¹⁰ L'Administrateur délégué du BUMIDOM à Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat aux Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, "Situation de Mlle Annie-Fleur Danican", 15 avril 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

¹¹¹ Condon and Ogden, 453.

¹¹² Ibid. 452.

to French citizens. Antilleans' status as French citizens enabled them to fill this unique hole in the labor force.

Antillean migrants' desire to work as civil servants is particularly telling. In demanding access to government jobs, Antilleans exercised their right as French nationals to have equal access to higher-status employment. They used their French nationality, but also their particular identity as citizens from the overseas departments, to carve out their own economic niche in metropolitan society. Antillean migrants also simultaneously used and worked around the Bureau to create a unique place for themselves in the Hexagon as both French citizens and Antilleans. When Antilleans requested the Bureau's help, they were exercising their right as French citizens to migrate and live in France where they would have equal access to social aid and employment. For many Antillean men and women, migration offered social advancement for themselves and their families. Many migrants left their young children behind in the Antilles, hoping that they would be able to finance their children's own migrations once they secured employment and housing. When Antilleans realized that this task of family reunification was financially impossible to accomplish on their own, they sought the French government's and the Bureau's help.

In 1976, Sébastien Dulac wrote a letter to the President of France requesting financial assistance for family reunification. "Soon it will be a year that I have been separated from my family because work is sparse in Guadeloupe, and the little work that there is, does not pay sufficiently, and it is too bad for fathers who have a family. I tell you this because I have lived it myself. Having decided to migrate to Amiens, I would now like to repatriate my family, but not having myself the ability to finance all of the

costs of their migrations, and not knowing at whose door to knock for help, I am asking you for help and the necessary information to make a financial request [for my family]...”¹¹³ In his request for financial assistance, Dulac sought to claim his right for him and his family to reside in the metropole, a privilege that he and his family purportedly possessed as a French citizens.

However, the reality was that the Bureau was only interested in helping those Antilleans who had proved that would be able to financially support themselves and their families once they arrived in metropolitan France. For the Bureau, migration served mainly an economic function. BUMIDOM officials hoped that Antillean migration would solve the unemployment problem in Guadeloupe and Martinique while simultaneously providing France with the low-level workers it needed to increase production and revive the economy. Therefore, the Bureau took care not to support migrants who it felt would compromise these economic goals. Its migration records show that it was wary of financing the migration of Antillean men who had taken no interest in finding employment and supporting their children, the majority of which they had allegedly fathered out of wedlock.

In the summer of 1976, the Bureau looked into Dulac’s case to determine if it would be able to finance his family’s migration. “Mr. Sébastien Dulac...is 55 years old, [and] has not worked since his arrival in the metropole....This migrant is the father of 10 children, 6 of whom are still his responsibility...He does not have sufficient housing to accommodate his family because he lives at his daughter’s place...In these conditions, it appears to me that it would be desirable to defer this family reunification until Mr. Dulac

¹¹³ Monsieur Sébastien Dulac à Monsieur le Président de la République, 6 juin 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

has secured a permanent employment...”¹¹⁴ For the Bureau, Dulac was not an ideal candidate for social aid. He was unemployed, did not have adequate housing, and had fathered too many children whom he could not adequately support. Dulac and his children were undesirable migrants because they were potentially a financial burden on French society.

Antillean migrants, such as Dulac, were certainly aware of the Bureau’s requirements for financial support. Nevertheless, they were not discouraged. For Antilleans, social aid was not exclusively for those who had demonstrated their ability to secure employment and find adequate housing. Rather, as French citizens, all Antilleans possessed the right to social aid regardless of their economic and social position. In his letter to the President of France, Dulac strategically invoked his French citizenship to claim his right to social aid. Dulac asserted his status as a French national when he described himself as a father who had sought out all opportunities available to him to support his family, including migration to France. He linked himself even more closely to the French nation when he described his children’s future migrations as “repatriation”. After departmentalization the French government highlighted France and the Antilles’ long historical relationship, and encouraged Antilleans—who had recently acquired French citizenship—to regard the Hexagon as the “motherland”. Officials hoped that this rhetoric of historical and cultural ties would help unite France and the Antilles into one French nation. In referring to his family’s migration as “repatriation”, Dulac was

¹¹⁴ L’Administrateur-Délégué du BUMIDOM à Monsieur le Secrétaire d’Etat aux Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer, Secrétaire Général des DOM, Service des Affaires Administratives, Financières et Sociales, “R.F. souhaité par Mr. Sébastien Duclac”, 12 août 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

invoking the French government's rhetoric of national unity to construct himself and his family as French citizens who were returning to the "motherland".

Antillean migrants, like Dulcac, learned how to leverage their citizenship and use it to their advantage to gain what they desired, whether it was migration, employment, or family reunification. In the process, they challenged the Bureau and the French government to carve a space for Antilleans in metropolitan France that fulfilled their expectations for social mobility, not those of the Bureau. In doing so, Antillean men and women inserted themselves into French society on their own terms, pushing against the Bureau's established notions of who belonged in the nation and what it meant to be French.

Conclusion

Antillean migration significantly affected the construction of French citizenship in the late twentieth-century. When the government began to encourage Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to migrate to metropolitan France, it had to figure out how Antilleans would fit into its vision for a new modern and prosperous French nation following the Second World War and decolonization. This proved to be difficult for the Bureau, as Antilleans purportedly possessed all of the behaviors and characteristics believed to be potentially detrimental to a rebuilding nation: namely, unemployment, high illegitimate birthrate, and low-education levels. The Bureau set out to solve this "problem" by establishing vocational training centers to educate Antilleans about how they were to conduct themselves in the Hexagon. In laying out the character traits and technical skills required for migration, BUMIDOM officials articulated who belonged in the nation; in other words, they defined what it meant to be French.

The Bureau claimed that it treated Antilleans as equal French citizens, providing them with opportunities for social mobility. However, Antilleans' interactions with the Bureau revealed a different reality. The Bureau used vocational education to train Antillean migrants for a particular kind of citizenship: one that was second-class in nature. For the Bureau, Antillean migration served an economic function; it fulfilled France's demand for low-level and unskilled workers. In contrast, for Antillean men and women, migration was about exercising their right as French citizens to access the same economic opportunities as their metropolitan counterparts. However, upon their arrival in metropolitan France, Antilleans learned that they did not have the same rights as metropolitans. The Bureau compelled Antilleans to endure vocational training at adaptation centers where they were closely monitored and controlled, and forced into undesirable and low-status jobs. This was not the promise of social mobility that their French citizenship purportedly afforded them.

The realities of migration compelled Antilleans to rethink their French citizenship. They began to see their identities in light of their experiences as second-class citizens. In enduring differential treatment at the hands of the Bureau, Antilleans were made aware of how their racial and cultural particularities had excluded them from the nation. Yet, Antilleans insisted that these differences did not preclude them from obtaining the same rights and privileges enjoyed by metropolitan citizens. In letters to the Bureau and other public officials, Antillean migrants demanded social aid for themselves and their families. In doing so, they claimed their French citizenship and carved out a space for themselves and their difference in the French nation.

CHAPTER II

The “right to difference”: the Forging of Antillean Ethnic Activism and French Multiculturalism before Mitterrand

Introduction

I'm in Bordeaux. I'm expecting a baby in December. My maternity leave begins on the 24th of October. When I migrated to France, I did not dare to ask to be employed as a teacher's assistant (I had worked as one the two previous years in Guadeloupe), or look for another job; I told myself that no one would hire me for only a month...I decided [to stay at home] to raise our daughter for one year (a year during which we lived in a dilapidated and unhealthy two-room apartment... On one winter's night, we were the victims of carbon monoxide poisoning), and I searched [for a job]... I contacted a social worker who promised me that she would find “something” for me. Time passed. Nothing...In June, confident, I went to this official organization, which boasts flyers with smiling hostesses, ANPE.¹ It told me: “It's vacation, there is certainly temporary work, come back in August.” In the meantime, I wrote to different administrations: SNCF², PTT³, city hall; I looked around all month. I returned in August to ANPE. On the first day, I filled out a questionnaire...Result: I was told that there was no work...I was fed up...The month of September was already here. I bought all of the local daily newspapers to inspect all of the classifieds... I received a letter from SNCF. “Yes, they are recruiting office workers, but they do not want high school graduates!” I called them. I told them that I did not care about my

¹ ANPE (*Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi*) was the National Employment Agency in France. It was created in July 1967 to provide counseling and aid to those who are in search of a job or training, including Antillean migrants. It served as a kind of intermediary, matching potential employees' skills and work experience with employers' requests for workers. BUMIDOM worked with ANPE to help secure employment for Antillean migrants in metropolitan France. In December 2008, ANPE merged with the Assédic (Association for Employment in Industry and Trade), an agency which collected and paid unemployment insurance benefits, to create a comprehensive employment agency called *Pôle Emploi*.

² The SNCF (*Société Nationale des Chemins de fer français*) or the National Corporation of French Railways, is France's national state-owned railway company. It was a large employer of Antilleans and even used BUMIDOM to recruit unskilled workers.

³ The PTT (*Postes, télégraphes, téléphones*) was the French public administration of postal services and telecommunications. Many Antilleans were employed as low-level administrators in the public sector, such as the Post Office. French citizenship was a requirement for these types of public service jobs, which meant that other immigrants were not qualified. Following the Second World War, as France's economy became much more service-based, there was a demand for Antillean workers who could fill this particular niche requiring unskilled French nationals.

high school diploma, I want to work... They told me that they were “sorry”... These contradictions began to imprison me. No work because I have a high school diploma, because it is nothing, because it is too much!... AMITAG.⁴ BUMIDOM. The people who seem to believe that you wish them ill will... I inquired about a job, without much hope, at a four star hotel that just opened up not very far from our neighborhood: Esso-Hotel. A few days later, I received a job offer for a maid.⁵

In its December 1974 issue, *Alizés*, a popular Antillean magazine, published Arlette Mansor’s account of her struggle to find adequate housing and employment in metropolitan France after migrating from Guadeloupe in October of 1972. *Alizés* was committed to informing Antilleans in Guadeloupe and Martinique about French politics and the experiences of Antillean migrants in the Hexagon. The magazine also had a political motive in publishing migrants’ negative impressions regarding the harsh realities of migration: it wanted to politically mobilize Antilleans in both metropolitan France and the islands and unite them in a common struggle against BUMIDOM and its treatment of them as second-class citizens. Mansor’s story, entitled “Journal of a Maid” was a part of *Alizés*’s recurring column, “Diary of an Antillean in Paris”, in which Antillean men and women reported on their lives in France. Similar to Mansor’s account, these narratives were rarely positive, detailing the hardships Antilleans faced in securing employment and finding housing, as well as the discrimination they faced in their interactions with government organizations and their fellow French citizens.

Mansor’s story was just one of *Alizés*’s many accounts depicting BUMIDOM’s failure to find employment and comfortable housing for Antillean migrants. On

⁴ The AMITAG (*L’Amicale des Travailleurs Antillais et Guyanais*) or the Association of Antillean and Guyanese Workers was founded in 1960. It received a substantial amount of financial support from BUMIDOM, who funded most of its projects. The AMITAG established relationships with employers in both the public and private sector who subsequently hired many Antilleans. It also organized cultural events for Antillean migrants, such as film showings, exhibits, dance and musical performances.

⁵ Arlette Mansor, “Journal d’une femme de chambre,” *Alizés*, December 1974-February 1975, 11-12.

numerous occasions, Mansor sought the aid of BUMIDOM, and ANPE, the National Employment Agency that worked with the Bureau to place Antilleans in jobs. However, despite her perseverance, her strong desire to work, and her qualifications and previous work experience, Mansor argued that the Bureau did little to help her. She had migrated to France believing BUMIDOM's promises to secure employment for her as a teacher's aid. Instead, she was informed that she did not have the right qualifications and skills. Mansor described her search for employment as a type of abandonment in which she was forced to fend for herself and take an undesirable and low-paying job as a hotel maid despite the fact that she was a high school graduate with several years experience as a teacher's assistant. Although Mansor never explicitly claimed that her inability to find a job was the result of discrimination, the inexhaustible excuses, such as being either overqualified or under-qualified, given to Mansor as to why she was unemployable, raised suspicions about the real reason why multiple employers refused to hire her. Mansor's experience suggests that metropolitans were treating her as if she was a second-class citizen. This certainly did not match Mansor's or other Antilleans' hopes for migration. The Bureau had promised Antilleans social mobility and equal treatment as French citizens; yet, upon their arrival in metropolitan France, Mansor and her fellow migrants faced an entirely different reality.

Alizés used stories like Mansor's to foster among Antilleans a shared political and cultural identity based on their common experiences of discrimination at the hands of BUMIDOM in metropolitan France. *Alizés*'s editors were a part of a larger group of leaders within the Antillean press who emerged in the early 1970s, hoping to challenge state agencies, like BUMIDOM, to officially recognize their cultural differences. These

Antillean editors and activists claimed that Antilleans possessed a particular Creole identity, which was entirely separate from their political identity as French citizens. Yet, they also insisted that Antilleans' cultural particularities did not preclude them from being French citizens. They argued that Antilleans were both Creole and French, and they struggled to be recognized as such by the French government. This chapter argues that beginning in the early 1970s, Antillean activists used the popular press as forum to create a dual identity for Antilleans as both Creole and French. In doing so, they were at the forefront of the movement for the "right to difference" in France.

Historians have tended to privilege other postcolonial immigrants' role in debates about diversity in France.⁶ They have argued that it was the anti-racism movement, largely organized by the second generation of Algerian and West African immigrants, that opened up the possibility for the "right to difference" in France during the early 1980s. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the French government actively encouraged immigration from its former colonies. These immigrants provided France with the labor it needed to rebuild the nation following the Second World War. This abruptly changed in the 1970s when economic recession set in across Europe. Employers ceased to recruit immigrant labor, but large numbers of immigrants continued to settle in France, resulting in a visible group of unemployed foreigners. Moreover, as employment opportunities grew scarcer, French workers blamed immigrants for driving down wages and pushing them out of their jobs. Official policy and public opinion concerning immigration

⁶ See: Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Alain-Philippe Durand, *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002); Carrie Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

transformed from an economic necessity to an economic and social “problem” that needed to be solved.

Scholars have demonstrated how the category of “foreigner” became synonymous with the term “immigrant” in 1970s France.⁷ In public and official discourse, the word “immigrant” was indeterminately used to signify those of non-European descent or appearance regardless of their nationality. In other words, questions of race and ethnicity within French society became conflated with the term “immigration”. The “immigration problem” referred to distinct racial categories of peoples whose cultural differences posed a perceived threat to national unity and identity. It was therefore primarily individuals of North African descent and blacks from West Africa and the Caribbean who were assumed to be the “immigrants”, although many of them were in fact French nationals.

More specifically, the “immigration problem” referred to the young second generation of immigrants who despite being born in France appeared to be unassimilated and on the margins of French society. In 1974, the French government officially banned immigration, but it proved unsuccessful in preventing family reunifications. This brought about a major change in France’s immigrant population. Whereas young men had made up the majority of immigrants until the early 1970s, in the mid-1970s and 1980s women and children began to dominate the immigrant population. Before families settled in France, many immigrant workers had been housed in hostels and boardinghouses, which kept them apart from the majority of French nationals. The

⁷ See: Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992), especially Chapter 3, entitled “The ‘problem’ of immigration”; Gérard Noiriel, *Le creuset français: histoire de l’immigration XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1988); Patrick Weil, *France et ses étrangers: l’aventure d’une politique de l’immigration 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991); Patrick Weil, *La république et sa diversité: Immigration, intégration, discrimination* (Paris: Seuil, 2005); Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *Citoyenneté, nationalité et immigration* (Paris: Arcantère, 1987); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, ‘Race’ and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

arrival of families meant immigrants were now a part of the mainstream housing market. At the same time, children of immigrants were enrolled in French schools. As a result, immigrants became more visible on a daily basis in a growing number of neighborhoods. Their increased visibility was remarkable for one reason: in contrast to earlier generations, this new wave of immigrants was instantly recognizable because of their skin color.⁸ Officials feared that if France's "immigration problem" was not solved, the nation would be torn apart by a similar form of social and economic unrest that had erupted in race riots in several cities across Britain.⁹

As the children of postwar immigrants reached adulthood in the 1970s and 1980s, they became increasingly resentful of their status as second-class citizens. French citizenship purportedly granted them equality; yet, they faced widespread discrimination in housing and employment. In 1972, the *Front National* (FN) emerged as a popular right-wing political party seeking to unify a variety of far-right parties against immigration. The party's platform blamed non-European immigrants for causing crime and unemployment, and revived the old *Action française* slogan "La France aux français" or "France for the French." In response, second- and third-generation immigrants, many of whom were French nationals, formed a left-wing anti-racism movement, which sought to unite all of France's ethnic minority groups against the growing popularity of a racist politics in France. Together, they mobilized support for

⁸ Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); See: Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁹ In 1958, a series of racially motivated riots broke out in the Notting Hill neighborhood of London, England. Racial tension between white working-class "Teddy Boys" and recent Caribbean migrants erupted in two weeks of violence. These riots strained the already bad relationship between the London Metropolitan Police and the British Caribbean community, which claimed that the police had not taken their reports of racial attacks seriously and had failed to protect them.

the socialist presidential candidate, François Mitterrand, who just two months prior to his election to the presidency in May 1981, had proclaimed “le droit à la différence” or “the right to difference” in France during a speech in Lorient. Mitterrand argued that it was time for the government to officially recognize France’s immigrant languages and cultures and guarantee them a place in French public life.

In the early 1980s, Mitterrand’s new team of socialist political leaders enthusiastically embraced the ideal of cultural difference. They supported anti-racism organizations, such as *SOS Racisme*, which was formed in 1984 as direct response to the growing electoral appeal of the *Front National*. *SOS Racisme*’s principal aims were to promote racial harmony and to protect ethnic minority groups against the spread of racism. It prided itself on uniting youths of all different backgrounds in a struggle against a common enemy: racism. Historically, the French Republic does not acknowledge the racial and cultural particularities of its citizens. Instead, it chooses to interact with its citizens as universal individuals who have purportedly given up all group and particular affiliations in favor of French citizenship. Opponents of multiculturalism, known as “the right to difference” in France, argued that claiming the right to cultural difference fundamentally violated what it meant to be French.¹⁰ Others believed that France needed to protect a national culture that immigrants should assimilate into.¹¹

¹⁰ For discussion of the Republican public sphere and the abstract citizen see: Dominique Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens: sur l'idée moderne de nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Jeremy Jennings, "Citizenship, Republicanism, and Multiculturalism in Contemporary France," *British Journal of Political Science* 30, no. 4 (October 2000): 575-597.

¹¹ For scholarship highlighting the relationship between assimilationism and republicanism see: Alain Finkielkraut, *La défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987); Christian Jelen, *Les casseurs de la République* (Paris: Plon, 1997), Christian Jelen, “La Régression Multiculturaliste,” *Le débat* 97 (1997); Christian Jelen and Ilios Yannakakis, *La famille, secret de l'intégration: enquête sur la France immigrée* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1993).

Following the Second World War, France, like other European nations, sought to distance itself from the Nazi-allied Vichy regime's use of race as a biological category to deport and exterminate millions of French Jews. This recent past, combined with the republican tradition of universalism, have made discussions of racial difference taboo and effectively excluded from public discourse in postwar France.¹² In the early 1980s, the anti-racism movement brought discussions of race to the forefront, using concepts of difference and multiculturalism to challenge republican perceptions of Frenchness. Members of the anti-racism movement argued for the right to be both different *and* French. Their struggle for the "right to difference" represented a shift away from assimilation toward the possibility of multiculturalism in France.

This narrative of French multiculturalism as a response to the increasing popularity of the *Front National* tends to oversimplify French anti-racism as a unified movement of racial "others" who experienced similar forms of exclusion and therefore, banded together to fight a singular form of discrimination. When we consider the particular case of Antillean migrants, it becomes clear that this was not the case. Antilleans are French citizens; yet, because of their racial and cultural differences, they are often treated as and perceived to be immigrants. Consequently, scholars have wrongly assumed that because Antilleans' experiences in France were similar to those of postcolonial immigrants, they naturally aligned themselves with these cultural and

¹² For scholarship on the ways in which race has been excluded from public discussion in France, see: Herrick Chapman and Laura Levine Frader, eds., *Race in France: interdisciplinary perspectives on the politics of difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Tyler Stovall and Sue Peabody, eds., *The Color of Liberty: History of Race in France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Rita C.K. Chin et al., *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009).

political groups in France.¹³ This chapter calls into question this assumption. It demonstrates that Antillean migrants' interactions with and position in French society was very different from that of postcolonial immigrants. It explores how Antilleans' particular status as both French citizens and racial and cultural "others" shaped their role in bringing about the possibility of the "right to difference" in 1980s France. In doing so, it illuminates how inclusion and exclusion worked in postwar France for particular migrant groups, such as Antilleans.

There is a tendency for scholars of the French anti-racism movement to characterize the introduction of President François Mitterrand's policy of the "right to difference" in the 1980s as a complete break in France's immigration policy from assimilation to multiculturalism.¹⁴ In other words, inclusion and exclusion in postwar France worked as a uniform set of official policies. However, an examination of Antilleans' particular case reveals that Antillean migrants were neither systematically included as French citizens, nor were they entirely excluded as racial and cultural others. Rather, inclusion and exclusion worked as a set of negotiations among Antilleans, government officials, and social aid organizations. These interactions concerning Antilleans' status and role in French society shaped discussions of the "right to difference" in France. This chapter argues that the "right to difference" was not a uniform policy brought on by a homogenous anti-racism movement; rather, Mitterrand's

¹³ See: Alain Anselin, *L'émigration antillaise en France: la troisième île*, (Paris: Karthala, 2000). Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁴ See: Sarah Waters, *Social Movements in France: Towards a New Citizenship* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Catherine Lloyd, *Discourses of Antiracism in France* (Aldershot, England, Ashgate, 1998); Catherine Lloyd, "Anti-racism, racism and asylum-seekers in France," *Patterns of Prejudice* 37, no.3 (2003): 323-340.

articulation of the “right to difference” was the culmination of a gradual move toward a tentative cultural plurality in which Antilleans played a formative role.

Since 1989, discussions of diversity in France have largely focused on the particular status of Islam.¹⁵ Debates about the place of multiculturalism in France shifted from “the right to difference” to religion, particularly individuals’ outward expressions of cultural difference in the form of religious symbols. This change in the terms of the debate is largely due to the recent headscarf affair. In the fall of 1989, three Muslim girls were suspended from school when they refused to remove their veils in class. The *Conseil d’État* ruled that that the veil’s religious expression was compatible with *laïcité* (secularism) of public schools. It recognized students’ legal rights to wear the veil, but nonetheless allowed school officials to forbid them if they were worn to proselytize, disrupt order, or interfered with the school’s mission of sexual equality.

In 2004, President Jacques Chirac signed a law definitively banning the display of “ostentatious religious symbols” in public schools. The law purportedly applied to all students, but in reality, it was specifically meant to prohibit female French Muslim students from wearing headscarves in school. Supporters of the headscarf ban argued that in publicly donning religious and cultural symbols, French Muslim students were violating what it meant to be French. They claimed that the headscarf threatened republican notions of a French citizen as an abstract individual divested of all differentiation and particular affiliations.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jocelyne Cesari, *Musulmans et républicains: les jeunes, l’islam et la France* (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1998); Alain Gresh, *L’islam, la République et le monde* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Cédric Vincent, *Bleu blanc beur* (Nice: France Europe éditions livres, 2006); Jonathan Laurence, *Integrating Islam: political and religious challenges in contemporary France* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006); Dounia and Lylia Bouzar, *La République ou la burqa: les services publics face à l’islam manipulé* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2010).

¹⁶ For scholarship on the headscarf affair in France see: Saïd Bouamama, *L’affaire Du Foulard*

Because media coverage of the headscarf affair has made questions of religion, particularly Islam, the central issue in discussions about difference, scholars have overlooked Antilleans' important contributions to the debates about diversity in France. This chapter argues that Antilleans are in fact central to these discussions concerning the politics of multiculturalism. The first part of this chapter examines Antillean migrants' public interactions with BUMIDOM (the Bureau), the state agency that organized Antillean migration. It argues that these public interactions were at the forefront of the emergence of a limited form of multiculturalism that began in the 1970s and culminated with Mitterrand's election in 1981 and the subsequent implementation of "right to difference" in France. The first chapter of this dissertation demonstrated how Antilleans leveraged their citizenship in private letters to BUMIDOM officials to obtain equal access to employment and housing, and reshape the meaning of French citizenship. This second chapter continues this narrative, exploring how Antilleans' private claims became public criticisms of BUMIDOM and the beginning of a political movement to gain official recognition of their Creole culture. It contends that ultimately, it was the Antillean community who influenced public opinion and placed pressure on the Bureau to reexamine its migration policy so that it took into consideration Antillean migrants' cultural specificities.

Antilleans argued for a particular kind of multicultural citizenship, namely one that enabled them to express their cultural difference in the forum of cultural

Islamique: La Production D'un Racisme Respectable (Roubaix: Geai Bleu, 2004), John Richard Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le foulard et la République* (Paris: Découverte, 1995), Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), Pierre Tévanian, *Le voile médiatique: un faux débat* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2005), Bronwyn Winter, *Hijab and the Republic: Uncovering the French Headscarf Debate* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

associations. These kinds of claims for the “right to difference” were compatible with republican notions of cultural difference as an exclusively private matter. This made it easier for the government to consider Antilleans’ new way of being French. In 1975, the Bureau officially changed its organization’s mission, and began to financially support Antillean cultural associations. This decision was a break from the government’s historical understanding of the place of difference in France. Not only did the Bureau officially recognize Antilleans as cultural distinct citizens, but it also used public funds to support Antilleans’ expressions of difference. Cultural difference was slowly becoming a public matter.

The second part of this chapter explores how Antillean migrants used the Bureau’s public support of its cultural associations to forge a unique ethnic activism movement in France. Throughout the 1970s, Antillean migrants founded hundreds of cultural organizations that celebrated their Creole culture. Together, these organizations formed a France-based Creole movement that challenged the government to change its policy of assimilation and recognize Antilleans’ particular Creole identity. They constituted a unique form of Antillean ethnic activism that was separate from the anti-racism movement, but nonetheless shaped discussions about the “right to difference” in postwar France.

Antilleans carved out a space for their difference in the nation by using an established institution around which particular groups in France could legally forge a group identity: cultural associations. In doing so, Antillean migrants established themselves in the nation as the “right” kind of culturally distinct French citizens who may have pushed the boundaries of the Republic to include their difference, but did so in

a way that was acceptable to the French government. This is why the government was so threatened by female French Muslim students' decision to express their cultural difference in donning the headscarf. Their struggle for the right to wear the headscarf in public schools was different from how other groups had argued for the right to difference in France. Whereas Antilleans argued for their particular group identity within the confines of republican institutions, namely cultural associations, French Muslims sought new ways to be different *and* French that did not fit within the Republic's established framework for expressing group identities within the nation.

This chapter contends that claims for difference and group identity first developed within Antillean cultural associations; these claims have slowly developed into the contemporary expressions of difference that are now embodied in the Muslim headscarf. The history of Antilleans' struggle to be recognized as both Creole and French reveals that the debates about the "right to difference" in France did not simply emerge as the Socialist government's response to the far-right's racist campaign against Algerian immigrants. Antilleans' demands during the late 1960s and 1970s regarding their status and role in French society laid the foundation for discussions about difference in the early 1980s.

Part I. Public Criticism of BUMIDOM and the Creation of an Antillean Creole Identity

Antilleans employed three strategies, which together, put pressure on the government to reexamine the meaning of French citizenship. First, the previous chapter of this dissertation explored Antillean migrants' personal letters to various public officials, in which they openly stated both their French citizenship and Creole identity.

In these letters, Antilleans not only claimed their rights as citizens of France, but also pushed the boundaries of French citizenship to include their cultural and racial differences. Simultaneously, Antillean activists began to publish articles in newspapers and pamphlets, publicly criticizing the Bureau's treatment of Antilleans as second-class citizens. These types of publications circulated among Antilleans in both the Caribbean and France and made them aware of the harsh realities they faced in France as migrants. Activists used their political writings to transform Antilleans' struggle to be recognized as first-class citizens from private complaints in the form of letters to the beginnings of a more public political and social movement. An even more public debate emerged in the early 1970s when the mainstream Antillean press also began to expose the discrimination Antilleans faced in France at the hands of other French citizens and the Bureau. Antilleans successfully used the press, which reached both Antilleans and metropolitans, as their third strategy to build a political movement that challenged state agencies, like BUMIDOM, to officially recognize their cultural differences. This marked the beginning of Antillean ethnic activism in France. Instead of making singular claims in private letters to government officials, Antilleans began to claim their rights as a collective political group.

Political Pamphlets and Newspapers

In the 1970s, leaders within the Antillean community began to publically vocalize BUMIDOM's poor treatment of migrants and its failure to provide adequate social and economic support. They sought to make Antilleans' struggles in France a part of the public discourse. Outspoken activists published and circulated their criticisms of the Bureau and the migration process in pamphlets and in the mainstream press. One such

political pamphlet, entitled “Nous Créoles” was a forum in which migrants expressed and made public their grievances. In particular, it published editorials from Antillean migrants that offered scathing critiques of the Bureau. One migrant wrote, “I am in complete despair. Three months ago I lost my wife and I wrote to BUMIDOM, asking for help to repatriate my three children.” When the Bureau responded that it could not help with such matters, the migrant described how he fell deeper and deeper into depression, and warned his “dear compatriots” about the harsh reality of migration. “That’s what the French government is...do not let yourselves be trapped by BUMIDOM...remorse...will weigh you down later. Why did the Bureau make these beautiful promises?”¹⁷

In a different proclamation published by “Nous Créoles”, Marcel Gargar, a member of the Communist Party and Senator of Guadeloupe’s representative assembly, expressed his party’s support for the current movement in another overseas department, Réunion, to suspend the Bureau’s activities and recruitment of migrants. Gargar encouraged Antilleans to also fight the Bureau and claim their right as French citizens to freely migrate to the Hexagon without having to pass through a government organization. “We, natives of the overseas departments, we want to draw the public opinion’s attention to our particular form of repression that is emigration.”¹⁸ Gargar criticized the Bureau as an oppressive organization that used its jurisdiction over migration to control Antilleans’ movements in metropolitan France and keep them in a subordinate position as second-class citizens.

¹⁷ “Nous Créoles”, No. 2, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

In the spring of 1971, a separate Antillean publication, *La voix de l'émigration* or "The voice of emigration" circulated yet another condemnation of the Bureau and its female adaptation program at the Crouy vocational education center and boardinghouse. In an article entitled "BUMIDOM's welcome: Crouy-sur-Ourcq", a group of Antillean reporters related the experiences of sixty-six young female migrants who had just arrived in France, and were now living at Crouy. The purpose of public criticisms, such as those in "Nous Créoles" and these interviews, was to make Antilleans more aware of the injustices they faced as second-class citizens in the Hexagon. "This world [of metropolitan France] does not reflect the promises that the Bureau has made... Shorthand typists, secretaries, nurse's aids, hospital workers, household domestics, this is the range of professions from which Antillean women can choose. However, at CROUY, they [young Antillean women] are all pushed toward household work: mop the floor, peel the vegetables, cook and clean the rooms."¹⁹ The reporters argued that BUMIDOM's false promises of vocational training for high-status jobs compelled Antillean women to migrate to metropolitan France in search of social mobility. However, upon their arrival, Antillean women learned the reality: the Bureau was preparing them to fill undesirable and low-status jobs refused by metropolitan citizens.

Around the same time, in March 1971, the Antillean activist group *Groupe d'Action de la Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise* also published a critical report on the Bureau's training centers entitled "Investigation of an organization beyond reproach". The *Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise* (CAG) described migration as a process of deceit.

¹⁹ "L'accueil du BUMIDOM: Crouy S/Ourcq," *La voix de l'émigration* 2 (Mars/Avril 1971). This article was attached to the following letter: Bernard Reine au Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

Bureau officials enthusiastically handed out brochures to young, unemployed Antilleans glamorizing the opportunities for social advancement in France. It “gave [young migrants] a free plane ticket for the “motherland”, promising “well-being, stability, abundance, [and] security. When one has nothing to eat, a free plane ticket is very enticing. Even more so, when you are promised the most lucrative job [and] the best job training.”²⁰ CAG claimed that the Bureau sought to maintain strict control over Antillean migration so that it benefitted France, not Antilleans themselves. First, the Bureau pushed migrants toward low-status and undesirable jobs. CAG reported that according to a psychologist who worked for the Bureau at its Fort-de-France office in Martinique, the medical and career tests he performed to determine candidates’ professional skills and potential areas of employment did not have any value. “Conceived in France, for the French, they have no worth in the Antilles.”²¹ Regardless of candidates’ level of education, job skills, or career aspirations, these tests consistently concluded that Antilleans were best suited to fulfill France’s need for unskilled labor. After being selected for low-status jobs, “the (im)migrants are deported to [training] centers”, where they endured oppressive discipline. For CAG, these training centers were the second form of oppression endured by Antillean migrants at the hands of the Bureau. Once the young women arrived at Crouy, they were “at the mercy of the center’s Director, who...immediately sets out to control them.”²² Residents could only leave the center to visit their families if Crouy’s director had pre-authorized their absence. The Bureau allowed migrants’ families to come to Crouy to visit the young

²⁰ Le Groupe d’Action de la Coummunauté Antillo-Guyanais, “Enquête sur un organisme au-dessus de tout soupçon”, *Edition Norman-Bethune*, Mars 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

women on either Saturday evenings or Sunday afternoons. During these visits, the young women and their families had to remain in the center's common areas. CAG claimed that the Bureau imposed these regulations because it felt they were "simply necessary for the legal security and future of the young women."²³

La Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise viewed the Bureau's adaptation centers and training programs as tools of assimilation that "strongly resemble[d] the beginnings of brainwashing."²⁴ It contended that at Crouy, the young Antillean women learned to devalue their Antillean culture in favor of French culture. "Integration into white society began with the denigration of Antilleans' race: the use of an iron to straighten hair, [and] authorization to wear rollers at ungodly hours. This was a part of the program of alienation, of depersonalization, of transformation to which our sisters of Crouy were forced to submit."²⁵ In addition, CAG claimed that the Bureau deliberately designed the length of Crouy's vocational training programs to ensure that Antillean migrants would not only occupy low-status positions in French society, but also passively accept this second-class status as their fate. In CAG's opinion, three weeks was not long enough to teach young women any useful job skills other than those of a housekeeper; yet it was "still a period of time sufficiently long enough to accustom the girls to censorship (the policing of mail), to harassing, and to impregnate them with the most degrading values of a dying bourgeoisie."²⁶

²³ Le Groupe d'Action de la Coummunauté Antillo-Guyanais, "Enquête sur un organisme au-dessus de tout soupçon", *Edition Norman-Bethune*, Mars 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

CAG argued that the short time period also prevented Antillean women from banning together and collectively developing “vague impulses of resistance”. As proof of the Bureau’s controlling nature, it offered one young resident’s impression of Crouy based on her personal experiences at the center. According to her, the Bureau designed the center’s rules to keep them from forming personal relationships. “We are not allowed to dance together [and] do not have the right to visit a friend’s room.” CAG insisted that these type of strict regulations “prevented all lasting political work, all militancy” from developing in the center. “Division guarantees docility. Crouy’s oppressors know this well.”²⁷ CAG used this harsh language in its report on the Bureau to convince its Antillean readers that through control and oppression, Crouy instructors were attempting to keep Antillean women in their inferior positions as second-class citizens. For CAG, the testimonies of the women it interviewed at Crouy embodied the Bureau’s real and malicious intentions: to create a population of adapted migrants who did not question their unequal status or the authority of their employers, and thus, would not challenge France’s social hierarchy.

These scathing public criticisms of BUMIDOM articulated by *La Communauté Antillo-Guyanais*, Gargar’s letter in the pamphlet “Nous Créoles”, and *La voix de l’émigration*, were politically motivated. All three organizations, including the Guadeloupean Communist Party to which Gargar belonged, identified as autonomists. They promoted Guadeloupe and Martinique’s autonomy within the French community. Autonomists wanted the Antilles to remain a part of the French nation, but at the same time, they argued that because of Antilleans’ separate Creole culture, they should have

²⁷ Le Groupe d’Action de la Coummunauté Antillo-Guyanais, “Enquête sur un organisme au-dessus de tout soupçon”, *Edition Norman-Bethune*, Mars 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

more control of their local affairs. In other words, autonomists constructed Antilleans' identity as both Creole and French. They used political pamphlets and newspapers as a tool to promote this political agenda. Pro-autonomy activists employed the harsh language of "brainwashing", "depersonalization", and "oppressive discipline" to characterize the Bureau as more sinister and controlling than it probably was. The Bureau's records include many cases in which it granted Antillean migrants financial aid to secure housing and employment, as well as airfare for family members' migrations.²⁸ In exaggerating the Bureau's demeaning treatment of migrants, autonomists hoped to anger Antilleans and incite them to reevaluate the meaning of their French citizenship. Their public critiques of BUMIODM were meant to mobilize Antilleans around their shared experiences of oppression in metropolitan France. Autonomists wanted Antillean migrants to believe that in the eyes of the Bureau and more broadly, the French government, they were second-class citizens. They hoped that this realization would make Antilleans aware of their shared experiences as "others" or members of a distinct cultural group: Creole. Autonomists used the press as a public forum to forge a Creole identity for Antilleans with the intention that they would not only embrace it, but also leverage it to make political demands, such as access to the social mobility and first-class French citizenship that the Bureau had promised.

For example, in "Nous Créoles", Gargar encouraged Antillean migrants to assert themselves as French citizens who deserved the same rights and privileges as metropolitan citizens. He demanded that Antilleans be free from the Bureau's "repression" and control, arguing that Antilleans, like all French citizens, should be free

²⁸ See chapter 1 in which I examine Antilleans migrants' personal letters requesting social aid from the Bureau and the Bureau's responses detailing the specific kinds of social and economic support it offered migrants.

to migrate without the intervention of a government agency. At the same time, Gargar openly expressed Antilleans' particular identity as "natives of the overseas departments".²⁹ Moreover, the title of the political pamphlet—"Nous Créoles"—in which Gargar's remarks were published, suggested that Antillean migrants shared a "Creole" identity that was separate from their French citizenship. He encouraged Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to embrace their close "connections derived from diverse forms of political, economic and cultural repression and discrimination."³⁰ Gargar challenged Antilleans to demand equal treatment as French citizens; but he also wanted Antilleans to struggle for official recognition of the "particular form of repression" that they had endured as racially and culturally distinct migrants. In doing so, he forged a Creole identity around which Antilleans could mobilize to claim their equal, yet culturally particular positions in the French nation.

Regionalization and the Antillean Popular Press

In the late 1960s, the National Assembly began to debate the possibility of regional reform for both its metropolitan and overseas departments. Regionalization was a kind of decentralization of the state government. It would give the locally elected assemblies of each department or region more control over its affairs, as well as the power to make legislative decisions that had previously been made by the State.³¹ In 1972, the National Assembly approved a series of regional reforms, grouping France's ninety-six departments into twenty-two separate regions. A legislative council of locally elected deputies was formed in each region, granting France's metropolitan regions

²⁹ "Nous Créoles", No. 2, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Un choix très simple: Français, à part entière? Ou entièrement à part?", *La Vague*, n°11, January 13, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

significantly more economic and cultural autonomy. However, the National Assembly was still unsure about the regionalization of the Antilles. In May 1967, the pro-independence group GONG had led a construction workers' strike in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, resulting in a violent confrontation between Antillean workers and the French army in which nearly fifty Guadeloupean workers and protestors were killed.³² During a time when anti-France voices were growing stronger and DOM officials were struggling to maintain French political authority, the National Assembly worried that its overseas departments were not yet ready for regional reform. It argued that decentralization of the DOM would politically and culturally divide metropolitan France and the Antilles, threatening national unity. Thus, for the time being, Guadeloupe and Martinique remained departments of France without any of the regional autonomy that had been granted to France's metropolitan departments.

This decision not to regionalize the overseas departments infuriated Antilleans across the political spectrum. Whereas French politics is divided into the right and left, the political status issue in the Antillean islands provided the fundamental point of identification for local party politics and created three main groups: *assimilationiste*, *autonomiste*, and *indépendantiste*. Assimilationists argued that legislative laws were not being equally applied in the Hexagon and the overseas departments; autonomists saw their goal of cultural autonomy within the French nation slip away. For nationalists who supported Guadeloupean and Martinican independence, this was just another example of the government's attempt to coercively maintain political control of the Antilles. In response, activists aligned with all three camps aired their grievances in the popular

³² "Les grandes dates du mouvement nationaliste guadeloupéen, 1928-1981: un demi-siècle déjà!" *Le Magazine Guadeloupéen (MAGWA)*, January-February 1981, 18.

press, hoping to mobilize Antilleans. In making public Antillean migrants' many experiences as second-class citizens, activists sought to empower Antilleans as both a political and cultural group. BUMIDOM, because of its familiarity to Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic as a part of their daily lives, became the focus of activists' political discontentment and frustration. The National Assembly's refusal to make Guadeloupe and Martinique regions of France and grant them more local autonomy was symptomatic of the everyday injustices Antilleans faced in metropolitan France.

Amidst these regionalization debates in the early 1970s, the popular magazine, *Alizés*, published several articles portraying Antillean migrants' experiences in France as a constant struggle against discrimination and racism. *Alizés*'s founder, Father Pierre Lacroix, perceived of the magazine as a "place of reflection" for Antilleans to "confront the collective problems" they experienced during the process of migration.³³ Lacroix was also committed to informing Antilleans in Guadeloupe and Martinique about Antillean migrants' shared experiences in metropolitan France. He named *Alizés* for the warm Caribbean winds that flowed northeast to Europe; it was meant to be a network of information for Antilleans residing in France and in the Caribbean.

In the magazine's first issue of 1971, Etienne Gaujour, an Antillean priest, recounted his conversations with several Antillean workers at Bichat Hospital in Paris. When asked how he was received in France, one migrant responded: "What makes me suffer is the color of our skin."³⁴ He mentioned that when he offered his seat to someone on the metro, the person refused and then took a seat a few places away from him.

Alizés intentionally chose to relate this anecdote to its readers in order to characterize

³³ Prêtre Pierre Lacroix quoted in Anny Dominique Curtius, "Utopies du BUMIDOM: Construire l'avenir dans un 'là-bas' postcontact," *French Forum* 35, nos.2-3 (Spring/Fall 2010): 135-155.

³⁴ Etienne Gaujour, "A l'Hôpital Bichat avec les Antillais," *Alizés*, January/February 1971, 16.

metropolitan France as an unwelcoming place for Antilleans. When this particular migrant stepped into the public space of Paris's subways, he expected to be received as a fellow French citizen. Instead, he was ignored; he failed to form a relationship with his purported compatriot in what was seemingly an ordinary everyday encounter. Public transportation or "transport en commun" was intended as a common space for all French citizens, literally a collective service and space for the public. However, the migrant felt singled out, as if he was not a part of this collective experience. He understood this rejection in terms of the color of his skin. In his interactions with his fellow French citizens in the public realm of transportation, the migrant discovered his difference.

The following year in 1972, *Alizés* published the first installment of "Diary of an Antillean in Paris". In this reoccurring column, Max Loubli, an Antillean migrant, reported on his life in France. Readers followed this migrant's story from his arrival in Paris through his struggles to find housing and employment. Loubli related no positive experiences; in every facet of his life, he endured discrimination and racism in his interactions with government agencies and his fellow French citizens. *Alizés*'s decision to only publish Loubli's negative impressions was intentional. *Alizés*' editors recognized the value of using popular magazines and newspapers to inform the Antillean public about how migrants experienced their difference and negotiated their position in metropolitan society. As Loubli discovered his difference over the course of several installments of "Diary of an Antillean in Paris", *Alizés*'s readers were supposed to see themselves in Loubli's struggles and realize their own difference. BUMIDOM's official discourse insisted upon Antilleans' equal status as French citizens. Yet, in his relationships with government agencies and metropolitans, Loubli did not benefit from

the sense of belonging that his French citizenship purportedly granted him; instead, he felt isolated and on the margins of French society.

For example, at one point during his search for an apartment, Loubli telephoned a landlord who assured him that the apartment about which he was inquiring was still available to rent and that he should come quickly to view it. When Loubli arrived at the apartment, the landlord seemed surprised by his appearance: “Oh! Are you the gentleman who phoned?...It’s a shame, sir....My mother just arrived unexpectedly; she grew weary of staying away from us, and her arrival obliges us to...”³⁵ The reader was expected to fill in the next part of the story with the assumption that upon seeing the color of his skin, the landlord no longer wanted to rent to Loubli. According to Loubli, this was just one story of many in which he was either denied housing or employment because of his skin color. “On the telephone, one cannot match a skin color to the voice. So imagine the surprise...”³⁶

Alizés used the first story about a migrant’s experience in the public realm of the Paris subway and Loubli’s private interaction with a landlord to relate how Antilleans’ difference was constructed in both public and private spaces. In public spaces, such as the subway, migrants felt outside of the collective experience. The rental market, as a space where the public and private converged posed an entirely different obstacle to Antilleans’ sense of belonging. Loubli freely participated in and had equal access to the public rental market. However, when his interactions with the landlord became a private matter in which the landlord decided who had access to his private space, Loubli perceived his difference. French public education had provided Loubli with the ability

³⁵ “Journal d’un Antillais à Paris,” *Alizés*, March-June 1972, 28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

to sound like a French citizen, but his skin color made him feel marginalized as an undesirable tenant. *Alizés* employed this narrative of Antilleans' difference and isolation to forge a collective political identity based upon Antilleans' shared experiences as a racial and cultural minority in France. These stories of discrimination and alienation were meant to incite resentment among Antilleans residing in both France and the Caribbean. They acted as a political call for Antilleans to realize their common struggle and band together to claim their belonging to the French nation, and to demand equal access to housing and high-status employment.

Antillean activists' efforts to use the press to build a political movement began to coalesce in the second half of 1970s. In 1976, the monthly news magazine, *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, assumed the task of reconnecting Antillean migrants with their "native lands" of Guadeloupe and Martinique. It sought to promote solidarity among Antilleans residing in both the Caribbean and France by providing its readers with information about their common struggles.³⁷ In 1978, Martinican migrant Ernest Marcelin became editor of *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, and changed the publication's name to *Flash Antilles Afrique*.³⁸ In doing so, he aligned Antilleans' fight against French oppression with the struggles of other ethnically black islands, such as Réunion and St. Pierre and Miquelon, that shared a similar history of oppression as France's former slave colonies.³⁹ Marcelin was particularly concerned with the fight against cultural oppression that manifested itself in France's official policy of assimilation, which sought to eliminate cultural

³⁷ "Un journal...pourquoi?", *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, April 1976, p.2.

³⁸ Ernest Marcelin was and still is a prominent leader of the Antillean community in France. After several years as a magazine editor, he founded the Antillean Catholic prayer group "Christ et Vivant", which today meets every two weeks and has approximately one thousand members. It welcomes all members, but is particularly focused on helping Antilleans who are confronting social and economic problems.

³⁹ Ernest Marcelin, "Flash Antilles Afrique: pourquoi?", *Flash Antilles Afrique*, October 1978, p.15.

differences. In an editorial entitled “What cultural identity?”, Marcelin called upon Antilleans to challenge assimilation and claim their “right to difference”. He encouraged Antillean migrants to “rediscover” their Creole culture and language and seek a “new cultural balance” between their French citizenship and Creole culture. In other words, Marcelin wanted Antilleans to use their unique status as both Creole and French to fight for what he called “cultural pluralism” in France.⁴⁰ Marcelin also published letters to the editor in which readers reflected upon Antilleans’ right to claim a cultural identity separate from that of France. In one such letter, a student at the university in Fort-de-France, Martinique, depicted the French government as a culturally oppressive force. “France has always ignored the fact that we [Antilleans] are a people with our own cultural, intellectual, and linguistic heritage, and as such, we have the right to develop it, to enrich it, and to make it live.”⁴¹ For this reader, it was time for Antilleans to claim this right to their own Creole identity.

Autonomy and “the right to difference”

Throughout the 1970s, leaders within the Antillean press sought to foster Antilleans’ particular Creole identity. They used the press to argue that assimilation had caused Antilleans to distance themselves from their Creole culture in favor of French culture and citizenship. While the nationalist press claimed that Antilleans’ distinct cultural identity justified Guadeloupe and Martinique’s independence, autonomist activists believed Antilleans possessed a Creole culture, which was entirely separate from, but also compatible with their political identity as French citizens. As the nationalists and autonomists publicly debated the Antilles’ future political status in their

⁴⁰ Ernest Marcelin, “Quelle identité culturelle?”, *Flash Antilles Afrique*, November-December 1979, p.5.

⁴¹ E. Jularid, “Le droit à l’identité culturelle”, *Flash Antilles Afrique*, December 1979-January 1980, p.6.

respective publications, the French government sought to discredit nationalists' claims for independence and secure the Antilles' union with France. Aware of the government's concern for a burgeoning independence movement, autonomists called for "the right to difference" as the less threatening alternative to independence. In doing so, they played a substantial role in forging an Antillean political movement that challenged the republican model of assimilation and argued for the introduction of a specific form of multiculturalism in French society. For autonomists, Antilleans were both Creole and French and argued that they should be recognized as such by the French government. In addition to claiming equal access to employment and housing, autonomists wanted government agencies, such as BUMIDOM, to financially support Antilleans' private cultural associations in metropolitan France.

As Antilleans' demands for "the right to difference" became more a part of the public discourse in the second half of the 1970s, the general public and government officials began to realize that the Bureau had failed to assimilate Antillean migrants into the nation. For metropolitan officials, the mere fact of the existence of an Antillean cultural movement was reason enough to believe that migrants had become a discontented population isolated from the metropolitan community. On September 19, 1971, an article in *Le Monde*, entitled "Antilleans on the path of exile", exposed Antillean migrants' feelings of isolation. According to Father Bocquillon, a chaplain for Antillean migrants in the metropole, Antillean migrants "come up against in the metropole, more and more, racist reactions that force them to question the reality of their French citizenship. Some of them begin to feel closer to the Malians or the Senegalese,

immigrants like themselves, than their metropolitan compatriots.”⁴² Bocquillon argued that the experience of migration had alienated Antilleans from their fellow French citizens, making them feel as if their experiences in the metropole were closer to those of other black immigrants rather than a French citizen. Bocquillon blamed metropolitans’ poor treatment of Antilleans for the growing divide that migrants felt between themselves and metropolitans. He claimed that within the first six months of their arrival in France, Antilleans’ sense of national belonging had disappeared. Migration had “traumatized all [Antillean] migrants and if they had the money, they would all repatriate.”⁴³

Le Monde was not the only newspaper to report on the tense relationship between metropolitans and Antillean migrations. Local newspapers in France’s overseas departments played an important role in informing Antilleans who had remained in the islands about metropolitan events, and more importantly, migrants’ lives in the Hexagon. However, the goal of the local press was not merely to inform; the daily newspapers and magazines were also politically motivated efforts to mobilize the Antillean community. *Témoignages* was one such local newspaper. It was founded in 1944 as the press outlet of the Communist Party of Réunion (PCR), which in the 1970s was politically aligned with both the Martinican and Guadeloupean Communist Parties. In 1973, Marcel Gargar, a member of Guadeloupe’s Communist Party and an elected representative of Guadeloupe’s local assembly, expressed his support for communist leaders’ calls for autonomy in Réunion, an island located in the Indian Ocean, east of Africa. He agreed that metropolitan officials needed to recognize all of the overseas departments’ cultural

⁴² Jean-Pierre Clerc, “Les Antillais sur le chemin de l’exil,” *Le Monde*, September 19-10, 1971, p. 5, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

differences and grant them more control over their local affairs.⁴⁴ Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion shared the same political status as overseas departments of France. The people of Réunion were also French citizens; their migration experience was very similar to Antilleans' in that it was also facilitated and controlled by BUMIDOM. Therefore, although *Témoignages* was affiliated with Réunion's Communist Party, it also reported on Antillean migrants' experiences and was circulated throughout Guadeloupe and Martinique.

On July 10, 1973, *Témoignages*, detailed the recent lynching of a young Guadeloupean migrant in the Lorraine region by a mob at the rally of New Order, an extreme right political organization.⁴⁵ *Témoignages* linked this migrant's murder to what it perceived to be the increasing acceptance of racism in French society. "This lynching is characteristic of racist feelings that certain extreme right organizations, such as New Order, are developing in the population of France. Yet, racism is not solely expressed by radical groups, but has become an everyday, and even accepted phenomenon in French society."⁴⁶ *Témoignages* condemned the French government's complacency, arguing that although it knew of New Order's discriminatory goals, it did not prevent the group's rally against the immigration of people of color to France. However, it did prohibit the Communist League, an opponent of New Order, from attending the rally in order to protest New Order's opinions. Moreover, despite the fact that the lynching occurred in a crowd, no one did anything to prevent the young Guadeloupean's death. Although all evidence pointed to the deliberate and intentional

⁴⁴ Marcel Gargar, "Témoignage", le 6 novembre 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁴⁵ "Un jeune Guadeloupéen est lynché en Lorraine: la justice des uns et la peau des autres," *Témoignages*, 7 Juillet 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

nature of Rousseau's murder, the police only charged the assailant for manslaughter and not murder. *Témoignages* criticized the police's handling of the case, stating "the skin of a Guadeloupean is apparently worth less than that of a French man....This is not the first time in France that in the matter of justice, the color of one's skin has an influence on the act of accusation and judgment."⁴⁷

Local newspapers like *Témoignages* often retold stories that had already been published in metropolitan newspapers. However, they did not simply republish articles; they added commentary and analyzed the events to make them relevant and compelling to Antilleans. In the case of Rousseau's murder, *Témoignages* explicitly stated that his lynching had been reported in a "metropolitan newspaper", causing "a certain emotion in the Antilles, which the press echoes".⁴⁸ *Témoignages* chose to report on France's racially biased justice system and the government's complacency in spreading racism as a strategy to gain support for its own political agenda. The communist parties of the overseas departments used *Témoignages* as a public forum to relate particular kinds of events and stories that would anger Antilleans and encourage them to join their movement for autonomy.

On the other side of the Atlantic in metropolitan France, the minority ethnic press was also seeking to mobilize Antilleans around their anti-racism movement. One such publication, *Sans Frontière* (No Border), conceived of itself as a "weekly news magazine of immigration." Launched in March 1979, the editorial team included

⁴⁷ "Un jeune Guadeloupéen est lynché en Lorraine: la justice des uns et la peau des autres," *Témoignages*, 7 Juillet 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

journalists and activists from numerous ethnic groups, including Antilleans.⁴⁹ *Sans Frontière* emerged as the public voice of the anti-racism movement that was coalescing in the late 1970s and early 1980s in response to the rise of the National Front and its use of arguments about racial and cultural difference to justify why immigrants should be excluded from the French nation. Anti-racism sought to unite all of France's minorities in a singular movement. However, Antilleans were not well represented in this movement. They were wary of aligning themselves with a cause that separated them from the larger national community as "immigrants."

In order to gain more support within the Antillean community for the anti-racism movement, publications like *Sans Frontière* chose to report on stories that were relevant to Antilleans. In June 1981, *Sans Frontière*, published a letter from the Nanterre Office of Affordable Public Housing (HLM) informing Léa Larairie, an Antillean migrant, that she had been refused housing. The president of the Nanterre HLM Office explained that 23,000 immigrants already lived in Nanterre's public housing, creating a "ghetto". In order to avoid the establishment of large immigrant shantytowns in Nanterre, the President explained that he could no longer accept applications from immigrants or Antilleans.⁵⁰ *Sans Frontière* employed this story to argue that Antilleans and immigrants experienced similar forms of discrimination. Antilleans' French citizenship did not grant them equal access to housing; rather, because French officials perceived of Antillean migrants as racially and culturally different from metropolitans, they placed Antilleans in the category of "immigrant." For *Sans Frontière*, immigrants and

⁴⁹ Driss El Yazami, "France's Ethnic Minority Press," in *Post-colonial Cultures in France*, ed. Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney (New York: Routledge, 1997), 115-130.

⁵⁰ "L'Office HLM ne veut pas d'Antillais," *Sans Frontière*, June 13, 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art.7

Antilleans were excluded from the nation in similar ways and therefore, should be united in their fight against this exclusion. In relating stories such as this one, *Sans Frontière*'s editors hoped to make Antilleans' aware of how their struggles in metropolitan France mirrored those of immigrants. *Sans Frontière* believed that this realization would encourage Antilleans to align themselves with anti-racism, making the movement even broader and more effective.

The Failure of BUMIDOM

As the local press in the overseas departments and the minority press in France competed for Antillean migrants' support for their respective political agendas, they produced a large body of stories detailing Antilleans' treatment as second-class citizens. This information circulated throughout France and the Antilles, prompting public criticism of the Bureau. Headlines in mainstream newspapers began to question whether or not BUMIDOM had effectively assimilated Antillean migrants. In its September 19-20 issue, *Le Monde* reported that hundreds of thousands of Antillean migrants were now living in the metropole, concentrated in what it referred to as "islands of immigration" or particular Parisian neighborhoods. Antillean migrants, as an unassimilated population, were quickly becoming a social problem, which the Bureau had failed to adequately address. "A number of criticisms have been made concerning the actual politics of organized migration from the overseas departments to the metropole. Some of these criticisms address the methods [of migration], others call into question its nature, and even its very existence."⁵¹ According to *Le Monde*, the Minister of the Overseas Departments, Pierre Messmer, had openly admitted the inadequacies of the Bureau and

⁵¹ Jean-Pierre Clerc, "Les Antillais sur le chemin de l'exil," *Le Monde*, 19-20 Septembre 1971, p. 5, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

its professional training programs, which “confine migrants in subordinate jobs.”⁵² *Le Monde* also noted that despite substantial help from the Bureau, hotelkeepers and apartment owners discriminated against Antilleans, making it extremely difficult for them to secure housing. The experience of migration had only succeeded in making Antilleans feel less connected to the Hexagon and unsure about their French nationality. “Upon their arrival in France, Antilleans discover that they are black like the others”.⁵³ *Le Monde* warned the public that activists affiliated with autonomist groups, such as the *Rassemblement des émigrés martiniquais*, were drawing upon migrants’ sentiments of isolation to bolster support in the Antilles for more cultural and political autonomy. “The left and extreme left in Martinique and Guadeloupe are in agreement in denouncing [migration] as the deportation of the youth” and BUMIDOM as “the upholder of a new type of slave trade.”⁵⁴ According to *Le Monde*, this kind of language was dangerous because it divided Antilleans and metropolitans, threatening the political unity between France and its overseas departments.

In October 1974, Yvon Gouguenheim, a public servant specializing in immigrant issues, wrote a report corroborating *Le Monde*’s early concerns regarding Antillean migrants’ growing disillusionment with their treatment as second-class citizens. He published a scathing critique of BUMIDOM and its organization of Antillean migration. In his interviews with numerous Antillean migrants, Gouguenheim discovered that the Bureau had failed to effectively communicate with Antilleans. This had resulted in a general misunderstanding among Antilleans concerning the migration process.

⁵² Jean-Pierre Clerc, “Les Antillais sur le chemin de l’exil,” *Le Monde*, 19-20 Septembre 1971, p. 5, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Although Bureau officials insisted that it informed potential migrants about the difficulties of migration, Gouguenheim learned that the Bureau did not systematically distribute its pamphlets on migration. Therefore, the majority of Antilleans did not have access to the information circulated by the Bureau. Those prospective migrants who did obtain the pamphlets could not understand them because the language used by the Bureau was too sophisticated; the Bureau had failed to take into account Antilleans' limited education.⁵⁵ Gouguenheim claimed that Antilleans understood BUIDOM as a type of "travel agency" that permitted them to travel free of charge to the metropole where they could forge their own destiny and achieve economic prosperity for themselves and their families. The voyage to France was "experienced as a celebration" and "the first step toward fulfilling [their] dreams."⁵⁶ This initial optimism quickly changed. Once in France, Antillean migrants faced the realities of unemployment, inadequate housing, and discrimination.

According to Gouguenheim, discrimination combined with the Bureau's mistreatment of migrants and its false promises, had the potential to produce a dangerous combination: an unassimilated and politically active population that could threaten the nation's stability. "As soon as he arrives in France, the Antillean is...quickly forced to call into question his belonging to the French collectivity...he experiences, little by little, rejection from the society to which he believed he belonged....This situation...translates into aggressiveness,...which leads to the discovery that he has a new identity to

⁵⁵ Yvon Gouguenheim, "Etude-Intervention. Pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles," octobre 1974-janvier 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

construct.”⁵⁷ From a young age, Antilleans had learned to idealize France. In school they learned of all the opportunities afforded to them by their French citizenship. However, Gouguenheim contended that when Antilleans settled in France, they discovered their black identity and that they belonged to a racial minority. Metropolitans stripped them of their citizenship and treated them like an immigrant. According to Gouguenheim, Antilleans’ “discovery of a metropolitan world different from the one [they] had imagined” made it difficult for them “to find a satisfying way to relate to metropolitans.”⁵⁸ Gouguenheim argued that if the Bureau did nothing to improve the state of alienation in which Antilleans found themselves, then Antilleans would be forced to turn inward. He warned that Antilleans’ feelings of isolation had already caused many of them to fall victim to different forms of “delinquency”, such as crime, prostitution, and drugs. Antillean migrants were separating themselves further and further from French society and their French identity, and they would continue to do so if nothing was done to ameliorate their situation.⁵⁹

Gouguenheim’s warning resonated with the Bureau. BUMIDOM officials were increasingly concerned about the rising prominence of some Antillean activists who were becoming more and more vocal in their calls for Guadeloupe’s and Martinique’s independence. They were wary of nationalist activists who employed critiques of BUMIDOM to generate support for the independence movement. For example, in 1974, the *Groupe de soutien Réunionnais et Antillais* leveraged the controversy surrounding the Bureau’s dismissal of two instructors to gain support for its nationalist politics. The

⁵⁷ Yvon Gouguenheim, “Etude-Intervention. Pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles,” octobre 1974-janvier 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

group's leaders hoped to rally Antillean migrants around their movement to cut ties with France and end migration. In October 1973, Father Claude Jacquin, a teacher at the Bureau's Marseille adaptation center, took his young Antillean students to an informational meeting organized by the French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT). As a Marxist, Jacquin believed that Antillean migrants should be conscious of their solidarity with and responsibility to the French worker's movement. BUMIDOM promptly dismissed Jacquin arguing that he had not maintained the political neutrality required of Bureau employees. When Albert Montagny sent a letter to the Bureau protesting his colleague's dismissal, the Bureau quickly relieved him of his post as well.

In response to what they perceived to be their wrongful dismissals, Jacquin and Montagny released a public manifesto condemning BUMIDOM as a colonial organization. They argued that the Bureau had constructed migration so that it was a new form of malicious colonialism, emptying the Antilles of its youth in order to fulfill the labor and economic demands of metropolitan France. Migration is a form of "true mass deportation practiced today, [and] is not a cure for the 'underdeveloped Third World' ".⁶⁰ In employing the word "deportation", Jacquin and Montagny were comparing Antilleans' migration experience to the Nazis' deportation and extermination of Jews during the Second World. For Jacquin and Montagny, departmentalization was a kind of occupation of the Antilles. It had severely hindered the islands' economic growth, forcing Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to migrate in search of work and a better life. They claimed that the Bureau's policies were not much different from the Nazis' in that they used perceptions of racial difference to justify Antilleans' second-

⁶⁰ Claude Jacquin and Albert Matigny, "Reflexions sur l'émigration des jeunes antillais et réunionnais," January 15, 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 7.

class status in French society. Jacquin and Montagny called upon Antilleans to rise up against this kind of foreign control, arguing that independence was Antilleans only source of liberation. They claimed that the only way to end this continued colonial oppression was to cut ties with France and end migration.⁶¹

In January 1974, when the *Groupe de soutien Réunionnais et Antillais*, learned about Jacquin and Montagny's dismissals, they quickly began to distribute flyers throughout France in support of the instructors' cause. They asked Antilleans to sign a petition to be delivered to BUMIDOM demanding that it end its control of migration and provide Antilleans with equal access to higher status jobs. In doing so, the *Groupe de soutien* impressed upon Antilleans the importance of coming together as a political group to fight not only for change in the Bureau's policies, but also in French society as a whole.⁶²

Within the Caribbean, Antillean leaders also began to call for a change in the migration process. On November 5, 1973, at a press conference at the Lutétia Hotel in Paris, Henri Bangou, the mayor of Guadeloupe's capital city, Point-à-Pitre, compared migration to colonialism. He claimed the Bureau's employment policies pushing Antilleans toward low-status jobs in the metropole was a modern adaptation of France's nineteenth-century colonial policies in Algeria; they made Antilleans economically dependent and subordinate so that an independence movement would never successfully materialize. Bangou informed Antilleans that migration only benefitted France.

Antilleans provided France with the labor it needed to rebuild the nation, but Antilleans

⁶¹ Claude Jacquin and Albert Matigny, "Reflexions sur l'émigration des jeunes antillais et réunionnais," January 15, 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 7.

⁶² Le Groupe de soutien Réunionnais et Antillais, petition to denounce the Bureau's dismissals of Claude Jacquin and Albert Matigny and to end migration to the metropole, January 15, 1974, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 7.

had received nothing in return. In general, Antillean migrants' economic position had not improved and the Antilles remained economically dependent on France for jobs and imports. Bangou argued that Antilleans needed to embark upon a political struggle to radically change this persistent colonial relationship between France and the Antilles.⁶³

These public critiques of the migration process identified BUMIDOM as the cause of Antilleans' alienation in French society. They convinced the Ministry of the DOM that the Bureau's failure to provide migrants with adequate employment and housing had pushed them toward Antillean nationalism. The existence of the Antillean independence movement in metropolitan France indicated to the Ministry of the DOM that the Bureau had not succeeded in cultivating Antillean migrants' emotional attachment to the French nation. Although the Ministry of the DOM had identified BUMIDOM as the part of the problem, it was not yet ready to dissolve the organization. DOM officials believed that the government still needed to oversee Antillean migration, and the Bureau was the only organization in place with the capacity to undertake such a large project. Therefore, instead of abandoning the Bureau, the Ministry of the DOM sought to transform the agency. In 1975, the Ministry of the DOM recommended that instead of continuing to increase the number of migrants it financed each year, the Bureau needed to focus on assimilating those Antillean migrants who were already residing in France. It dictated that the Bureau could finance no more than five thousand migrations per year.⁶⁴ The Ministry of the DOM also challenged the Bureau to rethink its focus on housing, employment and education; it encouraged Bureau officials to

⁶³ Henry Bangou, press conference at Hôtel Lutetia, Paris, November 5, 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 7.

⁶⁴ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu des principales activités", 30 septembre 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

develop new strategies for helping Antilleans overcome the isolation they felt as second-class citizens. DOM officials believed that political contentment among Antillean migrants would diminish their support of nationalist movements, and ensure national unity.

The “New” BUMIDOM

In the mid-1970s, BUMIDOM responded to the Ministry of the DOM’s concerns and completed an exploratory study on how it could improve the overall quality of Antillean migration.⁶⁵ In 1975, the Bureau decided to change its mission. Prior to 1975, BUMIDOM focused its efforts on selecting candidates for migration, funding migrants’ airfares to France, and facilitating job training and placement. After 1975, BUMIDOM made the “cultural adaptation” of Antilleans its main priority. For BUMIDOM, “cultural adaptation” meant eliminating Antilleans’ feelings of isolation, and cultivating their emotional attachment to the French nation. In order to dedicate more of its time and funds to Antilleans’ “cultural adaptation”, the Bureau began to encourage other public agencies and private organizations to provide social services to Antillean migrants. This was a substantial break from its previous function as the sole provider of social and economic assistance to Antilleans. More significantly, BUMIDOM began to actively support Antillean cultural events as a part of its strategy to promote Antilleans’ “cultural adaptation.” In doing so, it implicitly began to acknowledge that Antilleans possessed a Creole culture separate from that of France.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre-mer (BUMIDOM), “Note Concernant l’Etude-Intervention pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles”, March 1, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

BUMIDOM's first organizational change was to transfer its jurisdiction over Antillean employment to the National Employment Agency (ANPE), a public agency under the Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Employment that maintained a branch in each of France's metropolitan departments. From 1975 to 1977, ANPE opened a DOM-Metropole branch in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Paris. It became the central agency that assisted Antilleans in finding employment; the Bureau directed all migrants to ANPE and ceased to provide all employment services.⁶⁷

While Bureau officials relinquished control of the migration process in some areas, they simultaneously sought to broaden the scope of BUMIDOM by extending its services to all Antilleans residing in metropolitan France. Previously, it was BUMIDOM's unofficial policy to only provide social services to those Antilleans who had migrated with the Bureau's aid. Now, the Secretary of State for the DOM authorized the Bureau to use its funds to help "spontaneous" migrants who had settled in France without the Bureau's support. The Bureau must "take into account, on the grounds of national solidarity, that it is not possible for the public powers to ignore those migrants who, arriving on their own, have become expatriated and are not adapted to metropolitan life."⁶⁸ In the 1960s, BUMIDOM facilitated and financed nearly all Antillean migrations to France. In doing so, it believed that it could effectively monitor migrants' assimilation. This changed in the 1970s when large reductions in airfare made it affordable for Antilleans to migrate to France without BUMIDOM's financial aid. Beginning in the 1970s, the Bureau facilitated only a small fraction of Antillean

⁶⁷ "Etude sur le BUMIDOM et les associations s'intéressant aux originaires des DOM installés en métropole, no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁶⁸ "Programme d'action pour l'amélioration de la migration des originaires des D.O.M. en Métropole," no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

migrations to France; the vast majority of Antilleans either financed their own migrations or received help from family members who had already established themselves in the Hexagon.

In order to maintain control of the migration process, the Bureau decided that it would extend its social services to those Antilleans who had not sought BUMIDOM's help prior to leaving Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁶⁹ The Ministry of the DOM and the Bureau perceived of this change as both inevitable and necessary. As more and more Antilleans migrated without the Bureau's aid, the Ministry of the DOM felt that the only way the Bureau could continue to maintain control of migration was to offer its social services to all Antilleans regardless of how they had come to metropolitan France. Moreover, by the mid-1970s, it had become apparent to the Ministry of the DOM that Antillean migration was not a temporary solution to France's labor shortage. Rather, Antillean migrants wished to permanently settle in metropolitan France. Throughout the 1970s, the Bureau received hundreds of letters from Antillean migrants requesting financial aid so that the families they had left behind in the Antilles could join them in the Hexagon.⁷⁰ In anticipation of this shift in the Antillean migrant population from single men and women to families, the Ministry of the DOM insisted that the Bureau open up its services to all Antilleans. Specifically, the Bureau began to play an important role in helping "spontaneous" migrants secure housing. BUMIDOM officials recognized that Antilleans faced discrimination in the housing market; many private

⁶⁹ Secrétariat d'Etat auprès au Ministre de l'Intérieur (Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer), "Evolution et bilan de la politique de migration dans les départements et dans les territoires d'outre-mer", November 28, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 7.

⁷⁰ For example, see the case of Sébastien Dulac, which I discussed in Chapter 1. Monsieur Sébastien Dulac à Monsieur le Président de la République, 6 juin 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 23.

citizens and landlords refused to rent to Antillean migrants. Therefore, many Antilleans needed to obtain public housing through the Agency for Affordable Housing (HLM). Bureau social workers helped new migrants navigate the complicated public housing market, educating them on how to apply for and obtain subsidized housing.⁷¹ Without this policy change enabling the Bureau to help “spontaneous” migrants, the Ministry of DOM feared that more and more Antilleans would not have access to the social aid they needed, creating a large population of discontented migrants.

