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WITHOUT DISTINCTION:

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN THE FRENCH EMPIRE, 1943-1962

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Love to Mom and Dad, Meggie, and Andrew.

## **Introduction: Without Distinction**

In the morrow of the victory achieved by the free peoples over the regimes that had sought to enslave and degrade humanity, the people of France proclaim anew that each human being, without distinction of race, religion or creed, possesses sacred and inalienable rights... The law guarantees women equal rights to those of men in all spheres... France shall form with its overseas peoples a Union founded upon equal rights and duties, without distinction of race or religion...

-Preamble to the French Constitution of 27 October 1946

From its most limited to most expansive forms, suffrage law creates categories of difference that sort people into insiders who can vote and outsiders who cannot. In the French empire, voting and citizenship laws ordered metropolitan and imperial society along hierarchies of political rights determined by factors such as gender, age, race, income, religion, carceral status, and language. While such use of ranked “difference” has been an organizing principle of French citizenship since the eighteenth-century implementation of parliamentary democracy, Republican universalism simultaneously promoted the ideal of a neutral citizen devoid of all particularities: theoretically un-sexed, un-raced, and un-gendered. The electoral franchise defined the explicit legal limits of this more abstract French Republicanism, creating a system in which the unmarked “universal” voter in fact needed to meet particular requirements.

French citizenship was highly stratified by race and gender, and women in the metropole and nearly all of the inhabitants of the empire consistently found themselves on the wrong side of an ostensibly universal benchmark. The exclusion of both groupings of people was based on a shared logic of political “capacity” in which some individuals were considered more rational or modern than others and therefore more deserving of political rights and influence. Positioned below white men within a nebulous hierarchy, metropolitan women and imperial subjects were

frequently (although not exclusively) framed as in need of indefinite guardianship by their more “evolved” superiors.

While the disenfranchisement of metropolitan women and imperial subjects had much in common, marginalizations based on shifting conceptions of gender and race resulted in key differences. In the metropole, white male political superiority was often framed as a permanent and stabilizing system in which white women’s “natural” place was in a domestic realm in which they could dedicate their lives to caring for their husband and children. For certain non-white men in the empire, by contrast, disenfranchisement worked hand in hand with the French “civilizing mission” in which limited political rights were held out as a potential reward for assimilation towards French political, social, and cultural norms. Metropolitan and colonial citizenship regimes thus differed in how they gendered the future, incentivizing colonial men to become more like “superior” French men while rejecting the notion that metropolitan women should become more male. While the “evolution” of men in the empire included the possibility of one day securing the political franchise, colonial women’s assimilation towards French norms required them to emulate French metropolitan women by following certain ideals of domestic and family life. As political citizenship was always coded as male, women in the empire were considered doubly unfit by gendered and racialized logics of exclusion.

However, after French metropolitan women got the right to vote after the Second World War in 1944, being more like a French woman included the possibility of the franchise. In this dissertation, I use this shift as a key historical pivot, arguing that the question of how female colonial suffrage would be limited (and how those limits would be justified) transformed the expansion of colonial female citizenship from a political afterthought into a driving factor in determining the future of the French empire. While debates about the colonial franchise were

oriented towards the new concerns of the postwar world, they were informed and given significance by the past marginalizations of female and non-white political subjects. It was colonial women's longstanding doubled exclusion that transformed their enfranchisement into a political minefield, able to be interpreted as a potential confirmation that the civilizing mission had worked and French colonialism was indeed a force for good or, conversely, evidence that it was never needed in the first place and was in fact an agent of destruction.

French politicians and colonial administrators who wanted to reform and thereby retain the French empire promoted the former option, arguing in favor of a reinvigorated form of French Republicanism that was fully committed to equal citizenship "without distinction" of gender, race, or religion. Enfranchising women in the colonies could become the ultimate showcase for the civilizing mission that had so long justified the French imperial project. Yet doubts lingered and the categories of gender and race proved durable: should a highly-educated white Catholic businessman living in downtown Bordeaux with his wife and children have the same political representation as a black Muslim seamstress without formal schooling living with her husband, children, and co-wives in rural Guinea? The notion of a French Republicanism powerful enough to welcome the women of the empire into a universal franchise remained at odds with the way in which that same French Republicanism and its civilizing mission counterpart had so long been used to justify the exclusion of some in favor of more assimilated others. Such an interpretation was reinforced by French political commentators from across the political spectrum who raised alarms about the dangers of too "much" equality between metropole and colony, resisting the creation of a franchise in which non-white women had the same political rights as white men and warning of the dangers that would befall colonial powers who gave up too many concessions.

At the same time that the figure of the non-white female voter became a tool to promote a particular vision of the French empire, it also figured heavily into arguments that imperialism must end and that true female emancipation could only occur with some form of independence. Across the metropole and colonies, anti-colonial, feminist, and nationalist politicians noted that despite promises to the contrary, French citizenship law continued to divide the population of the empire into distinct categories with modified rights and obligations. Activists and political commentators saw the non-white female voter as a harbinger of independence rather than a reformed empire: as voting mothers, daughters, and revolutionaries of new nations that would soon exist outside of French political control.

Questions of where gendered and racialized “distinctions” would and would not be made on national, imperial, and regional levels in this way shaped the postwar French empire. My dissertation examines this history, focusing on the competing ways in which the non-white female voter was imbued with political and ideological importance by various groups and individuals inside and outside the colonial administration, including by the women themselves.

One important methodological aspect of my contribution is a relatively broad geographical scope, drawing on comparative trans-regional overviews as well as more specific case studies to expose the multiple juridical, cultural, religious, and political contexts that comprised the French empire. While Chapters One through Three are comparative and include examples and evidence from the Antilles to French India to Indochina, Chapters Three through Six draw on case studies in Senegal, Cameroon, and Algeria to better examine how particular contexts heightened the question of the female franchise in specific times and places. Each of these former colonies had their own regional histories that shaped the ways in which the franchise was gendered within imperial and local contexts. These particular case studies

illuminate specific contextual differences as well as intriguing linkages that suggest broader structural continuities.

A second important aspect of this study is a changing chronological pace, with Part One taking a long view look at French citizenship from the eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, Part Two focusing more intensely on a short period of time marked by the creation of the French Union between 1943 and 1946, and Part Three considering the linked postwar and postcolonial periods of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Using the period of 1943 to 1946 as an anchor or pivot, such a chronology enables me to emphasize the broader importance of the pre-World War II period in creating a range of political ideologies, legal structures, and cultural imaginaries that imbued the abstracted figure of the non-white female voter with such significance in the postwar and later postcolonial period.

Focusing on women's suffrage to tell this story provides a focused way to trace how different political programs, outlooks, and alliances were made and fractured over various postwar opportunities and challenges. For a range of feminist activists and politicians, for example, the advent of women's suffrage had many meanings. Among the more "imperialist" feminist organizations based in Europe, the focus on women's political rights upended older strategies that had prioritized what were considered to be "social" concerns, such as efforts to eradicate polygynous marriage. Yet much of the ideology of imperialist feminism remained unchanged, as seen in the tendency to frame the expansion of female suffrage in the colonies as part of a homogenous wave of women's "political awakening" that erased the diverse ways in which woman across colonial cultures had long been active political agents and thereby continued older imperialist assumptions about the natural incapacity of female colonial populations. By contrast, the goals of anti-colonial and nationalist feminist organizations,

themselves diverse, ranged from the promotion of a paternalist platform in which “our women” voted in national rather than imperial elections to an emergent transnational feminism in which global alliances of women emphasized shared forms of imperial marginalization and postcolonial empowerment. The debate over women’s suffrage in this way reflected the diverse ways in which those outside the French administration shaped new ideas about citizenship and decolonization in a rapidly shifting international context.

For the French colonial administration, the delayed expansion of female suffrage became an opportunity to preserve rather than destroy the empire, a way to argue that it was only with continued French guidance that inhabitants of the colonies – and women in particular – could finally be transformed into “modern” political subjects. By the highpoint of the Algerian War of Independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the French government was spending heavily on propaganda that claimed women’s political rights as a uniquely French gift. Framing the empire as a progressive force for political freedom and female emancipation thus became a key part of a larger and increasingly desperate French attempt to hold onto their rapidly decolonizing overseas territories, and the success of the French empire could be made or broken on its ability to incorporate non-white women into a universal Republican franchise.

### **Historicizing citizenship in France and the empire**

In this dissertation, I use the history of female citizenship in the empire to build on and contribute to the study of colonialism and gender by showing the linkages between modern democracy and modern imperialism. As contemporary citizenship was forged in a colonial crucible, the gendering of the franchise within democratic systems accommodated imperial hierarchies. In this way, contemporary European democracy is a thoroughly postcolonial system

in which issues of gendered and racialized exclusion go deeper than more well-known controversies such as the so-called “headscarf affair” or debates about refugees. Gendered inclusion and marginalization are central pillars of postwar political history, and the places and times where debates over female suffrage accrue signal moments of crisis and possibility.

While there have been studies of women’s citizenship in Republican France, French imperial citizenship, and gender and sexuality within colonial cultures, there has been less work that considers how questions of gender and sexuality shaped debates about citizenship and suffrage in the empire. My research builds on and contributes to existing scholarship by historicizing intersectional studies of gender and race to suggest how women’s citizenship regimes were linked across metropolitan and colonial space.<sup>1</sup> The connections between the disenfranchisement of women and inhabitants of the empire drew on associated logics of marginalization, and part of the goal of this dissertation is to illuminate why and how these relationships strengthened in some moments and broke apart in others. Rather than considering questions of gender and race as separate categories, this analysis builds on intersectional scholarship to show how debates about political “capacity” traversed a geographically broad imperial context as well as the specificity of the ways in which gender operated as a local site of power and resistance.

Considering how such gender regimes were linked builds on recent approaches to imperial history that have emphasized the mutual construction of metropolitan and colonial

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<sup>1</sup> Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, this conception of intersectionality has become a core tenant of critical race and gender studies. Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-167; Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (2013): 785-810.

space.<sup>2</sup> Empires were not discrete sidebars to national histories, but fundamental components of a broader intertwined narrative. Postcolonial theory has similarly complicated the history of imperialism by showing how non-European actors and histories shaped colonial cultures.<sup>3</sup> For example, Hibba Abugideiri argues that the concept of the “modern Egyptian women” and the broader gender regime in colonial Egypt was constructed not only through medically-rationalized British conceptions of sex difference, but also local discourses about gender norms.<sup>4</sup> While metropolitan policies and individuals were important, they did not unilaterally control the ways that the empire was made tangible, maintained, and challenged on the ground. Relying exclusively on French terminology (such as “indigenous woman” or “French female citizen with Arab personal status”) can accord metropolitan actors an inordinate amount of determinative power and obscure the complexity of colonial cultures. Local ideologies and goals existed in conversation with metropolitan perspectives, indicating the utility of de-centering the metropole without denying its importance.

In thinking more globally, new international histories have similarly shown how larger frameworks can be put in dialogue with local histories.<sup>5</sup> As people, goods, and ideas traversed

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory Mann, "Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa," *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (2005): 409-434; Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, 1-58 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> There are many examples, but some that have particularly influenced this research include Rachel Jean-Baptiste, *Conjugal Rights: Marriage, Sexuality, and Urban Life in Colonial Libreville* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Emily Lynn Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here: Households, Gender, and Politics in a West African State from the Slave Trade to Colonial Rule* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); and John K. Thornton, "I Am the Subject of the King of Congo: African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *The Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993): 181-214.

<sup>4</sup> Hibba Abugideiri, *Gender and the Making of Modern Medicine in Colonial Egypt* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Challenge to National Histories" in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender, 25-46 (Berkeley: University of

regional and global spaces, historians of empire must likewise work beyond national or imperial units of analysis while remaining attentive to smaller scale or regional contexts. Alongside histories of “global colonial metropolises” such as Paris or London, there has also been work about non-Western flows and the making of political activism within the “global south” or “Third World” in which colonial and former colonial spaces existed within international networks that may have bypassed the metropole completely.<sup>6</sup>

Within this complicated set of interlocking relationships, the history of citizenship clarifies how power, governance, identity, and representation were negotiated and given significance by a range of groups and interests. It is particularly useful for excavating the history of what Uday S. Mehta terms “liberal strategies of exclusion,” or how liberal democracies create categories of marginalization through inclusive and exclusionary citizenship.<sup>7</sup> Suffrage regimes illustrate how a government organizes society along hierarchies of what is often referred to as “capacity” or “maturity,” a hazy concept that claims to give the greatest political rights to the most responsible members of the body politic. As suffrage law plays a crucial role in constructing boundaries between insiders (who can vote) and outsiders (who are

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California Press, 2002); and Patrick O'Brien, “Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History,” *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3-39.

