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From Savage to Criminal: How French Colonial Assimilationist Attitudes and Policies Continue to the Modern Day

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FROM SAVAGE TO CRIMINAL: HOW FRENCH COLONIAL ASSIMILATIONIST ATTITUDES AND POLICIES CONTINUE TO THE MODERN DAY
By
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the French colonial practice of assimilation is present in modern society. The image of Blacks throughout the history of French media, first as colonial subjects and later as immigrants, illuminates the continuing influence of a colonial culture in fostering the myth of French cultural superiority. The stereotypes and associations that these images reproduce and reveal are practically employed by modern policies and laws that address immigration. Based on ethnographic interviews and a study of iconography, this paper analyzes how these images shaped race relations in France and how contemporary public discourse on immigration, race and culture can be better understood if contextualized in the colonial past.
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It is good for there to be yellow Frenchmen, black and brown.
They show that France is open to all races and that it is universal,
but only on the condition that they [the races] remain a small minority.
Otherwise, France will no longer be France.
General Charles de Gaulle (1961)

Our problem is not the immigrants, it is the overdose.
Jacques Chirac (1991)

Myths of the past are always functional in the present.
Maxim Silverman (1992)

INTRODUCTION

In 1956, France grants independence to its first African colony, Morroco. From 1954 to 1962, France fights a bitter war with Algeria over Algeria’s independence. Martinique and Guadeloupe remain, to this day, overseas departments of France. With only forty-five years past, the memory of colonialism is still in formation, and all of colonialism’s conflicting and unresolved consequences continue to engage lively public debate. Indeed, it is pre-emptive to say that colonialism and the colonial mentality is already a memory as its legacy is alive and continues to unroll as much within the former colonies as inside France itself. It is difficult to imagine that over the course of these past 45 years, more than three hundred years of colonial practice and colonial propaganda have been fully removed from the cultural heritage and French collective perceptions of the world.

French people were socialized through the hundreds of years of colonialism into the idea
of French cultural superiority. This process of indoctrination is brilliantly illustrated by two scholars of French colonial history who specialize in the study of colonial iconography, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire:

We can distinguish three key moments in this slow penetration of French society by the colonial culture: the period of impregnation (from the defeat of Sedan [1879] to the Treat of Fez [1912]), the period of fixation (from the First World War to the Rif War [1925]), and the period of culmination (from the Exposition of Decorative Arts to the International Colonial Exposition of 1931)...[This] approach to the process allows us to understand the complexity of a phenomenon that is, nevertheless, extremely simple: how the French became colonialists without having wanted to, without even knowing it, without anticipating it. Not colonialists in the sense that they actively contributed to the colonial enterprise or that they fervently supported colonialism, but colonialists in the sense of identity, cultural and instinctual...The colonial culture is, after-all, this omnipresence of the colonial domain in French society, which slowly evolves from “la Plus Grande France” to the empire, la France d’Outre Mer, and finally to the Union Française. The presence of the colonial domain in our collective imagination and in our structures is not exclusively the product of state propaganda...but results from a proliferation of networks and interactions that only today can we begin to understand the significance of. (2003: 7-8)

According to this analysis, French people were already fully acculturated to the idea of their superiority and most importantly to the inferiority of the colonial subjects by the late 1800's. Given the nature of colonialism as a cultural as well as an economic enterprise, the
colonial culture that developed over the 1800's includes racism, a priori. In so far as institutionalized racism, as we understand it in modern day, evolved out of the Enlightenment, it is a part of and a product of colonial culture. In fact, the influence of the French Empire’s propaganda was so powerful that William Cohen, author of the influential book The French Encounter with Africans, writes in the opening paragraph, “Frenchmen’s experiences and conceptions of black peoples helped form the image of the African in Western culture.” When looking at the iconographic record of French colonialism, the image of the Black colonial subject is relatively stagnant until the period around World War I. There has been little change in the image of Blacks in France since the dramatic and influential change in colonial practice and colonial representation of Blacks that took place around the First World War. The post-WWI image was created through the interplay of political propaganda, private publicity, and intellectual discourse. Each domain built upon the work of the other to construct an image of Blacks that is relevant today in the continuing representation of Blacks as well as in the discourse on racism.

Despite the prevalence of the image of Blacks as inferior and savage, France’s international image as the defender of human rights and socialist democratic values has successfully overshadowed the reality of its exploitative, abusive colonial past and how that past continues to manifest itself in the present. Nevertheless, scholarly writings as well as daily discourse on immigration and multiculturalism suggest quite the opposite. For example, the widespread demonstrations during the 2002 presidential elections when Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the extreme right party Front National, nearly ascended to presidency, and the increasing number of anti-racist groups reveal not only a level of public consciousness about the
existence of racism, but a coordinated effort to confront it. In short, the fact that racism exists in France is not a characteristic that is uniquely attributable to France’s colonial past. The way in which racism is addressed or denied, however, is very much rooted in the colonial legacy and testifies to the persistence of a colonial culture. In the following discussion, I will analyze the paradox between the global reputation of France as a haven for peace and security and the reality of the persisting colonial culture and policies. Precisely this paradox reveals the colonial culture that continues to shape today’s race relations and to drive French policies on immigration, which make the modern system hardly different from that of the colonial period. Thus, the colonial culture not only results in racism toward people with origins in former colonized nations but also serves as the architect of the current discourse on race, racism and immigration in France.

In my discussion, I build on writings by scholars of race relations in France, as well as on the extensive works by scholars of the Association Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine (ACHAC), the first to consistently and meticulously analyze French colonial iconography and its relationship to modern multi-cultural France. Amidst the conspicuous dearth of literature on racism in France, most analyses of immigration, race and discrimination are focused on France’s large Arab population. Indeed, the number of immigrants from North Africa and their descendants exceeds all other groups of immigrants, including Eastern European, Asian, and sub-Saharan African. Thus, this paper also brings attention to the fastest growing immigrant population in France, the Black Africans, whose experience in race relations in France has been, poorly recorded and rarely analyzed. This paper attempts to answer the following question:

Has the collective image of Black people changed in France since World War I and to
what degree does French colonial culture continue to influence race relations today?

A collective conscious or subconscious is never the product of purely external influences but results from a combination of internal processes and external stimuli. In order to capture the collective attitude of the French toward Black people, I rely on personal observations, interviews, and questionnaires that I collected during a two week ethnographic study in Paris, France. These personal observations complement scholarly texts and analyses of the French colonial system, social and political policies on colonialism and immigration, and finally, commentary on race relations by both scholars and French people whose perspectives were recorded in articles or national censuses.

I will begin my presentation with an historical summary of the development of direct interaction between French people and Black people by highlighting the major waves of immigration into France from Black Africa. I will then analyze the evolution of the representation of Black Africans in advertising, entertainment, and colonial propaganda. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of modern French discourse on immigration and racism and how it relates to the colonial culture of ethnocentrism and assimilationist policies. My analysis is prefaced with a brief explanation of my word use and a summary of the construction of the concept of race in Anthropological theory and French thought.
EXPLANATION:

Throughout this paper, I liberally use several controversial words. In order to avoid misunderstandings, I offer three helpful definitions to contextualize my argument:

**Race:** Despite the controversy about the degree to which race is a significant biological trait, race is a social fact because it is a reality in our social structure and behavior. In my text, I will be referring to sociologist Tukufu Zuberi’s definition of race as, “a biological notion of physical difference grounded in ideology” (2001). In other words, race is the observed physical difference between people that is justified and explained in social science as well as in common discourse, as cause and consequence of differences in social and cultural qualities.

**African:** In my text, the word African will refer to people of sub-Saharan African origin. If I am referring to people from North Africa, I will specify, North Africans. When I say Black Africa, I am adapting the conventional French term, *Afrique Noire*, to refer to sub-Saharan Africa. I will sometimes refer to people of sub-Saharan African origin as Black Africans.

**Black:** The most recent term used to refer to Black people in France is *homme de couleur* (person of color); however, unlike in the United States where it applies to all non-whites, this term in France refers to Black people. The word *Noir*, Black in English, is most commonly accepted word for people of African origin or African ancestry in France; therefore, I will use the word Black throughout my text when referring to Africans and people of African ancestry in France. Because most Africans came to France as workers, students or immigrants, while the presence of Blacks in the USA is the result of slavery,
in France there is little social distinction between first generation immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Black French citizens. Immigration of Africans to France began in significant numbers only after World War One, thus there is a strong national consciousness that Black people are first and foremost African. For example, the distinction between Black people from the Caribbean and Blacks from Africa was only realized by the general public after the Second World War.

METHODOLOGY:

When I arrived in France for my two weeks of ethnographic field study in Paris in March of 2003, I expected to find visible discrimination based on race and obvious stereotyping of Black people in the media. Though I had been to France before and I had even studied immigration of Africans during my previous stay in Paris, I had taken for granted the existence of racism in France. I was surprised to find that the reality of racism was not as straightforward as I had imagined it to be. Whereas I had expected Blacks to be uniformly grouped as criminals and immigrants, I saw many multicultural groups of friends, countless inter-racial couples, and the media did not, as a matter of fact, present Blacks in bad light. In fact, the one case of a major immigrant expulsion that I saw reported in the nightly news during my two week stay related to illegal immigrants from China. In a story on the prison system, which reported that more prison guards were needed, the only Black person shown in the media clip was the director of the prison. The prisoners who were seen in the clips were white as were the guards. Furthermore, when the news did speak about illegal immigration of Africans during those two weeks, it was about the brutal treatment by the police, not the criminality of the Africans.
Nevertheless, in looking at the history as well as the statistics (of job appointments, prison populations, etc), there is a significant record of discrimination against Blacks, which my direct research turned out to support. To understand French racism, however, I would have to look more closely not only at what was being presented and how, but also at what was being ignored and why. During these two weeks, I used three approaches to better grasp the system of race relations in France: through interviews, through questionnaires, and by watching various popular media sources.

In my pursuit of understanding modern French conceptions of Black people, I first had to understand how Black people experienced racism. I needed to know what constituted racism before defining it in terms of colonial collective imagination and colonial culture. To this end, I interviewed two students, Abdul and Ibrahim', who recently immigrated to France from Senegal. Ibrahim lives in Paris and Abdul lives in a small town in the north-west of France called Poitiers. As I stayed in Paris, a cosmopolitan and diverse city which is not purely representative of French culture, and did not travel throughout France to see smaller, more traditional towns and cities, it was important to have two credible informants from different social spheres and social settings. Both these informants were men with considerable years of higher education which made them interested in my project and willing to discuss their experiences.

Furthermore, Abdul was studying sociology at the Masters level and I was able to recruit him to interview other Africans who he knew in Poitiers in order to expand my data-base of information about the nature of racism aimed at Black people [see Appendix B for a list of the questions he asked each subsequent informant]. This process proved very effective not only in developing my data but also in avoiding potential mis-information had I personally carried out
interviews with Black immigrants. As a foreign white female, it is possible that the people I would have interviewed would not have taken me seriously, or that they would have found my questions offensive and imposing. Conversely, my informants’ assumption could have been that I would not understand their experiences prompting them to simplify their responses by omitting details, providing unnecessary explanations or otherwise altering the truth by withholding information or embellishing. Though any of these problems could have been the case when Abdul carried out the interviews, it is more likely that those interviewed at Poitiers would be more open and honest with him because he is also an immigrant from Africa. Through Abdul, I was able to collect testimonies from six additional sources on their personal experience with racism in France. Five of the additional interviews were undergraduate and graduate level students from various African countries and one was a Senegalese man who had spent 21 years living in France.