In addition, as a part of its new “cultural adaptation” initiative, the Bureau began to finance private associations whose mission it was to facilitate Antilleans’ integration into French society. BUMIDOM believed that public agencies’, including their own, exclusive focus on employment and housing had ignored Antilleans’ social assimilation or their “integration” into French society. In an attempt to fill this gap in the assimilation process, the Bureau began to support private organizations focused on providing Antilleans with a sense of community in metropolitan France. One such organization, CASODOM (Committee of Social Action for Peoples Originating from the Overseas Departments in the Metropole), provided many of the same services as the Bureau. However, it specifically focused on administering aid to those Antilleans who had been settled in France for longer periods of times. It extended the timeframe of BUMIDOM’s services and created a kind of community support for all Antilleans.⁷²

AMITAG (Association of Antillean and Guyanese Workers in the Metropole) also received a substantial amount of financial support from the Bureau. AMITAG was significantly different from any of the other private organization the Bureau had

⁷¹ “Etude sur le BUMIDOM et les associations s’intéressant aux originaires des DOM installés en métropole, no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁷² Ibid.

financed. AMTIAG was not exclusively focused on providing economic aid to migrants; rather, it organized cultural events, such as film showings, exhibits, dance, and musical performances. The Bureau claimed that these events enabled Antilleans to remain connected to the Antillean culture they had left behind in Guadeloupe and Martinique. They “permitted members of the Association to rediscover themselves in a setting that evokes their native land.”⁷³ In other words, AMITAG gave migrants a safe community in which they could maintain a sense of their own cultural identity while simultaneously acclimating themselves to French metropolitan society.

The Bureau’s support of AMITAG was a substantial break from its previous policies, which contained no mention of Antilleans’ distinct cultural identity. In financing AMITAG and its cultural events, BUMIDOM was implicitly recognizing that Antilleans possessed a Creole culture and identity separate from that of France. Nonetheless, this acknowledgement of Antilleans’ cultural differences did not necessarily mean that the Bureau was distancing itself from its policy of assimilation. For the Bureau, it was simply making the conscious decision to financially support Antilleans’ right as French citizens to establish cultural associations, such as AMITAG, in metropolitan France.⁷⁴ It could be argued that the Bureau’s use of public funds to support private cultural associations was a move toward multiculturalism; yet, the Bureau insisted upon its policy of assimilation. BUMIDOM officials claimed that its

⁷³ “Etude sur le BUMIDOM et les associations s’intéressant aux originaires des DOM installés en métropole, no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁷⁴ Under the “association law of 1901”, all French citizens have the right to form a private non-profit “association” or organization around any interest or cause. The law requires that the association consist of at least two people and that none of its members financially benefit from the association. However until 1981, individuals residing in France who were not French citizens, did not have the right “to associate” or organize themselves in private organizations officially recognized by the government. This angered postcolonial immigrants who vehemently fought for the right to associate as a part of their struggle for the “right to difference” during the 1970s and early 1980s.

recognition of Antilleans' Creole culture was a strategy to promote Antilleans' assimilation by improving Antillean-metropolitan social relations.

In a June 1979 note on its organizational changes, BUMIDOM stated that the social role of Antillean cultural associations is “not only precious, but irreplaceable.”⁷⁵ BUMIDOM supported AMITAG as part of its “endeavor to fight against the feeling of isolation that migrants can feel upon their arrival” in France.⁷⁶ It argued that cultural associations “permit[ted] isolated [migrants] to meet each other, to help one another, and to come into contact with those who preceded them in the metropole, in order to better adapt themselves [to France].”⁷⁷ Ultimately, the Bureau believed that cultural organizations promoted “cultural adaptation” or social assimilation and thus, stabilized the national union between the Antilles and France. In a July 1979 memo on the state of Antillean migration, the Ministry of the DOM noted that AMITAG has had a “positive influence on the migrants” and is therefore “beneficial to France.”⁷⁸

This shift in the Bureau's attitude was a response to autonomist and nationalist activists' politicization of Antillean migration. While autonomists used Antillean migrants' discontentment with the Bureau to garner political support for political autonomy within the French nation, nationalists argued that independence was Antilleans' only chance for liberation from the Bureau's control. As Antilleans' frustrations with the Bureau pushed them toward these leftwing political groups, the

⁷⁵ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre-mer (BUMIDOM), “Note”, June 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 5.

⁷⁶ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre-mer (BUMIDOM), “Note Concernant l'Etude-Intervention pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles”, March 1, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 7.

⁷⁷ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre-mer (BUMIDOM), “Note”, June 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 5.

⁷⁸ Ministre des Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, “Note au sujet de la situation de la migrations des originaires des DOM en métropole,” July 1979, Centres des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

Ministry of the DOM became concerned about the possible dangers of a politically active and discontented population of Antillean migrants. In the late 1970s, it initiated a study on how to improve Antilleans' situation in France. In October 1979, the Director of Economic, Social and Cultural Affairs of the DOM officially gave its recommendations for improving the politics of Antillean migration. He noted that the Antillean left had characterized migration as a continuation of French colonial rule under which the government manipulated Antilleans for their own economic gains. He then encouraged the Bureau to refute this perception by supporting Antillean cultural associations. The Director claimed that this would suggest to Antilleans that the Bureau was concerned about their social wellbeing and not just France's economy.⁷⁹

One month following the Director's recommendations, the Secretary of State for the DOM also encouraged BUMIDOM leaders to reevaluate its organization so that it promoted integration, not political frustration. In November 1979, the Secretary of State for the DOM informed the Bureau that it needed to "adapt its mission...to the evolving relationship between the overseas departments and metropolitan France."⁸⁰ For the Secretary of State, this meant supporting Antillean cultural associations. The "evolving relationship" referred to the fact that the Bureau could no longer afford to ignore Antilleans social and cultural demands for fear of a burgeoning Antillean political movement. The Ministry of the DOM reasoned that by aligning themselves with Antillean cultural associations, such as AMITAG, the Bureau would rehabilitate its

⁷⁹ Le Directeur des Affaires Economiques, Sociales et Culturelles de l'Outre-Mer, "Note à l'attention de M. Le Sous-Directeur des Affaires Sociales, Culturelles et de la Formation, October 11, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 3.

⁸⁰ Secrétariat d'Etat auprès au Ministre de l'Intérieur (Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer), "Evolution et bilan de la politique de migration dans les départements et dans les territoires d'outre-mer", November 28, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 7.

reputation with Antilleans. In doing so, it would mollify Antilleans' discontentment and create political stability between the Antilles and France.

Shortly after receiving these recommendations from the Ministry of the Overseas Department, the Bureau officially revised its statutes to read: "On the cultural plan, an effort will be taken by BUMIDOM to enable migrants to affirm their identity and permit the blossoming of their unique personality."⁸¹ In November 1979, the Secretary of State for the DOM announced that the Bureau was going to finance the development of several Creole cultural centers throughout France in order to promote "the awakening of a culture of the [Antillean] 'other'."⁸² These centers would provide a meeting place for Antillean associations that were focused on preserving Creole culture and providing migrants with social support.

The Bureau named its Marseille Creole culture center *Portes Ouvertes* or "open doors" to symbolize its new openness toward Antilleans' Creole culture. For the opening of this particular center, the Bureau invited leaders in the Antillean community to teach schoolchildren in Marseille how to make Creole musical instruments, and use them in Creole songs and dances. For the Bureau, events such as this marked the beginning of a greater cultural understanding between Antilleans and metropolitans. Antilleans' cultural differences did not exclude them from the French nation; rather they were a part of France's cultural history and diversity. "The departure has been taken. The future must spread the promises of these first achievements. Our ambitions have not

⁸¹ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Compte-rendu des principes activités", 30 septembre 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 28.

⁸² Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d'outre mer (BUMIDOM), "Rapport d'activités", 31 décembre 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

always been sensible in taking stock of and in expressing by all possible means and forms the Creole Cultural identity.”⁸³ The decision to open these Creole cultural centers marked a turning point in the Bureau’s politics on Antillean migration.

In 1980, the Bureau articulated its financial support of Antillean cultural associations as an integral component of its new policy of *action culturelle* or “cultural action”.⁸⁴ Paul Dijoud, who headed BUMDIOM as Secretary of State for the DOM (April 1978 to May 1981), played a significant role in developing “cultural action.” As the Secretary of State for Immigrant Workers (May 1974 to March 1977), Dijoud had implemented a handful of social policies that to some extent moved away from the government’s strict adherence to assimilation, and began to recognize a multicultural French society. For example, Arabic language classes began to be offered in public schools and Muslim prayer rooms were created in several factories and public housing.⁸⁵ Dijoud perceived of these social policies as an attempt to accommodate the growing number of second-generation immigrants living in France. Dijoud understood the Antillean migration “problem” as similar to the “problem” of second-generation immigrants. Both groups were French nationals who wished to maintain their distinct cultural identities.

Under Dijoud’s leadership, the Bureau noted the emergence of a new “Antillean-Guyanese establishment...composed of a number of young and dynamic individuals, often born in the Metropole or having established themselves here during the first years

⁸³ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, 31 décembre 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

⁸⁴ Bureau pour le développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Directeur des Affaires Economiques, Sociales et Culturelles de l’Outre-Mer”, April 17, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

⁸⁵ Romain Garbaye, *Getting into Local Power: The Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 71.

of their life, have a strong desire to preserve and express their cultural specificities.”⁸⁶

BUMIDOM also recognized that participation in cultural associations had become the foundation of young Antilleans’ expressions of difference in metropolitan France.

“These organizations, centered on the defense of migrants’ interests and the protection of their cultural specificities...indicates a rapid evolution in the migrant community’s awareness of their [political] importance in the Metropole.”⁸⁷ The existence of numerous newly established Antillean cultural associations indicated to the Bureau that there was a burgeoning Antillean cultural movement in metropolitan France. Not only did young Antilleans wish to maintain their cultural particularities, but they were also putting in place an organizational foundation for a political movement. The French government viewed this growing population of politically active young Antilleans who refused assimilation as a potential threat to national unity. For this reason, Dijoud encouraged the Bureau to develop a new policy that would satisfy young Antilleans’ desire to maintain their cultural links with Guadeloupe and Martinique while simultaneously solidifying the political union between the Antilles and France.⁸⁸

The Bureau followed Dijoud’s recommendations and decided to embark upon a new plan of *action culturelle* that would “assure [Antilleans] of the power to express their difference and integrate themselves in the host environment [France] while remaining themselves.”⁸⁹ In other words, BUMIDOM acknowledged Antilleans’

⁸⁶ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, 31 décembre 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Paul Dijoud, Press Conference, March 26, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

⁸⁹ Bureau pour la développement des migrations intéressant les départements d’outre mer (BUMIDOM), “Rapport d’activités”, 31 décembre 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 8.

cultural particularities because it believed that this change in policy would facilitate Antilleans' "integration" or social assimilation. Therefore, the Bureau's decision to recognize Antilleans' right to difference was essentially a conservative policy in that it maintained the political status quo in France. In providing financial support to Antillean cultural groups, *action culturelle* placed Antilleans' difference under the surveillance of the Bureau. In doing so, it enabled BUMIDOM to monitor the extent to which, as well as how Antilleans' cultural difference would be incorporated into the nation.

France créole

Leading up to the implementation of *action culturelle* in 1980, there was much discussion within the Bureau and the Ministry of DOM concerning Antilleans' Creole culture and how the government should go about recognizing these citizens' differences while simultaneously maintaining France and the Antilles' political unity as a singular nation. The Ministry of DOM's focus on securing Guadeloupe and Martinique's departmental status stemmed from a series of political transformations that occurred in France's territories under the leadership of Dijoud's predecessor Olivier Stirn (June 1974 to March 1977). Stirn negotiated the independence of Djibouti (1977), and The Comoro Islands, excluding Mayotte (1975), and autonomy for New Caledonia (1976) and Polynesia (1977). Dijoud worried that if nothing was done to address Antilleans' grievances with departmentalization, then the sweeping political changes that had occurred in France's territories would also be carried out in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The Ministry of the DOM's internal discussions regarding the future of its territories and departments contributed to a broader reevaluation of republican assimilation and a more public reflection on the possibility of the right to difference in France.

In a press conference on September 26, 1979, Dijoud, publicly stated that the policy of assimilation was not working; the government had failed to integrate Antilleans. “Traditionally, France has conducted a policy of assimilation that aims to align the behavior, the approaches, and the thinking of its compatriots to those of metropolitans; [however], we have come to believe that it is now quite clear that this approach is not sufficient.”⁹⁰ Dijoud based this conclusion on the unstable political climate that was currently enveloping the Antilles and France. In Martinique, the 1974 banana farm workers’ strike had paralyzed the Martinican economy and created tension between Antillean labor unions and the Ministry of the Overseas Departments.⁹¹ Similarly, Antillean migrants in the Hexagon were confronting economic recession and widespread unemployment during the mid-1970s. On both sides of the Atlantic, Antilleans were becoming increasingly discontent with their social and economic situation, prompting them to form their own political groups. Dijoud was particularly concerned about the establishment of one pro-independence political party: the Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe (UPLG). Established in 1978, the UPLG sought to bring together different factions of the nationalist movement under the political platform of independence, while highlighting the importance of Antilleans’ Creole identity. During his September 1979 press conference, Dijoud argued that in order to counteract this potentially destructive political movement, “we must strive to make our

⁹⁰ Paul Dijoud, Press Conference, March 26, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

⁹¹ Le Monde published several articles concerning the general labor strikes in Martinique and the social tension and discontentment this had created in the Antilles. See: Frimin Reneville, “Tension sociale à la Martinique”, *Le Monde*, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 17. Alain Rollat, “M. Dijoud annonce l’élaboration d’un “plan culturel de la France créole”, *Le Monde*, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 17. Alain Rollat, “M. Dijoud séjourne aux Antilles ou le climat social est tendu”, *Le Monde*, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 17.

compatriots of the overseas department realize that we are not looking to deny their difference, but on the contrary, are enhancing it.”⁹² Dijoud informed the public that the Ministry of the DOM was working to fight against two extremes: those “who believe that to be French is to have Gallic ancestors and deny all the rest” and those who “make the recognition of difference a rejection of all other people who have shaped their past.”⁹³ In other words, Dijoud sought to reconcile republican assimilation with Antilleans’ cultural specificities. He wanted to recognize Antilleans’ right to difference while simultaneously ensuring that Antilleans would remain proud of and connected to their French identity.

Dijoud also argued the government could no longer ignore Antilleans’ desire to express their Creole culture when it had recently recognized metropolitan citizens’ regional cultures and languages as a distinct part of the French nation. As Antillean nationalists claimed their Creole identity to justify their demands for independence, French citizens from metropolitan regions, such as Bretagne, Alsace, and Provence, were also reviving their particular languages, histories and folklores. In 1958, regional activists from across France banded together and formed the Secular Movement for Regional Cultures (MLCR), a special interest group concerned with promoting the preservation of France’s regional languages and cultures. Over the course of two decades, the MLCR activists gained official recognition of their respective regions’ cultural particularities, including the right for high school students to choose to be tested in their regional language as a part of the national university qualifying exams. Yet, the government refused to grant Guadeloupe and Martinique the same status as distinct

⁹² Paul Dijoud, Press Conference, March 26, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

⁹³ Ibid.

cultural regions of France. Dijoud claimed that these differential cultural policies for metropolitan France and the Antilles had created discontentment among Antilleans who were finding an outlet for their anger in various nationalist organizations. For this reason, he encouraged DOM officials to grant Guadeloupe and Martinique the same cultural recognition it had given to metropolitan departments. In a televised interview on France's national network FR3, Dijoud stated that he saw no reason why "young Antilleans would not also possess the right to have passion for their roots."⁹⁴ In the wake of the 1974 general labor strike from which Martinique was still recovering, as well as the establishment of the UPLG in Guadeloupe, Dijoud hoped that the Ministry of the DOM's recognition of Antilleans' Creole culture would heal the political tensions between Antilleans and the metropolitan government, and bring the Antilles and France closer in their political union.⁹⁵ This cultural and political project became what Dijoud referred to as *France créole*.

In his closing statement to the third Interregional Conference, an event attended by leaders from France and its overseas departments, Dijoud articulated the meaning of *France créole*. *France créole* was the cultural future of France and the Antilles in which both French and Creole cultures would concurrently exist and enrich the French nation. At this conference, Dijoud set in place a commission to oversee the creation of a *France créole* nation. The purpose of this commission was to reinforce Antilleans' political and cultural connection to metropolitan France while also making room within the nation for Antilleans' Creole culture. Dijoud was adamant that the recognition of difference should

⁹⁴ Televised round table discussion at network FR 3, Participants: Paul Dijoud, R. Calixte of FR 3 Martinique, Max Moinet of FR 3 Guadeloupe, and Anastasi Bourquin of FR 3 Guyane, October 8, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

⁹⁵ Alain Rollat, "M. Dijoud annonce l'élaboration d'un "plan culturel de la France créole", *Le Monde*, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 17.

not alienate Antilleans from the French nation; rather, it must “make sure that they are French...and conscious of belonging to a great nation.”⁹⁶ Dijoud was aware that some Antilleans wanted to use their Creole culture to launch a political fight for independence. *France créole* was a solution to this politicization of culture. It would use culture to “unite men and to assemble them, not divide them.” Antilleans had a distinct Creole culture, but they were also “heirs of the French Culture.”⁹⁷ *France créole* was as much about promoting Antilleans’ French heritage as it was about recognizing Antilleans’ Creole culture. Dijoud claimed that to ignore their unique cultural identity as both Creole and French would be to push Antilleans away from their French identity and citizenship. In a televised interview Dijoud stated that he wanted “Antilleans to be proud of being both French and Creole.”⁹⁸ Only then would the political and cultural union between France and the Antilles be stabilized.

Historians of France have argued that the anti-racism movement, largely organized by the children of Algerian and West African immigrants, opened up the possibility for the “right to difference” in France during the early 1980s.⁹⁹ Yet, the Ministry of the Overseas Departments’ policies on Antillean migration complicates this narrative. The Bureau’s financial support of Antillean cultural associations, its decision to build Creole cultural centers throughout France, its articulation of *action culturelle*, and Dijoud’s policy of *France créole* all played a significant role in shaping President François Mitterrand’s articulation of the “right to difference”. For Mitterrand, the “right

⁹⁶ Paul Dijoud, Discours de Clôture de la Conférence Inter-Régionale, October 18, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ See: Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, ‘Race’ and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

to difference” was a break from the French tradition of assimilation, which required individuals to shed all of their cultural particularities to obtain French citizenship. The “right to difference” permitted individuals to claim dual identities, such as Antillean and French, and also required that the government recognize the right of its citizens to claim multiple cultural identities. In a speech at Petit Bourg’s city hall in Guadeloupe, Mitterrand informed Guadeloupeans that for them the “right to difference” meant the reversal of the assimilation policies of departmentalization that had denied Antilleans the right to express their unique identity. It was the “realization of the synthesis between the Guadeloupean identity and French nationality.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, it permitted Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to be both Antillean and French.

To symbolize this break with assimilation, Mitterrand’s new socialist government dissolved the Bureau and established ANT (National Agency For the Insertion and Promotion of Overseas Department Workers) in its place. For all intents and purposes, ANT was a continuation of BUMIDOM in that it provided Antilleans with the same social services. However, it reflected the socialists’ new policy of the “right to difference”. ANT’s statutes explicitly stated “integration into the metropole, must not be an assimilation”, noting that the “Government is very attached to the ‘right to difference’ as a means to promote tolerance and solidarity.”¹⁰¹ One of ANT’s most important initiatives was to expand the Ministry of DOM’s financial support of Antillean cultural associations, which had begun under BUMIDOM as a part of its *action culturelle* policy. With this increased funding and ANT’s explicit support of the “right to difference”,

¹⁰⁰ François Mitterrand, Allocution prononcée par François Mitterrand à la Mairie de Petit Bourg, December 5, 1985, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940389, Art. 8.

¹⁰¹ Ministère DOM-TOM, “Nouvelle politique pour la migration des originaires des DOM/TOM”, March 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940389, Art. 8.

Antillean migrants founded hundreds of cultural associations throughout metropolitan France. It was these cultural associations that put in place the organizational foundation for the emergence of a distinct form of Antillean ethnic activism.

Part II. Antillean Ethnic Activism and the France-Based Creole Movement

During the 1960s, a strong Creole cultural movement developed in both Guadeloupe and Martinique.¹⁰² However, across the Atlantic in metropolitan France, Antillean migrants had yet to forge and unite around a singular Creole identity. A distinct form of Antillean ethnic activism did not emerge in the Hexagon until the 1970s when two simultaneous occurrences made the construction of a France-based Creole movement viable. First, as more and more Antilleans settled in metropolitan France, Creole activists in Guadeloupe and Martinique began to realize the importance of gaining migrants' support for their political and cultural movements. Throughout the 1970s, representatives of Guadeloupean and Martinican cultural groups traveled to the Hexagon, actively seeking to mobilize migrants around a shared Creole identity. Second, by the 1970s, the migration experience had made Antilleans aware of their difference as second-class citizens. Antillean activists in metropolitan France used these feelings of difference to construct a Creole identity around which migrants could mobilize for inclusion in the French nation as first-class citizens. Together, these two changes in how migrants perceived of their relationship to Antilleans in the islands and their position in French society established the groundwork for the development of Antillean ethnic activism in metropolitan France.

¹⁰² See: Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004).

In the 1970s and early 1980s, Antillean activists adopted the language of the Bureau's *action culturelle* and *France créole*, as well as Mitterrand's "right to difference" and forged a unique ethnic activism movement in France. Activists in Guadeloupe and Martinique who were particularly concerned with the preservation of and veneration of the Creole language and culture leveraged this emerging Antillean ethnic activism in the Hexagon to gain support for the Creole movement. In doing so, they forged a France-based Creole movement that celebrated the Creole language and culture. This France-based Creole movement was significantly different from the pro-independence Creole movement that had been gaining momentum in Guadeloupe and Martinique since the 1960s. While the Antilles-based movement employed Creole to justify the islands' political separation from France, the France-based movement used Creole to argue for the inclusion of Antilleans' cultural differences within the larger French national culture.

Guadeloupean and Martinican Cultural Groups and the Performance of Creole Identity in Metropolitan France

During the 1960s there was a proliferation of Antillean cultural groups in Guadeloupe and Martinique dedicated to the preservation of the Creole culture and language. Theater troupes, dance and music groups, as well as educational centers sought to counteract the damaging cultural effects of departmentalization. When Guadeloupe and Martinique became departments of France, the French government banned the use of Creole in public spaces, such as schools, the media, and labor unions, and replaced it with French. In doing so, the Ministry of Overseas Departments hoped to disseminate the French culture throughout the Antilles. According to Creole activists,

Antilleans had internalized this degradation of Antillean culture, creating a widespread disdain for Creole as an inferior culture and language. As early as the late 1950s, Antillean activists in Guadeloupe and Martinique founded Creole cultural organizations to help Antilleans rediscover and develop a newfound appreciation for their Creole culture and language.

By the 1970s, this strong presence of Antillean cultural associations throughout Guadeloupe, and Martinique had developed into full-fledged Creole cultural movement. On February 19, 1976, *Le Monde* published an article describing the cultural awakening occurring in the Antilles. On the occasion of Léopold Senghor's official visit to Martinique as the President of Senegal, there was a weeklong celebration of black culture in Fort-de-France. *Le Monde* interpreted these performances, art exhibits, film showings, and conferences as an expression of an "initiative of the city whose cultural politics for the past four years has consisted of rediscovering its own [cultural] sources and formulating an Antillean identity."¹⁰³ In the early 1970s, two competing cultural organizations emerged in Martinique. The Martinican Center for Cultural Animation (CMAC), financed by the Ministry of Culture, dedicated itself to promoting European art and culture in the Antilles. In contrast, the Municipal Office for Cultural Animation (OMAC) denounced CMAC's neglect of Antilleans' own unique culture, and supported research on the local Creole culture. These opposing perspectives generated a public debate about which form of cultural politics Antilleans should embrace. On the occasion of Senghor's visit to France, Creole activists took it upon themselves to highlight Antilleans' cultural links to Africa. In doing so, they emphasized their cultural

¹⁰³ "Retrouvailles afro-antillaises", *Le Monde*, February 19, 1976, p. 15, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 4.

differences and claimed their cultural connections to a nation other than France. *Le Monde* described this weeklong cultural event as a “particular expression of being Martinican”. It “demonstrated the capacity of Martinicans to develop in several directions at the same time, the cultural potentials of their island.”¹⁰⁴

Yet, this Creole cultural movement was slow in crossing the Atlantic to France. In the 1960s, Antillean migrants were more immediately concerned with securing housing and employment in France than with discovering their Creole culture. The metropolitan Antillean population had more pressing worries. At the same time, Creole activists believed that this was the population it needed to reach. Antillean migrants, particularly their children who had been born in France, were the most disconnected from their Creole culture and language. The physical distance between France and the Antilles made it extremely hard for migrants to maintain their cultural and personal links to Guadeloupe and Martinique. By the 1970s, nearly one third of the entire population lived in metropolitan France.¹⁰⁵ This staggering statistic worried Creole activists who feared that as more and more Antilleans settled in France, the Creole language and culture would be completely neglected and forgotten.

To prevent this from happening, Creole activists began to look for ways it could promote Antillean culture and spread the Creole movement throughout metropolitan France. During the 1970s, numerous Antillean cultural groups traveled to the Hexagon with the intention of helping migrants rediscover their cultural links to Guadeloupe and Martinique. On January 12, 1978, R. Guathierot, a representative of Guadeloupe’s *Groupe Folklorique Karukéra*, wrote to Olivier Stirn, the Secretary of State for the

¹⁰⁴ “Retrouvailles afro-antillaises”, *Le Monde*, February 19, 1976, p. 15, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 4.

¹⁰⁵ Alain Anselin, *L’émigration antillaise en France: la troisième île*, (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

DOM, requesting financial aid for his group's performance in France. Stirn quickly dismissed Gauthierot's request, stating that the Ministry of DOM's budget does not finance performances, but might be able to fund his group's travel expenses to France.¹⁰⁶ This letter is representative of the numerous demands from Antilles-based theater troupes, dance groups, and musical ensembles who wished to travel to France and literally perform their Creole culture for French metropolitans and Antillean migrants. Some organizations received funding from the Ministry of the DOM, and some did not. What is significant is how these groups represented themselves to the French government when requesting financial aid.

Each organization portrayed itself an "authentic" Antillean cultural group who wished to promote cultural exchange between France and the Antilles. For example, *Karukéra* wrote, it is "our desire to present, for the first time in France, Guadeloupean folklore from the perspective of traditional dances and songs, perfectly reflecting the mores and culture of our country...Our goal is to perpetuate the tradition of Guadeloupean folk dance, to make it appreciated and loved by the entire world, and to promote [cultural] contact between Europeans and Guadeloupeans."¹⁰⁷ In their letters, cultural associations like *Karukéra* expressed their particular Creole identity, arguing that Antilleans possessed an authentic or "traditional" culture that was distinct from France's cultural heritage. At the same time, the representatives of these organizations were careful to characterize these cultural differences as a part of the French nation. Guathierot wanted his group to perform with other Guadeloupean dance troupes that had

¹⁰⁶ Letter from R. Gauthierot, representative of the Groupe Folklorique Karukéra to Olivier Stirn, Secrétaire d'Etat aux DOM TOM, January 12, 1978, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

organized a performance for the national Bastille Day festivities on the fourteenth of July.¹⁰⁸ The inclusion of Guadeloupean's Creole culture in a national celebration would symbolize that Antillean culture was a part of France's national culture. Moreover, the act of writing to the government for financial support and possibly securing it was also an implicit claim for state recognition of Antillean culture. *Karukéra* members wanted more than an official acknowledgement of their unique cultural identity; they also emphasized the educational benefits of their organization. Through performances of Guadeloupean dance and song, *Karukéra* hoped to spread the message of cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange between metropolitans and Antilleans. *Karukéra* challenged the Secretary Stirn to revise the Ministry of the DOM's policy of assimilation; however, it also assured him that their organization promoted national unity.

The Development of Antillean Ethnic Activism in the Hexagon

It is hard to quantify the success of Antillean cultural groups like *Karukéra* in promoting the development of a Creole cultural movement in France. Nevertheless, the proliferation of Antillean cultural associations within France during the 1970s attests to the fact that there was a kind of cultural awakening developing among Antillean migrants. In 1976, the magazine *Flash Antilles Guyane* remarked upon the recent "sudden emergence of Associations and this revival of interest for our [Antillean] cultural heritage."¹⁰⁹ Among Antillean migrants, "homesickness has created a need to

¹⁰⁸ Letter from R. Gauthierot, representative of the Groupe Folklorique Karukéra to Olivier Stirn, Secrétaire d'Etat aux DOM TOM, January 12, 1978, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Democles, "Le folklore antillo-guyanais: signification", *Flash Antilles Guyane*, June 1976, 10.

return to the homeland.”¹¹⁰ However, the high cost of air travel prohibited Antilleans from visiting Guadeloupe and Martinique on a regular basis. This situation encouraged migrants to create cultural associations to organize “cultural events in which folkloric groups recreate the image of the homeland” in France.¹¹¹ *Flash Antilles Guyane* placed this revitalization of Creole culture within the politics of a larger regional movement organized by leaders of Corse, Bretagne, and Occitan, who were also seeking to preserve and gain state recognition of their regional cultures. Like other culturally distinct citizens of France, Antillean migrants exercised their political right to formulate cultural associations. These cultural associations were powerful political instruments symbolizing Antilleans’ cultural presence within the nation. They brought Antillean migrants together in their struggle for cultural and social rights.

In 1973, the presidents of several Antillean associations decided to coordinate their cultural and political efforts under one main organization. The Federation of Antillean and Guyanese Associations in the Metropole (FAGAM) acted as a representative of Antillean migrants’ interests in France.¹¹² In particular, it was concerned with ensuring that Antillean cultural associations received the financial and social support to which they were entitled as French citizens. In a letter to Mr. Ferret, the Director of economic, social and cultural affairs for the DOM, FAGAM’s President, G. Ravenet, criticized the successive governments of the Fifth Republic for failing to address the social needs of Antillean migrants. In France, Antilleans “confront

¹¹⁰ Daniel Democles, “Le folklore antillo-guyanais: signification”, *Flash Antilles Guyane*, June 1976, 10.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Secrétaire d’Etat auprès du Ministre de l’Intérieur, Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer, “Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Directeur de Cabinet. Objet: Fédération des Associations Guyanaises et Antillaises de Métropole (FAGAM)”, December 2, 1980. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 2.

difficulties of reception, of adaptation, of employment or lodging, and are too often affronted by the incomprehension and ignorance of those with which they live.”¹¹³ Because Antilleans are “different from others by the color of their skin and by their customs”, they are not “recognized as French.”¹¹⁴ This rejection of Antillean migrants’ culture and French citizenship has caused them “to form a ghetto in the disastrous image of certain groups of foreigners.”¹¹⁵ Ravenet argued that Antillean associations promoted positive cultural images of Antilleans in French society. Through cultural exchange, they reduced social tension and improved relations between metropolitans and Antillean migrants. Therefore, the Ministry of the DOM had an obligation to support Antillean cultural associations as a kind of social aid that helped Antilleans adapt to French society.

By the 1980s, Antilleans had more registered cultural associations than any other immigrant group in France.¹¹⁶ This proliferation of cultural associations was an assertion of Antilleans’ social right as French citizens to form non-profit organizations. Under the “association law” of 1901, all French citizens have the right to form a non-profit association of two or more people. Antillean migrants registered their organizations with the municipal police department; the declaration of the association’s existence then appeared in the French government’s *Journal Officiel*.¹¹⁷ Antilleans could have created functioning associations without registering them with the government. However, they consciously chose to make their cultural associations legal

¹¹³ Letter from Fédération des Associations Guyanaises et Antillaises de Métropole to Monsieur Ferret, Directeur des Affaires Economiques, Sociales et Culturelles de l’Outre-Mer, November 24, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Alain Anselin, *L’émigration antillaise en France: la troisième île* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

¹¹⁷ The *Journal Officiel* or Official Journal is a daily paper edited by the French government containing legal information, official declarations and information concerning new associations.

entities recognized by the French government. Although these non-profit theater troupes, dance groups, and music ensembles by definition could not promote any political agenda, they were political in the sense that they promoted the revival and preservation of Antilleans' Creole culture. In literally performing their Creole culture for Antillean as well as metropolitan audiences, Antillean migrants were publicly asserting and claiming their difference. Yet, Antilleans were also employing their French citizenship in these public expressions of difference. Antilleans were only able to form cultural associations because as French citizens they possessed the right to do so. Antillean migrants' use of their French citizenship to express their distinct Creole identity was a direct challenge to assimilation, which demanded that Antilleans relinquish all of their cultural particularities to become French citizens.

These types of legally recognized non-profit cultural associations represented a different kind of Creole movement that was separate from the pro-independence Creole movement that had been gaining momentum in the Guadeloupe and Martinique since the 1960s. Like the *indépendantistes* or pro-independence supporters, proponents of the new Creole movement were critical of assimilation, which they believed had denigrated and nearly destroyed Creole culture. However, whereas *indépendantistes* believed that Antilleans could only regain control of their cultural identity through independence, supporters of the new Creole movement wanted to reclaim their Creole identity while still remaining a part of the French nation.

Prior to the Second World War and throughout the 1950s, *indépendantistes* had some success in gaining support for Guadeloupean and Martinican independence in France. For the most part, *indépendantistes* attracted educated Antilleans who had

migrated to France to attend university. In the 1960s, Antillean university students were influenced by the struggles for decolonization in the former French colonies, the rise of pan-Africanism, the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions, and the political climate leading up to the May 1968 movement in France. These students came together and formed nationalist student associations, such as the General Association of Guadeloupean Students (AGEG). From AGEG, several pro-independence political parties formed, including the Antillean-Guyanese Front (FAG) in 1961 and the Group for the National Organization of Guadeloupe (GONG) in 1963. These organizations were relatively small, but they produced a substantial propaganda campaign against the French presence in the Antilles.

However, after the 1960s, *indépendantistes*' strategy of using university-based groups to build a mass movement proved to be ineffective. Since the 1963 when BUMIDOM first began to organize Antillean migration, the overwhelming majority of Antilleans who settled in France had a limited education and were a part of the working-class. According to BUMIDOM's migration records, there was a low level of schooling among migrants, with most having left school around the age of eleven and not always having obtained the primary education certificate. By the 1970s, around half of all Antillean migrants had left school at either fifteen or sixteen; nonetheless, they remained employed in low-level occupations in either the construction, metallurgy or machinery industries.¹¹⁸ These migrants of the BUMIDOM era did not relate to the educated and middle-class *indépendantistes*. BUMIDOM migrants had no use for the *indépendantistes*' intellectual movement and philosophical arguments that equated

¹¹⁸ Stephanie A. Condon and Philip E. Ogden, "Afro-Caribbean Migration in France: Employment, State Policy and the Migration Process," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no.4 (1991): 451.

departmentalization and migration with colonialism. They had created a new life for themselves and their families in France, and they wanted to remain connected to the French nation.

In 1982, the magazine *Antilles Guyane Actualités* interviewed a migrant of the BUMIDOM generation who had settled in metropolitan France during the early 1960s. The magazine argued that after nearly twenty years of living in Paris, Ronald had created a stable life for himself, his wife, and three children. He had a secure job as a public functionary; he owned a home, and played soccer with his friends on Sundays. Ronald also maintained his cultural connection with the Antilles. He subscribed to all of the Antillean magazines and newspapers; he preferred to exclusively listen to Antillean music, and he spoke Creole with his friends, the majority of whom were also Antillean. Ronald claimed that he was comfortable with his life in France, and did not understand why Antilleans in Guadeloupe and Martinique were calling for independence:

I do not understand the people over there. They talk about independence. But with what? Of course, there must be improvements. More power given [to the Antilles], but independence, that's bullshit. Suppose that there was independence, what would become of us here? The homeland cannot restrain us. Me, I live for my homeland, but also see clearly; if there is independence, it is us [Antillean migrants] who will have to remake ourselves again. That does not interest me.¹¹⁹

According to *Antilles Guyane Actualités*, Ronald was the “archetype of the Antillean in the metropole” who preferred the economic benefits of living in France over independence.

In April 1974, François Mitterrand, then a candidate for the presidency, committed what *Flash Antilles Afrique (FAA)* referred to as a “political blunder”: he

¹¹⁹ Serge Rosange, “La vie en métropole. La France, c’est aussi ça”, *Antilles Guyane Actualités*, January 1982, p. 22.

promised independence to those departments who wished it. Mitterrand's statement guaranteeing "right to difference" and "respect for cultural identity" was a part of a political speech he made in Ajaccio, the capital of Corsica, an island off of the southeast coast of France.¹²⁰ It was an attempt to gain the favor of Corsican voters who since the early 1970s had endured widespread violence at the hands of various nationalist movements calling for either some degree of political autonomy or full independence.¹²¹ For *FAA*, Mitterrand's call for the "respect for cultural identity" was essentially giving into the demands of nationalists who only represented a minority of France's citizens in Corsica as well as Guadeloupe and Martinique. *FAA* claimed that Mitterrand misread the desire of Antillean migrants like Ronald for autonomy, and alienated the Antillean electorate. For the magazine, Mitterrand's statement had facilitated the victory of his opponent Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, who won the election by only 1.6%. *FAA* argued that if Mitterrand had not mentioned the possibility of independence for Guadeloupe and Martinique, then more Antilleans would have voted for him, securing his overall victory in the national election.

However, in reality, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's electoral victory was not a landslide in the Antilles. Antilleans did not completely reject Mitterrand; forty-three percent of Antilleans voted for him.¹²² It is more likely that d'Estaing failed to win by a greater majority because of divisions within the Right, not because of Mitterrand's supposed "blunder." *FAA*'s interpretation of the 1974 presidential election represented a

¹²⁰ Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, June 10, 1980. Published in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

¹²¹ Since the early 1970s, groups that claim to support Corsican independence, such as the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FLNC), have carried out numerous violent campaigns, including bombings and assassinations. The FLNC usually targets buildings and officials representing the French government.

¹²² William F. S. Miles, "Mitterrand in the Caribbean: Socialism (?) Comes to Martinique," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no.3 (Autumn 198): 65.

widely held popular belief among Antilleans that independence would be detrimental to migrants who had carved out a life for themselves in metropolitan France as citizens of the French nation. “The majority of Guadeloupeans do not want separation from France because the politics is about social benefits. To maintain a decent income, is it not better to remain in the French bosom?”¹²³ Even if the *indépendantistes* did have some early success in gaining Antillean students’ support, students represented only a small proportion of the Antillean population in France. They needed the support of the working-class migrants of the BUMIDOM generation to make the independence movement politically viable.

***Théâtre Noir* and the Forging of a French Creole Identity**

In the 1970s, the Creole movement crossed the Atlantic, but it established itself in France as a cultural movement that Antillean migrants could relate to and rally around. It recognized the desires of migrants like Ronald to hold onto their Creole cultural identity while also maintaining their political status as French citizens. In its journey from Guadeloupe and Martinique to France, the Creole movement had shed its arguments for independence. By the 1980s, it was largely a movement of Antillean cultural associations whose leaders sought to make Creole culture a part of the French nation. The *Théâtre Noir* (Black Theater) is an example of the type of association that was a part of the new France-based Creole movement. In February 1974, Martinican Benjamin Jules-Rosette founded the “Black Theater Group” to perform the works of Antillean and African authors and artists unknown to the metropolitan public. Jules-Rosette placed his association within the burgeoning cultural movement of Antillean

¹²³ Socrat Soulanges, “Guadeloup’ an nou”, *Flash Antilles Afrique*, November-December 1982, p. 28.

migrants who wanted to rediscover their cultural roots. It was focused on representing both African and Antillean writers and artists, suggesting that Antilleans had cultural connections to nations other than France. In an interview, Jules-Rosette described his organization as the “Antillean people’s permanent search for an identity” from which they have been alienated.¹²⁴ In October 1979, Jules-Rosette opened the *Théâtre Noir* in the twentieth arrondissement of Paris, enabling his theater troop to reach a wider metropolitan audience with more frequent public performances. Jules-Rosette wanted the performances at *Théâtre Noir* to evoke in Antilleans a rediscovery of their cultural links to Africa, as well as their Creole heritage.

The play *Errance* or “Wanderings”, directed by Jules-Rosette, reflected this theme of cultural self-discovery. It depicted the “dilemma of a young rootless migrant woman halfway between the land of her birth and her adoptive country.”¹²⁵ In an interview, the actress who starred in *Errance*, Lisette Malidor, explained how the play’s story reflected her own discovery of her black identity as a Martinican migrant in Paris. In 1978, Malidor, a celebrated burlesque dancer who performed at the Moulin Rouge and the Casino de Paris, left music hall to follow her dream of becoming an actress. Malidor wanted to “return to her race”; she no longer wanted to be sexually objectified by a white metropolitan audience. At *Théâtre noir*, she “discovered her own race and herself.”¹²⁶ *Errance* celebrated this process of cultural awakening, in which migrants uncovered their black and Creole roots that they had left behind in the islands and lost in France. However, Jules-Rosette was also adamant that his theater was “certainly not a

¹²⁴ “Ouverture du Théâtre Noir”, Interview with Benjamin Jules-Rosette, September 4, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 5.

¹²⁵ Aline N’goala and Mohamed Nemmiche, “Interview Lisette Malidor, ‘Ma mere est une île’ ”, *Sans Frontière*, no date, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 840442, Art. 5.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

cultural ghetto.” Rather, it is “above all a place of affirmation, not of confinement.”¹²⁷ It was a “humanitarian” organization that facilitated “the coexistence of different racial communities through knowledge and reciprocal respect.”¹²⁸ The troupe performed in schools throughout France with the goal of teaching children to “respect cultural differences.”¹²⁹ These performances taught “blacks and whites to mutually understand and appreciate each other.”¹³⁰

Associations like *Théâtre Noir* promoted the public recognition of Antillean culture in France. It encouraged Antillean migrants to explore and claim their Creole cultural heritage; however, it did it in a politically accepted manner that did not pose a threat to the political union between France and the Antilles. The *Théâtre Noir* was registered with the government as an official non-profit cultural association. Although it was a publicly recognized organization, the *Théâtre Noir*'s expression of cultural difference remained connected to a private association. In other words, the *Théâtre Noir* was within the constraints of the nation's republican ideals, which understood diversity as strictly a private matter. For this reason, the *Théâtre Noir* had an excellent reputation. It was lauded in the metropolitan press as a positive expression of Antillean culture.¹³¹ The Ministry of the DOM was not hesitant to grant the *Théâtre Noir* 300,000F in financial support when it threatened to close its doors at the end of 1980 due to lack of monetary funds. The Secretary of State for the DOM praised *Théâtre Noir* for its ability

¹²⁷ “Ouverture du Théâtre Noir”, Interview with Benjamin Jules-Rosette, September 4, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 5.

¹²⁸ “Historique de l'Ensemble Culturel Théâtre Noir.” Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 7.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Since the opening of *Théâtre Noir* in 1979, numerous articles praising the theater's performances have appeared in the newspapers *Paris Hebdo*, *Pariscope*, *Le Quotidien* and *Sans Frontière*. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 5.

to “promote a better understanding of [Antillean] cultures and an exchange based on the respect of their differences.”¹³²

Similarly, in 1978 when M. Rilos, the president of the *Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise* (CAG) asked for extra funding to transfer its organization’s headquarters to a larger space, the Ministry of the DOM agreed without hesitation.¹³³ CAG was also a legally recognized association that promoted social and cultural support for Antilleans living in the metropole. They organized every kind of Antillean cultural activity, such as community parties and dances, film viewings, dance performances, musical groups, and plays. The Ministry of the DOM regarded CAG as a positive organization. It went so far as to send a representative to the inauguration of CAG’s community center to praise the association and its leaders. DOM officials were pleased to support CAG’s organizational growth because of the association’s commitment to helping Antillean migrants adapt to French society.¹³⁴ As long as CAG served the greater purpose of Antilleans’ integration, then the Ministry of the DOM was eager to support Antilleans’ expression of their Creole culture.

Compared to nationalist groups, organizations like the *Théâtre Noir* and CAG posed a minimal political threat to the nation. For this reason, the Ministry of the DOM encouraged their activities as a strategy to silence those Antillean activists who were arguing for independence. Debates in the National Assembly during the early 1980s

¹³² Letter from Secrétaire auprès du Ministre de l’Intérieur, Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer, to the Ministre des Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer, May 12, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 6.

¹³³ “Note pour Monsieur le Directeur des D.O.M., Objet: Demande de subvention présentée par la Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise”, October 24, 1978, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 42.

¹³⁴ Statement of a representative of the Ministre des Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer at the inauguration of the *Communauté Antillo-Guyanaise*’s new community center. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 42.

reveal that the France's elected representatives were extremely concerned about the subversive potential of the Guadeloupean and Martinican independence movements. In June 1980, a member of the National Assembly described the radicalization of the Antillean independence movement. Pro-independence leaders' "determination is increasing day by day", making the "masses ever more likely to fight a ferocious and indiscriminate repression."¹³⁵ The representative described independence as a movement of hate and racism that encouraged Antilleans to despise France and all that is not Guadeloupean or Martinican.

Joseph Cambolive, a member of the Socialist Party, responded to this representative's worries; he argued that the government could improve Antilleans' relationships with the nation by recognizing their cultural differences. He described the political and cultural atmosphere of France as one in which "claims for decentralization, self-autonomy, and expressions of regional cultures are already strong."¹³⁶ A similar cultural movement focused on the rediscovery of "the Caribbean man" was also growing stronger in the Antilles and among Antillean migrants in France. Cambolive argued that the denial of Antilleans Caribbean identity would create political and social tensions in France. This was already happening in the French territory of Polynesia: a member of Polynesia's territorial assembly noted that Polynesians felt contempt for the French government that had degraded and devalued their culture. Taking into account this particular situation, Cambolive encouraged members of the National Assembly to recognize Antilleans' Creole culture: "Faced with the sad situation, do you not feel,

¹³⁵ Débats Assemblée Nationale, June 5, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

¹³⁶ Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, June 10, 1980. Published in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

members of the Government, my colleagues, the urgent need to actively be inspired by the expression coined by François Mitterrand in Ajaccio on April 26, 1974: "Right to difference, respect for cultural identity?"¹³⁷

Some members of the French government philosophically supported the recognition of Antilleans' cultural specificities as a kind of cultural right that should be granted to all individuals. However, the "right to difference" took political hold and was effectively implemented as a solution to the pro-independence Creole movement's threat to national unity. The Ministry of the Overseas Departments' financial support of Antillean cultural associations, such as *Théâtre Noir* and CAG, was a part of this strategy to use "the right to difference" to solidify the political and cultural union between France and the Antilles. This does not imply that the France-based Antillean cultural movement was not politically subversive; it was not a passive movement that followed the government's directives concerning diversity's place within the French nation. Metropolitan Antillean activists' conscious decision to revive the Creole culture while simultaneously distancing their cultural organizations from the independence movement enabled a new kind of Creole movement to take hold in France. Antillean migrants could support this type of cultural movement that permitted them to maintain their social and cultural links with metropolitan France while also expressing their Creole identity. Moreover, the government could support Antillean associations as legal cultural groups that did not seem to pose a threat to national stability. With such widespread support from the Antillean migrant community as well as from the French government, the France-based Creole movement had the power to create political and

¹³⁷ Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale, June 10, 1980. Published in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

cultural change in France. Most significantly, it pushed French officials to recognize Antilleans' "right to difference." The France-based Creole movement reformed the policy of assimilation and pushed French republicanism toward the possibility of multiculturalism in France.

Conclusion

The history of Antillean ethnic activism is important for understanding the contemporary debates about diversity in France, which are largely focused on the question of religious diversity and the outward expression of difference in public spaces. The headscarf affairs and the 2004 law prohibiting students from wearing "ostentatious" religious symbols in public schools have reinforced education officials' conception of difference as incompatible with the purported universality of republican education. Historians have argued that the French government's focus on religion and Islam's place in public classrooms is due to the fact that Muslims now represent one of the largest minority groups in France. However, the history of Antillean activism reveals that this construction of Islam as the new threat to national unity is not simply about numbers; it is about the particular way in which Muslims are arguing for the right to difference in France.

This chapter argues that Antillean migrants employed the established republican institution of cultural associations to claim their right to be both Creole *and* French. BUMIDOM's recognition of Antilleans' Creole identity was a limited form of multiculturalism that fit into state officials' conception of how French citizens should be permitted to form groups with particular cultural identities. The Ministry of DOM's articulation of *action culturelle* and *France créole* was not a complete break with

assimilation. Rather, it offered the government a viable solution for effectively integrating Antilleans into French society. In acknowledging Antilleans' Creole identity, the Bureau hoped to placate Antillean activists while simultaneously solidifying the political union between France and the Antilles. BUMIDOM's recognition of Antilleans' difference took the form of financial support for the establishment of Antillean cultural associations in metropolitan France. The Bureau and the Ministry of the DOM supported Antilleans' expression of difference as long as it remained within the accepted realm of cultural associations. Therefore, in general, Antilleans asserted their difference by exercising their right as French citizens to form cultural associations. They used these organizations as a platform to insert their Creole culture into the French nation.

In contrast, French Muslims' expression of their cultural and religious difference does not fit into the model of cultural associations previously established by Antillean migrants. Female French Muslim students' decision to wear headscarves in public schools has therefore been interpreted by education officials as a challenge to the Republic's understanding of diversity and group identity as something that is exclusively expressed within cultural associations. French Muslim women's struggle to express their Islamic culture and faith by wearing the headscarf and veil is so controversial because it is a break from how other minority groups, such as Antilleans, have argued for the right to difference in France. Scholars of France have characterized the "right to difference" in France as a distinctive political change that only came to fruition in 1981 when Socialist François Mitterrand was elected President. However, this chapter has demonstrated that the "right to difference" in France was not an abrupt change in policy.

Rather, it was a much more gradual process that began in the 1970s. Negotiations among the Ministry of the DOM, the Bureau, and Antillean migrants concerning how and the extent to which Antilleans' Creole culture would be included in the nation connected the "right to difference" and group identity in France with cultural associations. This nuanced understanding of Antilleans' construction of diversity sheds light on the new ways in which French Muslims are expanding the concept of multiculturalism in France to include public expressions of difference.

CHAPTER III

From Militant Nationalists to Ethnic Minority: The Antillean Creole Movement in Metropolitan France and the Antilles after Departmentalization

Introduction

Currently, among the Antillean people, a powerful cultural movement is growing, closely linked to the broader movement for national liberation, transforming it and reinforcing it. At the center of this cultural movement: the Creole language, the knowledge of its rules and writing script.¹

Now, we declare ourselves Creoles. We declare that *Créolité* (“Creoleness”) is the cement of our culture and that it must govern the foundations of our Antilleanness. *Créolité* is the *interactional or transactional aggregate* of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of History....Indeed, *Créolité* claims a full and entire sovereignty of our peoples without, however, identifying with the different ideologies which have supported this claim to date...We also want to distance ourselves from this somewhat narrow nationalism...²

In 1977, *Jingha*, a Paris-based Antillean magazine with readership in both the Antilles and France, reported that the Creole language had become the center of the Guadeloupean and Martinican nationalist movements. After a period of repression, the Guadeloupean and Martinican nationalist movements reemerged in the early 1970s with a new strategy: their political platform was now infused with a cultural agenda. Nationalist leaders chose the Creole language as the symbol to distinguish local Antillean culture from the metropolitan French one. They argued that Guadeloupeans and

¹ “La langue créole: l’écrit et la parole”, *Jingha*, November-January, 1977, p. 17.

² Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1989), 26, 55. See also: M.B. Taleb-Khyar, trans. *In Praise of Creoleness* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1990).

Martinicans possessed a different language and culture from French metropolitans and therefore, should be independent nations.³ Simultaneously, Antillean academics set out to legitimize nationalists' appropriation of Creole by developing a standardized Creole writing system, vocabulary, and grammar. Martinican linguist Jean Bernabé deliberately chose to construct a Creole language that deviated as much as possible from French to symbolize Antilles' cultural and political independence from France.⁴

In 1989, in his essay entitled *Éloge de la Créolité* (In Praise of Creoleness), Bernabé and his colleagues, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, reconceived of the Creole language and culture as an amalgamation of European, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern cultures. *Créolité* also defined Creole as the embodiment of Antillean cultural identity, and encouraged both the preservation and creation of a distinct Antillean language and culture. However, in contrast to nationalist rhetoric, which used the Creole language to argue for independence, *Créolité* emphasized the unique transnational character of Antillean culture. In doing so, it argued for Antilleans' inclusion in the French nation as a distinct ethnic and cultural group. In the span of a decade, the Creole language, which was once synonymous with Antillean nationalism, became the symbol of French multiculturalism.

³ There is a large body of literature describing how various nationalist movements have used language & culture as a marker of a group's distinct nationality to argue for independence. The special role that language, in particular, has played in building nationalist movements has been acknowledged by historians and social scientists. See especially: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1983); Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Joshua A. Fishman, *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays* (New York: Newbury House Publishers, 1973); Anwar S. Dil, ed., *Language in Sociocultural Change: Essays by Joshua A. Fishman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Eric Hobsbawm, "Waving Flags: Nations and Nationalism" in *The Age of Empire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 142-164; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Stephen Barbour and Cathie Carmichael, ed., *Language and Nationalism in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

⁴ Jean Bernabé, "Ecrire le créole," *Mofwaz* 2 (1977): 11-20.

This chapter analyzes this shift in the Creole movement from nationalism to multiculturalism, and seeks to explain how such a transformation occurred. It traces both the France-based and Antillean-based Creole movement from its inception in the 1950s as a part of the Antillean “cultural awakening” to the nationalization of Creole in the 1970s, and finally to Creole’s redefinition during the 1980s as a symbol of multicultural politics. This political shift can be explained in part by a change in geographical focus from Guadeloupe and Martinique to metropolitan France. Due to a large wave of government-organized migration, by the 1970s, nearly one third of the entire Antillean population lived in metropolitan France.⁵ As more and more Antilleans settled in the Hexagon, independence became less and less popular. Migrants had created lives for themselves in metropolitan France, and they wished to remain a part of the French nation. Recognizing the desires of migrants, leaders within the Creole movement moved away from the discourse of independence toward multiculturalism. Their new argument for Antilleans’ right to be both Creole and French embodied the kind of Creole movement that appealed to an increasingly large population of Antilleans residing in metropolitan France.

This kind of historicization and trans-Atlantic analysis of the Creole movement reveals that Antillean ethnic activism emerged from the convergence of two political strategies of the postwar era: nationalism and assimilation. Beginning in the late 1970s, the Guadeloupean and Martinican nationalist movements took a militant turn. In April 1980, the GLA (Group of Armed Liberation) set fire to the studio of France 3, a national television station, in Point-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe. This was the first of a series of violent attacks in which the GLA and a separate nationalist organization, the Caribbean

⁵ Alain Anselin, *L’émigration antillaise en France: la troisième île* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

Revolutionary Alliance (ARC), started fires and planted bombs to destroy various French government buildings throughout Guadeloupe and Martinique. These *indépendantistes*' use of terrorism to achieve their political goals alienated the Antillean people in both the Antilles and France. Their acts of violence threatened the validity of the Creole movement, which had become virtually synonymous with the independence movement.

In 1983, the Ministry of the Overseas Department lifted the legal ban on the use of Creole in public spaces and declared Creole a regional language of France. This decision was a strategic move to depoliticize the Creole movement and undermine nationalists' appropriation of Creole as a tool of nationalism. In response, nationalist Creolists in the Antilles decided to join forces with assimilationist Creole-supporters in France to keep the Creole movement from disintegrating. They found common ground and popular support for the Creole movement in Antillean activists' articulation of "right to difference", and together, they began to argue for Creole's connectedness to the French language and culture. Creole's new incarnation as a symbol of multiculturalism appealed to Antillean migrants in France who wished to remain politically linked to the French nation, but also wanted to maintain their Antillean culture and identity.

The movement to promote, develop, and popularize the Creole language in the Antilles and France is a story of constant political transformations in which Antillean nationalists, intellectuals, and political activists in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France used Creole to navigate their specific positions regarding the Antilles' political status in relation to the French nation. Under departmentalization, Antilleans had become French citizens and therefore, possessed the same civil and political rights as metropolitans. Yet, for Antilleans, full liberation went beyond civil and political liberties. It meant freedom

from French cultural domination as well as the recognition of Antillean cultural distinctiveness.⁶ Antillean intellectuals and activists consistently defined Creole as the embodiment of Antillean cultural identity and elevated language as the rallying point around which Antilleans could achieve cultural emancipation.

However, the meaning of cultural emancipation was in flux in the postwar era. From departmentalization in 1946 through the 1980s, Antillean elites constructed and reshaped Creole and the goals of the Creole movement to correspond with their changing and competing political objectives. Nationalists used the Creole language to express Antilleans' separate cultural and national identity; assimilationists highlighted Creole's historical and cultural connection to France; multiculturalists constructed Creole as an integral component of the French nation. As each group appropriated Creole for its own political means, it became not only a symbol and object of struggle, but also a political resource to gain popular support for their specific cause and vision of the Antilles' relationship to France.

The first part of this chapter explores how Creole became a symbol of Antillean cultural revival in the decade following departmentalization. Departmentalization, and its destruction of Antillean cultural and political institutions, precipitated a "cultural awakening" among educated Antillean elites. These "Creolists" constructed the Creole language—the last vestige of Antillean culture that French officials could not destroy—as the symbol of Antillean cultural identity. Nevertheless, in the 1950s, Antillean intellectuals sought to disassociate the Creole movement from politics, and were careful

⁶ See: Gerhard Grohs, "Difficulties of Cultural Emancipation in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, no.2 (March 1976): 65-78. Grohs distinguishes cultural emancipation from economic and social emancipation, and argues that "true" emancipation not only includes political and civil liberties, but also freedom from cultural domination as well as recovery of a past cultural identity.

to minimize the potentially subversive nature of an Antillean cultural movement. Creole only became politicized with the emergence of the anticolonial and nationalist movements in Guadeloupe and Martinique.

Part two examines this nationalization of Creole in the 1960s and 1970s. During this time period, two groups formed the basis of the Creole movement: linguists or Creolists who shaped and codified the Creole language as a symbol of cultural and political resistance and national militants who sought to gain popular support for independence through the instrumental use of the Creole language. Linguists, such as Jean Bernabé, were Antilleans who had been educated in French universities during the 1950s and 1960s. As students in France, they were influenced by the struggles for decolonization in the former French colonies, the rise of pan-Africanism, the Cuban and Algerian Revolutions, and the political climate leading up to the May 1968 movement in France. This atmosphere politicized these young intellectuals as they discovered their Creole heritage, which for them was separate from their French identities. After returning to the Antilles, Bernabé surrounded himself with other linguists interested in Creole and in 1975 formed the Group for the Study and Research of “Créolophonie” (GEREC). For GEREC, the study of language, and in particular, Creole was a political assertion of their Creole identities and personal resistance against French cultural domination. Nationalists were former members of the Martinican and Guadeloupean communist parties who had become disillusioned with the party line. While communists advocated political autonomy within the French federation, nationalists began to press for a more radical position. These dissidents broke with the autonomist communist parties, declared themselves in favor of independence, and founded GONG (Group for the

National Organization of Guadeloupe), an anticolonialist and clandestine organization. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, GONG was the main nationalist organization in the Antilles. It focused on public protest against colonialism and on mobilizing the masses for national independence. The second section of this chapter argues that the Creole movement emerged from the interdependence of linguists and nationalists. Nationalists were dependent upon the academic authority of linguists to validate their political ideology, and linguists needed a nationalist following to promote their ideas among a skeptical populace.

At the same time, assimilationist Creolists in France were forging their own movement that used Creole to discredit the nationalists' claims and place Creole and the Antilles firmly within the French nation. The most prominent assimilationists were Guy and Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux, a husband and wife team who were associated with the University of Provence in France. They argued for the interdependence of French and Creole, a claim that directly challenged nationalists' construction of Creole as a completely distinct language from French. For the most part, the scholarship on the Antillean Creole movement is exclusively focused on the nationalist politics of Creole in Guadeloupe and Martinique.⁷ This chapter expands this narrative beyond the Caribbean, and places the Antilles-based and France-based Creole movements in conversation with each other. In the 1980s, Antillean migrants had no interest in nationalism or assimilation; rather, they were attracted to the movement for the "right to difference."⁸

⁷ See: Hubert Devonish, *Language and Liberation: Creole language politics in the Caribbean*; Michel Giraud, "Les Conflits de langues aux Antilles françaises: fondements historiques et enjeux politiques" *Études Polémologiques* 34 (1985): 45-65; Maryse Romanos, *La poésie antillaise d'expression créole de 1960 à nos jours: Essai d'analyse socioculturelle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998); Ellen M Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 2004).

⁸ For more on the Antillean movement for "the right to difference" in France, see Chapter 2.

Therefore, in order to attract migrants to the Creole movement, Bernabé and other leaders of the Antilles-based Creole movement found common ground with the Hazaël-Massieux's France-based Creole movement in the emerging politics of French multiculturalism. This chapter contends that Antillean ethnic activism emerged in France during the 1980s from the convergence of the France- and Antilles-based Creole movements.

The third part of this chapter analyzes the French government's reaction to the Creole movement. Prior to the 1980s, all efforts to advance the cause of Creole had been controlled by nationalist sympathizers and militants. In 1983, in an attempt to regain control of the Creole issue and pacify the independence movement, the Ministries of Education and Overseas Departments officially recognized Creole as a regional language of France and supported its preservation. This placed the Creole movement within the confines of the socialist government's articulation of the "right to difference".

In response to the government's attempt to coopt the Creole movement, Creolists embraced the language of the "right to difference" to reconstruct Creole as a political tool of Antillean ethnic activism. Nationalist militants associated with GONG continued to use Creole to argue for independence, but in 1982 with the publication of the *Charte Culturelle Créole*, Bernabé and his GEREC linguists chose to break with the *indépendantistes* and separate cultural rights claims from nationalist goals. Instead of using Creole to justify political separation from the French nation, linguists reinvented Creole as a symbol of French and Antillean cultural connectedness to argue for the government's recognition of Antilleans as an ethnically distinct cultural group within the

French nation. The fourth section of this chapter explores this shift in the Creole movement from nationalism to multiculturalism.

Part I. Creole and the Antillean Cultural Awakening

Prior to the departmentalization of Guadeloupe and Martinique in 1946, discussions in the National Assembly regarding the future assimilation of the Antilles raised concerns about how the State could use its social and political institutions to make Antilleans into French citizens. In 1944, the colonial newspaper, *La Tribune Syndicale et Laïque*, argued that the French language could possibly be a solution to this problem of assimilation in the Antilles:

To speak French is an act of patriotism. A community of one language is the surest guarantee of national unity. ...It is necessary to explain (to Antilleans) that to love France is not only to imitate its customs and traditions, to take advantage of its benefits, its protection, its laws, to share its history and its glories, it is also and above all to assimilate, to adopt its doctrines and its language. To be French is to think and speak French.⁹

When Guadeloupe and Martinique became departments of France, the Ministry of the DOM immediately employed the French language as a tool of assimilation. DOM officials believed that the dissemination of the French language would effectively distance Antilleans from their local Creole culture and incorporate them into French society as loyal citizens. Thus, they forcibly established French as the official language of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and banned the use of Creole in public institutions, such as schools, courtrooms, and the media. In doing so, they relegated Creole to the private sphere, and reduced its status to that of a local vernacular. The ability to speak French signified social prestige and power; in contrast, Creole was the language of lower-class

⁹ *La Tribune Syndicale et Laïque*, February 1944, 2. Quoted in Ellen M. Schnepel, "The Politics of Language in the French Caribbean: The Creole Movement on the Island of Guadeloupe" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990), 108.

Antilleans who had received little schooling, and thus did not have access to French or the social mobility it afforded.

Despite this stigmatization, Creole persisted in daily communication. Close friends and relatives addressed each other in Creole, and local merchants in smaller cities used Creole to interact with their customers. Teachers in rural areas often used Creole in their classrooms to ensure that students understood their directions. Moreover, Creole remained the primary expression of local Antillean culture. In particular, it dominated music and theater productions. The French government may have been able to declare French the national language of the Antilles, but it could not regulate how Antilleans communicated with each other or the cultural meanings they attributed to their Creole language.

In the 1950s, some Guadeloupean and Martinican elites reacted against the state's efforts to assimilate Antilleans to the French cultural model. Across the French empire, colonial subjects in Indochina, Algeria, and West Africa formed nationalist groups and entered into war with France for their independence. Inspired by these nationalists' claims that they possessed a separate cultural tradition from France, a group of elite Antilleans also began to explore their own cultural heritage. In July 1957, they formed ACRA (l'Académie Créole des Antilles), a cultural association dedicated to the preservation and creation of an Antillean culture distinct from French culture. This postwar Antillean "cultural awakening" was intrinsically different from the interwar *Négritude* cultural revival. *Négritude* was a literary and political movement founded by a group of Antillean and African intellectuals living in Paris during the 1930s and 1940s. Led by Aimé Césaire of Martinique and Léopold Senghor of Senegal, *Négritude* broke

with other French-educated intellectuals from France's colonial territories who had emulated French standards in art and culture and denied their African heritage. Césaire and Senghor revalorized Africa as the “motherland” and a source of inspiration in the construction of diasporic black cultures. The *Négritude* movement claimed “blackness” as a source of pride and identity in the struggle against colonialism.

In contrast, ACRA's members criticized *Négritude* writers' over-privileging of “blackness”; they looked within the Antillean context rather than to Africa for the cultural center of Antillean identity. For ACRA, *Négritude* was an exclusive movement in that it only appealed to those Antilleans who traced their roots to Africa. However, Antilleans were not just black. Since the slave trade first brought Africans to Guadeloupe and Martinique, many other cultures, including those from South and East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and the Americas, have mixed with the indigenous Carib culture to form a very diverse Antillean culture. In making the Caribbean and its many cultures the focus of its movement, ACRA hoped to appeal to all Antilleans and the many cultural heritages with which they identified. Culture and the Caribbean, not race and Africa, became the unifying elements of ACRA's movement to free Antillean history and heritage from French domination.

In its academic journal, *La Revue Guadeloupéenne*, ACRA declared itself committed to reviving the Creole language and culture:

...to take stock of our linguistic treasure; to establish the meaning of the words and proverbial sayings, as well as their genealogy, with notations and anecdotes; to research, in particular, the source of the languages that are a part of Creole; to establish a writing system...to defend it against French, one of its fathers, invasive and abusive.¹⁰

¹⁰ Gaston Bourgeois, “Vive l' ACRA!”, *La Revue Guadeloupéenne* no.37 (July-September 1957): 21.

ACRA's defense of the Creole language challenged the assimilation laws of departmentalization. However, its members did not want ACRA to be perceived of as a politically subversive organization. The 1950s and early 1960s was a time of political turmoil for the French empire as colonial subjects in North and West Africa fought for their independence. ACRA did not want to be associated with these various nationalist groups for fear that the French government would perceive of its organization as another independence movement and squelch its efforts to create an Antillean identity around the Creole language. This generation of colonial-educated elites believed that Antilleans could achieve cultural autonomy from within the French state. Unlike their contemporaries in France's remaining colonies, this group of Martinicans and Guadeloupeans did not desire independence. For them, complete integration with France was the answer to Antilleans' demands for political equality. Thus, ACRA sought to separate their cultural claims from the debates concerning Guadeloupe's and Martinique's political relationship with France, as well as the broader debates about the future political status of France's North and West African colonies.

In articles two and five of its charter, ACRA attempted to deemphasize the political implications of its cultural movement by referring to Creole as a "patois" and by prohibiting political discussions in group meetings. According to ACRA, its motives were purely cultural. "The objective of this association: is to privilege, on a cultural and friendly level, the exchange of views among peoples interested in various creole patois or dialect....The members prohibit all political or religious discussion."¹¹ ACRA's conscious decision to define Creole as a "patois" endorsed the preservation of Antillean

¹¹ ACRA, *Statuts*, July 27, 1957. Reprinted in Ellen M. Schnepel "The Politics of Language in the French Caribbean: The Creole Movement on the Island of Guadeloupe" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990), 445-448.

culture; yet, it did not pose a threat to French political and cultural domination. As an inferior “patois” or dialect of French, Creole as well as the Antilles would remain politically subordinated to the French language and nation.

Despite ACRA’s attempts to detach its cultural movement from the debates about the Antilles’ relationship to France, their insistence on defending Creole against an “invasive” an “abusive” French culture was nonetheless political. Their movement transformed Creole into a symbol of Antillean identity. They had made Creole an expression of Antilleans’ local culture and solidarity that stood in opposition not only to the French language, but also to French political and cultural dominance. ACRA could not separate Creole from politics; they were inevitably linked.

Part II. The Nationalization of Creole

The Beginnings of the Antillean Independence Movement

In 1946, most sectors of the Antillean population supported Guadeloupe’s and Martinique’s change in political status from colonies to departments of France. Antillean representatives, and in particular, Aimé Césaire, also unanimously supported departmentalization. He, like many of his colleagues perceived of the Republic as the upholder of equality while white settlers sought to maintain the islands’ colonial status so that they could continue to socially and economically dominate Antillean society. Césaire argued that a closer political union with France would end the hierarchy of the colonial regime, and bring social and economic equality to the Antilles.¹² However, a decade after departmentalization, a segment of the traditional Antillean left, including Césaire, had become disillusioned with the policy. Departmentalization had failed to

¹² For more specifics on the change in Guadeloupe and Martinique’s political status from colonies to departments see the Introduction.

solve the Antilles' grave social and economic problems; social disparities between Antilleans and metropolitans continued to exist, and were only growing larger. Moreover, by the mid-1950s, the Antilles had become more economically dependent upon the metropole and had progressively lost cultural autonomy.

Throughout the 1950s, a series of general strikes occurred in Guadeloupe and Martinique, culminating in the 1956 agricultural workers' strike. At the end of February 1956, the Federation of Agricultural Workers called for a general strike in protest of their low salaries and poor working conditions, as well as the white settlers' (*békés*) continued control of the sugar industry. The strike lasted for nearly two months, during which ten of thirteen factories were completely paralyzed due to the lack of sugar cane being harvested. On several occasions, violence erupted between the unionized agricultural workers and strikebreakers, resulting in the arrest of fifty striking workers.¹³ From this general malaise, there arose new political groups, demanding recognition of group identity and more local control. In 1956, Aimé Césaire broke with the French Communist Party (PCF); two years later he founded the Martinican Progressive Party (PPM). Césaire used the Soviet forces' violent suppression of a popular uprising in Hungary as a pretext for leaving the Soviet-aligned PCF. Yet, his letter of resignation was essentially a justification for turning away from the pro-assimilationist PCF toward autonomy. After a decade of departmentalization, Césaire no longer believed that assimilation would bring economic and social equality to the Antilles. Shortly after establishing the PPM, he joined forces with the newly formed local Communist parties in Martinique (PCM) and Guadeloupe (PCG), which had also recently split from the PCF. Together, these three parties opened up the debate on the political status of the islands,

¹³ Marie-Hélène Léotin, *Habiter le Monde Martinique, 1946-2006* (Paris: Ibis Rouge, 2008), 25-33.

and argued for more local control of political and cultural affairs. Hereafter, the right-wing parties distinguished themselves from the left by becoming supporters of departmentalization.