<sup>6</sup> Sanjam Ahluwalia, “Rethinking Boundaries: Feminism and (Inter) Nationalism in Early-Twentieth-Century India,” *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 4 (2003): 188-195; Gregory Mann and Baz Lecocq, “Between Empire, Umma, and the Muslim Third World: The French Union and African Pilgrims to Mecca, 1946-1958,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 367-383; and Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Uday S. Mehta, “Liberal Strategies of Exclusion,” *Politics & Society* 18, no. 4 (1990): 427-454.

disenfranchised), it is a critical historical source for tracing how abstract or aspirational ideologies about equality exist alongside very real legal limits.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, it is important to note that alternate or informal forms of inclusion have existed alongside or even in opposition to “formal” conceptions, particularly in times and places where rights were strictly limited. Histories of electoral practice and culture have shown the multiple meanings that citizens and subjects can imbue into ideas about “democracy” and the significance of “alternative” political representation such as petitioning.<sup>9</sup> In the empire, non-French forms of self and group identification could in this way be more relevant to an individual’s legal identity or ability to access and influence their socio-political world. An agricultural worker living in rural West Africa in the 1930s, for example, might have found their membership in various farming collectives a more relevant or immediate form of “social citizenship” than the right to vote for representation in Paris-based legislative assemblies. In considering histories of decolonization in this light, scholars such as Frederick Cooper have similarly emphasized that the inevitability of the postcolonial nation-state should not be assumed, as historical actors imagined a range of alternate federal or regional political forms that might succeed the empire.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The crux of being without political citizenship is being deprived of the right to vote, and, as Mohamed Sahia Cherchari argues, although citizenship cannot be limited only to the “one-dimensional right of suffrage, it is nonetheless... the substantial element, the hard core.” Cherchari, *Indigènes et citoyens ou l'impossible universalisation du suffrage* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), 743.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Gregory Mark, “The Vestigial Constitution: The History and Significance of the Right to Petition,” *Fordham Law Review* 66 (1988): 2153-2231.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

This question of “alternative” or “invisible” forms of citizenship is important for writing more inclusive and accurate political histories as a whole, particularly histories of marginalized groups. The definition of what is “political” is itself the product of a particular context, and just as labeling something to be “political” confers upon it an air of legitimacy, labeling something as “non-political” can delegitimize or discredit the actions of particular individuals or groups. Women and imperial subjects often found themselves the targets of such logic, meaning that their actions were often treated as “emotional outbursts” or “disorganized riots” rather than legitimate critiques.<sup>11</sup>

Within French history in particular, studies of citizenship have highlighted the ability of Republican universalism to divide as well as unite. As Chapter One will outline in greater detail, the “neutral” universal voter has historically belonged to a relatively narrow demographic. Depending on the era and regime, those allowed to cast ballots would have most commonly been white metropolitan males of legal age who were not hospitalized, imprisoned, nor in active military service, were physically present in an official residence where they had lived for at least several years, and also met any necessary income, tax, or property requirements. While some scholars have interpreted the racial, gendered, and religious requirements as “paradoxes” or “contradictions” within an ostensibly universal, color-blind, and secular ideology, others have argued that such exclusion was intrinsic to rather than in conflict in Republican universalist ideals.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Most work on this question has been done on the Aba Women’s War of 1929 in British Nigeria. For a recent overview, see Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock, *The Women’s War of 1929: A History of Anti-Colonial Resistance in Eastern Nigeria* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> Overviews include Edwige Liliane Lefebvre, “Republicanism and Universalism: Factors of Inclusion or Exclusion in the French Concept of Citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 7 (2003): 15-36; Joan Scott, “Universalism and the History of Feminism,” *differences* 7, no. 1 (1995): 1-15;

Since Olympe de Gouges in 1791, feminist theorists and historians of gender in France have been at the forefront of work that examines the seeming paradox of a “universalist citizenship” premised on strong exclusion.<sup>13</sup> The laws that established the French Republican regime organized the population into citizenship categories that, for the first time, explicitly excluded women as full political actors. Feminist historians have continued to expose how the ostensibly universal French subject was not in fact un-gendered, but was gendered as male. As “maleness” became considered a universal or neutral condition, “femaleness” or “non-maleness” therefore became “particular.” As Karen Offen argues, the deliberate exclusion of women exposed a “contradiction at the very heart of the movement for a democratic republic, starkly revealing that the concept ‘citizen’ was gendered to the core.”<sup>14</sup>

More conjunctural approaches to this history assert that French female suffrage had always been possible within a Republican philosophy but had to “wait out” conservative regimes, various political crises, and left-wing fears about women’s tendency towards monarchism or Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> More structural arguments present French republicanism as exclusionary by nature or even requiring women’s political absence, as seen in Geneviève Fraisse’s argument that “women's rights were not inadvertently overlooked but were denied out

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Shanti Marie Singham, “Betwixt Cattle and Men: Jews, Blacks, and Women, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man,” in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. Dale Van Kley, 114-153 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Olympe de Gouges, *Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne* (1791).

<sup>14</sup> Karen Offen, “Women, Citizenship, and Suffrage with a French Twist, 1789-1993,” in *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives*, ed. Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, 151-183 (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1994), 153; Scott, “Universalism.”

<sup>15</sup> See Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen: Histoire du suffrage universel en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

of necessity.”<sup>16</sup> Scholars have used the exclusion of women to articulate broader problems with democracy itself, as evident in Michèle Riot-Sarcey’s argument that the ease with which women were excluded from the “universal suffrage” of 1848 was a “symptom of political representation’s dysfunctional nature.”<sup>17</sup>

In addition to gendered exclusion, there has been a growing body of historical research establishing how this supposedly “neutral” political status shaped racialized colonial citizenship, particularly in relationship to the history of the French civilizing mission. For men in the empire, the more “French” one became — the more one would “assimilate” or “evolve” — the relatively greater access to formal political rights one might have. In her influential work on French Republicanism in the colonies, Alice Conklin argues that the civilizing mission prevented Republican advocates of colonialism to identify this process as a contradiction, enabling a political framework in which the work of empire was to slowly “elevate” those in the colonies, thereby making “democracy and colonialism compatible.”<sup>18</sup> In this sense, it was French Republicanism itself that allowed the French to establish colonial hierarchies of rights. Gary Wilder has emphasized an even tighter connection between the democracy and colonialism, seeing colonial discrimination not as the absence of French Republican policy but a crucial aspect thereof, situating Republicanism and imperialism as mutually enabling rather than contradictory.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), xv.

<sup>17</sup> Michèle Riot-Sarcey, “Citizenship and Equality of the Sexes: The French Model in Question,” in *States and Citizens: History, Theory, Prospects*, ed. Quentin Skinner and Bo Stråth, 191-207 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 196.

<sup>18</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

However, while French ideologies are in this way crucial for understanding imperial politics and state-making, scholars have clarified that they did not exist in a Eurocentric vacuum. As historians such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Elizabeth A. Foster have argued, debates about French Republicanism and colonial citizenships were also shaped by local concerns and principles.<sup>20</sup> Inhabitants of the empire used citizenship laws as a wedge to open up challenges to not only the French colonial state, but also other local and trans-regional political structures and organizations.<sup>21</sup> The terms and content of colonial citizenship were defined by a diverse set of actors working across and between imperial spaces, including high level interactions in administrative settings as well as informal encounters that took place in public and private spaces across cities, towns, and the countryside. Within this complex field of interaction, gender hierarchy was one major pillar of colonial rule that determined access to privilege and rights within households, the state, religious organizations, class structures, economic practices, and daily life. As Elizabeth Thompson argues, “because it so fundamentally defined power, gender became a primary site of conflict and compromise” to define the civic order and a crucial tool in understanding the history of citizenship and the state.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cheikh Anta Babou, *Fighting the Greater Jihad: Amadu Bamba and the Founding of the Muridiyya of Senegal, 1853-1913* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); Elizabeth Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Rachel Jean-Baptiste, “These Laws Should Be Made By Us: Customary Marriage Law, Codification, and Political Authority in Twentieth Century Gabon,” *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 217-240.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1; Richard Roberts, “Custom and Muslim Family Law in the Native Courts of the French Soudan,” in *Muslim Family Law in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial Legacies and Post-Colonial Challenges*, ed. Shamil Jeppie, Ebrahim Moosa, Richard L. Roberts (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 85-6.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, 4.

In considering this history of women and gender in the empire, scholars have long debated if European imperial rule was “good” or “bad” for women in the colonies.<sup>23</sup> There are two primary questions in this debate, the first related to the “condition of women” before the advent of European political control and the second related to the “impact” that European colonialism had on this status. As Chapter Two explores, the majority of colonial era-scholarship argued that since non-Western women led degraded lives, European political institutions and morals were an inevitably positive influence. This premise created a fictive reality in which only Western ideologies and structures delivered through imperialism could emancipate non-European women.

Scholars writing in the 1950s through the 1970s challenged this narrative by restoring (and in some cases celebrating) the pre-colonial period, including by tracing the histories of powerful and elite women, and, increasingly into the 1970s, histories of “mass” or “peasant” populations.<sup>24</sup> Feminist dependency theorists argued that agricultural and industrial policies initiated during the colonial era (such as the institution of cash-crops and new taxing methods) promoted the productivity of male labor at the expense of female labor and thereby led directly to the “deterioration” of women’s status in not only economic but also social and political

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<sup>23</sup> Historiographic overviews include: Margaret Jean Hay, “Queens, Prostitutes, and Peasants: Historical Perspectives on African Women,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 22 no. 3 (1988): 433-447; and Iris Berger, “African Women's History: Themes and Perspectives,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (2003): n.p.

<sup>24</sup> A.A. Akosua, “Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 9, no. 1 (1977): 1–14; Bolanle Awe, “The Iyalode and the Traditional Yoruba Political System,” in *Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View*, ed. Alice Achlegel, 144-160 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Carol P. Hoffer, “Mende and Sherbro Women in High Office,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1972): 151–164; Société africaine de culture, *La civilisation de la femme dans la tradition africaine* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1975).

spheres.<sup>25</sup> While such literatures were therefore concerned with tracing the history of “status,” much of this scholarship presented non-elite women as “non-political,” particularly before their “nationalist awakening” during movements of decolonization.<sup>26</sup> In this framework, it was only with the advent of formal suffrage within modern independent nation-states that women were able to “become” political beings.

In the 1980s and 1990s, research increasingly challenged this overly simplified definition of politics to present “pre-colonial” or “traditional” forms of female political agency. Within this argument, European colonial states often weakened the means through which many different categories of women could influence and control formal systems of government and society.<sup>27</sup> Complicating the framework of “good for women” versus “bad for women,” scholars showed

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<sup>25</sup> See Paul Bohannon and George Dalton, eds., *Markets in Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 10, 90-2; Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: Earthscan, 1989 [1970]), 41; Melville Jean Herskovits, *Economic Anthropology: The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples* (New York: Norton, 1965 [1952]), 220; Gloria Marshall, “Women, Trade, and the Yoruba Family,” (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1964), 71. For an early critique, see Judith Van Allen, “African Women, 'Modernization,' and National Liberation,” in *Women and the World: A Comparative Study*, ed. Lynne B. Iglitzin and Ruth Ross, 25-50 (Santa Barbara: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> LaRay Denzer, “Towards a Study of the History of West African Women's Participation in Nationalist Politics: The Early Phase, 1935-1950,” *Africana Research Bulletin* 6 (1976): 65-85; Margarita Dobert, “Civic and Political Participation of Women in French-Speaking West Africa,” (PhD diss., George Washington University, 1970), 56; Audrey Wipper, “Equal Rights for Women in Kenya?” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9, no. 3 (1971): 429-442.

<sup>27</sup> Carolyn M. Clark “Land and Food, Women and Power, in Nineteenth Century Kikuyu,” *Africa* 50, no. 4 (1980): 357–70; Nancy Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds, *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1976); Margaret Jean Hay and Marcia Wright, *African Women and the Law: Historical Perspectives* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1982); Emmanuel Konde, “Cameroonian Women in National Politics since the Second World War,” (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1991); Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Nkiru Nzegwu, “Recovering Igbo Traditions: A Case for Indigenous Women's Organizations in Development,” in *Women, Culture, and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover, 444-66 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Margaret Strobel, *Muslim Women in Mombasa, 1890-1975* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979); Margaret Strobel, “African Women,” *Signs* 8, no. 1 (1982): 109-131.

how historically specific systems have confronted historical actors with a variety of opportunities and challenges in accessing and broadcasting power.<sup>28</sup> Rather than passive pawns of the colonial system, women adapted “traditional” political strategies to new targets within a shifting context of conquest and authority.<sup>29</sup>

The imposition of colonial rule also shaped the very category of “woman,” in some instances disrupting societies in which gender identity, comportment, and performance may have differed greatly from French norms or expectations.<sup>30</sup> The creation of masculine citizenship regimes historicizes the ways in which European administrators sought out and privileged certain males when constructing the colonial state, thereby diminishing other forms of gendered influence, politics, and status.<sup>31</sup> Work on this topic draws greater attention to the importance of time and place as well as the individual agency of non-European actors, enabling historians to move beyond the question of the “impact of colonialism on women” to consider how the study of how gender and sexuality shaped and were shaped by imperialist systems of power and resistance.

One of my main contributions to this larger body of work is to consider how colonial citizenship (which I define to include the metropole) was influenced not only by race, but also by

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<sup>28</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *Feminist Review* 30 (1988): 61-88.

<sup>29</sup> Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987); María Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186-209; Oyèrónkẹ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> Brendan Hokowhitu, “Tackling Maori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 16, no. 2 (2004): 259-284; Osborn, *Our New Husbands Are Here*; Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

changing conceptions of gender and sexuality. In the context of French imperial history, women in the empire were considered to be on the “bottom” of the hierarchy of rights, the least “capable” of acting in their own political self-interest. In contrast to programs of political assimilation, efforts to target women in the empire focused primarily on “social” questions, such as making them into “better” mothers and wives through the promotion of things like French style marriage practices, ways of dressing, consumer practices, or by “saving them” from “savage customs.” If non-white women in the colonies were the “least universal” of all inhabitants of the empire and “least capable” of exercising political rights, what is the significance of the expansion of the “universal” franchise to include these “most particular” voters?

The post-World War II shift in focus to colonial women’s political rights along with the continued gendering of citizenship in the empire is in need of explanation. While the 1944 enfranchisement of metropolitan French women was a major factor, it does not explain why the debate over female suffrage was contentious in some places and relatively unremarked upon in others. It also does not clarify how intersecting ideas about race and gender were politicized in postwar citizenship, including how they shaped and were shaped by other cultural, social, economic, and ideological transformations. Racial and gendered exclusions were part of the same broader system, and the significance of the expansion of women’s rights in the metropole and colonies cannot be understood in isolation. Expanding the history of gendered citizenship to colonial space provides a way to enrich Offen’s characterization of French political citizenship as “profoundly gendered.” By exposing how citizenship remained based on gender in the colonies even after the 1944 extension of suffrage to French women, this dissertation suggests why gendered discrimination has persisted not only in former colonies, but in the former French

metropole as well. In this way, it supports work by scholars such as Mehammed Amadeus Mack and Joan Scott in determining the contemporary legacies of colonial exclusion.<sup>32</sup>

Putting female citizenship in the colonies and the metropole in the same framework also provides a way to address the persistent question of why French women's suffrage occurred so "late" in one of the earliest countries to embrace universal metropolitan manhood suffrage.<sup>33</sup> Explanations of French women's enfranchisement is typically glossed as a Goldilocks moment variously associated with women's participation in the resistance, de Gaulle's attempts to shore up his base and fend off a Communist electoral victory, the quirks of provisional governments, the declining fortunes of the Radical party, international pressures from Britain and the United States, and the rise of a political Christian party seeking women's support.

However, if women's 1944 enfranchisement is put into context with what came after women's enfranchisement, some of these explanations become less convincing; as Siân Reynolds points out, "the small number of women formally honored by male colleagues for Resistance work sits uneasily with the readiness of the same men to explain the granting of the vote entirely in terms of this argument."<sup>34</sup> More importantly, the assertion that female suffrage simply "happened" in 1944 erases the fact that citizenship remained limited by gender across the empire. Gendered political citizenship did not simply vanish, but was displaced outside of the hexagon, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of the female population of Algeria — a

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<sup>32</sup> Mehammed Amadeus Mack, *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Leora Auslander, "Women's Suffrage, Citizenship Law, and National Identity: Gendering the Nation-State in France and Germany, 1871-1918," in *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes, and Marilyn Lake, 138-152 (New York: Springer, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Siân Reynolds, *France Between the Wars: Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

region that was framed as an integral part of French territory — were not able to vote until 1958, almost a decade and a half after the supposed advent of female suffrage in France.