I also interviewed an employee at the prominent anti-racism organization, S.O.S Racisme. He was a man of African origin who spoke a French that betrayed his familiarity with and acculturation to France. Through this interview, I was able to get a more holistic perspective on the racism that is reported and by whom, as well as how the organization pursues cases of racism through the French political and legal systems which do not officially recognize the existence of racism in France. Because he was also Black, his historical analysis and legal explanations were all the more credible as he was speaking from personal experience as well as with reference to cases he had seen through his work. I was also able to speak to two professors teaching in Paris. One was of African descent and actively engaged in anti-racism work through his research and writings. The second professor, named Dr. Tiziou, was a native French woman.
Like the employee at S.O.S., these informants were important in giving me a more detached and systemic perspective on how racism manifests itself in France. Most importantly, Dr. Tiziou was able to bring my attention to recent public debates around the representation of Black people in ads and media.

My most quantitatively significant source of information was a questionnaire that I passed out to 90 students in Paris: 35 to students at Jussieu University, and 55 to students at Sorbonne University. Dr. Tiziou distributed and retrieved the questionnaires from Jussieu because I felt that having the questionnaires be introduced by a French professor lent them more credibility and thus begged more serious answers than had I myself introduced them. Nevertheless, the additional 55 were delivered by myself to students in a class on the sociology of religion at the Sorbonne University. I received 47 completed questionnaires, a 52% return rate.

The questionnaire was designed to capture the alternative perspective to that evident in the interviews, especially those with the African students. Rather than asking what were peoples’ preconceptions of racism in France and how do they experience it in reality, the questionnaire attempted to gage the respondents familiarity with the idea of racism in France and their standard for what constitutes racism. The questionnaire was designed with the help of three key advisors to ensure linguistic and scientific quality: by an Anthropologist at the University of Pennsylvania, a native-speaking French professor at Penn who corrected for French, and Dr. Tiziou who ensured that the topics covered and the phraseology were updated and understandable. The contents of the questionnaire can be seen in Appendices C1 and C2 along with a translation of the questions.
Although my focus population for the questionnaires was limited to the educated elite as Jussieu and Sorbonne are two of the best universities in France, out of all my data, the students compose the most random and potentially representative sample of French people. Most importantly, France's system of federal subsidies ensures a certain level of socioeconomic diversity within the university system. Furthermore, the responses on the questionnaires suggest that I captured voices from more provincial areas of France as well as the perspective of students whose families are not native to France. 45 of my respondents were French citizens, but 9 of these had at least one parent who was not a French citizen (Brazilian, American, Marocain, and Vietnamese to name a few), and at least 3 reported to be from the French Departments in the Caribbean. 2 students were not French citizens: one Polish and one Moroccan. In terms of regional origin, I had asked for both place of birth and place of residence. The great majority of the students stated that they currently reside in Paris or its six closest departments (France is divided into 95 regional divisions called departments). When looking at place of birth, however, the number of people reporting Paris itself or even Paris and its six surrounding departments decreased by a half. Thus, the questionnaire results show that the students who responded hailed from various regions of France, including voices from towns such as Nevers and Montreuil, as well as smaller cities such as Rennes and Lille.

Finally, in seeking responses from students in two different universities I attempted to reach a broader spectrum of attitudes and perspectives as each university has a unique reputation and thus automatically attracts self-selected groups of people. For instance, Jussieu is known as the more liberal and progressive university with a larger student body than that of Sorbonne, which is viewed as more traditional. Students coming to the Sorbonne have a tendency to be
more conservative. The differences in these institutions are fostered by the programs of study that are offered as well as by the nature of the faculty within each institution. Despite the limits and imperfections of these questionnaires, I believe they can illustrate the subject of my thesis and merit some attention, however conservative and restrained it may be. To complement these questionnaires, I will refer to past surveys and questionnaire results conducted by various governmental and non-governmental entities since the end of colonialism.

My final source of information about the general public's exposure to mainstream representations of Black people was the media. In order to get a sense of the representations of Black people seen by the average French person, I chose popular media sources that are easily accessible to the general public. Thus, I watched the news on public channels on seven out of the thirteen evenings I spent in Paris. I also watched commercials and popular T.V. shows aired before or after the news (between 6PM and 9PM), a time when the T.V. reaches the highest number of viewers. I also collected newspapers and magazines in search of stories, news accounts and graphics that had Black people as their subject. I bought popular magazines such as missEbene (the equivalent of Essence in the USA) and Mademoiselle, and read two of the most popular and most often consulted newspapers in Paris: le Figaro, a more liberal source, and Le Monde, a more mainstream and conservative newspaper.
ANALYTICAL FOUNDATION:
French anthropology, the concept of race, and colonial culture

The Western philosophical contribution to scientific ideas of race is difficult to assess in terms of motive and influence. Were the primary philosophers of race influenced by the external economic and cultural events of colonialism, so that their speculation about hierarchical human taxonomy were mere rationalizations of the injustices committed by the Europeans as they expanded into Africa and the Americas?...And was this thought innocent of the kind of malice that today would qualify it as racist? Whatever the answers, the philosophical contribution influenced social, political, and scientific formulations of human difference and became a formidable intellectual obstacle to abolitionism and egalitarianism.

Naomi Zack (2002: 9)

While studying the history of anthropology and sociology during my early undergraduate years, I became convinced that, given the prominent role of early anthropologists in the institutionalization of the social construction of race as scientific fact, anthropologists today must take an especially prominent and conscious part in the discourse on race and racism. It is more important, however, to consider the current use of race as a social and political tool to gain or maintain power, than to focus on the potential biological aspects of race. Unfortunately, the latter approach is more commonly used when addressing race in modern social science. This circular process is cynically described by race theorist Naomi Zack as “revisiting in the twentieth century what their [anthropologists’] predecessors constructed over the nineteenth” (Zack, 2002: 87).

This thesis is written in the spirit of my conviction that part of my responsibility as a student of anthropology is to actively work against the systemic racism that years of misguided theory and practice installed in our global society. However, I will not spend time disproving the biological basis of race in culture, nor will I demonstrate how the concept of race was based on poor science. I will not explain the evolution of social race theories from physiognomy through
eugenics to social relativism. There are many excellent texts that meticulously disprove the link between biological race and socio-cultural development, and provide comprehensive historiographies of anthropology and sociology with regard to race. Instead, I include this section to underline the immense role that French anthropologists had in the construction of the notion of race and, thus, in the development of the colonial culture in France. Because of the prolific writing by French theorists on race, the degree to which race pervaded French reality and conceptions of the world is unique and is well illustrated through the philosophical debates carried out by early anthropologists. This section should be read as a preface to the later discussion on French colonial culture and its continuity into the present day, not as an explanation of race as a construct. The fact that race is a socially invented idea shall be taken for granted throughout this paper.

Racism and discrimination existed before anthropology and exists independent of anthropology. In its beginning stages, the science of anthropology, nevertheless, gave race and racism credibility by making a theory of inequality scientific. Before slavery and the establishment of apartheid systems throughout the colonial empires of European countries, men from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds, including geographers, missionaries, and politicians, speculated and theorized as to the cause and consequences of dark skin. One of the first theories used to justify racial differences was the Hamitic theory of racial origin, adopted in 1670 by Chambonneau, a Frenchman serving as a company official in Senegal. According to this myth, Ham was punished by his father, Noah, for neglecting to avert his eyes when Noah was naked and drunk. As punishment, Noah cursed all of Ham’s descendants to be the future slaves of Japheth and Shem, Ham’s brothers. In Medieval Europe, this myth justified
the social classes: Japheth became the father of the nobles, Shem that of the clerks and Ham that of the serfs. By extension of this idea, Black people were conceived of as descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, and came to be seen as naturally destined for servitude. Though seemingly unfounded and allegorical, the Hamitic Theory was based in Christian mythology and thus became a highly influential means of persuasion about the superiority of white people. Most importantly, it removed slavery, colonialism and, by extension, modern racism outside of the realm of moral questions because it made social inequality and stratification a natural phenomenon.

The fundamental message in the Hamitic myth, however, only became powerful once it was inserted into a scientific framework that gave it social and political legitimacy. Ironically, it is during the height of cultural and social development known as the Enlightenment that this cementing of race and racism takes place. Disagreements about the origin and significance of race, and the number and categorization of races continued for generations, from Carl Linneaus (1707-1778) and Compte de Buffon (1707-1788), to Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) and Paul Broca (1824-1880). Buffon (1749) introduced the term ‘race’ into literature on natural and human sciences. Through his emphasis on scientific ordering and classification, Linneaus validated the Christian-derived concept of the Great Chain of Being according to which human diversity is perceived as a series of stages progressing from the savage Black races to the white races of Europeans who exemplify civilization at the top of the chain'. In other words, by taking the idea of racial hierarchy for granted, these theorists contributed to the construction of race. Marks explains that ‘by searching for the division of the human species as a cardinal biological question, the question assumed and in turn legitimized the proposition that the human
species could actually be divided into a small number of basic biological groups [emphasis in original]” (1995: 52). Whereas in the 18th century, diversity in human phenotypes was seen as a function of environment differences, by the 19th century, race became at once a mark of human phenotypical diversity and the cause for diversity in human societies. Race not only became a visible mark of difference but also the explanation for that difference. In such a way, by the 19th century, France had officially institutionalized its racism by making it scientific.

The emphasis on scientific inquiry also produced a proliferation of various “academic” societies to promote further exploration of human organization, racial diversity and the geography of the globe. The Geographical Society was founded in Paris in 1785, the Societe des Observateurs de l’Hemme in 1799, the Societe Ethnologue in 1839, and in 1859, the Societe d’anthropologie de Paris. By force of their highly placed theoreticians and their conviction that race was socially significant, the Anthropological society (founded by Broca) and the developing field of anthropology in France became dominated by physiological study, where the infamous image of the anthropologist measuring skulls and arm lengths gained its popularity. The conviction of the most educated classes about the importance of race in structuring society and social relations, however, demonstrates the widespread belief in the existence of race was. According to Cohen, even before Arthur de Gobineau published his Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races (1855), France had been thoroughly and effectively imbued with the concept of racial hierarchy as a result of these debates (1980: 95). Racism had become inherent in the French system of social and political organization. For instance, the scientific dictionary in 1830 states that “the Negro is and always will be a slave; interest assumes it, policy requires it, his own constitution accepts it without trouble” (Poliakov, 1982: 63). By 1890, another French
theorist, Ernest Renan writes in the last edition of *l'Avenir de la science*, "the process of the civilization can now be recognized in its general lines. The inequality of races has now been established."