Up until the early 1960s, it was inconceivable for a political group to speak of a “Martinican nation” or a “Guadeloupean nation”.¹⁴ The popular PPM, PCM, and PCG supported political autonomy for the Antilles within the French state, not as separate nations.¹⁵ Anticolonial groups, such as AGEF (General Association of Guadeloupean Students in France) condemned departmentalization as a continued form of colonial oppression; however, at this time, AGEF did not articulate independence as a solution to this particular problem. In December 1960, at its third annual conference in Montpellier, AGEF adopted a “Guadeloupean Student Charter”, calling for Guadeloupean students in France to fight against colonial oppression: “As a citizen of a colonized country, aware of his origins, the Guadeloupean student has the right and duty to conduct a struggle against colonialism in all of its forms.”¹⁶ This kind of abstract language established AGEF’s perception of Guadeloupe as a colonial possession of France despite its legal status as a department. Yet, it did not present the goal of this struggle in specific terms; it was not entirely clear that Guadeloupeans should be arguing for independence.

In the summer of 1961, when the Antillean-Guianean Front (FAG) emerged in France with the objective of “awakening the national consciousness in the Antilles”, the

¹⁴ Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Lettres créoles: tracées antillaises et continentales de la littérature, Haïti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane 1635-1975* (Paris : Hatier, 1991), 130-131.

¹⁵ E.M. Schnepel, “The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 120.

¹⁶ “Les grandes dates du mouvement nationaliste guadeloupéen, 1928-1981: un demi-siècle déjà!,” *Le Magazine Guadeloupéen (MAGWA)*, January-February 1981, 17.

President of France quickly dissolved the group.¹⁷ Two years later, with the formation of the anticolonialist group GONG (Group for the National Organization of Guadeloupe), an explicitly nationalist movement finally took hold in Guadeloupe and France. GONG was the first politically organized and active nationalist group that focused on mobilizing the masses in public protests against colonialism and for national independence. At an international conference uniting various anticolonial groups across Asia and Africa, GONG affirmed “the right of Guadeloupe to its national independence” and vowed to “employ any means necessary for the complete decolonization of their country.”¹⁸ In 1967, GONG supported and participated in the racial demonstrations and riots that broke out in the cities of Basse-Terre and Point-à-Pitre during a construction workers’ strike. During the violence, forty-nine Guadeloupeans were killed by the French army, which had been sent in to control and dismantle the strike. Jacques Nestor, a member of GONG, was among the dead protesters. Following the riots, French authorities set out to dismantle the anticolonialist resistance and nationalist movement. It arrested pro-nationalist Antillean students in Paris and Bordeaux, imprisoned GONG leaders, and placed eighteen “guadeloupean patriots” who participated in the riots on trial “for undermining the integrity of the French territory.”¹⁹

After this period of suppression, the nationalist movement reemerged in the 1970s with a new political strategy that embraced Antilleans’ Creole culture. More specifically, nationalist leaders associated with GONG, MUFLNG (Movement for Unification of Forces for the National Guadeloupean Liberation), and MIM (Martinican Independence

¹⁷ “Les grandes dates du mouvement nationalist guadeloupéen, 1928-1981: un demi-siècle déjà!,” *Le Magazine Guadeloupéen (MAGWA)*, January-February 1981, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Movement) chose the Creole language as a symbol of Antilleans' cultural and national difference. Although cultural groups, such as ACRA, had used Creole as a marker of Antilleans' cultural distinctness prior to the 1970s, the nationalists' cooptation of Creole was different. Whereas ACRA argued that Creole was merely a cultural symbol, the nationalists used Creole to make both cultural *and* political arguments. They argued that because Antilleans possessed a distinct culture from the metropolitan one, they also constituted a distinct nation. Prior to this period, Creole had been considered a deformed patois or dialect and a marker of lower-class status. In contrast, French was the language of prestige; it signified access to social advancement, and was the accepted language of the government, schools, courts, and the media. It seems worth asking, then, why Creole suddenly emerged as the nationalists' symbol of independence when previously language had not played a large role in their movement. The next part of this chapter argues that the movement to promote, codify, and popularize the Creole language became politicized when both militant nationalists and linguists sought to mobilize the masses in support of their respective nationalist and anticolonial movements.

Nationalists' Appropriation of Creole

In the 1970s, interest in the promotion of Creole was almost exclusively appropriated by the anticolonialist left and far-left. The anticolonial left included the Martinican and Guadeloupean Communist Parties whose leaders advocated a kind of moderate nationalism, known as autonomy. Autonomists argued for more local control of political and cultural affairs, but wanted Guadeloupe and Martinique to remain a part of the French nation. Militant nationalist groups, such as GONG, MUFLNG, and MIM made up the far-left. For these groups, independence was the only solution to Antilleans

oppression under French rule. Both the left and far-left argued that departmentalization was a continuation of France's ideological project of colonialism in which Guadeloupeans and Martinicans learned to "despise their national values" and "regard their language and culture as something entirely worthless."²⁰ The purported arms of French colonialism—the Church, public schools, and mass media—worked together to elevate the French language and culture and devalue Antilleans' own Creole culture and identity. In an editorial that appeared in *Djok*, a weekly newspaper published by the nationalist group *Ligue d'Union Antillais*, an Antillean migrant wrote that the time had come "to let our white masks fall, to open our mouths, and speak Creole."²¹ "For three centuries, Creole has been denigrated, ignored, despised. Speaking French was synonymous with beauty and intelligence. Speaking Creole was synonymous with coarseness, stupidity, or even insanity!"²² Far-left nationalist groups, like the *Ligue d'Union Antillais*, argued that in order to fight the process of assimilation that had destroyed and degraded the Creole culture and language, Antilleans needed to revalue their Creole culture and language and begin to preserve and create new works of Creole culture, such as literature, dance, and music. This preservation and production of the Creole culture and language was the first step in the process of independence. The promotion of Creole awakened national consciousness within Antilleans and made them aware of their separate national identity.²³

²⁰ An editorial in the publication *Pou Jou wouvé* succinctly expresses the position of anticolonial groups regarding the struggle to revalorize and preserve the Creole culture in the face of assimilation. *Pou Jou wouvé* was an organ of the General Association of Martinican Students (AGEM), an anticolonial organization dedicated to fighting France's continued colonial presence in the Antilles. committed "Editorial: Etudions notre réalité nationale!", *Pou Jou wouvé* 3, July 1978, 8.

²¹ "Editorial, Quand nos bouches s'ouvrent", *Djok* 3, November 27-December 3, 1976, 3.

²² Ibid.

²³ "Editorial: Etudions notre réalité nationale!", *Pou Jou wouvé* 3, July 1978, 8.

Two types of leaders formed the foundation of the Creole movement: nationalists who sought to employ Creole as the “language of the people” in their struggle for independence and linguists or Creolists who sought to codify, develop, and elevate the Creole language as a symbol of political and cultural resistance. These two distinct groups were dependent on each other to gain the popular support that they needed to further their own movements and political agendas. The nationalists needed the linguists to scientifically validate their claim that Antilleans’ possessed a distinct national culture, and linguists needed to the nationalists’ political influence to mobilize popular support for their academic Creole movement. Both nationalists and linguists discovered in Creole a political resource that they could manipulate to promote their vision of Antilleans as a culturally distinct people. Together, they politicized the Creole language, and employed it to popularize both the independence and Creole movements.

The politicization of Creole first began in the early 1970s when certain trade unions decided to use Creole instead of French in their general assembly meetings. Most notably, the UTA (*Union des Travailleurs Agricoles*), a union of agricultural workers, and the UPG (*Union de Paysans Pauvres de la Guadeloupe*), a union of small farmers and peasants, were the driving force behind this break with language traditions. These two local unions had been founded with the support of nationalist intellectuals, such as Sonny Rupaire, in 1970 and 1972 respectively. Like many nationalists of his time, Rupaire was radicalized by the Algerian War and the 1967 racial riots that broke out in Point-à-Pitre during a construction workers’ strike. Hailed as the “father of Creole poetry”, Rupaire used Creole to create a distinct Antillean poetry tradition that called for Guadeloupe’s independence.

During the early 1970s, the Antillean nationalist movement was growing in both the Antilles and in France. Rupaire's UTA also received support from the metropolitan-based Antillean student groups AGEG and AGEM (General Association of Martinican/Guadeloupean Students). These associations' student leaders were politically active in organizing demonstrations in Paris against "imperialism" and "French colonialism" in the Antilles.²⁴ They linked Antillean workers' plight in the metropole to Antilleans' struggles in Guadeloupe and Martinique; both experienced oppression at the hands of the French government. Prior to establishing the UTA, Rupaire was a representative for AGEG. In the early 1970s, he used his connections to AGEG to secure the group's support for the UTA. In February 1971, AGEG and AGEM handed out flyers informing Antillean migrants about the UTA's fight against the "shameful exploitation" of workers by "capitalist and colonialist raptors."²⁵ They called upon Antillean migrants to demonstrate outside of the Belleville metro in Paris to show their solidarity with Antillean workers.²⁶

Rupaire's participation in both the UTA and AGEG demonstrates that both organizations were intimately related. The UTA and the AGEG shared members who perceived of the workers' and independence movements as part of the same struggle.

UTA and AGEG leaders argued that the French government and its "white settler

²⁴ AGEM (Association Générale des Etudiants Martiniquais), AGEG (Association Générale des Etudiants Guadeloupéens), UEG (Union des Etudiants Guyanais), AGTAG (Amicale Générale des Travailleurs Antillais et Guyanais), "Samedi 13 février 71 Journée de mobilisation des émigrés antillais et guyanais", Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

²⁵ BUMIDOM, "Note", February 8, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

AGEM (Association Générale des Etudiants Martiniquais), AGEG (Association Générale des Etudiants Guadeloupéens), UEG (Union des Etudiants Guyanais), AGTAG (Amicale Générale des Travailleurs Antillais et Guyanais), "Samedi 13 février 71 Journée de mobilisation des émigrés antillais et guyanais", Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

²⁶ Ibid.

puppets” in the Antilles had oppressed the Antillean working-class in Guadeloupe and Martinique, as well as Antillean migrants in metropolitan France. Therefore, both organizations claimed that independence was the only effective solution to workers’ and migrants’ grievances. In the flyer advertising the Belleville demonstration, AGEG and AGEM informed Antillean migrants that they were participants in UTA’s “struggle of our people against French imperialism, [and] for their national independence.”²⁷ Antilles-based and France-based nationalist groups worked together to build a trans-Atlantic movement to unite Antillean workers in Guadeloupe and Martinique with Antillean migrants in France. Their desire for independence produced the need for a Creole identity that could unite Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to highlighting Antilleans’ common plight as low-level laborers in both the Antilles and France, pro-nationalist leaders sought to make Antilleans aware of their shared cultural identity. Creole provided the cultural platform from which they could construct this Antillean national identity.

Cognizant of the fact that the majority of agricultural workers spoke Creole and did not understand French, nationalist intellectuals encouraged UTA union leaders to use Creole in meetings as the most effective way to communicate with members. They argued that the use of Creole “liberated” workers by allowing them to speak freely in meetings and understand the union leaders’ political goals. The nationalist newspaper *Djok* published an illustration depicting how the French language had effectively silenced the Antillean worker. This picture of a black man with a muzzle on his mouth and a

²⁷ AGEM (Association Générale des Etudiants Martiniquais), AGEG (Association Générale des Etudiants Guadeloupéens), UEG (Union des Etudiants Guyanais), AGTAG (Amicale Générale des Travailleurs Antillais et Guyanais), “Samedi 13 février 71 Journée de mobilisation des émigrés antillais et guyanais”, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940380, Art. 30.

collar-like apparatus around his neck conveyed in a startling manner Antilleans' silence and feelings of immobility in the face of departmentalization and assimilation.²⁸ In addition to this use of Creole in private member meetings, union spokesmen also began to use Creole in public rallies and demonstrations, as well as during strikes to communicate with workers and mobilize them.²⁹ Thus, not only was Creole being valorized through its new role as the language of political struggle, but it had also become the symbol of personal and national liberation. Creole empowered Antilleans to break free from the constraints of French assimilation; it liberated workers by permitting them to participate in the debates about the Antilles' political status. In doing so, it became the language in which the argument for independence was discussed and formulated. National liberation would be achieved through leaders' use of Creole to mobilize the masses of agricultural workers, small farmers, and peasants in the countryside.

In addition to using union meetings to attract workers to their cause, the nationalists also founded newspapers, such as *Djok*, to bring the independence movement to the people. In the 1970s, the principle Parisian dailies and weeklies were all available in Guadeloupe and Martinique. *France-Antilles* was the only daily on both islands dedicated to local Antillean news. Founded in Martinique in 1964, and first published in Guadeloupe in 1967, *France-Antilles* was a part of Robert Hersant's media empire in metropolitan France. *France-Antilles*'s editor consciously avoided reporting on controversial local events, especially if they were related to politics. In Guadeloupe and Martinique, politics centered on the question of the islands' relationship to France. Thus,

²⁸ "Editorial, Quand nos bouches s'ouvrent", *Djok* 3, November 27-December 3, 1976, 3.

²⁹ E.M. Schnepel, "The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 121-124.

in avoiding all political subject matter, *France-Antilles* conveyed a distorted image of a politically unified nation, silencing those who challenged departmentalization.³⁰

For Antillean nationalists, *France-Antilles* was an arm of the French government that misinformed Antilleans and sought to create a passive citizenry in Guadeloupe and Martinique. In response, leaders of nationalist groups created their own newspapers and magazines, such as *Djok*, *Lendépendans*, and *Ja Ka Ta*, to enlighten Antilleans about local politics. Some publications had one full time paid journalist, but most of the reporting was done by a small number of unpaid volunteers. In general, these weeklies and monthlies were written in a simple journalistic French. However, Creole was frequently used in quotations or whole paragraphs denouncing France and its “colonial” practices in the Antilles. Leaflets and small pamphlets inserted into the newspapers for special occasions were also written in Creole. Nationalists encouraged union leaders to use Creole in their meetings as the language of struggle and “liberation”, and they did the same with their political press. Because of the ideological affiliations of these publications, they were expressions of opinion rather than organs of information. Their intention was to stimulate political debate and attract readers to their nationalist cause. Although readership reflected a limited portion of the population (weekly or monthly circulation averaged 3,000 to 7,000 in Guadeloupe out of a population of approximately 325,000 in 1990), as official organs of nationalist groups, these publications were

³⁰ For an overview of the Guadeloupean and Martinican press, see: Alvina Ruprecht, “Mass Media in Guadeloupe,” in *Mass Media and the Caribbean*, ed. Stuart H. Surlin and Walter C. Soderlund (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1990), 223-238. Also, see: Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004) 104-105.

nonetheless representative of the opinions and activities of the nationalist movement during the 1970s.³¹

In the spring of 1976, *Jingha*, a Paris-based Antillean magazine, informed Antillean migrants in metropolitan France of the current movement among nationalist union leaders to elevate the Creole as the language of the Antillean national movement. Antillean migrants founded numerous magazines, such as *Jingha*, to keep Antilleans in the metropole informed about local politics. In order to build a successful independence movement, local nationalists needed the support of all Antilleans, including those who had migrated to France. For this reason, nationalists often used sympathetic France-based publications, like *Jingha*, as a political forum to spread the discourse of nationalism. For example, *Jingha* reported on the public trial of Thernisien Nomertin, an Antillean laborer and the general secretary of the UTA, to rally Antillean migrants around the movement for independence. *Jingha* characterized Nomertin's public trial as an attempt by the "French colonialists" to keep Antilleans in a politically and culturally subordinate position. It then praised Nomertin's refusal to speak anything but Creole during the proceedings as a symbolic attack on the French judicial system, a primary emblem of French power. "This transgression of the prohibition of Creole [in court] has caused the irritation of the judges and the enthusiasm of the people. This fact reflects the reversal of power relations at the level of language, between French and Creole. Creole

³¹ *Lendépendans*, a weekly founded in 1984, is the official organ of the UPLG (Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe). The UPLG was formed in 1978 as the first official nationalist political party. It served as an umbrella organization for the nationalist trade unions, such as the UTA (Union of Agricultural Workers). *Ja Ka Ta* (meaning "it's already getting late") was one of the UPLG's earliest monthly magazines. See: Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004) 104-105.

has become a formidable weapon in the fight on ideological grounds.”³² The language used in *Jingha* was instructional, in that it was meant to inform Antillean migrants and make them aware of Creole’s new role as a political tool.

However, at the same time, the goal of pro-nationalist magazines like *Jingha* was not merely to inform; the director of *Jingha*, Hughes Drane, also wanted to unite Antilleans in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France in their common struggle against French oppression. In the first issue of *Jingha*, Drane wrote, “The publication of ‘Jingha’ should enable us to better work to strengthen our union...in allowing Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic to understand each other.”³³ He argued that in informing Antilleans in metropolitan France and in the islands about their respective life experiences, *Jingha* would “help to bring into the same movement that which is scattered.”³⁴ In order to do this, *Jingha* published testimonies from local union members that captured the excitement and growing momentum of the nationalist movement in the Antilles:

The first of the UTA meetings that I attended was at the Grosse Montagne school in Lamentin. A dense crowd of 2000 attentive people, animated at times, smiled and burst out laughing at other times. A crowd of workers in profound agreement over their shared condition, exposing the situation, denouncing abuses, claiming the rights of workers... Without a doubt for me: the instrument of this deep communion, it was Creole. First, it allowed a clear understanding of the situation, then it expressed the innermost feelings of these men... Creole revealed itself to me as a language that is perfectly capable of conveying a message, providing information in economic and sociopolitical areas that have previously been reserved for French.³⁵

³² “Guadeloup: Peia tini bon balan an ko-i! Kiles et inkiet’kiles?”, *Jingha: Magazine d’Union Antillais*, April-June 1976, 10. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-31746.

³³ Hughes Drane, “Rache vie zeb-la! Jin-n’ Pouss’-la: Baye Langre!”, *Jingha: Magazine d’Union Antillais*, April-June 1976, 3. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-31746.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Guadeloup: Peia tini bon balan an ko-i! Kiles et inkiet’kiles?”, *Jingha: Magazine d’Union Antillais*, April-June 1976, 10. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-31746.

Immediately following the union member's statement, Drane, declared that "the unity of the people of Martinique, French Guiana, [and] Guadeloupe is today's agenda and we need to realize it."³⁶ He published the union member's words to inspire a feeling of national solidarity among Antilleans living in the Caribbean and in metropolitan France. For Drane, Creole was a powerful political tool: it had unified union members, and now, he argued Creole was also the foundation of a common bond uniting all Antilleans into their own separate nation. Creole "touches the deepest part of us" and "inspires us to regain confidence in ourselves and dare to fight." It had the power to restore Antilleans' cultural identity and unite them in the "face of imperialism."³⁷

By the late 1970s, nationalist groups had succeeded in gaining the support of union leaders for the independence movement, known as MUFLNG (Movement for Unification of Forces for the National Guadeloupean Liberation). Together in 1978, they formed the first official nationalist political party, the UPLG (Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe). The UPLG served as an umbrella organization for many of the pro-nationalist trade unions, such as the UTA.³⁸ Many of these unions' leaders were also UPLG party members. The UPLG's main political goal was to mobilize the masses for independence. They turned to Creole, which had been politicized in union meetings, as the most effective tool for rallying the people to the nationalist cause.

³⁶ Guadeloupe: Peia tini bon balan an ko-i! Kiles et inkiet'kiles?", *Jingha: Magazine d'Union Antillais*, April-June 1976, 10. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-31746.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Nationalist trade unions include: UGTG (Union Générale des Travailleurs de la Guadeloupe), General Union of Guadeloupean Workers; UNEEG (Union Nationale des Elèves et Etudiants de la Guadeloupe), National Union of Guadeloupean High School and University Students; SGEG (Syndicat Général de l'Education en Guadeloupe), General Union of Education in Guadeloupe. For more on the UPLG as the umbrella organization of nationalist trade unions see: Ellen M. Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and Politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 2004) 104-107.

Suddenly, the Creole language was at the forefront of the Antillean nationalist movement. However, the nationalists' communicative needs and demands could not be met by the Creole language in its current state of development. In the early 1970s, Creole was strictly an oral language; it had no established grammar, writing system, or vocabulary. In order to be an effective tool of communication in the mobilization of the masses, the Creole language needed to be codified. *Jingha* informed the Antillean public of the importance of establishing a written Creole system. It argued that historically, cultural production formed the basis of nationalist movements throughout the world; Antilleans' claim for a separate nation hinged on the existence and production of a separate Antillean culture and language. Therefore, "the development of written Creole" was the "primary objective" of the nationalist movement. According to *Jingha*, it was necessary for Antilleans to "fight against the French writing, [and] move forward: written Creole literature must take off, our knowledge of our language must deepen."³⁹ The nationalists and union leaders looked to intellectuals to legitimize Creole as a written language in its own right. In the mid-1970s, certain pro-nationalist linguists working within the university system, such as Jean Bernabé, became actively involved in the standardization of the Creole language. For these individuals, their efforts to create a standard Creole grammar and vocabulary were a conscious political contribution to the greater struggle for independence.

GEREC and the Creation of a Nationalist Creole Writing System

In 1975, pro-nationalist Martinican linguist, Jean Bernabé, founded GEREC (*Groupes d'Etudes et de Recherches en Créolophonie*, later changed to *en Espace*

³⁹ "La langue créole: l'écrit et la parole," *Jingha*, November-December 1977, 17.

Créolophone), a university-based Creole research group. From 1976-1980, GEREC became well known by their publications: *Espace Créole*, a “theoretical review” and *Mofwaz*, a “Bulletin for Education Liaison and Research”. *Espace Créole* was an academic journal for linguists that theorized the origins and structures of multiple French-influenced Creoles. GEREC used *Mofwaz* to inform the general public about the cultural and political implications of certain developments within Creole studies. Thus, GEREC presented itself as both an academic institution and a group of militants using Creole and their academic credentials to promote a nationalistic political agenda. GEREC infused nationalist discourse into their research on the Creole language. Their characterization of Creole as a political tool of resistance and liberation echoed local unions’ appropriation of Creole.

According to GEREC, during departmentalization, French officials had used the French language as an instrument of control and assimilation. They devalued Creole as a patois and bastardization of French. GEREC perceived of their research as a conscious effort to revalue Creole as a language in its own right. In reconstructing Creole, GEREC linguists argued that they were reclaiming Creole from the control of the French government, and making it into a political tool in the nationalist resistance against French cultural and political domination.

Language of deviance and of resistance, Creole remains a dominated language. These characteristics give Creole a particularly symbolic meaning. So much so that all who despise Creole, fear its symbolic power of subversion; others who know Creole’s resources at the level of the imaginary collective rather than the social reality, want to use Creole in the development of the people that it concerns.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ GEREC, *Mofwaz* 1 (1977): 94.

In the above statement, which appeared in the first issue of *Mofwaz*, GEREK highlighted the political symbolism of Creole as a “language of deviance and resistance.” The study and use of Creole was a direct affront to French control and the policy of assimilation, which had attempted to eradicate Creole from Antillean society. GEREK believed that its work freed Creole from French domination so that the Antillean people could use it in the development of a separate culture and nation.

In 1975, GEREK’s leader, Jean Bernabé, returned from a Creole studies conference in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. One of the essential questions discussed at the conference was the standardization of a spelling system for Creoles. Bernabé understood that if Creole was to be used as a political tool in the nationalist movement, the time had come for Antilleans to choose and create a coherent alphabetical and spelling system for their Creole language. Upon his return to Guadeloupe, Bernabé set out to do just that. He published his proposals for an “integrated orthographic code” in both *Mofwaz* and *Espace Créole*. First and foremost, Bernabé argued that GEREK’s Creole writing system must be based on “scientific arguments as rigorous as possible.”⁴¹ This kind of thorough and precise study would elevate Creole as a bona fide language and validate it as integral component of a distinct Antillean culture. Bernabé proclaimed that the scientific study and construction of Creole was a “political problem”; the main objective of his efforts to standardize Creole was “to promote Creole as the bearer of a distinct history and culture.”⁴² Scientifically establishing the existence of a separate Antillean culture and language from the French metropolitan one was fundamental to nationalists’ argument

⁴¹ Jean Bernabé, “Ecrire le créole”, *Mofwaz* 1 (1977): 12.

⁴² GEREK, “Une pseudo-théorie pour apprendre le français aux petits créolophones”, *Mofwaz* 1 (1977): 83.

that Antilleans' possessed a different cultural heritage and therefore should be a separate nation.

After establishing Creole as a marker of Antilleans' distinct national identity, Bernabé theorized how to develop a writing system to reflect and reinforce this fact. According to Bernabé, there were two possible options: etymology or phonetics. He could develop a writing system using Creole's etymological origins in French, or he could standardize Creole so that it mirrored the sounds Antilleans made when they spoke Creole. Bernabé quickly dismissed the etymological method, arguing that such a French-centered script would counteract the nationalist political agenda: "We can already affirm that an adequate system of Creole should be simple, concrete, and respect the autonomy of the language. In a word, Creole must not, cannot be written like French."⁴³ Bernabé deliberately avoided the assimilationist tendencies of earlier writing systems that used French etymology to codify Creole and thus, reaffirmed Creole as a patois and culturally dependent upon French.

Instead, Bernabé envisioned a Creole writing system that highlighted Antilleans' separate national identity. He decided to use the unique sounds Antilleans made when speaking Creole to ensure that Creole would look nothing like French. This type of phonological orthography established Creole's separateness and independence from the French language. Bernabé was aware of the political power of language; his script was an intentional political act to promote the nationalist agenda:

Writing is a very important instrument. Like any human or humanized instrument, it encompasses a number of ideological and political values that would be futile to ignore. Specifically, one of the roles of a specific writing system, could be to help creole-speakers become aware of the specificity of their language, of their culture, in short of their identity. No

⁴³ Jean Bernabé, "Ecrire le créole", *Mofwaz* 1 (1977): 14.

writing system, even those elaborated on scientific principles, is neutral, and ours less than any other. We affirm, if it even needs to be, its militant character.⁴⁴

Prior to Bernabé's efforts to codify Creole, certain Antillean linguists had attempted to formulate a Creole script. Yet, these linguists had not perceived of their work as a political act; they believed that their work was purely cultural in that it simply sought to preserve the Creole language.⁴⁵ For Bernabé, this kind of cultural work was inherently political. The promotion of Creole made Antilleans aware of their separate identity as Creole-speakers and therefore, formed the foundation of the nationalist movement. Moreover, Bernabé claimed that in contrast to nationalist union leaders' appropriation of Creole, his work was rigorously academic. He used the science of linguistics to prove that Antilleans possessed a distinct culture and thus, should constitute their own nation.

Bernabé's linguistic work became even more politically militant and nationalistic when he decided to use the principle of "maximum deviance" (*déviance maximale*) to construct Creole's script. This meant that the form furthest from the French etymological model would be selected to create the letters that would make up written Creole words.⁴⁶ Maximum deviance pushed Bernabé's use of phonological orthography one step further. Not only did Bernabé use the sound of Creole words to make it visually different from French, but now, he also employed maximum deviance to do everything in his power to ensure that written Creole would be as distinct as possible from the French language. Bernabé included in his Creole script letters, such as w, which rarely appeared in the

⁴⁴ Jean Bernabé, "Ecrire le créole", *Mofwaz* 1 (1977): 28.

⁴⁵ In the mid-1950s, several colonial-educated elite Antilleans formed the Creole studies group ACRA (*Académie Créole des Antilles*) to promote the preservation of the Creole language. This group sought to keep politics out of its cultural work by forbidding political discussions during group meetings. Moreover, ACRA strategically constructed Creole as a "patois" to temper any potential nationalist overtones of their work.

⁴⁶ Jean Bernabé, "A propos de la lexicographie créole," *Espace Créole* 3 (1978): 87-98.

written French language. It was inconceivable for Bernabé to incorporate the French r in written Creole because it did not correspond to the authentic Guadeloupean or Martinican pronunciation of an r, which more closely resembled the sound of an English w. Instead, he chose to replace the French r with the letter w. Bernabé also chose to exclude many silent letters, such as the final e of a word, that are an integral part of the French writing system. For example, Bernabé combined these two principles in his Creole orthography for the word “rock”. The Creole word “woch” sounded similar to but looked significantly different from the French word “roche”. The word “woch” may have had etymological origins in the French language, but Bernabé used maximum deviance to sever these historical and cultural ties. “Woch” had been creolized; it was no longer recognizable as French.⁴⁷

French linguists had used what they perceived to be Antilleans’ “mispronunciation” of French sounds, such as the throaty r, as evidence for their characterization of Creole as a deformed patois of French. However, for Bernabé, Antilleans’ use of the English w in place of the French r, as well as his decision to drop all silent French letters not pronounced by Antilleans, was an expression of Antilleans’ unique identity. Therefore, his decision to exclude the French r and silent e from written Creole constituted a political statement about Antilleans’ relationship to the French nation. Antilleans’ use of the English w indicated that they were more culturally connected to the Caribbean where the English w was prominent; they were not a part of the French nation where the English w did not exist.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Donald Colat-Jolivière, “A propos du “r” en créole,” *Espace Créole* 3 (1978): 29-40.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Through Bernabé and his GEREC colleagues' writing system that identified Creole as a distinct language from French, the nationalists were able to lay claim to the separateness of the Antillean people. This sociocultural distinctiveness, reinforced by GEREC's scientific research, became the rationalization for seeking and establishing political independence. For example, in its monthly magazine, *Ja Ka Ta*, the nationalist political party, UPLG, used GEREC's purportedly scientific findings about the history of the creation of the Creole language to justify the construction of a separate Antillean nation. In April 1979 *Ja Ka Ta* published extracts from an academic presentation made by GEREC member Roland Thésauros in which he discussed the link between Creole and the formation of a national identity in Guadeloupe. Thésauros claimed that Creole was formed in the unique experiences of slaves who were brought to Guadeloupe and Martinique from Africa by French colonizers and plantation owners. He argued that a unique Antillean identity emerged from this process of language construction:

It is necessary to highlight the decisive contribution to the formation of creole: that of the soil itself. For these women and men realized quickly enough that there could be no return to Africa, that their destiny was linked to this new land which they worked and made fruitful with their sweat and blood...but this fact made them have a deep desire for a new identity. This real physical process, the true condition for survival, expressed itself in a language created from scratch, which will be the factor of cohesion and unity for this new people...⁴⁹

For *Ja Ka Ta*, Thésauros's status as an academic and linguist made their arguments for independence more credible. The UPLG and linguists, such as Thésauros and Bernabé, were essentially making the same claim that Antilleans possessed a distinct language and culture and therefore, constituted a separate nation. However, it was the linguists who proved the nationalists' claims for independence as a scientific fact.

⁴⁹ Roland Thésauros, "Créole et Identité Nationale (extraits)", *Ja Ka Ta*, Avril-Mai 1979, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte GR FOL-JO-20224.

Moreover, the standardization of a singular Creole orthography was of the utmost importance to nationalist groups because it enabled them to literally create an Antillean culture. Prior to the establishment of GEREK's writing system, Creole was historically an oral language. Creole stories, dance and music were a part of an oral tradition that was carried down through the generations. Nationalists argued that because most of Antillean culture was transmitted orally, a large part of it had been destroyed through the processes of colonialism, departmentalization, and assimilation. In particular, the Creole language itself was becoming "Frenchified" as more and more Antilleans attended public schools and learned to read and write French.⁵⁰ Nationalist groups found in GEREK's writing system a scientific way it could preserve the "pure" Creole language and culture unaffected by France's language and culture. Nationalist writers, playwrights, poets, and singers used GEREK's writing system to record in writing Antillean culture. In doing so, they created a body of Antillean culture from which a distinct Antillean identity could be constructed. Nationalists claimed these cultural productions as Antilleans' "authentic" identity and used it as the foundation of their arguments for independence.

Just as the nationalists were dependent upon the linguistic research of groups like GEREK to reinforce their political ideology, so, too, the linguists needed a nationalist following to promote their ideas among a highly skeptical populace. GEREK recognized that it needed the support of the Antillean masses to popularize the Creole movement. It published *Mofwaz* for the general public, but its abstract language and content did little to inform the Antillean people about the political implications of the current academic work in Creole studies. Ironically, because *Mofwaz* was written in French, the majority of

⁵⁰ "La Langue Créole: L'Écrit et la Parole, Man Ka Mandé lé Répondé", *Jingha: Magazine d'Union Antillais*, Novembre-Décembre-Janvier 1976/1977, 17. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-31746.

Antilleans could not understand it. GEREC intellectuals turned to the nationalists who saw in the new writing system an opportunity to use Creole to communicate with the Antillean masses and gain popular support for the independence movement. The UPLG launched its magazine, *Ja Ka Ta*, with the purpose of using a portion of the publication to teach Antilleans how to read and write Creole. From 1977 to 1983, it published four articles that described and illustrated GEREC's new Creole orthography. These articles acted as mini-lessons on how to read and write Creole.⁵¹ The UPLG intended for these lessons to create popular interest in what it perceived to be Antilleans' national language. However, they also benefited GEREC in that nationalists unanimously adopted and popularized its script as the "authentic" way to write Creole.

Educating the People

The development of the GEREC writing system strengthened the nationalist movement, providing *indépendantistes* with new material to express their nationalist goals. The new Creole script stimulated efforts among nationalists to spread their beliefs to the general population. Not only did it generate political tracts, slogans, and banners written in the new script, but a nationalist press soon emerged. Nationalists founded newspapers and magazines, such as *Jougwa*, *Magwa*, *Jingha*, *Djok*, *Grif-an-te* and *Ja Ka Ta*, with the express purpose of using Creole to gain popular support for the independence movement. In the first issue of *Djok*, the editor proclaimed that the time had come for Antilleans to express their thoughts in their own maternal language: "So, let's stop copying the old European style. Creole is our language. Our maternal

⁵¹ For example, see: "Kouman fo ou li e ekri kréyòl," *Ja Ka Ta*, Juillet 1980, 8; "Pou Nous a li e make lang an nou, Le problème du son /w/," *Ja Ka Ta*, Octobre-Novembre 1980, 12. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte GR FOL-JO-20224.

language. It is in Creole that we express our most authentic thoughts, our deepest feelings. Why then look elsewhere for what we possess ourselves!”⁵² *Djok* employed Creole to free its readers from the control of the French language. Creole released Antilleans’ authentic identity and innermost feelings, revealing to them their desire to be an independent nation free of French control.

The extent of these publications’ use of Creole varied extensively. Some used Creole only in headings, quotations and a limited number of articles; others were written exclusively in Creole. Nonetheless, all incorporated GEREC’s ideological principle of maximum deviance in their written Creole to express their nationalist political agenda. Nationalist leaders turned editors hoped that their use of Creole would pique the interest of the Antillean masses, the majority of which did not understand or read French. In using Creole, nationalists created publications specifically for those Antilleans whom the French press had either ignored or misled. According to Franz Succab, the founder of *Ja Ka Ta*, “these big agencies (like FR3 and *France-Antilles*) that claim to inform us, give us junk.” They are a “distortion of Guadeloupean public opinion. Their function is to mask the Guadeloupean reality, to intellectually impoverish the Guadeloupean.”⁵³ Succab argued that the French press distorted Antilleans’ support for the French nation to disseminate its assimilationist values. This resulted in Antilleans’ complacency and ignorance about the growing independence movement. Succab founded *Ja Ka Ta* as a direct challenge to the French press’s control of information. Through *Ja Ka Ta*, Succab hoped to educate the Antilleans masses about the nationalist agenda. He explicitly claimed Guadeloupe as a “Nation”, arguing that “We are Guadeloupean, we are not

⁵² “DJOK: pou ki-sa?”, *Djok*, November 12-18, 1976, 3.

⁵³ Frantz Succab, “Commencer la presse guadeloupéenne”, *Jakata*, December 1977, 1.

French.”⁵⁴ As the newspaper of the Guadeloupean nation, *Ja Ka Ta*, the Creole expression for “it’s already getting late”, signified the urgency of Antilleans’ political and cultural separation from the French nation.

GEREC’s written script provided nationalists with the ability to create a public forum—the Antillean press—in which they could speak directly with the Antillean masses and educate them about the oppression they endured under the French government and how to fight against their subordinate position. However, communication with the Antillean people was not as simple as creating Creole newspapers. While all Antilleans in Guadeloupe and Martinique spoke Creole, they did not read or write it. Because Creole was historically an oral language, Antilleans’ encounter with the nationalist press was more than likely the first time they had seen written Creole words. Therefore, first and foremost, nationalists needed to teach Antilleans how to read Creole. In articles on Creole grammar and orthography, nationalists worked to clarify GEREC’s nationalist agenda and to make Bernabé’s writing system accessible to the Antillean people. Lessons usually opened by placing the Creole language squarely within the nationalist movement. The ability to read Creole freed Antilleans from their dependence on the French press and thus, was an act of liberation. In an article explaining the importance of a written grammar, a *Djok* contributor explained that Creole is not “only a language”, but also “a means of political liberation.”⁵⁵ After establishing Creole as a defining element of Antillean national identity, these lessons presented Antilleans with vocabulary lists and grammar rules for

⁵⁴ Frantz Succab, “Commencer la presse guadeloupéenne”, *Jakata*, December 1977, 1.

⁵⁵ Al Roy, “Créole Grammaire”, *Djok*, November 19-26, 1976, 3.

common words and phrases.⁵⁶ For nationalists, these Creole lessons educated and empowered the Antillean people, who ultimately would form the foundation of the independence movement.

This kind of public instruction was as much for Antilleans in Guadeloupe and Martinique as it was for Antillean migrants in metropolitan France. In particular, *Jingha* was dedicated to bringing the Creole language and culture to Antilleans in the islands and in France: “The publication of ‘Jingha’ should enable us to work better to reinforce our union, the union of Antilleans.”⁵⁷ *Jingha*’s editor, Hughes Drane, purposefully circulated his publication throughout the Antilles and metropolitan France. He created *Jingha* to keep Antillean migrants informed about current events in the Antilles and connected to their Creole culture. In doing so, Drane hoped to gain Antillean migrants’ support for the nationalist movement. By the mid-1970s, nearly one third of the Antillean population lived in metropolitan France.⁵⁸ This staggering statistic meant that nationalists needed the support of Antillean migrants to sustain a successful independence movement.

Therefore, the LUA (*Ligue d’Union Antillaise*), the nationalist group associated with *Jingha*, began to organize summer camps in the Antilles for metropolitan-born Antillean children and university students who had migrated to France to pursue their studies. The LUA was a metropolitan-based group, uniting Antillean students and writers who leveraged Creole as a political tool in the movement for independence. It is most known for its publication of *Jingha* and *Djok*, the first newspaper to use Creole in the

⁵⁶ Beginning in 1978, *Jakata* published a series of Creole lessons. See especially: “Kouman fo ou li e ekri kreyol”, *Jakata*, July 1980. “Pou nou sa li é maké lang an nou, *Jakata*, September 1980. “Pou nous a li e make lang an nou. Le problème du son /w/”, *Jakata*, October-November 1980.

⁵⁷ “Rache vie zeb-la! Jin-n’pouss’-la: Baye langre!”, *Jingha*, April-June 1976, 3.

⁵⁸ Chantal Madinier, “Les originaires des départements d’outre-mer,” *Population (French Edition)* 6, (Nov-Dec 1993): 1859.

Hexagon. The purpose of its summer programs was to teach young Antilleans who had become far removed from their Creole culture about their Antillean identity. The LUA hoped that through these camps, young metropolitan Antilleans would rediscover their Creole culture and become supporters of the nationalist movement.

In the summer of 1976, *Jingha* published the testimony of Claude C., a young Antillean student who found his Antillean identity as a participant in LUA's summer program.

I am an Antillean born and raised in France, but upon becoming an adult, I felt the need to rediscover my Antillean origins, to know about Antillean life; that's when I met members of the Ligue d'Union Antillaise. When I entered the LUA, I discovered the Antillean world, and above all the Antillean people; I think that it is important for people like me, who have not lived in the Antilles or who were cut off very early from their country, to be able to meet and live with Antilleans....What does the LUA offer us? Personally, the LUA has made me realize that I am an Antillean. I now understand what it means to speak Creole, that it is not a folk language or a simple way to communicate, but Creole represents the life of a country, the reality; and the desire to link the Antillean people begins for me with speaking Creole.⁵⁹

Claude was one of many metropolitan Antillean students recruited by the LUA to participate in its summer Creole programs in the Antillean countryside. The LUA specifically targeted Antillean university students because the French education system had purportedly made them the most assimilated class of Antilleans. Moreover, the LUA chose to send its students to the Antillean countryside because it believed that Antilleans living in the remote areas of Guadeloupe and Martinique were far removed from the larger cities where French was more commonly spoken, and therefore possessed the most authentic Creole language and culture. The LUA contended that the act of being immersed in the culturally "authentic" Creole-speaking environment of the Antillean

⁵⁹ Claude C., "J'ai compris ce que voulait dire 'parler créole'", *Jingha*, July-August 1976, 19.

countryside enabled metropolitan-born Antilleans, like Claude, to discover their relationship with the Antillean people and culture. The LUA claimed that it was this emotional connection, developed through personal interactions in Creole, that encouraged metropolitan Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to reclaim their Antillean identity. Upon their return to France, these students served as the ambassadors of Creole culture for other Antillean migrants.

Claude's testimony is one such example of how the LUA used its students' experiences to disseminate the Creole movement and its nationalist agenda in France. It reads as a kind of spiritual revelation in which Claude realizes his Antilleanness and the importance of the Creole language as the receptacle of this Antillean identity. The nationalist press reported on accounts such as Claude's not only to attract participants to LUA's summer programs, but also to share this process of self-discovery with those Antilleans who could not participate. Claude's story was meant to resonate with metropolitan Antilleans and help them begin their own search for their Antillean identity. In the late 1970s, nationalists' and GEREK linguists' efforts to use the Antillean press to popularize the nationalist agenda of the Creole movement within France were becoming increasingly more important to the success of the independence movement. As they worked to nationalize Creole, another group of pro-departmentalization linguists in France was seeking to denationalize the Creole movement and reconstruct Creole as a part of the French nation.

CIEC and the Assimilationist Creole Movement

In the mid-1970s, both the French government and Antillean leaders were working to reconcile Antilleans' cultural differences with republican universalism. The

emergence of the assimilationist Creole movement in France was a part of this struggle between the French government and Antilleans to define how Antilleans would be incorporated into the French nation. It was a direct response to Antillean nationalists who had used Creole to argue that Antilleans constituted a separate nation. For nationalists, Antilleans' cultural differences could not be included in a Republic, which required them to assimilate the French culture. In contrast, the leaders of the assimilationist Creole movement highlighted Creole's cultural ties to France, arguing that Antilleans were indeed a part of the French nation.

CIEC (*Comité International des Études Créoles*) emerged from various conversations among native French linguists, Robert Chaudenson and Michel Tétu, and the Secretariat of AUPELF, Mauritian Jean-Claude Castelain. The three linguists met in November 1972 at AUPELF's (*Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française*) general conference in Geneva. All were interested in forming a French institution to unite the various universities across the French-speaking world that supported scientific research in Creole studies. In 1976, they founded CIEC at the University of Provence in Nice with the financial support of AUPELF. GEREC, their nationalist counterparts at the University of the Antilles and Guyana (UAG), immediately criticized CIEC as an arm of French assimilation. GEREC perceived of CIEC as a part of AUPELF, a centralized French university system, which was only interested in supporting the dissemination of the French language and culture. According to Bernabé and his GEREC colleagues, CIEC was the French government's attempt to coopt and diffuse their nationalist Creole movement.⁶⁰ Their opinion of CIEC was confirmed, when

⁶⁰ In an article for the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Robert Chaudenson gives a personal account of nationalist linguists' perception of CIEC. See: Robert Chaudenson, "Research, politics

one of its members, Guy Hazaël-Massieux, proposed an alternative to GEREK's orthography.

Born in Guadeloupe, Hazaël-Massieux was at the time one of the most qualified native linguists, having completed in 1972 a doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne on Guadeloupean Creole. However, because his politics did not match GEREK's nationalist ideology, he was not offered a teaching position at UAG. Instead, he and his French wife, Marie-Christine, who was also a linguist of French Creoles, took teaching positions at the University of Provence in Aix where they became active members of CIEC. Together, they created their own Creole orthography that used French etymology to determine the written form of Creole words:

Etymology is indispensable to 'justify' certain French written forms: why would one refuse Creole from having an 'origin' and a history, and therefore from also marking its etymology? It is the aim of certain politicians to separate Creole from French, with the intent of making Creole the language of 'national independence.'⁶¹

The Hazaël-Massieuxs' use of etymology openly challenged the GEREK writing system, which privileged phonology. They argued that Creole was historically and culturally connected to French and therefore, its writing should reflect these ties. GEREK's phonological writing system purposefully denied Creole's French origins to promote a nationalist political agenda. According to the Hazaël-Massieuxs, GEREK's script was a false construction. There was no scientific or linguistic evidence to support Creole's and Antilleans' autonomous identity.

and ideology: the case of the Comité International des Etudes Créoles," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 15-25.

⁶¹ Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux, "Annexe: l'écriture du Créole," quoted in Schnepel, "The Politics of Language in the French Caribbean: the Creole Movement on the Island of Guadeloupe" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1991).

In contrast, the Hazaël-Massieuxs argued that their etymological script was scientifically correct in that it reflected Creole's connection to the French language and culture, as well as Antilleans' "authentic" identity as French citizens. At its first Creole Studies conference in November 1976, CIEC members openly accused GEREK members of appropriating Creole and distorting it for their own political gains. CIEC leaders claimed that it had formed their research group with the intent of giving Creole back to the Antillean people who had lost their language to militant nationalists. Unlike GEREK linguists, who had made Creole a highly contested political symbol, CIEC claimed that their only objectives were "to serve as an organic link between researchers and Creole-speakers" and "to promote the creation and development of Creole studies centers."⁶² These purportedly apolitical intentions constituted CIEC's attempt to denationalize Creole and make their organization the objective authority of Creole. Yet, it is worth noting that the creation of an etymological writing system to insist upon Creole's cultural connections to French had broader implications for the Antilles' political relationship to France. CIEC linguists used their construction of Creole to encourage Antilleans to embrace their cultural and political ties to France. In doing so, they became a credible challenge to the Antillean independence movement.

The 1979 Creole Studies conference hosted by CIEC in the Seychelles, an archipelago of islands in the Indian Ocean and east of Africa, highlights the larger effects that these Creole debates had on shaping the discussion about the Antilles' political and cultural relationship to France. For GEREK linguists, the decision to hold the conference in the Seychelles, a former French colony that had recently gained independence, drew

⁶² CIEC, "Comité International des Études Créoles," *Études Créole* 1, no.2 (July 1978): 175-176. The English translation reads: "...to serve as the organic link between researchers and thousands of Creole speakers..." and "to give rise to the creation and development of Creole studies centers."

attention to France's continued political control of Guadeloupe and Martinique. At the conference's first working session, Roland Thésauros, the president of the University of Antilles-Guyana and the representative of GEREK, seized upon this opportunity to link Seychellens' and Antilleans' struggle for cultural and political independence. He denounced France's "disguised colonialism" in Guadeloupe and Martinique, arguing that as Creole-speakers Seychellens' and Antilleans' shared the same right to national autonomy.⁶³ Although Seychellans' and Antilleans' Creole languages were entirely distinct from each other, Thésauros noted that both languages were created in the same processes of colonialism and slavery. For this reason, Antilleans' and Seychellens' were culturally and politically linked in their respective struggles to preserve their Creole languages against European assimilation.

Thésauros also attempted to discredit CIEC's claim that Creole Studies was simply a scientific and intellectual endeavor. He contended that the study of Creole was innately political in that it established the groundwork for the legitimization of Creole-speakers' separate national identities. These provocative words enraged the French Ambassador of the Seychelles who, according to CIEC founder Chaudenson, was visibly uncomfortable and angry throughout Thésauros's speech. Later, he sent alarmist telegrams to Paris expressing his concern that the French universities funding CIEC were supporting nationalistic political conferences.⁶⁴ French officials recognized the subversive power of Creole. They chose to support groups, such as CIEC, that were exclusively focused on intellectual pursuits as the counterpoint to GEREK's nationalist

⁶³ Vinesh Y. Hookoomising, "So near, yet so far: *Bannzil's* Pan-Creole Idealism", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 30.

⁶⁴ This anecdote comes from Robert Chaudenson's personal account of the 1979 CIEC conference in the Seychelles. See: Robert Chaudenson, "Research, Politics, and Ideology: The Case of the Comité International des Etudes Créoles," *Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 19-21.

construction of Creole. The Ministry of the DOM closely monitored and was heavily invested in the codification of the Creole language. The adoption of a Creole orthography either based on etymology or phonetics had serious implications for the Antilles' future political relationship to France.

This fight for the control of the Creole script was not limited to the ivory tower. As previously mentioned, GEREK used the nationalist press to popularize the pro-independence ideology of its Creole writing system. In an effort not to lose its readership to the growing popularity of the Creole publications, the assimilationist press, such as *France-Antilles*, began to not only tolerate, but also promote the use of Creole in a limited form. *France-Antilles*, which was controlled by the assimilationist interest group of Robert Hersant in France, promoted a Creole script that more closely resembled CIEC's etymological script and reflected Hersant's pro-departmentalization position. Hersant made a mockery of Creole's nationalist ideology by allowing advertisers to use a bastardized etymological form of GEREK's script. For example, an ad for a discount store depicted two racially caricatured Antillean men having a conversation in a form of Creole closely resembling French. They discussed going to Martin's to buy imported European beers at discounted prices. These Creole advertisements appeared alongside serious news articles, which were written exclusively in French. This juxtaposition suggested that Creole was a patois that could not be used to report the news or in literature. French was the language of prestige reserved for serious writing, whereas Creole was a low-level form of communication among the uneducated Antillean masses.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Advertisement reprinted in Ellen M. Schnepel "The Politics of Language in the French Caribbean: The Creole Movement on the Island of Guadeloupe" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990), 502.

This power struggle between nationalists and assimilationists also played out in the monthly magazine, *Guadeloupe 2000*, a pro-departmentalization publication edited by Edouard Boulogne, the son of white metropolitans born in Guadeloupe. Boulogne openly supported the Hazael-Massieuxs' choice to use French etymology to standardize the Creole language as a necessary political statement against the nationalization of Creole. He argued that the "Creole nationalism of separatists is not only the enemy of France, but above all the enemy of the Guadeloupean, of his life and his soul."⁶⁶ Boulogne characterized the Creole movement as "bourgeois"; it kept Antillean peasants in a subordinate position by requiring them to learn Creole and denying them access to French, the language of social advancement. "Creole as a national language is a movement that prevents the working people and peasants from accessing French culture and all that it holds, in order to better establish their position as the ruling bourgeois class in a future independent Guadeloupe."⁶⁷ As "bourgeois intellectuals", GEREK linguists had the luxury of promoting Creole because they had already mastered the French language and achieved social mobility. They were appropriating Creole to establish an independent Guadeloupean nation, which would only advance their interests. Therefore, Boulogne argued that the maintenance of territorial integrity with France better served the Antillean people's social and economic interests.

In addition, Boulogne decided to take on the nationalists using their own political tool, and introduced written Creole into *Guadeloupe 2000*. Boulogne published letters in Creole from successful Antillean migrants in metropolitan France. This reoccurring column entitled "Creole Letters" (*Lettres Créoles*) characterized migration as a path to

⁶⁶ "Créole en question," *Guadeloupe 2000 Magazine*, June 1983, 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

social mobility, an option that Antilleans would lose if Guadeloupe and Martinique became independent nations. The content of these letters expressed a favorable image of the Antilles' and France's political union; yet, it was the Creole script that subliminally disseminated *Guadeloupe 2000*'s pro-departmentalization politics. The orthography used in the magazine had no resemblance to GEREC's pro-nationalist script; instead it promoted a highly unsystematic and variable approach to writing that appeared similar to French. For example, in a letter to his cousin Alexandre, Rico, a Guadeloupean living in metropolitan France, described in Creole all of the modern conveniences available in the Hexagon to Antillean migrants like himself: télévision couleu-la (colored television) frigidai-la (refrigerator), and congélateu-la (freezer). Not only did Rico's letter exaggerate Antillean migrants' economic circumstances in claiming that the majority of them could afford modern electronics and appliances, but Rico's "Creole" words closely resembled French. His script followed the Creole grammatical structure of placing the definite articles (*le* and *la*) after rather than before the noun. However, Rico's Creole words were essentially misspelled versions of the French words: television couleu-la for *la television couleur*, frigidai-la for *le frigidaire*, and congélateu-la for *la congélateur*. Rico had merely dropped the final "r" and "e" of the French words to form Creole ones.⁶⁸ The very format of Rico's script questioned Creole's cultural autonomy and underlined the language's subordination to French. *Guadeloupe 2000* repackaged Creole's nationalist image so that it matched its support for departmentalization.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ For a discussion of the Creole script used in Rico's letter to Alexandre see: Daniel Compère, "De la lettre du créole aux "letters créoles" *Alizés*, March-April 1981, 12, republished in "Le Créole...propagande?", *Guadeloupe 2000*, Août 1981, 7.

⁶⁹ In the spring of 1981, the pro-nationalist magazine *Alizés* published a critique of *Guadeloupe 2000*'s use of an etymological Creole script that resembled French. See: "Le Créole...propagande?", *Alizés*, March-April 1981, 12. "Le Créole...propagande?", *Alizés*, May-June 1981, 14.

In the spring of 1981, the pro-nationalist magazine *Alizés* responded by warning its readers that *Guadeloupe 2000*'s "Creole Letters" was a piece of political propaganda. *Alizés*'s article, entitled "Creole...propaganda?", not only exposed "Creole Letters" as a false depiction of Antillean migrants' reality in metropolitan France, but also a deformation of the cultural integrity of the Creole language. "Guadeloupe 2000 has published fictitious letters in a 'half fig, half grape' Creole" in an attempt to supplant GERIC's scientific construction of Creole.⁷⁰ *Alizés* characterized the writers of *Guadeloupe 2000* as "polemicists" who were using Creole to discredit the nationalists.⁷¹ *Guadeloupe 2000* quickly published a rebuttal to *Alizés*'s claims, arguing that the Creole orthography used in "Creole Letters" was in fact a scientifically researched script. It was based on the Hazael-Massieux's writing system, which had reshaped GERIC's orthography so that it reflected Creole's linguistic and cultural connections to French. According to *Guadeloupe 2000*, this script was culturally authentic; it was the GERIC nationalists who had created a "false" Creole writing system to promote their nationalist ideology.⁷²

The Antillean press experienced a remarkable period of growth in France and the Antilles during the 1970s. The development of the GERIC writing system gave nationalists the literary tools they needed to create Creole publications and disseminate their pro-independence politics. In response, assimilationists founded their own political newspapers. However, the distribution and readership of this local press remained

⁷⁰ Daniel Compère, "De la letter du créole au 'Lettres Créoles'", *Alizés*, March-April, 1981, 12.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Letter from Jean B. Fissier, the author of "Lettres Créoles", to the editor of *Alizés*. Published in *Guadeloupe 2000*, August 1981, 9. Fissier does not explicitly state his opinion on Creole orthography in this letter, arguing that he has done so extensively elsewhere in *Guadeloupe 2000*. For example, see: "Créole en question," *Guadeloupe 2000 Magazine*, June 1983, 26-27.

somewhat limited, especially in Guadeloupe and Martinique where a substantial part of the population remained illiterate.

Due to the Antilles' low literacy rate, radio was potentially a more effective alternative for reaching a wider audience. Although radio had been widely available in the islands since departmentalization, prior to the early 1980s when the newly elected Socialist government implemented a policy of decentralization throughout the Antilles, the French government controlled the airwaves. There was one single French-controlled radio-television station, Radio Guadeloupe/FR3. All programming was under strict French government censorship, and the content was limited to metropolitan and international news. The Creole language appeared in a limited number of broadcasts, most notably a musical variety program that aired Saturday afternoons.⁷³ The French government's exclusive control of radio broadcasts meant that during the 1970s, nationalists were forced to use the written press to disseminate and popularize their independence movement.

Because nationalists were prohibited from forming their own radio stations, they employed the press to critique the departmentalists' use of Creole on FR3. In December 1976, *Djok*, a weekly newspaper founded by the Paris-based nationalist group LUA, characterized FR3's use of Creole as a political strategy to attract more listeners and support for the French government. According to the testimony of Viviane, a Martinican woman who regularly tuned into FR3, "Creole is only used" to "give Martinicans a sad image of their country."⁷⁴ In one broadcast, the speaker used Creole to explain that ultimately it was Martinicans who were "responsible for all the flaws of the colonial

⁷³ Ellen M. Schnepel, "The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe," *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 124.

⁷⁴ Viviane, "Le créole dénaturé," *Djok*, December 17-24, 1976, 3.

system”, including the island’s poor economic state.⁷⁵ *Djok* used this Martinican woman’s account to inform its Antilleans’ readers about the ways in which pro-French organizations were using Creole to get their attention and manipulate them. It described FR3’s use of Creole as “the honey that is used to attract flies to the trap.”⁷⁶ Martinicans needed to be wary of certain groups’ use of Creole to ensure that it was not used in a coercive manner to spread departmentalization and lies about Antillean history and culture.

Beginning in the early 1980s, when the Socialist government in France reformed the audiovisual laws, allowing for the existence of *radios libres* or “free radios” that were not under the French government’s control, nationalists formed their own radio stations to reach a broader audience, including those Antilleans who could not read Creole or French. In September 1982, Guadeloupe’s nationalist party, the UPLG, founded *Radyo Tanbou*. This “free radio” was an explicitly political project. *Radyo Tanbou* implemented a strict policy establishing Creole as the official language of all of its broadcasts. In doing so, it affirmed Guadeloupeans’ non-French identity as Creole speakers. Moreover, the UPLG’s decision to use the Creole word *tanbou* (meaning “drum”) as a part of its radio station’s name was a political act. During Guadeloupe’s colonial past, slaves used drums to communicate with each other and organize rebellions against French plantation owners. In naming its radio station after a tool of resistance, the UPLG linked their movement for independence with their enslaved ancestors’

⁷⁵ Viviane, “Le créole dénaturé,” *Djok*, December 17-24, 1976, 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

struggle for freedom. For the UPLG, like a drum, *Radyo Tanbou* was an oral medium that united Antilleans' in their continued fight against French control.⁷⁷

These debates for the control of the Creole language, which played out in the Antillean press and on the airwaves, were not only about creating a scientifically correct Creole, they were also about the “authentic” identity of Antilleans. Linguists used purportedly scientific research to analyze the Creole language and make arguments about Antilleans' true cultural origins. As a visual symbol of Antillean cultural identity, the way in which Creole was written had serious implications for the future of the Antilles' political and cultural relationship with France. Nationalists and departmentalists employed linguists' purportedly scientific claims to construct a Creole language that culturally reflected their respective political agendas. A Creole script, such as CIEC's, that closely resembled French highlighted Antilleans' cultural relationship with France and therefore, culturally justified the Antilles' political status as a French department. Conversely, a Creole script, such as the one developed by GEREC, that distanced itself from the French language established Antilleans' cultural and political separateness from the French nation.

Throughout the 1970s, the French government closely monitored the politicization of Creole; it was acutely aware of Antillean leaders' ability to use the Creole language to mobilize Antilleans either in support of or against the French government. Although the period of decolonization in the 1960s had ended, the question of Guadeloupe's and Martinique's political status remained important to France's future

⁷⁷ For more on *Radyo Tanbou*, see: Alvina Rprecht, “Mass Media in Guadeloupe,” in *Mass Media and the Caribbean*, ed. Stuart H. Surlin and Walter C. Soderlund (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1990), 223-238; Ellen M. Schnepel, “The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe”, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 117-134.

as a unified nation. In the 1970s, the Ministry of the DOM debated the implications of granting the same regional status to Guadeloupe and Martinique that had been given to France's metropolitan departments. As regions of France, Antilleans would have more control over their local political and cultural affairs. DOM officials were unsure if conceding more local autonomy to the Antilles would strengthen the departments' union with France or if it was the first step in the process of independence. Therefore, up until the early 1980s when the Socialist government decentralized both France and the Antilles, the Ministry of the DOM tenuously navigated the islands' precarious political relationship with France, and avoided asserting an official position on the Creole question. When it did enter the debate, the leaders of the Creole movement would completely transform their politics to work within and around the constraints of the government's new Creole policy.

III. The French Response: the Regionalization of Creole

In the summer of 1981, a new leftist majority in the French National Assembly headed by President Mitterrand and his Socialist party implemented a policy of decentralization. This series of reforms granted more power to local assemblies in the both the metropolitan and overseas departments. During the previous two decades when the right was in power (1958-1981), any recognition of regionalist claims for cultural diversity had been limited and informal. Now, the Socialists seemed willing to make some official concessions. On June 21, 1982, the Ministry of Education legally recognized France's regional languages and cultures. This meant that teachers in France's regions were now free to incorporate their particular regional languages, cultures, and histories into their classrooms. This regionalization of the national

curriculum broke from the tradition of republican education that had used teachers as “secular missionaries” during the Third Republic to spread republicanism and assimilate peasants’ regional languages and cultures into a unified French national culture.⁷⁸ For decades, nationalists from several of France’s regions, most notably Basque and Brittany, had been fighting these policies of assimilation and advocating for full independence from the French nation. They argued that their distinct languages and cultures justified their political autonomy. Beginning in the 1960s, these separatist movements became more militant when some of its leaders began to resort to terrorism. Decentralization was the French government’s attempt to subdue this more militant branch of regionalism by granting local assemblies and politicians more cultural and political autonomy.

Simultaneously, Antillean nationalism in Guadeloupe and Martinique was also becoming a strong political force. However, pro-departmentalization Antillean migrants distanced themselves from both the Antillean independence movement and regionalism. They recognized in regionalism a common struggle for cultural recognition, but they did not want to be linked to the violence of the militant regionalist movement. Instead they

⁷⁸ Some scholars have argued that during the Third Republic (1870-1914), a centralized French government used public education to assimilate peasants’ regional cultures into the French nation, and to make “peasants into Frenchmen.” See: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling for the People: Comparative Local Studies of Schooling in History in France and Germany, 1750-1850* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985); Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal: primary schooling as nation building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb, I.L.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998). Other scholars have challenged the assertion that the process of nation building was an exclusively a top-down process. Rather, peasants also participated in their incorporation into the nation. See: James R. Lehning, *Peasant and French: cultural contact in rural France during the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Raymond Grew & Patrick Harrigan, *School, State & Society: The Growth of Elementary Schooling in nineteenth century France* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991). Another group of scholars have argued that nationalized institutions, such as public education, did not succeed in completely assimilating peasants into the nation. Instead, they have remained connected to their regional cultures. See: Timothy Baycroft, *Culture, Identity and Nationalism: French Flanders in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2004); Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Maryon McDonald, “*We are not French!*”: *language, culture and identity in Brittany* (London: Routledge, 1989).

articulated a distinct form of ethnic activism to argue for the inclusion of their cultural differences in the French nation. Chapter 2 argued that ultimately, it was the proliferation of Antillean cultural associations in metropolitan France during the 1970s that put pressure on French officials to reexamine its policy of assimilation and begin to support a limited form of multiculturalism even before Mitterrand came to power and formally implemented the “right to difference” in France. In an attempt to appease Antilleans’ cultural rights claims while simultaneously reinforcing republican universalism, the Ministry of the DOM and BUMIDOM began to financially support Antillean cultural groups. The government’s decision to make room in the Republic for Antilleans’ Creole culture and language was a political strategy. Metropolitan officials wanted to maintain their control of cultural diversity in France and they wanted to reinforce France’s political union with the Antilles. Therefore, the Ministry of Education’s decision in 1982 to recognize regional languages and cultures must be seen as a part this larger trans-Atlantic story concerning the government’s attempts to reconcile not only regional differences, but also Antilleans’ cultural differences, with republican universalism.

Although Antillean ethnic activism was a strong contributing factor to the Socialist government’s decision to recognize France’s distinct regional identities, it avoided officially including Antilleans in these legislative measures until 1983. The French government did not want it to seem as if it had given into Antilleans’ cultural demands; rather, it wanted to be the molder of cultural diversity in France. Prior to decentralization in the early 1980s, previous legislation had already recognized the

existence of culturally distinct regions within metropolitan France.⁷⁹ The narrative of French republicanism had perpetuated the myth that metropolitan regions had assimilated to French national culture. Therefore, the incorporation of their languages and cultures into the national curriculum did not pose a threat to national unity; regional languages and cultures were simply folkloric in nature.

In contrast, the Ministries of Education and DOM perceived of the Antilles' cultural and political union with France as much more tenuous. Despite Antilleans' long historical connection to France and their status as departments of France, the extent to which Antilleans had assimilated French national culture remained in question. In his 1975 report on Antillean migrants' assimilation into the nation, Yvon Gouguenheim noted that Antillean migrants were choosing to concentrate themselves in "immigration ghettos." He claimed that this separation from French society had "facilitated different forms of delinquency, such as theft, prostitution, and drugs, and moreover, had provoked a large number of deeply psychologically unbalanced [migrants], [who required] hospitalization."⁸⁰ Gouguenheim's report demonstrates that metropolitan officials still perceived of Antilleans' and their Creole language and culture as a potential social problem. Therefore, the Ministry of Education was not yet prepared to incorporate Creole into the national curriculum. To do so would recognize Antilleans as a culturally distinct part of the nation. The French government had found a way to reconcile regional differences with republican universalism, but it was uncomfortable with doing the same

⁷⁹ The 1951 *loi Deixonne* recognized Basque, Breton, Catalan, and Occitan as regional languages. Gradually this law was expanded to include Corsican (1974), Tahitian (1981), and even the national languages of immigrant groups in France, like Arabic Portuguese, Italian and Spanish.

⁸⁰ Yvon Gouguenheim, "Étude-intervention pour une amélioration qualitative de la migration en provenance des Antilles," Octobre 1974-Janvier 1975. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840442, Art. 3.

for its overseas departments. Antilleans and their Creole culture remained a social problem that needed to be solved.

This abruptly changed on May 22, 1983. At the opening session of CIEC's Fourth International Creole Studies Conference in Lafayette, Louisiana, Xavier Orville, the Chancellor of the Antillean Academy (the highest representative of the French Ministry of National Education in the Antilles) made a surprise announcement that the Ministry of Education had decided to extend to the Antilles its legislation incorporating regional languages and cultures into the national curriculum. The Antillean Creole language and culture would be integrated on an experimental basis in the local school systems of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

With some controversy, each official [of the Ministry of Education] voted in favor of the insertion of Creole and the Antillean and Guianean culture in the educational system. How must we, then, carry out this insertion? In academic policy, it is advisable at first to consider the language [Creole] as a pedagogical tool intended to stimulate the students' spirits and to place them more easily in their specific cultural context....To conclude, the purpose of teaching Creole and the Antillean and Guianean culture is to place the school in its specific regional context and to work together in the development of the people, while respecting the cultural identity of each individual.⁸¹

In his speech, Orville openly acknowledged that Antilleans were culturally distinct citizens, living in a specific regional context, and that the curriculum should take these differences into account. On the surface, the Ministry of Education appeared to be recognizing Antilleans as a cultural minority within the French nation.

However, the Ministry of Education's decision to lift the ban on Creole in Antillean schools must be placed within the context of the growing popularity of the Creole movement in the Antilles and France. Throughout the 1970s, nationalists had

⁸¹ Declaration of Xavier Orville's on May 22, 1983 at the opening of the Fourth International Conference of Creole Studies in Lafayette, Louisiana. Reprinted in *Antilla*, June 2-9, 1983, 38.

made the Creole language a subversive political tool in their struggle for independence. For the French government, Creole had become a threat to the Antilles' political and cultural union with France. Education officials decided to recognize Creole not because they were suddenly convinced that Antilleans had become assimilated like other regional groups, but because it was a strategy to control the debates about the islands' relationship to France. Recognizing Creole as a regional language was a conscious political strategy. In characterizing the Antilles as a "specific regional context" and Creole as merely a "pedagogical tool", the Ministry of Education stripped the Creole language of its nationalist symbolism. It used this language to reinforce the Antilles' status as a region of France; Creole was not a national language, but an instructive tool to be used to teach French to Antillean children. The Ministry of Education used its existing legislation on regional languages and cultures to take Creole out of the hands of the nationalists and to determine how Creole, and more generally Antilleans' cultural differences, would be incorporated into the French nation. Once the French government enacted legislation officially asserting their position on the Creole question, the nationalists lost their exclusive rights to Creole as a political and cultural demand.

The nationalist Antillean press referred to Orville's shocking announcement as the *le bombe de Créole* or "the Creole bomb". In the months leading up to Orville's declaration, DOM and education officials debated how to implement Mitterrand's policies of decentralization in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Amidst these discussions, nationalist leaders denounced the Ministry of Education's new decentralist policies as yet another form of colonialism disguised as regional and cultural rights. In the fall of 1982, *Jakarta* characterized the "law of decentralization for the DOM" as just another attempt

by the French government to discredit the independence movement and to keep Guadeloupe and Martinique as a “part of the Republic and the French nation.”⁸² For *Jakata*, the French government’s “discourse of identity reveals its trap” in the discussion concerning “the insertion of Antilleans in France.” Its rhetoric describing Antilleans as “complete citizens of France” was not about granting Antilleans the same rights and privileges as French citizens. Rather, *Jakata* contended that this assertion was a political tactic. In order to maintain its political control of Guadeloupe and Martinique, the government felt compelled to “insert” Antillean cultural identity in France by recognizing Creole as a “regional language”. According to *Jakata*, “our [nationalists’] struggle is the one of independence; theirs is the one of ‘specificity’ in the whole of France.”⁸³ In other words, the recognition of cultural specificity neutralized the independence movement and claimed Antilleans as a part of France, when in fact they possessed their own separate national identity.

This struggle between nationalists and the Ministry of Education for control of Creole and the meaning of cultural rights only caused nationalists to become more militant in their claims. This militancy alienated left-leaning Antilleans affiliated with more moderate autonomist groups who previously sympathized with the nationalists’ fight for political autonomy, but nonetheless wished to remain a part of the French nation. In this way, the government’s cooptation of Creole and Antillean nationalists’ cultural rights claims was successful in marginalizing the pro-independence movement. In Martinique, the social and economic advancements that would supposedly accompany decentralization convinced the pro-independence PPM (Parti Populaire Martinique) to

⁸² “Que vous êtes français!”, *Jakata*, September 1982, 3.

⁸³ “Journée sur les ‘DOM’ à Paris”, *Jakata*, December 1982, 8.

form a left-wing alliance with the Socialists and put a moratorium on the question of Martinique's political status. Results of local elections also provide evidence of the decreasing support for Antillean nationalism. During the 1981 presidential race in which Mitterrand was elected, nationalists encouraged Antilleans to abstain from voting, arguing that they were not French and therefore, should not participate in the processes of the French government. After 1981, pro-independence parties nonetheless presented their own candidates in local and regional council elections. Their nationalist candidates garnered minimal support from Antillean voters. In March 1982, only two pro-independence representatives won seats in the thirty-six member general council of the Antilles.⁸⁴

Under these circumstances of a failing political movement and increasing government control of the Creole question, nationalists resorted to the only recourse still available: political violence. In a two-year period from 1983 to 1985, over fifty bomb explosions or attempts occurred in Guadeloupe. In May 1983, a series of explosions took place simultaneously in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guiana, and Paris, targeting large French industries, such as Renault and Air France. The Caribbean Revolutionary Army (ARC) claimed responsibility for these actions, including other smaller bombings at a shopping center, a golf course, and a police station in Martinique. The French government officially outlawed the ARC in May 1984, but this did little to stop the violence.⁸⁵ Autonomist and assimilationist political parties came together to condemn the pro-independence forces' use of terrorism. Moreover, nationalist groups' use of violence

⁸⁴ William F.S. Miles, "Mitterrand in the Caribbean: Socialism comes to Martinique," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 27, no.3 (Autumn 1985), 73-75.

⁸⁵ Miles, "Mitterrand in the Caribbean: Socialism comes to Martinique," 73-75.

alienated the Martinican and Guadeloupean people, who began to perceive of independence as a radical rather than a viable option.