In addition, the colonial vantage indicates the degree to which the conception of western democracy is tied to a particular vision of women's emancipation within a global context of democratic "development" and empire. For example, in Steven Hause and Anne Kenney's *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic*, the authors express surprise that "by the 1930s, while the French Senate stood intransigent, women were voting in Palestine, parts of China, and several Latin American Republics. Women voted in Estonia, Azerbaijan, Trans-Jordan, and Kenya but not in the land of Jeanne d'Arc and the Declaration of the Rights of Man."<sup>35</sup> In this framework, it is not only the seeming contradiction that a country so fixated upon rights should not extend them to women for so long after the implementation of parliamentary democracy, but also that French women did not have the right to vote when other "less advanced" countries like Estonia, Kenya, and China already had, implying that the extension was "out of order" rather than "late."

The centrality of gender in a colonial context also clarifies what makes this a particularly "French" history. The establishment of a French imperial citizenship regime that focused primarily on gender (or maleness) and secondarily on race (or whiteness) is distinct from the British example, where race could at times be considered more important than gender in determining political rights. This was particularly common in white settler territories considered to be on the "frontier" (including Australia, New Zealand, and Canada), where white women often had the right to vote before women in the metropole.<sup>36</sup> A similar pattern occurred in the

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<sup>35</sup> Hause, *Women's Suffrage*, 254.

<sup>36</sup> Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan, eds, *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994); Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E.

nineteenth century United States, where states and territories along the expanding western frontier often instituted female suffrage as a strategy for securing a white electorate.<sup>37</sup> The British priority of establishing a white franchise (even if that meant including female voters) was therefore distinct from the French prioritization of a male franchise (even if that meant including non-white voters).

While the post-World War II era was a crucial turning point marked by the unprecedented expansion of female suffrage and ultimate collapse of the French colonial project, these shifts can only therefore be understood as part of a longer history rooted in the eighteenth-century creation of the modern French empire. Part I of my dissertation provides this deeper foundation, illuminating the diverse and often unpredictable ways in which ideas about citizenship and gendered political status moved throughout the metropole and colonies from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Both chapters are geographically and chronologically broad comparative histories, tracing the mutual construction of gender, race, and citizenship as they are legible in legal documents and government policy fiction as well as more cultural manifestations such as fiction and travel writing.

The first chapter, “‘Not Yet Ready’: Colonial Representation and the Making of the French Empire” exposes the longer history of citizenship in metropolitan France and the colonies by using voting rights law to track the changing goals and ideologies of the French state. Legal structures created a masculine citizenship regime that worked along other racialized logics to exclude all women and most non-white men as political subjects. In Republican regimes in

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Nym Malhall, and Philippa Levine, eds, *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Cherryl Walker, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in South Africa* (Cape Town: Center for African Studies, 1979).

<sup>37</sup> Karen M. Morin, “Political Culture and Suffrage in an Anglo-American Women's West,” *Women's Rights Law Reporter* 19, no. 1 (1997): 17-24.

particular, the colonies were positioned in a constant state of political underdevelopment that legitimized the imposition and maintenance of French colonial rule. However, the civilizing mission to “develop” these local political systems was necessarily limited by the requirements of imperial control, which would erode if rights were in fact equalized across French territory. French efforts to expand suffrage in the empire are not therefore best understood as the first steps towards decolonization or progressive emancipation, but instead as tools to more tightly bind individuals to the French imperial state.

To consider gender in greater detail, Chapter Two moves outside the realm of formal political rights and representation (from which women were excluded) to consider more social and cultural expressions that positioned both women and inhabitants of the empire as perennially “immature” or “undeveloped” political subjects. While the French civilizing mission advocated the slow “improvement” of colonial subjects to be more like French citizens, the analogue of advocating that women one day “improve” to be more like men would have resulted a profound crisis of gender and therefore society as a whole. Entitled “‘Woman in her Primitive State’: Gender and Race in France and the Empire” this chapter considers the metropolitan and colonial resonances of this female political exclusion and how it shaped the form and ideology of the French state and empire. In particular, I examine how the idea of “women’s status” was understood as a category of analysis that was thought able to explain “something else” about a particular society, be that its ostensive level of civilization or suitability for colonial conquest. The concept of women’s status was not a neutral metric but shaped by competing ideological claims about race, religion, and geopolitics. For example, different “types” of women were understood to have different political capacities and potentials, with the category of “female”

was mediated by a host of other labels and sub-categorizations such as “Muslim,” “African,” “black,” or “French-speaking.”

In contrast to these broader comparative histories, Part II focuses on the narrow sliver of time between 1943 and 1946 when the French Union was established as a postwar political structure. In the wake of the Second World War, the incoming Republican provisional government oversaw one of the most expansive changes to suffrage law in French history, expanding the franchise to include metropolitan women, citizens (male and female) in the new overseas departments, soldiers, and most citizens in overseas territories. Yet despite rhetoric that insisted on the unity and democratic nature of the newly formed French Union, colony-specific laws persisted and inhabitants of the empire remained divided into variety of different categories depending on their alleged political capacity.

Chapter Three, “‘The Stumbling Block’: Women’s Suffrage and the Making of the French Union” considers this tension by tracking how and why the limits of non-European women’s political rights in the empire took on unprecedented importance within debates about the shape and meaning of the postwar French state. I show that the 1944 enfranchisement of metropolitan French women was tightly bound with larger questions of empire. Even the historiographic assertion that France was “late” to the table of women’s suffrage indicates the degree to which the conception of western democracy remains tied to a particular vision of women’s emancipation that is defined by certain norms of representative institutions that are supposed to exist first in the metropole and secondly in the colonies. This chapter brings the enfranchisement of metropolitan and colonial women (and some men) into the same frame to explore why gender remained a pervasive means of organizing political rights in the empire even

after the enfranchisement of metropolitan women ostensibly ended formal gendered citizenship in France.

However, debates about rights and gender reflected not only the needs and perspectives of the French colonial administration, but also show how non-elites and inhabitants of the colonies exercised their own agendas and goals. Chapter Four, entitled “‘I Will Vote Like All Women’: Protest and Suffrage in the Four Communes of Senegal, 1944-1945,” provides an in-depth case study and social history of one particular example of this phenomenon, focusing on a protest in Senegal in which African men and women used women’s suffrage to assert their active inclusion within a massively reformed imperial structure. Although ostensibly a debate about the rights of women, the protest revealed the tangled relationship between colonial inhabitants and the French administration as a whole, particularly in competing visions of the future of the French empire. This chapter shows that anti-colonial protest did not always entail pro-nationalist activism, as these particular protesters typically framed their demands not as the first step to nationalist independence but as a means to control their own particular mode of political membership within a reformed yet explicitly imperial formation. Representation and democratic participation was not simply parceled out by the metropole, but seized, maintained, modified, and brandished by a range of groups and interests across colonial spaces, in the processes redefining notions of gender, race, and democracy.

Part III considers the late 1940s through early 1960s more broadly, crossing the boundary of decolonization to consider the role of the nation and the international sphere. In this era, questions of women’s citizenship and female electors became increasingly tied up in debates over nationalism and self-determination.

Entitled “‘Her Entrance into History:’ Elections, Reform, and Decolonization, 1946-1962,” Chapter Five tracks how ideas about female electors related to conflicting conceptions of the future of the French empire, be it a reformed “French Community” or a postcolonial set of independent nation-states or federations. Both anti-colonial and pro-colonial discourses positioned the female voter as a “national” object whose emancipation would be emblematic of their movement’s own modernity and unique ability to speak to “women’s issues.” Across the empire, competing movements connected women’s political role to their status as mothers, creating tensions between competing programs of progressive feminism and the domestication of the voting female subject. The case of Algeria is particularly important here, as both the French administration and the anti-colonial nationalist movement claimed the mantle of the “best” emancipator of Algerian women. Debates over the rights of women evinced competing forms of patriarchal control, either by the French (often portraying themselves as the kindly father who could “give” women their rights) or by nationalist leadership (who often asserted the rights that should accrue to “our” women in a postcolonial context). The role of feminist anticolonialism is also crucial in this chapter, existing at odds and in sync with initiatives and policies across the colonial and metropolitan divide.

My final chapter, “‘Prove that the French Have Taught Us Nothing: Gender in an International Empire,” situates these changes and shifts in a global context. I pay particular attention to how international institutions like the United Nations structured the way that both advocates and opponents of women’s suffrage in the French empire and postcolonial francophone world addressed questions of legitimacy, the right to political participation, and norms of citizenship. International organizations and networks wound across and extended the colonially-bound “French” world, shaping the development of political rights and gender in

colonial spaces. While their influence should not be overstated, global networks enabled people across the empire to interact not only with the “outside world” but also with each other and in front of different audiences. From the French perspective, international institutions posed challenges to the postwar reconfiguration of empire in the form of a cohesive national French Union. The presence of international oversight posed a major threat to France's particular imperialist ideology by diluting its territories' perceived “Frenchness” and enabling outside interference. As the proud creators of the *mission civilisatrice*, the French administration took serious umbrage at the implication that they needed guidance about how to develop their colonies. French conflict with international organizations therefore put their particular national vision of empire into clearer relief. Feminist organizations also played a major role in these transnational spaces, pushing not only for domestic reforms but also foreign changes that both challenged and shored up colonial policy.

As the Conclusion indicates, women’s rights and democracy remain contested in much of the francophone world, issues which protest and activist groups across the former metropole and colonies continue to challenge and address. This history therefore provides a framework for understanding how race and gender have remained contested issues, particularly within postcolonial feminist organizations. However, the roots of women’s suffrage remain obscure, trapped between studies of Europe and the world, of colonial and postcolonial eras, of gender and race, and of social and political history. My dissertation corrects this gap by exploring how women’s suffrage emerged as a key battleground where political activists – elite and non – challenged the status quo and each other with visions of the future.

Modern democracy is rooted in imperialist systems. In this sense, a more comprehensive history of suffrage within colonial and postcolonial spaces is crucial for contextualizing current

debates about gender, the state, and multiculturalism, particularly in postcolonial democracies such as France, consumed as it now is with resurgent debates that set a “French France” nationalism against a francophone cosmopolitanism. In considering women’s suffrage and political rights, it is also not enough to isolate national case studies from their larger imperial contexts. While histories of female suffrage are often framed as national questions (when did women get the right to vote in France or in Algeria) the ambiguity of the imperial franchise suggests a more complicated picture. Looking at France or Senegal alone does not tell us why French women got the right to vote as “late” as 1944 or why some Senegalese women got the right to vote as “early” as 1945 nor does it suggest how this very language of “lateness” emerged in colonial context that naturalized the idea that democratic rights “should” expand to some people before they can benefit others.

## **PART I**

### **Making the Modern French Empire (17th - 20th century)**

## Chapter One

### “Not Yet Ready”:

#### Colonial Representation and the Making of the French Empire

In the spring of 1914, Senegalese politician Blaise Diagne was in the middle of a heated campaign to become Senegal’s new deputy in the French National Assembly. He promised a “democracy of law and justice” for citizens and subjects alike through the institution of reforms that would “correct the errors of the past and make a claim on a very near future.”<sup>1</sup> Speaking about his critics at a rally in Saint Louis, Diagne told the gathered crowd that “they say that you are not French and that I am not French! I tell you that we are, that we have the same rights!”<sup>2</sup> For Diagne and the unnamed critics he references, the exact definition and application of this “Frenchness” was highly contested, a nebulous designation that could secure rights for some while denying them to others.

Born on the Isle of Gorée in 1872, Diagne was adopted by an elite Euro-African family as a young child, after which he converted to Catholicism and received a French-style education. Following his graduation, he worked in a number of positions across the colonial administration and eventually started a family with a white woman he met in Paris. Although Diagne advocated for the expansion of rights for all Senegalese people regardless of their religious, racial, or marital status, he suggested that his own life story provided particular qualifications in leading that political fight. For example, he criticized a political opponent by saying that “he is black as well, but he has not had a career like mine and he is

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Diagne, “Profession de la foi no°28: Sénégal,” *Chambre des députés: projets de lois, propositions, rapports, etc.* (7 August 1914): 1337-1340.

<sup>2</sup> G. Wesley Johnson, “The Ascendancy of Blaise Diagne and the Beginning of African Politics in Senegal,” *Journal of the International African Institute* 36, no. 3 (1966), 247-8.

not married to a French woman,” thereby presenting his personal history in the service of the French empire and his marriage to a white woman as key to defining his character as a black politician. Gender, race, and religion were also central in the critiques of his African and European detractors, who accused him of being a hypocritical non-practicing Catholic, an anti-white racist, in the thrall of the Freemasons, secretly circumcised by a Muslim mystic, or a promiscuous sleaze. The French mayor of Dakar threatened to shut of the power and water of anyone who voted for Diagne while other political commentators argued that he was not a full French citizen and therefore ineligible for political office in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this opposition, Diagne’s widespread popularity enabled him to prevail in a heated two-round election with a massive turnout.<sup>4</sup> Unprepared for such a result, the French administration scrambled to address the new political situation, with the Governor General only able to attribute the outcome to “Senegal’s bizarre electoral traditions.” One administrator suggested that although “grossly immoral,” a bribe might persuade Diagne to step aside, an assessment the Governor General agreed with in principle yet judiciously omitted in the final draft of his official report. Despite such qualms, the central electoral commission in Paris ultimately approved Diagne’s victory not because he was indeed an eligible French citizen (his exact status remained unspecified), but because he had already voted in the other French colonies such as Réunion and Guinea, he had accepted French

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, “Ascendancy.”

<sup>4</sup> Out of a total of 8,677 registered voters, 5,231 voted in the second round of the election. Of these, 2,424 voted for Diagne, 2,249 voted for Alsatian lawyer Henri Heimburger, and 472 for créole lawyer François Carpot. “Séance du 7 juillet 1914,” *Journal officiel de la République française Débats parlementaires Chambre des députés* (7 July 1914), 2735.

civil status, he was married to a French woman, and he had temporarily exercised the functions of a criminal judge in Madagascar.<sup>5</sup>

Even at the highest political levels and under the closest scrutiny, the definition of citizenship in the French empire were defined by a mix of cultural markers, marital status, religious practice, racial identity, and employment history that existed alongside shifting legal codes and contradictory court rulings. In determining who had the right to vote and run for office, questions of who one married, worked for, and prayed to were as significant as where one was born or if one paid taxes.

French efforts to expand suffrage in the empire are not best understood as the first steps towards decolonization or progressive emancipation, but instead as tools to more tightly bind individuals to the French imperial state.<sup>6</sup> For example, to be on a voting or electoral roll in 1920s French West Africa, an individual needed to have an “official identity” as codified in records of birth, employment, taxes, or family life. Most of the ways in which one could attain the necessary documents required acceptance of or participation in an explicitly French-controlled institution, ranging from fighting for the French military, to filing a patent with the French National Institute of Industrial Property, to acquiring a French-issued driver’s license. Such systems also enabled economic control over colonial populations, as suffrage laws with taxpaying obligations typically required a potential voter to secure a wage-labor job in the formal sector. Colonial citizenship favored an urban, male, French-educated electorate with professional or personal ties to the metropole and therefore

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2736-8.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); and Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

a potentially greater stake in the maintenance of the French colonial state. In this way, colonial citizenship was a cornerstone in the maintenance of imperial integrity. While expansions of the franchise were often later framed as progressive policies intended to help the “evolution” of a population to greater self-sufficiency (if not independence), they were in practice used to secure the continuation of the empire.