The influence of these "scientific" theories on French society and politics cannot be over-emphasized. For example, the French colonial policy of assimilation, the idea that Africans are primitive and lacking civilization that the French are responsible for introducing them to, was a direct outgrowth of the theories that were being developed, including the Great Chain of Being and Gobineau's affirmation of racial hierarchy (1855). Furthermore, political decisions required the support of the population, which meant that popular media simplified these theoretical musings into tangible images and explanations for the general public. The practicality of these reductions and simplifications was that the population was easily motivated to back the government. Such a use of scientifically-backed race constructions promoted a sense of unity among French people by emphasizing nationalism around the superiority of French culture. Bancel and Blanchard describe the interplay between politics and science as "a society ridden by angst before the social upheaval caused by the technological take-off of industrialization, wounded by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in 1870, these images of the Other unquestionably played a structuring role, reinforcing the collective identity, and creating a social cohesion articulated by this ideology of superiority and power" (2000: 38). The national colonial culture, thus, evolved out of a slow, progressive process that perhaps had no intention of arriving at the goal of racism when it started. Once it evolved into a systemic world view, however, its power and influence never failed to be used by French leaders to motivate people behind often inhumane or immoral undertakings. Betts phrases this idea in the following way:
The colonial territories were crudely grouped together as if they exhibited a certain uniformity of historical development, social behavior, and economic condition that marked them off from the peculiar rise of the West. True, the French clearly perceived that the particular geographic units of their empire were situated in distinctive cultural areas that qualitatively ranged, in late nineteenth century popular opinion, from the past greatness of the civilizations of the Far East to the absence of civilization in Black Africa. Yet what proved to be historically important was not the appreciation of such distinctions, but rather the tendency to treat all colonial peoples and cultures as being more alike than not in those qualities later described in American academic writing as “non-western.” Once assembled in the French mind as a world apart, North Africa, Indochina, and Black Africa were easily converted from particular places with variegated populations into abstractions: objects of intellectual, literary fabrication, historical model-building. (1982: 66)

Clearly, French anthropology had an immense influence, even if indirect, on the general population’s conceptions of Black people. However, whereas France may have been the chief origin of physiognomy, physical anthropology, and racial classification, it was not the first to question the ideas of white superiority at the root of these theories. The spread of critical discourse about race and racism has been inhibited in France because of the persistence of colonial culture, which was rooted in the racist mentality of the Enlightenment ideology and legitimated by official political and social policies such as assimilation. Later in the paper I will show that the popular representations of Black people, and thus the popular attitude about Black people, have remained relatively unchanged since the period around the First World War. But
first, I give a brief summary of the exposure of French people to Africans and the more recent African immigration waves to France.

**Black African Immigration to France**

Before beginning my analysis of the representation of Black people in French media, it is important to explain the immigration of Africans to France. The direct interaction between French and Africans is significant because, no matter how powerful, an image’s message is always challenged when the subject it portrays is confronted in reality. In French history, we can identify three main waves of Black immigration: post-WWI, post-WWII (Trente Glorieuses), and the turn of the 21st century.

During the early years of exploration and colonialism in the 1600's, interaction between Blacks and Whites took place mostly outside of metropolitan France and was limited to traders, explorers, military men, and a small number of diplomats and politicians (including the governors who managed colonies in Africa, the Carribean, and Asia). These people were directly involved in the process of colonization and became a bridge between France and the rest of the world, not only by traveling and establishing contacts throughout the globe, but also by bringing back news and information about what they saw and under what circumstances they established contact.

If we include colonists who settled in newly acquired territories, the number of whites who actually encountered Black people significantly increases, but these colons did not consistently travel back and forth between France and the colony where they settled. Settlers
were especially concentrated in the Carribean where plantation colonies developed and their numbers steadily increased into the late 1600's before stabilizing as the plantations became more institutionalized. For example, in 1665, 1,500 White people live in Haiti. By 1713, about 5,700 Whites are recorded on the island and this number remains more or less stable while the number of Blacks drastically rises. These colonists' impressions of Black people was significantly different from those in Black Africa because the people in the Carribean encountered a population of Black slaves who were not natives (the natives of the Caribbean islands had been killed early in the colonization process). Though these colonial settlers did not directly influence public opinion about Black people and the world outside of France, their letters, stories and reports influenced government policies and thus played a role in constructing the image of the world outside France in the minds of French people. Politicians who had more direct access to the experiences of these colonists would, in turn, pass the stories and images on to the general public. For instance, the following message found on Madagascar in 1653, depicts the kind of information that early colonists would exchange: "O you who come here, read this warning. It will be profitable for you, for yours and for your life; watch out for the inhabitants."

The early image of Blacks as savages was thus created as much by social scientists as by the politicians who interpreted the stories of the explorers and settlers.

Even after the establishment of settlements in the Carribean, the presence of Black people in Metropolitan France was discouraged and inhibited through explicit rules. Initially, slaves were prohibited from entry into France because such entry would automatically grant them freedom. Over time, this policy was broken as slave owners from the Carribean islands brought their slaves and were allowed to keep them during temporary stays in France. By 1738,
however, concern that too many Blacks were present in France prompted the introduction of a law that limited a slave’s stay in the Metropole to no more than three years and only for the purpose of learning a trade. This law made slave-owners susceptible to heavy fines and it was accompanied by laws against inter-racial marriage. In 1777, the law of 1738 was made more strict. It allowed colonists to travel across seas with slaves but forbade slaves any entry into France. As part of the law, the French erected a special depot to house slaves for the duration of their master’s stay in France. This decree resulted from a concern that, “the Negroes are multiplying every day in France. They marry Europeans...the colors mix, the blood is changing” (Cohen, 1980: 111). In 1778, slaves as well as free men of color were denied entrance into France and all slaves in France at the time were sent back to the Carribean while Blacks legally residing in France were required to register with the authorities and intermarriage continued to be forbidden. It is significant to note that at the time when the royal order of 1778 was decreed, only 5,000 Blacks were recorded in France within a population of 20 million, most of whom were concentrated in larger coastal cities. Again, the influence of early race theories can be traced to the foundation of these laws as each one was instituted in response to the fear that French blood may be contaminated by the Black’s residing in France.

The 1800’s made the colonial process more systematic and directed in its approach, though the quickened pace at which France collected various territorial possessions around the world was largely motivated by the desire to enlarge its empire and confirm its glory. First the successful revolution of independence in Haiti in 1804, followed by the fall of Napoleon in 1812, and then the humiliating loss in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, left France with wounded pride and a deep-seated sense of inferiority to its fellow Western powers, especially
Germany. While the French colonies in the Caribbean had already established their economic importance through their sugar, tobacco and coffee plantations which were an ample source of financial growth for France, France began to develop its colonial empire by conquering Algeria in 1830 and laying claim to Western and Central Africa beginning in the 1840's. This expansion culminated with Berlin Conference of 1884, which led to the creation of three administrative zones: l'AFrique Occidentale francaise (1904), l'AFrique Equatoriale francaise (1910), and Madagascar (1905 after the “pacification” of the island) (Quinn, 2000: 153).

Furthermore, as slavery was finally abolished in all French colonies in 1848⁴, the focus of colonialism in Africa in the 1800's turned from accumulation of wealth through slave labor to direct accumulation of wealth through exploitation of valuable resources. Thus, only midway through the 19th century did France begin to articulate a cohesive colonial policy of assimilation and the *mission civiliisatrice*. The economist, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, outlined the French colonial system in his essay, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* in 1874. He distinguished two types of French colonies: colonies of *peuplement*, where people immigrated, and those of *exploitation*, where capital was invested. Indeed, the future of French colonialism would follow his outline. After the Berlin Conference when France’s territories were officially defined, Jules Ferry delivered his famous speech (1885) to Chamber of Deputies in support of colonial expansion, arguing that “[the superior races] have the responsibility to civilize the inferior races.” This idea would crown the assimilationist approach to colonization, though in reality, it became a plan for controlling and dominating the local populations for the benefit of French economic goals. According to the theory of assimilation, France would install its educational, political and economic institutions in its overseas possessions while each overseas territory
would have politico-legal representation in the French legislature. In other words, the colonies
would collaborate with the French colonial system in return for French citizenship, for example
(Quinn, 2000: 176). This idea was never fully implemented, however, largely because the
natives were never expected to fully assimilate either because they inherently did not have the
capacity to do so or because such acculturation would encourage them to seek independence.
Around the wide-spread propaganda of “parler en francais, c’est penser en francais” (to speak
French is to think in French), there was the conviction that French culture, from language to the
Christian faith, was superior and should be shared. Thus, in contrast to the traders and explorers
who constituted the colonial force of the 1700’s, colonialism of the 1800’s relied on significant
numbers of missionaries and diplomats.

Despite centuries of colonialism, the first wave of Blacks to appear in France was during
World War One. Lemaire and Blanchard explain that “in terms of the development of a colonial
culture, the First World War constitutes a pivotal moment wherein the reality of colonialism
profoundly penetrated French society. It marks a breaking point in the discovery of the “Other”
and the conceptualization of the colonized populations as it is a moment of the arrival of many
contingents of soldiers from North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Indochina” (2003: 7)\textsuperscript{5}.
Indeed, in the trajectory of the French encounter with Black people, World War One marks the
first such interaction on a mass scale and within France itself.

Estimates of the number of African soldiers who fought in the war vary, but according to
historian Myron Echenberg’s conservative count, 180,000 Africans, collectively called
Tirailleurs Senegalais, fought for France during the Great War\textsuperscript{6}. Though most soldiers were
forcefully recruited into the army, and only a minority actually served as French citizens
and depended on it for its liberation. Popular posters and postcards of the line depicted
created within the general French population finally met the other half of the colonial empire
WWI, when African soldiers were brought to France during WWI, an entirely new situation was
and words that French people had only heard and read about before the period leading up to
prophesied and actual physical interaction. Whereas Africans and Africa were abstract images
suddenly came into direct and conscious contact with Blacks through both the government
into the pan-African Renaissance movement after World War II. The French, on the other hand,
structures. WWI thus was the beginning of the rise of an African consciousness that exploded
be when they managed colonial activity and interacted with traditional social and political
for the first time that Europeans were not so powerful and omnipotent as they were conceived to
colonial empire. In witnessing Europeans underfoot pain and loss on the battlefields, Africans saw
The war had significant repercussions on both the African side and the French side of the
they were enlisted in the French army as French citizens.
Africans become involved in an intra-European conflict and fight on the European continent, but
colonial subjects because Africa’s, suddenly, seemed to be treated as equals. Not only did
this, World War One marked a significant change in the relationship between France and its
Officially registered residents of these colonies were eligible to become French citizens.
chiefs in Senegal—Kuilsheba, Dakar, Goree, and Thiès—were designated as Communes in 1916,
entlithms in Africa. Furthermore, to facilitate recruitment and inspire motivation to enlist, four
become the first Black delegate in the French legislature as a representative of French overseas
hierarchy around Black citizenship was a dramatic change. For example, in 1914, Philippe Dorge
alongside White Frenchmen, the sudden presence of Blacks in France as well as the political
victorious Black soldiers under the title: “Glory to the Plus Grande France” (Blanchard, 2001: 57). Seeing Blacks parade through the streets of Paris as well as in provincial towns was an eye-opening experience that changed the way French people thought about Africa and Africans.