By the mid-1980s, militant nationalists had lost both political and popular support for their independence movement. As a group of radicals on the fringe of Antillean society, they no longer had any credibility. This concerned linguists and Creolists, particularly those associated with the pro-nationalist GEREC group, who feared that the Creole movement would also dissolve with the Antillean independence movement. Antillean intellectuals working within Creole studies were concerned that their efforts to promote Creole would also become discredited as a cultural movement that had been politically linked to Antillean nationalism. Therefore, they began to reconstruct the politics of Creole to distance themselves from militant nationalists and to preserve the political and cultural validity of their movement.

IV. From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Créolité and the “right to difference”

With the radicalization of the pro-independence forces, many Guadeloupeans and Martinicans in the Antilles had grown wary of supporting a nationalistic Creole movement. According to Guadeloupean teachers who supported the use of Creole in Antillean schools, Antillean parents opposed the Creole movement because “for several years, one has assimilated Creole to the idea of independence.”⁸⁶ In the words of one Antillean parent, “you are for Creole...you are *indépendantistes*.”⁸⁷ According to *Alizés*, the newspaper in which this letter was published, Antillean parents felt that they could not in good conscious support a cultural movement that was politically linked to the violence and terrorism perpetuated by pro-independence groups.

⁸⁶ “Enseignants en recherche. Libérer la parole,” *Alizés*, November-December 1984, 8.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

In addition to losing local support, nationalists had also failed to gain Antillean migrants' support for Guadeloupean and Martinican independence. In the early 1980s, the Antillean press reported on migrants' growing disdain for the Creole movement because of its nationalistic political agenda. In the spring of 1980, H. Cléostraste, an Antillean migrant living in the Parisian suburb of Romanville, wrote a letter to the editor of *Flash Antilles Afrique*, criticizing intellectuals' promotion of Creole as political isolation for the Antilles: "As for our Creole language that certain individuals want to build as a language...it is ridiculous; it is the best way to isolate us from the rest of the world...but we will keep our cultural originality. My purpose is not to create controversy, but to wear away at the detractors of the French community, of which we are happily a part. We are [a part of France] for better or for worse; I express with force the wish for French continuity in our regions."⁸⁸ Cléostraste expressed many Antillean migrants' hesitancy to support any kind of pro-independence movement, including the Creole movement. In general, Antillean migrants supported Guadeloupe's and Martinique's political union with France. They had exercised their rights as French citizens when they decided to migrate to and live in metropolitan France. The Creole movement's insistence upon Antilleans' separate cultural and political identity threatened to take away this right and the lives they had carved out for themselves in France. Therefore, Antillean migrants tended to be wary of intellectuals' motives in promoting Creole.

Beginning in the early 1980s, GEREC linguists and Creolists began to look for ways to reestablish the political and cultural integrity of the Creole movement. GEREC

⁸⁸ H. Cléostraste, "Courrier des lecteurs. Ne distillez pas le venin, la haine," *Flash Antilles Afrique*, March-April 1980, 7.

academics felt as if they had lost control of Creole to two competing groups: militant nationalists and the newly elected French Socialist government. In order to create a movement that could be attractive to both Antilleans in the islands and metropolitan France, GEREC needed to distance itself from the nationalist rhetoric of separatism while simultaneously challenging the Socialists' control of Creole.

With the publication of *Charte Culturelle Créole* (Creole Cultural Charter or CCC) in 1982, GEREC officially broke their political and cultural alliance with Antillean nationalist groups. In the CCC, GEREC noted that its association with Antillean nationalism had compromised its reputation as a legitimate organization:

GEREC has been boycotted, seen as degenerate by education officials, troublemakers with an arrogant politics, exclusive and partisan. One has judged it [GEREC] subversive because it has dared to associate linguistic reflection with development...Whatever the content and form of implementation of decentralization, the ideological conception of the relationship between the languages of the Antilles and Guiana will no longer be exactly the same as it previously was...the landscape has changed, the debate and the struggle will have a perspective that will no longer be exactly the same as it was in the past.⁸⁹

This realization of its “subversive” reputation pushed GEREC to disassociate with nationalist groups. Moreover, the Socialists' implementation of decentralization had prompted GEREC to reevaluate the political and cultural message of its organization. The Socialists' official recognition of Antillean culture and language had emphatically placed Creole within the French nation as a “regional” language. In doing so, the new Socialist government had successfully challenged GEREC's construction of Creole as the national language of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Because of the Socialists' cooptation of Creole, GEREC argued that now was the time for it to rethink its political strategy for

⁸⁹ GEREC, *Charte Culturelle Créole*:se pwan douvan avan douvan pwan nou! (Schoelcher, Martinique: Centre Universitaire Antilles-Guyane, 1982), 27.

promoting the Creole language. In an attempt to obtain support from the new left-wing French government as a legitimate political and cultural movement with reasonable demands, GEREK linguists made the conscious choice to reconstruct the Creole language so that it reflected the new Socialist discourse of the “right to difference.”

In the early 1980s, the “right to difference” was becoming the accepted way for particular cultural groups, such as immigrants, to claim their cultural, political, and social rights within the French nation.⁹⁰ The discourse of the “right to difference” was a distinct form of French multiculturalism that broke from the Republican tradition of assimilation, which contended that all distinct cultural groups in France had assimilated to a singular national culture. The “right to difference” argued that particular cultural groups within the French nation had the right to possess a different cultural identity from that of the dominant French nation; furthermore, these groups had the right to be recognized by the French government as culturally distinct groups. Mindful of the acceptance of this new political strategy, GEREK sought to transform the meaning of its orthography so that it fit into the Socialists’ vision for a culturally diverse French nation.

GEREK’s shift away from independence, combined with its decision to move its administrative center from Guadeloupe to Martinique, attracted new members to the organization who were not as vehemently pro-nationalist as the original founders. The independence movement in Guadeloupe had a long history and a much stronger political presence than in Martinique. This was largely due to unique differences in the islands’

⁹⁰ See: Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Alain-Philippe Durand, *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002); Carrie Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Sharif Gemie, *French Muslims: New Voices in Contemporary France* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010); David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

colonial histories. In contrast to Martinique, a significant white *béké* class did not emerge on the island of Guadeloupe. For this reason, Guadeloupe was a much less racially mixed compared to Martinique where a large and influential mixed-race middle-class emerged. Moreover, the absence of a large *béké* class in Guadeloupe meant that there was no buffer between locals and the metropolitans who arrived in the island after 1946 to implement the policies of departmentalization. Ethnographers have also noted that in contrast to Martinique where assimilation to French culture appears to be more pronounced, Guadeloupe has retained much more of its African heritage.⁹¹ Therefore, GEREK's relocation to Martinique, which was purportedly more assimilated and less politically radical than Guadeloupe, symbolized a new period in the development of its ideology.

Martinican writer and journalist Raphaël Confiant was one of GEREK's new members who was not politically linked to Antillean nationalism. He worked with Jean Bernabé to change the meaning of GEREK's Creole writing system. Confiant and Bernabé did not make any changes to the linguistic content of its etymology. They still used the principle of maximum deviance to construct a Creole language that looked as different from French as possible. However, instead of using Creole's distinctiveness to argue for independence, GEREK began to highlight Creole's cultural connectedness to French. In the *CCC*, Confiant and Bernabé presented Creole's new meaning. Previously GEREK linguists had avoided comparing the Creole and French languages, arguing that such comparisons were irrelevant because the two languages were neither linguistically nor culturally related. Now Confiant and Bernabé contended that scientific comparisons

⁹¹ Ellen M. Schnepel, "The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe," *The International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 119-120.

of French and Creole would not subordinate Creole to French; rather, this kind of comparative study would further comprehension of the interconnectedness as well as the distinct identities of the two languages:

To compare Creole and French, is not to subordinate one language to the other; on the contrary, it is to find a scientific principle of description that encompasses both languages...[such comparisons] provide a means to better perceive the identity of each of the languages in question.⁹²

When GEREK was using Creole as a symbol of Antillean nationalism, it had attempted to elevate the Creole language above French in the Antilles. This was an intentional decision to invalidate Creole's traditional construction as a patois of French. In contrast, in the *CCC*, Confiant and Bernabé advocated for the "equalization of French and Creole" while also highlighting each language's distinct identity.⁹³ This use of linguistic research to reformulate Creole as simultaneously separate and connected to, yet also equal to French reflected GEREK's preconception of Antilleans' relationship to France. Antilleans' cultural and linguistic distinctiveness no longer formed the foundation of GEREK's argument for independence; instead, GEREK argued for recognition of Antilleans as both culturally distinct and equal members of the French nation.

GEREK's new political ideology had the potential to be more effective than its nationalist ideology in arguing for Antilleans' cultural and political rights. It fit within the Socialists' discourse of the "right to difference" and therefore appeared to be less subversive. Yet, it still challenged the government's conception of diversity's place within the Republic by arguing for the recognition of Antilleans as culturally distinct citizens of France. GEREK's reconstruction of Creole and French as scientifically equal

⁹² GEREK, *Charte Culturelle Créole*: se pwan douvan avan douvan pwan nou! (Schoelcher, Martinique: Centre Universitaire Antilles-Guyane, 1982), 27.

⁹³ GEREK, *Charte Culturelle Créole*, 256.

languages supported its new claim that Creole and French cultures had equal statuses within the nation. GEREC maintained that Antilleans did not have to assimilate into the French culture; they could be both Creole and French citizens.

Confiant and Bernabé, along with their GEREC colleague, writer Patrick Chamoiseau, formally conceptualized this new challenge to republican assimilation as *Créolité* or “Creoleness.” *Créolité* was a particular kind of Antillean multiculturalism that called upon the French government to officially recognize Antilleans culturally distinct citizens of France. It contended that Antilleans possessed multiple identities and could be both Creole and French.

We are at the same time, Europe[an], and Africa[n], nourished by Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indian [cultures] . . . *Créolité* is ‘*the diffracted world, but recomposed*’ . . . Because we know that each culture is never an achievement but a constant dynamic . . . that does not dominate but enters in relation [to other cultures], that does not plunder but exchanges. . . . *Créolité* is an annihilation of the false universality, of monolinguals, and of purity.⁹⁴

Créolité highlighted Antilleans’ dual French and Creole identity, exposing the myth of the French Republican tradition that claimed to have assimilated individuals’ cultural distinctiveness into a singular national culture. Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau created the concept of *Créolité* to argue that as Creoles, Antilleans possessed a multicultural identity made up of multiple cultural traditions. Thus, Antilleans’ status as both French citizens and Creole revealed what GEREC perceived to be the “false universality” of French republicanism, which had purportedly erased cultural and linguistic differences in favor of assimilation to a dominant national culture.

⁹⁴ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 54.

According to the *Créolité* movement, cultural diversity had always existed in the Republic; French national culture had always been in a constant state of construction, influenced by other cultures and peoples from around the globe. Yet, France was not just a nation composed of any of the world's cultures; it was an amalgamation of those peoples and cultures that France had colonized. Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau contended that *Créolité* was “the only concept that permits Békés [white Creoles] to finally assume (instead of distinguishing himself from) his *Africanness* and the non-Béké (black Creole) to uninhibitedly reevaluate, and completely clarify, the *European dimension* of his identity.”⁹⁵ In claiming that the *békés* or white French colonizers shared an African heritage with black Antilleans, *Créolité* inserted Antilleans' racial difference into metropolitan France. This challenged constructions of French citizenship that linked whiteness to belonging in the French nation. According to *Créolité*, Antilleans were the most powerful example of the diversity of the French national culture and French citizens, and therefore, they should be officially recognized as such.

Prior to the articulation of *Créolité*, GEREK had been aligned with pro-independence groups. Beginning in the mid-1980s, GEREK no longer argued for the creation of a separate Antillean nation. Instead, it argued for the reconstruction of the French nation so that it included Antilleans' cultural differences. At the same time, the pro-independence group associated with the nationalist publication, *Alizés*, also began to realize the political potential of a more multicultural ideology and reprinted excerpts of GEREK's *Eloge de la Créolité*, detailing the *Créolité* ideology. In doing so, *Alizés* hoped to disseminate GEREK's multicultural politics as a movement that could prove to be a more effective challenge to French control in the Antilles. According to *Alizés*,

⁹⁵ GEREK, *Charte Culturelle Créole*, 29-30.

multiculturalism granted Antilleans the economic benefits of remaining a part of the French nation. Yet, it also granted them more cultural autonomy in permitting them to exist in the French nation as culturally distinct citizens.⁹⁶

The Ministry of the DOM agreed with *Alizés*'s perception of *Créolité* as a potentially subversive movement. In February 1982, shortly after the publication of GEREC's CCC, French officials in Martinique noted the potential of *Créolité* to attract popular support. In a bulletin, the Office of Information in Martinique informed the Ministry of the DOM, that GEREC's *Créolité* movement was not just "intellectual activism", but a political struggle for a "coherent construction of the identity of Creole-speaking peoples."⁹⁷ As a movement that promoted Antilleans' "cultural specificity", DOM officials perceived of *Créolité* as a threat to the unity of French national culture. For the Ministry of the DOM, *Créolité* might prove to be even more threatening than the Creole movement's previous nationalist ideology.

This shift within the Creole movement from nationalism toward multiculturalism permitted a new alliance between the Antilles-based GEREC and the France-based CIEC Creole studies groups. Prior to GEREC's articulation of *Créolité*, GEREC's nationalist ideology conflicted with CIEC's assimilationist ideology. This ideological split weakened the Creole movement, as both groups competed for support for their own particular political agenda. As GEREC moved toward multiculturalism, CIEC also moved away from its pro-assimilationist origins toward a multicultural politics. GEREC saw its shift away from Antillean nationalism as a political tactic that used the Socialists' discourse of the "right to difference" to challenge the policy of assimilation and argue for

⁹⁶ See: Pierre Lacroix, "Eloge de la Créolité", *Alizés*, July-October 1988, 21-23.

⁹⁷ Bureau d'Etudes Martinique, Bulletin de Renseignement Particulier, Objet: Charte Culturelle de GEREC, February 1, 1982. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

Antilleans' cultural rights. In contrast, CIEC supported the Ministry of Education's recognition of regional languages and cultures as an effective strategy for neutralizing the Antillean independence movement and Antilleans' cultural rights claims. In a letter to the Minister of National Education, Robert Chaudenson, one of the founding members of CIEC, praised the Minister's "recent declaration...concerning regional languages and cultures" as a "relief" for Guadeloupe and Martinique where "the demand for the French education system to take into account cultural and linguistic specificities of the DOM is a political claim (autonomy or independence)..."⁹⁸

Despite their different reasons for moving toward multiculturalism, GEREC and CIEC were able to come together in their support for a new multicultural Creole movement. In *Etudes Créoles*, CIEC put forth an argument for diversity's place within the French nation that closely resembled GEREC's use of *Créolité* to challenge the republican tradition of assimilation:

In the perspective of social development, it seems that one must encourage the integrative elements of ethnicity while preserving the right of diverse groups in these plural societies to have particular ethnic identities and the possibility for these individuals to chose their belonging.⁹⁹

CIEC openly acknowledged French society as multicultural, and stated its support for the right of particular groups, such as Antilleans, to receive official recognition of their distinct cultural identities. This assertion challenged French republicanism's assumption that cultural rights do not need to be attributed to members of specific ethnic groups because they already possess civil and political rights and therefore, are already protected under the law.

⁹⁸ Letter from Robert Chaudenson, to Monsieur le Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale, July 26, 1982. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

⁹⁹ Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux, "Rapport général du IV^e Colloque International des Études Créoles," *Études Créoles : Culture, Langue, Société* 7, nos.1-2 (1984):19.

The convergence of CIEC and GEREC in support of Antilleans' cultural rights claims established the foundation for the emergence of Antillean activism in France during the 1980s. GEREC's original nationalist ideology and CIEC's assimilationist tendencies alienated Antillean migrants who were seeking to maintain both their political relationship with France and their Creole identity. Antillean migrants latched on to the new multicultural Creole movement as an ideology that expressed their dual French and Creole identities. Several editorials appearing in the monthly magazine *France Antilles Afrique* reveal how Antillean migrants' perception of their place within the French nation fit into GEREC's *Créolité* ideology. In one such letter to the editor, Antillean migrant N. Rogo argued that Antilleans possess a distinct cultural identity, but are also proud of being French: "I believe that we are French (whether certain French people want us to be or not) and we are also proud of being it with a capital F... We are precious to France. They need us, in the same way that we need them."¹⁰⁰ Rogo expressed Antillean migrants' desire to be recognized as an integral part of the French nation. They had carved out lives for themselves in metropolitan France and wanted the Antilles to maintain its political union with France. *Créolité* appealed to migrants like Rogo because it advocated just that, while also recognizing their particular position in the French nation as cultural others. It validated their feelings of loyalty to the French nation, as well as the isolation they felt in metropolitan France as a distinct cultural group.

Conclusion

The Creole movement is a story of constant transformations in which Antilleans in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France used Creole to navigate their political and cultural

¹⁰⁰ N. Rogo, "Fier d'être Français", *Flash Afrique Antilles*, December 1985, 10.

relationship to the French nation. In 1957, a group of educated Martinicans and Guadeloupeans employed Creole to challenge the assimilation laws of departmentalization. However, they argued that their movement was strictly cultural, and contended that Antilleans could achieve cultural autonomy from within the French state. Beginning in the 1970s, nationalists politicized Creole. They argued that Guadeloupe and Martinique possessed a distinct language and culture from metropolitan France and therefore, should be independent nations. In 1981, Mitterrand's Socialist party rose to power and coopted the Creole movement as a part of the government's move toward the "right to difference." In response, Creolists who had previously advocated independence and those who had promoted assimilation found common ground in an emerging multicultural politics. Instead of using Creole to justify their separate political agendas, both groups reinvented Creole as a symbol of French and Antillean cultural connectedness. This newly constructed Creole movement provided Antillean migrants with a political strategy to argue for inclusion in the French nation as culturally distinct citizens.

In following the Creole movement from its inception in the 1950s as a part of the "Antillean cultural awakening" to GEREC's nationalization of Creole in the 1970s, and finally to Creole's redefinition during the 1980s as a symbol of multicultural politics, we can begin to see how Antillean ethnic activism emerged from the convergence of two unsuccessful political strategies: nationalism and assimilation. In order to gain popular support for the Creole movement, nationalists and assimilationists had to come together and transform Creole into a particular kind of multicultural politics that Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic could rally around.

As French citizens who claimed their distinct Creole identity, Antilleans found themselves at the center of the debates about the place of cultural diversity in the Republic: How could the French government accept Antilleans' demands for cultural rights that other citizens did not possess? For the French government, the idea of group-differentiated rights opposed France's tradition of assimilation, which required all citizens to give up their particular identifications and group affiliations in favor of French citizenship. In using cultural rights claims of "difference" to argue for inclusion in French society as culturally distinct citizens, Antilleans were reformulating the boundaries of French citizenship to include those racial and cultural "others" who have maintained their particular cultural identities, but are nonetheless a part of the French nation.

However, this moment of multiculturalism was short-lived in France. When the National Front rose to power in the 1983 elections, Mitterrand's socialist government stepped away from the possibility of creating a more multicultural France. As the radical right used arguments about race and cultural difference to justify immigrants' exclusion from the nation, the left retreated to safer ground. Race and cultural difference became the territory of the right while the left once again continued to ignore how perceptions of race affected Antilleans' and other minority groups' access to French political and social institutions. Despite this retreat into republican notions of assimilation during the mid-1980s, with the formal articulation of *Créolité* in 1989, Antilleans found a new way to argue for inclusion in the French nation. In highlighting the racial and cultural diversity of all French citizens, including white metropolitans, *Créolité* challenged the French

government to reimagine the nation as a culturally and racially diverse entity that was in a constant state of transformation.

CHAPTER IV

The Creole Question in Republican Education: Gérard Lauriette and the Regionalization of the Antilles

Introduction

“It is expressly forbidden for students to speak Creole.”¹ Each day, when Antillean children arrived at school, they saw these words posted on the walls of their classrooms. This classroom rule reminded Antillean children, teachers, and parents that they were French citizens and therefore, were required to speak French. Their maternal language, Creole, had no place in the French nation; Creole was not to be spoken in French institutions, such as public schools. Following departmentalization, the institution where the conflict between French and Creole cultures played out most dramatically was the local public school system. This chapter examines these debates about Creole’s place in republican education. It argues that the Creole question was more than a simple debate concerning whether or not Creole should be used and taught in Antillean classrooms; it was about Guadeloupe’s and Martinique’s political and cultural relationship to metropolitan France.

When Guadeloupe and Martinique became departments of France in 1946, the newly formed Ministry of the Overseas Departments (DOM) set out to politically and culturally incorporate Antilleans into the nation as French citizens. DOM officials

¹ According to Gérard Lauriette, a teacher and Creole activist, these words were a part of a list of rules posted by the Ministry of Education in each Antillean classroom. Gérard Lauriette, *Les Débuts de l’enseignement aux Antillais Créolephones guadeloupéens, martiniquais*, n.d. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand. Côte: 4-R-12595.

immediately exported republican education as its most effective tool of assimilation. They compelled local Antillean teachers to follow metropolitan directives and implement a national curriculum that taught Guadeloupean and Martinican children about French culture and history and marginalized Antilleans' own unique culture. The Ministry of Education banned the use of Creole in schools, and demanded that all Antillean children learn to speak, read, and write French, the national language of both France and the Antilles. In classrooms across the Antilles, Guadeloupean and Martinican children learned how to be proper French-speaking citizens. Through public education, particularly the acquisition of the French language, French officials hoped to unite Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France into one nation with a singular cultural and linguistic heritage.

However, the Ministry of the DOM could not legislate how Antilleans communicated with each other. Creole persisted in the classroom as students' and teachers' only form of communication. It remained the spoken language of the majority of Antilleans, and came to symbolize Antilleans' cultural difference. Creole activists, particularly, Gérard Lauriette, used the Creole question to negotiate Antilleans' cultural and political relationship to the French nation. The Creole debates focused on several issues: First, they questioned whether or not Creole should be a part of the Antillean classroom. Second, they discussed at what level—preschool, primary or secondary—Creole should be introduced into the educational system. Finally, they sought to determine in what capacity Creole should be introduced into the Antillean classroom. Some teachers argued that Creole should solely be used during the early years of schooling as an instructional or transitional language that would later be replaced by

French. Others vehemently disagreed, and insisted that Creole was an equal partner with French in a fully bilingual program, and should be considered as a discipline of study in its own right.²

Each group's opinion on the status and role of Creole in public schools corresponded to its own position regarding the Antilles' political status in relation to the French nation. Teachers who argued for the use of Creole as the sole language of the Antilles were often politically aligned with pro-independence nationalist groups. Those who supported the implementation of Creole in public schools alongside French spanned the political spectrum from regionalists to cultural autonomists who supported the Antilles' political union with France while simultaneously calling for more control over local affairs, such as education and culture. Some Antillean teachers also felt that Creole's presence in the classroom would impede Antillean children's acquisition of French and threaten their opportunities for social mobility; their opponents labeled them pro-French assimilationists.³ Ultimately, these public discussions between French education officials and Antillean teacher-activists shaped Guadeloupe's and Martinique's changing cultural and political relationship with France from departmentalization in 1946, through regionalization in 1972, and the official implementation of decentralization in 1982. These negotiations concerning Creole and public education not only affected Creole's status in French society, but they also transformed Antilleans' political and cultural position in the French nation.

² Ellen M Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 2004). See especially chapter 5, "Conflict in the Capesterre School."

³ Ellen M. Schnepel, "The Creole Movement in Guadeloupe," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 117-133.

The first part of this chapter examines Antillean education as a site of conflict between one of the most outspoken Creole activists, Gérard Lauriette, and the Ministry of Education. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Ministry of Education was focused on using public education to make Antilleans into culturally assimilated French citizens. It perceived of Creole as a social problem that inhibited Antilleans' assimilation and therefore, threatened the political union between France and the Antilles. In contrast, for Lauriette, the Creole question was a political issue. Hailed as the father of the Creole movement, Lauriette was the first teacher to design and implement a Creole pedagogy for use in the classroom. He was a self-proclaimed defender of Antillean rights and critic of French colonialism. For Lauriette, the Creole question symbolized Antilleans' lack of political and cultural authority; in other words, their unequal relationship with France. He decried the fact that education in the Antilles was Eurocentric and failed to capture the reality of the Antillean child's cultural, linguistic, and social universe. He was vehemently opposed to making French the sole language of instruction, and argued for the use of Creole in Antillean classrooms. Moreover, he fought against the exclusive use of textbooks and pedagogical methods that emanated from a highly centralized educational bureaucracy and followed the dictates of the Ministry of National Education in France. To discredit this practice, Lauriette wrote and published his own textbooks, utilizing Creole and the Antillean child's everyday experiences and natural environment as a point of reference.⁴ The first part of this chapter argues that in calling for a reform of republican education that took into account Antilleans' linguistic and cultural

⁴ For a brief biography of Gérard Lauriette and his contributions to the Creole movement see: Ellen M Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity: Creole and politics in Guadeloupe* (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 2004). See especially pages 85-88 chapter 4, "The Creole Movement: An Ideology of Language is infused in the Nationalist Movement."

particularities, Lauriette argued for a modification of departmentalization and its laws of assimilation. Lauriette wanted Antilleans to have more cultural and political autonomy, beginning with public education.

Lauriette's Creole pedagogy placed pressure on the Ministry of DOM to modify the statutes of departmentalization. For the Ministries of DOM and Education, the persistence of Creole in public education meant that departmentalization had not succeeded in assimilating Antilleans. In the late 1960s, when the National Assembly considered regional reform for its metropolitan departments, DOM officials looked to regionalization as a possible solution to Antillean discontentment and what it perceived to be the growing popularity of Antillean independence. The second part of this chapter argues that the debates concerning regionalization and the possibility of granting Antilleans more control over local affairs was a response to the Creole question. When regional reform became a real possibility for Guadeloupe and Martinique, Lauriette distanced himself from the independence movement and advocated a change in the Antilles' political status from departments to regions. In the 1970s, the National Assembly implemented a system of regions to promote local cultural and economic development. Each region was headed by a prefect and composed of several departments. The prefects oversaw local projects that were too big to be organized by each individual department, but were small enough that they could be handled at the regional level. Lauriette believed that once Guadeloupe and Martinique became official regions of France, the Ministry of Education would give Antilleans the same economic, linguistic, and cultural rights they had previously accorded to metropolitan regions. However, this was not the case.

The last section of this chapter examines this differential application of the laws of regionalization to metropolitan France and the Antilles during the 1970s. Despite the fact that Guadeloupe and Martinique possessed the same political status as other metropolitan regions, the Ministry of Education refused to implement the laws of regional language instruction in the Antilles. Education officials permitted metropolitan teachers to alter the national curriculum to include their respective regional languages and cultures, but they continued to ban Creole from Antillean schools. The Ministry of Education argued that Creole was an impediment to its efforts to promote French literacy, education, and social advancement in the Antilles. According to education officials, the ban on Creole purportedly promoted equality by improving Antillean children's French language acquisition and affording them the same social and economic opportunities as metropolitans. In constructing the Creole question as purely a social problem, the Ministry of Education attempted to depoliticize Creole as an issue that concerned Antilleans' rights as French citizens.

Part I. Gérard Lauriette and the Ministry of Education's struggle for control of Antillean Education

National Unity Through French Literacy

On November 7, 1946, five months after the Antilles became French departments, French officials requested that all of Guadeloupe's teachers gather at the Renaissance Theater in Pointe-à-Pitre. In a personal account of this event, Gérard Lauriette claimed that the Ministry of Education called this meeting to ensure that Guadeloupean teachers understood their new role as instructors within a French department. When everyone was assembled at the theater, a representative from the Ministry of Education announced:

“You are no longer a colony; you are assimilated.”⁵ This meant that Antillean teachers were now required to follow the national curriculum of France’s metropolitan departments. In response to this assertion, Lauriette, who at the time was a young twenty-four year old elementary school teacher, stood up and shouted: “One cannot assimilate a people from a country without winter to a people from a country with winter; the French were not able to assimilate the people of Alsace-Lorraine....As for Guadeloupean society, you do not understand it because you have not experienced it, you have not lived it.”⁶ This outburst was the beginning of Lauriette’s forty-year struggle against what he perceived to be the government’s use of education to culturally oppress and assimilate young Antilleans. He proclaimed that Antilleans could not be culturally assimilated to France because of these two countries’ vast cultural and social differences. The extreme contrast between the Antilles’ and France’s weather indicated that the two countries were naturally distinct; it was therefore unnatural to culturally assimilate Antilleans into the French nation. Lauriette applied his position to republican education, arguing that it was not only unnatural, but also absurd to implement France’s metropolitan curriculum in the Antilles.

Lauriette’s negative response to departmentalization, and the law of assimilation that accompanied it, demonstrated to education officials that the political and cultural union between metropolitan France and the Antilles was at best, tenuous. In response, the Ministry of Education turned to republican education to secure France’s political position in the Antilles and make Antilleans into French citizens. It centralized Antillean education, making local teachers accountable to the Ministry of Education, and

⁵ Gérard Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur antillais créolophone et francophone découvre une philosophie* (1974), 1.

⁶ Ibid.

implemented France's national curriculum in Guadeloupe and Martinique. In particular, the Ministry of Education became preoccupied with teaching Antillean children how to speak proper French. Since departmentalization, Antilleans' Creole language had become the symbol of Antilleans' cultural differences.⁷ For the Ministry of Education, these differences had no place in the classroom, nor did they fit into the French nation. It perceived of Antilleans' inability to speak proper French like their metropolitan compatriots as an obstacle to Antilleans' assimilation.

In the fall of 1946, the Ministry of Education sent Germain d'Hangest, a general inspector of public education, to Guadeloupe and Martinique to evaluate the state of Antillean schools and to determine how to implement the French system of universal republican education in the islands. D'Hangest's report painted a grim picture of Antillean education. He was surprised to discover that in both Guadeloupe and Martinique, elementary schools were severely overcrowded and dilapidated. In one school, a single teacher was responsible for the education of nearly one hundred children. Moreover, classrooms did not contain the basic supplies, such as notebooks and maps, needed to educate students. These types of conditions not only led to ineffective learning environments, but also to poor hygiene. The bathrooms and classrooms were in such decrepit states that cases of dysentery were common among schoolchildren.⁸

Although initially shocked by the state of Antillean schools, d'Hangest noted that these problems were easily solvable with the construction of more schools and the

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of how the Creole language became the symbol of Antillean cultural identity, see Chapter 3, "From Militant Nationalists to Ethnic Minority: The Antillean Creole Movement in Metropolitan France and the Antilles after Departmentalization".

⁸ L'Inspecteur Général G. d'Hangest à Monsieur le Ministre de l'éducation nationale et à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'outre-mer, décembre 1946, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 55.

recruitment and training of more teachers. For d'Hangest, there was a more pressing problem: Antillean children's inability to speak, read, and write the French language had made them severely undereducated compared to their metropolitan counterparts. In his letter to the Ministries of Education and Overseas Departments, d'Hangest remarked upon Antilleans' lack of knowledge of the French language as the main problem not only facing Antillean education, but also threatening the political unity between France and its new departments:

From reading high schools' quarterly reports, as well as various local publications, I have realized that literary subjects [in Guadeloupe] suffer from quite a clear inferiority due to the nearly exclusive oral use of Creole: the true maternal language of the entire population, it is naturally sufficient for the needs of daily life; and in the absence of any other dialect... Creole finds itself promoted to the rank of a national language, at the expense of French, whose phonetics, syntax and spelling are only truly mastered by a small minority of the teachers of local origin. I have emphasized everywhere (in Martinique as well) the necessity of a sustained effort toward improving the clarity, accuracy and ease in the usage of the administrative and literary language [French], which is indispensable to national solidarity.⁹

D'Hangest claimed that a large part of the process of incorporating Antillean society into the French political and social structure included disseminating French across the Antilles as the national language. He perceived of Creole as a hindrance to Antilleans' acquisition of French, and therefore to the process of national unification. Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France were politically the same nation; however, they could not culturally be one nation, if they did not share the same national language. According to d'Hangest, the dissemination of French through public education was the means through which to incorporate Antillean society into the French political, economic, and social

⁹ L'Inspecteur Général G. d'Hangest à Monsieur le Ministre de l'éducation nationale et à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'outre-mer, décembre 1946, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 55.

structure. Ultimately, this would lead to cultural assimilation and “national solidarity”. Education officials’ logic concerning the link among French literacy, assimilation, and national solidarity stigmatized Creole as an impediment and threat to assimilation and therefore, national unity. Creole symbolized the “problem” of Antillean assimilation that needed to be solved. French literacy was a tangible solution, and possibly the most effective way that the French government could make Antilleans into French citizens.

Lauriette’s Creole Pedagogy

Lauriette opposed the Ministry of Education’s characterization of Creole as a social problem that impeded Antilleans’ assimilation and prevented the islands from achieving the same economic and social stability as metropolitan departments. From the moment Guadeloupe and Martinique became overseas departments, Lauriette was critical of assimilation and the ban on Creole that accompanied this policy. He argued that it was the exclusive use of French in Antillean classrooms, not Creole, that caused the Antilles’ social and economic problems. In 1948, Lauriette organized a conference for a Guadeloupean teachers’ association at which he presented and defined his educational philosophy for Antillean children. At this conference, Lauriette argued that because Antillean children had different social and cultural experiences from French children, public education in the Antilles could not simply be the mirror image of metropolitan education policy. In order to properly serve the Antillean people, the national curriculum needed to reflect the Antilles’ cultural and social particularities.¹⁰ Lauriette was adamantly opposed to French officials legislating what should be taught in Antillean

¹⁰ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l’enseignement d’une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d’enseignement d’un instituteur guadeloupéen*, Lauriette Gérard, 1975, Bibliothèque National François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

classrooms. They knew nothing about Guadeloupean and Martinican society and culture and therefore, were not fit to determine the kind of curriculum and educational methods that benefitted the Antilles. Only Antilleans had the knowledge and authority to determine what was best for Guadeloupean and Martinican children.¹¹

For Lauriette, Antillean children required a curriculum that valued their Creole culture and language. He argued that from the moment the Antillean child entered the French classroom, he was confronted with a metropolitan curriculum that was not adapted to the reality of his experiences in Guadeloupe and Martinique.

On his first day of school the child trembles. He is afraid. He is disturbed. His vision is blurry. The beating of his heart fills his ears with the roar of a waterfall. There is a smartly dressed man before him that he does not know...Or a woman whose bright red lipstick is the only thing that captivates him. Now what will come out of these mouths? Growls, chuckles, yells, words he does not know...¹²

In his pedagogical writings on Antillean education, Lauriette frequently constructed this image of a young, scared Antillean schoolboy who felt alienated by his teachers' exclusive use of the French language. He employed this image contrasting the confused Creole-speaking child with the confident French-speaking teacher to underscore what he believed was the French language's negative affects on Antillean children's academic performance. Antillean children were unable to successfully learn because they did not speak French, and therefore did not understand what was going on around them in the classroom. Like education officials, Lauriette recognized that Antilleans were undereducated partly due to the fact that they were Creole-speakers and had to begin the difficult task of learning French upon entering the public school system. However, in

¹¹ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l'enseignement d'une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d'enseignement d'un instituteur guadeloupéen*, Lauriette Gérard, 1975, Bibliothèque National François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

¹² Ibid.

contrast to official education policy which enforced the Ministry of Education's belief that the use of Creole in the classroom amplified Antillean children's confusion between the French and Creole languages, Lauriette argued that Creole had a positive effect on Antillean children's academic performance. In its current state, France's metropolitan curriculum was not functional for the Antilles; the legal ban on Creole from public classrooms prevented Antillean children from receiving a proper education.¹³

To resolve this problem, Lauriette proposed that the Ministry of Education permit teachers like himself to implement a specific curriculum adapted to Antillean children's cultural and linguistic differences, as well as their everyday experiences in Guadeloupe and Martinique. This kind of adapted pedagogy, which Lauriette described as *education fonctionnelle* or "functional education", would teach Antillean children according to the particularities of their social environment, popular language, and cultural history.¹⁴ The most important component of Lauriette's "functional education" was a pedagogical method that used Creole to teach the French language to Antillean children. Lauriette believed that French was a foreign language to Antilleans and should be treated as such. He reasoned that when French children learned a foreign language, such as English, the teacher used French to translate the English words and explain English grammar. Therefore, it only seemed logical that teachers in the Antilles would also be able to use Creole to define French words and teach French grammar. Lauriette described teachers' attempts to use French to teach Antillean children who only spoke Creole as "completely

¹³ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l'enseignement d'une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d'enseignement d'un instituteur guadeloupéen*, Lauriette Gérard, 1975, Bibliothèque National François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

¹⁴ Ibid.

absurd.”¹⁵ During this time period, all of the pedagogical material on foreign language instruction recognized that children needed to use their maternal language in order to quickly and effectively learn a foreign one.

Despite the Ministry of Education’s ban on Creole, Antillean teachers were still using Creole in the classroom because it was the only way they could communicate with their Creole-speaking students. Metropolitan teachers who had been assigned to teach in the Antilles also found themselves trying to use Creole in an effort to establish some form of communication and understanding. Therefore, aside from the challenge that Lauriette’s Creole pedagogy posed to official educational policy, his efforts to introduce Creole into Antillean public schools was not particularly novel. Both teachers and students employed Creole in Antillean classrooms. What made Lauriette’s pedagogy subversive was its use of Creole as a legitimate pedagogical tool and not just a basic form of communication. His “functional education” required the Ministry of Education to not only lift the ban on Creole, but also to formally acknowledge the educational value of Creole in republican education. This kind of official recognition was important to Lauriette because it elevated Creole from a crude patois to a legitimate language.¹⁶

According to Lauriette, the Ministry of Education’s ban on Creole debased Antilleans’ language and culture and made it inferior to the French language and culture. The ban symbolized Creole’s status as an illegitimate and unlawful component of the French nation. The signs posted on the walls of Antillean classrooms stating, “Creole not permitted”, taught Antillean children to be ashamed of their Creole language and culture.

¹⁵ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l’enseignement d’une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d’enseignement d’un instituteur guadeloupéen*, Lauriette Gérard, 1975, Bibliothèque National François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

¹⁶ Gérard Lauriette, *Les Débuts de l’enseignement aux Antillais Créolophones guadeloupéens, Martiniquais*, n.d., Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-12595.

In his pedagogical writings, Lauriette instructed teachers that the most important aspect of his “functional education” was to explain to Antillean children that their Creole language was equal to French. “During the first lesson, make it known that the Creole language is not a ‘shameful’ language, that...all languages are the same...The French language is not more beautiful than the Creole language.”¹⁷ For Lauriette, this revalorization of the Creole language was a starting point for reforming the national curriculum to include Antilleans’ cultural particularities.

Lauriette wanted to completely change the curriculum that teachers used in Antillean classrooms, including the educational materials available to them. Antillean and metropolitan children read from the same textbooks. This was problematic for Lauriette because metropolitan textbooks were exclusively focused on French history and culture. Lauriette argued that in metropolitan history books, “only white Frenchmen are brave, good [and] intelligent.”¹⁸ These white heroes had “long hair, a straight nose, and skinny lips”; they look[ed] completely different from black Antilleans who had “curly hair, a large nose, and fat lips.”¹⁹ Because their physical characteristics did not match those of the national heroes they learned about, Lauriette contended that Antillean children grew up believing that there were no black heroes. Only “white models register in his [an Antillean child’s] mind and he only has white models to emulate.”²⁰ According

¹⁷ Gérard Lauriette, *Les Débuts de l’enseignement aux Antillais Créolophones guadeloupéens, Martiniquais*, n.d., Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-12595.

¹⁸ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l’enseignement d’une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d’enseignement d’un instituteur guadeloupéen, Lauriette Gérard*, 1975, Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

¹⁹ Gérard Lauriette, *L’Enseignement du Français à Partir du Créole: Les dix premiers séances d’enseignement de la redaction française dans une école guadeloupéenne*, 1972, Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte EL 4-R-PIECE-71.

²⁰ Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l’enseignement d’une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d’enseignement d’un instituteur guadeloupéen, Lauriette Gérard*, 1975, Bibliothèque Nationale François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

to Lauriette, this imitation of white heroes traumatized Antillean children and made them feel inferior. In other words, the Ministry of Education's exclusion of Antillean culture from the national curriculum psychologically damaged Guadeloupean and Martinican children. For Lauriette, "the more a Guadeloupean is instructed in French schools, the more he believes himself to be inferior to white people."²¹ Lauriette's "functional education" fought against republican education's purportedly oppressive nature. It insisted upon incorporating stories of "brave, good, and intelligent black men" so that young Antilleans had positive role models to which they could relate.²²

In March 1949, several months after laying out the above pedagogy at a private conference for a Guadeloupean teacher's association, Lauriette wrote a letter to his superiors in the administration of the Guadeloupean school district. In this letter, Lauriette restated what he had argued for in his lecture on "functional education". He also informed his superiors that he refused to monitor his school's cafeteria as a form of protest. Lauriette argued that this action demonstrated that he was not a complacent supporter of France's education policy. He did not allow the Ministry of Education to control his work schedule; nor did he enforce its ban on Creole.²³ After receiving Lauriette's provocative letter, the Vice Rector of Guadeloupe's school district asked the Departmental Director of Health to evaluate Lauriette's mental state. In a confidential letter to the Vice Rector, the Director of Health informed him that Lauriette's actions

²¹ Gérard Lauriette, *Les Débuts de l'enseignement aux Antillais Créolophones guadeloupéens, Martiniquais*, n.d., Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-12595.

²² Gérard Lauriette, *Présentation des méthodes et philosophie de l'enseignement d'une école libre de la Guadeloupe. Extraits de quelques livres d'enseigneemn d'un instituteur guadeloupéen, Lauriette Gérard*, 1975, Bibliothèque National François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-14142.

²³ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to his "Chefs hiérachiques de l'Administration de l'Enseignement officiel", March 4, 1949. Published in Gérard Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur antillais créolophone et francophone découvre une philosophie*, 1974, 1-3. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte EL-4-Z-228.

indicated “a very deficient psychological state.”²⁴ He suggested that he admit Lauriette to a hospital for observation and to undergo treatment. The Director of Health claimed that this matter was particularly urgent because of Lauriette’s profession, implying that he could possibly harm the children with whom he worked.²⁵ The Vice Rector followed the Director of Health’s advice and placed Lauriette on an extended professional leave for nearly three years. Lauriette was only reintegrated into Guadeloupe’s school district in May 1952 after pleading his case before a group of psychiatrists at the *Salpêtrière* Hospital in Paris. Years after this incidence, Lauriette speculated that this was the beginning of the Ministry of Education’s attempt to silence him and diminish the political challenges his Creole pedagogy posed to republican education.²⁶

Lauriette’s defiant call for the introduction of the Creole language and culture into Antillean schools was a radical reformulation of the Ministry of Education’s assimilation policy. In 1952, only several years had passed since departmentalization, and the Minister of Education remained fervently committed to the “laws of assimilation.” These laws required French officials to implement France’s social and economic structures, such as education, as they existed in France with no consideration for the differences that existed in Antillean society. For the Ministry of Education, this meant education officials applied France’s national curriculum to Antillean classrooms without alteration. Because Lauriette’s Creole pedagogy deviated from this law of departmentalization, the Ministries

²⁴ Confidential letter from the Directeur départemental de la santé to Monsieur le Vice Rectorat de la Guadeloupe, Pointe-à-Pitre, “Objet: Avis officieux état mental de M. Lauriette”, March 11, 1949. Published in Gérard Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur antillais créolophone et francophone découvre une philosophie*, 1974, 3. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte EL-4-Z-228.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Gérard Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur antillais créolophone et francophone découvre une philosophie*, 1974, 4. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte EL-4-Z-228.

of Education and DOM perceived of it as a threat to the government's project to build the political and cultural union between France and the Antilles.

The Ministry of Education's concerns about Lauriette's Creole pedagogy were amplified by the period of decolonization following the Second World War. During the Fourth Republic (1946-1958), the French government faced multiple colonial uprisings, including the wars for independence in Indochina, West Africa, and Algeria. In 1960, these wars compelled President Charles de Gaulle to revise the French constitution to allow French-ruled territories to unilaterally change their own constitutions and political relationship with France. The majority of France's territories in Asia and Africa opted for and obtained independence that same year. Two years later, in 1962, Algeria became an independent nation.

As decolonization swept across its empire, the French government became particularly concerned about preserving its political ties to its remaining departments and territories, which included Guadeloupe and Martinique. Former colonial subjects' decision to reclaim their national cultures and histories, and become independent nations caused DOM officials to question whether or not it had successfully assimilated Antilleans and made them loyal citizens of France. The French government turned to education to establish a politically and culturally unified nation. The Ministries of the DOM and Education focused their attention and funds on educating Antillean children about their established historical, cultural, and linguistic ties to France. Officials hoped that knowledge of this relationship between Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France would compel Antilleans to feel as if the national link between the Antilles and France was not only natural, but also historically and culturally justified. Republican schools made

“peasants into Frenchmen” during the Third Republic, and, now, DOM officials employed public education to effectively assimilate Antilleans as the newest citizens of France.²⁷

Elementary French and the Social Problem of Creole

While Lauriette defiantly developed and implemented his Creole pedagogy in his own classroom, the French government experimented with its own curriculum, one that was specifically tailored to the Antilles. Lauriette had failed to persuade the Ministry of Education that the ban on Creole negatively affected Antillean children. However, he succeeded in convincing education officials that Antillean children were linguistically different from metropolitan children. The Ministry of Education agreed with Lauriette that Antilleans’ inability to speak French negatively affected their academic performance. However, whereas Lauriette believed that this linguistic difference justified the use of Creole as a pedagogical tool in Antillean classrooms, the Ministry of Education contended that the persistence of this difference indicated that it had not done enough to erase this linguistic particularity. In order to resolve this “problem” of difference, the Ministry of Education developed a pedagogical method to rapidly teach Antillean children to speak and read French.

²⁷ In *Peasants Into Frenchmen*, Eugen Weber argues that during the Third Republic, the French government effectively used education and language to create a politically and culturally unified French nation. Prior to the Third Republic, a singular French national identity did not exist. Peasants living in the countryside were more likely to identify with their particular region. French officials used mandatory schooling to instill in peasants an awareness of being “French” and belonging to the nation of France rather than to one’s own province. During this time, the 1882 Jules Ferry laws, which made education free, secular, and obligatory, also declared French the national language of instruction. Education officials hoped that a national curriculum, combined with a shared language, would ultimately assimilate regional and cultural differences into a singular national culture. In other words, the Ferry laws linked public education and French language to the construction of a unified French nation and culture. See: Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

In 1952, M. Abraham, the director of the cabinet of the Ministry of Education decided to form a committee to study the problem of education in the Antilles. In a meeting held on June 23, 1952, the Committee of DOM Instruction discussed education as the most effective means through which the government could promote national solidarity among Guadeloupe, Martinique and France. The committee's investigation revealed that metropolitans and Antilleans did not fully understand their political and cultural relationship to each other. Lauriette, despite being educated in France, was an example of one such Antillean who did not understand the unbreakable historical and cultural ties uniting Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France together since the seventeenth century. According to Abraham, this lack of knowledge threatened national unity. "This ignorance is certainly at the root of the difficulties that sometimes arise between France and these people [of the DOM]...It is essential to ensure a fraternal understanding between all peoples who constitute the French Union."²⁸ Abraham argued that these misunderstandings and the subsequent disunity they promoted were solvable through education. The Ministry of Education decided to create a national curriculum focused on informing both metropolitan and Antillean children about their shared belonging to the *Union française* or "French Union".²⁹ This educational initiative was a part of the government's efforts to define a new kind of French nation during the period of decolonization. In an attempt to appease former colonial subjects' demands for political and cultural autonomy, the government replaced its old colonial system of the French Empire with the French Union. However, this "union" needed to be constructed. The

²⁸ Commission de l'Enseignement d'Outre-Mer, meeting minutes, June 23, 1952, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 6.

²⁹ Ibid.

Ministry of Education taught Antilleans and members of France's other departments and territories that they were all a part of a greater French nation, culture, and history.

French literacy was an integral part of this national curriculum promoting cultural and political unity among members of the French Union. In February 1950, Professor of linguistics Georges Gougenheim, informed the Ministry of Education of the importance of disseminating the French language throughout the French Union. In a report on the role of the French language in the French Union, Professor Gougenheim characterized French literacy as an "initiation to the civilization of metropolitan French."³⁰ He constructed French literacy as the unifying cultural element of the French Union. According to Gougenheim, it offered a solution to the Ministry of DOM's difficult task of uniting the distinct cultures and languages of France's departments and territories into one political union. On a purely practical level, the French language provided members with a common language. As the administrative body that implemented metropolitan directives, the Ministry of the DOM needed the ability to communicate with French Union members. Effective communication between the metropole and overseas departments was essential to political and social unity.³¹ Moreover, French literacy promoted social mobility by providing members of the DOM with access to higher levels of education. Gougenheim contended that DOM members' satisfaction with socio-economic status would lead to political stability and support for the French Union.³²

³⁰ Georges Gougenheim, "Le Français Élémentaire", *Education Nationale*, n°25, October 14, 1954, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art.41.

³¹ Georges Gougenheim, Commission Nationale Pour l'Éducation, "Rapport sur l'adaptation de la langue française au rôle de langue auxiliaire", February 10, 1951, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 41.

³² Ibid.

French literacy was of such importance that the Ministries of the DOM and Education worked with linguists, like Gougenheim, to develop a new pedagogical method for teaching French to Union members as quickly and as efficiently as possible. In January 1952, the Minister of National Education sponsored the formation of the Committee of Elementary French, and appointed Gougenheim as its director. Gougenheim's "Elementary French" replaced traditional methods of French instruction, which the Ministry of Education believed were slow and often lacking in effectiveness. Elementary French purportedly eased Union members' acquisition of the French language by simplifying it into its most basic vocabulary and grammar.³³ It was originally intended for adults and children who had little formal education. However, the Committee of DOM Instruction recognized the potential value of Elementary French within traditional classrooms throughout France's departments and territories. In its June 1952 meeting, the Committee recommended the implementation of Elementary French in Antillean schools as a solution to the islands' education problem. Antillean children's academic performance was so far behind that of metropolitan children's because they did not understand French. The Committee feared that Antillean teachers' and children's dependence on Creole for effective communication was interfering with Antilleans' acquisition of the French language. Committee members argued that the Elementary French method enabled Antillean children to quickly learn French so that they did not

³³ Georges Gougenheim, Commission Nationale Pour l'Education, "Rapport sur l'adaptation de la langue française au rôle de langue auxiliaire", February 10, 1951, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 41.

have to resort to the use of Creole; in doing so, it facilitated their academic success and potential for social mobility.³⁴

Following the Ministry of Education's decision to implement Gougenheim's Elementary French pedagogy in the Antilles, Lauriette once again found himself in conflict with both local and national education officials. Having already been suspended once, Lauriette knew that his relationship with education officials was tenuous; yet, he continued to ignore and publicly criticize the ban on Creole. He refused to use the Elementary French method, claiming that it was unpractical and ineffective. For Lauriette, Elementary French was just another example of the Ministry of Education's misunderstanding of Antillean society and the causes of its social and economic problems. By the mid-1950s, Lauriette was known for his nonconformist teaching methods; administrators knew that he ignored national directives and used Creole in his classroom, and they were not particularly pleased with his public defiance.

In 1956, the Ministry of Education sent the local education inspector, Mr. Pareosse, to Lauriette's classroom to examine and evaluate his teaching performance. Lauriette claimed that the Ministry of Education used the report from this investigation to document his purportedly poor performance so that officials could force him out of education at a later date. In response, Lauriette wrote his own report refuting the departmental inspector's critiques, and sent it to the Ministry of Education. The Minister of Education refused to change Mr. Pareosse's report; instead, he informed Mr. Hélisey, the director of The School for Boys where Lauriette taught, of Lauriette's insubordination and refusal to enforce the ban on Creole. Hélisey insisted that Lauriette follow the

³⁴ Commission de l'Enseignement d'Outre-Mer, meeting minutes, June 23, 1952, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770508, Art. 6.

national curriculum, but when he refused to do so, Hélisey was forced to temporarily suspend Lauriette for not complying with national pedagogy.³⁵

However, Lauriette refused to be silenced. One week after his suspension in April 1957, Lauriette published two scathing critiques of French republican education in *Le Progrès Social*, a Guadeloupean newspaper described by its director as an “instrument of information for the defense of Guadeloupean interests.”³⁶ In the first article, entitled “On the education of young Guadeloupeans who do not speak French”, Lauriette described the French education system in the Antilles as a complete failure. At the School for Boys in Capesterre, one of the most prestigious institutions in Guadeloupe, only one to three students successfully passed the national primary education exam and received their Certificate of Primary Studies. Lauriette argued that these deplorable statistics were a direct result of the Ministry of Education’s refusal to permit teachers to use Creole to educate Antillean children. Educating children “in the metropolitan manner” and “in a language that they do not understand has disastrous consequences.”³⁷ The ban on Creole kept Antillean children in a state of confusion, and prevented them from learning French. Lauriette claimed that one year after he introduced Creole into Capesterre’s School for Boys, forty-two students succeeded in obtaining their Certificate of Primary Studies. This was primarily due to the fact that the students were better able to understand the exam questions and respond properly in French. For Lauriette, his experience at the School for Boys confirmed his educational philosophy that Creole could

³⁵ Gérard Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur antillais créolophone et francophone découvre une philosophie*, 1974, 4. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte EL-4-Z-228.

³⁶ Henri Rodes, Director of *Le Progrès Social*, quoted in *Le Progrès Social*, April 20, 1957. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, côte GR FOL-JO-7692.

³⁷ Gérard Lauriette, “De l’enseignement aux petits Guadeloupéens ne parlant pas le Français”, *Le Progrès Social*, April 20, 1957, 2. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, côte GR FOL-JO-7692.

be effectively used as a pedagogical tool to facilitate Antillean children's acquisition of the French language.³⁸

One week after this article appeared in *Le Progrès Social*, the newspaper's director published another one of Lauriette's critiques. This article, entitled "Young Guadeloupean Children and the School", examined what Lauriette believed to be the absurdity of using metropolitan textbooks in the Antilles. Upon examining his son's schoolbook, he discovered a lesson on the four seasons of France listing the different fruits and flowers that grew during each season. For Antillean children who lived in a tropical climate and did not experience the change in seasons, this lesson was completely irrelevant. Lauriette failed to find in his son's history, grammar, and math books "a single example that would interest a Guadeloupean child."³⁹ For this reason, Lauriette claimed that the metropolitan curriculum did not match the reality of Antillean children's experiences in Guadeloupe and Martinique. He challenged the Ministry of Education's notion that Antilleans "are children of France and must make use of the books of Paris, the national capital", and encouraged Antillean teachers to create their own curriculums specifically designed to teach "young Creoles" about their own history, culture, and language.⁴⁰ In closing his article, Lauriette stated that he was "breaking the order of silence" surrounding the ineffectiveness of republican education in the Antilles. He argued that Antillean teachers and parents could no longer remain silent about the damaging metropolitan curriculum, which was keeping Antillean children uneducated and subordinate. He called upon Antillean teachers and education officials to implement

³⁸ Gérard Lauriette, "De l'enseignement aux petits Guadeloupéens ne parlant pas le Français", *Le Progrès Social*, April 20, 1957, 2. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, côte GR FOL-JO-7692.

³⁹ Gérard Lauriette, "Les Petits Guadeloupéens et l'école", *Le Progrès Social*, April 27, 1957, 2. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, côte GR FOL-JO-7692.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

a new Creole pedagogy that would better serve Antilleans' educational and social needs.⁴¹

When *Le Progrès Social* published these two articles, the Ministry of Education was already well aware of the challenges that Lauriette's Creole pedagogy posed to republican education. It had already attempted to silence and subdue him by suspending him twice. However, with the publication of these articles, the Ministry of Education became even more concerned about the subversive nature of Lauriette's educational philosophy. Prior to the publication of these articles, Lauriette had only expressed his opinions in either private conferences or letters to education officials and administrators. The fact that Lauriette had now chosen to publicly critique republican education was of particular concern to the Ministry of Education. Lauriette specifically directed his articles to Antillean teachers, suggesting how they could use his Creole pedagogy in their classrooms.⁴² This indicated to education officials that Lauriette was most likely trying to organize a popular teachers' movement to overturn national directives concerning the strict implementation of France's metropolitan curriculum in the overseas departments.

Moreover, not only did Lauriette's articles challenge the ban on Creole, but they also argued that Antilleans had a separate identity as "Creoles". Lauriette's Creole pedagogy established Antilleans' separate history, culture, and language, and insisted upon cultivating this unique Creole identity within the classroom.⁴³ The Ministry of Education feared that the goal of Lauriette's pedagogy was to create young Antilleans who valued a Creole cultural identity separate from their French citizenship. Education

⁴¹ Lauriette, "Les Petits Guadeloupéens et l'école", 2.

⁴² See: Lauriette, "De l'enseignement aux petits Guadeloupéens ne parlant pas le Français", 2. Lauriette, "Les Petits Guadeloupéens et l'école", 2.

⁴³ Lauriette, "Les Petits Guadeloupéens et l'école", 2.

officials perceived of this as a direct affront to departmentalization and its laws of assimilation, which required Antilleans to give up their cultural particularities in favor of French citizenship. The Ministry of Education was also wary of the publication in which Lauriette's articles appeared. *Le Progrès Social* was allegedly an independent publication without any political affiliations. However, its owner, Henri Rodès was the brother of Félix Rodès, a well-known activist for Guadeloupean independence. This worried education officials who perceived of *Le Progrès Social* as a political platform designed to rally the Antillean people around the movement for political autonomy. The Ministry of Education was concerned that nationalist political groups would appropriate Lauriette's use of phrases such as "my native land of Guadeloupe" to popularize the idea of a Guadeloupean nation separate from France. It feared that the *indépendantistes* would latch on to Lauriette's Creole pedagogy, politicize it, and employ it in their struggle for independence.

Lauriette was a liability for the Ministry of Education; his Creole pedagogy threatened the political union between France and the Antilles. Eight days after the publication of these two articles in *Le Progrès Social*, the Ministry of Education decided to take action. It made Lauriette's temporary suspension permanent and placed him on an extended leave of absence for mental illness. In August 1959, Lauriette founded the "Gérard Lauriette Institution", a private school for girls and boys who had either dropped out or been dismissed from public schools for repeatedly failing to pass the national exam for the Certificate of Primary Studies. This private school provided Lauriette with the opportunity to fully implement his teaching methods and Creole pedagogy. The Ministry of Education may have prevented Lauriette from teaching the Creole language and

culture in public schools, but it had no jurisdiction over private schools.⁴⁴ Lauriette found a way to challenge the ban on Creole from outside the confines of formal public education. He sent letters to local and national education officials detailing his success with students the French public school system had given up on. In these letters, Lauriette boasted that his teaching methods enabled his students to quickly learn French and pass the national exam for the Certificate of Primary Studies. He argued that his unprecedented achievements indicated that the Ministry of Education needed to lift the ban on Creole and permit teachers to use it as a pedagogical tool. Lauriette boldly ended his letters by informing the recipient that he had attached his Creole pedagogy detailing his teaching methods. He asked the recipient to forward this material to the necessary education officials for review and consideration.⁴⁵

In April 1961, Lauriette organized an exhibition at his school. He presented and displayed his numerous writings on his pedagogical philosophy and teaching methods. Lauriette also published his writings from this exhibition. A few days later, Lauriette received a letter from the Departmental Medical Committee of Guadeloupe, informing him that the Ministry of Education was forcing him to take an early retirement at the age of thirty-nine due to “mental illness contracted outside the realm of his profession.”⁴⁶ For Lauriette, the timing of his forced retirement was not a coincidence. His decision to open a private school based on his Creole pedagogy solidified his status as a potentially subversive character. According to Lauriette, the Ministry of Education declared him insane in an attempt to discredit him and his authority as an educator. Lauriette perceived

⁴⁴ Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur...*, 4.

⁴⁵ Letters published in *Bulletin de l'école AGEP, Association Gudeloupéenne d'Education Populaire*, October 1971. Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, côte 4-JO-26061.

⁴⁶ Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur...*, 4.

of this as the Ministry of Education's last resort to disrupt his pedagogy's challenge to republican education.⁴⁷

By the early 1960s, the Ministry of Education was completely frustrated with Lauriette's defiance. His Creole pedagogy and its potential to mobilize Antilleans for cultural and political autonomy symbolized for the Ministry of Education its failure to control and improve education in the Antilles. Moreover, it represented departmentalization's inability to politically and culturally unify the Antilles and France. After fifteen years of departmentalization and republican education, economic and social malaise still persisted in the Antilles. The Ministry of Education's 1962 report on the "problems of national education in the departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe" confirmed officials' fears that the deplorable state of Antillean education had the potential to exacerbate the social and economic problems and create discontented citizens critical of France's political involvement in the Antilles. In this report, R. Courtoux, the Chief Inspector of Public Schools, informed the Secretary General of the DOM that "the pedagogical methods for learning the French language are not fully developed."⁴⁸ Gougeneheim's Elementary French had yet to be implemented in Guadeloupe and Martinique and it showed in Antillean schoolchildren's poor academic performance. In 1961, only thirty five percent of Antillean children had scored within the "average" range on the national exam to receive an elementary school diploma. This contributed to

⁴⁷ Lauriette, *Un homme de couleur...*, 4.

⁴⁸ R. Courtoux, Inspecteur Général de l'Instruction Publique to Moulins, Secrétaire Général pour le Département d'Outre-Mer, "Objet: Rapport de mission aux Antilles et à la Guyane", February 7, 1962, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

underachievement at the high school level. More than half of Antillean adolescents left school after completing the minimum amount of secondary education.⁴⁹

According to Courtoux, these academic failures presented serious social problems. “One has already begun to see on the streets of Fort-de-France, idle and bitter gangs of young boys who are naturally ready for all their bad circumstances and to participate in subversive activities of any kind. As for the girls, they are vulnerable to prostitution.”⁵⁰ Courtoux’s report linked the Antilleans’ inability to speak French or the “Creole problem” to the deplorable state of education in the Antilles, which in turn created an unstable society. Social instability led to discontentment and ultimately threatened the political union between the Antilles and France. The Ministry of Education used this reasoning to construct public education, and specifically Creole, as one of the most important social problems it needed to solve.

Over the next two decades, education officials clung to their representation of Creole as a purely social problem as Lauriette sought to reshape the Creole debates in terms of the Antilles’ political relationship with France. For the Ministry of Education, the dissemination of the French language was about the maintenance of social stability, from which political unity would follow. In contrast, Lauriette perceived of the Ministry of Education’s ban on Creole as a strategy to culturally assimilate Antilleans and maintain political control. He contended that the Antilles’ social and economic problems did not stem from the Creole language, but from France’s continued political and cultural domination of Guadeloupe and Martinique. In 1966, he founded the Guadeloupean

⁴⁹ R. Courtoux, Inspecteur Général de l’Instruction Publique to Moulins, Secrétaire Général pour le Département d’Outre-Mer, “Objet: Rapport de mission aux Antilles et à la Guyane”, February 7, 1962, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Association for Popular Education (AGEP) to promote a more culturally specific type of Creole instruction in Guadeloupean schools. Lauriette used the association's bulletin as a public forum to publish articles criticizing France's highly centralized educational bureaucracy, which had made French the sole language of instruction and ignored Antillean children's' cultural and linguistic particularities. According to Lauriette, he sent a copy of each of these articles to the Minister of Education through the office of Guadeloupe's director of education. Lauriette claimed that he never received any responses, but he nonetheless continued to use his Creole pedagogy in his school, and lead the struggle against the ban on Creole.⁵¹ During the 1970s, the Creole question became highly politicized as education officials and Antillean activists, like Lauriette, negotiated Creole's place within French public schools, and more broadly, the Antilles' political relationship with France.

Part II. Lauriette and the Regionalization Debates

Lauriette's criticism of republican education was an expression of his political ideology and his larger involvement in political activism. Lauriette sympathized with the anticolonialist and pro-independence group GONG (Group for the National Organization of Guadeloupe). In the majority of his writings, Lauritete used anticolonial rhetoric to critique the Ministry of Education's ban on Creole. He argued that public education remained "colonial" in that it devalued Antilleans' Creole language and culture and sought to establish French as the language of social prestige. According to Lauriette, his pedagogy was "anticolonial"; it challenged the Ministry of Education's degradation of Creole and granted it equal status with French in the classroom. He encouraged teachers

⁵¹ *Bulletin de l'Ecole AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Education Populaire)*, June 1971, 1-2. Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

to inform their Antillean students that “all languages are equal.”⁵² “The French language is not more beautiful than the Creole language, but considering that French is our administrative, religious, political, and written language, it is useful if not essential to know it as best as possible.”⁵³ For Lauriette, it was important to master French not because it was superior to Creole, but because rightly or wrongly, it was the working language of the Antilles. Lauriette’s equalization of Creole and French reversed traditional French colonial pedagogical practices while simultaneously demystifying the prestige of French.

Throughout the 1960s, Lauriette worked to make his anticolonial pedagogy known to a broader public. He used his political connections to GONG to forge a professional relationship with Henri Rodès, the editor and founder of the weekly newspaper *Le Progrès Social*, who was also a supporter of GONG. Lauriette claimed that between April 1965 and May 1967, he contributed over one hundred articles to *Le Progrès Social* in which he defiantly denounced the French colonial education system.⁵⁴ In May 1967, Lauriette participated in the construction workers’ strike in Basse-Terre that was organized by GONG. When the strikes escalated into violent anti-France protests, French authorities arrested nearly twenty GONG activists, including Lauriette. In October 1960, following a wave of economically paralyzing strikes across the Antilles, the Ministry of the DOM implemented what Antilleans referred to as the “vile ordinance” to discourage any future strikes and protests. This ordinance authorized the Prefect to

⁵² Gérard Lauriette, *Les Débuts de l’enseignement aux Antillais Créolophones guadeloupéens, Martiniquais*, n.d., Bibliothèque Nationale de François Mitterrand, Côte 4-R-12595.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d’Education Populaire)*, June 1971, 1-2. Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

remove to metropolitan France any civil servants, including teachers, whose activities were considered to be a threat to the public order. In May 1967, DOM officials in Guadeloupe invoked the “vile ordinance” to send Lauriette and his GONG compatriots to metropolitan France where they were imprisoned, charged, and tried for undermining the integrity of the French nation.

From June 2, 1967 until his release in April 29, 1968, Lauriette was a political prisoner; he was forced to defend himself and his loyalty to the French nation. Lauriette had to prove that his participation in the May 1967 protests was not an attempt to incite a popular movement for Guadeloupean independence. Ultimately, Lauriette and the other GONG activists were declared innocent; however, Lauriette’s experience with what he perceived to be a corrupt and tyrannical French judicial system made him further question the Antilles’ political relationship with France. Prior to his imprisonment, Lauriette believed that the current French public school system in the Antilles was a remnant of the islands’ colonial past. Now, he was convinced that departmentalization and all of the French institutions that accompanied it were no different from colonialism. Lauriette argued that like colonialism, departmentalization was a form of social and cultural oppression that permeated all facets of Antillean society. After being released from prison, Lauriette returned to Guadeloupe determined to fight departmentalization and secure more political and cultural autonomy for the Antilles.

In 1968, Lauriette conceived of his own political party, *Mystico Rationaliste* or Mystical Rationalist. In one of his first publications following his imprisonment, Lauriette explained that mystical rationalism was a particular kind of nationalist viewpoint that linked the mystical to the rational. Lauriette defined “mystico” as how a

person experienced and created meaning out of his particular world. “Rationaliste” referred to the way in which a person coded his experiences and turned them into something relevant to him and the people with whom he communicated. When combined, Lauriette argued that these two philosophies created a specific politics. The *Mystico Rationaliste* party acknowledged that individuals and the cultural groups to which they belonged experienced and understood the world in different ways. Moreover, individuals who shared a particular culture were more likely to share life experiences and possess a similar worldview. For example, because Antilleans shared a Creole culture and language, they also held similar beliefs and experienced life in the same way. Therefore, Lauriette contended that it was absurd for French officials, who were culturally distinct from Antilleans and possessed a different worldview, to govern Antillean society. Lauriette claimed that the Antillean economy remained underdeveloped because it was controlled by individuals within the French government who did not understand Antilleans and their way of life. Lauriette’s *Mystico Rationaliste* party was nationalist; it declared that only native Antilleans possessed the specific knowledge and the right to effectively govern the society in which they lived. “No man passing through [Guadeloupe], whether he be French, [or] Moroccan, can be the head of an administration in Guadeloupe; only those who are born in Guadeloupe or who have been in this country for at least a generation can be a leader.”⁵⁵ In insisting that Antilleans needed to govern their own nation, Lauriette called upon Antilleans to fight French domination and gain control of their own nation. Only then would Antilleans experience social and economic advancement.

⁵⁵ Gérard Lauriette, “Conceptions humanistes et politiques d’un homme de couleur antillais,” April 23, 1968, published in *Bulletin de l’école AGEPE (Association Guadeloupéenne d’Education Populaire)*, June 1971, 3. Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

Lauriette turned to his area of expertise, education, to provide Antilleans with a salient example of how French control prohibited Guadeloupeans and Martinicans from improving their social and economic positions. In 1969, Lauriette held a conference-debate at his school, Guadeloupean Association for Popular Education (AGEP), regarding “the problems of education in Guadeloupe.” According to Lauriette, “the worst enemy of the Guadeloupean people are teachers who teach with the reading and history books of France.”⁵⁶ He noted that a primary school reader used in both Antillean and metropolitan classrooms contained an excerpt from Jules Renard’s the “The Unleashed Dog” describing an “entirely black dog showing his teeth” as “a negro in revolt.”⁵⁷ For Lauriette, racist statements in French textbooks, such as this one, was proof that France’s national curriculum was discriminatory and therefore, detrimental to Antilleans. French public education taught Antilleans to have disdain for themselves and their culture. In doing so, it subordinated Antilleans and prevented them from taking control of their own economic and social affairs.

Two years later, in 1971, at a different debate on education held at his school, Lauriette declared that he could not “conceive of economic and social policy reform without a reform of education.”⁵⁸ According to Lauriette, educational reform recognizing Antillean children’s particularities would lead to broader economic and social improvements in the Antilles. Currently, Guadeloupean and Martinican teachers had no jurisdiction over what they taught in Antillean classrooms. The Ministry of Education

⁵⁶ Gérard Lauriette, “A un de mes élèves de 3ième fils de paysan,” *Le Progrès Social*, June 21, 1969, 3.

⁵⁷ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Pierre Brunion, delegate for the French government in Guadeloupe, June 30, 1971. Published in *Bulletin de l'école AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Education Populaire)*, October 1971, Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

⁵⁸ Gérard Lauriette, “Pour une réforme de l’enseignement en Guadeloupe,” *Le Progrès Social*, January 17, 1970, 1.

forced them to follow a curriculum that only took into account how metropolitan children experience the world, which contrasted sharply with Antillean children's worldviews.⁵⁹ Because of this, Antillean children had no context for the education they received and therefore, were failing school at higher rates than metropolitan children. Lauriette contended that the Ministry of Education needed to implement a curriculum tailored to Guadeloupean and Martinician children's cultural specificities. This kind of particularized curriculum would improve Antillean children's academic achievements, and a more educated population would lead to economic and social stability.

However, education reform was not enough for Lauriette, especially if it was simply implemented as a directive from the centralized Ministry of Education. Lauriette believed that French education officials could never create an effective form of public education in the Antilles because as members of the French culture, they could never entirely understand Antillean children's life experiences. Therefore, Lauriette argued that the French government needed to grant Antilleans more cultural autonomy and legislative control of education. He believed that this autonomy would empower Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to build a more prosperous and stable Antillean society.