Democratic hierarchies were also used in the service of the so-called French civilizing mission, as only those most “assimilated” towards French norms were rewarded with formal rights.<sup>7</sup> Alongside the claim that colonial populations were too “immature” to participate in electoral democracy, pre-colonial systems of government were portrayed as underdeveloped, particularly in parts of the world the French sought to acquire for their empire. (The assertion of political “maturity” existing on a continuum from savage to civilized is also evident in discussions of European class politics, with a French guidebook from 1820 describing peasants as “savage barbarians” in the midst of civilization.<sup>8</sup>)

This was, however, not always a successful project, as individuals across the empire also used citizenship to carve out their own spaces of resistance and autonomy, finding alternate means to enact political change or define the terms of their inclusion. Colonial inhabitants challenged French control over political institutions by creating their own forms of representation and, in some instances, forcing the colonial state to recognize them as legitimate. Using laws and legal codes as well as letters, op-eds, and published works, this chapter shows how the democratic franchise both enabled and eroded imperial structures.

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<sup>7</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Eugen Weber, “The Second Republic, Politics, and the Peasant,” *French Historical Studies* 11, No. 4 (Autumn 1980): 521.

## Codifying the white male citizen

Conceptions of “citizenship” and national belonging were relatively nebulous throughout early modern France, as individuals formed affinities through overlapping sets of identities that included geographic, religious, clientist, gendered, linguistic, and kin-based criteria.<sup>9</sup> As access to rights was premised primarily on social standing or wealth, elite women had a measure of formal civic rights, including participation in municipal councils and bodies such as the Estates General.<sup>10</sup> Such opportunities were limited however, and women in general had less access to formal political authority than did men.<sup>11</sup>

Distinctions of status and class shaped access to political rights in France’s early overseas empire as well, leading to representative institutions that favored European business and administrative interests.<sup>12</sup> The limits of political citizenship were further complicated by

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<sup>9</sup> As Peter Sahlins argues, “citizens” of this period are better characterized not by the rights they had but by the restrictions to which they were *not* subject. Gail Bossenga, “Rights and Citizens in the Old Regime,” *French Historical Studies* 20, no 2 (1997): 217-243; Jeffrey Merrick, “Conscience and Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21, no. 1 (1987): 48-70; Peter Sahlins, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners, 1789-1793* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Charlotte Wells, *Law and Citizenship in Early Modern France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Wells, *Law and Citizenship*, 8, 107, 118, 135-6; Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 3 – 4; Steven D. Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002), 130n34;

<sup>11</sup> Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Jean Haechler, *Le règne des femmes: 1715-1793* (Paris: B. Grasset, 2001); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Colette V. Michael, *Sur les femmes en France au dix-huitième siècle: un âge de ténèbre* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006); Samia I. Spencer, ed., *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Wells, *Law and Citizenship*.

<sup>12</sup> Membership was typically appointed (sometimes by the king) and limited to advisory roles. For the Antilles, for example, see: Edict of Réunion of March 1711; Arrêt du Conseil of Martinique of 10 December 1759; Arrêt du Conseil Martinique of 23 July 1759; Reglement of

the racialized systems of enslavement and labor that barred those with non-white ancestry from claiming full political rights.<sup>13</sup> While ideas about race therefore shaped access to rights, specific types of inclusion and exclusion varied across different regions of the empire. Racial categories were defined and given significance through a range of criteria, remaining flexible and slippery in both legal and discursive realms.

For example, colonies with white rather than black hypodescent often enabled all those with even a single French ancestor to claim an elevated “European” racial status and citizenship. In 1770s French India, the official “white” demographic included a *métis* or mixed-race majority.<sup>14</sup> Racial categorizations did not simply prioritize whiteness but specifically a French whiteness, as to be *métis* one needed to have a French ancestor rather than any European ancestor. Alongside such ideas about race and nation, definitions of *métis* identity also involved social and economic qualities, including practicing Catholicism and wearing European styles of clothing.<sup>15</sup>

The Revolution of 1789 transformed the concept and practice of French national belonging in the metropole and the colonies, codifying a new system of rights built on a

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Martinique of 24 March 1763; Arrêt du Conseil of 9 April 1763; Ordonnance of Guadeloupe of 17 June 1787.

<sup>13</sup> Guillaume Aubert, “‘The Blood of France’: Race and Purity in the French Atlantic World,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2004): 439-478; John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Dominique Rogers, “On the Road to Citizenship: The Complex Route to Integration of the Free People of Color in the Two Capitals of Saint-Domingue,” in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. D. Geggus and N. Fiering, 65-78 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Including 461 *métis* out of 787 “Europeans.” Jean Deloche, *Le papier terrier de la ville blanche de Pondichéry 1777* (Pondichéry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Jessica Namakkal, “Transgressing the Boundaries of the Nation: Decolonization, Migration & Identity in French India, 1910-1972” (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, 2013), 35-6.

shared idea of “Frenchness” in which citizens became sovereign participants in the formation of public laws and political life.<sup>16</sup> As not all members of the state were equal, the process of creating a more unified body politic required formalized sets of inclusions and exclusions. While the exact limits of these new rights changed throughout the years of Revolutionary turmoil, full “active” citizenship was restricted to certain adult French men and was variously tied to residency, tax level, and military service.<sup>17</sup> This transformed all women, the bankrupt and indebted, recent immigrants, dependents and minors, domestic servants, the homeless, and those who did not pay enough taxes into so-called “passive” secondary citizens.<sup>18</sup>

While debates over the limits of the new representative institutions were in flux, individuals and groups across the colonies took advantage of the political upheaval to make political claims for their own representation, ranging from sending *cahiers* to the Estates General in Paris to traveling in person to lobby French politicians to simply forming their

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<sup>16</sup> Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en Révolution, 1789-1794* (Paris: PUF, 1992); Michael Fitzsimmons, “The Invention of Citizenship,” in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, ed. Renée Waldinger et. al., 29-41 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993); Lynn Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); Sophie Wahnich, *L’impossible citoyen: l’étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997); and Renée Waldinger et. al., *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Some movements advocated for openings of the franchise for most adult men, such as the never-implemented Constitution of Year I (24 June 1793) which would have bestowed French citizenship for any man who acquired property, married a French woman, adopted a child, supported an elderly person, or, somewhat astonishingly, was simply a “foreigner who is considered by the legislative body to be deserving of being treated humanely.” Dale L. Clifford, “Can the Uniform Make the Citizen? Paris, 1789-1791,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34, no. 3 (2001): 363-382; Malcolm Crook, *Elections in the French Revolution: Apprenticeship in Democracy, 1789-1799* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michel Offerlé, *Un homme, une voix? Histoire du suffrage universel* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> William H. Sewell, Jr., “Le citoyen/la citoyenne: Activity, Passivity, and the Revolutionary Concept of Citizenship,” in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 2, ed. Colin Lucas, 105-123 (New York: Pergamon Press, 1987).

own assemblies without waiting for approval. Through this piecemeal process, limited colonial representation was introduced for Saint-Domingue, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, Guyane, and India between 1789 and 1792.<sup>19</sup> However, debates over race complicated metropolitan franchise laws that were made on the basis of residency or tax payments.<sup>20</sup>

In the Antilles for example, a March 1790 decree enfranchising all property-owning men over the age of twenty-five did not specify if non-white men were included, instigating a heated debate about the law's interpretation and limits.<sup>21</sup> Violence over citizenship laws and the legitimacy of elections and representative institutions escalated, with alliances forming and breaking across class and color lines. In Saint Domingue, wealthy men of African descent capitalized on the vague language of the law to insist that it applied to all free property-owning men regardless of color, arguing that a political hierarchy of property

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<sup>19</sup> See meetings of 4 July 1789, 14 October 1789, and 7 July 1790 in *Assemblée nationale constituante, Procès-verbal des séances de l'Assemblée nationale de France tenues en l'année 1789 et suivantes* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1791); Decree of 28 May 1791; French National Assembly, "Tit III, chap 1, sec 1, art 1," *French Constitution of 3 September 1791* (Paris, 1791); Decree of 28 March 1792; Decree of 29 March 1792; Decree of 22 August 1792.

<sup>20</sup> An important point of comparison here is the debate over Jewish citizenship as a racial issue in the metropole. On Jewish citizenship, see "Admission of Jews to Rights of Citizenship, (27 September 1791)," in *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), 99–101; Pierre and Ira Katznelson, eds, *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, And Citizenship*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> In 1791-2, the French National Assembly recognized political rights for all free persons of color born to a free mother and father, a figure estimated to be roughly five percent of the total population of free people of color. A law in April 1792 more abstractly stated the equality of free people of color. See Decree of 8 March 1790; Decree of 28 March 1790; Decree of 15 May 1791; Law of 4 April of 1792.

rights was more stable than one based on race.<sup>22</sup> However, they found limited support among the colony's population of non-property-owning Free People of Color and even less among the enslaved black population, as few would have met the financial qualifications even if the racial issue had been found to be irrelevant. Both wealthy and poor whites also opposed the expansion, with some white planters going so far as to ignore missives from the metropole and create their own all-white assembly to block any such decree.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, in many parts of the empire, groups created their own assemblies regardless of metropolitan recognition. In the West African outposts at Saint-Louis and Gorée, a group of Eurafrikan, African, and European elites united by common trade interests devised their own plan for a local government that included municipal offices, a mayor, and elections by all resident males who were French through birth or naturalization.<sup>24</sup> The fact that the petition was never acted on by the National Assembly in Paris was ultimately irrelevant to its drafters, who organized their own local council without formal metropolitan approval.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> John D. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé Jeune (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas* 68, no. 1 (2011): 33-62; David Geggus, "Racial Equality, Slavery, and Colonial Secession during the Constituent Assembly," *The American Historical Review* 94, no. 5 (1989): 1290-1308.

<sup>23</sup> Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation And Human Rights* (New York: Verso, 2011); Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 205-7; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); CLR James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 1989 [1938]); Jeremy D. Popkin, "The French Revolution's Other Island," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 203.

<sup>24</sup> These "democratic" advantages would have been limited to Frenchmen, Creoles, and a select group of Africans, excluding women, servants, and domestic slaves.

<sup>25</sup> See Johnson, *Emergence*, 40-42; P. Alquier, "Saint-Louis du Sénégal pendant la Révolution et l'Empire (1789-1809)," *Bulletin du Comité d'Études Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* 5 (1929): 277-320; Léonce Jore, "Les établissements français sur la côte occidentale d'Afrique de 1758 à 1809," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 51 (1964), 136-7,

In this instance, shared economic needs were of relatively greater significance than racial identity, leading to a political coalition of influential traders from Bordeaux as well as their African and Afro-European intermediaries, partners, and families.<sup>26</sup>

Inhabitants of French India similarly took advantage of the revolutionary disorder to create a number of their own assemblies, although the white French hypodescent that characterized the colony resulted in a markedly different racial dynamic than the slave societies of the Antilles or the trading enclaves of coastal Africa. In 1790, for example, six hundred male French citizens of various racial backgrounds created an “Assembly of French Pondicherry” to affirm that “Europeans and the descendants of Europeans” were equally eligible for citizenship.<sup>27</sup> This both “whitened” the French-Indian métis population while excluding both the majority Tamil population as well as all “Topas,” those descended from earlier mixed Indian-Portuguese unions.<sup>28</sup> After being frozen out of this assembly, a group of Tamil men formed their own body to nominate representatives to put pressure on India- and French-based politicians and advocate for Tamil and Hindu rights.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, the legal codes that originated in Paris-based institutions expressed only part of the multiple ways in which inhabitants across the colonies conceptualized and practiced forms of

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258; Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 184.

<sup>26</sup> H.O. Idowu, “The Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal,” *The Journal of African History* 9, no. 2 (1968): 261-277; James L.A. Webb, “The Trade in Gum Arabic: Prelude to French Conquest in Senegal,” *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 2-3 (1985): 149-168; Amanda Sackur, “The French Revolution and Race Relations in Senegal, 1780-1810,” in *Peoples and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder*, ed. J.F. Ade Ajayi and J.D.Y. Peel, 69-89 (New York: Longman, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> M. Gobalakichenane, “The ‘French Revolution’ of the Tamils in Pondicherry (1790-1793),” *East and West* 50, no. 1 (2000), 299-304.

<sup>28</sup> Namakkal, 30-32.

<sup>29</sup> Gobalakichenane, 304; Adrian Carton, “Shades of Fraternity: ‘Créolization and the Making of Citizenship in French India, 1790-92,” *French Historical Studies* 31 (2008); Namakkal, 32-3.

political representation, particularly in moments where sociopolitical upheaval presented new opportunities and challenges.

The reintroduction of strict voting rights requirements following the 1795 establishment of the Directory limited the franchise across the metropole and the empire, ushering in a period of extensive electioneering, fraud, and electoral violence.<sup>30</sup> The military dictatorship annulled all colonial representation, creating a profoundly restricted franchise that would persist through the remainder of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth.<sup>31</sup> If it can be said to have existed at all, electoral participation was profoundly limited. At the same time, ideas about the importance of elections and voting rights grew in significance, and it was in this era that the phrase “universal suffrage” first gained currency in French political writing.<sup>32</sup> Rather than an expression of inclusion, the concept of “universal suffrage” could play a surprisingly restrictive function, enabling advocates of a particular voting regime to hide the choke point of citizenship restrictions by claiming a right to be “universal” while restricting what “universal” actually meant.

While voting rights remained relatively narrow, the exact limits of manhood suffrage shifted throughout the early nineteenth century in the constitutional monarchies that emerged in the wake of Napoleon’s downfall.<sup>33</sup> Criticism of electoral fraud and

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<sup>30</sup> Malcolm Crook and John Dunne, “The First European Elections? Voting and Imperial State-Building Under Napoleon, 1802-1813,” *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 3 (2014): 661-697; Malcolm Crook, “Parties, Schisms, and Purges: Elections under the Directory, 1795-1799,” *Elections in the French Revolution: An Apprenticeship in Democracy, 1789-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> The French Charter of 1814; and the French Charter of 1830.

<sup>32</sup> Active soldiers were barred from electoral participation due in part to an argument that they could either serve the king with loyal devotion or have the electoral freedom to vote for the opposition, but not both at the same time.