Indeed, the effects of World War One on acclimatizing French people to Blacks is remarkable. A sudden extremism and hilarity marked France of the 1920’s with a new perspective on Black people, Negrophilia. It is due to this apparent positive disposition of France toward Black people that during the inter-war period many African-American scholars and artists, such as Langston Hughes and Josephine Baker, find their home in Paris. Thus, in addition to the immigration of Blacks from the African diaspora, some of the Tirailleurs Senegalais remained in France, largely settling in the port cities of Marseille, Le Havre and Bordeaux as well as in Paris. The presence of Africans in France was also accompanied by new cultural symbols such as mosques, the first one built in Paris in 1926, and cafes that catered to the African palette (Quinn, 2000: 186). Nevertheless, since the Negrophilia fever was characteristic of Paris elites and the majority of Blacks in France settled in significant port cities or Paris, the majority of French people living in the provinces remained limited to the media for their exposure to Blacks.

The second large wave of Black people to come to France was after WWII, in the period known as the Trente Glorieuses (1945-1975). France enlisted at least 200,000 Africans for its military campaign, meaning that about 9% of the total French army comprised Black divisions. Again, some of these Blacks would remain in France after the war and settle in coastal cities as laborers in the same way that African soldiers had done after the First World War. WWII, however, brought one significant change to the immigration of Blacks to France: for the first
time, Black people came as students. Among them were theorist Franz Fanon and Leopold Sedar Senghor, the first president of Senegal, both of whom served in the French army and then stayed in France to continue their studies. By the 1960's, France had a significant population of Blacks living within its borders that spanned various social spheres: former soldiers who settled in France after the war as laborers, members of the upper class including students, intellectuals and artists, and politicians and diplomats such as Blaise Diange and Lamine Gueye (African administrators of French territories in Africa).

The immigration wave after WWII caused a dramatic increase in population, which by the 1970's, manifested itself most conspicuously in a shortage of housing. As a result, the 70's became marked by largely negative associations with immigration. With the more populous North Africans, however, Blacks effectively escaped association with this problem of overpopulation and remained relatively anonymous. By far the most prominent and visible of the Black immigrants were the intellectuals who gained much attention probably because they at once distinguished themselves so extremely from the conventional image of Blacks and because they affirmed the potential success and value of the assimilationist theory. Nevertheless, they were known as isolated cases of exceptional Africans. Sociologist Mahamet Timbera explains that, “immigration of a people seen as insignificant, with no glorious past, defeated, colonized, and then civilized, this immigration [of Black Africans] is more tolerated, in however a paternalistic fashion, than immigration from Algeria” (1997:44).

The final wave of Black immigrants to France is currently at its peak. After the Second World War, people coming to France from Africa, including North Africa, outnumbered immigrants from any other part of world, and in the past five years, immigration from sub-
Saharan Africa has outpaced the influx from all other regions of the world. Between 1982 and 1990, the number of Black Africans coming to France tripled, so that today, they comprise more than 6.6% of the total French population. Currently 1.5 million Black Africans live in France, though this figure is an underestimation given the number of people who escaped the official records. Not surprisingly, this proportional increase of Blacks in France is causing significant changes in the perception of Africans and African immigration, and the Black population is earning a new reputation as the illegal immigrants, or *sans-papiers*.

The immigration patterns described in this section must be understood, above all, in terms of France’s economic situation. The first two major waves of immigration, post-WWI, post-WWII, are related to a need for manual labor. The loss of lives and especially of men in the first two periods was dramatic enough to oblige France to import labor from outside. Just like it sought soldiers for wars in its colonies, France found relief from its labor crises in its overseas territories. For instance, in 1966, the Minister of Social Affairs, Jean Marcel Jeanneney, was quoted as saying, “illegal immigration itself is not without a certain value, for were we to pursue a policy of strict enforcement of the rules and international agreements governing this area, we would perhaps lack the manpower we need” (Silverman, 1992: 44). It is worth pointing out that the backlash against immigrants only began in the late 70's when the economy was dwindling and the country was forced to provide much needed social support and benefits to massive numbers of poor and marginalized people of color. Unlike earlier immigration periods which were dominated by migrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, and Portugal, the post-WWII wave and immigration now is decidedly African. Though the immigrants of European backgrounds faced their own racist treatment in France, the racism experienced by African
immigrants and particularly sub-Saharan Africans is very conspicuously linked to the colonial legacy of France. This topic will be further analyzed in the third part of this paper. For the moment, let us turn to the imagery that helped to form French attitudes toward Black people, and that now records the evolution of French perceptions of Africans.

From Savage to immigrant: a story through images

*The will to represent is always stronger than the impossibility of representing.*

Mireille Rosello (1998)

The image of the African went through few significant transformations since the institution of colonialism. For the purposes of this analysis, I will distinguish three main changes in the representation of Blacks in French media: the savage, the *l’enfant negre* and the immigrant. Not surprisingly, each change correlates with major changes in colonial practice; however, it is not self-evident that the changing appearance of the black form in the images accurately depicts an evolution in the French consciousness about what Black is. As we shall see, besides the superficial composition of the images, there is little to suggest that the collective consciousness about Black people changed in France, in part because the phases of each representation overlap and in part because the fundamental goals at the core of the political and social policies of each period are not dramatically different. The first two phases will be analyzed in this section, but the creation of the image of Black people as immigrants will be elaborated in more detail in the final section of this paper as it results more from the effects of policies and of pictoral evolution.

Because media is a product of culture and contribute to cultural evolution, the history of
publicity is a powerful way to illustrate the continuity of colonial culture. Media reflects social ideas and mentalities, and contributes to their formation. According to, Cassandre, one of the most widely printed graphic artists of the early 1900's, there are three principal functions of the poster:

1) Perspective: a poster is made to be seen...this visibility depends not only on the simple contrast of colors, but on the relation of values, exposed by the shock created by shape and juxtaposition.

2) Graphics: We did not lay down the railroad network to post a sign bearing the words, “Please stop.” We have consistently preferred colorful signals, carriers of ideas that are infinitely more expressive with a message that is more easily captured. The poster, which must transfer its message clearly and quickly, has chosen the same language: the image itself becomes the vehicle for thought.

3) Poetry: The poster must instill in the viewer much more than a reactionary visual sensation, a conscious or subconscious emotion, or at least an obsession. The poster does not ask the viewer to like it, or to understand it; it only asks to be taken in. The poster is to painting what rape is to love.”

Indeed, before the advent of mass publishing, posters were the most prevalent source of media during early colonialism, both for the information they transferred and the entertainment they offered. In the late 19th century, increased literacy rates and improved technology allowed printing of regular periodicals and newspapers on a mass scale to develop. This phenomenon was largely limited to Paris until the 1870's when printing production and distribution dramatically increased in the provinces. Many new media sources appeared, including Le Rire,
Journal des Voyages, and Le Petit Journal, which was one of the most widely distributed and read sources of media into the inter-war period. Thus, well before the First World War, technological, social and economic progress gave the booming press industry the role of distributing information and advertising. One can say that colonialism was one of the longest running publicity campaigns ever recorded. The printed and posted images not only helped shape the race theories and the general population’s impressions of Black people, but they now serve as a record of the collective imagination of Black people. For this reason, the images themselves are as much an external stimuli for the evolution of the colonial cultural as an internal agent of that change.

The iconographic record of colonialism and French perceptions of Blacks begins with the image of Africans as savages of tropical Africa, at once attractive and dangerous. These images were born out of political interpretations and renditions of explorers’, theoreticians’, and missionaries’ accounts of the world outside France. Cohen describes the fascination and distrust of Africa in the following way:

Africa served Europeans as a convenient mirror, or as a screen onto which they projected their own fears about themselves and their world. The encounter with Africa in the seventeenth century occurred in an era that emphasized order, self-discipline, self abnegation, sexual restraint, and Christianity. These were difficult ideals. The Europeans’ failure to realize these lofty goals or even their temptations to deny them, created serious inner tensions to which the contact with Africa gave an emotional release. (1980: 33)

It follows that the chief objective of the iconography in the 1700’s and 1800’s was to glorify
military campaigns and missionaries as those who uphold the national and colonial mission and enterprise. Popular magazines of the period would decorate their cover pages with colorful pictures of the colonial empire, often depicting violent scenes of colonial expansion into previously untamed lands. Africans were seen as cannibals and savages. Especially notable were the records of the violent and uncivilized natives in Madagascar, where France faced considerable opposition in establishing its colonial outposts. Posters of the time would show provocative illustrations of war with captions such as, “the black invasion” (Blanchard, 1995: 23). Another example of the popular image of Africans as savages were the Dahomey people, in modern-day Benin, who were described by Bishop of Autun as a place where, “murderous Satan rules through human hecatombs” (Figure 1) (Cohen, 1980: 258). The illustrated supplement of the Petit Journal, printed 14 images of the Dahomey people between 1891 and 1893, 10 of which were printed in 1892 alone. As a result of these images and their popularity, the physical presence of Black people in France beginning with WWI was preceded by a well developed and instituted network of images that propagated ill-conceived and inaccurate ideas about Black people.

The first transformation in the French representation of Africans occurs during the WWI period, which, as discussed in the previous section, brought a dramatic change in social dynamics when large numbers of Blacks appeared in the Metropole. As France suffered immense losses in the trench warfare, it came to dependent on African man-power to win the war. In order to soften the influx of “savages” amidst the French population, as well as to attract African recruits, it began to be in the interest of the government to provide a more positive image of Blacks. The contradiction between the continuing colonial rhetoric about African
inferiority and the sudden existence of Black citizens on overseas territories produced a new image of the African as the *enfant negre*. The change from the image of the savage that characterized 19th century publicity, to the *enfant negre* of the 20th, directly correlates to an immense propaganda campaign launched by the state to show the African as friendly, innocent and harmless; as a big child in other words (Figure 2). Blanchard articulates this evolution as "supplanting the ‘bloodthirsty-savage’ of the previous era...this archetype of the good, brave native of the Empire, who gave his blood for France, took root in the French visual and mental landscape...[as] Greter France’s adoptive child" (2001: 86).

The image that epitomized this change was a breakfast drink advertisement, commonly referred to as *Y’a bon Banania*, which was the most prevalent and consistently used image of all the iconography concerning Africa and Africans (Figure 3). Its origins lie in the business endeavors of one Pierre Lardet who sold a breakfast coco drink under the slogan *Y’a bon*, a French pidgin meaning “it’s good,” which was spoken by African soldiers conscripted into the African militias used throughout the French colonies. Militias of African soldiers, known as *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, had existed since the 1800’s and were created to help maintain order within the French colonial empire⁸. They comprised Africans from all ethnic groups (not exclusively from the region of Senegal) and were employed throughout the African continent to quell some of the most fierce native resistance efforts, including in Madagascar and in North Africa. The militias were later integrated into the French army during the world wars, and the name, *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, was incorrectly extended to include the battalions of Black French citizens from the four communes in Senegal. Lardet adopted the image of the *Tirailleur Senegalais* for his advertisements in 1915, and thus helped to propagate the stereotype of all

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Blacks as the smiling, friendly soldier citizen.