Lauriette's call for Antilleans to take control of education pressured the French government to consider decentralization for the Antilles. In the late 1960s, the National Assembly debated the possibility of regional reform for both its metropolitan and overseas departments. Regionalization was a kind of decentralization of the state government. It gave the locally elected assemblies of each department or region more control over its affairs, as well as the power to make legislative decisions that had

⁵⁹ "Les problèmes de l'enseignement en Guadeloupe," *Le Progrès Social*, November 16, 1969, 3.

previously been made by the State.⁶⁰ On March 26, 1968, President de Gaulle expressed his support for the referendum on regionalization in a speech delivered in Lyon. He argued that “centralization, which was necessary for a long time in order to realize and maintain [French] unity” was no longer necessary because the “provinces [have] successfully joined France.”⁶¹ De Gaulle characterized decentralization as inevitable, declaring that “regional activities now appear to be the springs of future economic power.”⁶² Despite his enthusiasm, de Gaulle failed to get legislative approval for regionalization in 1968. Members of the National Assembly agreed with de Gaulle that France’s once culturally distinct provinces had in fact been assimilated into the nation. However, they were concerned that regionalization would fracture metropolitan France and adversely affect national unity.

In the spring of 1969, de Gaulle decided to consult the voters about regionalization. He declared that he would resign if the public did not approve the referendum for regional reform. On April 27, 1969, 53.5% of the voters voted against regionalization; one day later de Gaulle resigned. However, this negative result was more of an expression of the voters’ dissatisfaction with de Gaulle and the recent general strikes of May 1968 that had occurred under his leadership rather than a statement against regionalization. With de Gaulle’s resignation and the election of Georges Pompidou as president in June 1969, the National Assembly set out to garner popular support for regional reform, and began to implement regionalization, but only in metropolitan

⁶⁰ “Un choix très simple: Français, à part entière? Ou entièrement à part?”, *La Vague*, n°11, January 13, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

⁶¹ Speech delivered by President Charles de Gaulle, March 26, 1968. Quoted in *Le Monde*, March 26, 1968.

⁶² *Ibid.*

France.⁶³ The National Assembly was wary of how regional reform would affect the Antilles' political relationship with France. It was unsure about Antilleans' loyalty to France and the extent to which they had been culturally assimilated into France.

Just one year prior in May 1967, the pro-independence group GONG had led a construction workers' strike in Basse-Terre, Guadeloupe, resulting in a violent confrontation between Antillean workers and the French army in which nearly fifty Guadeloupean workers and protestors were killed.⁶⁴ The Ministry of the DOM perceived of this strike as an anti-France protest, indicating that departmentalization had not transformed Antilleans into loyal French citizens. During this period when anti-France voices were growing stronger and DOM officials were struggling to maintain French political authority, regional reform was particularly controversial in the Antilles. DOM officials were concerned that the regionalization of Guadeloupe and Martinique would potentially weaken the Antilles' political ties with metropolitan France and move the departments closer to independence. On the other hand, the Ministry of the DOM wondered if regionalization would solidify the islands' union with France as distinct regions of a singular nation.

In a July 1968 memo entitled "Will we keep the Antilles French", Serge de Larrouche, a civil administrator assigned to the Antilles, reported to the Ministry of the DOM that there was a "certain malaise" and "resurgence in nationalist feeling" developing in Guadeloupe and Martinique. De Larrouche noted that while only a small

⁶³ See: Harvey G. Simmons, "The Planner's Dilemma: Regional Reform in France," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 4, no.3 (September 1971): 381-394; Anne Azam-Pradeilles, "Report. Regionalism seen from the National Perspective: The French Process of Regionalisation," presented at European Commission for Democracy Through Law Conference on "Models of Regional Development", 21-24 April 2008. Accessed December 22, 2011. [http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2008/CDL-UDT\(2008\)011-e.pdf](http://www.venice.coe.int/docs/2008/CDL-UDT(2008)011-e.pdf).

⁶⁴ "Les grandes dates du mouvement nationaliste guadeloupéen, 1928-1981: un demi-siècle déjà!", *Le Magazine Guadeloupéen (MAGWA)*, January-February 1981, 18.

number of vocal activists actually supported independence, there was nonetheless a general “indictment against departmentalization that is passionate and on certain occasions outrageous.”⁶⁵ De Larrouche worried that the nationalists would gain popular support if the Ministry of DOM continued to ignore Antilleans’ disillusionment with departmentalization’s failure to solve the islands’ social and economic problems. He contended that there was “serious discord”, which DOM officials needed to “clear up while there is still time.”⁶⁶ In considering possible solutions to Antilleans’ growing dissatisfaction, Larrouche turned to regionalization. He suggested that only regionalization could appease Antilleans’ desire for more control of local affairs while simultaneously reinforcing French political authority in the Antilles. He adamantly stated, “regionalization is the only card it is possible to play if we want to keep the Antilles French.”⁶⁷ It “would have the double advantage of not scaring off the Metropole and diffusing a separatist trend.”⁶⁸ According to Larrouche, in promoting a limited form of political autonomy, regionalization had the ability to create pro-French sentiment in the Antilles and strengthen the Antilles’ political union with France. However, the Ministry of the DOM remained wary of the political consequences of regional reform; it was a few more years and several more anti-France protests before DOM officials decided to support the regionalization of the Antilles.

In the fall of 1971, several months after a nine-day trip to Martinique, Pierre Messmer, the newly appointed Secretary of the DOM, publicly presented the regionalization of the Antilles as a strategy for solidifying the union. Messmer’s visit to

⁶⁵ Serge de Larrouche, “Saurons-nous garder les antilles françaises...”, July 1968, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 21.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

the Antilles coincided with a period of social and political instability in the Antilles; pro-independence supporters were active and vocal in their demands. In October 1971, *Le Monde* reported that during Messmer's visit local police blockaded roads and visibly armed themselves with grenades and guns as a precaution to squelch the possible outbreak of violence from anti-France and pro-independence supporters. This show of force only fuelled the *indépendantistes* who interpreted the police presence as a symbol of colonialism. When grenades exploded in *la Savane*, a twelve-acre park in Fort-de-France where protesters had congregated, the police responded and violence quickly erupted. According to *Le Monde*, the police escalated the violence as they beat protesters and called them "dirty negroes". During the chaos that ensued, a grenade killed a young high school boy who was only seventeen years old. The evening after his death, nearly a thousand Martinicans gathered at Fort-de-France's city hall building to protest against "colonialism, oppression, and racism."⁶⁹ *Le Monde* contended that after twenty-five years of departmentalization, the colonial relationship between the Antilles and France persisted. Guadeloupe and Martinique were economically dependent, social inequalities based on race still existed, and Antillean culture remained suppressed.⁷⁰ The outbreak of violence in Fort-de-France demonstrated to Messmer that as the representative of the French government in the DOM, he could no longer ignore Antilleans' discontentment with departmentalization and the reality of the strained relationship between the Antilles and France. The violence in Martinique proved that the statute of departmentalization was incapable of resolving the question of Antillean identity and belonging. Messmer reasoned that if the French government remained committed to maintaining the status quo

⁶⁹ Claude Kiejman, "Martinique et Guadeloupe, Départements français ou terres étrangères?", *Le Monde*, October 16, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of departmentalization, then those Antilleans who remained loyal to France, would eventually become disillusioned and find good reason to be pulled into the fight for independence.⁷¹

Messmer turned to regional reform as a possible solution to Antilleans' growing discontentment and demands for change. Decentralization and the creation of regional legislative bodies were received with widespread support among local political and cultural groups who had been struggling for decades for more political control. Messmer believed that regionalization would have the same effect in the Antilles. It would address Antilleans' desire for more cultural and political autonomy by allowing them some control of local affairs while still enforcing the Antilles' political union with France. In early 1972, Messmer consulted local elected officials and socio-professional organizations to determine how to implement regional reform in the Antilles. He offered two options. Antilleans could choose the same regional reform as the metropolitan departments, or it could adopt a "particular system of regionalization" specifically designed to address Guadeloupe and Martinique's unique problems and concerns.⁷² Throughout the winter of 1972, both the French and Antillean press detailed the heated debates that exploded concerning the redefinition of the islands' political relationship with France.⁷³ The *indépendantistes* rejected the entire regionalization project as another

⁷¹ Claude Kiejman, "Martinique et Guadeloupe, Départements français ou terres étrangères?", *Le Monde*, October 16, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

⁷² Noel-Jean Bergeroux, "La Réforme Régionale et les DOM. Les 'départementalistes' rejettent l'offre d'un statut particulier", *Le Monde*, February 15, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art.43.

⁷³ See: Claude Kiejman, "Martinique et Guadeloupe, Départements français ou terres étrangères?", *Le Monde*, October 16, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43. "D'après le journal parisien 'France-Soir' la réforme régionale pose le problème de l'avenir des liens des Antilles avec la France", *France-Antilles*, November 7, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43. "Un choix très simple: Français, à part entière? Ou entièrement à part?", *La Vague*, n°11, January 13, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388,

form of colonialism that sought to oppress Antilleans and make them dependent upon France. It was futile in that it detracted from the main goal of independence.⁷⁴ In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Antillean political groups supported the regional reform that had already been implemented in France's metropolitan departments. They rejected "particular regionalization" as a step toward social and economic isolation. Antilleans feared that if local assemblies and leaders took control over Guadeloupe's and Martinique's regional affairs, then they would not be able to continue to enjoy the same social and economic benefits as their metropolitan counterparts. Antilleans had embraced the rhetoric that they were "français à part entière" or fully-fledged French citizens, and wanted to ensure that regionalization would not divest them of this status.⁷⁵

Lauriette was at the forefront of these regionalization debates. His calls for a more decentralized education system placed pressure on the Ministry of DOM to reevaluate the political effectiveness of departmentalization. Regionalization was not what Lauriette and his pro-independence GONG colleagues had imagined for the

Art. 43. Noel-Jean Bergeroux, "La Réforme Régionale et les DOM. Les 'départementalistes' rejettent l'offre d'un statut particulier", *Le Monde*, February 15, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art.43. "Les trois départemetns français d'amérique butent sur la regionalization et se replient sur leur individualism", *Marchés Tropicaux*, February 25, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

⁷⁴ See: Letter from S. Menil, General Secretary of Le Syndicat des Instituteurs (SNI) to le Ministre des D.O.M. and le Préfet de la Martinique, January 22, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 940388, Art. 42.

Letter from R. Bernabé, leader of the Section départementale du Syndicat des Enseignants du Secondaire to le Ministre des D.O.M., January 22, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 940388, Art. 42.

⁷⁵ Throughout the fall of 1971 and the winter of 1972, numerous newspapers published articles expressing various political groups' support for "metropolitan" regional reform. See especially: "D'après le journal parisien 'France-Soir' la réforme régionale pose le problème de l'avenir des liens des Antilles avec la France", *France-Antilles*, November 7, 1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43. Un choix très simple: Français, à part entière? Ou entièrement à part?", *La Vague*, n°11, January 13, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43. Noel-Jean Bergeroux, "La Réforme Régionale et les DOM. Les 'départementalistes' rejettent l'offre d'un statut particulier", *Le Monde*, February 15, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art.43. "Les trois départemetns français d'amérique butent sur la regionalization et se replient sur leur individualism", *Marchés Tropicaux*, February 25, 1972, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 43.

Antilles. Nonetheless, when it became apparent that regional reform was a real possibility for Martinique and Guadeloupe, Lauriette reframed his political ideology and became a staunch supporter of the regionalization of the Antilles. Lauriette distanced himself from GONG, which continued to call for independence as the only acceptable political possibility for the Antilles, and advocated for regional reform. Independence still remained the ultimate goal for Lauriette; but, he also envisioned regionalization as a kind of interim goal on the path to independence.

In 1971, Lauriette contributed an article to *Le Progrès Social* in which he described regionalization and the jurisdiction it granted Antillean educators as a “political necessity”.⁷⁶ He trusted that Guadeloupe and Martinique would receive the same political and cultural autonomy that the government had accorded to its metropolitan regions. With this local control, Lauriette argued that Antilleans would be empowered to improve education and other social and economic ills as they continued to fight for independence. Lauriette saw in regional reform an immediate solution to the Antilles’ poor economic state; independence was possible, but it would take more time before this could be achieved.

Part III. Regionalization’s False Promises for Creole

In metropolitan France, by the mid-1970s, the Ministry of Education had granted local education officials more jurisdiction over the curriculum taught in their regional school districts. Lauriette was a proponent of regional reform because he believed it would give Antilleans the same kind of cultural autonomy. He viewed regionalization as an extension of the Deixonne law to the overseas departments, which according to

⁷⁶ Gérard Lauriette, “Pour une réforme de l’enseignement en Guadeloupe,” *Le Progrès Social*, January 17, 1970, 1-3.

Lauriette, would permit the use of Creole in Antillean schools. In January 1951, Maurice Deixonne, the leader of the National Assembly's education commission, implemented a law authorizing the teaching of regional languages and dialects in public schools. The "Deixonne law" officially recognized, for the first time, the existence of France's regional languages and dialects. However, it was not a multicultural policy. Rather, it was a part of the French government's efforts to rebuild and forge a culturally unified nation following the Second World War. The Deixonne law only permitted elementary school teachers to use regional languages, specifically Basque, Breton, Catalan, and Occitan, to facilitate their students' acquisition of the French language. The second article "authorized teachers to use local dialects in primary and preschools only when they can benefit from teaching them, particularly for the study of the French language."⁷⁷ Moreover, any kind of formal instruction regarding regional languages and cultures was limited to one hour a week and was strictly optional for students.⁷⁸ Therefore, the Ministry of Education ultimately decided to recognize France's regional diversity because it was a strategy to build France's political and cultural unity. The Deixonne law permitted education officials to closely monitor and control the extent to which difference was incorporated into public classrooms.

In 1958, regional activists from across France formed the Secular Movement for Regional Cultures (MLCR), a special interest group concerned with promoting the teaching of regional languages and cultures in public schools. The proliferation of pro-regional groups, such as the MLCR, placed pressure on members of the National Assembly representing France's various regions to expand the Deixonne law. From 1958

⁷⁷ Loi n°51-46 du 11 janvier 1951 dite Deixonne relative à l'enseignement des langues et dialects locaux, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 13 Janvier 1951, p. 483.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

to 1963, with the support of their constituents, nine different representatives set forth a series of motions, petitions, and laws that sought to increase the number of school hours dedicated to regional language instruction. In addition, these legislative propositions attempted to carve out a place for regional histories and literature in the national curriculum.⁷⁹ In response to these demands, the National Assembly created the “Commission for the study of the problems concerning the teaching of regional languages and cultures”. This Commission was composed of national assembly members who supported the expansion of the Deixonne law and regional education activists, such as MLCR co-founder Robert Lafont.⁸⁰ The Commission held its first meeting on November 19, 1964 and shortly thereafter met in Montpellier to discuss how to incorporate regional languages and cultures into the national curriculum at all educational levels from preschool through university. In its reports, the Commission encouraged the Ministry of Education to apply the Deixonne law to secondary and higher education. It made detailed suggestions concerning the number of hours high school teachers should dedicate to regional languages and cultures. The Commission proposed that instructors set aside three hours each school year to explain the linguistic similarities and differences between French and regional languages. It also recommended that the Ministry of Education require teachers to give ten lessons on regional and local histories dispersed throughout the school year.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Note d'information, Objet: Enseignement des parlers dialectaux, 27 Octobre 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

⁸⁰ Compte rendu de 1^{ère} réunion de la Commission d'études des problèmes relatifs à l'enseignement des langues et cultures régionales, 19 Novembre 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

⁸¹ Commission d'études des problèmes relatifs à l'enseignement des langues et cultures régionales, Rapport général pour l'enseignement du 1^{er} degré, Propositions jointes au Rapport de la Commission Académique provisoire de Montpellier, Janvier 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

Despite this parliamentary pressure, Christian Fouchet, the Minister of Education refused to expand the Deixonne law. Fouchet argued that it was not possible to increase the number of hours dedicated to regional languages and cultures because the extra lessons infringed upon the amount of time dedicated to other more important subjects, such as French. In order to avoid decreasing the amount of instruction spent on French, the number of hours in the school day needed to be increased. However, according to Fouchet, this was detrimental to the student, whose day was already overloaded.⁸² Although Fouchet invoked the logistical unfeasibility of extending the school day to dismiss the expansion of the Deixonne law, he expressed his true concern about regional languages and cultures when he mentioned his fear that French was being replaced by regional language instruction. Fouchet worried that regional language instruction harmed students' acquisition of the French language, highlighted cultural difference within the nation, and threatened national unity.

Up until the implementation of the Deixonne law in 1951, the government refused to acknowledge the existence of regional languages and cultures, arguing that to do so threatened the political and cultural unity of the French nation. Moreover, militant regional activists' insistence that their linguistic and cultural differences validated their claims for political autonomy only bolstered the Ministry of Education's fears about the potential consequences of permitting regional language instruction. Therefore, supporters of regional languages and cultures, such as the Commission and its MLCR representatives, had to convince the Ministry of Education that recognition of regional particularities did not necessarily threaten the political unity of the French nation. They

⁸² Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Note d'information, Objet: Enseignement des parlers dialectaux, 27 Octobre 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

did this by framing their support for regional instruction in terms of the government's current preoccupation with building national unity around a singular French language and culture. Raoul Bayou, a commission member and deputy from the Occitan region, argued that regional languages were not separate from, but an integral part of the national patrimony:

Remember that the thinking of the Celts, their prestigious legends, their courtly poetry came to us through the Breton language. Occitan reigned at the dawn of modern times...All of Europe has lived the ideals of medieval Occitan culture, and we can still profit from contemplating them, as they contain much human value...To allow these cultures to be lost in the dustbin of history, to not save the languages that support them, is more than a waste. This type of abandonment is a crime.⁸³

In characterizing Breton and Occitan as precursors to the French language, Bayou made these regions a part of France's cultural and linguistic history. Because these local dialects were a part of French culture, Bayou contended that the Ministry of Education needed to require primary and secondary instructors to teach these regional languages to their students. He argued that if regional languages were not taught and allowed to die out, then an important part of France's patrimony would also be lost.

Bayou and the MLCR portrayed regional language instruction as "an act of patriotism" that permitted teachers to educate young citizens in the regions about their French national identity. According to teachers who supported the MLCR, regional language instruction provided an opportunity for students to compare French and regional languages and discover their similarities as part of the same national culture:

We want to nourish the teaching of the French language by constantly comparing it to our [regional] languages, to make visible all of the connections between national culture and regional culture that are the true

⁸³ Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, Note d'information, Objet: Enseignement des parlers dialectaux, 27 Octobre 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

face, although little known, of French intellectual life, of flourishing cultures, but [they] may soon be sacrificed.⁸⁴

For the MLCR, regional languages and cultures were the “true face” of French national culture. It assured the Ministry of Education that regional language instruction did not highlight cultural difference within the nation; rather, it helped students understand how their regional cultures came to be a part of French national culture. Moreover, these kind of linguistic comparisons facilitated students’ French language acquisition. The MLCR argued that regional language instruction at the high school level “permitted older students to experience a reconciliation between [their] regional language and [their] national language...and to correct their ‘local French.’”⁸⁵ Instruction in a regional language and “training for its acquisition will be gradual, and will have a certain utility in perfecting the study of the French language itself.”⁸⁶ In order to extinguish the Ministry of Education’s fears that French language instruction would take a back seat to regional linguistic differences, the MLCR insisted that regional language instruction improved students’ understanding of French. MLCR members shaped the debate about regional languages so that it fit with the Ministry of Education’s efforts to use public education to disseminate the French language and culturally unify France’s regions.

In making regional languages and cultures a part of France’s national patrimony, the Commission and the MLCR neutralized regional activists’ militant use of linguistic difference to argue for political autonomy. According to the MLCR, the “politics [of

⁸⁴ Commission d’études des problèmes relatifs à l’enseignement des langues et cultures régionales, Rapport général pour l’enseignement du 1er degré, Propositions jointes au Rapport de la Commission Académique provisoire de Montpellier, Janvier 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Académie de Montpellier, Centre de régional de documentation pédagogique, Commission d’études des problèmes relatifs à l’enseignement des langues et cultures régionales, Rapport et propositions de la sous-commission d’études pour le 1er degré, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

linguistic unity] has been implemented in all regions” for centuries and has “reached its successful conclusion.”⁸⁷ The MLCR contended that the Ministry of Education had successfully assimilated France’s regional languages and cultures into the nation; they were an integral part of French national culture. Therefore, the MLCR argued that regional language instruction was nothing more than an innocuous cultural movement to preserve a part of France’s national patrimony. This characterization of regional difference enabled the Ministry of Education to reshape its perception of regional language instruction as a positive contribution rather than an impediment to national unity.

In the late 1960s, when the National Assembly debated the merits and dangers of regional reform, the MLCR and other supporters of regional languages had already laid the groundwork for the Ministry of Education to decentralize and permit local school officials to have more control of their particular regions’ curriculum. In 1970, the Ministry of Education allowed high school students to choose to be tested in Basque, Breton, Occitan or Catalan as a part of the national qualifying exams for entrance into university. This reform implied that regional education officials needed to have more input in determining their specific region’s language curriculum. The Ministry of Education granted local teachers in metropolitan France, as well as on the island of Corsica, the power to adjust the national curriculum so that it included their region’s particular history, culture, and language.

However, the Ministry of Education continued to ban Creole from Antillean schools. Despite the similarities between Corsica, Guadeloupe, and Martinique as island-

⁸⁷ Ministère de l’Education Nationale, Note d’information, Objet: Enseignement des parlers dialectaux, 27 Octobre 1964, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 771307, Art. 42.

departments, the Ministry of Education remained wary of extending the Deixonne law and its various reforms to the Antilles. It ignored the Antilles' long colonial history with France that dated back to the seventeenth century, and argued that unlike metropolitan regions, which had been incorporated into France since the nineteenth-century, Guadeloupe and Martinique had only been French departments for thirty years. The Ministry of Education supported regional language instruction in its metropolitan regions because it was confident that the peasants of France's provinces had been assimilated into the nation. Because it was unsure about the extent of Antilleans' assimilation, the Ministry of Education continued to ban the Creole language and culture from Antillean schools. For now, it continued to perceive of Creole as a social problem that contributed to poor academic performance and thus, needed to be solved. In contrast to Basque, Catalan, Occitan, and Breton, which were a part of France's patrimony, Creole remained a detriment to national unity.

Lauriette vehemently opposed the Ministry of Education's characterization of Creole as something outside of the French nation. For Lauriette, the question of Antilleans' loyalty was not an issue; Antilleans did not have to demonstrate their Frenchness. The decision to recognize Creole as a regional language was a question of Antilleans' rights as French citizens. Antilleans possessed the same citizenship status as metropolitans and therefore, should be granted the same linguistic rights that the Deixonne law had accorded to metropolitans over twenty years ago. In 1971, Lauriette published an article in *Le Progrès Social* calling for the Ministry of Education to extend the 1951 Deixonne law to the overseas departments and permit Creole language instruction in Antillean schools. Lauriette informed Antilleans that regional activists of

Brittany and Languedoc had been involved in the same struggle for recognition of their respective linguistic differences.⁸⁸ The only difference was that Breton- and Occitan-speakers have possessed the right to use their languages in their regional public schools for the past twenty years while Antilleans remained embroiled in this fight. He argued that “what has been done for the Breton language, must also be done for the Creole language.”⁸⁹ Lauriette considered anything less to be unequal treatment and discrimination. He described the Ministry of Education’s refusal to recognize Creole as “linguistic prejudice” similar to “racial prejudice.”⁹⁰ For Lauriette, the ban on Creole revealed the hypocrisy of a French government that claimed to treat Antilleans as “full French citizens”, yet denied them the same linguistic rights as metropolitan citizens. Lauriette contended that Antilleans had the same political status as metropolitans and therefore, enjoyed “the same right to demand that their language be honored like the ones of the white people.”⁹¹

Six months after this article appeared in *Le Progrès Social*, Lauriette traveled to Paris in an attempt to convince the Ministry of Education to extend the Dexionne law to the Antilles and implement his Creole pedagogy. On September 20, Lauriette went to the offices of the Ministry of Education where Terny Josette, the inspector of studies, informed him that in order to meet with the Minister of Education, he needed to write his office requesting an appointment. Lauriette drafted his request and left his letter with

⁸⁸ Gérard Lauriette, “Occitan et Créole”, *Le Progrès Social*, April 2, 1972, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte GR-FOL-JO-7692.

Gérard Lauriette, “Pour une épreuve de créole au Baccalauréat, Ce qui a fait pour la langue bretonne doit être fait pour la langue créole,” *Le Progrès Sociale*, February 27, 1971, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte GR-FOL-JO-7692.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Gérard Lauriette, “Le Corse au baccalauréat: A quand le créole?”, *Le Progrès Social*, February 10, 1973, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte GR-FOL-JO-7692.

⁹¹ Lauriette, “Le Corse au baccalauréat...”

Josette.⁹² When he received no response from the Ministry of Education, Lauriette decided to write to the Minister of Justice, imploring him to recognize the educational benefits of Creole. He argued that in light of the Ministry of the DOM's "recent announcement concerning a proposed change in the political status of Guadeloupe", the Ministry of Education should also consider lifting the ban on Creole.⁹³ For Lauriette, regionalization of the Antilles established the political justification the Ministry of Education needed to recognize Creole as a regional language of France, and permit its use in Antillean classrooms. He defined "regionalism as first and foremost education through the regional language."⁹⁴ Lauriette assumed that when Guadeloupe and Martinique became regions of France, the Ministry of Education would no longer be able to deny Antilleans the linguistic rights that the Deixonne law had granted to metropolitans.

When Lauriette also failed to receive a response from the Minister of Justice, he wrote to Georges Pompidou, the president of France, informing him that the Ministers of Education and Justice had refused to meet with a citizen France. He argued that it was this "contempt of French leaders for the honorable men of Overseas France that will cause a [political] split, which the majority on both sides fears."⁹⁵ With this statement,

⁹² Gérard Lauriette, "Dénouement de la querelle Ministère de l'Éducation nationale Française—Lauriette Gérard," *Bulletin de l'école AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Éducation Populaire)*, April 1972, Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

⁹³ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Le Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, September 23, 1971. Published in *Bulletin de l'école AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Éducation Populaire)*, October 1971, Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

See also: Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Olivier Guichard, Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale Française, September 20, 1971. Published in *Bulletin de l'école AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Éducation Populaire)*, October 1971, Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

⁹⁴ Gérard Lauriette, "Du régionalisme à l'universalisme," *Bulletin de l'école AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Éducation Populaire)*, January 1971.

⁹⁵ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Georges Pompidou, Président de la République Française, September 28, 1971. Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Olivier Guichard, Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale

Lauriette implied that the Ministry of Education's commitment to ignoring Antilleans' cultural particularities and preserving the ban on Creole pushed Antilleans further away from the French nation. If the government wanted to secure Antilleans' loyalty to France, then it needed to permit them to take control of their own local affairs. As a last attempt to make his voice heard, Lauriette sent a copy of this letter to Michel Rocard, a sympathetic Socialist representative of the metropolitan department of Yvelines. One day later, Rocard took up Lauriette's cause in the National Assembly.

Rocard was a known anticolonialist. He was the author of a leaked report on the widely ignored refugee camps of the Algerian War. Moreover, he was a prominent figure of the May 1968 crisis; he publicly supported auto-gestion, which called for workers to have more of a voice in decisions regarding their interests. For Rocard, the regionalization of the Antilles and the implementation of Lauriette's Creole pedagogy was a part of an inevitable move toward decentralization and less state control. In a written question published in the *Journal Officiel*, Rocard asked the Minister of Education why he had not considered lifting the ban on Creole. Considering "the exceptional results obtained by Mr. Lauriette's students, does it not seem natural to reconsider the theory defended by this man."⁹⁶ Rocard questioned the validity of "maintaining in Guadeloupe's schools, educational materials based on a total ignorance of the psychological realities or geographical specificities of this country, on a latent racism, on a total contempt for the Creole culture and language."⁹⁷ He demanded that the

Française, September 20, 1971. Published in *Bulletin de l'école AGEPE (Association Guadeloupéenne d'Education Populaire)*, October 1971, Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

⁹⁶ Michel Rocard, député de Yvelines, question écrite to Ministre de l'Education Nationale, September 29, 1971. Published in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, October 3, 1971.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Ministry of Education fix this situation and establish a plan for “the development of the Creole culture and language.”⁹⁸

In his written response to Rocard and Lauriette, the Minister of Education, Olivier Guichard, refused to lift the ban on Creole, arguing that since departmentalization, the implementation of the French national curriculum in Guadeloupe and Martinique has vastly improved the Antillean education system. Guichard cited the increase in enrollments in Antillean public schools as proof that the Ministry of Education had succeeded in providing Antillean children with the social and economic benefits of education. According to Guichard, education officials needed to focus on “reaching an enrollment similar to that of the metropolitan departments.”⁹⁹ This would establish in the Antilles “equal policy with the same conditions and quality of education as in the metropole.”¹⁰⁰ The Ministry of Education measured equality in terms of opportunity. It upheld equality by ensuring that Antilleans and metropolitans had the same access to education and learned the same curriculum. Therefore, the implementation of a particularized curriculum that introduced Creole into Antillean classrooms was an impediment to equality.

In contrast, for Lauriette, equality meant that Antillean and metropolitan children achieved similar rates of academic success. The Ministry of Education’s statistics clearly indicated that Antilleans and metropolitans were unequal with respect to the average level of education each group obtained. In the early 1970s, only three percent of Antillean

⁹⁸ Michel Rocard, député de Yvelines, question écrite to Ministre de l’Education Nationale, September 29, 1971. Published in *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, October 3, 1971.

⁹⁹ “Débats parlementaire Assemblée Nationale,” *Bulletin Officiel de la République Française*, March 18, 1972, 629-630. Published in “Dénouement de la querelle Ministère de l’Education Nationale Française-Gérard Lauriette,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEP (Association Guadeloupéenne d’Education Populaire)*, 1972, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

students completed secondary education, and eighty percent of Antilleans were illiterate.¹⁰¹ Lauriette argued that this was the case not because Antillean children did not have access to education, but because the curriculum was not adapted to their cultural particularities. Because education in Guadeloupe and Martinique was administered in French, a foreign language for the majority of Antilleans, lessons were “poorly acquired, poorly assimilated, and quickly forgotten.”¹⁰² Lauriette contended that in order to ensure that Antilleans and metropolitans obtained equal levels of education and opportunities for social advancement, the Ministry of Education needed to recognize Antilleans’ linguistic differences.

Several months after Lauriette returned from Paris, the National Assembly decided to heed his warnings that in delaying regional reform in the Antilles, it was alienating Antilleans and pushing them toward pro-independence groups. In April 1972, with widespread support from locally elected officials and Antillean voters, the National Assembly decided to make Guadeloupe and Martinique official regions of France with all of the same rights and privileges as France’s other metropolitan regions. However, the DOM statute of regionalization did contain one difference: an interregional committee. This non-legislative body was made up of both local and nationally appointed officials from Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion, and Guyana. It held conferences to discuss the particular problems and interests of these four “department-regions”. These meetings produced policy recommendations for national-level officials, such as the Ministers of Overseas Departments and Education. On the one hand, the interregional committee gave Guadeloupe and Martinique more control of its local affairs and representation at

¹⁰¹ Gérard Lauriette, “Droit et Liberté, enseignement et culture en Guadeloupe,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEP*, 1972, 6, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

¹⁰² Ibid.

the national level; on the other hand, it set in place an official body through which the national government could continue to closely monitor its “department-regions.”

The Ministry of Education used the interregional committee as a pretense for why it could still not lift the ban on Creole despite the fact that Guadeloupe and Martinique were now official French regions. For the Ministry of Education, regionalization was a solution to the growing problem of Antillean nationalism, not a recognition of Antillean cultural difference. It remained unconvinced that the introduction of Creole into Antillean classrooms did not pose a threat to Antilleans’ assimilation. Education officials at the national level contended that they needed to investigate how Creole affected national loyalty in the Antilles before it regionalized Guadeloupe’s and Martinique’s public schools and granted Antilleans the same rights as metropolitan citizens.

In January 1973, André Patris, a civil servant and member of the “interregional education mission” travelled to Guadeloupe and Martinique to examine Antillean education and how it could be improved. In his report, Patris noted that public education was of great importance because of the overwhelmingly young nature of the Antillean population. In both Guadeloupe and Martinique, more than half of the population was under the age of twenty.¹⁰³ Therefore, public education was the one avenue through which the French government could reach the majority of young Antilleans. Education offered the Ministry of Education the opportunity to impart the French culture upon Antillean children and teach them to value the opportunities their French citizenship afforded them. Patris argued that public education was essential for creating successive

¹⁰³ Report for the Ministry of Education. André Patris, “Contribution à l’étude des problèmes: de formation professionnelle continue, d’apprentissage, de taxe d’apprentissage dans les départements d’outre-mer”, March 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

generations of Antilleans who were loyal to the French government and supportive of the political union between the Antilles and France.

However, Patris argued that during the past twenty years, public education had failed to culturally and politically assimilate Antilleans into the French nation. Patris's analysis of educational data revealed that since departmentalization, the number of Antillean children who received an education had significantly increased. Nonetheless, compared to their metropolitan counterparts, Antillean children remained severely undereducated. To a certain extent, Patris blamed overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated school buildings, and untrained teachers; yet, he also contended that there was a cultural reason for the deplorable state of Antillean education:

Repetition of grades, falling behind and failures in school, dropping out of school and truancy is typical behavior of [Antillean] students. Truancy is the result of climatic conditions, the importance of festivals (in the Antilles, "Carnival" lasts three months), the lack of motivation, poor job prospects, and the mediocre social behavior of the [Antillean] population; this constitutes a large disadvantage, [and] it is not clear how to reverse this.¹⁰⁴

Patris perceived of Antillean culture as a lackadaisical acceptance of mediocrity, which was fuelled by a warm climate and fondness for celebration. For him, it was clear that these peculiarities of Antillean culture were an obstacle to Antillean children's academic success, which on a higher level, greatly affected the Antilles' economic and social development. These negative particularities of Antillean society not only justified but also necessitated an educational policy for Guadeloupe and Martinique that was different from the Ministry of Education's policy for its metropolitan regions. Patris encouraged the Ministry of Education to use public schools as forum to transform Antillean society

¹⁰⁴ Report for the Ministry of Education. André Patris, "Contribution à l'étude des problèmes: de formation professionnelle continue, d'apprentissage, de taxe d'apprentissage dans les départements d'outre-mer", March 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

so that it reflected the French work ethic and desire to achieve success. Once public education instilled these characteristics in Antilleans, Patris argued that Guadeloupe and Martinique would experience social and economic advancement on the same level as metropolitan France.¹⁰⁵

After establishing Antilleans' culture of laziness and amusement as the cause of the islands' underdevelopment, Patris turned to the "problem" of Creole:

In spite of the significant development of the education system and the widespread diffusion of the radio, Creole remains the spoken language of the majority of the population. It is this nonwritten and grammatically poor language that is exclusively spoken in the majority of families, as well as by the young child before his schooling, and the elementary, middle, and high school student during his studies. The child who arrives for the first time in school must therefore learn not only, like the young metropolitan, to read, write and count, but also he must first learn to speak a language that is not his maternal language. For the most part, he only speaks French in school. The result: a significant portion of the young [Antilleans] who are called to military service are illiterate even after having satisfied their schooling requirements.¹⁰⁶

Patris argued that Creole's continued dominance in Guadeloupe and Martinique negatively affected both Antillean schoolchildren's education and the French nation. He viewed Creole's presence in Antillean society as a social disadvantage; it prevented Antillean children from having the same knowledge of French as metropolitan children. Therefore, Antillean children were already academically and socially behind upon entering the French public school system.

Moreover, Patris's concern about illiterate Antilleans serving in the French military suggests that he also believed that Creole had a negative impact on national unity. He questioned the strength and efficacy of a military whose soldiers did not share

¹⁰⁵ Report for the Ministry of Education. André Patris, "Contribution à l'étude des problèmes: de formation professionnelle continue, d'apprentissage, de taxe d'apprentissage dans les départements d'outre-mer", March 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

the same national language. For Patris, departmentalization had failed to assimilate Antilleans, and Creole was the obstacle to their assimilation. Antilleans could serve in the military like all other French citizens; yet, they did not possess the most basic characteristic of a French citizen: the ability to speak and understand French. For Patris and other DOM officials, it was inconceivable that Antilleans were French citizens, but remained attached to Creole at the expense of the French language. According to the Republican tradition, Antilleans had supposedly relinquished their cultural particularities in favor of French citizenship. When Patris's report revealed what DOM officials already knew—that Creole still persisted in Antillean society as the chosen language of communication—the Ministry of the DOM renewed its preoccupation with solving the “Creole problem.” It remained committed to the ban on Creole, arguing that Creole had no place in Antillean classrooms as long as Guadeloupeans and Martinians remained unassimilated and unable to speak French.

In March 1974, Lauriette held a conference at this school to refute the Ministry of Education's logic as to why it could not lift the ban on Creole. Once again, Lauriette argued that the Ministry of Education was not upholding the ideals of republican equality. In refusing to recognize Creole as a regional language, the Ministry of Education was denying Antilleans their rights as French citizens. Nine months before the conference, the Ministry of Education had applied the *Fontanet Circulaire* to Guadeloupe and Martinique. Promulgated on December 4, 1972, this law stipulated that “specific provisions” must be given to elementary school students who “enter school without knowing French and not speaking it at home.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, this law permitted those

¹⁰⁷ Gérard Lauriette, “Exposition Philosophico-Peagogique Salle II,” *Bulletin de l'Ecole AGEP*, March 1974, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

students whose maternal language was not French to be separated from their French-speaking peers. These students followed an alternative curriculum that enabled them to quickly acquire the French language. Lauriette claimed that when applied to the Antilles, the Fontanet proclamation granted Antillean teachers the right to give their Creole-speaking students “specific provisions” and alter the national curriculum to their particular needs. For Lauriette, this meant the destruction all French language books on reading, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar currently used in Antillean classrooms and their replacement with Creole textbooks. Moreover, Lauriette contended that the Minister of Education, Joseph Fontanet, did not have the authority to implement these changes and develop a particularized Antillean curriculum because “he does not know Creole, nor has he lived in Guadeloupe.”¹⁰⁸ Instead, “it was the teachers and education specialists of Guadeloupean origin who needed to seek out the ‘specific provisions’” of Antillean education.¹⁰⁹

On March 11, 1974, Lauriette wrote a letter to Fontanet, demanding that the Ministry of Education review his Creole pedagogy and consider its implementation. In a document attached to his letter, Lauriette reminded Fontanet that “regionalization was the division of a country into autonomous regions”, meaning that “each region is in charge of its own economy and the education of its inhabitants.”¹¹⁰ In July 1973, the Prefect of Guadeloupe, Jacques Le Cornec, arrived in Guadeloupe with the mission to regionalize the Antilles. He had purportedly decentralized Antillean institutions so that

¹⁰⁸ Gérard Lauriette, “Exposition Philosophico-Pedagogique Salle II,” *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEP*, March 1974, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to Joseph Fontanet, Ministre de l’Education Nationale, March 11, 1974. Published in *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEP*, March 1974, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

Guadeloupeans and Martinicans could take more control of their local affairs. Yet, Lauriette noted that he saw no change in Antillean education, which continued to be controlled by a centralized Ministry of Education. He argued that the Antilles' new status as French regions and Fontanet's recent proclamation concerning non-French speaking students validated his arguments for Creole's introduction into Antillean classrooms.¹¹¹ According to Lauriette, he did not receive a reply from Fontanet.¹¹² This silence indicated to him that the Ministry of Education perceived of Antilleans as second-class citizens. It did not permit Antilleans to exercise the political and cultural autonomy that accompanied regional reform in metropolitan France.

Under the new leadership of René Haby, the Ministry of Education continued to deny Antilleans the linguistic rights it had granted its metropolitan citizens. On July 11, 1975, Haby implemented a law stipulating that regional languages and cultures should be a part of the curriculum for all grade levels from preschool through high school. However, Haby specified that this law was only applicable to those regional languages officially recognized by the 1951 Deixonne law. Creole was not one of these regional languages. The Ministry of Education used this loophole to uphold the ban on Creole in public education. Shortly after the implementation of the Haby law, the Ministry of the DOM wrote a note concerning its linguistic and cultural policy in the Antilles. In this document, it admitted that Guadeloupe and Martinique "are curiously excluded from the benefits of certain measures that are purportedly extended to the entire national

¹¹¹ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to Joseph Fontanet, Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale, March 11, 1974. Published in *Bulletin de l'École AGEP*, March 1974, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

¹¹² Gérard Lauriette, "Vers un enseignement démocratique," *Bulletin de l'École AGEP*, March 1974, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, François Mitterrand, Côte 4-JO-26061.

territory.”¹¹³ It explained that the “pedagogical innovations that have emerged in the metropole hardly have a counterpart in the DOM.”¹¹⁴ However, according to the Ministry of the DOM, the Ministry of Education was justified in its decision not to extend the Deixonne law to the Antilles. The Ministry of the DOM argued that the Antilles’ “linguistic and cultural problems cannot be purely and simply reduced to metropolitan regionalism.”¹¹⁵ It claimed that whereas other regional language movements were exclusively cultural, the recognition of Creole was an ideological movement linked to autonomy and independence. DOM officials feared that Creole’s recognition highlighted Antilleans’ cultural differences and encourage the movement for independence.

In addition to citing the increasing popularity of the Antillean independence movement, the Ministry of Education used the statistics on the high rate of French illiteracy among Antilleans to justify its refusal to lift the ban on Creole. Antilleans’ inability to speak French indicated their failure to assimilate and thus, the tenuous state of the islands’ political relationship with France. In 1974, the Inspector of preschool education, Madame Jouanelle, reported that only seventeen percent of three-year olds attended French preschools in Martinique. This concerned Jouanelle because it meant that Antillean children were not learning French until they entered elementary school at the age of five or six, making it more difficult for them to achieve the same academic success as French-speaking metropolitan children. Jouanelle suggested that the Ministry of Education focus on increasing preschool enrollment to “address to a large extent the

¹¹³ “Vers une politique linguistique et culturelle dans les D.O.M. Francais”, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 19.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

problem of the knowledge of the French language.”¹¹⁶ In its current state, preschool education in the Antilles was inadequate for improving French literacy. The limited number of preschools and teachers was not sufficient to educate all Antillean children. Furthermore, for the most part, preschools were located in cities, where French literacy was not as serious of a problem. The Ministry of Education needed to prioritize the construction of preschools in the countryside where Creole remained the spoken-language for the majority of the people.¹¹⁷

In April 1976, Haby, the Minister of Education, made an official visit to Guadeloupe with the express purpose of improving preschool education. He created the new post of “departmental inspector of pre-elementary education”. This individual oversaw the construction of preschools and kindergartens in the Antillean countryside and the hiring of thirty-four new teachers, all of which was made possible by Haby’s decision to double the Ministry of Education’s subsidies to rural communities. Haby contended that this focus on pre-elementary education would solve the “Creole problem” and improve Antillean children’s chances of achieving academic success and social mobility.¹¹⁸ This discourse linking Creole and French illiteracy to the Antilles’ social and economic problems politicized Creole as a symbol of departmentalization’s failure to assimilate Antilleans and solidify the political union between the Antilles and France. This justified the Ministry of Education’s decision to continue to ban Creole despite the

¹¹⁶ Ministère de l’Éducation, Commission sur l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Comptes-rendu de la réunion plénière du 24 Janvier 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹¹⁷ Report for the Ministry of Education. André Patris, “Contribution à l’étude des problèmes: de formation professionnelle continue, d’apprentissage, de taxe d’apprentissage dans les départements d’outre-mer”, March 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

¹¹⁸ Note on the official visit of Monsieur Haby, the Minister of Education, to Guadeloupe, April 22-26, 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 9.

fact that regionalization had allowed metropolitan school districts to introduce regional languages and cultures into their curriculums.

For the Ministry of Education, the Creole question was a social issue. It made the Creole debates about teaching French literacy, improving Antillean education, and Antillean children's opportunities for social advancement. In February 1977, the Ministry of Education formed the "Committee on Teaching French in the Overseas Departments" to evaluate the state of French language education in the Antilles and suggest possible improvements. In February 1977, the Committee submitted its report, confirming the Ministry of Education's fear that "one of the causes of academic failure in this department [Martinique] is the weakness in French of our students, weakness arising from the fact that their maternal language is Creole."¹¹⁹ In identifying Creole as the sole cause of academic failure, the report ignored other social factors, such as poverty, that negatively affected Antillean children's scholastic achievements. Members of the Committee noted that the "social origins of the children reveal that these [failing] students are from poor rural and urban areas, speaking Creole."¹²⁰ The Committee also reported that "Creole reinforced these socio-cultural handicaps."¹²¹ This analysis linked poverty to Creole, making Creole the main contributor to the social and economic ills of Antillean society.

For the Committee, promotion of French language education, and the social mobility that accompanied it, was the solution to the Antilles' "Creole problem".

"Teaching French" is the "only chance for social promotion and a better future for young

¹¹⁹ Ministère de l'Éducation, Commission sur l'enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Compte-rendu du réunion plénière du 24 Janvier 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Martinicans.”¹²² The Committee claimed that when it took into account the current French illiteracy rates among Antillean children, it could not advocate the recognition of Creole as a regional language. To do so would threaten the promotion of the French language and Antillean children’s only chance for social mobility. In a public interview for the magazine *Guadeloupe 2000*, Paulette Urgan, the inspector of public education for the Antilles, stated that she was “entirely against any teaching that would be in Creole; because it ignores the possibilities of progress for the children of Guadeloupe.”¹²³ According to Urgan, “French is an international language” that provided Antillean children with social and economic “progress”. Moreover, she believed that Antilleans should speak French like all other French citizens. She “did not see why Guadeloupeans would be the only [French citizens] to speak Creole.”¹²⁴ Urgan saw no place for Creole in public education; nor did she consider the possibility of teaching both French and Creole in Antillean classrooms.

In a report entitled “How to improve French in Guadeloupe”, Urgan argued that bilingual education was not an option for the Antilles. She questioned why Antilleans should “have the right and duty to be bilingual” when “one does not give Bretons [and] Basques the right to be bilingual.”¹²⁵ According to Urgan, the recognition of Creole was not simply an extension of the Dexionne law; Creole was much more dangerous than other regional languages in that it threatened the French language and the cultural integrity of the nation. She noted that “Creole, in and of itself, in its actual form, is not

¹²² Ministère de l’Éducation, Commission sur l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Comptendu du réunion plénière du 24 Janvier 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹²³ “Une interview de Madame Paulette URGIN, Inspectrice départementale de l’Éducation Nationale,” *Magazine Guadeloupe 2000*, June 1975, 9.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Paulette Urgan, “Comment améliorer le français en Guadeloupe,” 1976, 1, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

*the problem.*¹²⁶ Rather, it was “the interferences of Creole and French” that confused Antillean children and adversely affected their French language acquisition.¹²⁷ Other education officials in the Antilles agreed that Creole caused linguistic and cultural confusion, preventing Antillean children from becoming fully assimilated French citizens. In a report entitled “Adapation of teaching French to children whose maternal language is Creole”, Madame Lamy, noted that Antillean children spoke French poorly. She argued that because Creole is “often a deformation of a French word”, it “can hinder considerably the student.”¹²⁸

For this reason, the Ministry of Education did not recognize Creole as a regional language. Regional languages, such as Breton, Basque, and Occitan, were not an impediment to metropolitan children’s French language education and cultural attachment to the nation; unlike Antilleans their native language was French. Metropolitan regions had purportedly been culturally and politically incorporated into the nation for generations. Thus, before Creole could be recognized as a regional language and culture, Antilleans also needed to prove that they had been assimilated like their metropolitan counterparts. For the Ministry of Education, a French literacy rate equivalent to that of metropolitan France, and the economic and social stability that accompanied French language acquisition, were the benchmarks of successful assimilation. Only then could the Ministry of Education permit Antilleans to enjoy the same linguistic rights as metropolitan citizens.

¹²⁶ Paulette Urgin, “Comment améliorer le français en Guadeloupe,” 1976, 1, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Madame Lamy, Directrice de l’Ecole Mixte de Trenelle “B” à Fort-de-France, “Adaptation de l’enseignement du français aux enfants dont la langue maternelle est le créole, Rapport de synthèse, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 800285, Art. 13.

In framing the Creole question as a social issue, education officials attempted to depoliticize Lauriette's construction of Creole as a political issue concerning Antilleans linguistic and cultural rights as French citizens. On December 30, 1977, Lauriette wrote a letter to President Giscard d'Estaing, detailing the Ministry of Education's attempts to silence him and his struggle for Antilleans' linguistic rights.¹²⁹ He informed the President that his Creole pedagogy was no different from the regional language instruction that was taking place within France's metropolitan regions. It advocated "teaching a child to read and write the words of his language that he already fluently speaks."¹³⁰ Lauriette sent his Creole pedagogy to countless education officials in France and the Antilles. However, according to him, they refused to read and implement it because "it [did] not develop the concepts of the white man."¹³¹ Lauriette perceived of the Ministry of Education's rejection of Creole language instruction as a conscious decision to deny Antilleans their rights because of their race. According to Lauriette, the Ministry of Education wanted to avoid granting political and cultural autonomy to Antilleans so that they remained in a position of subordination, similar to that of colonialism. For him, this was the only conceivable reason why the Ministry of Education continued to deny Antilleans rights that it already granted to metropolitan citizens.

In May 1978, the mayor of Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe wrote to the Secretary General of Antillean education to defend Lauriette's Creole pedagogy and request that it be implemented in Antillean schools. He praised Lauriette for "advancing the question of

¹²⁹ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Giscard d'Estaing, December 30, 1977, Published in *Bulletin de l'Ecole AGEP*, année scolaire 1977-1978.

¹³⁰ Gérard Lauriette, *Bulletin de l'Ecole AGEP*, année scolaire 1979-1980, n°2, 6.

¹³¹ Letter from Gérard Lauriette to M. Giscard d'Estaing, December 30, 1977, Published in *Bulletin de l'Ecole AGEP*, année scolaire 1977-1978.

the Creole language and its utility in education in Guadeloupe”, and encouraged the Secretary General to consider implementing Lauriette’s “pedagogical initiatives.”¹³² By the late 1970s, the Ministry of Education had done just that. Pressure from locally elected officials, such as the mayor of Pointe-à-Pitre, representing Antilleans’ growing demands for more cultural autonomy, encouraged the Ministry of Education to reconsider the ban on Creole. In 1977, the “Commission on Teaching French in the Overseas Departments” suggested that the Ministry of Education permit Creole in Antillean classrooms under certain circumstances. For example, the Commission argued for the Antillean child’s right to speak to his teacher in Creole during individual conversations.¹³³ Moreover, Creole was “acceptable in preschool education as a means of communication” and “on the playground.”¹³⁴ Shortly after the Commission made these suggestions, the Ministry of Education wrote to the Rector of the Antilles-Guiana Academy, informing him that “the occasional usage of Creole can be used during the initial stages of preschool education.”¹³⁵ However, the Minister of Education also explained that this limited use of Creole was by no means ended the ban on Creole. He reminded the Rector that “upon entry to secondary education, the exclusive use of French must be the rule.”¹³⁶ This was far from the Creole pedagogy that Lauriette envisioned.

¹³² Letter from Monsieur le Maire de Pointe-à-Pitre, Henri Bagou to Monsieur le Secrétaire Général, May 27, 1978, Published in *Bulletin de l’Ecole AGEPE*, année scolaire 1977-1978, n°8.

¹³³ Ministère de l’Éducation, Commission sur l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Comptendu du réunion plénière du 24 Janvier 1977, Rapport du Groupe 4, Place du créole a l’école maternelle afin de mieux apprendre le français, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹³⁴ Commission chargé de l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Note à l’attention de M. Daste, Directeur Adjoint Cabinet, Objet: Travaux de la Commission chargé de l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, December 20, 1978, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 800285, Art. 13.

¹³⁵ Letter from le Ministère de l’Education to Monsieur le Recteur de l’Académie Antilles-Guyane, Objet: Pédagogie de l’enseignement du français dans l’Académie des Antilles-Guyane, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 800285, Art. 13.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

He wanted Antillean educators to be able to develop and implement a curriculum that addressed Antillean children's cultural and linguistic specificities. For Lauriette, these concessions did nothing to equalize Creole and French. Rather, they enabled the Ministry of Education to continue to control the terms under which Creole would be permitted in public education.

In the late 1970s, Lauriette and the Ministry of Education seemed to be at an impasse. Lauriette continued to use his school's bulletin as a forum to promote his Creole pedagogy. He framed the Creole question as political issue concerning Antilleans' rights as French citizens. Lauriette claimed that like all French citizens, Antilleans possessed the right to regional language instruction. For Antilleans, their regional language was Creole. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Education avoided comparing the Creole issue to regional rights. Instead, it continued to construct Creole as a social problem that threatened the Antilles' political union with France. In a note detailing the education problems in France's overseas departments, the Secretary of State for the DOM, recognized that it might be beneficial to adapt the national curriculum to the particular linguistic needs of Antillean children. "It is now recognized that schooling in the French language, modeled on the metropolitan curriculum, is a source of difficulties for the children of the overseas departments and territories whose maternal language, for the most part, is not French."¹³⁷ Despite this, the Secretary of State noted that it was not in France's best interest to adapt the metropolitan curriculum to the Antilles and permit Creole language instruction because it is "a refuge of cultural identity for [Antilleans] who see in it a means to politically affirm themselves against the

¹³⁷ Note written by Secrétaire d'Etat, DOM-TOM, Objet: Dossier sur les problèmes d'éducation dans les départements et territoires d'outre-mer, Adaptation de l'enseignement aux cultures et langues locales, December 27, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 1.

metropole.”¹³⁸ According to the Secretary of State, Antilleans used Creole to culturally distinguish themselves from metropolitan France. Creole therefore, threatened Antilleans’ political and cultural assimilation. By the late 1970s, education officials were considering the possibility of extending regional language instruction to the Antilles, but it heeded the Ministry of the DOM’s warnings, and ultimately decided that Antilleans were not ready for these kinds of regional rights. Creole was linked to the Antillean independence movement and thus, too politically dangerous to be introduced into Antillean classrooms.

Conclusion

For nearly forty years, Gérard Lauriette and the Ministry of Education were embroiled in a debate about Creole’s place in public education. What appeared to be a question about Creole’s role as a language of instruction in Antillean classrooms, was in reality a struggle for control of Antillean education, and ultimately the Antilles. For Lauriette, the Creole question was a political issue. From departmentalization until the late 1960s, he used his Creole pedagogy to argue that Antilleans needed to have control of not only education, but also of Antillean society. Lauriette believed that Antilleans possessed a different culture and language from French metropolitans and therefore, should be an independent nation. In the 1970s, Lauriette distanced himself from Antillean nationalism and became an advocate of regional reform. Instead of arguing for independence, Lauriette envisioned a more culturally autonomous Antilles that remained politically linked to France. Yet, he continued to perceive of Creole as a question of

¹³⁸ Note written by Secrétaire d’Etat, DOM-TOM, Objet: Dossier sur les problèmes d’éducation dans les départements et territoires d’outre-mer, Adaptation de l’enseignement aux cultures et langues locales, December 27, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 1.

Antilleans' political and cultural rights. He called upon the Ministry of Education to end its treatment of Antilleans as second-class citizens and grant them the same linguistic and cultural rights that it had granted to its metropolitan regions with the implementation of the Deixonne law in 1951 and the *Fontanet Circulaire* in 1972.

In contrast, the Ministries of DOM and Education perceived of Creole as a social problem that needed to be solved. Creole was a barometer of the extent to which Antilleans had been culturally and politically assimilated into the French nation. DOM and education officials argued that Creole was a detriment to Antillean society because it prevented Antilleans from achieving academic success and experiencing the same social and economic opportunities as their metropolitan counterparts. For the Ministry of Education, the ban on Creole was not an unequal application of regional language laws. Rather, it ensured Antilleans' acquisition of the French language, opening the doors to social mobility. In this way, it was the fulfillment of republican equality.

Lauriette constructed the Creole question as the denial of republican equality. Conversely, for the Ministry of Education its policies on Creole were the realization of republican equality. These competing constructions reveal that the Creole debates were really about Antilleans' status as French citizens and how their cultural differences fit into the nation. By the mid-1970s, the Antillean independence movement was no longer popular, and the majority of Antilleans, including Lauriette, wanted to remain French citizens. However, it was unclear what French citizenship would look like for Antilleans. Whereas Lauriette envisioned Antilleans as culturally distinct French citizens, the Ministry of Education insisted that incorporation into the French nation required Antilleans to give up their Creole identities in favor of a universal French citizenship.

These debates concerning Creole's place in republican education, and more broadly how Antillean culture fit into the nation, played out in Antillean classrooms as the Ministry of the DOM, education officials, teachers, and students navigated the meaning of Antilleans' French citizenship and their cultural and political relationship with France.

CHAPTER V

From Assimilation to Intercultural Education: Immigrant Education Policy and the Exclusion of Creole, 1970-1983

Introduction

Of Antillean origin, I came to France to pursue my studies. . . . One did not hesitate to highlight for me my “cultural backwardness”, “my shortcomings” without giving me the means to overcome them. . . . After getting over the first strong, traumatizing reaction characterized by humiliation, shame, and a gnawing rage, I began to view myself just as I was, objectively formed-deformed by the colonial phenomenon and assimilation. . . . Then, as a professor in the transition classes, in the schools of Nanterre and Aubervilles with high percentages of children of immigrant workers . . . I realized that the difficulties encountered by these students in learning and mastering French were not a result of pedagogy. Aware of this sociolinguistic problem, I intuitively felt that the obstacle did not solely come from the “qualities” and intrinsic difficulties of the linguistic system, that it was more the social relationship of the parents and of the children to the language than the language itself, a relationship created from the contact with this language, the elevated social status of French. I confirmed this idea when I engaged myself in eliminating the illiteracy of immigrant workers. . . . it was the problem of the interiorization of a dominant culture by the dominated. . .¹

In the late 1960s, Dany Bebel-Gisler, a young Guadeloupean student crossed the Atlantic to pursue her education in France. While obtaining her doctorate in sociolinguistics, Bebel-Gisler taught “transition” classes for children from immigrant families in the Parisian suburbs of Nanterre and Aubervilles. She also led an experimental adult literacy program for West African and Algerian immigrants.

According to Bebel-Gisler, this experience made her realize that the French government

¹ Danny Bebel-Gisler, *La Langue Créole Force Juglée: Étude socio-linguistique des rapports de force entre le créole et le français aux Antilles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1985), 3-7.

was using education, and in particular, the French language to control and assimilate immigrants' cultural and linguistic differences into a singular national culture. The Ministry of Education promoted French as the language of prestige, devaluing immigrants' maternal languages and cultures as obstacles to a unified French society. She claimed that education officials perceived of France's immigration "problem" as a direct result of immigrants' cultural otherness and incapacity to learn French. Bebel-Gisler contended that this exclusion of difference caused immigrants to interiorize their cultural inferiority, preventing them from achieving social advancement. She therefore challenged the Ministry of Education's policy of assimilation and argued for the integration of immigrant cultures into the national curriculum. For Bebel-Gisler, this recognition of immigrants' differences was important for ensuring social equality between immigrants and French citizens.²

While defending immigrants' right to difference in Paris, Bebel-Gisler came to the realization that the conflict between French and immigrant cultures in metropolitan France was the same conflict between French and Creole in the Antilles. She claimed that the Ministry of Education's exclusion of difference from public classrooms was similar to the way in which French colonization and departmentalization assimilated Antilleans and attempted to destroy their Creole language and culture. Antilleans, like immigrants, were cultural "others" who occupied an inferior social position. According to Bebel-Gisler, the promotion of the Creole language and culture helped Antilleans overcome these feelings of inferiority and empowered them to regain political and cultural control of Guadeloupe and Martinique.³

² Bebel-Gisler, *La Langue Créole Force Juglée*.

³ Ibid.

Inspired by her work in Paris, Bebel-Gisler returned to Guadeloupe in 1976 to teach Creole literacy to poor farmers in the countryside of Lamentin.⁴ In 1979, she founded the *Centre d'Education Populaire Bwadoubout* (The Standing Wood Center of Popular Education), a Creole literacy center for children and adults who lacked formal education or came from disadvantaged households in the agricultural regions of Basse-Terre.⁵ Creole was the language of instruction at *Bwadoubout*; reading and writing were also taught in Creole. The metaphorical meaning of the Creole word *bwadoubout*, “self assurance”, embodied Bebel-Gisler’s commitment to promoting Creole and eliminating the socially divisive consequences of privileging the French language. For Bebel-Gisler, instruction in Creole facilitated access to knowledge and thus, social mobility. She claimed that in insisting that only French be used in the classroom, education officials impeded Antillean children’s ability to understand their teachers. In this way, the ban on Creole prevented Antilleans from receiving an education and achieving social advancement.⁶

Bebel-Gisler’s story reveals the connection between immigrant education policy in France and Creole language policy in the Antilles. While the Ministry of Education debated the place of immigrant languages and cultures in the metropolitan education system, it was also embroiled in a political struggle with Antillean activists, such as Bebel-Gisler, concerning Creole’s role in Antillean classrooms. Yet, despite the simultaneity of these policy debates, in general, scholars have examined the history of

⁴ Lamentin is of Guadeloupe’s thirty-two communes. The commune is the lowest level of administrative division in the French Republic. Each commune possesses a mayor (*maire*) and a municipal council (*conseil municipal*) who jointly manage the local affairs of the commune.

⁵ Basse-Terre Island is the name of the western half of Guadeloupe. It is separated from the other half of Guadeloupe (Grande-Terre) by a narrow sea channel. Basse-Terre is also the name of a the capital city of Guadeloupe.

⁶ Bebel-Gisler, *La Langue Créole Force Juglée*.

immigrant and Antillean education separately.⁷ In contrast, this chapter illuminates the relationship between these two seemingly separate policies, and seeks to understand how the Ministry of Education's policies on immigrant and Antillean education informed and shaped each other across the Atlantic. In placing the debates on immigrant and Antillean education in dialogue with each other, this chapter highlights the points of convergence and divergence regarding the French government's treatment of two culturally and politically distinct groups: immigrants and Antilleans, who were French citizens, but also culturally distinct like immigrants.

From 1946 to 1970, the Ministry of Education treated Antilleans and immigrants similarly, and adhered to a policy of assimilation for both groups. This changed in 1970 when the Ministry of Education gradually introduced immigrants' cultures and languages into the metropolitan curriculum while continuing to prohibit educators from using Creole in Guadeloupean and Martinican classrooms. Historians have characterized France's exclusionary policies as either a failure of republicanism to live up to its inclusionary principles or the result of an inherently flawed republican ideology that only purported to promote equality.⁸ However, the divergence in education policy for

⁷ For studies on Antillean education policy, see: Danny Bebel-Gisler, *La Langue Créole Force Juglée: Étude socio-linguistique des rapports de force entre le créole et le français aux Antilles* (Paris: Harmattan, 1985); Dany Bebel-Gisler, *Les enfants de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); Alban Cummings, Mildred K. Lee, and Clement London, "Children of the Caribbean: A Study of Diversity", *Journal of Black Studies* 13, no.4 (June 1983): 489-495. For scholarship on immigrant education see: Jacques Berque, *L'Immigration à l'École de la République* (Paris: Centre national de Documentation pédagogique, 1985); Commission de la République Française pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture, *Alphabétisation des Migrants Étrangers en France* (Paris: la Direction des populations et des migrations du Ministère du travail de l'emploi et de la population, 1971); Le Fonds d'Action Sociale Pour les Travailleurs Migrants, *Dix Ans au Service des Etrangers et des Migrants* (Paris: Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi, et de la Population, 1972); Ministère du Travail et de la Participation, *Le Dossier de L'Immigration* (Paris: Direction de la Population et des Migrations, 1978); Louis Porcher, ed. *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France* (Paris: Centre de Recherche et d'Étude pour la Diffusion du Français (CREDIF), 1978).

⁸ For scholarship that claims that exclusion occurred from the failure of state officials to live up to the lofty ideals of republican equality, see: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave*

immigrants and Antilleans reveals that republican assimilation was not intrinsically exclusionary or inclusionary. Rather, it simultaneously included and excluded different cultural and political groups, including immigrants and Antilleans. Although republican discourse stigmatized the recognition of difference in the public sphere, in practice, the Ministries of Education and the DOM implemented specific education policies for immigrants and Antilleans to navigate how each group's differences were included and excluded from the nation.

The first part of this chapter examines the period from departmentalization to 1970 when education policy for immigrants and Antilleans was similar. From 1946 to 1970, the Ministry of Education used republican education to assimilate both immigrants and Antilleans. In both metropolitan France and the Antilles, education officials implemented various programs to rapidly facilitate immigrant and Antillean children's knowledge of the French language. The Ministry of Education believed that the ability to speak French was the key to assimilation. French literacy was the means through which the Ministry of Education attempted to eliminate both immigrants' and Antilleans' cultural particularities and make them into French citizens.

Beginning in 1970, the Ministry of Education implemented policies specifically targeting immigrant children attending metropolitan schools. It recognized that the

Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804 (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005). For scholarship that argues that inequality and exclusion developed as a part of the French Republican tradition, see: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference*; Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

national curriculum did not meet the particular needs of immigrant children, and created “transition” classes to help them adapt to the French public school system before being integrated with their French peers. In 1975, the Ministry of Education reformed its immigrant education policy even further when it invited foreign instructors from southern and eastern Europe to come to France and teach immigrant children their maternal languages and cultures during regular school hours. This decision marked a shift from the exclusion of immigrants’ diversity from the classroom to “intercultural education” or the inclusion of immigrants’ difference in public education.

In response, Antillean activists argued for the same recognition of their Creole culture and language, prompting the Ministry of Education to reconsider Creole’s place in Antillean classrooms. However, education officials ultimately continued to exclude Creole from Antillean classrooms. The second part of this chapter analyzes this divergence in immigrant and Antillean education policy and seeks to understand why the Ministry of Education seemed to be more willing to make room in public education for immigrant children’s linguistic and cultural differences.

When Mitterrand’s socialist government came to power in 1981 and articulated the “right to difference”, Antillean activists renewed their fight to end the ban on Creole. However, the Ministry of Education applied the “right to difference” differently in the metropolitan France and the Antilles. While it mapped out a comprehensive plan to make immigrants’ languages and cultures a part of the national curriculum, it remained committed to excluding Creole from Antillean classrooms. The last section of this chapter examines these early 1980s debates about Creole’s place in public education leading up to the Ministry of Education’s decision to finally lift the ban on Creole in

1983. It argues that Antillean activists' participation in these discussions shaped the meaning of the "right to difference" in metropolitan France and the Antilles as they struggled to reshape education policy and gain official recognition of their Creole language and culture.

Part I. French Literacy and the Assimilation of Immigrants and Antilleans, 1946-1970

Creole and the "Problem" of Antillean Assimilation

In order to fully appreciate the divergence of the Ministry of Education's policies regarding Antillean and immigrant education during the 1970s, it is first necessary to understand how closely Antillean and immigrant education resembled each other prior to 1970. The following review of Antillean education policy in the two decades following departmentalization is meant to provide the essential points of comparison for analyzing how the Ministry of Education constructed French literacy as the most important component of both Antillean and immigrant education before 1970.

In the mid-1940s, French colonial officials and elected Antillean representatives debated Guadeloupe's and Martinique's future political status. They discussed whether the islands should remain French colonies, become independent nations or be fully integrated into the nation as overseas departments of France (DOM). In 1944, during this legislative debate, the colonial newspaper, *La Tribune Syndicale et Laïque*, anticipated the departmentalization of the Antilles, and argued that the acquisition of the French language was essential for the Antilleans' political and cultural assimilation.

To speak French is an act of patriotism. A community of one language is the surest way to guarantee national unity. . . . One must explain to them (Antilleans) that to love France is not only to imitate its customs and traditions, to take advantage of its benefits, protection, laws, to share its

history and glories, but above all to be assimilated, to adopt its doctrines and language. To be French is to think and speak French.⁹

For *La Tribune*, speaking French was synonymous with being a part of the French nation. Therefore, the fact that Antilleans possessed a distinct Creole culture and language was problematic. French national unity was dependent upon its citizens sharing a common culture and language. *La Tribune* argued that as future French citizens, Antilleans needed to adopt French culture, beginning with the French language.

Two years later, in 1946, when Guadeloupe and Martinique officially became overseas departments, the Ministries of the DOM and Education set out to assimilate Antilleans into the nation. Although Antilleans were now French citizens, they were still culturally distinct from their metropolitan counterparts. Their Creole culture and language did not fit into popular perceptions of what it meant to be French. In particular, the Creole language was one of the most visible expressions of Antilleans' difference. As such, it became the symbol of the "problem" of Antillean assimilation that the French government needed to solve. DOM officials forced Antillean radio and television networks to exclusively broadcast French programs, and imported French newspapers replaced the local Antillean press. French administrators even went so far as to ban the use of Creole in political meetings and addresses, the media, as well as public schools. Chapter 4 extensively detailed how the French government used public education, specifically French language instruction, to make Antilleans into culturally French citizens. For the Ministry of Education, Antilleans' Creole language and their inability to speak proper French created a political and cultural divide between the Antilles and

⁹ *La Tribune Syndicale et Laïque*, February 1944, 2. Quoted in Ellen M. Schnepel, "The Politics of Language in the French Caribbean: The Creole Movement on the Island of Guadeloupe" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990), 108.

metropolitan France. French literacy was the solution to this Creole “problem”; it facilitated the political and cultural assimilation of Antilleans, and secured the Antilles’ political relationship with France.¹⁰

French Literacy and the Immigration “Problem”

While the Ministry of Education implemented education policies designed to assimilate Antilleans into the nation as proper French-speaking citizens, it also struggled to culturally assimilate immigrants and their families into metropolitan France. After the Second World War, the French government actively encouraged immigration from southern and eastern Europe and its former colonies. These immigrants were a solution to the postwar labor shortage; they provided France with the unskilled labor it needed to rebuild. In 1945, the government established the National Immigration Office (ONI) to recruit labor and oversee workers’ placement in France. According to ONI’s director, Pierre Bideberry, it was the Office’s responsibility “to protect the national community through an effective selection process based on considerations of health, employment and moral conduct.” In addition, the ONI, “guaranteed as far as possible an [even] distribution of foreigners in France.”¹¹ ONI officials did not simply recruit immigrant labor; rather, it carefully monitored the introduction of foreigners into French society according to the government’s criteria for ethnic and cultural balance, as well as assimilation. The republican discourse of “assimilability” stipulated that ethnic proximity was essential for ensuring a quick and unproblematic assimilation. This meant that in the eyes of the French government, southern and eastern Europeans were the more

¹⁰ For more on how the French government constructed French literacy as the solution to the “Creole problem”, see chapter 4 of this dissertation, especially the section entitled “National Unity Through French Literacy.”

¹¹ Quoted in Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992), 39.

desirable immigrants. Compared to former colonial subjects from Africa and Asia, they were more culturally similar to French citizens and thus, more likely to assimilate. In order to protect France's national integrity, the ONI attempted to regulate not only the amount and distribution of immigrants throughout France, but also the ethnic and racial makeup of the immigrants who entered France.