<sup>33</sup> These included the Bourbon Restoration (1814/15-1830) and the July Monarchy (1830-1848).

manipulation remained touchstones of oppositional movements throughout an era in which elections occurred with limited manhood suffrage and without an effective elected legislature.<sup>34</sup>

Following the loss of many of France's American possessions in the early nineteenth century, the remaining pockets of French colonial holdings were put in an uncertain juridical state. While the July Monarchy attempted to consolidate its overseas territories by implementing metropolitan codes, colonial law became strongly decentralized.<sup>35</sup> In general, formal representation expanded in colonies where French political and economic presence was the strongest, resulting in systems of limited local representation that retained European proportional superiority. For example, the General Council of Senegal headquartered in Saint Louis was composed of "European and indigenous traders and property-owners" selected by a forty- to sixty-person electoral college of European and African "notables" who were themselves appointed by the administration.<sup>36</sup> This tiered and appointed form of representation enabled certain concessions to local interests while maintaining strong minority control in the hands of the French. Nominally democratic institutions thus expanded alongside French colonial control to uphold the power of the colonial state.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter McPhee, *The Politics of Rural Life: Political Mobilization in the French Countryside, 1846-1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 59; and Michel Offerlé, *Un homme, une voix? Histoire du suffrage universel* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 18.

<sup>35</sup> For example, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Bourbon, and Guyane each acquired local councils (electors had to pay a certain tax threshold that profoundly limited the membership) as well as a metropolitan-based council of delegates. By contrast, colonies such as Algeria, India, Senegal, and Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon remained under regimes of decree that further constricted rights and consolidated control in the hands of the local administration. See the law of 24 April 1833.

<sup>36</sup> Ordonnance Organique of 7 September 1840; Arrêté of 18 December 1847. Also see Jones, *Métis*, fn22.

Religion played a role in determining these rights as well, particularly in France's new North African territories, where the military conquest of Algeria brought an increasing number of Muslims and Jews into the French empire. While initial French assessments of North Algerian Jews positioned them as inferior subjects, pro-colonialist politicians argued that they were in fact more "civilized" than their Muslim neighbors.<sup>37</sup> Although the Jewish population was still in need of "regeneration" to reach towards full political maturity and escape the conditions of "Islamic despotism," their relative advancement made them natural candidates for policies of assimilation and thus deserving of additional citizenship rights. The requirements of securing geopolitical control within France's growing imperialist aspirations thereby intertwined with and reinforced shifting ideas about religion, civilization, and political "capacity."

### **The Revolution of 1848 and its Aftermath**

Domestic disapproval of the July Monarchy increased through the mid-1840s, culminating in the 1848 Revolution and overthrow of the regime.<sup>38</sup> Since grievances over limited political representation had been at the heart of the opposition movement, the incoming provisional government was under great popular pressure to expand the franchise for the elections to the constitutional assembly.<sup>39</sup> This expansion was not simply a move

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<sup>37</sup> Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Michael Brett, "Legislating Inequality in Algeria: The Senatus-Consulte of 14 July 1865," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51, no. 3 (1988), 441-2.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1973); William Fortescue, *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (New York: Routledge, 2005); William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

<sup>39</sup> Raymond Huard, "Le suffrage universel sous la Seconde République. État des travaux, questions en attente," *Revue d'histoire du 19 e siècle* 14, no. 1 (1997): 51-72; Alain Garrigou, "Le brouillon du suffrage universel. Archéologie du décret du 5 mars 1848," *Genèses* 6

towards liberalization, but also part of a political strategy to reign in the possibility of political violence.<sup>40</sup> The resulting implementation of a “universal” male suffrage without property or literacy qualifications expanded the French franchise from about two hundred and fifty thousand to over nine million voters.<sup>41</sup> Despite universalist language that stated that “the election belongs to everyone without exception...the law is equal and absolute for all,” women’s rights were not expanded.<sup>42</sup>

The Revolution of 1848 resulted in limited colonial representation and non-white suffrage rights, including in Algeria, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, Senegal, India, and Guyane.<sup>43</sup> The abolishment of slavery further expanded the pool of potential non-white male citizens.<sup>44</sup> For example, the legislative elections of October 1848 included about 12,000 newly-eligible African voters in the Communes of Senegal, many of whom did not speak French or practice Christianity.<sup>45</sup> However, this law was weakened by a number of last

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(December 1991): 161-178; Robert Balland, “De l’organisation à la restriction du suffrage universel en France (1848-1850),” in *Réaction et suffrage universel en France et en Allemagne (1848-1850)*, ed. Jacques Droz 67-173 (Paris: Société d’histoire de 1848, 1963).

<sup>40</sup> John Ellis, “Patterns of Political Violence during the Second Republic, 1848-1851,” in *Revolt to Revolution*, ed. Mickael Elliot-Bateman, John Ellis, and Tom Bowden, 59-112 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974); Louis Hincker, *Citoyens-combattants à Paris, 1848-1851* (Villeneuve-d’Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2008); Olivier Ihl, “Lurn et le fusil: sur les violence électorales lors du scrutin du 23 avril 1848,” *Revue française de science politique* 60, no. 1 (2010): 9-35; and Dominique Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens: Sur l’idée moderne de nation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 81.

<sup>41</sup> Decree of 5 March 1848; Decree of 2 March 1848; Proclamation provisoire à l’armée of 30 March-1 April 1848.

<sup>42</sup> Proclamation of 16 March 1848.

<sup>43</sup> Decree of 5 March 1848; Instruction du gouvernement provisoire du décret du 5 mars 1848; Instruction of 27 April 1848.

<sup>44</sup> Decree of 27 April 1848; Instruction of 17 April 1848; “Note sur le régime électoral dans les Etablissements Français de l’Inde,” (23 April 1937), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2875.

<sup>45</sup> Arrêté of 10 October 1848; Arrêté of 11 October 1848; Michael Crowder, *Senegal: A Study in French Assimilation Policy* (London: Methuen & Company Limited, 1967), 13; Catherine Coquery-Vidrotitch, “Nationalité et citoyenneté en Afrique occidentale français: Originaires et citoyens dans le Sénégal colonial,” *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 2 (2001), 288-9;

minute modifications, including a provision that allowed only a week and a half for new voter registration and another that restricted the law's applicability to the urban centers of Saint Louis and Gorée.

This strategy of limited and controlled expansion of certain political institutions became a cornerstone of French colonization policy, enabling the administration to frame conquest as the modernization of “primitive” political space. In spring of 1848, for example, elected deputy and Foreign Ministry official Léonce de Lavergne argued that the lack of modern political and social institutions made the colonies “states in development,” *tabula rasas* that would provide France an opportunity to export its own Republican genius and experiment with a range of political and social policies, as “if something might save Africa today, as well as France itself, it is liberty.”<sup>46</sup> Lavergne argued that the slow implementation of representative institutions was particularly well suited to address Africa's current “lack” of political structures, as French reforms could provide an “equal place for everyone under an African sun” and thereby “illuminate a new world of universal suffrage and mutual rights and responsibilities.” He drew on the widespread European belief that Africans had no real history or society, as “here, more than anywhere else, all men are equal, because there is no past, no ancient divisions.”<sup>47</sup> The stereotype of an Africa existing outside of

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Doudou Thiam, *La Portée de la citoyenneté française dans les territoires d'outre-mer* (Paris: Société d'Éditions africaines, 1953), 99-104.

<sup>46</sup> Léonce de Lavergne, “L’Afrique sous le gouvernement républicain,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 22 (1 May 1848), 390. On the French colonies as a laboratory, see Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, “Exporting the Revolution: Grégoire, Haiti and the Colonial Laboratory, 1815–1827,” in *The Abbé Grégoire and his World*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin et. al., 41-69 (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Lavergne, “L’Afrique,” 392.

history and inhabited by malleable individuals was used in the service of a promised democratic expansion that could itself secure French colonial interests.

While the Second Republic oversaw a slow expansion of colonial representation, not all administrators agreed with the policy. For example, after Governor of Senegal Auguste Baudin lost an election to influential Saint Louis-based métis merchant Barthélémy-Durand Valentin, he condemned the system that failed to elect him as inherently flawed.<sup>48</sup> Baudin described universal suffrage in the colonies as “absurd and nonsensical,” arguing that if any French advocate saw how elections proceeded in the colonies, “it would frighten even the most dedicated partisan” of electoral expansion. He described election day as a chaotic and “murderous battle... I would defy any black to know positively which candidate he voted for, and if this business should take place often, all the paper manufacturers in Europe will not be able to meet Senegal’s needs,” so extensive was the alleged fraud.<sup>49</sup> While Baudin shared Lavergne’s image of the black voter as a primitive political subject, he did not agree with Lavergne’s vision of a future in which that voter could be molded to suit French needs.

While the Constitution of November 1848 confirmed universal and direct manhood suffrage as well as colonial representation, it did not specify the number of representatives nor the means through which they would be elected.<sup>50</sup> Colonies were simultaneously declared “French territory” as well as spaces of exception “ruled by particular laws” and whose status could be changed by a “special law” at any point in the future.<sup>51</sup> Such a flexible system made it possible to fully remove colonial representation (as happened for

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<sup>48</sup> Jones, *Métis*, fn23.

<sup>49</sup> Auguste Baudin, cited in G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 26-27.

<sup>50</sup> Articles 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, and 46 of the Constitution of 1848.

<sup>51</sup> Article 109 of the Constitution of 1848.

India in 1849) or tack on additional requirements for citizenship and voting (as happened in Senegal the same year).<sup>52</sup> The Revolution of 1848 in this way opened some spaces of colonial enfranchisement while also providing new legal structures to control political systems in the empire.

Although the implications of these political reforms would continue to reverberate in the coming years, the Second Republic itself was short-lived, as the fall of the regime and the establishment of the dictatorial Second French Empire in late 1851 suspended colonial representation and curtailed suffrage rights across the metropole.<sup>53</sup> Despite a lack of official representative institutions, debates continued about the value of elections and suffrage in new colonial spaces, with questions of citizenship and nationality gaining in importance as imperial borders expanded.<sup>54</sup> Rationales for limiting the rights of new imperial subjects were seen as less necessary in contexts of explicitly violent conquest, although references were often made to the “inherent barbarism” of non-Christian religions and the belief that “uneducated and savage” masses would be intellectually incapable of rational political action.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Constitution of 1848; Electoral law of 8 February 1849; Law of 28 February 1849; Electoral law of 15 March 1849; Promulgation of the Electoral Law of 15 March 1849 of 22 July 1849; Articles 75-78, 82, and 96 in the Electoral Law of 15 March 1849.

<sup>53</sup> Law of 2 December 1851; Articles 4 and 32 of the Constitution of 14 January 1852; Decree organique of 2 February 1852; Decree réglementaire of 2 February 1852. Also see Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders: Europe 1800-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 176.

<sup>54</sup> Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Howard Payne, *The Police State of Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, 1851-1860* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961); Brett, “Legislating Inequality,” 450.

<sup>55</sup> “Sénatus-Consulte du 14 juillet 1865 sur l’état des personnes et la naturalisation en Algérie,” in *Le voyage de S. M. l’Empereur Napoléon III réd. d’après les documents officiels* (Paris: E. Pick, 1865). Also see David Robinson, “French Africans” in *Democracy and Development in Mali* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2000); Jean-Loup Amsell, *Affirmative Exclusion: Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France* (Ithaca: Cornell University

## Making the Third Republic

The official proclamation of the French Third Republic in September 1870 initiated a round of debates about political rights and citizenship in the new French regime across metropole and colony. The “ideal” citizen was a self-sufficient male head of household, and while women were understood to be central in the construction of the nation and the home, they remained politically disenfranchised.<sup>56</sup> Activist groups dedicated to the promotion of women’s rights proliferated, yet relatively few advocated female suffrage as their primary goal.<sup>57</sup> Although limited colonial representation was affirmed, politicians remained conflicted about the extent to which democratic institutions should be enacted in the different colonies, resulting in a contested system of imperial citizenship.<sup>58</sup>

For example, one of the largest of such debates occurred in Algeria in the wake of the 1870 transition from military rule and the establishment of new civilian political structures. The newly-created General Council established voting rights for “French, indigenous, and foreign” individuals, although the exact limits and applicability of such

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Press, 2003); Christopher Harrison, *France and Islam in West Africa, 1860-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 10; A.S. Kanya Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan: A Study in French Military Imperialism* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969); Brett, “Legislating Inequality,” 441; and Patrick Weil, “Le statut des musulmans en Algérie coloniale – Une nationalité française dénaturée,” in *La Justice en Algérie 1830-1962*, 95-109 (Paris: La Documentation française, 2005).

<sup>56</sup> William Fortescue, *The Third Republic in France 1870-1940: Conflicts and Continuities* (New York: Routledge, 2000); James R. Lehning, *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Gérard Sautel, *Histoire des institutions publiques depuis la Révolution française* (Paris: Dalloz, 1985), 507-9; Vivien A. Schmidt, *Democratizing France: The Political and Administrative History of Decentralization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30-39; and Bertrand Taithe, *Citizenship and Wars: France in Turmoil, 1870-1871* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>57</sup> Paul Smith, *Feminism and the Third Republic: Women’s Political and Civil Rights in France, 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Fauré, *La démocratie sans les femmes*, 4-6.

<sup>58</sup> Decree of 15 September 1870; Decree of 28 January 1871. Also see Elizabeth Heath, *Wine, Sugar, and the Making of Modern France: Global Economic Crisis and the Racialization of French Citizenship, 1870-1910* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 45.

terms was left unclear.<sup>59</sup> For example, Algerian Muslim “indigenous” inhabitants who rejected their right to “personal status” (the use of Islamic law in marriage, inheritance, and divorce) and agreed to the French Civil Code became eligible to apply for French citizenship, although this process was not guaranteed.<sup>60</sup> Despite the narrowness of Muslim enfranchisement, white French opposition persisted. Arguments often characterized the population as “impossible” to be assimilated, as seen in one political tract that described Algerian Muslims as “completely opposite” to France and its values.<sup>61</sup> Building on such sentiments, suffrage was not extended to Muslim Algerians, as the administration stated that such a practice would violate the principle of public law by conferring the right of citizens on those who were not French.

The situation was different for Algerian Jews, however, who found themselves the target of a new French “emancipation” campaign intended to assimilate them into “better” Republicans.<sup>62</sup> Jewish Algerians gained access to full French citizenship partly based on the belief that they were in need of saving from Ottoman or Islamic barbarism. For example, the same political tract that described Muslims as opposite to the French described the Jews of

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<sup>59</sup> Decree of 11 June 1870; Jules Delsieux, *Essai sur la naturalisation collective des Israélites indigènes* (Algiers: Duclaux, 1860); and Adrien Bavalier, *Essai historique sur le droit d'élection et sur les anciennes assemblées représentatives de la France* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1874), 391-2.

<sup>60</sup> See Brett, “Legislating”; and Charles-Robert Ageron, *Modern Algeria: A History from 1830 to the Present* (London: Hurst, 1991), 39.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Fawtier, *L'Autonomie algérienne et la république fédérale* (Constantine L. Marle, 1871), 4.