The *Y’a bon* ads are a direct product of the cultural perceptions of racial hierarchy prevalent at the time. They provide a visual record of the racist mentality of the general French population because they were created by a Frenchman and because French people’s positive response to the image made the *Y’a bon* one of the most successful advertising campaigns in history. To this day, the *Y’a bon* is used to sell various products from rice pudding to chicken sauce. Blanchard and Bancel, explain how the image of the *Tirailleur Senegalais* encapsulates the French colonial imagination of Black people:

*The body of the *Tirailleur* in the representations is a superficially domesticated body... This domestication is metaphor of the possibility of subjugating all Africans to a European discipline meant to raise them to the frontiers of civilization...*The figure of the *Tirailleur* thus emerged. He was a hybrid character, who was no longer completely African, but who could not envisage being completely French either...Behind the superficially domesticated body of the soldier lurked the savage, animal instincts, which is why the archetypes of the *Tirailleur* sometimes liken them to Whites, sometimes to Blacks.* (2000: 38, 40)

Thus, this first evolution of the image itself was only a slight change from the savage that was present in the earlier years of colonialism. Even as the examples of Diange and later Senghor were touted to potential African recruits in the four *Communes* of Senegal, the crudeness of the character in the *Y’a bon* image, his simplicity and implied stupidity underlined Black people’s inferiority that would not be transcended, even after internalizing French culture.

Despite the changes in colonial policy and rhetoric that came with WWI, the image, as
well as the discussion around the use of African troops, stayed true to the theory of racial hierarchy and impossible assimilation. For example, military and political discussions on the integration of Black and French troops focused on the question of which African races were the best warrior breed. One of the leading French military men of WWI France, Charles Magnin, claimed that “warrior instincts...remain extremely powerful in primitive races.” Lunn further explains how Magnin characterized warrior races and his rationale for why they were better fit for warfare: “(1) an ability to live in harsher climates than other races; (2) the capacity (owing to centuries of portage and migration) to carry heavy loads great distances; (3) a nervous system that was less developed than that of ‘whites’, which gave them greater resistance to pain and hence more willingness to shed blood in battle...” (1999: 521). Clearly, amidst rhetoric of noble African soldiers supporting France, the reality of promise of equal treatment symbolized by the creation of the four Communes in Senegal as well as the promises of monetary and political compensation to African soldiers were a myth. By 1945, only 3% of the Africans recruited had some French speaking or writing skills not because of the inherent incapacity of Blacks to learn but because of conscious negligence of on the part of the French who feared uprisings (Echenberg, 1991: 114).

The change that took place around World War One in the attitudes of the general French population about Black people is well documented in a book published by a bourgeois woman who explained her first encounters with Black soldiers and the evolution of her relationships with them as she became their French teacher (Coustourier, 1920). Her book provides insight into the sources of influence on her conceptions of Blacks, as revealed by the language in her often elaborate descriptions. The book opens with a quote from Buffon’s Histoire Naturelle
(1749) and proceeds to give an analysis of the term *negre*. The adjectives used to describe the Blacks she encountered are as if torn directly off of the posters and published images of the time: monster, ugly, beast, devil, etc. She wrote, “if I attempt [to apply a name] onto their [*Tirailleurs Senegalais*] existence, moral as well as physical, it would be the name ‘man’ or ‘smiling-man’ and I would write it with lower case letters, humbly, as one would write about trees, grapes, or sugared raisins.” She goes on to explain her mixed feelings about the sudden presence of “uncivilized Negroes” near her property where a military camp had been set up, by saying, “in response to these invaders from the south, our improvised defenders, we feel an anger that is hardly patriotic.” Even though Coustourier was not entirely representative of the French population because of her elite status, her words reveal an indoctrination by various media sources that was in no way unique to the upper classes.

The significant change from savage to *enfant negre*, as well as in the evolution of the French disposition toward Blacks can also be seen through the sudden voyeuristic curiosity about Black people as exemplified by the inter-war phenomenon of *Negrophilia*. The French needed to find a way to relieve the contradiction between France’s dependence on African soldiers to win the war, and the persistent rationalizations that Africans were inherently inferior and uncivilized. The result was a seeming appreciation for “Black culture” and for Africans. In the book, *Negrophilia: Avant Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920’s*, Petrine Archer-Straw explains this peculiar phenomenon as “art resulting from a clash of Black and white cultures in the ‘jazz age’ both reflected the European avant-garde artist’s anarchic interests and challenged prevailing colonialist views. Advertisements, painting, sculpture, photography, popular music, dance and theater, literature, journalism, furniture design, fashion and objets d’art - all
[revealed] how black forms were appropriated, adapted and vulgarized by whites” (2000: 9). In short, the Negrophilia in France that made France appear to be less racist and more open to Black people, was no more than fetishism of the elites. As Fanon succinctly clarifies the contradiction in this phenomenon in the following way: “he who loves the Negroes is as sick as he who loathes them” (1982:6). Even advertisements characteristic of Negrophilia do not fail to hide the inherent paternalism of the French attitude, and the savagery that the French continued to perceive in Black people. A prime example are the prolific images of Josephine Baker, striking strange and provocative poses, wearing animal print, or simply appearing naked (Figure 4). New art trends lead by Picasso and Matisse, as well as the sudden acceptance of l’Art negre revealed the objectification and obsessive “love” for everything Black. This commodification of “Black culture” was not new however. In the same way that France treated Africans as units of capital and tradable commodities during slavery, and African soldiers in the First World War as canon fodder⁹, Negrophilia was yet another means of satisfying a French need to be the cutting edge of cultural innovation and life.

No matter how progressive the Negrophilia of the 1920’s appeared to be, the change in the image of Black people that it pre-supposed was neither absolute nor uniformly accepted. The assimilationism of colonialism, the fear of the savage, and the exoticism of the “other” were all wrapped up into the inter-war period. Most significantly, the new image of the enfant negre and those of Negrophilia were contradicted by the popularity of colonial expositions that continued to exhibit Africans as exotic specimens of primitive cannibals before and after WWI. In addition to magazine pictures, cartoons, and product advertisements, the publicity of colonial expositions, which appeared consistently from the 1870’s to the 1930’s, held immense sway over
the general populations’ conceptions of Africans. Not only were the images in the posters widely accessible and reaffirmed by other images found in magazines and ads, but they were also cloaked with scientific legitimacy.

Also known as Human Zoos and zoological gardens, expositions were designed to visually and physically expose the visitors to exotic curiosities from around the world without forcing them to leave the comfort of home. They assembled everything from material objects of foreign societies to actual groups of people and, in the spirit of the Great Chain of Being, exhibited them behind fences, drawing millions of Parisians to pay the entry fee. The first exposition in Paris was organized in 1877, presenting Nubiens from Egypt and Eskimos from America. Their popularity was dramatic. For example, in 1900, an exposition displaying a live diorama of Madagascar attracted fifty million visitors. Because of their appeal, these events soon spread from the major cities such as Paris, Marseille and Lyon, to the provinces where any and every Frenchman could discover the lands of savages through “exact” reconstructions of “Senegalese villages.” Between 1877 and 1912 at least thirty were organized in Paris alone. Blanchard depicts their role in the following way: “Not a single town in France missed the opportunity, on a sunny afternoon, between the farming competition, Sunday mass, and a walk around the lake, to discover a ‘real’ reconstitution of these savage lands inhabited by exotic people and beasts” (2000: 85). Besides providing “information” and entertainment for the general public, these expositions also fostered scientific study of the evolution of civilization. Anthropologists came to these events to examine the exotic specimen of different human races and to build upon their theories of the relationship between racial make-up and cultural evolution.
Advertisements for these expositions were extremely influential by virtue of their simple messages that fed directly into the already developed image of Blacks as savages. For example, a German poster dating to 1880 carried the following message: “Australian Cannibals, Males and Females. The exclusive colony of this savage race, strange, mutilated, and more brutal than any others ever found in the land of the savages. The lowest order of humanity.” As explained by Blanchard, “this vocabulary that stigmatized savagery - bestiality, taste of blood, strange fetishism, beasts - is reinforced by the production of iconography of unprecedented violence, justifying the idea of a stagnant sub-humanity, humanity confined to the colons, the border between human and animal” (2000: 4). The colonial images in the exposition posters often portrayed Black people as mere inhabitants of a distant, exotic continent; part of the French colonial possession (Figure 5). Such images coincided with the political rhetoric of the time. For example, the Ministry of Marine described the inhabitants of Senegal as, “lazy, indolent, without ambition and don’t even give themselves the bother to pick up the riches that they brush against every day” (Cohen, 1980:161). Clearly, these expositions were a powerful means of transmitting French colonial culture and mentality. It is telling that one of the most significant Expositions took place in Paris as late as 1931. It drew 34 million people who came to see the same things that the posters had been promising since the 1870's, exotic animals and human specimens.

The prevalence and popularity of the images and cartoons of Blacks prior to the considerable African immigration starting in the 1960’s, greatly influenced how Africans would be treated upon arrival in larger numbers during the Trente Glorieuses. Thus, images such as the “Y’a bon banania” as well as the exposition posters set a framework for and shaped the nature of
race relations in France. The final change in the iconographic record is that of *enfant negre* to immigrant. This change, however, is not the result of the major transformation that corresponded with the presence of Blacks after WWII. Indeed, French people had become more accustomed to cohabiting with Blacks as long as their inferiority was assured. It had been accepted that Blacks fought alongside Whites and that France could rely on its colonies in times of need. The change that did occur in the post-WWII era, was that Blacks began to come to France as students and intellectuals. Whereas before there were only a few exceptional Africans, such as Blaise Diange, who came as assimilated citizens involved in diplomatic business, now there were large numbers of Blacks moving to France for indefinite periods of time and many were entering French universities. Not surprisingly, this change was not represented in the iconographic record and did not affect the collective image of Blacks. Rather, representations of Black Africans disappeared, except within the ramifications of old images such as that of *Y’a bon*, for example (Figure 6). As late as 1986, a modern adaptation of the *Y’c bon* image were published to advertise chicken sauce (Figure 7). The persistent use of this image, however, cannot be reduced to its status as a cultural icon that, over time, became removed from the stereotypes and racist assumptions that produced it in 1915. Evidence of its continued indoctrinating power about the inferiority of Blacks was confirmed when in 1997, a neo-Nazi group distributed the image of the smiling soldier with his head stamped out as rejected in the Parisian metro (Figure 8). It is also telling that three responses to my questionnaires listed “joie de vivre” as typical characteristics of Black African immigrants in France.