Despite the Office's efforts to favor southern and eastern Europeans, employers often chose to recruit labor directly, bypassing the ONI's criteria for cultural assimilability. Economic planners conceived of immigration as a necessary part of postwar reconstruction and consequently, allowed economic demand to dictate and control migration flow. The need for a new and larger labor force took precedence over all other considerations, including the regulation of immigration. In the mid-1960s, an increasing number of male immigrant workers from France's former colonies permanently settled in France, precipitating chain migration and family reunification. For the French government, immigration quickly transformed from a temporary solution to an economic problem into a "social problem" of assimilation, ethnic balance, and national security.¹²

This was not the first time that the French government encountered the "problem" of assimilating culturally distinct groups into the nation. France had a long history of immigration.¹³ Moreover, for nearly twenty years prior to the "problem" of postcolonial immigration, the Ministry of the DOM had been using public education in Guadeloupe and Martinique to make Antilleans into French citizens. DOM and Education officials

¹² Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation*, 70-95.

¹³ See: Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

believed that Antilleans remained unassimilated because they did not possess the same level of French literacy as their metropolitan counterparts. In the mid-1960s, as more and more former colonial subjects permanently settled in France, education officials feared the same outcome in metropolitan France. They argued that immigrant workers and their children were on the verge of becoming another group of unassimilated “others” who did not speak French. For the French government, this fear became a reality in the early 1970s. In contrast to their southern and eastern European predecessors who appeared to have quickly assimilated the French language and culture, these non-European immigrants and their French-born children remained unemployed and concentrated in suburban ghettos. Public discourse linked second-generation immigrants’ inability to assimilate to their cultural distinctiveness, and blamed this group for France’s social and economic problems.¹⁴ While DOM officials made Creole the scapegoat for the Antilles’ problems, in metropolitan France, the government also constructed immigrants’ cultural “otherness” as a social “problem” and threat to national unity.

In a memo entitled “Problems concerning the reception and adaptation of foreigners”, the Ministry of Education warned that by the end of 1968, approximately three million foreigners would be living in France. This shocking statistic indicated to education officials that they needed to do something to quickly solve this “problem” of an increasingly large population of unassimilated immigrants. In the Antilles, the Ministry of the DOM was using public education, and in particular French literacy, as a tool of assimilation. The Ministry of Education drew upon its experiences with education and assimilation in the islands, and identified French literacy as an effective solution for ensuring immigrants’ adaptation to metropolitan French society: “Learning French is

¹⁴ Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation*, 70-89.

necessary for the migrant's adjustment to professional and daily life."¹⁵ In a plan for his region's economic future, Mr. Ruban, the economic advisor for the Rhône-Alpes, noted that French literacy was of the utmost importance, especially since immigrants from north and west Africa were now a significant part of his region's workforce. According to him, "the goal of French literacy [was] no longer to [simply] enable an individual to acquire a common language." French literacy was about ensuring immigrants' ability to receive "training so that they can obtain a vocational profession" and become productive members of society.¹⁶ For Ruban, and other education and economic officials, French literacy promoted immigrants' adaptation, enabled them to obtain a job, and prevented them from becoming an unassimilated, unemployed, and discontented group.

The Ministry of Labor confirmed regional officials' analyses that French literacy was the key to producing an assimilated and therefore productive immigrant population. In a separate report on the education of foreign workers, it called upon the Ministry of Education to fund and implement French literacy programs to prepare immigrants to enter the workforce while simultaneously introducing them to life in France.¹⁷ In 1966, the Ministry of Education acted upon the Ministry of Labor's suggestion. It placed the *Fonds d'Action Sociale* (FAS), originally a government-funded social welfare organization for Algerian workers, in charge of "the educational problems concerning

¹⁵ Le Ministère de l'Éducation, "Les problèmes de l'accueil et de l'adaptation des étrangers," 1968, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

¹⁶ M. Ruban, "Place de l'alphabétisation et de la formation professionnelle dans la préparation du 6ème plan," in Préfecture du Rhône, Service de Liaison et de Promotion des Migrants, "Groupe de synthèse de promotion des migrants, L'alphabétisation des Etrangers dans la Région Rhône-Alpes, April 17, 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 13.

¹⁷ Commission de la République Française pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture, *Alphabétisation et Promotion des Migrants Etrangers en France*, (Paris: Direction des populations et des migrations du Ministère du travail de l'emploi et de la population, 1971), 10.

workers of all nationalities and their families.”¹⁸ Initially, FAS focused its efforts on organizing French literacy classes for male workers during the evening hours. These classes were entirely voluntary. FAS relied upon employers to encourage their immigrant workers to attend these classes. This meant that in order to recruit students, FAS needed to convince employers that French literacy improved their immigrant workers’ overall job performance. FAS used pamphlets to inform employers that “learning the host country’s language is necessary for the migrant’s adaptation in his professional and daily life.”¹⁹ FAS officials argued that immigrant workers without knowledge of the French language did not effectively communicate with their employers and therefore, were not able to adequately perform their jobs. FAS’s recruitment techniques worked. French literacy classes slowly gained a reputation among employers as a necessary tool of adaptation. From 1966 to 1967, FAS held 600 French literacy classes in approximately 350 public schools and boarding houses throughout France. In its November 1967 report, FAS boasted that it had taught nearly 20,000 immigrant workers how to read and write French.²⁰

Government agencies were not the only organizations preoccupied with improving immigrant workers’ cultural adaptation. Private groups, such as the Association for the Education of Foreigners (*Amicale pour l’enseignement des étrangers*), were also concerned about the large number of immigrants living in France who could not speak French: “Rare are those among them [immigrants] who have, at

¹⁸ Le Fonds d’Action Sociale (FAS), “L’Alphabétisation des travailleurs étrangers résidant en France,” November 16, 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

¹⁹ Le Fonds d’Action Sociale Pour les Travailleurs Migrants (FAS), *Dix Ans au Service des Etrangers et des Migrants* (Paris: Ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi, et de la Population, 1972).

²⁰ Le Fonds d’Action Sociale (FAS), “L’Alphabétisation des travailleurs étrangers résidant en France,” November 16, 1967, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

their arrival on our territory, a sufficient knowledge of our langue so that they can integrate themselves without too much difficulty, to our way of life.”²¹ In November 1961, *l’Amicale* established itself as a nonprofit association and began to coordinate educational classes and programs for immigrant workers and their families. Five years later, in 1966, *l’Amicale* became a member of CLAP (Liaison Committee for Literacy and Social Promotion), a federation of organizations dedicated to promoting immigrant education and social mobility. CLAP coordinated the literacy programs of nonprofits focused on immigrant social aid. Its mission was to ensure that immigrants residing in all of France’s regions had access to education.

CLAP perceived of itself as an altruistic organization seeking to improve immigrants’ social position and alleviate the economic and social hardships they endured in their homeland and in France. According to CLAP’s president, Robert Buron, the promotion of French literacy did more than enable immigrants to communicate; it elevated immigrants’ social mobility by opening the door to French culture and society:

French literacy, then, does not only represent for them [immigrants] the possibility of access to academic “knowledge” (knowledge of techniques of speech, of reading, of writing, and a foreign language), but the mastery of a dynamic and evolving culture, developing in him [the immigrant] independence of judgment and social mobility, which will serve him in any country where he is called to work, and one day, as soon as possible, in his own [country].²²

²¹ Amicale pour l’enseignement des étrangers, “Premiers étapes de notre association,” *Vivre en France*, 1968, 4. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

²² Robert Buron, Président du CLAP, “Note on Comité de Liaison pour l’Alphabétisation et la Promotion (C.L.A.P.), in Préfecture du Rhône, Service de Liaison et de Promotion des Migrants, “Groupe de synthèse de promotion des migrants, L’alphabétisation des Etrangers dans la Région Rhône-Alpes, April 17, 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 13.

This discourse of France as a benevolent host society striving to provide immigrants with economic opportunities and the skills to improve their own homelands once they returned was reflective of the public debate and official policy concerning immigrants' shifting position in French society. In the early 1960s, dozens of nonprofit associations for immigrants implemented literacy programs throughout France. For the most part, the government was content to support these private organizations' efforts by funding a portion of their activities. CLAP and *l'Amicale* provided a service to immigrants that the government recognized as necessary and valuable, but it did not have the time or organizational means to fully oversee the education of immigrant workers. However, in the late 1960s, when it became apparent that this new wave of north and west African immigrants were permanently settling in France, the stakes of assimilation were suddenly higher. Government officials wanted to ensure that these culturally and racially distinct immigrants assimilated into French society without threatening the stability of the nation.

In an attempt to gain control of immigrant education and assimilation, national education officials decided to intervene and regulate the cultural content and teaching methods used in CLAP's and *l'Amicale*'s literacy programs. In March 1968, the Ministry of Education worked with *l'Amicale* and CLAP to establish a standardized curriculum that effectively promoted French literacy and facilitated immigrants' assimilation to French society. In a letter to *l'Amicale*'s president, Stanislas Magin, the Minister of Education informed him of the government's desire to fund and work with his association. Under this collaboration, *l'Amicale* was required to submit its curriculum to the Ministry of Education for annual approval. This process ensured that *l'Amicale* followed the national guidelines for immigrant education. These guidelines stipulated

both the materials and methods *l'Amicale* needed to use in their French literacy classes. One week later, Magin responded, agreeing to collaborate with and follow the Ministry of Education's recommendations.²³

In July 1968, the Ministry of Education published a decree in the *Official Bulletin of National Education* legally formalizing its relationship with *l'Amicale*.²⁴ Through this partnership, the Ministry of Education asserted its control over how immigrants were educated and assimilated into French society. It emphasized the importance of French literacy, arguing that assimilation began with the acquisition of the French language: "Difficulties [of assimilation] are primarily linguistic, understanding of the spoken language being the first requirement for [cultural] exchanges on which foreign workers are dependent. This is why, first and foremost, each teacher must focus on the learning of language, without which nothing can be undertaken."²⁵ The Minister of Education argued that "the means to communicate" ensured "equal opportunity between them [immigrants] and French workers."²⁶ In other words, French literacy classes upheld Republican equality by providing immigrant workers with an equal opportunity to obtain employment and economically succeed in France. According to the Ministry of Education, immigrants' economic success facilitated their assimilation and thus, solved any social problems potentially arising from a discontented population of unemployed and unassimilated immigrants.

²³ Ministère de l'Éducation, Alain Peyrefitte, au Président de l'Amicale pour l'enseignement des étrangers, March 12, 1968. Published in *Amicale pour l'enseignement des étrangers*, "Premiers étapes de notre association," *Vivre en France*, 1968. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

²⁴ Le Ministre de l'Éducation, "Circulaire du 15 juillet 1968," *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale*, n°28, August 1, 1968. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.13.

²⁵ Ministère de l'Éducation, quoted in *L'Amicale pour l'enseignement des étrangers*, *Circulaire de Rentrée*, année scolaire 1970-1971, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

In the late 1960s, the Ministry of Education firmly controlled the education of immigrant workers. It financed FAS, *l'Amicale*, and CLAP, and determined the curriculum of each organization's classes. Yet, state officials were not entirely convinced that their French literacy programs were producing a literate and assimilated population of immigrant workers. Out of the hundreds of thousands of illiterate immigrant workers residing in France, the Ministry of Labor estimated that only 32,178 participated in the government-sponsored programs.²⁷ It blamed the insufficient number of courses as well as the strong "indifference of migrants toward literacy" as the main causes of the Ministry of Education's failure to educate and assimilate immigrants.²⁸

The Ministry of Labor's growing apprehension became more of a public concern in the early 1970s when a series of articles exposing the failures of immigrant education appeared in several popular newspapers. One such article in *Le Monde* set a fearful tone regarding the purported dangers of uneducated immigrants. This article claimed that despite the government's efforts to convince both employers and immigrants of the social and economic benefits of French literacy, both groups remained indifferent to education. The "majority of employers... seem unaware that the literacy of their foreign workforce would promote stabilization and productivity."²⁹ Moreover, *Le Monde* noted that workers were often exhausted from their long workdays and did not have the energy to travel to and attend evening classes. This apathy on the part of both employers and workers meant that a large number of uneducated immigrants were working and living in

²⁷ Commission de la République Française pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture, *Alphabétisation et Promotion des Migrants Étrangers en France*, (Paris: Direction des populations et des migrations du Ministère du travail de l'emploi et de la population, 1971), 44.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

²⁹ Nicole Bernheim, "L'indifférence d'employeurs et l'insuffisance des moyens freinent l'instruction des travailleurs migrants," *Le Monde*, n.d., n.p., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

France. The article estimated that out of the three million foreigners in France, approximately a half million of them were illiterate. In addition to not speaking French, *Le Monde* claimed that a large number of immigrants could neither read nor write in their maternal languages. It warned that the consequence of the government's failed literacy programs was a "situation that radically hampers their professional and social integration."³⁰

In an attempt to solve this perceived social problem, the Ministries of Labor and Education turned to employers who sponsored their own literacy classes for their foreign workers. At the Citroën-Panhard factory in Paris's thirteenth arrondissement, management provided immigrant workers with the pedagogical materials they needed to learn French. It also permitted immigrants to attend French classes during the workday for up to two and a half hours per week.³¹ However, these kinds of programs were uncommon and only reached a small number of workers. In order to increase the overall effectiveness of immigrant education, the Ministries of Labor and Education realized that it needed to make the Citroën-Panhard model the norm. The Minister of Labor therefore required employers to permit immigrant workers to spend one hour of the workday learning to speak and write French. The July 1970 contract between the National Center of French Employers (*Centre national du patronat français*) and workers' unions recognized "the right of workers to take training courses" and "reserved a place for literacy during work hours."³²

³⁰ Nicole Bernheim, "L'indifférence d'employeurs et l'insuffisance des moyens freinent l'instruction des travailleurs migrants," *Le Monde*, n.d., n.p., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Commission de la République Française pour l'Education, la Science et la Culture, *Alphabétisation et Promotion des Migrants Etrangers en France*, (Paris: Direction des populations et des migrations du Ministère du travail de l'emploi et de la population, 1971), 11.

This initiative was effective in promoting French language acquisition among those immigrants who were employed. However, it failed to reach the growing population of young immigrants who were no longer required to attend school, but had not yet obtained a job due to their lack of education and knowledge of the French language. In a memo on “adolescent immigrants”, the Minister of Education noted that French literacy was an indispensable skill for obtaining professional training and social mobility. Yet, young immigrants between the ages of fourteen and eighteen who had aged out of the public school system did not have any opportunities to learn French. Consequently, they were relegated to low-paying and unskilled jobs, which ultimately slowed the process of assimilation.³³

To address this problem, the Ministry of Education charged both FAS and *l'Amicale* with developing professional training and French literacy courses designed specifically for adolescent immigrants. Beginning in 1966, FAS funded French language classes at the Rocheton and Saint-Etienne boardinghouses outside of Paris. According to FAS, these twelve weeks of intensive language instruction not only prepared young immigrants to enter the workforce, but also facilitated their adaptation to French society. FAS described Rocheton as a “happy step in the life of these boys.” “They are comfortable; while being supervised, they are free; they have friends.”³⁴ Rocheton served as a kind of interim period of adaptation that came shortly after young immigrants’ arrival in France, but before they entered the workforce. It was a “short

³³ Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale, Direction de la Coopération avec la Communauté et l’Étranger, “Note relative à l’organisation de stages pour de jeunes immigrants étrangers,” n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

³⁴ Service social d’aide aux émigrants, Service social de la main-d’œuvre étrangère, “Rapport Général 1966,” Presented to the Assemblée Générale June 1, 1967, 3-4. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

acclimation to the French way of life that not only provided them [adolescent immigrants] with knowledge of the [French] language, but also constituted a period of development and adaptation to a life different than they had known before.”³⁵

While the Ministry of Education developed literacy and job training programs to ease adolescent immigrants’ transition into French society, it also began to focus on the education of a different demographic of immigrants: children enrolled in France’s public schools. When the Ministry of Labor recruited male workers to fill France’s labor shortage following the Second World War, it assumed that their migration was temporary. However, after finding stable jobs and adequate housing, male immigrants often brought their wives and children to France. This meant that by the 1960s, the demographic makeup of the immigrant population was quickly changing from primarily young male workers to include women and children.

In June 1970, *l’Amicale* estimated that there were approximately 750,000 immigrant children under the age of sixteen living in France.³⁶ In order to ensure the assimilation of entire families into French society, FAS advocated the implementation of “educational action [that] also reach[ed] the wife and children of the migrant.”³⁷

Convinced of the importance of educating the entire immigrant family, the Ministry of Education funded FAS research to “determine the hours and appropriate methods” for instructing immigrant children in the French language and culture.³⁸ In January 1965, the Ministry of Education charged FAS with subsidizing the Association of pre and

³⁵ Service social d’aide aux émigrants, Service social de la main-d’œuvre étrangère, “Rapport Général 1966,” Presented to the Assemblée Générale June 1, 1967, 3-4. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

³⁶ *L’Amicale pour l’enseignement des étrangers*, “Les enfants des travailleurs étrangers en France,” *Vivre en France*, n°7, June 1970, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

³⁷ Le Fonds d’Action Sociale Pour les Travailleurs Migrants (FAS), *Dix Ans au Service des Etrangers et des Migrants*, 40-42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

postgraduate courses for foreign nationals (*l'Amicale des Cours péri et postsecondaires pour les ressortissants des pays étrangers*) to develop “social promotion courses for immigrant workers, their wives and children in France.”³⁹ Several months later in October, J. Auba, the president of *L'Amicale des Cours péri et postsecondaires* sent a letter informing the director of each of France’s school districts of the necessity of establishing *cours de rattrapage* or remedial French language classes for immigrant children in their respective regions. Auba insisted that French language instruction was essential in that it helped young immigrants catch up as quickly as possible to the educational level of their peers. At the same time, Auba did not want immigrant children to be separated from their French peers. He firmly believed that immersion in French classrooms facilitated immigrant children’s adaptation and assimilation. He therefore stipulated in his letter that the *cours de rattrapage* must take place after school hours as a supplement to the education immigrant children received in public schools.⁴⁰ Although the Ministry of Education required each school district to establish afterschool French language classes for immigrant children, attendance remained voluntary. Because of this, education officials were not confident that the *cours de rattrapage* were reaching a significant number of immigrant children. A December 1968 police study on the increasing number of foreign-born children in Paris’s public schools indicated to the Ministry of Education that the education and assimilation of immigrant children was a social issue that needed

³⁹ Letter from Président de l’Amicale des Cours péri et postsecondaires pour les ressortissants des pays étrangers to Monsieur De Baecque, Conseiller d’Etat, March 10, 1966, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 770641, Art. 31.

⁴⁰ Letter from J. Auba, Président de l’Amicale des Cours péri et postsecondaires pour les ressortissants des pays étrangers to Monsieur l’Inspecteur d’Académie, October 15, 1965, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 770641, Art. 31.

to be addressed.⁴¹ Education officials acted quickly to solve this emerging social “problem”. In 1970, the Ministry of Education established a national program for the education of immigrant children, empowering school officials and teachers to monitor and facilitate immigrants’ assimilation into French society.

Part II. The divergence of Immigrant and Antillean Education Policy: *Classes d’Initiations, Langues et Cultures d’Origines*, and “Intercultural Education”, 1970-1981

Up until 1970, education policy for immigrant and Antillean children was similar. On both sides of the Atlantic, the Ministry of Education implemented programs to rapidly improve immigrant and Antillean children’s acquisition of the French language. Education officials believed that French literacy was the necessary starting point for both immigrants’ and Antilleans’ adaptation to the French way of life, employment, social mobility, and ultimately assimilation into French society. They perceived of both immigrants and Antilleans as cultural “others” whose linguistic and cultural differences threatened their assimilation and thus, the unity of the nation. This changed in 1970 when the Ministry of Education took into account immigrant children’s cultural differences, but remained committed to excluding Antilleans’ Creole language and culture from public schools. It implemented different policies in the Antilles and mainland France as it worked through how to include and exclude each group’s linguistic and cultural particularities from the French nation.

⁴¹ Préfecture de Paris, Inspection Générale, Service d’études et de recherches, “Les élèves étrangers dans les écoles de Paris”, December 1968, 770641, Art. 13.

Classes d'initiation for Immigrant Children in France

Prior to the 1969-1970 school year, the Ministry of Education informed the director of each school district that due to inadequate funds, it was no longer providing financial support for the *cours de rattrapage* as they currently existed. This meant that in November 1969, the number of hours immigrant children spent in these “remedial” classes each week was cut from six to three. In addition, the Ministry of Education financed only one *cours de rattrapage* per school and limited the duration of this course to the first two trimesters of the school year.⁴² In response to these changes, the Ministry of Education and the Association for the Education of Foreigners, the organization charged with promoting immigrant education, received an outpouring of letters from school directors who claimed that these modifications in the *cours de rattrapage* program were detrimental to immigrant children’s education and their transition into French society.⁴³ Teachers and school administrators valued the *cours de rattrapage* as both an educational and social necessity; they worried that cuts in the program were not only harmful to immigrant children’s assimilation, but also the stability of the classroom and more broadly, French society. According to the Director of the School for Girls in Marseille, “[immigrant children’s] transition into society [was] certainly disrupted”

⁴² Letter from L’Inspecteur départemental de l’Education Nationale, Aymeric to Monsieur l’Inspecteur d’Académie, Objet: de l’Enseignement des étrangers, November 24, 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), 770641, Art. 14.

⁴³ For example, see: Letter from Le Directeur du collège to Monsieur le Président et l’Amicale pour l’Enseignement des Etrangers, November 28, 1969; Letter from Le Directeur de l’Ecole publique de garçons de Ceylan to Monsieur le Président de l’Amicale pour l’Enseignement des Etrangers, November 28, 1969; Letter from Monsieur le Directeur Ecole St. Barthélémy to Monsieur l’Inspecteur Départemental de l’Education Nationale chargé des cours de rattrapage, Amicale pour l’Enseignement des Etrangers, November 18, 1969; Letter from Madame la Directrice de l’Ecole de filles de Servières par St. Louis to Monsieur l’Inspecteur Départemental chargé des classes de rattrapage, November 17, 1969; Letter from Directeur de l’Ecole de garçons de Fort Vert to Monsieur le Président de l’Amicale pour l’Enseignement des Etrangers, November 28, 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art. 14.

without the existence of the *cours de rattrapage*.⁴⁴ “The consequences of the disappearance of these courses [was] not only academic, but can also [brought] about profound repercussions from a sociological and political standpoint.”⁴⁵ This director contended that poorly educated and ill-adapted immigrant children fuelled the creation of a politically discontent group within French society.

During the 1969-1970 school year, the Ministry of Education found itself in a difficult position. It viewed the *cours de rattrapage* as a social necessity, but as more and more immigrant children enrolled in public schools, it no longer possessed the funds to finance the program’s increasing number of classes. The current program was such a financial burden because the Ministry of Education had to compensate teachers for the additional hours they spent preparing for and teaching the *cours de rattrapage* after regular school hours. This dilemma compelled education officials to develop a more affordable approach to immigrant education, including the possibility of making the *cours de rattrapage* a part of the normal school day. This decreased the amount of overtime paid to instructors, making the *cours de rattrapage* much more affordable. Moreover, it ensured that all immigrant children attended these classes and received the educational resources they needed to adapt to French society.⁴⁶

On January 13, 1970, the Ministry of Education officially authorized the creation of initiation classes or CLIN (*classes d’initiation*) as the “appropriate method” for assimilating non-Francophone immigrant children into public schools and French

⁴⁴ Letter from La Directrice de l’école de filles, Marseille to Monsieur le Directeur de l’Amicale pour l’enseignement des étrangers, November 12, 1969, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 770641, Art.14.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ministère de l’Education, Circulaire n°IX 70-37, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale*, January 13, 1970. Published in Michel-Patrick de Miras, *La classes d’initiation au français pour enfants non francophones* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2002), 143-145.

society.⁴⁷ Education officials conceived of CLIN classes as a period of transition. During this time, immigrant children were separated from their French peers and placed in “initiation” classes where they quickly acquired the necessary language and academic skills to succeed in French public schools. For the Ministry of Education, “the mastery of the French language” was “an indispensable prerequisite for [immigrant children] to integrate into school” and society.⁴⁸ The CLIN program was about a lot more than French literacy; it was about assimilating immigrant children to the French culture and way of life. Claudine Joseph, a CLIN teacher in the Parisian suburb of Aubervillies, described the *classes d’initiation* as “not just language classes where one learn[ed] to speak French, but also a step toward the insertion of these children in our society, a new society for them where they discover[ed] our culture, our civilization, [and] our customs.”⁴⁹

The Ministry of Education firmly believed that immigrant children needed to be initiated into the French way of life before they were integrated into classrooms with their French peers. This initial period of separation was essential for ensuring immigrant children’s academic success. It purportedly placed them on the path to assimilation, thus securing the stability of the nation. Yet, the Ministry of Education’s decision to create initiation classes was not as simple as it appeared to be. The introduction of the *cours de*

⁴⁷ Ministère de l’Education, Circulaire n°IX 70-37, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale*, January 13, 1970. Published in Michel-Patrick de Miras, *La classes d’initiation au français pour enfants non francophones* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2002), 143-145.

The French government used the term *classe d’initiation* to refer to French language classes for non-Francophone immigrant children at the elementary school level (ages 5-10). The term *classe d’adaptation* describes classes for immigrant children at the middle school level (ages 11-13). Before September 1973, French language classes for immigrant children only existed at the elementary school level.

⁴⁸ Ministère de l’Education Nationale, “Note sur la scolarisation des enfants des migrants étrangers en France,” n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671. Art. 7.

⁴⁹ Claudine Joseph, “Neuf ans dans une classe pour enfants non francophones,” *Vers l’éducation nouvelle* 288 (Decembre 1974): 12-13.

rattrapage into public education meant that immigrant children were separated from their French peers into classes specifically designed for them and their special needs. For the Ministry of Education, this was equivalent to acknowledging immigrant children as a culturally distinct group requiring particular considerations. This kind of recognition challenged the ideal of republican equality. Up until this point, the Ministry of Education used the discourse of republicanism to argue that immigrant children were not to receive a different education from their French peers; they needed to be immediately integrated into classrooms with French students. In the early 1970s, the Ministry of Education searched for a way to reconcile its republican ideals with what it perceived to be the social necessity of creating separate classes to assimilate immigrant children in an efficient and affordable manner.

The Minister of Education, Olivier Guichard, was wary of the CLIN program's potential challenges to republicanism. In the early 1970s, distinct political and cultural groups, such as Antilleans, were arguing for their cultural rights.⁵⁰ Because of this political atmosphere, Guichard wanted to ensure that these groups did not characterize CLIN classes as a government program that advocated the recognition of diversity. He did not want Antilleans and other cultural groups to appropriate the CLIN program as a symbol of their struggle for the "right to difference." In an attempt to prevent this kind of political cooptation, Guichard deliberately constructed the CLIN program as a continuation of the republican ideal of universal education. He argued that CLIN fulfilled the French republic's mission of offering free, obligatory, and secular education to all children residing in France. The CLIN program ensured that "all foreign children

⁵⁰ For more on the emergence of Antillean ethnic activism in France, see chapter 2. For a discussion of Antilleans' claims for cultural rights in Guadeloupe and Martinique, see chapter 3.

between the ages of 6 and 16...have the same opportunities available to them” and “under the same conditions as French children.”⁵¹ According to the Ministry of Education, the CLIN program upheld republican equality by providing all children, regardless of their nationality, with the right to an education.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education’s justification for the separation of immigrant and French children into distinct classes constructed CLIN as a republican program that promoted complete assimilation. Guichard insisted that the differential treatment of immigrant children was only temporary. In the written proclamation establishing the creation of CLIN classes, Guichard was adamant that the main objective of the initiation classes was “to insert foreign children as quickly as possible into a normal cycle of studies.”⁵² This meant that the time an immigrant child spent in the CLIN program was limited to either one semester or one trimester. In less than a year, the Ministry of Education expected immigrant children to be fully integrated into classes with their French peers. Guichard also stipulated that this period of temporary separation was not meant to cut immigrant children completely off from the activities of their French classmates. He encouraged CLIN teachers to periodically facilitate contact between immigrant children and their French peers by allowing them to participate in French students’ non-scholastic activities, such as music, art, and physical education.⁵³

One week after authorizing the creation of CLIN classes, the Ministry of Education published in the “Official Bulletin” an explanation regarding its decision to develop a separate education program for immigrant children. According to the Ministry

⁵¹ Ministère de l’Education Nationale, “Note sur la scolarisation des enfants des migrants étrangers en France,” n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671. Art. 7.

⁵² Ministère de l’Education, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale* (19 Janvier 1970). Quoted in Louis Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France* (Paris: CREDIF, 1978), 75.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

of Education, the CLIN program was a part of France's republican ideals. It did not recognize immigrant children's cultural differences; rather, it was a necessary program that facilitated immigrant children's academic success and placed them on the path to assimilation and equality:

The acquisition of the French language can only be done easily (that is to say as quickly and with firmness) if one puts them [immigrant children] apart [from French children]. . . Once this linguistic mastery is established, one can reasonably hope that the foreign students will find themselves on an equal scholastic standing with their French peers. They will then reintegrate themselves, well-equipped, into the normal pedagogical track with the same opportunities of success equal to that of French natives. Having abolished their biggest handicap, they are now in a state of educational equality.⁵⁴

For the Ministry of Education, the CLIN program was a solution to France's "problem" of unassimilated immigrants who did not speak French and had no knowledge of the French culture. Education officials insisted that classes tailored to immigrant children's specific linguistic needs were necessary to ensure their acquisition of the French language. CLIN prevented immigrant children from falling further and further behind their French peers. Educators' feared the possibility of immigrant children reaching adulthood without mastering the French language. The inability to speak and understand French made it difficult for them to obtain employment and thus, assimilation into French society.⁵⁵

The Ministry of Education insisted that the period of temporary separation in CLIN classes prevented the formation of "ghettos" and the marginalization of immigrant children within French public schools: "It is not about isolating them [immigrant children], but only about giving them the period of time that they need to adapt

⁵⁴ Ministère de l'Éducation, *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* (19 Janvier 1970). Quoted in Louis Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France* (Paris: CREDIF, 1978), 121.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 120-129.

themselves to a new situation. Thus, it is not a ghetto, but, on the contrary, it is an effort to avoid it.”⁵⁶ CLIN classes eradicated future marginalization by affording immigrant children the necessary time to learn the French language and assimilate the French culture. In granting immigrant children a finite period of time to acquire what the Ministry of Education referred to as *capital culturel* or “cultural capital”, CLIN classes provided immigrant children with the “same opportunities of success equal to that of French natives.”⁵⁷ In other words, the Ministry of Education claimed that the CLIN program granted immigrants *égalité de chances* or an equal opportunity to succeed.⁵⁸ In this way, it upheld the nation’s Republican ideals.

Despite the Ministry of Education’s insistence that the CLIN program created equality and was in line with the nation’s republican values, it remained extremely controversial throughout the 1970s. It became the center of the public debate concerning the perceived “problem” of immigration. Education specialists and scholars used the forum of education journals to debate the CLIN program’s effectiveness and how it either contributed to or confronted the “immigration problem”. On one side of the debate, certain education specialists supported the Ministry of Education’s construction of CLIN as a solution to the “immigration problem.” In 1974, one scholar of elementary education

⁵⁶ Ministère de l’Éducation, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Éducation Nationale* (19 Janvier 1970). Quoted in Louis Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France* (Paris: CREDIF, 1978), 121-122.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

⁵⁸ According to the French Republican tradition, equal opportunity (*égalité de chances*) promotes equality in society by providing all individuals with the same opportunities to succeed. *Égalité de chances* sharply contrasts with the Anglo-Saxon or American tradition of “equality of outcome” or “positive discrimination” (affirmative action), which promotes social equality by ensuring that all minority groups achieve the same social status or “outcome” as the majority. In contrast to French “equal opportunity”, which ignores ethnic and cultural difference as an obstacle to social success, American “equality of outcome” recognizes that group differences may prevent minority groups from achieving the same success (outcome) as the majority. According to proponents of “equality of outcome”, *égalité de chances* does not create social equality, and the government must therefore implement “positive discrimination” or affirmative action in order to ensure minority groups’ social success (“equality of outcome”). See Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*.

presented her analysis of CLIN in the journal *Vers l'Éducation Nouvelle*. She concluded that the *classes d'initiation* provided foreign children with “the same rights, the same means, and the same opportunities as the others [French children]” and were therefore an indispensable part of Republican education.⁵⁹ She argued that CLIN classes granted immigrant children an “equal opportunity” to learn French. They ensured that immigrants “truly benefitted from obligatory education in France”, and became assimilated and productive members of society.⁶⁰

In contrast, others argued that CLIN classes were minority “ghettos” that marginalized non-Francophone children and their differences. Jacques Berque was one of CLIN’s most outspoken critics. Born to French parents in Algeria, he was a *pied-noir* (French national born in Algeria) and a prominent Islamic scholar and sociologist who supported Algerian independence. He was also an early defender of the right of Arab immigrants in France to be different in a multicultural society. As a proponent of the “right to difference” in France, Berque perceived of CLIN as a program of assimilation aimed at erasing immigrant children’s cultural differences and keeping diversity out of public education. In a report for the Ministry of Education, Berque described immigrant classrooms as “the CLIN ‘ghetto’ or ‘cocoon’ [that] is in every way too often marginalized in relationship to the rest of the school.”⁶¹ A year of exclusion in CLIN classes psychologically stigmatized immigrant children as separate and “ill adapted” children.⁶² Berque believed that the separation of immigrant children from their French

⁵⁹ Hélène Gratiot-Alphandéry, “Les enfants de migrants,” *Vers l'éducation nouvelle* 278 (Decembre 1974): 10.

⁶⁰ Ministère de l'Éducation, *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale* (19 Janvier 1970). Quoted in Louis Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 121.

⁶¹ Jacques Berque, *L'immigration à l'école de la République: rapport d'un groupe de réflexion animé par le professeur Jacques Berque au Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale* (Paris: CNDP, 1985), 10-11.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 27-29.

peers wrongly highlighted immigrants' cultural differences as the social "problem" that needed to be solved. For him, immigrants' adaptation to French society stemmed from accepting and integrating their cultural diversity into classrooms, not excluding it.

Louis Porcher also condemned the Ministry of Education's policy on immigrant education. Like Berque, Porcher was a sociologist and proponent of cultural and linguistic diversity in education. For him, republicanism and the acceptance of difference were not incompatible. He argued that the incorporation of immigrants' cultural diversity into the classroom integrated them into society and prevented their marginalization as "outsiders". According to Porcher, the inclusion of immigrants and their cultures promoted equality and was thus the fulfillment of republicanism. In contrast, it was the CLIN program that kept immigrants on the margins of public education and society and marked them as "different". In a 1978 study for the Center of Study and Research for the Diffusion of French (CREDIF), Porcher asserted that "foreign children are naturally separate in French school by their inability to speak French and their different cultural practices." The CLIN program highlighted immigrant children's difference even more by segregating them in special classes. Porcher contended that "it is necessary to promote a system of education such that it reduces this 'strangeness' (or this marginalization)."⁶³ For Porcher, this meant ending immigrant children's separation in CLIN classes and placing them in classrooms with their French peers. He claimed that this kind of integration erased the stigma of difference associated with immigrant children and facilitated their integration not only into the French school system, but also the nation as a whole.

⁶³ Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 123.

Both Porcher and Berque advocated for the introduction of immigrant children's cultural particularities into public education. However, they did so with the assumption that this type of integrative education policy would ultimately lead to immigrant children's assimilation. In their respective studies, both noted that the acquisition of French occurred more quickly when immigrant children regularly interacted and communicated with their French peers.⁶⁴ Porcher's and Berque's support for integration was not a call for multiculturalism. Rather, they believed that through integration and constant contact with the French language and culture, immigrant children assimilated into French society. Although Porcher and Berque may have opposed the CLIN program, they agreed with the Ministry of Education that assimilation was the main goal of immigrant education policy. They simply advocated integration and not separation as the means through which to achieve this common goal. Whereas the Ministry of Education argued that temporary separation was necessary so that immigrant children were focused on quickly acquiring the French language, Porcher and Berque insisted that immediate integration was the most effective way to assimilate immigrant children.

Porcher's and Berque's critiques of separation were a part of a larger debate concerning the ineffectiveness of CLIN in solving the immigration "problem". In the mid-1970s, a series of academic studies appearing in popular education journals characterized the CLIN program as a complete failure. These studies warned its readers, mostly educators and policymakers, that the nearly one million immigrant children attending public schools in France were not achieving the same academic success as their French peers. They remained unassimilated and in a state of psychological confusion

⁶⁴ Berque, *L'immigration à l'école de la République*, 27-29.
Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 120-125.

between French culture and their culture of origin.⁶⁵ Moreover, these studies predicted that this “problem” was only getting worse as more and more immigrants and their families settled in France.⁶⁶ This mounting concern about the dangers of a large population of unassimilated foreigners forced the Ministry of Education to reevaluate the effectiveness of separation in promoting assimilation. It began to consider Porcher’s and Berque’s calls for integration as an alternative strategy and possible solution to the assimilation problem.

Simultaneously, across the Atlantic, Antilleans also placed pressure on the Ministry of Education to integrate their Creole language and culture into public education. For example, as discussed in chapter 4, Gérard Lauriette, an outspoken teacher and activist, was the leader of the local movement to end the ban on the Creole. For Lauriette, Creole and French citizenship were not incompatible. He argued for the use of Creole in public schools as a pedagogical tool that enabled Antillean children to quickly acquire the French language, achieve academic success, and become productive members of French society.⁶⁷ Throughout the 1970s, the Ministry of Education vehemently opposed Lauriette’s teaching philosophy and continued to impose the ban on Creole. Yet, in metropolitan France, the Ministry of Education began to consider the possibility of teaching immigrant children their maternal languages and cultures as a way to facilitate their integration into French society. It perceived of Lauriette’s Creole

⁶⁵ For example see: Pierre Grange and Pierre Chereil, “Les enfants de partout et l’école française,” *Hommes et Migrations* (1975); Christine Heredia-Deprez, “Apprendre une autre langue,” *Vers l’éducation nouvelle*, no.289 (Janvier-Février 1975): 7-13; Andre Meury, “Enfants D’Immigrés: Des étrangers dans la classe,” *Le Monde de l’Éducation* (Février 1975): 7-10 ; Postel-Vinay et al, “Enfants de Travailleurs Migrants,” *L’Éducation et développement*, no.spécial (Mai 1975).

⁶⁶ The pedagogical journal *Vers l’Éducation Nouvelle* reported that as of January 1973 nearly one million immigrant children attended French public schools. See: Hélène Gratiot-Alphandéry, “Les enfants de migrants,” *Vers l’éducation nouvelle* 278 (Decembre 1974): 5.

⁶⁷ See chapter 4, especially the section “Lauriette’s Creole Pedagogy.”

pedagogy as a potential danger to France's and the Antilles' political and cultural union, but in metropolitan France, the Ministry of Education believed that his philosophy might prove to be the solution to the immigration "problem".

Langues et Cultures d'Origines in Metropolitan France and the Exclusion of Creole

In February 1973, the Ministry of Education invited foreign teachers to come to France and instruct immigrant children in their "languages and cultures of origin". These classes, referred to as the LCO program, took place after school hours as a supplement to immigrant children's French schooling. LCO classes did not recognize the place of diversity within public education. Rather, the Ministry of Education conceived of the program as a reinforcement of its assimilation policy. It contended that immigrant children's mastery of their maternal languages augmented their general literacy skills, and facilitated their acquisition of French. In his argument for LCO instruction, the Minister of Education, Joseph Fontanet, claimed that according to educational studies of bilingual immigrant children, "maternal language courses, far from harming the scholastic achievement of the student, only facilitated it."⁶⁸ Fontanet's reasoning closely resembled Lauriette's argument for the use of Creole in Antillean schools as a stepping-stone to the French language, and ultimately assimilation.⁶⁹ Yet, Fontanet remained strongly opposed to Lauriette's linguistic philosophy because according to him, acceptance of Creole's presence in public education was equivalent to recognizing Antilleans' unique cultural identities. Fontanet argued that the acknowledgement of

⁶⁸ *Bulletin Officiel de l'Education Nationale*, "Circulaire du 2 Février 1973." Quoted in Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 80.

⁶⁹ See chapter 4, especially the section "Lauriette's Creole Pedagogy."

difference threatened the process of assimilation, as well as the cultural unity of the nation.

On the one hand, the Ministry of Education recognized the benefits of maternal language instruction, but on the other hand, it also viewed such instruction as challenge to its assimilation policy. The Ministry of Education struggled with wanting to carve out a space for immigrant children's languages and cultures while upholding the ban on Creole in the Antilles. Before its decision in 1973 to implement the LCO program, the Ministry of Education privileged French language instruction to the exclusion of immigrants' and Antilleans' languages and culture. It therefore wanted to ensure that its decision to promote immigrant children's maternal languages, but not Creole, was not interpreted as a policy of differential treatment. The Ministry of Education wished to maintain the universality of public education in France, which purported to provide all children in France and its overseas departments with the same education. In other words, it did not want the LCO program to be perceived of as a kind of special treatment for immigrant children.

For this reason, the Ministry of Education adamantly insisted that LCO instruction take place after regular school hours.⁷⁰ The LCO program was very different from Lauriette's Creole pedagogy, which advocated the use of Creole in Antillean classrooms during regular school hours. The Ministry of Education viewed Lauriette's Creole pedagogy as a challenge to universal education in that it proposed changes to the national curriculum. In contrast, under the LCO program, maternal language classes were not a

⁷⁰ The *circulaire* establishing the LCO program specifically stated that foreign teachers were prohibited from instructing foreign students in their languages and cultures of origin during official school hours. *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale*, "Circulaire du 2 Février 1973." Published in Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 80.

part of the national curriculum; they were an extracurricular activity that immigrant children elected to participate in. During the school day, immigrant children, like Antilleans, remained focused on learning French in classrooms where French was the sole language of communication and instruction. The Ministry of Education used this reasoning to justify its decision to permit LCO instruction while it continued to ban Creole. It argued that education in both metropolitan France and the Antilles remained universal. The curriculum during regular school hours was the same; the only difference was that immigrant children had the opportunity to learn their maternal languages as a part of their extracurricular activities.

The Ministry of Education insisted that universal education prevailed and that its education policies concerning linguistic diversity in metropolitan France and the Antilles remained the same. However, in practice its decision to exclusively permit LCO instruction in continental France instituted a hierarchy of cultural difference. In addition to stipulating that LCO classes only be held after normal school hours, the Ministry of Education also required the foreign governments of LCO teachers to enter into bilateral agreements with the French nation.⁷¹ This ensured that the Ministry of Education controlled not only how and the extent to which it included diversity in public education, but also the specific cultures and languages that entered the nation. In the mid-1970s, the French government used what it perceived to be certain immigrants' ethnic and cultural proximity to France to inform immigration policy and dictate who could enter the nation. When contrasted with the new wave of western and northern African immigrants who had recently settled in France, the past generations of southern and eastern European

⁷¹ *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale*, "Circulaire du 2 Février 1973." Published in Porcher, ed., *La scolarisation des enfants étrangers en France*, 80.

immigrants appeared to be more culturally similar to French citizens, and thus more desirable and less threatening to national unity.⁷²

The Ministry of Education applied the same standards of cultural proximity to its education policies. Shortly after the establishment of the LCO program, southern and eastern European nations entered into agreements with the Ministry of Education, permitting the instruction of Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.⁷³ In contrast, the Ministry of Education sought to keep northern and western African languages and cultures out of public education, and refused to include Arabic as an official language of the LCO program until the early 1980s.⁷⁴ Similarly, Antilleans' culture and language was considered too different, and the Ministry of Education continued to uphold the ban on Creole throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s. In choosing to only accept southern and eastern European immigrants' languages and cultures as a part of afterschool programming, the Ministry of Education carved out a space, albeit limited, for a specific kind of diversity in public education. Difference was not dangerous as long as the Ministry of Education controlled its terms and as long as it was not too dissimilar from French culture. Antilleans' Creole language and culture did not meet these criteria.

⁷² For a discussion of the "racialization" of immigration and the concept of "assimilability" that informed France's immigration policies in the 1970s, see Silverman's *Deconstructing the Nation*, especially chapters 3 and 4.

⁷³ Between 1973 and 1977, the Ministry of Education entered into agreements with Italy, Spain, and Portugal to recruit teachers to come to France and instruct immigration children in their respective languages. See: Letter from Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale to Messieurs les Recteurs, les Inspecteurs d'Académie, "Objet: Enseignement de l'Italien à l'intention des élèves italiens scolarisés dans l'enseignement élémentaire," Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 7. Letter from Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale à Messieurs les Recteurs, les Inspecteurs d'Académie, "Relative à l'enseignement du portugais à l'intention des élèves portugais scolarisés dans l'enseignement élémentaire," 19 janvier 1973, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6. Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, "Relève des conclusions de la réunion d'experts touchant l'éducation des enfants espagnols en France," les 26 et 27 avril 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6.

⁷⁴ "Enseignement de la langue et de la civilisation arabes aux enfants algériens fréquentant les écoles élémentaires française", *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale*, no. 82-164 (8 Avril 1982).

The Ministry of Education's refusal to permit the use of Creole in Antillean classrooms secured Antilleans' place as cultural outsiders whose difference challenged national integrity. Bilingualism was a possibility for culturally similar immigrants who had proven their assimilability. However, for Antilleans, bilingual education prevented Creole-speaking children from becoming assimilated French-speaking citizens.⁷⁵

In 1975, the Ministry of Education's policies on immigrant and Antillean education diverged even further when it decided to permit LCO instruction during normal school hours. In an official bulletin to the head administrators of each school district, the Ministry of Education announced that "certain school districts are [now] authorized to integrate [immigrant] language courses into the school day for three hours each week."⁷⁶ As a part of the regular school day, immigrant children's linguistic diversity was integrated into the national curriculum. When he was the Minister of Education (July 1972 to May 1974), Fontanet insisted that because LCO instruction was an extracurricular program, it did not recognize the place of diversity in the classroom and therefore, was not a challenge to universal education. In 1975, the new Minister of Education, René Haby, was forced to explain how the new LCO program fit into universal education. The Ministry of Education was unable to continue to claim that its policies concerning linguistic diversity in metropolitan France and the Antilles were the

⁷⁵ For education officials' interpretation of bilingual education as detrimental to Antilleans' acquisition of the French language and assimilation see: "Une interview de Madame Paulette URGIN, Inspectrice départementale de l'Éducation Nationale," *Magazine Guadeloupe 2000*, June 1975, 9. Paulette Urgan, "Comment améliorer le français en Guadeloupe," 1976, 1, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26. Madame Lamy, Directrice de l'École Mixte de Trenelle "B" à Fort-de-France, "Adaptation de l'enseignement du français aux enfants dont la langue maternelle est le créole, Rapport de synthèse, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 800285, Art. 13. Also see chapter 4, especially page 61.

⁷⁶ Ministre de l'Éducation, *Circulaire n°75-148*, "Enseignements de langues nationales à l'intention d'élèves immigrés, dans le cadre du tiers temps des écoles élémentaires," *Bulletin Officiel de l'Éducation Nationale*, April 15-17, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6.

same. Immigrant children received instruction in their maternal languages during the normal school day, but Antilleans did not.

Education interculturelle or “intercultural education” was the Ministry of Education’s attempt to reconcile the implementation of these differential policies while still adhering to the republican ideal of universal education. Intercultural education was not unique to France. It was a set of strategies, programs, and policies that recognized and sought to resolve the specific educational issues arising in multicultural and multiracial societies.⁷⁷ The Ministry of Education’s decision to permit LCO instruction during regular school hours was a part of this new policy of intercultural education. However, according to Haby, intercultural education was not a move toward multiculturalism. Rather, he argued that this change in the LCO program was merely a new and better strategy to promote immigrant children’s assimilation.

In May 1975, the National Labor Union of Teachers in France (USNEF) wrote to Haby condemning his decision to permit LCO instruction during the normal school day. USNEF’s general secretary, Claude Teboul, claimed that the LCO program did not uphold the ideal of equality that defined France’s universal education. It “formalized discrimination between the students attending our schools: French children and foreign children.”⁷⁸ For the USNEF, LCO instruction highlighted immigrant children’s differences, widening the cultural divide between French and immigrant children. The Ministry of Education refuted these claims in an official bulletin, arguing that it was

⁷⁷ For a more detailed description of intercultural education in post World War II France, see: Louis Porcher, *The education of the children of migrant workers in Europe: Interculturalism and teacher training* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1981).

⁷⁸ Letter from Claude Teboul, le Secrétaire Général pour le Bureau National de l’U.S.N.E.F, Union Syndicale National des Enseignants de France to Monsieur le Ministre de l’Education, May 21, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6.

“erroneous to think that in recognizing the specificity of the national cultures of foreign children, one runs the risk of estranging them from the French culture.”⁷⁹ The Ministry of Education argued that marginalization was more of a possibility when LCO instruction was strictly an extracurricular program. Before the change in policy, foreign teachers controlled the content of their classes, making it difficult for local and national school officials to oversee immigrant children’s education. In 1975, when LCO instruction became a part of the national curriculum, the Ministry of Education finally possessed the ability to dictate the terms under which diversity was incorporated into public education. Haby claimed that the new policy enabled school officials to ensure that the outcome of LCO instruction was equality and assimilation.⁸⁰

For the Ministry of Education, the LCO program was a precarious balance between diversity and assimilation. It recognized that “foreign students, who have a working knowledge of both languages, as well as contact with both cultures, [were] capable of experiencing a particularly enriching education.”⁸¹ At the same time, the Ministry of Education worried that the integration of difference into public classrooms hindered immigrant children’s assimilation. Education officials therefore sought to control diversity’s place in public education by dictating which schools welcomed foreign teachers and LCO instruction into their institutions. The official bulletin authorizing LCO classes during regular school hours stipulated that “this type of instruction can only be instituted in schools where the number of immigrant children

⁷⁹ Ministère de l’Education, “Scolarisation des enfants immigrés”, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale* no.78-238 (25 July 1978).

⁸⁰ Letter from J. Deygout, le Directeur des Ecoles to Monsieur le Secrétaire Général de l’USNEF, June 20, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6.

⁸¹ Ministère de l’Education, “Scolarisation des enfants immigrés”, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale* no.78-238 (25 July 1978).

from the same nationality justifies it.”⁸² Accordingly, the Ministry of Education determined which schools possessed a large enough immigrant population to justify the creation of LCO classes, and then informed these schools’ directors of the changes that were taking place in their schools.⁸³ The Minister of Education contended that this stipulation limited LCO instruction to only those school districts that absolutely required it. It contained the introduction of diversity into public schools, ensuring that French and immigrant children continued to receive the same universal education.

Over the next two years, the Ministry of Education took even more steps to guarantee its control of LCO instruction. In 1976 and 1977, Haby authorized the creation of several Training and Information Centers for the Education of Migrant Children (CEFISEM) throughout France. These centers were branches of France’s teaching colleges. They put in place the necessary administrative and institutional support for the Ministry of Education to dictate the content of LCO classes. In the “Official Bulletin”, Haby stipulated that all “employees who intervene in the schools [with LCO programs] and particularly, the foreign teachers who instruct in [their] national languages” are required to attend workshops at CEFISEM centers.⁸⁴ During these training sessions, the Ministry of Education explained the LCO curriculum and detailed exactly how teachers were to educate immigrant children about their maternal languages and cultures.⁸⁵ The Ministry of Education created this CEFISEM bureaucracy to ensure that the LCO

⁸² Ministre de l’Education, *Circulaire n°75-148*, “Enseignements de langues nationales à l’intention d’élèves immigrés, dans le cadre du tiers temps des écoles élémentaires,” *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale*, April 15-17, 1975, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Ministère de l’Education, “Scolarisation des enfants immigrés”, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale* no.78-238 (25 Juillet 1978).

⁸⁵ Ministère de l’Education, “Situation des maîtres étrangers chargés de dispenser un enseignement en leur langue nationale aux enfants immigrés scolarisés dans les écoles élémentaires françaises”, *Bulletin Officiel de l’Education Nationale*, no. 29b (28 July 1977).

program did not pave the way to multiculturalism. Haby acceded to incorporating a limited form of diversity into public schools as long as he could closely monitor it, and as long as assimilation remained the most important goal of immigrant education policy.

While Haby developed the Ministry of Education's plan to oversee the incorporation of immigrants' languages and cultures into public education, he nevertheless remained committed to prohibiting the use of Creole in Antillean schools. The Ministry of Education insisted that this divergence in policies did not constitute differential treatment of immigrants and Antilleans. Rather, they were two different strategies that pursued the singular goal of universal education: assimilation. The Ministry of Education believed that in order to achieve assimilation in both metropolitan France and the Antilles, it needed to implement specific policies that fit the political and cultural circumstances of each group and place. In 1970s France, the Ministry of Education used LCO instruction to confront the immigration "problem", which was purportedly the result of second-generation immigrants' refusal to assimilate. Their supposed rejection of republican ideals constituted a threat to national stability. Social scientists concluded that this new generation of young immigrants was not assimilated because it was "between two cultures". These French-born children of immigrants were a lost generation of young people who were disconnected from their countries of origin, but also felt that they did not belong in France.

The Ministry of Education conceived of the LCO program as a solution to this psychological issue preventing immigrant children from assimilating. In a memo on LCO policy, Haby noted the "positive effects of this [LCO] instruction, of which the most important is, without a doubt, the removal of psychological barriers initially born

from a sense of belonging to another culture that is not recognized as such by the school system.”⁸⁶ The LCO program’s “dual objective [was to] facilitate their [immigrant children’s] adaptation to school and to French society while avoiding cutting them off from their linguistic and cultural roots.”⁸⁷ According to the Ministry of Education, LCO instruction helped immigrant children gradually adapt to French schools and was thus, the first step in the process of assimilation.

In contrast, the Ministry of Education perceived of Creole as a direct challenge to Antilleans’ assimilation. During the 1960s and 1970s, supporters of Antillean independence appropriated Creole and made it the symbol of Antilleans’ cultural difference. They argued that because Antilleans possessed a distinct culture, they also constituted an independent nation separate from France.⁸⁸ Because Creole was inextricably linked to the independence movement, the Ministry of Education remained committed to the ban on Creole. In February 1977, the “Commission on the Teaching of French in the DOM-TOM” recommended that the Ministry of Education’s “efforts must remain focused on the acquisition of French.”⁸⁹ Education officials wanted to prevent nationalists from interpreting the Ministry of Education’s potential acceptance of Creole instruction as the recognition of Antilleans’ cultural difference and thus, their political status as an independent nation. The French government was struggling to politically and culturally unite France and the Antilles into one nation. Antilleans were French citizens,

⁸⁶ *Ministre de l’Éducation Nationale, “Utilisation éventuelle des enseignements en langue nationale destinés aux enfants immigrés scolarisés dans les écoles et collèges français,”* n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 890213, Art. 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ For more discussion on the nationalists’ politicization of Creole as a symbol of Antillean independence, see Chapter 3, especially Part II entitled “The Nationalization of Creole.”

⁸⁹ *Ministère de l’Éducation, Commission sur l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Comptes-rendu du réunion plénière, January 24, 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.*

but according to DOM and Education officials, they were not culturally assimilated. In a report submitted to Haby, the “Commission on the Teaching of French in the DOM-TOM” cited the statistic that only fifty percent of Antilleans spoke Creole as proof of Antilleans’ failure to assimilate.⁹⁰ Moreover, at a press conference in Fort-de-France, Haby complained that the “situation of the Creole language” persisted in the Antilles. Creole was “the maternal language of [Antillean] children spoken in their family, not French.”⁹¹ For the Ministry of Education, Antilleans’ Creole culture and language threatened their assimilation, which was fragile at best in the 1970s.

The Ministry of Education refused to lift the ban on Creole because such a change in policy accepted the fact that despite Antilleans’ status as French citizens, they possessed a different language and culture. This acknowledgement threatened the cultural unity of the nation and introduced the possibility of an alternative way of being French—one that recognized cultural differences. LCO instruction and the recognition of immigrant languages and cultures did not pose a threat to national unity because immigrants and their families constituted a particular type of diversity that existed outside the nation. In 1974, the French government banned immigration, arguing that France had reached its “threshold of tolerance.” This meant that the government needed to work on assimilating the immigrants already settled in France before it welcomed any more into the nation. Following this change in policy, the government implemented a series of policies designed to encourage immigrants’ repatriation. The LCO program was a part of

⁹⁰ Ministère de l’Éducation, Commission sur l’enseignement du français dans les DOM-TOM, Comptendu du réunion plénière, January 24, 1977, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

⁹¹ René Haby, press conference at the offices of the Academy of Fort-de-France, April 5, 1976, quoted in “Stage académique sur l’enseignement du français aux Antilles”, December 13-15, 1976, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

these repatriation efforts. In permitting “home country” governments to send teachers to France to instruct immigrant children in their “mother tongues”, the Ministry of Education hoped to prepare immigrant families for their eventual return to their countries of origin. In two separate pamphlets concerning immigrant education, Haby argued that one of the objectives of LCO instruction was “to help [immigrant children] maintain a working knowledge of the maternal language and contact with the culture of origin in order to preserve the cultural identity of the immigrant child and to enable his eventual return to his country [of origin].”⁹² Even though it was increasingly apparent that immigration was in fact permanent, the Ministry of Education tried to reverse this trend. It clung to the idea that immigration was temporary. Haby justified LCO instruction during school hours by arguing that it provided immigrants with the linguistic and cultural tools they needed to repatriate. LCO classes were not about carving out a place for immigrants’ languages and cultures in public education. Rather, it was a solution to the “immigration problem.” In encouraging immigrants to return home, Haby argued that LCO instruction preserved France’s national and cultural unity.

The Ministry of Education’s view of LCO instruction contrasted sharply with its perception of Creole. Whereas LCO instruction was the solution to the “problem” of diversity, Creole was the problem. In contrast to immigrants who remained outside of the nation as cultural others who would eventually return to their homelands, Antilleans were French citizens. This meant that the inclusion of their cultural and linguistic differences

⁹² Ministère de l’Éducation, “Les Enfants Étrangers dans le premier degré,” n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6. See also: “Scolarisation des enfants d’immigrés”, *Le Courrier de l’Éducation, Bulletin d’information du Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale*, no.43, January 17, 1977, p. 5. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 900671, Art. 6; Ministère de l’Éducation, “Scolarisation des enfants immigrés,” *Bulletin Officiel de l’Éducation Nationale*, no. 78-283, July 25, 1978.

in public education challenged the policy of assimilation requiring Antilleans to give up all of their group and particular affiliations in favor of French citizenship. For the time being, the only way to achieve assimilation in the Antilles was to ensure that Creole remained excluded from public schools and outside of the nation.

Part III. Creole Challenges to Republican Education: the “Right to Difference” and the “Creole Bomb”

In the late 1970s, the Ministry of Education remained publicly committed to enforcing the ban on Creole, and upholding its assimilation policy. Yet, in private, it entertained the idea of implementing a trial program to determine how Creole’s presence in schools affected Antillean children’s academic success and their assimilation. In November 1978 and January 1979, the newly appointed Minister of Education, Christian Beullac, and the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Education, Jacques Pelletier, made official visits to Martinique and Guadeloupe in order to assess the present state of education in the islands. In a memo regarding these visits, Beullac noted that despite the ban on Creole, Antillean children remained academically behind their French peers due to “the [persistent] use of Creole by the students, and often by the teachers.”⁹³ The dismal state of Antillean education in the late 1970s forced Beullac to realize that the Creole ban had not facilitated improvements in Antillean children’s French literacy. Because of this, Beullac decided that the Ministry of Education needed to develop a new strategy to solve the “problem” of Antillean education and assimilation.

⁹³ “Schéma de la communication du Secrétaire d’Etat auprès du Ministre de l’Education concernant son voyage aux Antilles,” January 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 6.

Creole as a Solution to the “Problem” of Antillean Education

The Ministry of Education turned to the work of J. Oliel, a teacher of French descent who drew upon his experiences in a middle-school in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe to develop a new pedagogical method for teaching French to Antillean children. In his published study, “Teaching French in Creole-speaking Regions”, Oliel challenged the Ministry of Education to adapt the curriculum in Guadeloupe and Martinique so that it took into account the unique linguistic situation in the islands. Despite French’s status as the national language, Creole remained Antilleans’ maternal language. He argued that in requiring teachers to use the same methods to teach French in both metropolitan France and the Antilles, the Ministry of Education ignored how Creole affected the manner in which Antillean children learned French.⁹⁴

According to Oliel, it was impractical to expect non-native French speakers to learn French in the same way as native French speakers: “Our difficulties come when we try to teach French to Creole-speakers using the methods and manuals that were conceived for French-speakers.”⁹⁵ Oliel contended the Antillean children did not properly speak and write French because of the Ministry of Education’s refusal to accept the fact that Antillean children required a different curriculum tailored to their specific linguistic needs. Oliel warned the Ministry of Education that Antillean children’s academic failures had much more serious social and economic implications. In order to “succeed professionally, [and] socially, it is necessary [for Antilleans] to obtain diplomas,

⁹⁴ J. Oliel, *Enseignement du Français en milieu créolophone: aspects pratiques du bilinguisme franco-créole. Le Bilinguisme Franco-Créole ou la difficulté d’enseigner le français en milieu créolophone* (Guadeloupe, CDDP, 1979), 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

[or] in other words, demonstrate that one can correctly express himself in French.”⁹⁶

Oliel claimed that Antillean children who failed to learn French remained “maladjusted” into adulthood, contributing to the already fragile social and economic state of the Antilles.

Oliel insisted that bilingualism was the answer to the Antilles’ social and economic problems. He argued that instead of banning Creole and privileging French, educators needed to “imagine their coexistence”.⁹⁷ According to Oliel, Creole was a “pedagogical tool” that helped Antillean children master the French language and achieve their full educational potential. The Creole ban created linguistic confusion for Antillean children who were unable to distinguish between the Creole and French languages. Most Antillean children spoke what Oliel referred to as a “degraded” form of French containing many “Creolisms” or Creole words and grammatical structures.⁹⁸ Because of this, Oliel claimed that Antillean children failed to comprehend correctly spoken and written French, a necessity for academic success. Oliel contended that a policy of bilingualism enabled Antillean children to differentiate between the two languages, ensuring that they spoke and understood proper French as it was spoken across the Atlantic in metropolitan France. In other words, for Oliel, bilingualism facilitated assimilation.

Oliel was not the first educator to suggest that lifting the ban on Creole was essential for improving Antillean education. As discussed in chapter 4, Lauriette began to argue for the introduction of Creole into Antillean public schools more than thirty years before the publication of Oliel’s study. The only difference between their two

⁹⁶ Oliel, *Enseignement du Français en milieu créolophone*, 5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

pedagogies was that Lauriette viewed Creole as much more than a pedagogical tool that aided in Antilleans' assimilation. For Lauriette, Creole was a symbol of Antilleans' cultural difference, as well as their right to political autonomy.⁹⁹ Oliel's bilingual pedagogy was a response to Lauriette's more subversive appropriation of Creole. During a time of uncertainty when the Ministry of the DOM was trying to secure the Antilles' political and cultural union to France, the Ministry of Education was intrigued by Oliel's argument that ending the Creole ban facilitated Antilleans' assimilation. It saw in his work an opportunity to appease Antillean activists' calls for cultural recognition while still enforcing its policy of assimilation, and ensuring that the Antilles remained a part of France.

On September 26, 1979, Paul Dijoud, the Secretary of State for the DOM-TOM, held a press conference concerning the tenuous state of the Antilles' political and cultural relationship with France. In his statement to the press, he claimed that the current economic and social instability in Guadeloupe and Martinique was not the main catalyst of the Antillean independence movement. Rather, Dijoud argued that the growing desire of a new generation of Antilleans to develop a separate nation from France was the result of the lack of cultural understanding between metropolitans and Antilleans.¹⁰⁰ According to Dijoud, this "cultural problem" stemmed from France's commitment to an outdated policy, which sought to "assimilate and align the behavior, approaches and thoughts of its compatriots [Antilleans] with those of its metropolitans."¹⁰¹ The intent of this policy of assimilation was to bring Antilleans into a closer cultural and political union with France.

⁹⁹ For an overview of Lauriette's Creole pedagogy, see Chapter 4, especially the section entitled "Lauriette's Creole Pedagogy."

¹⁰⁰ Conference de press de M. Paul Dijoud, September 6, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

However, Dijoud claimed that in practice, it created resentment among younger Antilleans who wanted to rediscover their Creole identities, and felt as if DOM officials were denying them their right to express their cultural difference.

Dijoud contended that the only way to solve this “cultural problem” was to modify the assimilation policy. The Ministry of DOM needed to “make our compatriots feel that we [the government] do not seek to deny them their difference, but rather [we want] to enhance it.”¹⁰² Dijoud believed that the “recognition of these [Antilleans’] difference” helped young Antilleans understand that their Creole culture and language were not a justification for their political independence. Rather, there was a place for their difference within the French nation. Dijoud insisted that the inclusion of Creole enabled young Guadeloupeans and Martinicans to “reconcile themselves” to their two identities so that they “[felt] proud to be French, in the same way, that they [were] proud to be carriers of the Creole culture.”¹⁰³ In order to keep Guadeloupe and Martinique politically linked to France, Dijoud argued that the Ministry of the DOM needed to stop denying Antilleans their Creole identity, and ensure that Antilleans were culturally included in nation.

Oliel’s bilingual pedagogy and Dijoud’s suggestions, combined with Antilleans’ growing demands for cultural and political autonomy, compelled the Ministry of Education to consider the political advantages of ending the ban on Creole. It started to believe that the recognition of Creole as a pedagogical tool had the potential to fulfill Creole activists’ demands while also solidifying the cultural union between France and the Antilles. Yet, the Ministry of Education also wanted to be reassured that assimilation

¹⁰² Conference de press de M. Paul Dijoud, September 6, 1979, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940216, Art. 12.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

and the acquisition of French remained the primary goal of public education in the Antilles. In November 1979, the Ministry of Education sent Maurice Zinovieff, the Secretary General of the High Commission of the French Language, to the Antilles to investigate how lifting the Creole ban affected the status of French in Guadeloupe and Martinique. In his report, Zinovieff confirmed Oliel's belief that Creole needed to be used as a pedagogical tool to solve the dismal state of French literacy in the Antilles. He recommended that the Ministry of Education "recognize Antillean cultural specificity, with particular attention paid to Creole", especially since it [Creole] was "likely to become a language tool for learning French among the youngest [Antilleans]."¹⁰⁴

One year after Zinovieff's trip to the Antilles, the Ministry of the DOM held an inter-ministry meeting during which it established an official committee to oversee the process of integrating Creole into Antillean classrooms.¹⁰⁵ This committee recommended "a policy statement showing the Government's recognition of Creole" as a part of Antilleans' "linguistic and cultural heritage."¹⁰⁶ In 1980, the Ministries of DOM and Education privately agreed to recognize Creole's place in public education, granting Antillean children the right to learn about the Creole language and culture in public schools. Yet, the terms of this policy and who controlled its implementation were unclear. In the early 1980s, DOM and education officials found themselves in a political struggle with Antillean activists for control of Creole's incorporation into public

¹⁰⁴ Danielle Barret, Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Ministre, Objet: Mon entretien avec M. Zinovieff, Secrétaire Général du Haut-Comité de la Lanuge française, November 7, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Compte Rendu des réunions interministérielles tenues les 27 novembre et 11 décembre 1980 sous la présidence de MM Steinmetz et de La Sablesse, charges de mission au cabinet du Premier minister, December 15, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹⁰⁶ Vers les Créoles: Lanuges Régionales, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

education. In these debates about Creole's status and place in the classroom and the nation, Antilleans shaped the meaning of difference in France.

Creole and the Meaning of the “Right to Difference” in Antillean Public Schools

In May 1981, François Mitterrand became the president of France, placing the Left in control of the government for the first time in over two decades. Shortly after his election, Mitterrand decentralized the government, granting regional officials more control over local affairs. Along with decentralization, Mitterrand reframed the longstanding policy of assimilation, arguing that French citizens possessed the “right to difference.” The government officially acknowledged the nation's distinct cultural groups, and their right to possess and express their cultural differences. These two policies—decentralization and the right to difference—were potentially transformative for public education in the Antilles. They provided the Ministry of Education with an official policy to justify an end to the Creole ban and the implementation of a regionalized curriculum based on Antilleans' linguistic and cultural particularities.

Shortly after being elected president, Mitterrand chose Alain Savary to replace Beullac as the Minister of Education. Like Mitterrand, Savary was a member of the Socialist party and a supporter of the right to difference. For Savary, the introduction of Creole into Antillean classrooms as a “pedagogical tool” was the fulfillment of the “right to difference”. It recognized that Antilleans' possessed a distinct language, and that this reality needed to be taken into account when teaching French to Antillean children.¹⁰⁷ However, certain Antillean activists and teachers did not agree with the Ministry of

¹⁰⁷ Vers les Créoles: Lanuges Régionales, n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

Education's interpretation of the "right to difference" and its vision for introducing Creole into Antillean classrooms. For them, the "right to difference" meant that educators taught and used Creole in Antilleans schools as a language in its own right. This group of Antillean activists argued that the Ministry of Education's construction of Creole as a "pedagogical tool" was a distortion of the true meaning of the "right to difference"; it was just another attempt by the government to control Antilleans' difference and facilitate their assimilation.

Jakata, a pro-independence Guadeloupean newspaper, denounced the Ministry of Education's support of Oliel's bilingual pedagogy as a political strategy to weaken the Antillean nationalist movement. *Jakata* characterized Oliel as a "foreigner" with a "colonial mentality."¹⁰⁸ According to *Jakata*, the only reason Oliel supported the use of Creole in Antillean classrooms was because he believed it facilitated Antillean children's acquisition of the French language. *Jakata* argued that Oliel's intentions were clear: he wanted to make Creole yet another tool of assimilation. Moreover, *Jakata* refuted Oliel's conception of Creole as the cause of the Antilles' social and economic problems, insisting that the islands' difficulties stemmed from the French government's control of education and its insistence that Creole was merely a "technical instrument" for learning French. *Jakata* claimed that the only way for Antilleans to reclaim control of education and Creole, was to sever their islands' political ties with France and become independent nations. Creole belonged to Antilleans and therefore, only Antilleans possessed the right to "appropriate the elements of their culture" and "truly defend it."¹⁰⁹ For nationalist

¹⁰⁸ "FON É TOUPÉ ou un « créoliste » venu d'ailleurs", *Jakata*, March 1980, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

groups like those represented by *Jakata*, the right to difference meant political and cultural independence.

Jakata was by no means representative of the dominant political opinion among Antilleans, but for the French government, it was potentially the most subversive. Like Antillean nationalists, moderate Creole activists were also wary of the political reasons behind what appeared to be the Ministry of Education's sudden interest in Creole's role in Antillean education. Yet, unlike nationalists, they did not want to give up their French citizenship; they strove to claim and achieve recognition of their Creole identity while working within the confines of the nation. These activists saw the move toward the "right to difference" in the early 1980s as an opportunity to work with the Ministries of DOM and Education to shape the meaning of diversity in France and the incorporation of Antilleans' Creole culture and language into the nation.