<sup>62</sup> However, Jews did not blindly accept French policy, even at its most “emancipatory,” pushing back against the expanding colonial state using language that drew not only on French Republicanism but also their personal understandings of Jewish piety and law. Jules Delsieux, *Essai sur la nationalisation collective des Israélites indigènes* (Algiers: Duclaux, 1860); Schreier, *Arabs*, 165; Joshua Schreier, “‘They Swore upon the Tombs Never to Make Peace with Us,’ Algerian Jews and French Colonialism: 1845-1848,” in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed., Patricia Lorcin (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 112.

Algeria as being “deprived of rights, reduced to slavery, treated as enemies, despised by Muslims.”<sup>63</sup> In creating these new divisions between “indigenous” Algerians based on religious criteria, the French established a bright line of difference between Jewish and non-Jewish people of Algeria and their position within the French colonial state.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, many Jewish Algerians opposed this forced “assimilation,” and furthermore, this legal citizenship and sympathetic discourse did not negate widespread anti-Semitism, particularly within the growing population of white settlers in the region.<sup>65</sup>

The enfranchisement of such white European “foreigners,” namely non-French white settlers in Algeria, initiated an additional set of conflicts. The white settler or  *pied noir*  population of Algeria was split on the matter, partly due to the fact that much of the white population was itself descended from non-French European settlers. Some argued in favor of freer access to French citizenship for Italian and Spanish migrants while others raised concerns about a “foreign peril” that would overwhelm the white Francophone community.<sup>66</sup> The “pro-foreigner” camp acquired a number of high level political supporters, including one deputy who argued that “these brave co-citizens who have been colonizing this land with so much courage that they want to be French, yet we refuse them the right to send representatives to this assembly! Why should this be?”<sup>67</sup> The Minister of War similarly added that “the French who are cozy at home make poor colonizers, so the future of

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<sup>63</sup> Fawtier, *L'Autonomie algérienne*, 4-5.

<sup>64</sup> Decree of 24 October 1870. Also see Sarah Taieb-Carlen, *Les Juifs d'Afrique du Nord: De Didon à de Gaulle* (Paris: Sépia, 2016), 102.

<sup>65</sup> H. Garrot, *La mystification du décret Crémieux* (Alger: Librairie Relin, 1898); “Assemblée nationale, Séance du mardi 30 novembre 1875,” *Le XIXe siècle* (2 December 1875), 2.

<sup>66</sup> Schreier, *Arabs*, 162; David Prochaska, *Making Algeria French: Colonialism in Bône, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 202.

<sup>67</sup> “Corps législative, session ordinaire de 1870, séance vendredi 17 juin 1870,” *Journal officiel de l'Empire français* (18 June 1870), 1035.

colonization in Algeria will, we must acknowledge, owe much to the foreigners who will come to settle there.”<sup>68</sup>

The definition of who was or was not a “true foreigner” or able to be assimilated into white French Algerian society stood in sharp contrast to the steadfast assertion that indigenous Muslims would never be truly French.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, Muslim political activists also opposed the “foreigner” measure, arguing that allowing non-French white settlers to vote while keeping other Algerians disenfranchised flew in the face of administration rhetoric about assimilation towards French norms as a precursor for full citizenship. Colonial architects such as Jules Ferry and Émile Ollivier questioned how the indigenous population would continue to react to the practice of enfranchising non-French foreigners while their own rights remained so limited.<sup>70</sup> Other deputies opposed the plan as well, with one commentator acknowledging that while such a practice “might be prudent in very far away colonies,” it was a “genuine danger” to do when it came to the “Algerian land that has become French, made even more French by the recent inauguration of the civilian rule.”<sup>71</sup> While ultimately all voters were required to be nationalized before gaining the right to vote, race and religion remained the most significant in determining suitability for nationalization.

In this sense, the boundaries of the franchise were determined not by ironclad imperial logic, but by a shifting array of priorities that tracked the concerns of the French state and people living within it. Questions of religious affiliation and citizenship were controversial not only in Algeria, but also in West Africa and India. In Senegal, for example,

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<sup>68</sup> “Corps legislative.”

<sup>69</sup> Schreier, *Arabs*, 162.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> “Corps legislative.”

the Governor opposed the expansion of representation by arguing that the region was in fact “not ripe” for democratic institutions as its European population was too small and business-focused while “Muslim influence” in the region made the African population too impervious to French “civilization.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite reservations, municipal institutions continued to expand across the colonies throughout the early 1870s, with the limits of such institutions becoming increasingly contentious as the new constitution was being drafted.<sup>73</sup> Opponents of colonial representation used civilizational discourse to buttress arguments about the measure’s supposed impracticality. For example, one French senator warned that an expanded franchise would result in an electorate comprised of “ten or twelve savage *nègres* for every civilized white” which would therefore make the proposal not “feasible.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly, the Minister of the Navy argued that while local general councils should be enlarged in places like Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Réunion, colonial representation should not be applied in colonies such as Cochinchina, Guyane, New Caledonia, Senegal, or India because the population was not yet “matured.”<sup>75</sup> Addressing the National Assembly to loud cheers, he argued that “the populations of the colonies, with morals, origin, civilization, and even religion so different from ours, have no idea of French interests” and therefore could not possibly be allowed to have representation equal to that of French departments.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> François-Xavier Michel Valière cited in Idowu, “Establishment,” 269.

<sup>73</sup> Metmau, “Chronique,” *La Revue de France* (January-March 1874), 915; Decree of 10 August 1872; Decree of 13 June 1872.

<sup>74</sup> Baron de Lareinty, “Lettre,” *Le XIXe siècle* (5 August 1873): 1-2; Henri Baillardel de Lareinty quoted in Metmau, “Chronique,” *La Revue de France* (January-March 1874), 915.

<sup>75</sup> Charles Dompierre d’Hornoy, quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Dompierre d’Hornoy, “Assemblée nationale, Séance du mardi 30 novembre 1875,” *Le XIXe siècle* (2 December 1875), 3.

Those who favored colonial representation did so for a number of reasons, including attacking those who opposed representation as dangerously monarchist, dictatorial, unworldly, or racist.<sup>77</sup> One popular strategy focused on the need to preserve the cohesion of a larger vision of France, as seen in one article that argued that any diminishment of colonial representation would “split the great French family.”<sup>78</sup> The use of a familial metaphor was a popular technique, seen in another opinion piece which argued that it was only colonial representation that could protect the “faraway members of the French family, who — despite their troubles, their smallness, and their handicaps — are nonetheless worthy of our affection and our constant solicitude,” presenting the colonies as distant junior kin.

Such paternalism was common amongst those who supported colonial representation, as Republicans often framed the expansion of elections as a key part of France’s civilizing mission. One deputy argued that overseas electoral capacity would only improve with more guidance on the part of the French administration, and that the “negligence of a duty is not a sufficient reason to suppress a right.”<sup>79</sup> Some such supporters were explicit in their belief of the inferiority of non-white voters, even if they believed future improvement was possible. For example, one opinion piece stated that “blacks... leave much to be desired in terms of political intelligence... they know not what they do when they deposit a vote for Mr. X or Mr. Y, even including those who are literate... furthermore, they happily sell their vote for a simple glass of rum, a *coup de sec* as they say... the barrels of rum sometimes stored near

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<sup>77</sup> E. Schnerb, “Journée politique,” *Le XIXe siècle* (17 March 1874): 1; Metmau, “Chronique,” *La Revue de France* (October-December 1875), 687; Albert Teisseire, “La Représentation coloniale et l’Amendement Tallon,” *Gironde* (30 April 1874); Thomy Lahuppe, “Au rédacteur, Paris, 15 novembre 1875,” *Le XIXe siècle* (17 November 1875): 2; Unknown, [Untitled], *Le XIXe siècle* (25 November 1875): 2-3.

<sup>78</sup> Teisseire, “La Représentation coloniale.”

<sup>79</sup> “Assemblée nationale, Séance du mardi 30 novembre 1875,” *Le XIXe siècle* (2 December 1875), 3.

the voting halls have certainly influenced election results.”<sup>80</sup> Despite these limitations, the author nonetheless argued that those who opposed colonial representation still “over-blackened” the colonies (“*les noircit trop*”) as “since emancipation they have progressed more every day” and would do so even more with greater practice and French guidance. Elections and suffrage were a way to showcase the power of Republicanism to correct “degenerate societies,” be that caste hierarchies in India or “animistic fetish worship” in Africa.<sup>81</sup>

When the debate had settled in 1875, each Algerian department as well as Guadeloupe, India, Martinique, and Réunion (the four colonies represented in the Senate) secured the right to nominate a single deputy, enabling legislative representation in Algeria, Guadeloupe, India, Martinique, and Réunion.<sup>82</sup> Local and municipal councils were framed as a means to “introduce” public or political life into the colonies and promote assimilation to the French political model.<sup>83</sup> Representative institutions were often divided into “European” and “Indigenous” sections in which at least half of the seats would be reserved for Europeans, particularly when they were in the numerical minority. One administration official and naval admiral described the legal changes from the 1870s as introducing the “first duties of public life” to the regions, preparing the population for even more representative institutions that would “better conform to the principles of autonomy that

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<sup>80</sup> H. Metmau, “Chronique coloniale” *Revue de France* (April - June 1874), 613-621.

<sup>81</sup> Namakkal, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Law of 24 February 1875; Constitution of 1875; Law of 24 December 1875; Loi organique of 30 November 1875.

<sup>83</sup> “Rapport N° 6948 of 4 February 1879,” *Bulletin des lois de la République française* 12 (1879), 457-459; Décret of 25 January 1879; “Note pour le Ministre: Régime électoral dans les Etablissements Français de l’Inde” (June - August 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; and “Note sur le régime électoral.”

tends to prevail in our colonial legislation,” framing French political structures as the introduction of politics itself.<sup>84</sup>

However, the exclusion of Senegal from representation in the new National Assembly was deeply controversial, prompting an immediate amendment from the now-outgoing Senegalese deputy Lafon de Fongaufier who argued that “in Senegal, in particular, the population has always demonstrated the greatest patriotism, the Assembly would not want to remove their right to be represented.”<sup>85</sup> In a dramatic if somewhat convoluted op-ed, the deputy decried how the rights of Senegal and Guyane had been “sacrificed to the Minotaur of the moral order... like the desert hunter that flees on horseback, cubs of the lioness hidden in the folds of his robes. He tosses down first one cub, then another, and while their mother pursues to collect his discarded loot, he gains ground... however, the lioness only wants to devour them.”<sup>86</sup> This use of violent imagery was not uncommon, as another deputy’s description of the removal of Senegalese voting as creating a “mutilated France.”<sup>87</sup> When the decision was ultimately reversed in 1879, opposition to expanded colonial suffrage in Senegal remained strong, as seen in the screed of one deputy who led a “furious assault” against the restoration of Senegalese representation in the Chamber, “speaking ill of the place and its inhabitants.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> A. Pothuau, “Rapport n. 7948 au Président de la République, suivi de deux Décrets,” *Bulletin des lois* 18 (1879), 547.

<sup>85</sup> “Assemblée nationale, Séance du mardi 30 novembre 1875.”

<sup>86</sup> Paul Lafargue, “Le Parlement: Courrier de la chambre,” *Le XIXe siècle* (28 February 1877): 1.

<sup>87</sup> Lafargue, “Le Parlement,” (28 February 1877).

<sup>88</sup> Paul Lafargue, “Le Parlement: Courrier de la chambre,” *Le XIXe siècle* (1 July 1876): 1; Law of 8 April 1879; Decree of 12 April 1879.

With a basic framework of representation now in place, debate turned to what sorts of specific “reservations and modifications” would govern elections across the empire.<sup>89</sup> In general, elections expanded, including within newly established colonies such as Cochinchina, French Oceania, and in the Hebrides, where white settlers declared an independent commune known as Franceville that was alleged to include universal suffrage without distinction of gender or race.<sup>90</sup> However, double electoral colleges, strict voting requirements, and reserved seats for European candidates ensured French domination.<sup>91</sup>

The vague limits of such laws meant that they often had to be interpreted and enforced at the level of the courts. A series of cases in Senegal between 1907 and 1910 did just that, resulting in juridical decisions that drew sharper lines between the rights of originaires – black inhabitants of the Communes with an increased set of rights – and other black inhabitants of Senegal.<sup>92</sup> While the rights granted to originaires through the ruling

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<sup>89</sup> “Titre VI: Dispositions relatives à l’Algérie et aux colonies,” in *Loi du 5 avril 1884 sur l’organisation municipale, accompagnée d’annotations extraites de la circulaire ministérielle du 10 avril 1884* (Lyon: Association Typographique, 1884), 70-71.

<sup>90</sup> M. Eugène Etienne referred to a petition drafted by the settlement that called for greater French influence as “merely waste paper.” Oceania’s General Council was very short lived, abolished in 1903. “The New Hebrides Question,” *The Sydney Morning Herald* (12 October 1889), 11; Jean-Marc Regnault, “Citoyen et/ou sujet des colonies, puis des territoires d’outre-mer,” in *Identité, nationalité, citoyenneté outre-mer: actes du colloque des 9-10 novembre 1998* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1999), 155.

<sup>91</sup> In Senegal, for example, the right to elect members of the centralized General Council was open to non-white men, but required one to write, read, and speak French. Law of 28 July 1881; Law of 16 June 1885; Law of 13 February 1889; Law of 17 July 1889. Also see Regnault, “Citoyen et/ou sujet,” 157; Decree n. 7949 of 4 February 1879; and Arrêté de promulgation of the Decree of 4 February.

<sup>92</sup> Municipal law of 5 April 1884; Arrête of the Cour de Cassation of 24 July 1907; Arrête of the Cour de Cassation of 22 July 1908; Arrête of the Cour de Cassation of 26 April 1909. Also see Coquery-Vidrotitch, “Nationalité et citoyenneté,” 291.

were relatively narrow, the local French colonial administration felt they were too expansive, leading them to institute new laws to restrict the actual practice of such rights.<sup>93</sup>

While debates over the exact limits of citizenship laws were common across the empire, they took on different forms depending on local context. In French India for example, over half of the membership in the centralized General Council and local municipal councils were reserved for “Europeans or their descendants.”<sup>94</sup> Disenfranchised Tamil politicians protested this division and the limited expansion of suffrage in general, advocating for a single list of universal manhood suffrage that gave all voters equal representation.<sup>95</sup> However, other influential Indian elites fought against universal suffrage and argued in favor of the maintenance of separate electoral lists for “Europeans” and “elite indigenous,” arguing that they did not want to be included in the same political category as lower-status or lower-caste individuals.<sup>96</sup> (As Chapter Four shows, a similar situation unfolded in 1940s Senegal, where the more elite originaire voters did not want to be put into the same citizenship category as rural African farmers.)