Only in the 1960's, after the independence of African nations, did the image of Africans
change into that of immigrants, however, as explained by my informant at S.O.S. Racisme, the negative stereotypes attributed to immigrants from North Africa are not associated with Blacks. Immigration to France only began to be viewed as a problem in the 1970's as a result of the economic crises that dramatized the poverty of large numbers of immigrants living in over-populated ghettos. The image of ghettos was propagated as a national problem related to the cultural invasion of Islam and became attached to North Africans most of whom were indeed, Muslim (Silverman, 1992: 99). Black African immigrants, on the other hand, were not commonly thought of as Muslims even though the majority of them are. Instead, the image of Blacks that persisted was that of the enfant negre. Blanchard explains this duality in the depiction of African immigrants in the following way:

At the start of the new century, economic crisis, the tensing of the republican model of integration, the rise of ultra-nationalism (or fanaticism), and the rejection of African (or North Africa) immigration have, in the context of a colonial history with which we have not yet come to terms, favored the emergence of a dual reference image of the Other: that of the ‘archetypal foreigner’ – who can potentially be assimilated – and that of the archetypal immigrant – a hangover from the colonial image of the archetypal native. (2000: 84)

A more modern example of the persistence of the image of Blacks as jovial, simple characters, came in a popular television talk show called, There's Nothing We Won't Try aired on March 12, 2003. The legacy of colonialism and the prevalence of colonial culture in modern mentalities revealed by this show was astounding. The show opened with a short clip wherein two police-men stop cars that run a stop sign. One of the policemen is Black and one is White.
Every time the White officer leaves the driver to walk around the car, the Black officer offers to sell the driver a protective gris-gris, a colorful necklace with purple and yellow beads, which he says will protect the driver from the fine that surely awaits him. Repeatedly, the drivers buy the gris-gris and leave without a fine. Besides the gris-gris that the Black officer sells, he is depicted making abstract gestures and sounds behind the back of the White officer that are suggested to have some link with the effects of the gris-gris. The clip provoked enthusiastic cheers to maraboutisme, voudou, and les gris-gris among the audience assembled in the studio. After the clip, the show host introduced the guest, an African man who called himself an ethno-psychologist. As the only Black man and African on the show, he proceeded to explain that, in spite of his stereotypes of Europe as a place vacant of spirit and soul, through his stay in France he has come to understand that gris-gris are not particular to Africa but can also be found in Europe. The response among the French distinguished audience (there were 6 guests that constituted the interactive audience) was ecstatic as one woman yelled out, “You can never under-estimate Europe.” Others confirmed that they find their credit card or cigarettes to be their gris-gris.

The general ignorance of history and culture, and the liberal stereotyping that dominated this show was clear. First, those assembled confused Islam-based maraboutisme, with Ouidah-originated Voudou (from Benin), and the traditional use of gris-gris amulets. Through their generalizations and stereotyping, they homogenized Africa and perpetuated the West v. rest dichotomy. The ethno-psychologist also confirmed these stereotypes by laughing at the opening clip, entertaining the ignorant comments, misrepresenting the value and importance of gris-gris by accepting the audiences’ interpretation of credit cards and cigarettes as gris-gris. In short, the
comical tone of this show exposed the fact that the reductionism, simplification and commodification of anything related to Africa that characterized colonial images, Negrophilia, and racial stereotypes is very present in modern France. Clearly, the influence of colonial culture persist in shaping the French world-view, especially with regard to Black Africans. The airing of this show, at a time and on a station that is widely accessible, visually demonstrates the continuing perception of Black’s as commodities, exotic curiosities, and simple *enfants noirs* [particularly boldly embodied by the Black policeman].

Thus, despite the end of the colonial empire and the increased Black population in France, the colonial image of the *enfant negre* persists. Archer-Straw articulates the continuity of this colonial culture in the following way:

> Even though in its strictest sense European colonial rule has long been surrendered, its ‘civilizing’ remains influential. The language inherited from the colonial era is still prevalent enough and potent enough to affect how other cultures are described. First world versus third world, developed versus underdeveloped, West versus the rest are paired opposites just like savage versus civilized. These constructs stem from colonialism’s binary way of thinking, which through language enforced European superiority. Terms such as ‘primitive’ and ‘primitivism’ are similar expressions of this power relationship and thus need to be re-examined and replaced. They form part of the outstanding debt not yet settled between the colonizer and the colonized. (2000: 12)

Indeed, the French media is overrun with images of Black people, but the overwhelming message is consistently that Blacks are not entirely human, they are objects, subjects, and canon fodder no longer for the military machine but for the market industry. Just as the image of the
Tirailleur Senegalais, smiling and drinking his cacao on the Y’a bon poster was an incredibly successful advertising campaign, so are today’s adds full of images of Blacks that are designed to attract customers. From the table sets decorated with Y’a bon, to cosmetics, credit cards, and general representation of Africa and Africans in daily sources of entertainment (Figure 9), the African is presented as an optimistic figure of stunning physical presence with an emphasis on his dark skin. Blanchard explains how a 2002 visa card commercial successfully commodified the black body by removing the head from the boundaries of the image, “deforming the body, to emphasize social marginalization, racial difference, strangeness” (2002: 150).

The mixing of old ideas in new images and old images in modern times testifies to the persistence of the colonial culture. This fact does not mean that all French people are racist or that all these images were created with the intention of upholding the inferiority of Black people. These images do reveal, however, a cultural mentality and world-view that influences racism and race relations in France. Understanding the transcendental and spiritual manifestation of this colonial culture is the first step in confronting the particular racism it helps to shape.

Racism in France: Hiding behind Ethnocentrism

*Right to Difference!*

Rallying call of anti-racist organizations in the 1970's (Silverman, 1992: 89)

The continuity in the visual representation of Blacks in France is not the only way that the colonial culture manifests itself. The persistence of the images that represent Blacks as enfant negre is, above all, a symptom of the persistence of colonial culture. The primary driving forces behind the colonial culture are the immigration policies that stem directly out of the old colonial ideology of assimilation and the mission civilisatrice. Like these images, however,
immigration policies both betray the existence of colonial culture in modern France and help to reproduce it. Identifying and acknowledging the presence of the modern colonial images that were discussed in the previous section, then, is the first step in addressing the problem of racism that is rooted in colonial practice.

In this section, I prefer not to focus on the details of racism in France. There was general agreement among the African students interviewed as well as in the responses to the questionnaires that racism exists and manifests itself in daily interactions and through institutional discrimination. Indeed, racism functionally similar in most Western societies: housing, work, education, and the legal system are all more difficult to gain access to and maneuver through for people of color. For example, Ibrahim, my informant in Paris, explained to me his experience with his search for work. He had left his resume and contact information with three work recruiting offices that had advertised a need for math tutors. Each office responded positively to his inquiries, so he scheduled interviews with all three. When he came to the offices for the meetings, however, the response of the employees was less than welcoming. In one office, for example, the secretary denied that the person who Ibrahim was supposed to report to was present. The second office refused to pursue his candidacy for the job and the company insisted that there were no positions for him, despite the fact that Ibrahim continued to find its help-wanted ads in newspapers. The third recruiting office successfully found a placement for Ibrahim. Because of his impressive credentials and previous experience with teaching, there was no reason why any of these companies should have neglected to offer Ibrahim a position, unless they had no openings, which was not the case. Many of the students interviewed at Poitiers confirmed Ibrahim’s impressions by saying that African students were often not able to find jobs because employers consistently favored Whites. The jobs that were
made available to Blacks were mostly menial labor positions. A recent *Paris - Le Journal* issue (1997) illustrates that these students’ experiences are indeed a reality. The cover proudly displays the Paris maintenance crews, which are nearly all Black (Figure 10).

Though the practical way in which racism manifests itself is not unique to France, the rhetoric around race is most certainly an outgrowth of the French colonial culture. The testimonies of the African students poignantly reveal the contradiction inherent in the rhetoric that denies racism while propagating the image of a France where “liberté - égalité - fraternité” are the most respected values. One informant summarized his frustration with the public discourse on racism as follows:

In all honesty, I was disappointed by the behavior of the French: France had said loudly what it normally only whispers during the presidential elections of May 2002. France sold itself to the Front National, which is a racist political party. And furthermore, the meetings in protest of Le Pen, the marches, it’s all hypocrisy because the French were the ones to vote for him [Le Pen] in the first place.

Another informant put the same impression more succinctly: “What is said, and what is actually done are complete opposites.” The influence of colonial culture in modern race relations in France is evident in this disjunction between the existence of race and racism, and their official denial by politicians. The basic contradiction inherent in assimilationism during colonialism was the ultimate denial of integration: integration is theoretically possible but realistically non-existent. Modern assimilation is based in the denial of racial categories. Silverman explains that the result of the “reformulation of assimilation in contemporary France...is to reconstruct cultural differences between Europeans and non-Europeans (especially Africans). The new racism of cultural difference...shows that the notion of ‘race’ continues even if the word race, in
France, is virtually non-existent” (1992:103). Thus, assimilationist rhetoric is centered on cultural differences, cloaking racism with the more euphemistic and abstract practice of ethnocentrism. Guillaumin explains this phenomenon:

Between 1965 and 1970 a new approach took shape, a new semantic element appeared. It was most certainly a spin-off from decolonization, but also the result of cultural and political diversification which becomes more noticeable with technical and media developments. Progressive movements attempted to promote ‘the right to be different’...This idea of difference was immediately appropriated by the Right. A shift now occurred. This new term ‘difference’ was associated not with somatic features but with cultural ones. Through language, lifestyle, religion, and politics and morality, ‘culture’ took over from ‘race’ to refer to the same things. (1991: 12)

Reducing race and culture into the same meaning is a direct continuation of colonial assimilationist policies. . The focus on cultural differences and lack of tolerance for non-French culture makes racism only theoretically better defined as ethnocentrism because once race is subsumed under culture, emphasizing and stigmatizing cultural difference becomes racism. In denying race and racism, France uses culture do delimit who is acceptable and who is not. The irony, then, is that while ethnocentrism is the accurate term for the practice, it fails to accurately describe the fact that exclusion and discrimination is based on race. Thus, the emphasis on culture is a rhetorical euphemism that comes from a long line of assimilationist policies and hides the reality of the source of inequality in France.

Most importantly, the reduction of race and culture has become the foundation for immigration policies in France. Silverman’s book, Deconstructing the Nation, explains that articulating the immigration of Africans first as a problem and then as a cultural hindrance to
France (with rhetoric such as “threshold of tolerance”) has stigmatized non-Whites by equating Blacks and Arabs uniformly with immigration (1992: 55). According to Balibar, the result of French immigration policies was that, “immigration” has become the name *par excellence* of the race... ‘Immigrants’ is the prime characteristic allowing the classification of individuals in a racist typology” (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1988: 296). Thus, if Blacks and Arabs are a priori imagined as immigrants, and immigrants are inherently not French, Blacks and Arabs can never be French. The widespread indoctrination of this perspective on race, immigration and racism was made clear in the responses to my questionnaires wherein the most consistent answer to the question, “what, for you, characterizes an immigrant,” was “color.” This paradox is similar to Blanchard’s description of the *Y’a bon* image as a race trapped between the potential for complete assimilation and the fact of its eternal inferiority. The practice of ethnocentrism in France recreates precisely the *Y’a bon* situation: acculturation is always possible but it will never be complete as long as the skin remains non-white. The focus on cultural difference (ethnocentrism) effectively avoids the stigma of race because race is subsumed in the categories of culture and immigrant. Non-White is already defined as culturally not French. Consequently, in the same way that during the Enlightenment science legitimized race, which was an ideological fabrication that served the interests of the colonizing powers, modern denial of race and the discourse about assimilation legitimizes the colonial ideology of French cultural superiority.