Hector Pouillet was one of the most prominent members of this group of Creole activists. Pouillet came from a middle-class and educated Guadeloupean family. According to him, he grew up believing that France was the generous motherland who granted Antillean slaves their freedom and rights. He believed in the legitimacy of France's presence in the Antilles, and that he was as much a French citizen as those metropolitans who lived on the other side of the Atlantic. When he migrated to France to pursue his studies in 1957, Pouillet claimed that like all Antilleans of his generation, he experienced the "psychological shock" of realizing that he was not French. In Paris, Pouillet confronted racism and discrimination and learned that metropolitans viewed him

as a foreigner and immigrant, not a fellow French citizen. This experience radicalized Poulet, driving him to become a supporter of the Antillean independence movement.¹¹⁰

In 1968, eleven years after leaving the Antilles, Poulet returned to Guadeloupe where he underwent another political transformation. Faced with what he described as “the Guadeloupean reality” of a “country that is not politicized and not prepared to realize the ideal” of Antillean nationalism, Poulet began to question the viability of “immediate independence” for Guadeloupe and Martinique.¹¹¹ While searching for a different political answer to the Antilles’ social and economic problems, Poulet met Gérard Lauriette. Poulet quickly became a student and supporter of Lauriette’s Creole pedagogy; he shared Lauriette’s belief that Antilleans’ cultural and linguistic differences needed to be included in the French national curriculum. Together, Lauriette and Poulet challenged the Ministry of Education to end the ban on Creole, arguing that Antillean children possessed the right to learn about their Creole culture and language in public schools. For two years, Poulet taught math at Lauriette’s private school for Antillean children who had failed out of the public education system. The school encouraged teachers’ use of Creole in the classroom, and students learned to read and write in Creole. While working at Lauriette’s school, Poulet saw firsthand Creole’s positive effects on Antillean children’s academic success. He became convinced that Creole needed to have place in Antillean education.¹¹²

In 1976, Poulet implemented Lauriette’s Creole pedagogy in one of Guadeloupe’s public school. At a middle school in Capesterre, Poulet teamed up with

¹¹⁰ Interview with Hector Poulet, published in Dany Bebel-Gisler, *Les enfants de la Guadeloupe* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1985), 131-132.

¹¹¹ Interview with Hector Poulet, published in *Le Journal Guadeloupéen (JOUGWA)*, June 1982, 40.

¹¹² See: Interview with Hector Poulet, published in Bebel-Gisler, *Les enfants de la Guadeloupe*, 131-132; Interview with Hector Poulet, published in *Le Journal Guadeloupéen (JOUGWA)*, June 1982, 40.

three other teachers, Danièle Montbrand, Moïse Sorèze, and Sylviane Telchid, to create a curriculum for introducing Creole into Antillean classrooms. Together, the three teachers conducted Creole workshops on Wednesday afternoons when school was not in session. They purposefully avoided making Creole a part of the regular school day because they did not want the Ministry of Education to perceive of their workshops as a challenge to the Creole ban. At the time, Poulet and his colleagues were more interested in developing a useful pedagogy for teaching Antillean children how to read and write Creole. They wished to avoid making their afterschool Creole program a political struggle between Antillean educators and the Ministry of Education.¹¹³ The Ministry of Education was also sensitive to the potential political implications of these Creole workshops. It therefore chose to ignore them. The Ministry of Education realized that a forceful demand to end the Creole workshops might agitate Antillean nationalists. Antillean independence was a real fear for the Ministry of Education, and it wanted to avoid giving its supporters a platform at all costs.¹¹⁴

From 1976 to 1980, Poulet developed his Creole pedagogy relatively freely without interference from the Ministry of Education. In their weekly Wednesday afternoon classes, Poulet and his colleagues refined their methods for teaching Antillean children how to read and write in Creole. In 1980, these workshops culminated with the publication of a Creole teaching manual, which served as a pedagogical guide for Antillean teachers. In addition, the manual presented the politics of Poulet's Creole pedagogy, and explained why Antilleans needed to learn Creole. During their Creole workshops, Poulet and his colleagues discovered with their students that Creole could be

¹¹³ See: Interview with Hector Poulet, published in Bebel-Gisler, *Les enfants de la Guadeloupe*, 131-132; Interview with Hector Poulet, published in *Le Journal Guadeloupéen (JOUGWA)*, June 1982, 40.

¹¹⁴ See: Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*, 117-121.

written, and was therefore, a language with its own vocabulary and grammar. Pouillet believed that the Ministry of Education's repression of Creole taught him and other Antillean children to despise their maternal language and culture. In the preface to his teaching manual, Pouillet noted, "it is the negation of Creole that has led to the failures that we know [in Antillean society]." ¹¹⁵ He argued that "the recognition of its [Creole's] existence" in his afterschool workshops has "helped our students to get rid of their firmly rooted language complex, and little by little [has] removed their feelings of guilt" about their Creole identity. ¹¹⁶ According to Pouillet, his Creole pedagogy fought the French government's degradation of Creole and inspired Antilleans to value their identity as Creole-speakers. He insisted that Antilleans did not have to assimilate; they could remain connected to their Creole culture while also embracing their French citizenship. ¹¹⁷

Pouillet's Creole pedagogy challenged the Ministry of Education's vision for introducing Creole in Antillean classrooms. For the Ministry of Education, "the right to difference" was about recognizing how Antilleans' cultural particularities affected their assimilation. It conceived of Creole as a "pedagogical tool" for improving French literacy. In contrast, for Pouillet, Antilleans' cultural differences were not a hindrance to Antilleans' assimilation. He wanted Antilleans' Creole culture and language to be a part of the French nation, and a part of their identity as French citizens. Pouillet argued for the introduction of Creole into schools as a language and culture in its own right. In two separate interviews appearing in the Guadeloupean press, he explained that his pedagogy "was not about using Creole to learn French in order to ensure that Creole was

¹¹⁵ Danièle Bernini-Montbrand, Hector Pouillet, Moïse Sorèze, Sylviane Telchid, *Créole et Français: CM2-6è*, 1980, 4. Bibliothèque National de France, François Mitterrand. Côte: EL 4-R-2366.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

abandoned.”¹¹⁸ It was about “teaching them [Antillean children] to read and write Creole so that they reconciled themselves with the language” and learned to value their Creole identity.¹¹⁹ Pouillet insisted that Creole was not simply a steppingstone to the more advanced and valued French language. Creole was equal to French; it was a literary language that deserved serious academic study alongside French. In calling for the coexistence of Creole and French in Antillean classrooms, Pouillet challenged the Ministry of Education to reevaluate its assimilation policy and recognize Antilleans as both Creole and French.

This debate concerning Creole’s place in Antillean classrooms and the French nation came to head in the early 1980s as both Antilleans and the Ministry of Education sought to control Creole’s role in public education. While Pouillet and his colleagues developed their pedagogy, the Ministries of Education and DOM considered the political benefits of recognizing Antilleans’ Creole language and culture. In a note dated November 26, 1980, the Ministry of DOM argued that its impending decision to lift the ban on Creole was a political strategy to retain its authority over the Antilles and the Creole question. According to the Ministry of DOM, the ban on Creole radicalized a generation of young Antilleans who “found revenge in the exacerbation of certain revolts” against the French government.¹²⁰ In 1978, two nationalist political parties emerged in the Antilles: the Martinican Independence Movement (MIM) and the Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe (UPLG). Both groups argued for national

¹¹⁸ “Créole à l’école: adaptation ou rupture?”, *Le Journal Guadeloupéen (JOUGWA)*, December 1981, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ Dannyck Zandronis, “Pour ou Contre le Créole à l’Ecole? 3 professeurs guadeloupiens ont décidés d’utiliser officiellement la langue créole dans leurs cours; une expérience passionnante et déjà controversée, mais qu’il faut suivre car demain n’est plus très loin,” *Magazine Guadeloupéenne (MAGWA)*, December 1981-January 1982, p. 30.

¹²⁰ “Langues Créoles: Langues Régionales”, November 26, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 1.

liberation from France and sought to rally Antillean voters around their political platform of independence. Because of the purportedly growing popularity of these nationalist parties, DOM officials contended that “it may be time to solve a tense situation in several places with a political decision and legal act.”¹²¹ By the end 1980, the Ministry of the DOM was seriously considering the “legal act” of ending the ban on Creole. For DOM officials, this was a “political decision” necessitated by Antilleans’ growing discontentment with the French government and its assimilation policy.

In 1981, the Ministries of the DOM and Education began to develop its plan for legally recognizing Creole as a regional language and culture of France. On January 7, 1981, the Ministry of the DOM suggested that the Ministry of Education form a “think tank” in Guadeloupe and Martinique to discuss and determine “the respective places of French and Creole in education.”¹²² In a note concerning the think tank’s goals, the Ministry of the DOM revealed that its “support for the Creole issue (language and culture)...was planned to meet the aspirations for cultural identity manifested by the young generations.”¹²³ At the end of the year, in December 1981, Henri Emmanuelli, the Minister of the DOM, formally requested that the Ministry of Education implement pilot programs in the Antilles to slowly introduce Creole into the curriculum. Although Emmanuelli noted that his decision to end the ban on Creole was to “meet [Antilleans’] demands for cultural identity”, he stipulated that the recognition of Creole and Antilleans’ “right to difference” was meant to promote Antillean children’s acquisition of

¹²¹ “Langues Créoles: Langues Régionales”, November 26, 1980, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 1.

¹²² “Créole”, note attached to letter from Henri Emmanuelli, Secrétaire d’État chargé des DOM-TOM to Alain Savary, Ministre de l’Éducation Nationale, January 6, 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹²³ Ibid.

the French language. Emmanuelli suggested that “teachers and researchers working in educational reform conduct experimental programs introducing Creole during the early stages of education (preschool, kindergarten, first grade), followed by a gradual transition to learning French.”¹²⁴ For Emmanuelli, Antillean children’s immersion in the French language resulted in linguistic confusion, impeding their ability to distinguish between French and Creole. He supported the use of Creole in early elementary education as a pedagogical strategy for improving Antillean children’s French language skills.

Therefore, his decision to recognize Antilleans’ distinct Creole language and culture was not about acknowledging Antilleans’ “right to difference” as envisioned by Poulet and his colleagues. Rather, it was a political strategy designed to appease nationalists’ cultural claims for independence while simultaneously promoting Antilleans’ assimilation of the French language and culture.

Poulet and his colleagues were worried that Emmanuelli’s support for pilot Creole programs was just another one of the government’s attempt to solidify French officials’ control of Antillean education and ensure that Creole remained a secondary language behind French. They therefore became much more vocal and forceful in their insistence that Creole be introduced into Antillean classrooms as a language of academic study. In a December 1981 interview, Poulet explained that the time had come for him and other Antillean educators to “take control of our linguistic destiny.”¹²⁵ In an attempt to preempt what they perceived to be the Ministry of Education’s cooptation of their

¹²⁴ Ministre des DOM-TOM, “Note: La prise en compte des langues et cultures créoles dans l’enseignement: lancement d’expériences pilotes,” December 9, 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840443, Art. 1.

¹²⁵ Dannyck Zandronis, “Pour ou Contre le Créole à l’Ecole? 3 professeurs guadeloupiens ont décidés d’utiliser officiellement la langue créole dans leurs cours; une expérience passionnante et déjà controversée, mais qu’il faut suivre car demain n’est plus très loin,” *Magazine Guadeloupéenne (MAGWA)*, December 1981-January 1982, p. 28.

movement to introduce Creole into Antillean schools, Pouillet and his colleagues sought official recognition of their Creole pedagogy. Prior to the opening of the 1981-1982 school year, Pouillet, Sorèze, and Telchid met with the principal of Capesterre's middle school to discuss the possibility of implementing a Creole language program as a supplement to the students' French classes. The principal, a naturalized French citizen of Polish background, was supportive of their idea. From 1981 to 1982, Pouillet and his colleagues taught Creole alongside French, highlighting Creole's status as a valuable literary and academic language. At the end of the school year, the three teachers agreed that their program had achieved this goal. They reported a greater openness among their students in expressing themselves in Creole. For Pouillet, Sorèze, and Telchid, their students' acceptance of Creole indicated that young Antilleans were learning to value and be proud of their Creole language and culture. For the following school year, Pouillet recommended that the teaching of Creole be separated from French instruction so that the study of Creole was a discipline in its own right.¹²⁶

Encouraged by the apparent success of Pouillet's Creole pedagogy, in May 1982, Capesterre's principal wrote to Savary, hoping to gain the Ministry of Education's official recognition of his school's "Creole experiment."¹²⁷ Although the Ministry of Education was internally debating the possibility of introducing Creole into Antillean schools as a "pedagogical tool", Pouillet's Creole pedagogy was not what officials had in mind. Savary did not approve of elevating Creole to the same level as French. In a February 1982 report on the Ministry of Education's suggestions for introducing Creole into Antillean classrooms, Savary justified "the limited use of Creole in schools" by

¹²⁶ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*, 121-124.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

arguing that Antilleans did not possess a distinct Creole identity.¹²⁸ He contended that the Creole language and culture were merely “a part of the overall [French] national patrimony.”¹²⁹ In claiming Creole as a part of French national culture, Savary adhered to the policy of assimilation requiring Antilleans to give up their cultural distinctiveness in favor of French citizenship. This contrasted sharply with Pouillet’s Creole pedagogy, which insisted that Antilleans’ possessed the right to express and preserve their separate cultural identity. Pouillet wanted Antillean children to learn French and Creole alongside each other, reflecting their French and Creole identities.

Because of the political implications of lifting the ban on Creole, Savary and the Ministry of Education continued to theoretically support the limited use of Creole in Antillean classrooms while avoiding any legal recognition of the Creole language and culture. On June 21, 1982, a new ministerial directive authorized the teaching of France’s regional languages and cultures. Savary mapped out a comprehensive plan to introduce regional languages progressively into schools at the nursery, primary and secondary levels. However, he intentionally ignored the Creole question. In a note further explaining the directive, Savary noted that “at no point does this circular mention the DOM” and insisted that the directive only applied to “the five languages already legally recognized”, including Breton, Basque, Catalan, Occitan, and Corsican.¹³⁰ He acknowledged that the directive “was bound to disappoint many peoples in the overseas departments...considering the numerous steps taken by the Ministry of Education aimed

¹²⁸ *Ministre de l’Education Nationale, “Prise en compte de la culture et de la langue créoles dans l’enseignement,”* February 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

at upgrading the status of Creoles.”¹³¹ Nonetheless, Savary and Emmanuelli worried that the Creole question was too politicized for the Ministry of Education to officially recognize Creole as a regional language of France. In October 1982, the directors of education for the overseas departments met with Savary and Emmanuelli to discuss the possibility of extending the June 1982 directive to Guadeloupe and Martinique. The islands’ education officials recommended that the Ministry of Education recognize Creole as a regional language of France and slowly introduce Creole into the curriculum. Yet, in a letter to Savary, Emmanuelli noted that “the Creole question is often distorted by partisan considerations.”¹³² The Ministries of Education and the DOM therefore put off legally recognizing Creole as a regional language of France. Savary and Emmanuelli did not want to antagonize Antillean nationalist groups who considered Creole a national language and not one of France’s regional languages.

Despite the ambiguity concerning the June 1982 circular’s applicability to the Antilles, Poulet and his colleagues forged ahead with their “Creole experiment”. With the support of their school’s principal, Poulet, Sorèze, and Telchid continued to teach their students how to read and write Creole during the 1982-83 school year. Poulet and his colleagues viewed their decision to teach unauthorized Creole language classes as a challenge to the Ministry of Education’s authority and control of education in the Antilles. The instructors referred to themselves as *nèg mawon* (maroons in Creole). In doing so, they compared themselves to runaway slaves who had formed independent

¹³¹ Ministre de l’Education Nationale, “Prise en compte de la culture et de la langue créoles dans l’enseignement,” February 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

¹³² Letter from Le Secrétaire d’Etat auprès du Ministre d’Etat, Ministre de l’Intérieur et de la Décentralisation chargé des Départements et Territoires d’Outre-Mer to Monsieur le Ministre de l’Education Nationale, “Objet: Mise au point d’une circulaire Ministérielle relative aux langues locales des DOM et TOM,” February 23, 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 17.

settlements in the hills of Guadeloupe during the period of French colonial control. Their self-identification as “maroons” symbolized their renegade status in the French national education system while conjuring up images of rebellious behavior and resistance to domination. For Poulet and his colleagues, their struggle to gain official recognition of Antilleans’ Creole language and culture was a continuation of the slaves’ fight to liberate themselves from the control of their French owners and the colonial government that had set in place the system of slavery.¹³³

Poulet and his colleagues’ open defiance was particularly concerning for the Ministry of Education because of the political reputation of the town in which they decided to implement their Creole pedagogy. Since the 1960s, Capesterre was known as a community that attracted pro-independence sympathizers. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a number of nationalists and former members of GONG (Group for the National Organization of Guadeloupe) taught in the local secondary schools. Moreover, Poulet, Telchid, and Sorèze were members of SGEG (General Union of Education in Guadeloupe), a nationalist teachers’ union. The SGEG publicly opposed French cultural and political domination and supported an alternative educational model that recognized Antilleans’ cultural specificity. Language was critical for the SGEG; the introduction of Creole into Antillean classrooms was the union’s chief political demand. In order to achieve this, SGEG’s members, the majority of whom were teachers, needed to be educated in the Creole script and its nationalist ideology. In the early 1980s, the union’s leadership worked to establish a Creole pedagogy, such as the one created by Poulet and

¹³³ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*. See especially chapter 5 entitled “Conflict in Capesterre School,” 121-124.

his colleagues, to educate Antillean children about their cultural particularities and raise national consciousness among the masses.¹³⁴

Because of Capesterre's anti-France reputation and Poulet and his colleagues' nationalist affiliations, by the end of the 1982-83 school year, the Ministries of Education and the DOM viewed the "Creole experiment" in Capesterre as a political challenge to departmentalization with the potential to instigate a full-fledged independence movement. Savary and Emmanuelli were concerned that Poulet's language classes were promoting a nationalist agenda privileging Antilleans' Creole identity above their French citizenship. The possibility of a burgeoning movement for national independence in Capesterre was of particular concern because it was the third most populated municipality in Guadeloupe. Savary and Emmanuelli feared that Capesterre's numerous voters had the ability to elect pro-independence representatives to challenge not only the French government's control of education, but also the political union between France and the Antilles. In order to maintain France's political authority in the Antilles, the Ministries of Education and the DOM decided that it needed to regain control of Creole and its place in Antillean schools. In a note on the Creole question, Emmanuelli argued for the "preparation of a decree declaring the Creoles [of the Antilles] regional languages." He encouraged the Ministry of Education to take the necessary administrative steps to prepare for the "optional teaching of these languages [Creole] at all levels" during the 1983-84 school year.¹³⁵ Emmanuelli explained that it was "desirable for the Government to take into account these incremental and progressive proposals before the [Antillean]

¹³⁴ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*. See especially chapter 5 entitled "Conflict in Capesterre School," p. 117-120 and chapter 4 entitled "The Creole Movement: An Ideology of Language is Infused in the Nationalist Movement," 99-103.

¹³⁵ Ministère des Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, "Vers les Créoles: Langues Régionales", n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 15.

people's wishes transform themselves, in the near future into very passionate and entirely politicized demands."¹³⁶

The Ministry of Education's Cooptation of the Creole Question

On May 22, 1983, at the Fourth International Creole Studies Conference in Lafayette, Louisiana, the highest representative of the French Ministry of Education in the Antilles, Xavier Orville, made a surprise announcement. He officially lifted the ban on Creole and recognized Creole as a regional language of France. The text of this declaration or the "Creole bomb" as it was satirically referred to in the Antillean press, was a strategic political move by the French government.¹³⁷ On the surface, the document acknowledged Antilleans' Creole identity. It claimed that "the purpose of teaching Creole and Antillean culture was to insert the school in its specific regional context and to work...to respect the cultural identity of each [individual]."¹³⁸ However, a closer examination of the Louisiana declaration revealed that the Ministry of Education was more interested in separating the Creole question from the nationalist movement than in recognizing Antilleans' right to difference. One month after Orville's announcement, the Ministries of Education and the DOM held a meeting to discuss the political implications of ending the ban on Creole, as well as how the process of including Creole was to take place. The official note on this meeting described the decision to make Creole a regional language as "necessary...when considering the risks of local

¹³⁶ Ministère des Départements et Territoires d'Outre-Mer, "Vers les Créoles: Langues Régionales", n.d., Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940388, Art. 15.

¹³⁷ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*, 125-126.

¹³⁸ Declaration of Xavier Orville's on May 22, 1983 at the opening of the Fourth International Conference of Creole Studies in Lafayette, Louisiana. Reprinted in *Antilla*, June 2-9, 1983, 38.

susceptibilities” to political arguments.¹³⁹ Moreover, education and DOM officials in attendance at the meeting insisted that the introduction of the Creole language and culture had to be “gradual” and “cautious” in order to “firmly maintain French as the language” of the Antilles.¹⁴⁰

While the Louisiana declaration clearly established Creole as a regional language of France, it did little to resolve the ambiguity surrounding Creole’s place in Antillean classrooms. The Ministry of Education did not outline any specific directives to implement Creole language instruction. The classes were optional and supplemental. This meant that each school district and its staff of teachers determined how and if Creole was offered as a part of the local curriculum. Organizational barriers within the Antillean educational system also made the implementation of the Louisiana declaration particularly challenging. For example, there was no formal program in the teachers’ colleges to instruct future educators on how to integrate Creole into their classrooms. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education did not set in place a process for codifying Creole. This meant that multiple forms of Creole were introduced into Antillean classrooms. Local teachers and educational officials in Guadeloupe and Martinique clashed over which Creole orthography to use. The debate concerning Creole’s status as a “pedagogical tool” for learning French or as a language of study in its own right also continued to divide Antillean educators. In not articulating the specific policies for implementing the Louisiana declaration, the Ministry of Education made Creole’s status even more ambiguous and contentious. In this way, the Ministry of Education effectively

¹³⁹ “Note. Objet: réunion du 23 jeudi 23 juin sur le IVème colloque international des études créoles (Lafayette, 22-28 mai 1983),” July 20, 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 27.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

diminished Creole's symbolism as the unifying force of the Antillean people while simultaneously making the Creole question subject to state control.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

For the Ministry of Education, cultural diversity played a distinct role in France's metropolitan and overseas departments. As early as 1970, the Ministry of Education recognized immigrants' cultural and linguistic particularities when it implemented "transition" classes for children of immigrants in metropolitan France. In 1973, the Ministry of Education reformed its immigrant education policy even further when it invited foreign teachers from southern and eastern Europe to come to France and instruct immigrant children in their languages and cultures of origin. Two years later, in 1975, the Ministry of Education made these LCO programs a part of the normal school day. According to the Ministry of Education, these policies did not include immigrants' cultural specificities in the national curriculum. Rather, they facilitated immigrant children's adaptation to the French school system and their acquisition of the French language. The Ministry of Education argued that it employed these policies to promote immigrant children's assimilation.

Across the Atlantic, in its overseas departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique, the Ministry of Education was equally concerned with Antilleans' assimilation into the French nation. However, until May 1983, it banned Antilleans' Creole culture and language from public education and refused to recognize the pedagogical benefits of introducing Creole into Antillean classrooms. Although the Ministry of Education acknowledged the potential of LCO instruction to ease immigrants' transition into French

¹⁴¹ Schnepel, *In Search of National Identity*, 123-129.

society, it viewed the Creole question as a divisive issue that threatened the Antilles' political and cultural union with France.

This divergence in education policy was largely due to immigrants' and Antilleans' different political statuses. In the 1970s, the French government conceived of immigration as temporary and actively supported immigrants' repatriation. Because French officials believed that immigrants and their families would eventually return to their homelands, their languages and cultures did not threaten national unity. Immigrants' cultural specificities remained outside of the nation. In contrast, Antilleans were French citizens; they were a part of the French nation. Therefore, their attachment to their Creole identity challenged France's cultural integrity. The Ministry of Education only decided to end the Creole ban and recognize Antilleans' cultural specificities when it appeared politically advantageous. It justified the Louisiana declaration by arguing that this change in policy wrested Creole from the hands of pro-independence activists. In recognizing Creole as a regional language of France, the Ministry of Education hoped to neutralize Creole's challenge to republican assimilation as a symbol of cultural difference and national liberation.

Historians have argued that republican assimilation was either entirely inclusionary or exclusionary. However, the Ministry of Education's differential policies concerning immigrant and Antillean education reveal that republican assimilation was simultaneously inclusionary and exclusionary. Although republican discourse stigmatized the recognition of difference in the public sphere, in practice the Ministry of Education took into account the cultural and linguistic particularities of immigrants and Antilleans when implementing its respective policies for each group. For the Ministry of

Education, the recognition of cultural difference potentially appeased Antilleans' political claims and promoted assimilation. In contrast, Creole activists, such as Poulet, viewed the inclusion of Creole in Antillean classrooms as an expression of Antilleans' distinct Creole identity. Therefore, the introduction of Creole into Antillean classrooms was neither an inclusionary nor an exclusionary policy. The inclusion of diversity in metropolitan and Antillean classrooms was a series of negotiations in which the Ministry of Education sought to include Creole in public education as a way to exclude the more radical constructions of Creole as a symbol of Antilleans' separate national identity. The Ministry of Education and Antillean activists used existing policies concerning immigrants' cultural specificities, as well as regional languages and cultures to navigate Creole's place in public education and the French nation.

CHAPTER VI

“On sèl pèp, on sèl chimen”: The Pan-Creole Movement, 1959-1989

Introduction

On May 20, 1979 at the Second International Creole Studies Conference, Jacques Hodoul, the Minister of Education and Culture for the newly independent Seychelles, articulated the existence of a Creole-based cultural identity. “We are here to proclaim the existence of a language and to witness our solidarity with the peoples who speak it.... Torn from everywhere, from all horizons of the planet, we have searched for a common way of expressing ourselves. That is how the creole language has sprung forth, the symbol of a people who refuse to be silenced.”¹ As of one of the leaders of a young revolutionary republic, Hodoul seized the opportunity to link the conference with the struggle for linguistic and cultural recognition of Creole-speaking peoples across the globe. In his opening address to conference participants, Hodoul made it clear that Creole was not merely an object of scientific analysis and intellectual study; it was also a shared cultural identity. Creole languages were formed in the colonial context, resulting in a social hierarchy that elevated the colonizer’s languages and subordinated the colonized’s Creoles. In characterizing Creole languages and cultures as inferior to those of Europe, the colonizers sought to keep Creole-speakers under their control. According

¹ Jacques Hodoul, “Allocution” at CIEC’s Second International Creole Studies Conference. Published in *Etudes Créoles* 2, 1980, 142.

to Hodoul, it was this shared experience of colonization and the struggle to overcome domination that united Creole-speakers in a singular cultural identity.

Hodoul's conscious desire and concerted effort to forge a distinct Creole-based cultural identity was not something entirely new. However, his statement marked the first time that a leader of a Creole-speaking nation explicitly expressed Creole-speakers' common cultural identity as the foundation for a political and cultural movement against Europe's continued domination of Creole-speaking peoples. Two simultaneous occurrences contributed to the emergence of this kind of pan-Creole movement. Following the Second World War, the movement for decolonization linked cultural identity to political freedom as former colonized peoples used their distinct cultural identities to argue for independence. Moreover, the development of modern sociolinguistics questioned the stigma attached to Creole languages as well as the discrimination of their speakers. Together, these two developments laid the ideological groundwork for Creole-speakers to claim their Creole languages and cultures in their shared fight against European domination.

So far, this dissertation has focused on how Antilleans have used Creole to shape the Ministries of Education and DOM's position on the place of diversity within the French nation. In other words, Creole activists and intellectuals, as well as migrants, have employed Creole as a political tool to make claims about the French nation. Whether they were arguing for independence or a distinct kind of multiculturalism, these Antilleans were mainly concerned with their relationship to France; yet, they were equally aware of their position within the greater international community. Antillean Creole activists did not limit their political activities to France or the French Caribbean.

In addition to carving out a space for themselves within the French nation, Antilleans also struggled to create their own political and cultural spaces outside of the French nation. They created a broader movement that united all Creole-speakers in their struggle against European domination, and was not necessarily tied to a specific nation. At the same time that Antilleans appropriated Creole to make nation-based claims, they were also forming political and cultural networks with other Creole activists across the Caribbean and Europe. They employed these networks to propose an alternative to French nationality: a pan-Creole identity. In doing so, they constructed a Creole movement that not only shaped the debates about diversity in France, but also forged a unique Creole identity that was neither geographically nor culturally bounded to the French nation.

In telling the history of Antilleans' role in creating a pan-Creole politics that did not fit into the boundaries of a singular nation-state, this chapter argues that the Creole movement had no geographical center; rather, it consisted of transnational and international political and cultural networks. In other words, the Creole movement was not limited to trans-Atlantic exchanges between the Antilles and France. Antilleans also used Creole to carve out "Creole spaces" that crossed national and regional boundaries throughout Europe and the Caribbean. This chapter interprets Antillean activists' identification and creation of a Creole identity as a practice through which not only to claim French citizenship rights, but also to claim a cultural and political identity that was not national, but nonetheless deserved recognition. My consideration of the Antillean Creole movement in relation to international networks of Creole activists builds upon the work within both postcolonial and new imperial studies' that has brought the metropole

and the colony into one analytical framework.² Scholars of postcolonialism have decentered Europe, but they have nonetheless left intact the sanctity of the nation as the proper subject of history. Postcolonial history has become the history of how the nation was constructed in the colonies.³ This chapter uses the metropole-colony framework of postcolonial as a starting point from which to exam how Antilleans have shaped the French nation. It also expands this framework and takes into account how Creole activists from other colonial peripheries, such as the British Caribbean, have also shaped debates about diversity in France. In doing so, it argues that postcolonial France was not only constructed by Antilleans, but also by individuals and groups outside of the French metropole-colony framework.

Theoretically, pan-Creolism eclipsed Creole-speakers' racial, cultural, political, and experiential differences while uniting them around their shared, but also distinct Creole languages. Yet, despite a common history of colonialism and creolization, could such racially, ethnically, geographically and linguistically diverse peoples unite as one political and cultural group of Creole-speakers? Were Creole languages a useful rallying

² Scholars of postcolonial cultures in Europe have demonstrated how postcolonial migrants' cultures have reshaped Europe's national cultures. For the French case, see: David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004); Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Kamal Salhi, ed., *Francophone Post-Colonial Cultures* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003). For the British case see: Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": the Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Hutchinson, 1987); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler articulated the research agenda of for the "new" imperial history. See Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Catherine Hall's edited volume also provides a good overview of the new imperial history's historiographical interventions. See: Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

³ Antoinette Burton makes a similar critique of new imperial historians' privileging of the metropole-colony framework. See Antoinette M. Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

point around which “Creolophones” could create a pan-Creole movement against European political, economic and cultural domination?⁴ Was it possible to forge one Creole culture and political movement out of multiple cultures, political views, and linguistic differences?

This chapter explores these questions by tracing the emergence of the pan-Creole movement from its inception at the first Creole language studies conference in 1959 to the articulation of *Créolité* in 1989. Since 1959, debates among intellectuals, activists and native Creole-speakers about who controls and has the rights to Creole languages have hindered attempts to build an international Creole movement. This chapter examines three major divisions in pan-Creolism between French and British Creole studies groups, foreign and native linguists, and intellectuals and local activists. It argues that in appropriating Creole to promote their particular political goals, competing groups have polarized the Creole community; they have failed to create a shared cultural identity among Creole-speakers. Because divergent groups have molded Creole to fit the specificities of their politics, the Creole language may not be a useful departure point from which to build a pan-Creole identity. Competing political and cultural interests on a national level, as well as on an international scale have prevented the coalescence of a single pan-Creole movement.

The first part of this chapter examines academics’ role in providing the intellectual framework for the development of a pan-Creole movement. It argues that from its inception as an academic movement, pan-Creole studies was fraught with cleavages pitting British and French intellectuals against each other. Their conflicting

⁴ *Créolophone* is a French word referring to those whose native language is Creole, but it has also been adopted by English and Spanish-based Creole-speakers.

views concerning Creole languages' political and social meanings prohibited them from consolidating their common intellectual and political goals into a single international Creole studies group.

As Francophone Creole studies gained momentum in the 1970s, another fissure emerged between foreign scholars of Creole and native Creole-speaking linguists. The second part of this chapter highlights this struggle between European and native academics for political control of Creole. It argues that native linguists perceived of foreign academics dominant involvement in Creole studies as a continuation of Europe's cultural and political domination of Creole-speakers. In an attempt to reclaim Creole from this kind of colonial domination, native intellectuals broke with the broader Francophone Creole movement in 1982, and founded the group *Bannzil Kréyòl*. A self-described "international" and "nativist" organization, *Bannzil Kréyòl* attempted to forge a pan-Creole identity based on native Creole-speakers' common struggle against European domination.

However, within Creole-speaking regions, *Bannzil Kréyòl* stirred up conflict between intellectuals who supported *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s vision of pan-Creole solidarity and local activists who were more concerned with using Creole to forge national identities. The third part of this chapter contends that intellectual pan-Creole movements, such as *Bannzil Kréyòl*, ultimately pitted the educated elite against nationalistic activists. Nationalistic activists resented what they perceived to be intellectuals' cooptation and depoliticization of Creole. Leaders of the local Guadeloupean and Martinican pro-nationalist Creole movement began to accuse linguists of intellectualizing and destroying the "authenticity" of the Antillean people's language. The result was the further

polarization of Creole between international academic Creole studies groups and local grassroots movements.

This schism promoted a group of Antillean activists to articulate yet another distinct Creole movement: *Créolité*. They constructed *Créolité* as a new kind of pan-Creole politics that appealed to both foreign and native intellectuals, local activists, as well as Creole-speaking migrants in Europe and North America. The last section of this chapter argues that *Créolité* might be the movement capable of resolving the cultural and political tensions among the different interest groups within pan-Creolism, and creating a global pan-Creole identity.

Part I. The Academic Creole Studies Movement: Cooperation and Dissent Between British and French Linguists

Creole emerged as a language of intellectual study in March 1959 at the first “Creole Language Studies” conference at the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in Kingston, Jamaica. Attended by scholars from across the globe, this week-long conference marked the first international discussion concerning the scientific study of Creole languages. During the 1950s, linguists, particularly those trained in Britain and the United States, were becoming increasingly interested in English-based Creole languages and the process of creolization. However, for the most part, they were working in isolation from each other, separated by oceans and continents. In the conference proceedings, R.B. Le Page, a prominent scholar of Jamaican English, stated that he had organized the conference to put Creole linguists in contact with each other and to facilitate the exchange of information.⁵ This new interest in promoting Creole

⁵ R.B. Le Page, ed., *Creole Language Studies: Proceedings of the Conference on Creole Language Studies* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), 123.

studies was not purely academic; it arose with the dismantling of the old European empires and the national liberation struggles that broke out across the globe following the Second World War.

The emergence of Creole studies as an academic discipline was a part of the attempt by disintegrating empires, such as Britain, to redefine their relationship with their former colonies. In the conference's opening statement, F.G. Cassidy, a linguist of British Caribbean Creoles, argued that knowledge of Creole was essential for establishing a Federation of the West Indies:

To try to deal with people without understanding their native language was bound to be ineffective; to try to form a Federation of the West Indies while ignoring the language problems of the peoples compromising that Federation was to overlook a most important factor. It was not enough to say that the official language was English; it must be recognized that the peoples of the West Indies speak languages and dialects which are not Standard English; that Creole languages are for most of these people their native languages.⁶

In January of 1958, as colonized peoples from around the world struggled for independence, the British government created the Federation of the West Indies as a last-ditch effort to maintain control of its Caribbean colonies. The intention of the Federation was to create a political unit that would eventually become independent from Britain as a single state. British officials hoped that this would allow them to maintain a political presence in the Caribbean as head of the Federation while simultaneously satisfying the demands for independence from all colonies in the region. Cassidy's statement arguing for the elevation of Creole to a language of academic study reflected the British government's efforts to balance its desire to hold on to its colonies with nationalists' calls

⁶ F.G. Cassidy, opening statement for Creole Language Studies Conference at UCWI, Kingston, Jamaica, March 28, 1959. Published in R.B. Le Page (ed.), *Creole Language Studies: Proceedings of the Conference on Creole Language Studies* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1961), 117.

for self-determination. In taking a serious intellectual interest in West Indians' native cultures, Cassidy believed that Britain would be able to rebuild its strained relationship with its Caribbean colonies. He argued that the main goal of Creole studies was to use scientific evidence to rectify any contempt that still persisted for Creole languages.

In the preface to the conference proceedings, Le Page asserted that when Creole languages were "objectively studied", as they were at the conference in Jamaica, "they were found to be languages in their own right."⁷ Therefore, "it was necessary to combat the popular misconception that pidgins and Creoles were dishonourable debasements of European languages."⁸ Le Page's insistence on using vigorous academic study to elevate Creole languages echoed nationalists' calls for Caribbean peoples to fight against colonial oppression, which had taught them to despise their languages and cultures as socially inferior. British linguists' focus on rescuing Creole from its history of degradation had the potential to be politically subversive in that it highlighted Creole-speakers common experience of oppression. In doing so, it revealed the political usefulness of Creole in the struggle against European colonialism. However, Le Page perceived of the promotion of Creole quite differently; for him, the study of Creole was a means through which former colonial powers, such as Britain, could maintain their influence in the Caribbean.⁹ At a time when colonized peoples were claiming their cultural and linguistic differences to argue for independence, British officials hoped that certain concessions, such as the recognition of West Indians' Creole language, would defuse nationalists' claims and solidify their political union with the Caribbean.

⁷ Le Page, ed., *Creole Language Studies*, 114.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

This relationship between Creole and geopolitics was also apparent in the United States' financial support for Creole studies. Le Page sought and obtained funding for his conference from the Rockefeller Foundation.¹⁰ He understood the United States' interest in developing a sphere of influence in the Caribbean; he knew that American institutions would want to be involved in the development of the region as the islands successively gained independence. As the British and French were pushed out of the Caribbean, the United States seized the opportunity to establish political control as the supposed benevolent protector of the newly independent Caribbean nations. Its financial support of Creole studies was a part of this strategy. Together with British scholars, American linguists played a leading role in the establishment of Creole studies as an autonomous discipline.¹¹ American academics' involvement in Creole studies provided the United States with the ability to claim the Caribbean as its area of expertise; this, in turn, enabled the United States to assert its political influence in the Caribbean.

As a part of this strategy to develop their authority in the Caribbean as experts of Creole languages and cultures, both British and American linguists intentionally approached the study of Creole as a strictly scientific and intellectual endeavor. The conference in Jamaica was devoid of any discussions concerning the political implications of Creole's social and cultural meanings. Participants limited their interests to defining Creole languages and their common structural components, as well as the linguistic processes from which Creole languages emerged. According to Le Page, "desirable" studies of Creole languages emphasized the importance of "first-hand information obtained by field work . . . the first step [of which] should be the collection

¹⁰ Le Page, ed., *Creole Language Studies*, 125.

¹¹ Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far: *Bannzil*'s pan-Creole idealism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 29.

of ‘texts’, from which grammars and dictionaries should then be prepared.”¹² Le Page and his cohort of British and American linguists were primarily interested in amassing scientific data on the linguistic characteristics of Creole languages. Their conference papers only briefly acknowledged the colonial histories of violence and oppression that produced Creole languages and culture.¹³ Rather than recognizing the troubled history, as well as the cultural and social complexities of each distinct Creole, they set out to control Creole by developing a single classification system for its many distinct languages. This was a conscious effort to depoliticize nationalists’ appropriation of Creole to argue for independence. In making Creole studies a science, British and American linguists hoped to neutralize Creole-speakers’ emotional connection to Creole as a language of resistance. In doing so, Britain and the United States would be able to assert their influence and promote their nation’s respective political agendas in the Caribbean.¹⁴

Moreover, the proceedings of the 1959 Creole studies conference indicate that British and American linguists perceived of their study of Creole languages as an act of benevolence toward Creole-speakers. It reflected Western linguists’ lingering colonial impulses to economically and culturally uplift peoples who had failed to help themselves.¹⁵ The scientific study of Creole would not only benefit the academic community by revealing new methods of linguistic theory, but it would also promote self-

¹² Le Page, ed., *Creole Language Studies*, 125.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123-130.

¹⁴ For a discussion of knowledge gathering as a form of colonial control see: Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Form of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ This 19th and 20th century idea that the more “civilized” nations were morally obligated to bring Western civilization to supposedly “backwards” peoples was most explicitly expressed in France’s “civilizing mission.” For a more detailed discussion of France’s “civilizing mission” see Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

understanding and social mobility among native Creole-speakers. Foreign linguists argued that their elevation of Creole as a valuable language of study would empower Creole-speakers of “newly-emergent nations” to rediscover their cultural richness as an “essential preliminary [step in] making the fullest use of their resources, both economic and cultural.”¹⁶ According to Le Page, one of the most important social benefits of Creole studies was its intervention in the education of Creole-speakers. Linguists’ standardization of Creole languages would enable teachers to use Creole to effectively teach English and other European languages. In the 1950s, British education officials were investigating how the government could improve the deplorable state of education in the Caribbean. They viewed West Indians’ inability to speak the “Queen’s English” as the main factor contributing to the high percentage of uneducated West Indians. Despite linguists’ claims that Creole was “on par with any other language”, the acquisition of Western languages remained the most effective path to social mobility. Therefore, Creole was valuable in that it could be used as a pedagogical tool to reinforce the supremacy of English and Britain’s cultural domination in Caribbean.

Following the first Creole studies conference in 1959, British and American linguists organized two more conferences in 1968 and 1975 at the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of Hawaii respectively. The content of these two conferences signaled a radical shift in Creole studies. Up until 1968, the field of Creole studies had been devoted to the identification and description of Creole languages. The small group of scholars who gathered at UWI oriented research away from descriptive concerns toward broader theoretical issues, such as the social and cultural factors

¹⁶ Le Page, ed., *Creole Language Studies*, 127.

involved in the process of creolization.¹⁷ They argued that in order to fully understand Creole languages, linguists needed to closely study the distinct societies in which they developed. This new focus on the connection between language and society made the question of colonialism unavoidable.¹⁸ At the 1959 conference, scholars had avoided discussing colonization and European powers' role in denigrating Creole for fear that such discourse would encourage anticolonialists. Now, they openly acknowledged colonialism as the culprit.¹⁹

In the preface to the published volume of papers presented at the 1968 conference, American anthropologist Dell Hymes linked the stigmatization of Creole languages to the violence of colonization:

These [Creole] languages have been considered, not creative adaptations, but degenerations; not systems in their own right, but deviations from other systems. Their origins have been explained, not by historical and social forces, but by inherent ignorance, indolence, and inferiority. Not the least of the crimes of colonialism has been to persuade the colonized that they, or ways in which they differ, are inferior—to convince the stigmatized that the stigma is deserved. Indigenous languages, and especially pidgins and creoles, have suffered in this respect.²⁰

Hymes accused linguists of reproducing colonizers' disparagement of Creole languages, peoples and cultures. Their decision to exclusively study the linguistic structure of Creole in relationship to European languages had reinforced Creole's inferiority as a "degeneration". Hymes challenged scholars to examine the historical and social forces from which Creole materialized, namely colonialism and slavery. He argued that this reexamination of Creole languages' histories and social uses would precipitate a

¹⁷ David DeCamp, "The Field of Creole Language Studies," *Latin American Research Review* 3, no.3 (Summer 1968): 25.

¹⁸ Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far," 27.

¹⁹ Dell Hymes, ed., *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, April 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 3-11

²⁰ *Ibid.* 3.

reevaluation of Creole as a creative and adaptive language instead of a degenerative form of a superior European culture.

The involvement of scholars outside the field of linguistics, such as Hymes, reflected the new broader scope of Creole studies. It was no longer just about the scientific study of language; linguists also drew on work within sociology and anthropology to contextualize the role of language in Creole cultures and societies. In the 1968 conference report, scholars of Creole studies argued for the “study of creolization within the context of the general process of hybridization, convergence, and acculturation.”²¹ Their conference papers were particularly interested in the historical processes that precipitated the emergence of unique Creole languages and cultures, as well as the present social and political importance of Creole in the Caribbean region.²² This acknowledgement of the distinctiveness of Creole societies and cultures attracted many more native Creole-speaking scholars who saw an opportunity to make their study of Creole a political act. For these academics, their efforts to develop knowledge about Creole societies and cultures proclaimed the existence of these societies and cultures as distinct entities. In other words, Creole studies was a critique of colonialism; it was about elevating Creole peoples and their cultures to argue for more cultural and political autonomy.

Despite this growing interest among native scholars, the 1968 and 1975 Creole studies conferences were still dominated by British linguists who were interested in

²¹ Hymes, ed., *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, 7.

²² See: Albert Valdman, “The Language Situation in Haiti”; Mervyn C. Alleyne, “Acculturation and the Cultural Matrix of Creolization”; Christian Ersel, “Prestige in Choice of Language and Linguistic Form”; Dennis R. Craig, “Education and Creole English in the West Indies: Some Sociolinguistic Factors”; and Allen D. Grimshaw, “Some Social Forces and Some Social Function of Pidgin and Creole Languages”. All published in Dell Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, April 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

maintaining their political influence in the Caribbean region and American academics who perceived of the Caribbean as a region that would become increasingly important to the United States as its islands gained independence.²³ French linguists were also involved in the newly emerging field of Creole studies; however, unlike Britain who had lost its West Indian colonies during the wave of decolonization following the Second World War, France held on to its Caribbean colonies by transforming them into departments. For France, the promotion of Creole was therefore antithetical to the politics of departmentalization, which called for the complete cultural and political integration of Martinique and Guadeloupe into the French nation.

Yet, Antillean academics understood the political importance of their Creole languages and cultures. In 1969, a group of secondary teachers and university-level researchers at the Center for Antilles-Guiana Regional Studies (became the University of Antilles-Guiana in 1982) founded the Association of Inter-Caribbean Exchanges (Interca). The goal of the organization was to “develop educational, cultural and personal ties the Caribbean zone” and “to implement exchange programs of peoples and ideas, giving habitants of the region a better reciprocal understanding of each other.”²⁴ Throughout the 1970s, Interca organized exchanges between the French and British Caribbean islands. In general, high schools and universities in the British Caribbean and the French Antilles served as the institutional sponsors of these exchange programs.

²³ Only two of the papers presented at the 1968 UWI conference discussed French-based Creoles: John E. Reinecke’s “Tay Boi: Notes on the Pidgin French spoken in Vietnam” and Albert Valdman’s “The Language Situation in Haiti”. For complete texts of these papers see: Dell Hymes (ed.), *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, April 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). Only one paper on a French-based Creole was presented at the 1979 Creole studies conference: Danielle d’Offay de Rieux’s “Creole and Educational Policy in the Seychelles”. For a complete text of this paper see: Albert Valdman and Arnold Highfield (eds.), *Theoretical Orientations in Creole Studies* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

²⁴ Statuts de l’Association Intercaraïbe d’Echanges. Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 3.

During their summer vacations, Martinican students and teachers traveled to Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica; they also welcomed these students to Martinique. According to Interca's annual report, these exchange programs enabled Caribbean students and teachers to learn about each other's distinct cultures while also discovering their shared experiences as peoples of the Caribbean.²⁵

These shared experiences included the violence of colonization and slavery from which their Creole languages emerged. Interca's founders believed that this common history connected Caribbean peoples and justified them joining forces in the struggle against Europe's continued influence in the Caribbean. In order to become a strong political entity in the face of European oppression, Caribbean peoples need to support each other and combine their resources. This process began with mutual understanding fostered by exchange programs, such as those organized by Interca. In 1976, the monthly magazine, *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, suggested that Creole was the starting point for this kind of Caribbean collaboration. The promotion of Creole "would permit the inhabitants of the Anglophone and Francophone islands to better understand each other, in order to organize together a closer cooperation within the Caribbean world."²⁶ *Flash Antilles-Guyane* argued that Creole transcended the cultural particularities of each Caribbean island. It suggested that Creole be used as the "lingua franca" of the Caribbean to promote cultural and political links among the islands.²⁷ The interest of a popular publication, such as *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, in the promotion of a kind of Caribbean union, indicates that the Antillean people were also becoming aware of their relationship

²⁵ L'Association Intercaraïbe d'Echanges, Programme d'Activité, 1973-194, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 840446, Art. 3.

²⁶ M. Lourel, "A propos de l'usage du Créole: un point de vue," *Flash Antilles-Guyane*, May 1976, 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

to other Caribbean islands. Interca's exchange programs had created a generation of Antilleans who had knowledge of other Caribbean islands and were interested in exploring their cultural ties to the Caribbean. Moreover, Interca shaped Jamaicans', Trinidadians' and Barbadians' understanding of their close relationship with Antilleans.

Interca marked the beginning of Antillean academics' interest in collaborating with other scholars in the English-speaking Caribbean. In contrast to the British and American sponsored international Creole studies conferences, Interca was an exclusively Caribbean organization. It was founded by Antilleans and was based in Fort-de-France, Martinique. This enabled Antilleans to set their own agenda. Previously, Britons and Americans had dominated the conversation at Creole studies conferences, privileging the scientific study of Creole languages. Now, with the formation of Interca, Antilleans entered the debate. For Antilleans, discussion of Creole languages and cultures should not be limited to the ivory tower; it was about cultural exchange among the peoples of the Caribbean. Guadeloupe and Martinique were politically tied to France; yet with the founding of Interca, Antillean teachers and academics asserted their cultural and political ties with other Caribbean islands. In other words, they were beginning to explore their distinct Caribbean identity separate from their French citizenship. A decade later, at the 1979 Creole studies conference, native Creole-speakers clearly articulated this idea of a shared pan-Creole cultural identity.

Interca was Antillean teachers' and academics' entry point into discussions about Caribbean collaboration and pan-Creolism. This prompted non-native French linguists to form their own distinct Creole studies groups so that they too could claim a stake in the emerging Creole debates. Following the 1968 and 1975 conferences, the importance

acquired by Creole studies could not be ignored, particularly as a new generation of native scholars, like those associated with Interca, were claiming the distinct identity of Creole societies. The formation of the *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches en Espace Créolophone* (GEREC), a Creole research group founded by Antillean scholars in 1973, illustrated the native seriousness of purpose.²⁸ Moreover, the predominance of Anglo-American scholars in the field of Creole studies motivated French linguists to form their own Creole research organizations for fear that they would lose intellectual authority of a language spoken in many of its former colonies and overseas departments.

By the mid-1970s, interuniversity and intergovernmental organizations, such as AUPELF (*Association des Universités Partiellement ou Entièrement de Langue Française*) and ACCT (*Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique*), had grown wary of British and American universities' political intentions in dominating the field of Creole studies. In 1975, the ACCT sponsored the first French-based Creole studies conference held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Formed in 1970, the ACCT was an intergovernmental organization of twenty-one states and governments, who came together based on the sharing of the French language. Its mission was to promote the cultures of its members, to improve cultural cooperation among members, and to strengthen the solidarity and connection among French-speaking states. The ACCT financed the conference in Haiti to support and encourage French scholars' involvement in Creole studies. It had long perceived of the promotion of the Creole language as an activity inspired by the United States with the intention of reducing the role of the French language and France in the Caribbean. The proliferation of American scholars' work on

²⁸ For a more detailed history of GEREC, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation, entitled "From Militant Nationalists to Ethnic Minority: The Antillean Creole Movement in Metropolitan France and the Antilles after Departmentalization."

Haitian Creole proved to French academics that this was indeed the case. Therefore, as the organization that represented francophone nations, the ACCT became actively involved in supporting Creole studies as a means to secure France's political interests in the Caribbean.²⁹

French linguists responded to Anglo-American dominance in Creole studies and the growing militancy of native academics by attempting to bring everyone together on a common cosmopolitan platform. In November 1976, with the support of ACCT and AUPELF, French linguist, Robert Chaudenson, organized the first French Creole conference in Nice, France. On this occasion, the *Comité International des Etudes Créoles* (CIEC) was formed with Chaudenson as its president. It was Chaudenson's intention to achieve the widest possible representation at CIEC's First International Creole Studies Conference by welcoming native and nonnative participants from around the world. The newly formed Creole studies group was thus cosmopolitan in composition, but French-controlled. In the preface to the first issue of CIEC's journal, *Etudes Créoles*, Dankoulodo Dan Dicko and Jean-Marc Léger the secretary generals of the ACCT and AUPELF respectively, emphasized that it had become "more and more urgent" to support the study of French-based Creole languages.³⁰ CIEC resented Anglophone linguists' privileging of English-based Creoles in the Caribbean, and felt that French-based Creoles needed to be studied more rigorously. CIEC's constitution emphasized the need to promote and develop French-lexicon Creole studies and to disseminate scientific research conducted in French in the related fields of linguistic and

²⁹ Robert Chaudenson, "Research, politics, and ideology: the case of the Comité International des Etudes Créoles," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 16-19.

³⁰ Dankoulodo Dan Dicko and Jean-Marc Léger, "Avant Propos," *Etudes Créoles* (1978): 9-10.

cultural creolization.³¹ The result was a split between Francophone and Anglophone linguists that prevented Creole studies from becoming a truly international discipline and movement.

In the spring of 1979, Anglophone and Francophone scholars held separate Creole studies conferences. The National Science Foundation, the College of the Virgin Islands, and Indiana University sponsored British and American linguists' fourth Creole studies conference from March 28 to April 1 on the island of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Less than two months later, AUPELF and ACCT financed CIEC's second conference in the Seychelles. Ideologically both conferences claimed to be international in scope, welcoming scholars of Creole languages and cultures from around the world. Organizers of the St. Thomas conference boasted that their conference had attracted more than 150 participants representing twenty different nations.³² In using the word "international" in their conference title and their groups' name, CIEC also claimed to be a global organization. However, in reality, these two conferences were divided along linguistic lines. The papers presented at the St. Thomas conference almost exclusively discussed English-based Creoles, and although CIEC insisted upon its international status, it also proclaimed its staunch commitment to furthering the study of French-based Creoles.³³ The university and government organizations funded these Anglophone and Francophone Creole studies conferences with their own particular political interests in mind. They perceived of their involvement in creation of knowledge

³¹ Constitution of Comité International d'Etudes Créoles (CIEC), published in *Etudes Créoles* (1978): 175.

³² Arnold Highfield and Albert Valdman, eds., *Historicity and Variation in Creole Studies*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers, Inc., 1981), vii.

³³ The papers presented at the 1979 Creole studies conference in St. Thomas were published in Arnold Highfield and Albert Valdman, eds., *Historicity and Variation in Creole Studies*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers, Inc., 1981), vii.
Constitution of Comité International d'Etudes Créoles (CIEC), published in *Etudes Créoles* (1978): 175.

about Creole languages and cultures as a way to assert their political and cultural presence in the Caribbean region. Thus, their competing interests prevented them from forming a Creole studies group that bridged the divide between French-based and English-based Creoles. Instead, Anglophone and Francophone Creole studies groups vied for control of Creole as they also fought for political and cultural control of the Caribbean.

In addition to solidifying the divide between Anglophone and Francophone Creole studies, the 1979 conferences revealed another cleavage in Creole studies between native and nonnative scholars. The emergence of newly independent Creole-speaking nations in the 1970s such as Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, and the Seychelles, as well as the rising tide of nationalism in other Creolophone territories still dominated by European metropolises, such as France's overseas departments, brought to the fore discussions about the politicization of Creole in connection to national movements. As native scholars became increasingly invested in the political stakes of Creole studies, they also began to express their resentment of what they perceived to be non-native scholars' unmerited control of Creole studies. Native Creole-speakers at both the St. Thomas and Seychelles conferences openly questioned nonnative linguists' authority to study Creole languages. They believed that as native Creolophones, they spoke authentic Creole uncorrupted by European influences and therefore, should possess exclusive rights to standardizing their own languages. Francophone and Anglophone scholars' dominant presence in Creole studies was a continuation of European colonialism, resulting in the further degradation of Creole languages and cultures. In this respect, the St. Thomas and Seychelles conferences marked a radical departure from previous conferences where tensions

between native and non-native scholars remained in the background. In 1979, native scholars joined Anglophone and Francophone linguists in the struggle for control of Creole and Creolophone regions, further fracturing the international Creole movement.

Part II. Bannzil Kréyòl: A Native Pan-Creole Movement

In 1979, native Creolophone scholars seized the opportunity of the St. Thomas and Seychelles conferences to reclaim control of their Creole languages. In the course of impassioned discussions at the St. Thomas conference about Creole's place in Haitian education, native Creole-speakers did not hesitate to communicate in their maternal tongue.³⁴ This elevated Haitian Creole by dramatically demonstrating its adequacy and suitability for intellectual discourse. Yet, perhaps more importantly, the native scholars' use of Haitian Creole excluded the predominantly non-native and Anglophone linguists from the discussion who did not specialize in and thus, did not understand Haitian Creole. This symbolized a conscious effort by native linguists to reclaim control of their language and assert their right to determine how it would be used and integrated into their societies.

It is notable that the native scholars who openly expressed their dissent with non-natives' involvement in Creole studies spoke a French-based Creole and were citizens of a former French colony. In contrast to Britain, whose Caribbean colonies had gained independence by the late 1970s, France adhered to the politics of *continuité territoriale*. Conferring the status of *département d'outre-mer* (DOM) on its Creole speaking colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe meant that France maintained its authority to privilege the

³⁴ Arnold Highfield and Albert Valdman, eds., *Historicity and Variation in Creole Studies*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Karoma Publishers, Inc., 1981), vii-x.

French language at the expense of Creole. The unresolved issue of France's continued political and cultural domination of the DOM gave the study of French-based Creoles a political dimension that was absent in Anglophone Creole studies.³⁵ In the French Antilles, Creole became a symbol of resistance against French control. Because of this politicization of Antillean Creole, French-based Creole studies was much more fractured as competing groups sought to use Creole to promote their own political agendas. Native linguists appropriated Creole in their struggle against French control while non-native linguists used Creole studies to assert their power and influence in the Caribbean.

Two months after Haitian linguists asserted their intellectual authority at the St. Thomas conference, the conflict in French-based Creole studies between native and nonnative scholars came to a head in at CIEC's second conference in the Seychelles. In his opening address, CIEC's President, Robert Chaudenson, proclaimed that Creole studies was about promoting the development of Creole-speaking regions:

I think that the researcher, particularly in developing countries, cannot ignore the consequences or the eventual applications of his work. "An underdeveloped country is an understudied country"; this statement illustrates two kinds of phenomena: the obvious need to develop knowledge, a prerequisite for development itself, but also the impossibility that these countries generally find themselves in of achieving this self-knowledge prior to development.³⁶

Chaudenson argued that in neglecting to develop self-knowledge about their societies and cultures, Creole-speaking regions had failed to encourage their own social and economic progress. Therefore, it was the scholar's job to create this knowledge that would stimulate development. For Chaudenson, Creole studies was a benevolent project; it was

³⁵ Prudent Lambert-Félix and Ellen M. Schnepel, "Introduction," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 6.

³⁶ Robert Chaudenson, "Allocution" at CIEC's Second International Creols Studies Conference. Published in *Etudes Créoles* 2 (1980): 144-151.

about saving Creole-speakers from underdevelopment and helping them achieve social mobility. A telegram from the General Director of UNESCO addressing the conference participants praised Chaudenson's decision to organize the conference around this theme of "Creole studies and development". He stated that CIEC's conference, "which aims to make Creole an instrument of development", also "reflects the concerns of UNESCO's efforts to promote development."³⁷ As European empires decolonized, intergovernmental organizations, like UNESCO, became involved in promoting sustainable development and international collaboration through education, the sciences, and culture in former colonies across the globe. For UNESCO, international conferences that increased understanding of different cultures, like those organized around Creole studies, were important for creating cultural understanding, international collaboration, and peace in the world.

However, native scholars at the Seychelles conference understood Chaudenson's and UNESCO's support of Creole studies as instrument of development quite differently. They perceived of nonnative involvement in the study and standardization of Creole languages as a continuation of colonial rule in Creole-speaking regions. UNESCO purportedly furthered the doctrine of human rights and the fundamental freedoms, such as political sovereignty, proclaimed in the United Nations Charter; yet it supported Creole studies, which was preoccupied with the scientific study of Creole and ignored European nations' persistent dominance of Creole-speaking regions. Native scholars saw this hypocrisy within Creole studies as an attempt by nonnative linguists to appear to be supportive of Creole cultures while seeking to establish control of them. Frustrated with

³⁷ Telegramme adressé aux participants par M. Amoudou Mahtar M'Bow, directeur general de l'UNESOC. Published in *Etudes Créoles* 2 (1980): 153.

what they perceived to be nonnative scholars' misappropriation of Creole studies, native scholars used the forum of the Seychelles conference to reclaim the study of Creole cultures and languages for native linguists.

In his opening statement, Jacques Hodoul, the Minister of Education for the Seychelles, criticized nonnative linguists' attempts to avoid the politicization of Creole studies by focusing on the scientific analysis of Creole languages. He made it clear that "the Creole language cannot be at this symposium a mere object of a simple scientific dissection, coldly carried out."³⁸ Instead, he linked the study of Creole to Creole-speakers' struggle for cultural and political recognition, arguing that Creole studies was inherently political. To support this claim, Hodoul underscored Creole's importance in the recent Seychellois struggle for independence:

In the Seychelles, the people knew how to react, and knew how to make language, once an instrument of domination, an instrument of their liberation... What wonder one beautiful morning in June 1977, when the people recovered their right to speak, the first words announcing this liberation on the radio, as you suspected, were Creole words! And since this big day, our language had grown freely and has also become the instrument of our development... Today, uncovered, [Creole] intends to appear as its true self and lends itself to the new role of the people, a role fully and completely sovereign.³⁹

For Hodoul, the story of the Seychelles' independence was an example of how Creole-speakers rallied around Creole as a symbol of their distinct cultural identity to argue for and gain political liberation. Creole studies was about the development of Creolophone regions; however, it was not for nonnative scholars to decide how Creole would be used in this development. Native linguists needed to reclaim their authority and regain control

³⁸ Allocution de M. Jacques Hodoul, Ministre de l'Éducation et de la Culture de la République des Seychelles. Published in *Études Créoles* 2 (1980): 142.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 142-143.

of their Creole languages so that they could determine Creole's place in their societies. This would enable them to use Creole studies to address to the problem of Europe's continued political and cultural domination of Creolophone regions. Hodoul claimed that "there is only one objective, to enable people to live in sovereignty, thanks to their inalienable right to speak."⁴⁰ He called upon native linguists' to distance themselves from nonnative linguists' apolitical research, and make the study of Creole a political struggle against European control.

In organizing the Seychelles conference, CIEC had attempted to bring together nonnative and native scholars under the cosmopolitan platform of scientific research; yet, the dissatisfaction of native linguists expressed by Hodoul in his opening statement, revealed that intellectual cooperation among such politically diverse linguists was precarious and fraught with tension. Hodoul's speech made the conference conducive to expressions of Creole militancy. In the following working session, Ronald Thésauros, President of the University of the Antilles-Guiana (UAG) denounced the "disguised colonialism" of the French in the DOM.⁴¹ As the representative of GEREC, the UAG's Creole studies group, Thésauros used his inflammatory words to deliberately separate GEREC from the CIEC, the French-controlled sponsor of the Seychelles conference. Thésauros did not want GEREC to participate in a Creole studies movement that continued to be complacent about French control in Guadeloupe and Martinique. A few months after the conference, he published an article entitled, "Creole and National Identity", in the pro-nationalist magazine *Jakarta*. In this article, Thésauros articulated his

⁴⁰ Allocution de M. Jacques Hodoul, Ministre de l'Éducation et de la Culture de la République des Seychelles. Published in *Études Créoles* 2 (1980): 142.

⁴¹ Roland Thésauros, quoted in Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far: *Bannzil's* pan-Creole idealism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (1993): 30.

vision for a native-controlled Creole movement that promoted Antillean independence. He wrote that the “Creole language wants to be one of the elements of struggle in the recovery of national heritage” and “national independence”.⁴² According to Thésauros, Antilleans needed to rehabilitate their Creole language, which had been denigrated under French colonialism, and continued to be characterized as an inferior language by European linguists working within Creole studies. He called for a separate native-controlled Creole movement as the only solution to the Antilles’ continued oppression at the hands of France.

Hodoul’s and Thésauros’s recognition of Creole as a fundamental part of Creolophones’ struggle for cultural and political liberation made native linguists aware of Creole-speakers’ common cultural and historical links beyond the language connection. In his speech, Hodoul touched upon these feelings of pan-Creole solidarity, proclaiming that “the history of a language and that of the people who speak it are one and of the same history.”⁴³ Creole-speakers are “torn from everywhere, from all horizons of the planet”, and have “looked for, from the very beginning, a common way of expressing ourselves.”⁴⁴ It was in this manner that “the Creole language was born, the symbol of a people who refused to be silenced.”⁴⁵ Hodoul argued that Creole-speakers’ mother tongues developed out of the same history of colonization and slavery; moreover, they were politically connected in their common struggle against European domination. Because of this, they shared a Creole cultural identity.

⁴² Roland Thésauros, “Créole et Identité Nationale,” *Jakarta*, September-October, 1979, 9.

⁴³ Allocution de M. Jacques Hodoul, Ministre de l’Éducation et de la Culture de la République des Seychelles. Published in *Études Créoles* 2 (1980): 142.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

Several months after Hodoul planted this seed for a pan-Creole movement separate from an academically focused Creole studies movement, Thésauros also recognized the political power of Creole to link otherwise culturally and geographically disparate Creolophone regions into one political and cultural movement. In the same article mentioned above, Thésauros ended his discussion of Creole and national identity with the assertion that “Creole allows [us] to transcend all ethnic cleavages because it is the maternal language of an entire people.”⁴⁶ He saw in Creole not only its ability to promote Guadeloupean and Martinican nationalism, but also its importance in uniting all Creolophones, regardless of their cultural differences, in a singular pan-Creole movement against European oppression. This kind of pan-Creole cultural politics necessarily excluded nonnative linguists, further fracturing the intellectual Creole studies movement between nonnative and native scholars.

In May 1981, at CIEC’s third conference in St. Lucia, this native/nonnative conflict became even more apparent. The conference took place during a time when debates concerning the merits of using Creole, as opposed to French, as the preferred language of communication were at the forefront of Creole studies. In general, French was the predominant language of Creole studies. Both native and nonnative scholars wrote, presented, and discussed their work in French. They agreed that their exclusive use of French reinforced the stigma of Creole as underdeveloped and inadequate for intellectual communication. This contradicted the main goal of Creole studies, which was to elevate Creole languages. Yet, this problem was not easily solvable. There was a significant obstacle to using Creole as the favored language of Creole studies: Creolists spoke many different Creole languages; in other words, there was no main Creole

⁴⁶ Roland Thésauros, “Créole et Identité Nationale,” *Jakarta*, September-October, 1979, 9.

language understood by all scholars within Creole studies. By default, French was necessarily the main language of oral and written communication. CIEC appeared to be open to resolving this dilemma. Its president, Chaudenson, offered the solution of developing an “inter-Creole” language that would be comprehensible to all Creolophones. He argued that “a common graphical code would favor mutual understanding of Creole cultures and would facilitate their dialogue.”⁴⁷ This would “permit the development of an autonomous communication among the different Creolophone countries of a region and would inevitably reinforce [their] independence from control by the North.”⁴⁸ An inter-Creole language would not only promote communication and understanding among Creole-speaking regions, but it would free them from the grasp of the French language, and permit them to take more control of their own local affairs.

Despite CIEC’s interest in promoting inter-Creole, such a project proved to be difficult and complicated to implement and was for all intents and purposes quickly abandoned. Native linguists perceived of inter-Creole’s dissolution as one of many examples of the hypocrisy of Creole studies which proclaimed to support the elevation of Creole languages, but in reality reinforced the supremacy of French. This tension between native and nonnative scholars erupted at the St. Lucia conference, resulting in the formation of *Bannzil Kréyòl*, an exclusively native pan-Creole movement that separated itself from the French-controlled CIEC. During the conference, an unanticipated breakdown in communication occurred due to the difficulties experienced by the host country’s delegation in speaking French. This problem was momentarily

⁴⁷ Robert Chaudenson, quoted in Françoise Dreyfus, “Créole et droit à la communication des pays en développement,” *Etudes Créoles* 3 (November 1980): 75.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

resolved when several native Creole-speakers spontaneously decided to speak in their respective Creoles.⁴⁹ However, this was problematic to CIEC and ACCT, one of its French sponsors, who perceived of the use of Creole as the primary language of communication as an affront to their control of the conference proceedings. To reestablish their authority over what it perceived to be a deteriorating situation, CIEC and ACCT reasserted French as the conference's "working language". During the first working session, the ACCT reminded participants that it was an intergovernmental organization whose members were united around their common use of the French language. Therefore, because ACCT was one of the conference's major donors, French should remain the sole "working language" of CIEC and Creole studies in general.⁵⁰

In reflecting upon this tension concerning Creole's place within Creole studies, Chaudenson reevaluated his previous support of the development of an inter-Creole language. He highlighted French's status as the international language of science, and used this fact to contend that French should be the official language of Creole studies. Chaudenson argued that because of the linguistic diversity of the many French-based Creoles, Creole was not an effective means of communication. The reality was that the majority of the people in the Creole world spoke French. Thus, "cultural and scientific cooperation, inevitably in French...was necessary for the progress of Creole studies."⁵¹ Chaudenson's argument stripped Creole of its intellectual legitimacy and its potential to be a language of academic communication and production. Native linguists at the St.

⁴⁹ Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far: *Bannzil's* pan-Creole idealism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 30-31.

⁵⁰ The ACCT stated its support for the exclusive use of French in Creole Studies in its journal, *AGECOP-Liaison*. "Colloque international des études créoles à Ste-Lucie," *AGECOP-Liaison*, May-July 1981, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 26.

⁵¹ Chaudenson, "Research, politics, and ideology", 22.

Lucia conference perceived of CIEC's privileging of French as a cooptation of their Creole languages under the guise of scientific research. It was suddenly clear to native Creolophone scholars that CIEC was not interested in elevating Creole languages and cultures; it was just another European-dominated organization interested in maintaining Creole's subordination.⁵²

Convinced by CIEC's actions that the legitimization of Creole could not be achieved from within a French-controlled organization, native linguists began to explore the possibility of establishing a native-controlled Creole studies group. In an act of defiance, a group of native scholars stopped attending the workshops CIEC had planned for the St. Lucia conference. Instead, they organized impromptu meetings exclusively for native Creole-speakers. During these sessions, they discussed the possibility of creating a pan-Creole communication system that would enable Creole-speakers to understand each other. Their goal was to forge an inter-Creole language that would replace French as the official working language of Creole studies.⁵³ They signed a resolution promising to "use Creole languages in the creation of their scientific research."⁵⁴ In this resolution, native Creole-speakers asserted that foreign academics' use of French to study Creole languages had degraded Creole as a non-intellectual language. In order to revalue Creole languages, native scholars argued that they needed to demonstrate Creole's usefulness and employ it in their own work.

Native scholars' break from CIEC was not just about their disapproval of its privileging of French; it was also about creating an autonomous organization to explore

⁵² Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far", 30-31.

⁵³ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁴ Resolution of native Creolophones who participated in the impromptu workshops on the creation of an inter-Creole language at CIEC's St. Lucia conference. Published in *Etudes Créoles* 4, no.1 (1981): 137.

their pan-Creole feelings beyond the language connection. During the conference's closing session, Father Patrick Anthony presented native scholars' position to CIEC's general assembly:

Having come here together, as people from different parts, we have experienced a unity which we never knew existed before. We have experienced that we are Creolophone peoples, but although we come from Reunion or Mauritius, although we come from the Seychelles, we have something in common: the Creole experience. We can speak to each other in Creole, we can reflect intelligently and scientifically on our reality in Creole, and in a way, understand our very Creole being and our Creole way. That experience has caused us to come together and put our minds together to form a committee to organize a conference on the coming together of Creole people.⁵⁵

Over the course of their impromptu meetings in St. Lucia, native scholars discovered their linguistic and cultural connections with each other. In addition to being Creolophones, linked by a common language, they also became aware of their shared cultural identity as Creoles. This discovery of their collective "Creole experience", "Creole being" and "Creole way" produced pan-Creole feelings that they had never before experienced. With the above statement, native scholars officially proclaimed that they were creating *Bannzil Kréyòl*, their own autonomous organization in which they could freely express and develop this pan-Creole identity that CIEC had denied them and discouraged.