The controversy over the nature of political division in India accelerated into the 1870s, resulting in a new “Renunciation” movement that came to play a central role in shifting citizenship rights. The main power of the movement came from the lower status

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<sup>93</sup> For example, originaires had expanded rights only when they were physically inside of the so-called Communes, four urban centers consisting of Dakar, Saint-Louis, Rufisque, and the Isle of Gorée. Decree of 6 August 1912; Coquery-Vidrotitch, “Nationalité et citoyenneté,” 289.

<sup>94</sup> For example, India’s centralized Conseil Général had fourteen Europeans and eleven “natifs,” elected by a double list. In the Municipal Councils, European representation was reserved for eight of the fifteen slots in Pondichery, five out of the nine at Chandernagor, and six out of the thirteen at Karikal. Decree 25 January 1879; Decree of 12 March 1880; “Note sur le régime électoral dans les Etablissements Français de l’Inde.”

<sup>95</sup> Namakkal, 63; and Ian H. Magedera, “France-India-Britain, (Post)Colonial Triangles: Mauritius/India and Canada/India, (Post)Colonial Tangents,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002), 65.

<sup>96</sup> Namakkal, 63.

Tamil supporters who demanded greater political rights and critiqued the administration's division of the population by "origin" rather than "capacity."<sup>97</sup> Their protests provoked the administration to reconsider their method for dividing the Indian population, as they wanted to keep this population separate from the Europeans but also wanted to provide a reward for willingness to assimilate towards French political norms.<sup>98</sup>

In the early 1880s, the colonial administration created a new political status that opened up citizenship to non-Europeans who "renounced" their "Hindu status" and accepted the French Civil Code.<sup>99</sup> However, to placate upper caste and elite individuals who did not want to be in the same political class as those in lower castes and to ensure that the "European" list would not be overwhelmed by Tamil voters, the French made three citizenship categories: the "French Element," the "French Element, Renouncers," and the "Indigenous Element."<sup>100</sup> While some Tamil politicians criticized the requirement to renounce one's Hindu status in order to receive membership as part of the "French Element," others disadvantaged by caste hierarchies saw this as an opportunity to strategically affiliate with the colonial state in order to gain certain advantages.<sup>101</sup> The exact limits of these three categories continued to shift, with the first list expanding to include not only "electors of European origin or descent" but also the vaguely-defined collection of "some natives who have renounced their local status and also meet certain conditions." The

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<sup>97</sup> "Note sur le régime électoral dans les Etablissements Français de l'Inde."

<sup>98</sup> Arrêt of the Cour de Cassation of 7 November 1883.

<sup>99</sup> Decree 21 September 1881; Arrêt of the Cour de Cassation of 7 November 1883; Decree of 26 February 1884.

<sup>100</sup> Decree du 26 February 1884.

<sup>101</sup> Namakkal, 63-4.

second list was reserved for any renouçants who did not meet these “certain conditions” as well as any non-renouçants who met an entirely separate set of necessary conditions.<sup>102</sup>

The French administration framed the acquisition of citizenship as a process of mutual devotion and service to empire, characterizing the renouçants as those who “wish to renounce their personal status to submit themselves entirely to the empire of French law. They will welcome every advantage... to obtain as complete an assimilation as possible with the European element and erase every trace of difference.”<sup>103</sup> In one French op-ed, the renouçants were described as “men of progress who represent the active liberal element of the country, we must open to them as big as possible the doors to local councils.”<sup>104</sup> The author acknowledged that this was partly due to strategic necessity on the part of the French administration, as there were very few “true Europeans” remaining in the colony and the non-renouçant Hindus “refuse to accept our laws.” However, he despaired that few of the thousands of renouçants were “truly liberal” and “intelligent” enough to bear this political duty, making the whole proposition a massive risk.

A British author writing in 1902 described political status in turn of the century Pondicherry in similarly derogatory terms, stating that:

Madame la République has artlessly introduced universal suffrage. Every Hindoo, who chooses to renounce his status as such, is an elector, and contributes, so far as in him lies, towards the Parliamentary responsibilities of the Luxembourg and the Palais Bourbon. There are thus nearly seventy thousand persons on the registers, of whom some five hundred at most can sign in French. This colossal crowd had no idea whatever of the value of its right and votes blindly at the bidding of any native who possesses the requisite amount of influence. In many cases voting papers are put into the urn in packets. A visitor to Pondicherry once watched a voting-station all day

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<sup>102</sup> Décret du 20 September 1899; Giacobbi, Letter to Monsieur le Vice Président (17 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; “Note pour le Ministre: Régime électoral dans les Etablissements Français de l’Inde.”

<sup>103</sup> Decree of 26 February 1884.

<sup>104</sup> Anonymous, “Mon cher monsieur About,” *Le XIXe siècle* (March 1884): 1.

and saw precisely fourteen people enter; yet the returns showed that over twelve hundred votes had been recorded at the polling booth.<sup>105</sup>

French voices also critiqued the presence of allegedly rampant voter fraud across the empire, usually framing the phenomenon as a rationale to halt colonial elections and representation entirely. For example, one op-ed written in the wake of the legislative elections of 1893 stated that the small frauds and imperfections of elections in France were “nothing compared to the violations which occur in the colonies” where elections are “some sort of gentle fantasy” in which polling stations that received only a handful of voters were shown to have thousands of ballots cast.<sup>106</sup> A French commenter described turn-of-the-century colonial elections as a “deplorable and often grotesque spectacle” riddled with fraud while a joke published in a 1910 paper played on the idea of fraudsters in Réunion voting in the name of faraway bishops, the president, and the deceased.<sup>107</sup>

While French commentary treated fraud as an outcome of an incompetent voting population, inhabitants of the colonies put the blame squarely on the French administration, arguing it was falling short in its electoral duties. For example, one formerly enslaved man from Guadeloupe wrote to the Minister of Colonies in 1908 to explain how universal suffrage had been “strangled” by violence and fraud during elections, using strategically worded language to hold out hope that “humanitarian France and liberating France cannot abandon its children.”<sup>108</sup> While the most common invocation of fraud was as a critique, others pointed to the

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<sup>105</sup> Julian James Cotton, “Pondicherry,” *Macmillans Magazine* 517 (November 1902), 130.

<sup>106</sup> “L’Élection de l’Inde,” *Le XIXe siècle* (9 October 1893): 1.

<sup>107</sup> Antonin Lefèvre-Pontalis, *Les élections en Europe à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1902), 14-15; “Politique coloniale,” *Figaro* (22 September 1893); “Élections coloniales,” *Figaro* (16 Septembre 1893); “Les Elections Coloniales,” *Le XIXe siècle* (30 April 1910): 1.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Heath, *Wine Sugar*, 1.

existence of fraud as a means to prompt the French administration to do more to protect the institution of suffrage where it was vulnerable.

### **From World War to World War**

Colonial representation continued to be challenged throughout the early twentieth century.<sup>109</sup> For example, one failed Royalist proposal from 1905 suggested that representation cease in order to better separate “colonial matters” and “political matters,” as if the two were separate entities.<sup>110</sup> The Minister of Colonies defended overseas representation, encouraging other politicians to sustain the institution as a way to “consider the future... and the place France holds in the world, our desire to remain faithful to our civilizing mission,” a statement that met with great applause in the French Senate.<sup>111</sup> Other opponents of colonial representation returned to the question of fraud, with one deputy noting in 1912 that “we all know how elections go in the colonies” and that it did not make sense to have “two weights and two measures, according rights to some colonies but not to others... in the colonies, there are many electors who are not taxpayers and who do not do military service yet intervene in our debates and vote for either peace or war.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “Nouvelles parlementaires,” *Le XIXe siècle* (17 October 1884): 1; Charles Bos, “Nos Leaders: Les Députés coloniaux,” *Le XIXe siècle* (16 January 1897): 1; “La représentation coloniale,” *Le XIXe siècle* (14 January 1897): 2; “La Représentation coloniale,” *Le XIXe siècle* (22 January 1897): 2; E.W., “Au Sénat,” *Le XIXe siècle* (17 April 1905), 4; “A la Chambre: La Réforme Electorale,” *Le XIXe Siècle* (28 March 1912): 2. Also see H.S. “La Réforme Electorale au Senat,” *Le XIXe siècle* (16 December 1912): 2; H.S. “La Réforme Electorale au Senat,” *Le XIXe siècle* (20 December 1912): 2.

<sup>110</sup> E.W., “Au Sénat.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> D’Elissagary in “A la Chambre: La Réforme Electorale,” *Le XIXe Siècle* (28 March 1912): 2; H.S. “La Réforme Electorale,” (16 December 1912); H.S. “La Réforme Electorale,” (20 December 1912).

This connection between military service and voting rights remained central in discussions of colonial representation, particularly in the lead up to the First World War. For example, following the 1908 leaking of a plan to extend obligatory military conscription in Algeria, a delegate of Algerian men unsuccessfully met with the administration to demand that any conscription be paired with expanded citizenship, even for those retaining their personal status.<sup>113</sup>

Military service remained a citizenship issue throughout the First World War, enabling politicians like Blaise Diagne in Senegal to draw on administration language to justify an expansion in rights. In his 1915 law on military service and citizenship, for example, Diagne argued that “indigenous electors enjoy the outrageous privilege – to which they themselves take exception – of taking part in a national government without being called to pay their blood tax like all French must do... they consider this anomaly to be a veritable humiliation for the reputation of their patriotism and their French consciousness.”<sup>114</sup> The law prevented originaires from being put into the *tirailleurs* – an army of non-citizen subjects – and thereby laid the groundwork to solidify veterans’ claims for full citizenship. As war continued through 1916, Diagne further paired expanded voting rights with the provision of military service through an additional law that stated that originaires “are and remain French citizens, subject to the military obligations stated by the law of 19 October 1915.”<sup>115</sup> This law also expanded the very category of originaire to include all those born in the Communes of Senegal (Saint-Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and

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<sup>113</sup> Martin Evans and John Phillips, *Algeria: Anger of the Dispossessed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 42; Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 107; Benjamin Stora, *Algeria, 1830-2000: A Short History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 246; Smith, *Colonial Memory*, 107.

<sup>114</sup> Law of 19 October 1915.

<sup>115</sup> Law du 29 September 1916.

Rufisque) as well as their children, bundling descent of status, the importance of military service, and the permanence of citizenship.<sup>116</sup>

At the same time that men in the empire used military service to make claims in favor of expanded citizenship, French metropolitan women's lack of military service fortified arguments against expansion of female suffrage. Despite support in the Chamber, none of the six measures proposed between 1919 and 1936 to expand metropolitan female suffrage were able to pass in the Senate. Indirect women's representation was also taken up in debates about family citizenship. However, although sometimes described as a means of enacting female representation, proposals for family citizenship would have typically worked by enlarging the voting rights of male heads of household depending on the presence of a wife and the number of their children. Along with keeping the priority on a patriarchal family structure, women's incorporation into political rights would have continued to be at level of the whole domestic unit rather than as an independent actor.

Given the large numbers of veterans produced by the war, debates over the connection between family life, military service, and citizenship persisted into the interwar period, particularly in the colonies.<sup>117</sup> As the children and wives of veterans, girls and women in French Africa soon had an increased number of pathways to access French nationality and citizenship, typically provided a request was made by the male "head of the household" and the family provided an "express waiver" of personal status.<sup>118</sup> In the initial version of one such law, the term "wives" was technically written in the plural, intended by the French administration to refer to the entirety of individual women in monogamous

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<sup>116</sup> Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 69.

<sup>117</sup> Law of 31 March 1928; Decree of 5 November 1928; Regnault, "Citoyen et/ou sujet."

<sup>118</sup> Decree of 14 January 1918.

marriages with eligible male citizens. However, the language itself opened up a way for polygamous households to make claims for citizenship to extend to multiple wives within the same household. In 1920 for example, a lieutenant from the French Soudan did just that, taking advantage of the non-specific language to acquire French naturalization not only for himself but also for his two wives.<sup>119</sup> The wording that enabled multiple “wives” to acquire citizenship rights through their husbands was quickly revised to specify that only one “wife” could acquire this right within each household, emphasizing the incompatibility of polygamy with French notions of citizenship and the family.

However, the gendered limits of who could and could not pass on rights within various types of family organization remained uneven. For example, in September 1932, a female originaire from Senegal attempted to acquire citizenship for her husband, who was not a citizen but had fought for the French during World War I. However, the administration questioned if a black female French citizen could also be considered a French national and, more importantly, if a woman should be allowed to pass her citizenship status on to a man. The language used by the court to deny the couple’s request framed the debate in terms of both gender and military service, arguing that the law about passing citizenship through marriage “only applies to men and their descendants. The law does not apply to women because they do not have the right to vote or to serve in the army.”<sup>120</sup>

Despite the limited openings enabled by unclear prose, the French administration clarified the language of the laws to more precisely specify what types of households, husbands, and wives were able to take advantage of the new citizenship laws. It was not any

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<sup>119</sup> Doussou Oulougouen for his two wives Yatembe Tembili and Yaraga Ouologouen. See Coquery-Vidrotich, “Nationalité et citoyenneté,” 291.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

male heads of household who were able to pass on their status to their wives, but only those who had only one wife at a time. Furthermore, women, regardless of their status, could not pass on citizenship or nationality to men they married. Citizenship regulations ordered family life to meet French criteria, with a subsequent law that required the wife and children of a man who had acquired French citizenship to themselves meet unspecified cultural “standards” in order to share in the man’s citizenship status.<sup>121</sup>

Although the proliferation of such regulations checked expansion of citizenship in the colonies, French politicians remained alarmed about any potential dilution of elite white political status. For example, following his 1924 electoral loss to Blaise Diagne, French lawyer Paul Defferre argued the election itself was invalid due to the allegedly “anti-white” politics that had turned the contest into a “race war.”<sup>122</sup> Defferre provided several examples, including a scene of an electoral rally in Rufisque at which Diagne reportedly told a gathered crowd that “Senegal cannot be represented by a white.” Defferre also described a meeting between Diagne and a group of Europeans that took place in a local hotel, in which Diagne showed up late and proceeded to “lash out” at the group by calling them “fanatics, riff raff sons of peasants, metropolitan runaways, and war deserters.” Regardless of its veracity, his anecdotes reveal an anxiety about the “inverting” of racial status in the empire, one in which elite Africans who had fought for France in the war rise above the white “riff raff” and “deserters” that comprised the colonial administration.

The case for who could and could not have the right to vote was thus intensely moralized, treated as a “reward” for those who had the right kind of family, fought the right

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<sup>121</sup> Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 122.