Black people are those that have been most affected by this rhetoric of cultural difference and the reduction of race and culture into negative associations attached to immigrants. General stigma of immigration started in the late 1970’s, but it was confined to North Africans who, at the time, were numerically the most significant. Most recently, however, the negative
stereotypes associated with *immigration* and *immigre* (immigrant) became linked to the image of Black Africans as illegal immigrants. Timera explains this evolution in the representation of Blacks:

The 90's marked a turning point for Black Africans. Their perception is significantly modified during the course of this decade as it becomes dominated by the image of immigrants from the region of the Senegal River, incorrectly designated as ‘Malaisans,’ a generic term that includes Senegalese as well as Mauritians, and people of many different ethnic groups including Soninka, Bambara, Poular, etc. This perception was progressively constructed. In essence, intuition and public opinion construct the image of social groups through a process of indoctrination wherein interest groups and institutions exaggerate specific events. In such a way, polygamy, female genital mutilation, apparent disinterest of parents in their children’s education, have come to constitute the causes of friction between French and African immigrants, especially symbolized by the suburban ghettos. (1997: 45)

Though the characteristics of immigrants cited at the end of Timera’s quote are specific to the new image of Blacks as immigrants, and especially illegal immigrants, they imply the same stereotypes that were inherent in the images of the savage and *enfant negre*: polygamy, genital mutilation, poor parenting are all considered to be uncivilized practices that are “un-French.” The process of constructing an image that reduces a diverse population to one abstract concept is well documented by Rosello. She describes with great precision and detail how the French media succeeded in linking a protest of Malaian immigrants with the larger question of immigration and racism in France precisely by playing on the pre-established stereotypes of Blacks. She writes:
When the media mention undocumented immigrants, the most common, most naturalized and therefore most worrying association is between clandestinity and race (or rather skin colour), and more specifically, between illegal immigration and blackness. When a camera films groups of people identified as illegal immigrants either by the context or by the words of the journalist, the race and ethnicity of the filmed subjects is usually not commented on. The place of origin sometimes comes into play but no discourse seems to want to register or theorize the fact that French viewers are more and more often presented with images of Black people. (1998: 140)

The rhetoric around cultural difference clearly does not void the existence of racism; it only makes it more difficult to articulate and confront racist practice and policies. By denying the existence of race and racism, France made the presence of Blacks in French society benign. If race is not officially recorded or acknowledged, Black people are only recognized in exceptional circumstances. Rosello explains that “France, unlike Great Britain or Germany, does not make much of an attempt to represent its non-European ethnic minorities. As a result, the sudden focus on black bodies stands out as an exception against a backdrop...where everyone is either white or tokenized as the representative of a whole group” (Tagliabue, 1998: 142). Dogad Dogou, founder of a consulting firm for Black business men in France, alludes to the political practicality of this denial: “they say that France is one and indivisible...And I say: yes, and with many invisible people” (2003: 1). Until recently, Blacks were the enfant negre on the old colonial images, but they did not appear in general discourse on immigration. Since the 1990's, negative associations with immigrants have linked race not only with culture but also with political and social status. As depicted above by Rosello, the result is that the recent rhetoric and policies around immigration have effectively criminalized Blacks by associating them with
illegal immigration as indiscriminately *sans-papiers*.

Thus, one of the most significant consequences of creating social stereotypes of a people is the simplification and generalization of social realities into visual images, which influence policy- and law-making. The result is that policies and laws that are aimed at the images, not real social problems. In such a way, the link between nationality and race and between culture and race, and the relationship between legal and illegal are flattened or reduced. In other words, the colonial culture is propagated and perpetuated as much through political and legal practice as through the images, precisely because the images better reflect the foundation of the policy, not the people it affects. Rosello underlines this power of association by explaining that the "the deviousness of the move from 'illegal immigrants are (often) black' to 'black people equal (illegal) immigrants' is easy to denounce in theory but quite difficult to transform within the realm of the visual" (1998: 141). The same situation was faced by officials in World War One: How does one convince a nation that believes that Africans are inferior savages, that those Africans must be depended upon to help save the nation. The result was a vigorous campaign to convince French people that Blacks are not cannibals and savages (or at least that not all of them are). This modern day presence of the image that was created during the period around WWI, with all of the contradictions it embodies about Black people - friendly and dangerous, exotic yet familiar, uncivilized but attractive - reveals the success of that campaign.

**CONCLUSION:**

The continued prevalence of colonial images in today's media is revealing of how modern French attitudes about Black people are rooted in colonialism. To say that the mere presence of these images proves that racism is common-place today is perhaps a simplification.
However, if modern representations of Blacks are seen as a historically based tradition, taken in context of French social and political policies, and above all understood in light of a generally passive acceptance of these images, the very presence of these images becomes significant and powerful as evidence of the continuity of French colonial culture.

The practice of this modern assimilationism is best exemplified by the negative image of Africans that is perpetuated in French immigration policies which stigmatize and criminalize Africans. The rhetoric and practice of these policies that simplify, reduce and collectivize the personality, history and social situation of immigrants work practically complement the images in order to define a population so that it is more easily controlled. What’s more, colonial culture, which is rooted in policies such as assimilationism and the *mission civilisatrice*, promotes these associations and stereotypes that continue to define French identity in opposition to images of the “other.” The rhetoric of cultural difference and denial of race and racism empower colonial cultural practice today, which points out differences, stigmatizes them by labeling them anti-French, then rejects the subjects that exemplify the difference. This logic of stereotyping and ethnocentrism is evident from the way people interact on the street to the way in which government policies are implemented. The misappropriation of names, such as *Tirailleurs Senegalais*, which refers to soldiers and militia-men from all of Africa, not just Senegal; and the modern general use of the term Malaians to refer to immigration of Black Africans. The reality is that the French denial of race and racism relies on the compounding of race and culture. Thus, the confusion between skin color, culture and nationality is inherent in modern assimilation policies. However, when in 1994 the French police nearly deported a Guadeloupian man before realizing that Guadeloupe is a French Department, the euphemistic rhetoric about cultural difference, integration and denial of racism was exposed (Rosello, 1998: 51)
141). In fact, the denial of racism, the focus cultural difference, and the manner in which imagery is used to propagate ideas about French nationality and French culture is most definitely, today’s colonial culture.

To conclude, I return to the prevalence of the image of the *Tirailleur Senegalais*. Their symbolism of the continuation of colonial culture is poignantly summarized in the prominent journal, *Africultures*, in the introduction to the issue devoted exclusively to the *Tirailleurs Senegalais*:

The “Tirailleurs Senegalese” are part of the French collective subconscious, in the same way that the Vichy Government and the Algerian War are. The representation of these soldiers in popular images teaches us more about ourselves than any intellectual discussion: it reveals the contradictions of a Republic that constantly oscillates between the desire to assimilate the Other and its rejection of the Other as inferior. It is time to follow the lead of persevering historians and progressive/forward-thinking authors, whose works this journal aspires to echo, and for France not only to confront its true history, but to alter these images that perpetuate misrepresentations which reduce people to a figment of a collective imagination. It is high time that we strip the walls of France of the “Banania” smiles, as Senghor had said. (Bartlet, 2000: 1-2)^10

To do so, however, requires a strongly articulated and progressive anti-racist movement. The search for a powerful counter-ideology to assimilationism has been in effect since even before Senghor, but it is likely to continue for a long time to come. This paper is my contribution to the effort of defining and implementing a new and challenging anti-racism.
NOTES

1. Names of individual informants, if cited throughout the text, are changed.


4. The abolition of slavery in 1848 was not the first time that France attempted to end slavery. Under the influence of the French Revolution’s (1787-1794) inspirational ideals about equality (fraternity and liberty) between men, the newly established Convention of elected representatives (first convened in 1792) passed a decree of emancipation and abolished slavery in French territories in 1794. This declaration lasted only eight years before Napoleon reinstated slavery as legal practice in 1802.

5. Translated by author. Original text reads: Au cours de ce processus [de la creation d’une culture coloniale], la grande guerre constitué un moment charniere ou la realite colonial a penetré en profondeur la société francaise et marque une rupture dans la decouverte de l’alterite et la mise en scene des populations colonisees puisqu’elle fut marquee par l’arrivee massive de contingents de tirailleurs maghrebins, indochnois ou africains.

6. Other historians offer different statistics. Lunn (1999) cites more than 140,000 soldiers from West Africans alone to have fought for France in World War One. Echenberg (1991) cites 170,000 black Africans who served as *Tirailleurs Senegalais* in WWI.

7. Cited from the exhibit at the Musee de la Publicite in Paris and can be consulted on the museum’s website: www.museedelapub.org. Translated by author. The original text reads: 1) Optique: Une affiche est faite pour être vue (...) Cette visibilité dépend, non d’un simple contraste de couleurs, mais bien d’un rapport de valeurs, exalté par un choc de formes, un accident formel. 2) Graphique: On n’a pas jalonné les voies de chemin de fer de pancartes portant les mots « veuillez vous arrêter SVP ». On a judicieusement préféré des signaux colorés, sortes d'idéogrammes infiniment plus expressifs et d'une lecture plus rapide. L'affiche qui doit parler vite a choisi le même langage : l'image, véhicule même de la pensée. 3) Poétique: Il lui faudra provoquer chez le spectator bien plus qu’une sensation visuelle fugitive, une émotion consciente ou inconsciente, en tout cas obsédante. On ne lui demande pas de se faire aimer ni comprendre, seulement de se faire subir. Elle est à la peinture ce que le viol est à l’amour.

8. The exact date of the formation of the first militia is unclear. According to historian Myron Echenberg, author of an influential book on African Soldiers of the French empire (1991), the first such regiment was formed in Senegambia in the 17th century. However, the creation of an official regiment under the official title of *Tirailleurs Senegalais* was in 1857. An article in the Senegalese newspaper, *le Soleil* (9 December 1997), claims that a battalion of African soldiers was actually created in 1803 and fought against the Russians during Napoleon’s conquests.
9. Lunn (1999) is more committed to revealing the abuse of African soldiers in WWI as simply resources for the military machine. His argument often runs counter to the more conservative theories and numerical interpretation found in Echenberg (1991).

10. Translated by author. Original text read as follows: Les tirailleurs « sénégalais » font partie de l’inconscient historique français, au même titre que la collaboration ou la guerre d’Algérie. Leur représentation en images nous en apprend plus que n’importe quel discours : elle révèle les contradictions d’une République qui ne cesse d’osciller entre volonté d’assimilation de l’Autre et son rejet pour infériorité. Il est grand temps qu’à la faveur des travaux d’historiens tenaces et d’écrivains lucides, dont ce dossier se fait l’écho, la France non seulement se confronte à sa propre Histoire mais modifie les représentations imaginaires réductrices que ces occultations contribuent à perpétuer. Il est grand temps que l’on déchire, comme le demandait Senghor, les rires Banania sur tous les murs de France.
References Cited


APPENDIX A

Chronology:

1635  Martinique and Guadeloupe are claimed for France.

1653  Pacification of Madagascar begins.

1749  Compte de Buffon publishes *Histoire Naturelle*.

1785  Geographic Society formed in Paris.

1789-1794  French Revolution

1794  National Convention of the first Republic formally abolishes slavery in French colonies

1799  *Societe des Observateurs de l'homme* formed.