One year later, *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s founding members met in Mahé during the "Creole week" organized by the Seychelles in 1982. The outcome of this meeting was the formal launching of *Bannzil Kréyòl* and the establishment of its objectives. Antillean scholars Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant played an important role in shaping what

⁵⁵ Transcription of a tape-recording of the closing session of the third CIEC conference in St. Lucia, May 1981. Quoted in Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing, "So near, yet so far: *Bannzil*'s pan-Creole idealism," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 31.

Bannzil Kréyòl stood for as a pan-Creole movement. During the St. Lucia conference, Bernabé took the lead in organizing the impromptu meetings during which native scholars broke with CIEC and discussed the possibility of forming an inter-Creole language. Confiant became the face of *Bannzil Kréyòl* as its first president. During the 1970s, both were militant proponents of Creole and members of GEREC, the pro-nationalist Creole studies group associated with the University of Antilles-Guiana. In the early 1980s, Bernabé and Confiant began to distance themselves from Antillean nationalism and articulated a new kind of Creole multiculturalism.⁵⁶ In December 1980, they hosted a conference on the theme of “formation and divergence of Creole societies” with the *Horizons créoles*, a Creole studies group focused on the Indian Ocean region. This conference addressed the linguistic commonalities between the Antilles (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Haiti) and the islands of the Indian Ocean (Reunion, Mauritius). It sought to understand how two such geographically separated and culturally distinct societies developed strikingly similar Creole languages.⁵⁷ Bernabé’s and Confiant’s collaboration with *Horizons créoles* marked Antillean scholars’ growing awareness of their cultural and linguistic connections to other Creolophones across the world, particularly those who spoke other French-based Creoles of the Indian Ocean. It was the beginning of their theorization of a pan-Creole identity, which they formalized with the creation of *Bannzil Kréyòl* in May 1981 and their publication of *Eloge de la Créolité* in 1989.

Bernabé suggested the name of *Bannzil Kréyòl* or “Creole Islands” for the native scholars’ autonomous organization. Bernabé constructed the phrase by combining three

⁵⁶ For a more detailed analysis of this shift from nationalism to multiculturalism in the Antillean Creole movement, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation, especially the Part IV entitled “From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Créolité and the “right to difference.”

⁵⁷ Bruno Bondi, “Le Créole: langue internationale,” *Flash Antilles Afrique*, January 1981, 22.

words: *bann*, the Indian Ocean Creole marker of plurality, *zil*, the Creole word for island, and *kréyòl*, the Antillean spelling of Creole.⁵⁸ Bernabé chose to combine both Indian Ocean and Antillean Creole languages so that *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s name would visually express its pan-Creole motto of “unity within diversity”. For Bernabé and other native scholars, *Bannzil Kréyòl* represented a particular kind of unity among Creolophones. Creole-speakers possessed diverse languages and cultures, yet they were united in their shared experiences of colonialism and slavery. Although *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s statutes defined the organization as an academic movement to “develop and promote the study of Creole languages and culture”, *Bannzil Kréyòl* was a political movement in that it sought to create an pan-Creole identity that challenged Europe’s cultural and political control of Creole regions.⁵⁹ Its founding declaration defined the movement as an association of linguists, educators, researchers, artists, and writers who perceived of themselves as “members of a great family scattered over the world” and who regarded Creole as a “synonym of identity.”⁶⁰

Shortly after the St. Lucia conference during which *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s was founded, Bernabé published an article proclaiming the existence of a pan-Creole identity: “There exists a Creole civilization, just like there exists a Greek, Roman or African civilization.”⁶¹ For Bernabé, the St. Lucia conference “marked an important date in the history of [Creole] societies.”⁶² Creole-speakers had always been a part of a unique civilization, but the founding of *Bannzil Kréyòl* was the moment when Creole scholars

⁵⁸ Schnepel, *In Search of a National Identity*, 154.

⁵⁹ Bannzil Kréyòl's statutes. “Archives: Création de l'association Bannzil Kréyòl,” accessed June 10, 2011, <http://www.montraykreyol.org/spip.php?article503>.

⁶⁰ Bannzil Kréyòl's founding declaration, quoted in Vinesh Hookoomsing, “BannZil Kreol, Archipel Créole,” *Diagonales* 12 (1989): 36 and Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing, Y. “So near, yet so far: Bannzil's pan-Creole idealism,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102 (1993): 28.

⁶¹ Jean Bernabé, “Coup d'état dans le monde créolophone,” *Jougwa*, May-June 1981, 27.

⁶² *Ibid.*

realized and articulated their shared pan-Creole identity. Bernabé defined this concept of pan-Creole identity as *créolité*. *Créolité* emerged during the St. Lucia conference as an “instrument of identity.”⁶³ It developed from the “necessity of creating a new kind of man” who is “situated at the crossroads of multiple heritages”.⁶⁴ In other words, *Créolité* proved to be unifying concept because it cut across Creole-speakers’ geographical and cultural differences. This empowered native scholars to realize their shared identity as “Creoles” so that they could unite in their desire to prevent foreign scholars’ from controlling Creole studies and the construction of their Creole languages. For Bernabé and other native scholars, *Créolité* was about “positively taking control of our development on our own.”⁶⁵ *Bannzil Kréyòl* activists perceived of their ability to control and develop their own Creole languages as a part of their struggle to regain political and cultural control of their respective Creole regions.

However, merely stating the existence of *Créolité* was not enough to build a popular pan-Creole movement. Native scholars associated with *Bannzil Kréyòl* needed to convince Creole-speakers across the globe that they shared a Creole cultural identity. This was the goal of *Bannzil Kréyòl*’s second official meeting in Lafayette, Louisiana on May 27, 1983. During the meeting, Bernabé encouraged native scholars to create a local *Bannzil Kréyòl* branch in their respective regions. He perceived of each branch as a local promoter of Creole identity, where Creole-speakers could come to learn more about pan-Creolism. For example, Bernabé wanted each local section of *Bannzil Kréyòl* to have a viewing of the film, “Vivre en Créole”, which detailed the Creole languages and cultures

⁶³ Jean Bernabé, “Coup d’état dans le monde créolophone,” *Jougwa*, May-June 1981, 27.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

throughout the world.⁶⁶ According to Bernabé, these kind of public cultural activities would promote support for *Bannzil Kréyòl* by distancing it from “all these debates surrounding the Creole language, which rather than uniting us, now tend to divide us.”⁶⁷ Instead of continuing to promote the construction of an inter-Creole language as their central project, members of *Bannzil Kréyòl* began to focus on making Creole more “accessible” and “user friendly”.⁶⁸ *Bannzil Kréyòl* activists believed that their intellectual analysis alienated the Creole-speaking masses and made them disinterested in what *Bannzil Kréyòl* had to say about *créolité*.

The Lafayette conference represented a turning point for *Bannzil Kréyòl*. From that moment on, its members began to work to simplify and popularize their pan-Creole message. A few months after meeting with *Bannzil Kréyòl* members in Lafayette, Bernabé promoted the idea of pan-Creolism in the popular Guadeloupean magazine *Magwa*. He described to his Antillean readers the “experience of Creole in which we are all immersed.”⁶⁹ Antilleans shared with all Creole-speakers the same “basic habits, the unstated code of social relationships, [and] beliefs.”⁷⁰ Bernabé left out the academic discourse analyzing Creole-speakers’ linguistic similarities and the process of creolization in which all Creole languages and cultures formed. Instead, he described pan-Creolism as a feeling of solidarity among a people who had been culturally and politically oppressed. Over the next couple of years, *Bannzil Kréyòl* leaders organized

⁶⁶ Rapport de la réunion de BANNZIL, Lafayette, May 27, 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 27.

⁶⁷ Jean Bernabé, “A propos du 4ème colloque sur les études créoles en Louisiane,” *Magwa*, October 1983, 28.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Creole cultural events across the world with the intention of promoting pan-Creole sentiments among Creolophones.

On October 28, 1984, *Bannzil Kréyòl* celebrated the first International Creole Day. *Bannzil Kréyòl* members organized Creole art exhibitions, music performances, theater productions, and parades in their respective regions. In Guadeloupe, the theater troop *Volkan Tèyat* put on a play in Creole that told the story of how the language became the foundation of Guadeloupeans' Creole identity. The local chapter of *Bannzil Kréyòl* also worked with the teachers' union to organize an exhibition of Antillean students' artwork and a reading of their poems and stories written in Creole. According to Guadeloupean teachers, this kind of celebration of Creole taught "the young Guadeloupean to love his language and his culture" and helped him to "feel culturally at ease."⁷¹ For *Bannzil Kréyòl*, this valorization of Creole was the first step in the process of forging a pan-Creole identity. In order for Creolophones to support the idea of *créolité*, they first needed to accept Creole as a positive aspect of their identity. *Bannzil Kréyòl* also used International Creole Day to educate Creolophones about all Creole cultures and languages across the world. *Bannzil Kréyòl* leaders hoped their two strategies of celebration and education would help Creole-speakers realize their pan-Creole identity and create a popular *créolité* movement.

In response to native scholars' attempts to control Creole studies with the formation of *Bannzil Kréyòl*, nonnative linguists and members of CIEC articulated their own pan-Creole studies movement. As early as 1980, Jean Benoist, a French anthropologist specializing in Martinican and Reunion societies, published an editorial in

⁷¹ "Journée internationale du créole", *Lékòl: Journal du Syndicat de l'Education en Guadeloupe (SGEG)*, December 1984, 6.

CIEC's academic journal, *Etudes Créoles*, in which he argued for the creation of a *monde créole* or "Creole world". He perceived of CIEC as the creator of this "Creole world", describing its conferences as a place of "meetings and dialogue" for scholars of Creole languages and societies from across the globe. However, Benoist's *monde créole* was significantly different from *Bannzil's* construction of a pan-Creole cultural identity. *Monde créole* was about scientific collaboration: "We...maintain at all costs rigorous scientific [study], which can only give meaning to [Creole]." ⁷² In making science the focus of CIEC's *monde créole*, Benoist hoped to depoliticize pan-Creolism and mold it into a more innocuous academic movement.

In 1981, Robert Chaudenson, the president of CIEC and professor of Reunion Creole at the University of Aix-Marseille, presented to the Ministry of Education his argument for the establishment of the *monde créole* as an official *aire culturelle* or "cultural area" of study. Chaudenson lamented that because speakers of French-based Creoles were geographically separated, scholars studied these regions in isolation from each other. The islands of Reunion, Mauritius, Rodrigues, and the Seychelles were considered a part of Africa, the Antilles were attached to the Caribbean and Louisiana and Guiana were linked to the Americas. Chaudenson contended that unifying these Creolophone regions into a singular area of academic study, headed by himself and based at the University of Aix-Marseille, would facilitate cooperation among these regions' multiple governing bodies. Moreover, it would make France the central intellectual authority on the *monde créole*, thus increasing its role in the development of these Creolophone regions. During a time when the influence of British and American

⁷² Jean Benoist, "Editorial: Caraïbe—Océan Indien : Pour un Réseau Du Monde Creole," *Etudes Créoles* 2 (1980): 5-10.

academics was increasing in French-based Creolophone regions, especially those areas associated with the Caribbean and the Americas, Chaudenson argued that French scholars needed to assert their intellectual authority in these areas. He feared that France's political influence would diminish as British and American scholars gained more knowledge about the Creolophone world.⁷³ For Benoist and Chaudenson, the creation of *monde créole* was a conscious effort to secure France's political and intellectual authority in the Creole-speaking world. On the one hand, they wanted to ensure that native linguists did not coopt Creole studies with their politics of pan-Creolism; on the other hand, *monde créole* was a way for France to prevent the United States and Britain from encroaching on its political influence in the Caribbean.

In April 1982, the Secretary for the Ministry of the Interior sent a letter to the Ministry of National Education concerning the designation of the Creole world as a cultural area of study. He agreed with Benoist's and Chaudenson's assessment of the benefits of creating the *monde créole* and advised the Minister of National Education to approve their request. The Secretary of the Interior perceived of the *monde créole* as a necessary response to pan-Creolism: "The emergence of the feeling of a Creole community in the new generations [of Creole-speakers] makes more urgent the development of research in this area."⁷⁴ In addition, "such an enterprise would...create an intimate association between the University of Aix-Marseille and the researchers at the

⁷³ Letter from Robert Chaudenson to the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, January 20, 1982. Attached to this letter was Chaudenson's note to the Mission de la Recherche du Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, entitled "création d'une aire culturelle "Monde créole". Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 18.

⁷⁴ Letter from le Secrétaire d'état auprès du Ministre d'Etat, Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Décentralisation, chargé des départements et territoires d'outre-mer to Monsieur le Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale, "Objet: création d'une aire culturelle 'monde créole' ", April 9, 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 18.

university centers of the DOM.”⁷⁵ The French government was astutely aware of the Antillean scholars’ use of Creole to forge a political movement around a Creole cultural identity. For the Ministry of the Interior, *monde créole* was a way the government could monitor and possibly diffuse this kind of subversive politics.

The Ministry of the Interior’s support for *monde créole* aligned with the new Socialist government’s policy of decentralization, which permitted France’s regions, including Guadeloupe and Martinique, to exercise more control of its local political and cultural affairs. Socialists promoted decentralization as a more efficient government structure; however, it was also a political strategy designed to offer some concessions to leaders of nationalist regional movements while solidifying regions’ political union with France.⁷⁶ At the same time that the Socialist government granted regions more freedom to express their cultural differences, it also became more involved in the patrimony of France’s regions. Beginning in 1981, under the leadership of Socialist Jack Lang, the Ministry of Culture significantly increased its financial support for the preservation and creation of France’s regional cultural heritages. In doing so, the Socialists’ hoped to control how difference was incorporated into and expressed in the nation. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture wanted to garner loyalty from France’s regions as the benefactor of their local patrimonies. The proliferation of government-funded research projects on Creole culture and the Socialists’ support for Creole cultural festivals and associations in the Antilles was a part of this new political tactic of cultural decentralization.

⁷⁵ Letter from le Secrétaire d’état auprès du Ministre d’Etat, Ministre de l’Intérieur et de la Décentralisation, chargé des départements et territoires d’outre-mer to Monsieur le Ministre de l’Education Nationale, “Objet: creation d’une aire culturelle ‘monde créole’ ”, April 9, 1982, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 18.

⁷⁶ See chapter 4 of this dissertation, especially Part II and Part II entitled respectively “Lauriette and the Regionalization Debates” and “Regionalization’s False Promises for Creole”, for a more detailed discussion of decentralization as a political strategy to diffuse nationalist regional movements.

In 1983, the Ministry of Culture organized a “cultural mission” for the Antilles. Lang gave mid-level functionaries within the Ministry of Culture the task of assessing the state of Creole culture in Guadeloupe and Martinique. In their report, this taskforce for the “cultural development of the DOM” concluded that the Ministry of Education needed to do more to promote the development of an Antillean culture that could coexist with and was not in opposition to French culture. Currently, in Guadeloupe and Martinique, “the search for a Caribbean cultural identity is often part of an opposition to European culture, particularly French culture, which is perceived as imperialist.”⁷⁷ In order to avoid the development of this kind of Antillean culture that distanced Guadeloupeans and Martinicans from their French citizenship, the Ministry of Culture’s taskforce argued for a “true politics of cultural development and creation” in the Antilles.⁷⁸ The functionaries envisioned the construction of cultural centers that would house Antillean patrimony and support the creation of Antillean culture. In addition, they suggested that the Ministry of Culture build education centers to train Antillean artists, musicians, and writers. The taskforce believed that this kind of financial patronage would create popular support for the French government.

Several months after the taskforce submitted its report, the Ministry of Culture created a “special fund” of one million francs for the “diffusion, promotion, and exchange” of DOM cultures.⁷⁹ It created the “Office of DOM Cultures” to oversee the distribution of this money. The Ministry of Culture established this office “under the

⁷⁷ Mission de la Cellule Formation de la Direction du Développement Culturel du Ministère de la Culture, February 23, 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870646, Art. 77.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Memo written by Dominique Wallon, Directeur du Développement Culturel du Ministère de la Culture, “Objet: Promotion des cultures d’outre-mer, projet d’un fonds spécial pour des cultures d’Outre-Mer pour la diffusion, la promotion et les échanges, September 19, 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870646, Art. 77.

new politics of decentralization” as means to “coordinate local, interregional, and international [cultural] project.”⁸⁰ In June 1984, Jean-Pierre Colin, the chief officer of the “cultural mission” in the Antilles, informed Lang that the maintenance of the Antilles’ political union with France was dependent upon the Ministry of Culture’s involvement the development and expression of Antillean culture. Colin argued that “it is necessary to help Martinicans express themselves in their own manner.” The “politics of difference” was “the only way, and not otherwise, that one will maintain the French presence in the region.”⁸¹ The Ministry of Culture was not just concerned with promoting Antillean culture in Guadeloupe and Martinique; it also supported the “diffusion” and “exchange” of culture between the Antilles and France, as well as between the Antilles and other regions of the Caribbean and Pacific.⁸² According to Colin, “it is indispensable to open the French islands of the Antilles to the world that surrounds them.”⁸³ He advised the Ministry of Culture to “encourage at all costs, including financially, artists and intellectuals to increase contacts with English- and Spanish-speaking islands, as well as with the [United] States on the continent.”⁸⁴

Colin’s interest in supporting the Antilles’ political and cultural relationship with nations other than France indicates that The Ministry of Culture was aware of not only an emerging Antillean identity, but also a pan-Creole identity that encompassed all Creole-

⁸⁰ Memo from within the Ministry of Culture. “Pour une politique vigoureuse de la promotion des cultures d’outre-mer,” 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870646, Art. 77.

⁸¹ Jean-Pierre Colin, Note à l’attention du Ministre de la Culture, Objet: Mission aux Antilles, June 26, 1984, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870296, Art. 9.

⁸² Memo written by Dominique Wallon, Directeur du Développement Culturel du Ministère de la Culture, “Objet: Promotion des cultures d’outre-mer, projet d’un fonds spécial pour des cultures d’Outre-Mer pour la diffusion, la promotion et les échanges, September 19, 1983, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870646, Art. 77.

⁸³ Jean-Pierre Colin, Note à l’attention du Ministre de la Culture, Objet: Mission aux Antilles, June 26, 1984, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870296, Art. 9.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

speakers across the world. Colin noted that the Antilles' "exclusive relationship with the metropole has a somewhat schizophrenic side, and it is not tenable at the moment."⁸⁵ In describing the Antilles' relationship with France as "schizophrenic", Colin was referring to the multiple identities that were emerging in the Antilles. Guadeloupeans and Martinicans were simultaneously French, Antillean, and Creole. Colin argued that the Ministry of Culture needed to understand these multiple identities and Antilleans' relationship with other Creolophones so that it could determine how to incorporate this difference into the French nation. As a part of the project of *monde créole*, which designated Creole-speaking regions as a distinct cultural area of study, the Ministry of Research and Technology formed the Committee for the Coordination and Research in the Overseas Departments and Territories (CORDET). This committee oversaw and funded academic research in the Antilles. One of its most important projects looked at the development of a Creole identity across entire Caribbean region. It characterized the development of Creole identity as an important political and cultural movement that had implications for Antilleans' place in the French nation. CORDET wondered how the "concept of Creole identity" affected Antilleans' feelings of attachment to France.⁸⁶ The Ministry of Culture was invested in financing research that helped it address the emerging politics of *créolité*. According to CORDET's report on its yearly planning meeting, the Antilles were also of particular interest because of their close proximity to other Caribbean islands and the Americas. CORDET perceived of its collaboration with other researchers of Creole societies in these neighboring regions as an essential part of

⁸⁵ Jean-Pierre Colin, Note à l'attention du Ministre de la Culture, Objet: Mission aux Antilles, June 26, 1984, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870296, Art. 9.

⁸⁶ Commission CORDET—Sciences humaines et sociales. "Rapport l'étape sur l'avancement du programme," 1984, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 19.

the French government's role in navigating the social and economic development of the Caribbean as a whole.⁸⁷

The Ministry of Culture also designated a portion of its "special fund" for "cultural action" in the DOM to support inter-Caribbean cultural festivals. In Guadeloupe, it funded the Festival of Inter-Caribbean Music that united musicians from across the Caribbean.⁸⁸ In becoming involved in this cultural exchange among Creolophones, the Ministry of Culture wanted to assert its role in the formation of this new kind of cultural politics. Under the new policy of decentralization, Antilleans were supposed to gain more control of their local cultural affairs. However, in reality, Socialists' used the politics of the "right to difference" that accompanied decentralization to justify their involvement in the preservation and creation of Antillean culture. The Ministry of Culture argued that the creation of new French-controlled institutions in the Antilles, such as the Office of DOM Cultures, was to ensure the promotion of the "right to difference" in the Antilles. Its sudden interest in Antillean culture was an attempt to control the terms of the debate about Antillean identity, pan-Creolism and how these new identities fit into the French nation.

Throughout the 1980s, the French government, foreign scholars, and native Creolophone members of *Bannzil Kréyòl* vied for control of an emerging pan-Creole movement and identity. Although both native and nonnative linguists sought to popularize Creole languages and cultures, for the most part, the debates about pan-

⁸⁷ Ministère de la Recherche et de la Technologie, Secrétariat d'Etat aux Départements et Territoires d'Outre Mer, "Compte rendu de la réunion plénière de la Commission de Coordination de la Recherche dans les Départements et Territoires d'Outre Mer, November 12, 1984, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 940381, Art. 19.

⁸⁸ "Projets emanant des communautés d'outre-mer en métropole", February 3, 1986, Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC), Fontainebleau, 870646, Art. 60.

Creolism remained within the government and the university. As a result, pan-Creolism became almost exclusively an intellectual movement. Local nationalist activists who had appropriated Creole to argue for independence resented what they perceived to be academics' cooptation of the Creole movement to support their own intellectual endeavors. For them, Creole was a national movement, not an obscure identity linking Creolophones across national borders. As *Bannzil Kréyòl* sought to transform the Antillean Creole movement into pan-Creolism, local nationalists also entered the struggle for pan-Creole identity, seeking to maintain their grasp on Creole as a tool of nationalism.

Part III. Intellectuals' and Nationalists' Struggle for "the people's language"

During the 1970s, nationalists and academics associated with GEREC, the University of the Antilles-Guiana's Creole studies group, had worked together to construct Creole as a symbol of Antillean national identity. Beginning in the 1980s, GEREC linguists began to distance themselves from nationalists as they became more militant, resorted to terrorist tactics, and lost popular support.⁸⁹ Another factor contributing to this ideological split was GEREC linguists' involvement in the emerging politics of pan-Creolism. As early as 1978, GEREC's leaders demonstrated their awareness of a broader Creole identity that extended beyond the Antilles when they changed their groups name from *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches de la Créolophonie* to *Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches en Espace Créole*. The word *créolophonie* was a play on the word *francophonie*, which described the political cooperation and cultural ties among French-speaking nations of the world. In replacing *créolophonie* with *espace créole*, GEREC argued that it was distancing Creole-speakers' ties to European

⁸⁹ Chapter 3 of this dissertation looks more closely at this collaboration and then ideological split between nationalist activists and linguists associated with GEREC.

institutions, such as *francophonie* and broadening the focus of its organization to include all Creole-speakers across the globe.⁹⁰ GEREC was beginning to think not only about Creole's importance as a symbol of Antillean identity, but also about Antilleans' connections to a pan-Creole identity that crossed national boundaries. In 1982, when two of GEREC's most prominent scholars, Jean Bernabé and Raphaël Confiant, also became founding members and leaders of *Bannzil Kréyòl*, local nationalist activists became resentful of what they perceived to be academics' attempts to intellectualize and neutralize the nationalist Creole movement.

Following *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s celebration of its first International Creole Day in October 1984, articles critical of GEREC's and other academic activists' support of pan-Creolism appeared in the Antillean nationalist press. One such article published in the pro-Communist Guadeloupean newspaper, *Combat Ouvrier*, characterized pan-Creolism an intellectual attempt to coopt the Antillean nationalist movement, and transform Creole from an agent of political change into an innocuous cultural movement. According to *Combat Ouvrier*, the sole purpose of *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s International Creole Day was to "remind everyone that Creole is a living force throughout the world, that it is for many the driving force of our daily life."⁹¹ *Combat Ouvrier* perceived of *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s decision to only highlight the large number of Creolophones across the globe as a conscious attempt to ignore and thus, neutralize Creole's nationalistic symbolism:

One cannot take into account the Creole question, as many do, outside the political context in which it develops. In almost all the countries where it exists, Creole is an object or the tool of underhanded political struggles. For example, in Martinique and Guadeloupe, the nationalist supporters use it as a unifying myth, as a national value on the same scale as a flag or a national hymn. In their eyes, Creole contributes to unifying the people (a

⁹⁰ "Avant propos", *Espace Créole* 3 (1978): 7.

⁹¹ *Combat Ouvrier: Hebdomadaire Communiste Révolutionnaire*, no. 274, November 3, 1984, 4.

single people!), bourgeoisie and working classes, into a single block in the struggle for independence.⁹²

For the pro-communist *Combat Ouvrier*, Creole could not be separated from nationalism. To do so would be to the detriment of the working classes and the social unity of the Martinican and Guadeloupean nations. It argued that *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s denationalization of Creole and privileging of an international pan-Creolism identity had divided the Creole movement along class lines. In separating Creole from nationalism, "bourgeois" academics, like those associated with *Bannzil Kréyòl*, had made Creole a tool for the domination of the working classes. *Combat Ouvrier* argued that a "left-wing aristocracy, speaking four languages, has economically exploited the people, and as a consolation has formally recognized their popular culture to silence the poor."⁹³ In other words, pro-Creole intellectuals were only interested in Creole as way to manipulate and subjugate the working classes. Pro-Creole intellectuals had achieved their secure positions through access to languages of international prestige, such as French, not Creole. Therefore, in attempting to control Creole, the only language available to the working classes, the pro-Creole bourgeoisie was seeking to protect their superior social status and prevent the working classes from achieving social mobility.

The *Combat Ouvrier*'s characterization of pan-Creolism as an intellectual movement that only advanced the interests' of the bourgeoisie created a fissure in the Creole movement between linguists and leaders of local nationalist movements. This ideological split was centered on the question of who had the rights to Creole. *Combat Ouvrier* contended that Creole languages belonged to the Guadeloupean and Martinican workers and framers. In contrast to French-educated academics, the working classes had

⁹² *Combat Ouvrier: Hebdomadaire Communiste Révolutionnaire*, no. 274, November 3, 1984, 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

not been corrupted by the French language. Therefore, workers and farmers were the “authentic” speakers of Creole. As such, *Combat Ouvrier* contended that they were the only group with the authority to standardize the Creole language and determine its artistic uses. Despite Antillean nationalists’ collaboration with intellectuals in the 1970s to standardize the Creole language, they had always perceived of Creole as the “people’s language” and had been wary of linguists’ involvement in the Creole movement. In 1977, the newspaper of the pro-nationalist organization, *Ligue d’Union Antillais*, described “the people” as “the master of the word” and therefore must “play the dominant role” in the Creole movement.⁹⁴ *Combat Ouvrier* warned the working classes that they could not permit pro-Creole intellectuals “to mask the necessary condition for a genuine flourishing of culture in the people, and the poor’s attainment of control of their own affairs.”⁹⁵ In other words, workers had to wrest Creole from the hands of academics and continue to use it in their struggle for independence. Only then would they be able to fully develop their own Creole culture and language, and control their own affairs.

Criticism of *Bannzil Kréyòl* and its pan-Creolism was not limited to the nationalist press. While Antillean nationalists perceived of *Bannzil Kréyòl* as an affront to the independence movement, departmentalists were wary of pan-Creolism as a challenge to Antilleans’ cultural ties to France. The week following International Creole Day, a letter from Michèle Montantin appeared in the pro-French newspaper *France-Antilles*. Montantin was the director of the *Centre d’Action Culturelle de la Guadeloupe* (CACG), a local cultural organization funded by the French government. CACG had sponsored the cultural events, which mostly consisted of theater performances, for *Bannzil Kréyòl*’s

⁹⁴ “La langue créole: l’écrit et la parole,” *Jingha*, November/December 1976-January 1977, 17.

⁹⁵ *Combat Ouvrier: Hebdomadaire Communiste Révolutionnaire*, no. 274, November 3, 1984, 4.

International Creole Day at Fort St. Charles in the city of Basse-Terre. In her letter, Montantin regretted that certain individuals had used these cultural events to express their nationalist politics. On the afternoon of the theater performances, the CACG received threats from nationalists wanting to protest *Bannzil Kréyòl* and the involvement of a French government-funded organization, such as CACG, in promoting Creole culture. Montantin responded by arguing that “Creole belongs to all those who want it, and not only to those who want to make it into weapon of combat.”⁹⁶ In contrast to nationalists who believed that the Antillean people had the exclusive right to Creole, Montantin insisted that everyone, including native linguists, foreign Creole studies groups, French-sponsored cultural organizations, as well as the Antillean people had access to the Creole language. In doing so, she blurred the political distinctions among the many groups with a stake in the Creole movement in an attempt to depoliticize it and make Creole exclusively a cultural issue.

This controversy surrounding *Bannzil Kréyòl* suggests that it did not develop a lucid coherent vision of what it stood for as a pan-Creole movement. The abstract idea of a great Creole family scattered around the world failed to gain enough attraction to overcome Creole-speakers’ feelings of distance and difference. On the one hand, pan-Creolism alienated Antillean nationalists who were more interested in using Creole to forge independent Guadeloupean and Martinican nations. They perceived of *Bannzil Kréyòl*’s construction of a pan-Creole identity as an affront to their efforts to create an Antillean national identity. On the other hand, *Bannzil Kréyòl* distanced itself from foreign linguists, giving up the possibility of receiving financial support from the French

⁹⁶ Michèle Montantin, “‘Téyat è Kréyòl’ mise au point de la directrice du CACG,” *France-Antilles*, November 7, 1984, n.p.

government. Native linguists founded *Bannzil Kréyòl* as a challenge to what they perceived to be nonnatives' dominance of Creole studies and thus, Creole-speaking regions. This only served the purpose of creating more divisions within the Creole movement as both natives and foreign linguists sought to control what pan-Creolism would look like. Moreover, *Bannzil Kréyòl* failed to achieve one of its main goals: the construction of an inter-Creole language through which all Creole-speakers could communicate. Without this shared form of communication, many *Bannzil Kréyòl* members questioned whether or not a pan-Creole identity could be achieved.

In particular, Bernabé and Confiant began to look for a new way to express a pan-Creolism that was not fraught with divisions like those within *Bannzil Kréyòl*. In 1989, with their Martinican colleague, Patrick Chaomiseau, Bernabé and Confiant articulated their philosophy for a separate pan-Creole movement in *Éloge de la Créolité*. *Créolité* expressed a pan-Creole viewpoint that was essentially the same as *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s; however, in focusing on appealing to all participants in the Creole debates, including the French government, native and nonnative linguists, nationalists, and working class Creole-speakers, it attempted to give new life to pan-Creolism as a movement supported by all groups from across the political spectrum.

Part IV. Créolité: The Answer to Pan-Creole Divisions?

As members of GEREC, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau had been developing their ideas on *créolité* or “creoleness” since the beginning of the 1980s.⁹⁷ In 1982, GEREC's *Charte culturelle créole* recognized the existence of a “Creole matrix”

⁹⁷ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation, especially Part IV entitled “From Nationalism to Multiculturalism: Créolité and the ‘right to difference’”, for a more detailed account of how the concept of *créolité* emerged as a distinct part of the Creole movement.

that transcended the diversity of Creole languages and cultures.⁹⁸ This idea of a shared Creole identity connecting Creolophones of all nations was an integral part of the *Bannzil Kréyòl* movement. However, *Créolité* was only formalized as a cultural and political movement in 1989 when it became clear that *Bannzil Kréyòl* had failed to create a cohesive pan-Creole identity and politics. In 1988, *Bannzil Kréyòl* lost its reputation as a movement that challenged Europe's control of Creolophone regions when it registered itself as an official French cultural association. *Bannzil Kréyòl* members believed that this kind of formal legal status would solve its organizational problems and internal strife. But in reality, this decision emptied *Bannzil Kréyòl* of its political objectives. In attaching itself to the French government, *Bannzil Kréyòl* comprised its status as an international movement linking Creole-speakers across national borders around a singular pan-Creole identity. *Bannzil Kréyòl* had placed itself squarely within France, securing Creole-speakers' political and cultural attachment to western European nations.

In response to *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s political paralysis, combined with what they had learned about pan-Creolism's unintentional divisive nature, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau forged the *Créolité* movement. The tension between European governments and Creolophone regions, nonnative and native scholars, as well as pan-Creole supporters and nationalist activists demonstrated to Bernabé, Confiant and Chamoiseau that the success of a pan-Creole identity and movement depended on the coalescence of these competing interests around a singular ideology. For Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, *créolité* was this ideology that would mend the cultural, political, and regional divisions within the Creole movement. Like *Bannzil Kréyòl*, the *Créolité* movement emphasized the political and cultural unity underlying Creole peoples' diverse languages,

⁹⁸ Groupes d'Etudes et de Recherches en Espace Créole (GEREC), *Charte Culturelle Créole*, 1982.

nationalities, and cultural heritages. However, the *Créolité* movement also linked this pan-Creole identity to a larger international trend of diversity:

The world is progressing toward a state of *creoleness*. The old national tensions are yielding under the advance of federations, which maybe will not live long. Underneath the all-embracing universal crust [of the earth], Diversity is maintaining itself in the small peoples, in the small languages, in the small cultures.... There is a new humanity emerging, which will have the characteristics of our creole humanity, all of the complexity of Creoleness.⁹⁹

Créolité was a critique of France's Republican tradition of universalism, which required the government to ignore its citizens' cultural differences and interact with them as universal individuals. For Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, French universalism was "false" in that it obliged individuals to assimilate to the French national culture. They argued that the ideal of a universal individual did not exist; according to the French government, French citizens had to be culturally French. In critiquing French republicanism, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant argued for a new kind of universal individual that was culturally connected to many different nations. Creole peoples, who possessed cultural characteristics from Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, were an example of this universal individual. Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau contended that the world was moving toward this new state of cultural diversity or *créolité*.

The *Créolité* movement's emphasis on not only the diverse nature of Creole cultures, but also the heterogeneity of all cultures, including those of Europe, called for the equalization of all the cultures of the world. Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau argued that European nations should not have control over Creolophone regions, simply because they perceived of Creole as a degradation of their own cultures. All cultures

⁹⁹ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1989), 51-52.

were amalgamations and therefore equal. However, *Créolité* was not simply another anticolonial movement. In fact, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau argued that *Créolité* “liberates us from anti-colonialist militancy.”¹⁰⁰ They realized that in order for *Créolité* to be a successful movement, it needed to be a unifying ideology, not a divisive movement like *Bannzil Kréyòl*. Thus, they were careful to distance *Créolité* from an anticolonial discourse that pitted Creolophones against European powers. Instead, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau contended that Creole peoples’ who possessed European nationalities, such as Antilleans, could be Creole and still remain politically attached to a European nation, like France. In doing so, they hoped to present *Créolité* as a politically nonthreatening movement, and gain European support for pan-Creolism.

Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau also worked to construct *Créolité* as a movement that bridged the divide that *Bannzil Kréyòl* had created between intellectuals who supported pan-Creolism and nationalist activists. As previously discussed in this chapter, nationalists framed the Creole debates in terms of social class. Nationalists perceived of intellectuals’ involvement in the Creole movement as a bourgeois attempt to keep working-class Creolophones in a subordinate position by controlling their languages and cultures. To erase pan-Creolism’s stigma as an intellectual and bourgeois, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, constructed Creole not only as a racially unifying ideology, but also a movement that cut across class lines.

In multiracial societies, such as ours, it is urgent that we let go of the usual racial distinctions and that one resumes the habit of designating the man of our country with the only word that suits him, whatever his complexion: Creole. The socio-ethnic relations of our society, will now take place

¹⁰⁰ Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, quoted in Pierre Lacroix, “Éloge de la Créolité”, *Alizés*, July-October 1988, 22.

under the common seal of Creoleness, which will obliterate, not in the least, class confrontations.¹⁰¹

According to Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau, in equalizing all cultures as fusions of many different cultures, the *Créolité* movement erased class distinctions based on race that privileged white European culture over multiracial Creole cultures. Moreover, *Créolité* argued for the equalization of European and Creole languages. In doing so, it also broke down the class hierarchy between those educated Creole-speakers who had mastered a language of prestige, such as French, and uneducated Creoles who only had access to Creole and therefore, could not achieve social mobility.

Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau also distanced *Créolité* from *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s intellectualism in constructing it as a movement that necessitated the people's involvement. They critiqued linguists' use of scientific jargon as alienating and not useful to the majority of Creole-speakers. Instead, the *Créolité* movement encouraged "each Creophone to become a specialist in his own words."¹⁰² In describing *Créolité* as a socially equalizing movement that sought to place Creole back in the hands of the working-class people who spoke it, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau hoped to gain the support of the support of the nationalists. Although they wanted to distance themselves from what was becoming an increasingly militant nationalist movement, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau realized that pan-Creolism needed the support of all groups within the Creole movement, including the nationalists, if it was to develop into an effective cultural and political movement.

¹⁰¹ Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, quoted in Pierre Lacroix, "Éloge de la Créolité", *Alizés*, July-October 1988, 22

¹⁰² "Le GEREK propose son aide. Notes pour un traitement pédagogique de 'pawòl pale'", *Mofwaz*, 1977, 68.

Creole-speaking migrants was another group whose support *Créolité* sought to acquire. *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s anticolonial politics did not appeal to Creole migrants living across Europe and North America. It had considered them as an integral part of the pan-Creole world; yet, it failed to recognize that while migrants were critical of the discrimination they endured at the hands of western governments, they were nonetheless invested in staying politically connected to these nations as residents and citizens. *Bannzil Kréyòl*'s focus on fighting western government's continued political control of Creole-speaking regions, such as the French Antilles, did not provide Creole migrants with an ideology that embraced their desire to be both Creole and citizens of a western nation. In contrast, *Créolité* addressed migrants' particular situation and gave them the flexibility to be, for example, in the case of Antilleans, both Creole and French.

Within France, Antillean migrants have interpreted *Créolité* as a type of multicultural politics to argue for the inclusion in the French nation as a distinct ethnic group.¹⁰³ In particular, they have appropriated its rhetoric of the diversity and changing nature of all cultures to challenge the myth that France has assimilated generations of immigrants into the French national culture. According to the *Créolité* ideology, "each culture is never an achievement, but a constant dynamic researcher of new questions, of new possibilities, who does not dominate, but enters into relation to, who does not steal, but exchanges."¹⁰⁴ Therefore, France never possessed a unified and constant national culture to which all migrants assimilated; rather, generations of migrants have shaped French culture into its current heterogeneous and changing state. *Créolité* gave Antillean

¹⁰³ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for a more detailed discussion of how Antillean migrants in France used *Créolité* to challenge assimilation and demand official recognition as culturally distinct citizens.

¹⁰⁴ Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant, *Éloge de la Créolité*, quoted in Pierre Lacroix, "Éloge de la Créolité", *Alizés*, July-October 1988, 22.

migrants the discourse they needed to fight assimilation and reshape the boundaries of France's patrimony to include their Creole culture and language.

Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau articulated the *Créolité* ideology to create a politically and culturally unified pan-Creole movement. They hoped to resolve the fissures in the international Creole movement that *Bannzil Kréyòl* had revealed. Despite their efforts, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau did not succeed in salvaging pan-Creolism or in making *Créolité* an international movement. Creolophones across the globe were members of culturally distinct regions, each of which had a different political relationship with Europe. Some lived outside of Europe, but remained politically attached to the continent; some lived inside of Europe; and others were a part of independent nations. This political diversity meant that Creolophones had different perspectives on the relationship of their Creole languages and cultures to those of Europe. Therefore, it was next to impossible to create a unified international Creole movement that appealed to all of Creolophones' different politics. In reality, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoiseau ended up articulating a particular kind of Creole multiculturalism that proved to be more useful for making specific claims on the French nation. *Créolité* was successful in that gained the popular support of Antilleans residing in Guadeloupe, Martinique, and France and united them into a singular cultural and political movement. However, *Créolité* was not successful in creating a multicultural French society. Antilleans have made some strides in gaining state recognition of their Creole culture. The French government funds more cultural associations for Antilleans than any other ethnic group, and it promotes Creole cultural festivals throughout France and the Antilles. Yet, the distinction between public identity and private expressions of cultural difference

remains. In public, Antilleans and other minorities must disguise their particularities and express their universal French citizenship; in private, they are free to express their difference as they wish. The failure of the antiracism movement and the successive restrictions, which began in 1989 and continue today, on Muslim women's right to wear headscarves and the niqab in public spaces indicate that there is still no place for difference in French society.

Conclusion

Despite numerous efforts on the part of linguists and activists, a politically and culturally cohesive pan-Creole movement has not emerged. Since the first international Creole studies conference in 1959 to the articulation of *Créolité* in 1989, pan-Creolism has been fraught with political divisions. The conflict between Anglophone and Francophone Creole studies, native and foreign linguists, and intellectuals and local nationalist activists centered on the question: Who controls Creole? Native linguists argued that as "outsiders", foreign linguists did not understand Creole's political stakes and therefore, should not be involved in the Creole movement. According to nationalist activists, both foreign and native linguists do not have the authority to codify Creole, which is the people's language, not an intellectual endeavor.

Moreover, intellectuals and activists argued about the political effectiveness of a pan-Creole movement. They questioned whether or not the development of a singular Creole identity would free Creole-speakers from their cultural oppression or if it was more useful to use Creole to implement political change on a regional and national scale. These tensions among the creators and leaders of pan-Creolism only heightened the cultural and geographical differences separating Creolophones that naturally impeded the

development of a singular Creole identity. Without a unified leadership, pan-Creolism could not become a popular movement.

Yet, despite these multiple divisions and political conflicts, the ideal of pan-Creolism persists. The *Bannzil Kréyòl* and *Créolité* models of pan-Creolism have been integrated into the International Organization of Creole Peoples (IOCP), which unites over twenty different Creole-speaking regions of the world. Founded in Los Angeles in 2005 by an eclectic group of Creole scholars, activists, and artists, the IOCP is committed to promoting the Creole culture worldwide and coordinating efforts at the local and international level to build a Creole identity.¹⁰⁵ In making its objectives open and broad, the IOCP is attempting to unite all groups within the Creole movement, including foreign scholars, native linguists, local activists, Creole migrants, and working-class Creole-speakers. In its founding charter, IOCP members declared, “We, the Creole people from all over the world are determined to establish the conducive atmosphere to unite Creoles from different parts of the world” and “to galvanize all forces within the Creole world to build up the PanCreole movement.”¹⁰⁶ Conscious of the political conflict that has divided previous pan-Creole movements, such as *Bannzil Kréyòl* and *Créolité*, IOCP’s founders insisted that as an organization IOCP needed to work to “develop friendly relations among the different bodies or individuals working for the promotion of Creole Culture.”¹⁰⁷ They argued that this kind of unified leadership would “maintain [the] close relationship and harmony among Creole people.”¹⁰⁸ The IOCP understood that the

¹⁰⁵ “Objectives of the International Organization of Creole Peoples (IOCP), the IOCP, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://iocp.potomitan.info/objectives.php>

¹⁰⁶ “Charter of the International Organization of Creole Peoples (IOCP),” the IOCP, accessed June 15, 2011, <http://iocp.potomitan.info/charter.php>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

success of its pan-Creole movement was dependent upon the organization's ability to mend the political and regional divisions created by *Bannzil Kréyòl* and *Créolité*.

The recent founding of the IOCP indicates that while an actual pan-Creole identity may not yet exist, it is still the ideal that many Creole scholars and activists strive for. Local and regional Creole groups are realizing that their efforts to promote their local Creole languages and cultures might prove to be more successful if they work alongside an international organization that has the ability to raise funds and reach out to more people. Nonetheless, in order to avoid dissension among its diverse members, international Creole organizations, such as the IOCP, have distanced themselves from articulating any kind of political platform that challenges Europe's cultural domination of the Creole world. Therefore, in aligning themselves with pan-Creolism, many local Creole movements, which are generally more anticolonial and nationalistic in nature, have had to either downplay or abandon this political aspect of their movements. For better or worse, the current efforts to build a pan-Creole identity are exclusively cultural; it remains to be seen whether or not this cultural identity can be mobilized by Creolophones to achieve political recognition as a distinct ethnicity.

CONCLUSION

On February 1, 2009, President Nicolas Sarkozy sent his Secretary of State for the DOM, Yves Jégo to Guadeloupe to negotiate with workers' unions and resolve the general labor strike that had been paralyzing the island for nearly two weeks.¹ On January 20, the LKP ("Liyannaj kont pwofitasyon" or Collective against extreme exploitation), an organization representing fifty of Guadeloupe's unions, cultural associations, and political parties, called for a general strike and set forth a platform of 146 demands. That same day, six thousand Guadeloupeans took to the streets, protesting the high cost of living, the rapidly increasing prices of basic commodities, including gas and food, and workers' low wages which were not rising with the price of housing and goods.² More specifically, the LKP demanded an immediate reduction of 50 centimes on car fuel, a lowering of prices for transport and water, a rent freeze, an increase of 200 euros in the monthly minimum wage, and the right to education and professional training for Guadeloupean youth and workers.³

Four days after this initial demonstration, the LKP organized another mass protest on January 24. The organization's leader, Elie Domata, claimed that Guadeloupeans

¹ Association de la presse francophone (APF), "Yves Jégo en Guadeloupe pour désamorcer la crise," *Le Monde*, February 1, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2009/02/01/yves-jego-en-guadeloupe-pour-desamorcer-la-crise_1149269_823448.html.

² Nathalie Calimia-Dinane, "Le Mouvement Social en Guadeloupe: 20 Janvier 2009 – 4 mars 2009," in *La Guadeloupe en Bouleverse 20 janvier 2009 – 4 mars 2009* (Point-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe: Editions Jasor, 2009), 30.

³ Françoise Thull and Pierre Mabut, "Guadeloupe general strike isolated by French trade unions," World Socialist Website, published by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/feb2009/guad-f09.shtml>.

assembled to support the unions' demands for higher wages. Less than a week later, a private research group reported that between 55,000 and 65,000 Guadeloupeans (out of an entire population of 410,000) demonstrated on January 30 in the island's capital of Pointe-à-Pitre.⁴ The protests in Guadeloupe resonated with Antillean cultural and political groups in metropolitan France. The *Collectif DOM* (Collective of the Overseas Departments) called upon Antilleans in the Hexagon to meet outside the Nation metro stop at the Place des Antilles to gather in solidarity with their fellow protesters in Guadeloupe, and to call attention to the island's economic and social problems.⁵

On February 5, the unrest spread to Martinique. According to local police, approximately 11,000 protesters participated in demonstrates during the first seven days of the strike. Martinican union leaders disagreed, arguing that at least 25,000 people attended the rallies and marches held on the streets of Martinique.⁶ In both Guadeloupe and Martinique the strikes brought the islands to a near standstill. Grocery stores, gas stations, banks, and hotels were closed. The strikes also forced the shut down of public services, including education, transportation, utilities, and sanitation.

After a month of relatively peaceful demonstrations, the general strike escalated into rioting. On February 17, the *New York Times* reported that protesters were looting shops, torching cars, and burning trashcans in Point-à-Pitre. According to *Le Monde*, tear gas was fired during a standoff between two squadrons of riot police and a group of sixty

⁴ Nathalie Calimia-Dinane, "Le Mouvement Social en Guadeloupe: 20 Janvier 2009 – 4 mars 2009," in *La Guadeloupe en Bouleverse 20 janvier 2009 – 4 mars 2009* (Point-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe: Editions Jasor, 2009), 30-31.

⁵ "Collectif DOM: Communiqué de soutien," Dossier spécial LKP, Union Générale des Travailleurs de Guadeloupe (UGTG), accessed January 3, 2012, http://ugtg.org/article_721.html.

⁶ Abayomi Azikiwe, "French Colonies in the Caribbean Demand Decent Pay, End to Racism," March 2, 2009, accessed January 4, 2012, http://news.newamericamedia.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=07d1c4c88d666f61cda39fc01a74264a.

protestors, several of whom were reportedly armed with handguns.⁷ Just after midnight on February 18, Jacques Bino, a union activist, was shot dead near a roadblock in Point-à-Pitre as armed youths opened fire on police.⁸ The next day, nearly 500 French police officers arrived in the southern town of Saint-Anne, Guadeloupe in an attempt to subdue the ongoing violence following Bino's death. Protestors stormed and occupied Saint-Anne's city hall and looted and burned the town's businesses.⁹

After 44 days of general strike, the LKP voted to end demonstrations on March 4, 2009 when the French government agreed to raise minimum wage by 200 euros per month and granted the LKP their top 20 demands, including a 6% reduction in the price of water, jobs and training for youth aged 16 to 25, a rent freeze and ban on evictions, and numerous provisions for the development of the Creole culture and language. As Secretary of State for the DOM, Jégo represented the French government's interests and acted as the mediator between the LKP and business owners. All parties agreed that wages in the islands needed to be raised; negotiations focused on who would pay for the costs of these wage increases. The agreement, called the "Jacques Bino Accrod" in memory of the union activist who was killed during the strike, stipulated that local employers, as well as the French and local governments would share the costs, with small business employers responsible for only a quarter of the increase.¹⁰

⁷ "Strike in Guadeloupe escalates into rioting", *New York Times*, February 17, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/17/world/europe/17iht-france.4.20259662.html>.

⁸ Lizzy Davies, "Guadeloupe riots turn paradise into war zone as one protestor shot dead," *The Guardian*, February 18, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/18/nicolassarkozy-guadeloupe>.

⁹ "France proposes to raise salaries to end Guadeloupe violence," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/19/world/europe/19iht-france.4.20315766.html>.

¹⁰ Richard Fidler, "Guadeloupe: General strike scores victory, spreads to other colonies," *Green Left*, March 13, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/41236>.

The general strikes in Guadeloupe and Martinique began over the high cost of living in the islands and workers' low wages, which did not reflect the rising cost of housing and basic commodities. However, the strikes exposed the deep racial and social tensions and disparities within Antillean society. The protesters were particularly angered by what they perceived to be an uneven distribution of wealth along racial lines within Guadeloupean society as well as between citizens residing in metropolitan France and the Antilles. The LKP claimed that Guadeloupe's current economic problems were a result of the legacy of French colonial rule, which had made the island and Antilleans dependent on France for imported goods and jobs. Although the *békés*, the ethnically French and white European descendants of the islands' colonial settlers, only make up one percent of the island's population, they control the majority of Guadeloupe's largest land and business assets. The majority of the Guadeloupean population, who are of African or mixed-race descent, live in comparative poverty to the *békés*.¹¹

In addition, LKP supporters decried the relative wealth and economic security of metropolitans compared to Antilleans. According to 2007 statistics, the unemployment and poverty rates for the Antilles were double those found in mainland France.¹²

Guadeloupe and Martinique had two of the highest unemployment rates in the European Union. Guadeloupe had the highest youth unemployment rate with 55.7% of 15 to 24

¹¹ See: Estelle Shirbon, "Paris falling to end island protests, seen spreading," *Reuters, UK Edition*, February 13, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/02/13/france-protests-caribbean-idUKLD40833620090213>.

Béatrice Gurrey, "Un ministre à l'écoute tardive de la colère de la Guadeloupe," *Le Monde*, 6 février 2009, 1.

¹² Angelique Chrisafis, "France faces revolt over poverty on its Caribbean islands," *The Guardian*, February 11, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/12/france-revolts-guadeloupe-martinique>.

year-olds unemployed.¹³ While average salaries were lower and unemployment higher in metropolitan France, basic commodities and food staples were thirty to sixty percent more expensive in the islands due to the high cost of importing these goods from France.¹⁴ The LKP condemned the *békés*' and the French government's "extreme exploitation" of Antilleans who continued to live in poverty as the white settlers, business owners, and metropolitans extracted the islands' wealth for their own economic and social gains.

The way in which the LKP framed its demands is reflective of how Antilleans have navigated their political and cultural relationship to the French nation following departmentalization. On the one hand, the LKP denounced France's political control of Guadeloupe and Martinique, and argued for Antilleans' right to govern their own societies. During demonstrations, protesters chanted in Creole the LKP's slogan: "Guadeloupe belongs to us. Guadeloupe does not belong to them. We will not let them do what they want in our country."¹⁵ In referring to Antilleans as "us" and the French government as "them", the LKP was highlighting Guadeloupe's and Martinique's distinctiveness as separate political and cultural entities from France. Antilleans and metropolitans were two discrete groups that did not belong to the same nation. It is also noteworthy that the LKP used Creole not only in their organization's motto, but also in the preamble to their list of 146 demands, as well as their press release calling for a general strike on January 20. Since the 1970s when nationalist groups appropriated

¹³ "French isles top EU jobless table", BBC News, last updated February 16, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7892773.stm>.

¹⁴ Françoise Thull and Pierre Mabut, "Guadeloupe general strike isolated by French trade unions," World Socialist Website, published by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), accessed January 3, 2012, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/feb2009/guad-f09.shtml>.

¹⁵ Sadi Sainton, "La grève générale en Guadeloupe vécue de l'intérieur," in *La Guadeloupe en bouleverse 20 janvier 2009 – mars 4 2009* (Point-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe: Editions Jasor), 57.

Creole for its own political agenda, Antilleans' Creole language and culture has been linked to both the Guadeloupean and Martinician independence movements.¹⁶ The LKP's use of Creole thus associated their political demands with those of the nationalists who argued that as Creole-speakers, Antilleans constituted a separate nation. Moreover, the LKP's use of the word *pwofitasyon* or "extreme exploitation" linked Antilleans' current demands to Antilleans' past struggles against slavery and French colonial rule. For the LKP, its current fight for more economic security was a part of Antilleans' greater struggle for political liberation and freedom.

Yet, on the other hand, in several interviews during the general strike, the LKP's leader, Domata, insisted that his group was not interested in changing the islands' political status, and that Antilleans wished to remain French citizens.¹⁷ A closer examination of the LKP's demands reveals that its leaders believed that Antilleans could achieve economic and social change as a part of the French nation. The LKP's principal grievance was that as French citizens, Antilleans did not possess the same economic stability as their metropolitan counterparts. According to the LKP, it was the government's duty to increase wages and lower the cost of goods on the islands to ensure that Antilleans had the same standard of living as citizens in the Hexagon. In a statement to the press Domota explained, "We are saying that the state has to help small Guadeloupe businesses to develop, to have access to bank credits, and also to pay for our

¹⁶ For more on the relationship between the Antillean nationalist movement and Creole, see chapter 3 of this dissertation, especially Part II entitled "The Nationalization of Creole."

¹⁷ See: Béatrice Gurrey, "Un ministre à l'écoute tardive de la colère de la Guadeloupe," *Le Monde*, 6 février 2009, 1. "Interview du porte-parole de Lyannaj kont pwofitasyon," *L'Express*, January 26, 2009, posted in "Dossier spécial LKP" on website Union Générale des Travailleurs de Guadeloupe (UGTG), accessed January 3, 2012, http://ugtg.org/article_702.html.

wage increases.”¹⁸ For the LKP, the French government was not in and of itself the oppressor or the obstacle impeding the Antilles’ economic development. Rather it was the government’s complacency that had permitted the *békés*—the true oppressors—to control the islands’ local economies and amass all the wealth for themselves. The LKP’s perception of the Republic as the upholder of liberty and equality and as Antilleans’ protector against the white settlers who sought to keep them in subordinate positions reflected how Antilleans perceived of their relationship to France during the revolutionary period, the Third Republic, and then departmentalization. As former slaves and colonial subjects, Antilleans had supported complete integration into the Republic as an opportunity to achieve French citizenship and all of the rights and privileges that accompanied this legal status.¹⁹ Similarly, LKP supporters clung to their French citizenship, arguing that the government had not lived up to its republican ideals of ensuring equality for all of its citizens regardless of their race.

The LKP’s political platform and its strategy for achieving their demands highlighted Antilleans’ desire for the government to recognize their culturally distinct identity *and* their right as French citizens to enjoy the same economic and social security as their metropolitan counterparts. This struggle to be both French *and* Creole points to the contemporary debates about diversity in France, which concurrently recognize and dismiss difference as a part of France’s national heritage and history. Proponents of the right to difference claim that French citizens have the right to express their cultural

¹⁸ Estelle Shirbon, “Paris fails to end island protests, seen spreading, *Reuters Edition UK*, February 13, 2009, accessed January 3, 2012, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/02/13/france-protests-caribbean-idUKLD40833620090213>.

¹⁹ For more discussion of Antilleans’ support for and involvement in the French Revolution see: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

difference, and that diversity has always been a part of French society. In contrast, opponents contend that the right to difference fundamentally violates what it means to be French. They argue that according to the principles of republican universalism, French citizens are required to give up individual particularities and group affiliations. This absence of differentiation is what ensures that all citizens are equal before the government. Recently, members of the radical right, particularly those affiliated with the *Front National*, have appropriated the language of the right to difference to argue that immigrants are in fact intrinsically different and thus, cannot be a part of the French nation. According to the *Front National*, French national culture is immutable, and any attempt to include difference undermines the nation's political and cultural integrity.

Through an examination of the specific case of Antilleans and how they have used the debates about Creole and its place in public education to argue for the right to difference, this dissertation helps to illuminate the complexities in the discussions about diversity in France after the Second World War. In placing Antilleans at the center of these debates, I argue that republican assimilation was not a monolithic policy that either entirely included or excluded different migrant groups from the nation. Rather, Antilleans and the French government negotiated the terms of assimilation and the extent to which Antilleans' Creole culture and language was included in the nation.

Inclusion and exclusion were inseparably linked in the Creole debates because of the fundamentally incompatible goals of the Ministry of Education and Antillean activists who argued for Creole's incorporation into republican education. The Ministry of Education wanted to preserve the universalist ambitions of the Republic's national curriculum, but it insisted that the language and culture of universalism was French.

Simultaneously, Antillean teachers and activists argued that Creole was an autonomous culture with its own linguistic legitimacy. They viewed independence as the only possible resolution to Antilleans' struggle to preserve and express their Creole identity. Yet, Antillean activists also recognized that their Creole movement needed the support of Antillean migrants who wanted to retain their French citizenship. Therefore, Creole activists reframed the debate in terms of Antilleans' "right to difference". On both sides of the Atlantic, Antilleans challenged the republican ideal of universal French citizenship and argued for inclusion in the French nation as both Creole *and* French.

In general, scholars have tended to focus on the importance of postcolonial immigrants and their children, particularly those from North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco) and of Muslim descent, and how they have challenged France to reconcile its republican ideals of universalism and assimilation with the nation's new multicultural reality.²⁰ This privileging of the "immigration question" is largely due to the political controversy surrounding recent events, including the headscarf affairs in the late 1980s and 1990s culminating in the 2004 headscarf ban and the 2005 riots in the rundown suburbs of French cities (*banlieues*).²¹ During several nights of looting and car burning,

²⁰ See: Alec G. Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds., *Post-Colonial Cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); René Gallissot, *La république française et les indigènes: Algérie colonisée, Algérie algérienne, 1870-1962* (Paris: Atelier, 2006); Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1830-1954* (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester University Press, 2002); Patricia M.E. Lorcin, *Imperial Identities: Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Race in Colonial Algeria* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Neil MacMaster, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-62* (Houndmills: MacMillan Press, 1997); Jo McCormack, *Collective Memory: France and the Algerian War, 1954-1962* (Lanham, M.D.: Lexington Books, 2007); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Paul A. Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

²¹ For more discussion of the politics of the headscarf affairs in France, see: Saïd Bouamama, *L'affaire Du Foulard Islamique: La Production D'un Racisme Respectable* (Roubaix: Geai bleu, 2004); John Richard Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard et La République* (Paris: Découverte, 1995), Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

young French citizens, many of whom were children of postcolonial immigrants, condemned what they perceived to be the prevalence of racial discrimination in French society, and demanded equal access to housing and employment. For the most part, Antilleans are absent from the discussions of difference precipitated by these events because of their particular history as French nationals. As French citizens, Antilleans who migrated to mainland France in the 1950s and 1960s had access to civil servant jobs that were unavailable to other ethnic and racial groups, including postcolonial immigrants. Although Antilleans generally occupied low-level positions compared to metropolitans, public service jobs nonetheless initially provided Antillean migrants with more opportunities for social advancement than postcolonial immigrants.²² Moreover, unlike other immigrant groups, Antilleans spoke French and possessed knowledge of French cultural symbols. This first generation of Antillean migrants achieved higher rates of economic success and social mobility and were therefore, generally perceived as the “model” of assimilation to which postcolonial immigrants should aspire.²³ Antilleans who arrived in the Hexagon during the 1950s and 1960s also distanced themselves from

University Press, 2007), Bronwyn Winter, *Hijab and the Republic: Uncovering the French Headscarf Debate* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

For scholarship on the 2005 youth riots in France’s *banlieues*, see: Jocelyne Cesari, “Ethnicity, Islam, and les banlieues: Confusing the Issues,” November 30, 2005; Stéphane Dufoix, “More Than Riots: A Question of Spheres,” December 2, 2005; Alec G. Hargreaves, “An Emperor with No Clothes?,” November 28, 2005; Paul A. Silverstein and Chantal Tetreault, “Postcolonial Urban Apartheid,” June 11, 2006; Michel Wieviorka, “Violence in France,” November 18, 2005; Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, “Reflections ‘À Chaud’ on the French Suburban Crisis,” November 28, 2005, all articles accessed January 4, 2012, <http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org>.

Azouz Begag, *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance*, trans. Alec G. Hargreaves (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

²² Stephanie A. Condon and Philip E. Ogden, “Afro-Caribbean migrants in France: employment, state policy and the migration process,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 4 (1991): 445.

²³ See: Marc Tardieu, *Les Antillais à Paris: d’hier à aujourd’hui*, (Paris: Editions Rocher, 2004); David Beriss, “Culture-as-Race or Culture-as-Culture: Caribbean Ethnicity and the Ambiguity of Cultural Identity in French Society,” in *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference*, ed. Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 111-140.

postcolonial immigrants' struggle for the right to difference, particularly the burgeoning antiracism movement of the 1980s. Instead, they preferred to highlight their French citizenship to argue for equal access to housing and employment, not their cultural and racial difference.²⁴ Because of Antilleans' status as the "models" of assimilation, as well as first-generation migrants' decision to downplay their cultural and racial specificities, scholars have tended to overlook Antilleans' role in shaping discussions about difference and the "problem of immigration" in France.²⁵

At the same time, other scholars have discounted the specificity of Antilleans' experiences in metropolitan France. Unlike previous scholarship, Antilleans are not absent from these studies. Instead, this body of work has analyzed Antilleans' social and economic position in France alongside those of postcolonial immigrants, arguing that as cultural and racial "others", Antilleans and postcolonial migrants experienced the same forms of discrimination and exclusion.²⁶ This academic treatment of Antilleans as postcolonial immigrants was the result of a demographic and political shift within the Antillean community in metropolitan France. As the second-generation of metropolitan-born Antillean migrants came of age in the 1980s, they confronted high unemployment rates (25-30%) comparable to those experienced by the second-generation of postcolonial

²⁴ David Beriss, *Black Skins, French voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004).

²⁵ Antilleans are rarely mentioned in the scholarship on immigration. See for example: Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Alec G. Hargreaves and Marck McKinney, eds., *Post-colonial cultures in France* (London: Routledge, 1997); Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration, 'Race' and Ethnicity in Contemporary France* (London: Routledge, 1995); Maxim Silverman, *Race, Discourse, and Power in France* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Avebury, 1991); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992); Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: l'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration, 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991).

²⁶ For example, in Michel Wieviorka's study of the sociology of racism in France, Antilleans occupy only a small place and are at times conflated with non-French blacks. See: Michel Wieviorka, *La France raciste* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

immigrants, many of whom were also French citizens by birth.²⁷ This perception of social inequality encouraged this new generation of metropolitan-born Antilleans to reject their parents' acceptance of assimilation. Like the second-generation of postcolonial immigrants, they have claimed their distinct identities and demanded the right to be both different *and* French.²⁸

Both bodies of scholarship—those that excluded Antilleans from their discussion of immigration and its impact on France and those that equate Antilleans' struggle with those of postcolonial immigrants—have marginalized the history of Antillean migration and Antilleans' important role in shaping debates about diversity and what it meant to be French in an increasingly multicultural nation following the Second World War.²⁹ In looking at the specific case of Antilleans and their distinct political and cultural position in France, this dissertation demonstrates how Antillean migration prompted the government to construct exclusionary meanings of French citizenship. For example, chapter one argues that in determining the character and cultural traits required of Antilleans for migration, BUMIDOM defined what it meant to be a proper French citizen. More specifically BUMDIOM officials defined French citizenship against what they perceived to be Antilleans' negative characteristics, including their lack of education, poor work ethic, dirty households, and purportedly loose sexual relationships. In doing so, BUMIDOM created a definition of French citizenship that excluded Antilleans on the basis of their purported cultural differences. However, in letters to

²⁷ Claude-Valentin Marie, "Les Antillais de l'Hexagone," in *Immigration et integration: l'état des savoirs*, ed. Philippe DeWitte (Paris: La Découverte, 1999), 100.

²⁸ David Beriss, *Black Skins, French voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004).

²⁹ In her article, "Invisible Exodus", Madeline Dobie attempts to explain why Antilleans are absent from both academic studies on France's history of immigration, as well as cultural representations of diversity and immigration in France. See: Madeline Dobie, "Invisible Exodus: The Cultural Effacement of Antillean Migration," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 13, no.2/3 (Fall/Winter 2004): 149-183.

BUMIDOM and other government officials, Antilleans argued for a definition of French citizenship that included their Creole culture. Ultimately, it was these exchanges between BUMIDOM and Antilleans migrants that opened up the possibility for the right to difference in France.

In addition, this dissertation contends that the specific way in which Antilleans argued for the “right to difference” sheds light on the current discussions of diversity centered on religious difference, and in particular Islam’s perceived threat to French national integrity. Chapter two claims that Antilleans’ struggle for the “right to difference” made cultural associations the acceptable forum for forging group identities in France. In general, Antilleans asserted their difference by exercising their right as French citizens to form cultural associations; they used these organizations as a political platform to carve out a space for their Creole culture in the French nation. These organizations’ leaders sought financial support from BUMIDOM to fund their cultural programs, which publicly asserted Antilleans’ Creole *and* French identity. The emergence of hundreds of Antillean cultural associations across metropolitan France challenged the government’s perception of French citizens as universal citizens without particular group affiliations.

Antilleans’ decision to express their difference within the established republican framework of cultural associations contrasts sharply with female French Muslims’ current struggle to assert their religious and cultural differences by donning headscarves in public spaces, such as schools and courtrooms. French Muslim’s desire to express their religious and cultural differences outside of the constraints of cultural associations is so controversial because it is a break from how other minority groups, such as Antilleans,

have previously argued for the “right to difference” in France. Therefore, this dissertation’s focus on Antilleans broadens our understanding of the contemporary “politics of difference” in France. Historians have tended to characterize French multiculturalism as a response by President François Mitterrand and his Socialist government to the rise of the far Right and its campaign against Algerian immigrants, particularly those of the Muslim faith. Instead, this dissertation argues that as early as the 1970s, state officials and Antillean migrants negotiated the “politics of difference” as they determined Creole’s place in French society. Not only did Antillean activists’ and migrants’ earlier demands to be recognized as both Creole *and* French shape the government’s understanding of diversity’s place in the Republic, they also laid the foundation for other groups’ claims for the “right to difference” in the early 1980s.

Chapters 4 and 5 also explore how Antillean Creole activists and the French government understood Antilleans’ cultural position in the nation in relationship to other cultural groups, including French citizens who claim distinct regional identities and postcolonial immigrants. In these chapters, I situate Antilleans’ claims for the right to difference, and more specifically their struggle to introduce Creole into Antillean classrooms, within the concurrent debates concerning the place of regional and immigrant languages and cultures in public education. In doing so, I reframe other scholars’ understanding of republican assimilation as either entirely inclusionary or exclusionary.³⁰

³⁰ For scholarship that argues that the republican tradition has been and can be inclusionary, see: Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, trans. Geoffroy de Laforcade (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976); Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: l’aventure d’une politique de l’immigration 1938-1991* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1991); Patrick Weil, *Qu’est-ce qu’un Français?: histoire de la nationalité française depuis la révolution* (Paris: Grasset, 2002); Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, *De l’immigré au citoyen* (Paris: Documentation française, 1989); Michèle Tribalat, *Cents ans d’immigration, étrangers d’hier, français aujourd’hui: apport démographique, dynamique familiale et économique de l’immigration étrangère*

When the government's policies on Antillean education, regional languages and cultures, and immigrant education are placed in dialogue with each other, it becomes apparent that the government did not enforce a singular policy of assimilation for all of the Republic's distinct cultural and linguistic groups. Despite the government's refusal to publicly acknowledge its citizens particularities, in practice, the Ministries of Education and DOM implemented differential education policies for Antilleans, immigrants, and children with distinct regional identities. For example, chapter five highlights the Ministry of Education's decision to develop an education policy that took into account immigrants' languages and cultures nearly a decade before it considered doing the same for Antilleans. I argue that this decision was largely informed by Antilleans' and immigrants' different political relationships to the nation. While the government viewed immigrants' presence as temporary, Antilleans were French citizens and permanent members of the nation. For the Ministry of Education, this meant that the political stakes of Antilleans' assimilation was much higher. Whereas instruction in their languages of origin helped prepare immigrants' children for an eventual return to the homeland, Creole language instruction was a hindrance to Antilleans' assimilation and thus, the cultural integrity of the nation. In examining the Ministry of Education's decision to implement

(Paris: Presse universitaires de France, 1991), Vincent Viet, *La France immigré: construction d'une politique, 1914-1997* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

For scholarship that claims that exclusion occurred from the failure of state officials to live up to the lofty ideals of republican equality, see: Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

For scholarship that argues that inequality and exclusion developed as a part of the French Republican tradition, see: Herrick Chapman and Laura L. Frader, eds., *Race in France: interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference*; Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992); Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

differential education programs for Antilleans and other distinct cultural groups, chapters four and five argue that the government constantly reevaluated its understanding of assimilation. The Ministry of Education did not simply maintain a monolithic policy of assimilation. Rather, it adjusted republican assimilation and its position of diversity so that it reflected the different political and cultural positions of the Republic's many diverse groups.

Lastly, this dissertation demonstrates how Antilleans used Creole to claim their right to difference within *and* outside of the French nation. Chapter three argues that Antillean ethnic activism emerged from the convergence of two unsuccessful political strategies: nationalism and assimilation. In order to gain support for the Creole movement, Antillean nationalist and assimilationists came together and transformed Creole into a particular kind of multicultural politics that Antilleans on both sides of the Atlantic could rally around. Yet, Antillean Creole activists were equally concerned with their position within the greater international community. They created a broader movement that united all Creole-speakers across the globe in their common struggle against European domination. In examining Antilleans' construction of a pan-Creole identity that moved beyond France and the French Caribbean, chapter six contends that the postcolonial French nation was not just constructed in the colonies or by immigrants who migrated to France following decolonization. Antilleans formed political and cultural networks with other Creole activists across the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. They used their interactions with Creole activists across national boundaries to also shape debates about diversity in France. In this way, postcolonial France was not only

constructed by Antilleans, but also by individuals and groups outside of the French metropole-colony framework.

While Antilleans are just one of many distinct cultural groups that have challenged republican assimilation, this dissertation argues that attention to their specific case is particularly important for understanding the multiple meanings and applications of the “right to difference” in France. The debates about diversity were not top-down government decisions to either completely include or exclude difference from the French nation. From departmentalization through the end of the ban on Creole in 1983, Antilleans negotiated with the Ministries of Education and the DOM for the inclusion of their Creole language and culture in public education. In highlighting these negotiations, this dissertation argues that the policies concerning the right to difference in France were not only developed by state ministries, but also by the actions of Antillean migrants and Creole activists on both sides of the Atlantic.

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