1802  Napoleon re-institutes slavery.

1804  Haiti gains independence.

1804-1811  Napoleonic Empire

1830  French occupy Algeria

1839  *Societe Ethnologue* formed.

1848  Second Republic abolishes slavery in all French colonies.

1855  Arthur de Gobineau publishes *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*

1859  *Societe d'Anthropologie* founded in Paris.

1870-1871  France loses the Franco-Prussian War.

1877  First Colonial Exposition held in Paris.

1879  Defeat of Sedan.

1880-1881  Jules Ferry is prime minister.

1884  Berlin Conference

1904  Government of *l'Afrique occidentale francaise* (AOF) is organized.
1910   Government of *l'Afrique equitoriale francaise* (AEF) is organized.

1914-1918 World War I

1916 Statute accords citizenship to inhabitants of four *Communes* in Senegal.

1925 Rif War

1931 Final Colonial Exposition held in Paris.

1939-1945 World War II

1946 *Union francaise* proclaimed.

1956 Moroccan and Tunisian Independence is declared

1958 Independence of Guinea is declared.

1960 Independence is granted to AOF and AEF states and Madagascar

1962 Evian Accords in Algeria and declaration of Algerian Independence.
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions: carried out by Abdul in Poitiers

1) How did you imagine your interactions with French people before coming to France?

2) Before coming, what were your ideas about racism?

3) How and where did you gain this information about racism in France?

4) How do you experience racism in France since coming here?

5) Were you impressions and assumptions about France and the French true upon coming to France?
APPENDIX C1: French version of questionnaire

Merci de remplir ce questionnaire, qui vous prendra environ 10 minutes ; vos réponses nous aideront beaucoup dans ce projet de recherche. On vous assure, dans vos réponses, d'un total anonymat.

Information Personnelle:

Âge. __________

Sexe: H ___ F ___

Niveau d'éducation:

   Bac. :    Oui ___ Non ___
           Bac. +1 ___ Bac. +2 ___ Bac. +3 ___ Bac. +4 ___ Autre : __________

Lieu de résidence : __________________________

Origine:

   Lieu de naissance: __________________________
   Votre Nationalité: __________________________
   Nationalité de vos parents: __________________

Questions:

1) Veuillez cocher les endroits que vous avez visités avant janvier 2003:
   __ Musée de l’Homme
   __ Musée de la Publicité
   __ Musée des Arts Orientaux et Africains
   __ l’Institut du Monde Arabe

2) Qu’est-ce que les Forces Noires?

3) Avez-vous déjà vu cette image (ci-jointe) ? Oui ___ Non ___
   a. Si oui, où ?

Même si c’est la première fois que vous voyez cette image, répondez aux questions suivantes :
   b. Qu’en pensez-vous ?

   c. Qu’est-ce que veut dire «y bon banania» ?

   d. Est-ce que vous connaissez l’histoire de cette image ? Si oui, veuillez l’expliquer brièvement :
BANANIA

LE PLUS NOURRISANT
DES ALIMENTS FRANÇAIS
PETIT DÉJEUNER DU MAÎTRE
CRÈME ET ENTREMETS
EN VENTE PARTOUT

y'a bon
e. Avez-vous déjà vu des images semblables à celle-ci ? Si oui, veuillez décrire ces images ainsi que noter l'endroit où vous les avez vues:

f. Pensez-vous qu'il est acceptable d'afficher de telles images dans les endroits publics ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

4) Est-ce que vous sortiriez avec une personne d'une couleur différente de la vôtre ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

a. Est-ce que vous vous marieriez avec une personne d'une couleur différente de la vôtre ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

5) Réfléchissez sur ce que vous avez lu récemment concernant l'immigration des ressortissants de l'Afrique Noire :

a. Dans quel journal, magazine, livre, etc. ?

b. Veuillez resumer brièvement ce que vous en avez retenu ?

6) Cocher votre réponse à la question suivante :
La majorité des immigrés en France viennent de :
   L'Europe de l'Est _____
   L'Asie _____
   L'Afrique Noire _____
   Le Maghreb _____
   Les Antilles _____
   Autre. Veuillez préciser : __________

7) Qu'est qui caractérise, selon vous, un/une immigré(e) de l'Afrique Noire ?

8) Donnez 4 ou 5 mots qui pour vous ractérisent le mieux l'immigration en France:

9) Est-ce que le racisme existe en France ? Si oui, comment se manifeste-t-il ?
APPENDIX C2: Translation of Questionnaire with results

Questionnaire Results: Total returned: 47/90

Background Information:
Age: all between 18-22, except one 23 year old, one 31 year old

Sex:
   Female: 35
   Male: 12

Level of Education
   Bac.: 6
   Bac.+1: 17
   Bac.+2: 22
   Bac.+3: 1
   Bac.+4: 0
   Other: 1

Place of Residence:

Origin:
   French Nationality: 45
   Dual Nationality (French+other): 3
      French/American: 1
      French/Algerian: 1
      French/Brazilian: 1
   Origins in Antilles: 3
      Guadeloupe: 1
   Other:
      Moroccan: 1
      Polish: 1

Those with French Nationality but with Parents from somewhere else (already counted as French):
   Algerian: 2
   Brazilian: 1
   Moroccan: 1
   Spanish: 2

Respondents with mixed parents, French and Other:
   Algerian/French: 1
   Irish/French: 1
   Vietnamese/French: 1

Questions:
1) Please put a check next to the places that you have visited before January 2003:
   19 Musée d’l’Homme
   2  Musée de la Publicité
   11 Musée des Arts Orientaux et Africains
22  l’Institut du Monde Arabe

2) What are the Forces Noires?
- 2 people responded that they did and their explanation was correct
- Most questions were left blank; otherwise, people speculated. Two people guessed that it
  had something to do with chocolate, others with a revolutionary movement.

3) Have you seen the attached image before? Yes: No: only 7 people marked no.

a) if yes, where?
   Old chocolate boxes: 5
   Post cards: 6
   Text books: 6
   Book on history of Publicity: 3
   Restaurant/café/bars: 5
   T.V. special on colonisation: 4
   Poster: 1
   Decoration Store: 1
   In a private home: 1

Even if you have are seeing this image for the first time, please respond to the following questions: [SELECTED ANSWERS FROM RESPONDENTS]

b) What do you think about it:
   Nothing
   It has a racist history
   It is an ad that makes people laugh because of the smiling person in the picture
   It’s unfortunate
   Nice
   Typical of colonialism

c) What does “y’a bon banania mean”?
   They’re good, bananas.
   Primitive language.
   Poor French
   It’s gooc.

d) Do you know the history of this image? If yes, please describe briefly:
   Only 2 people knew the history. Most had no idea. Some speculated that it had to
   do with slavery, or chocolate or banana trade.

e) Have you seen images similar to this one? If yes, please describe these images and note
   where you saw them:
   10 respondents had not see other images like it.
   16 had:
     History manuals: 5
     Books on publicity: 4
Television: 3
Old chocolate boxes: 2
Post cards: 1
During the election campaign of 2002: 1

f) Do you think it is appropriate to post these kinds of images in public places? Why or why not?
   Yes: 14
   No: 22
   One person said this is no longer relevant to our times.
   Another: this is not representative of reality. Ask the people who cultivate the cocoa fields.
   But this is just a smiling man!
   It is no longer appropriate to post this because of political correctness.
   Personally, I do not have a problem with this.
   Why not, it does not disturb anyone.

4) Would you date a person of a different race from yours? Why or why not?
   Every respondents said yes.
   a) Would you marry a person of a different race from yours? Why or why not?
      Overwhelming majority said yes.
      Mixing is beautiful.
      I have no color prejudice
      2 respondents hesitated.
      Religion differences may interfere.

5) Try to remember the last piece of information you read about immigration of Black Africans to France:
   a) In what journal, newspaper, magazine, etc?
      Le Monde
      Newsweek
      Moroccan news magazine
      l'Humanite
      T.V. Guide
      Liberation
      le Parisien
      book by Pierre Vidal Naquet
      Charlie Hebdomodaire
      Le Monde Diplomatique
      Rfi (radio station)
      Canal + (t.v. station)

   b) What information did you gained from this source? [MOST FREQUENTLY CITED RESPONSE]
      Living conditions of immigrants.
Difficulty of immigrating to France
Immigrants mostly come as workers.
Immigration is not the problem, it is a colonial legacy of France’s politics
There is no regulation of immigration to France.

6) Please check your answer to the following question:
The majority of immigrants in France come from:
   6 Eastern Europe
   7 Asia
   17 Black Africa
   31 North Africa
   3 Antilles
   0 Other. Please specify:

7) According to you, what typically characterizes an immigrant from Black Africa:
   Color: 7
   Not integrated into French society: 7
   Different culture: 5
   Accent: 5
   Difficult living situation: 3
   Seeking work: 3
   Integration into French society but maintains native culture: 3
   Joie de vivre: 3
   Seeking better living conditions: 2
   Prostitution: 1
   Political refugees: 1

8) List 4 or 5 words that best summarize immigration in France:
   Multi-racial/cultural: 12
   Exploitation/segregation/oppression/exclusion/intolerance/expulsion: 6
   Work: 5
   Papers: 4
   Looking for better life situation: 4
   Work in black market: 3
   Racism: 3
   Hope: 3
   Welcome: 2
   Poverty: 2
   Different culture (no integration): 2
   Controlled: 1
   Poorly controlled: 1
   Violence: 1
   Integration: 1
   Separation: 1

9) Does racism exist in France? If so, how does it manifest itself?
Every person said yes.
  By rise of FN in last elections: 14
  Verbal and physical aggression: 11
  By looks: 7
  In work place: 8
  Media: 3
  Exclusion/Isolation: 2
  In housing: 2
  Through indifference: 1
  Antisemitic acts: 1
  In the administration: 1
  Entrance to dance clubs: 1
  Fear if Arabs: 1
Figure 1: Illustrated supplement to the journal *Le Petit Parisien* (16 March 1890) with cover image of the Dahomey People.
Figure 2: Post card (c. 1915) showing _Tirailleur Senegalais_ in the new _enfant negre_ image of Black people that resulted from the political and social changes accompanying World War One (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 3: Popular ad for cacao drink depicting a Tirailleur Senegalais in the enfant negre tradition (c. 1915) (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 4: Performance artist, Josephine Baker, at the height of *Negrophilia* in France (c. 1925) (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 5: Colonial Exposition poster depicting the Dahomey people (1887) (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 6: Advertisement for the company, Entremont, using the colonial image of the *Tirailleur Senegalais* (1985) (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 7: Advertisement for chicken sauce, using the colonial image of the *Tirailleur Senegalais* (1998) (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 8: This sticker decorated the Parisian metro in 1997, distributed by a neo-Nazi group mobilizing against immigration (after Blanchard et al. 2001).
Figure 9: Famous cartoon series, Adventures of Tin-Tin, that are popular still today and use the savage/enfant noir images of Black people (1997) (after Herge, 2001).
Figure 10: Cover of the magazine, *Paris - Le journal* (April 15, 1997), depicting the Paris maintenance crew under the slogan: Together for a clean Paris (after Blanchard et al. 2001).

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