<sup>122</sup> Paul Defferre, Letter to the President of the Chamber of Deputies (15 May 1924), ANF C//10017.

kind of battles for the right country, and were the right kind of religion. In this sense, suffrage was part of a larger process of moral and racial “education” embedded within the French civilizing mission. In a lengthy article, French author and colonial commentator Pierre Mille discussed the expansion of universal suffrage in the colonies as a system of racial education, with democracy as a process through which “a race may acquire political consciousness, to learn to use a voting ballot for something other than satisfying individual desires.”<sup>123</sup> He argued that “even the French had to go through this education,” and that rushing the expansion of manhood suffrage in France in 1848 had “resulted in eighteen years of authoritarian Empire, because most the electors were not ready to use this gift with independence.” He compared the situation in French Africa to that of the United States, where he argued that the “ten million black electors” did not have adequate representation because “they sell their votes” or otherwise “do not know how to use them.” He then argued that the “deplorable situations” of Liberia and Haiti occurred because of “the blacks’... incomplete political education,” and, although “France proclaims the equality of the human races... all the races have not reached the same degree of development” and therefore must be “monitored and led to advancement when considering the expansion of their political rights.”<sup>124</sup> While France’s duty was therefore to slowly impart the values of democracy, it must be done slowly in order to ensure stability of both political and racial hierarchies.

The administration framed things in a similar way, as seen when the Governor General of French West Africa described the 1925 implementation of limited consultative councils for “exceptional individuals” as going “as far as is possible down the path of

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<sup>123</sup> Pierre Mille, “Nos colonies et le suffrage universel,” *Courrier Colonial* (17 October [1924]), ANS 20G15. Also see Yaël Schlick, “The ‘French Kipling’: Pierre Mille’s Popular Colonial Fiction,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 34, no. 3 (1997): 226-241.

<sup>124</sup> Mille, “Nos colonies et le suffrage universel.”

indigenous participation of representation,” indicating that only so much “progress” could be made at once.<sup>125</sup> In the creation of the councils, the Governor General further argued that “the French administration has totally fulfilled its guiding role and should be credited for the fashion in which it will bring [its colonies] to a higher level.” In this sense, the French administration credited themselves with solving a “problem” of their own making, slowly reversing the restrictions they imposed on the population and calling that progress.

A permanent commission established to implement the representative councils shared a similar perspective. According to the commission, France had successfully drawn on its “long and invaluable experience” to secure the “evolution of indigenous mentality,” particularly through its encouragement of a “transformed” family structure and cultivation of the values of “humanity, responsibility, duty” as well as the development of a more “keen intelligence... and harder work ethic” among the population.<sup>126</sup> The foundation thus established, future development could be secured by “allowing the masses to choose for themselves... and make real their aspirations” through electoral colleges and increased representation, which were the “most rational way to ensure a true representation of indigenous interests in our assemblies.” However, while the elite of the indigenous population had “reached a higher level due in large part to their close contact with the European colonizers... across vast territories a primitive mentality remains dominant. No conception of a general interest has yet penetrated these backwards regions.” Therefore, such future democratic reforms would be limited to “evolved” regions in urban centers with

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<sup>125</sup> Carde, Letter to Minister of the Colonies Paris n°58 (6 March 1925), ANS 20G15; Decree of 30 March 1925; Decree of 18 April 1925.

<sup>126</sup> Commission permanente du Conseil de Gouvernement, “Rapport sur le Création d’un collège électoral indigène et refonte de la législation concernant les différents conseils,” (1925), ANS 20G15.

high numbers of white administrators. This was not only part of the duty of the French civilizing mission, but also a security measure that could “bring all of our subjects new proof of our true feelings for them and a certain assurance of our confidence in their future.” The promise of democratic expansion thus became a central element in administration language as a tool to ensure French-approved outcomes in a stable colonial hierarchy.

Yet the exact shape of any new democratic institutions remained uncertain. For example, in response to one proposal to create an additional “Colonial Parliament,” the Minister of Colonies responded that there should be only “one Parliament, the French Parliament” rather than separate bodies for colonial and domestic matters.<sup>127</sup> This question of a unified “French” representative body with limited space for colonial representatives took on increasing importance in interwar Algeria, where questions of citizenship expansion remained controversial.

Commenting on this question, then Minister of the Interior André Tardieu discussed possibilities for reform, either by enlarging existing institutions to incorporate all indigenous men or by creating a separate “special electoral college” reserved for Muslims to elect their own representatives.<sup>128</sup> Questions of “political evolution” were high on the list of importance in solving this puzzle, as government had to first determine the “current state of culture and development of the indigenous masses... if they exist in the same conditions as the European masses to fulfill the functions of political electors.”<sup>129</sup> While noting that the importance of Algerians spilling blood for France during the war, Tardieu also argued that “following the tradition of the Republic” regarding “equity” of laws and rights, they must

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<sup>127</sup> Georges Chaudey, “Le budget des colonies,” *Le XIXe siècle* (22 February 1921): 2.

<sup>128</sup> André Tardieu, “Un discours de M. André Tardieu sur les droits politiques des indigènes,” *Les Annales coloniales* (5 March 1929).

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

account not only for the “abstract logic” of a blood debt, but also the “social, economic, and mental stage of the regions to which the reforms would apply.”

Of particular concern for Tardieu was the influences of Islam and of rising Bolshevism, the former of which was “ancient” yet “proven to behave under the engineering of mutual fruitful adaptations” and indeed nourish civilizations while the latter was “recent... inassimilable... and destructive.” Despite this language of division and difference, he emphasized the unity of the French empire as a whole, arguing that “there is no such thing as Algerian problems, Indochinese problems, or West African problems. There are only French problems” and the changes to the law therefore must not consider Algeria in isolation but instead “of France in its entirety, of metropolitan France, of African France, of the France of everywhere.” For Tardieu, the genius of French social engineering in the colonies would ultimately prove successful, and the upcoming centenary of the 1830 French conquest of Algeria would be a time to “celebrate peace in place of anarchy, prosperity in place of misery, education in place of ignorance, life in place of death.” He encouraged politicians to “look, compare, think, conclude” as “the government has left the paths open” for them to “trace, in the calm of your consciences, the pathways of progress” for a France that “metropolitan or colonial, intends to be and remain one and indivisible.”

However, with the global depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, France leaned all the more heavily on its colonies as a place to generate income and cut costs rather than expand citizenship and social programs.<sup>130</sup> Nationalist and anti-colonialist activists continued to press the

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<sup>130</sup> Pierre Brocheux, “The State and the 1930s Depression in French Indochina,” in *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of South East Asia in the 1930s Depression*, ed. Peter Boomgaard and Ian Brown, 251-270 (Leiden: Kitlv Press, 2000); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Mutation de l’Impérialisme Colonial Français dans les Années 30,” *African Economic History* 4 (Autumn 1977): 103-152; Irene Nørlund, “Rice and the Colonial Lobby: The Economic Crisis in French

administration on their failures to live to the expansive citizenship reform that had long been promised.<sup>131</sup> The administration often framed the risk of violence as coming not from their own actions or failures, but by “natural” divisions and animosities existing in the colonial world between “types” of subjects who were at different levels of political evolution, particularly considering how the “native hatred of the Muslim towards the Jew is exacerbated by the question: ‘Why can they vote and not us?’”<sup>132</sup> Indeed, compared to the relatively regular if limited reforms of the immediate post-WWI era, actual expansions of citizenship across the empire stagnated in the early 1930s.<sup>133</sup>

However, promise of change arose in the aftermath of acrimonious elections in the spring of 1936, as the incoming Popular Front government pledged reinvigorated reforms across France and the empire.<sup>134</sup> The new administration established a commission to look into the political, economic, and cultural situation of overseas France, emphasizing how progressive reform, humanism, assimilation, material and moral advancement, infrastructure and development, modernization would lead to an “altruistic colonialism” able to improve the lot of everyone in the empire.<sup>135</sup> This renewed focus on the civilizing mission emphasized French paternalism, with

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Indochina in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of South East Asia in the 1930s Depression*, ed. Peter Boomgaard and Ian Brown, 198-228 (Leiden: Kitlv Press, 2000).

<sup>131</sup> The demand for suffrage rights was a core element of Etoile. Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 199-215, 239.

<sup>132</sup> “Historique de la question indigène: Le projet de loi Viollette,” (January 1935), ANOM ALG-GGA-12H/14.

<sup>133</sup> Tony Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France’s Successful Decolonization?* (New York: Berg, 2002), 28.

<sup>134</sup> Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-38* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); William B. Cohen, “The Colonial Policy of the Popular Front,” *French Historical Studies* 7, no. 3 (1972): 368-393; Siân Reynolds, “Women and the Popular Front: The Case of Three Women Ministers,” *French History* 8, no. 2 (1994): 196-24.

<sup>135</sup> Chafer, *End of Empire*, 33-5.

the empire remaining a moral duty of uplift by the more advanced races to their global inferiors. While reforms were nowhere near as significant as anti-colonialists had hoped, the fact that the white population of the French colonies often referred to the Popular Front years as the “time of troubles” indicates the relative scale of some of these proposed changes.<sup>136</sup> And indeed, across the empire individuals capitalized on the reinvigorated Republican language to promote for even greater reforms, including the abolition of the *indigénat*, expansions of voting rights, increased social spending, and greater regional autonomy. Anti-colonialists advocated a reformed empire in place of an abolished empire, such as the newly-formed Algerian Muslim Congress pressure on the Popular Front for “unity pure and simple with France” and the abolition of all special structures that restricted full citizenship to white French citizens.<sup>137</sup>

One of the most contentious administration attempts to reform colonial citizenship was the so-called Blum-Viollette Project, which would have enabled a greater number of Algerian Muslims to vote in the French electoral college while retaining their personal status.<sup>138</sup> In other words, people who wanted full voting privileges in French elections would no longer have to give up their right to use Islamic law in marriage, inheritance, and family life. The colonial lobby and white settlers immediately opposed the proposal, which they characterized as administrators in Paris intervening in something they did not understand.<sup>139</sup> The situation was seen as all the more egregious as it was spearheaded by the reform-friendly Algerian governor Maurice Viollette (who detractors had nicknamed “Viollette the Arab” due to his “indigenous sympathies”) and Jewish prime minister Leon

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<sup>136</sup> Chafer, *End of Empire*, 37.

<sup>137</sup> Evans and Phillips, *Algeria*, 46-7.

<sup>138</sup> The plan would have enfranchised approximately 20,000-25,000 of a total population of approximately six million.

<sup>139</sup> Marcel Régis, “A propos de projet Blum-Viollette: Rétablissons la vérité!” *Populaire* (7 March 1938), n.p.

Blum.<sup>140</sup> In March 1938, a dozen white Algerian mayors resigned in protest of the adoption of the first article of the project, arguing that they had been “utterly deprived of the moral force necessary to exercise their duties.”<sup>141</sup> The mayors stated that the “French of Algeria” were ready and waiting to “welcome the indigenous into the French family only on the condition that access to citizenship requires total submission to all French laws.”<sup>142</sup>

Opposition also came from Muslim Algerians, who argued that the bill was “anti-democratic” as it would have delayed the actual implementation of greater suffrage rights and, where it did increase the franchise, catered only to elites.<sup>143</sup> In early 1937, a group of Algerian Muslim politicians argued that the law would “create two categories of Muslims: a privileged class, who have good positions, who pretend to constitute an elite; and those who are sacrificed, who put through pain and suffering to make a better life for the privileged” and therefore flying in the face of France’s “love of equality, an equality which is at the foundation of the French electoral regime.”<sup>144</sup> Deputy Marcel Régis attempted to defend the bill from the “lies and untruths” that had been circulating, arguing that plenty of locals were in fact in favor of the reforms and supported the candidates that in turn supported the Blum-Viollette project.<sup>145</sup> Another op-ed criticized the opposed white settlers – the so-called “100% French” – and the “fascist mayors” who had resigned, arguing that they were so

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<sup>140</sup> Evans and Phillips, *Algeria*, 48.

<sup>141</sup> “Dix maires d’Algérie se demettent de leur fonction: A la suite de l’adoption de l’article premier du projet Viollette,” *Petit Journal* (7 March 1938), ANFF 19940500//270; “Pour protester contre le projet Viollette plusieurs maires d’Algérie donnent leur démission.” *Action française* (7 March 1938); ANFF 19940500//270; “Reponse au projet Viollette: Onze maires d’Algérie dont les trois présidents des Conseils généraux donnent leur démission,” Unknown newspaper clipping (7 March 1938), ANFF 19940500//270.

<sup>142</sup> “Dix maires d’Algérie.”

<sup>143</sup> Gabriel Lambert, *L’Algerie et le Projet Viollette* (Oran: F. Plaza, 1937), 6.

<sup>144</sup> Conseillers Municipaux et membres de la Djemâa de Saint-Leu, “Letter to Lambert” (12 January 1937), ANFF 19940500//270.

<sup>145</sup> Régis, “A propos.”

caught up in their pride and privilege that they “refused to accept the idea that their ballots will be mixed with those of the indigenous.”<sup>146</sup>

Indeed, frustration with the limits of actual reform continued to grow across the colonies. In the elections of October 1937 for Pondicherry’s Conseil General, the 604 registered voters on the first “European” list and the 38,233 on the second “indigenous” list were each able to elect by the same number of seats, regardless of the vast difference in the number of people each “half” of the council was intended to represent.<sup>147</sup> Between August and October 1937, a number of reform-minded councilors in French India resigned in protest of the proposal, arguing that the maintenance of multiple electoral lists disadvantaged non-European voters and therefore were not reforms at all.<sup>148</sup> Despite these critiques, the administration continued to insist that the French had brought liberty to India, describing this uneven structure as “complete universal and direct suffrage” that assured “balanced” representation for all of the population.<sup>149</sup>

By spring of 1938, growing geopolitical instability and difficulty in forming coalitions led to the suspension of Popular Front in favor of policies geared towards economic recovery and border security. By early summer, the Popular Front had collapsed completely, and the start of the Second World War wiped away all proposals that would have expanded the franchise in either the empire or for metropolitan women.<sup>150</sup> After Britain and

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<sup>146</sup> “Les maires fascistes d’Algérie s’insurgent contre le projet Blum-Viollette et contre un discours de M. A. Sarraut,” Unknown [*Populaire?*] [March 1938?], ANFF 19940500//270.

<sup>147</sup> “Elections au Conseil Général et aux Conseils Locaux,” *Journal Officiel de l’Inde* (16 October 1937), 1296; “Note pour le Ministre: Régime électoral.”

<sup>148</sup> Decree 28 September 1937; “Note pour le Ministre: Régime électoral”; Giacobbi, Letter to Monsieur le Vice-Président.

<sup>149</sup> “Note sur le régime électoral.”

<sup>150</sup> Olivier Wieviorka, *Orphans of the Republic: The Nation’s Legislators in Vichy France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 133.

France declared war on Germany in September 1939, elections were suspended as the French government focused on national defense and mobilization. The German invasion in the spring of 1940 further fractured this already tenuous political structure, and by summer Philippe Pétain's right wing faction had gained control of the government. The parliament "suspended" the widely-maligned Third Republic Constitution of 1875 and voted to grant Pétain full powers to establish a new construction and legislative structure.<sup>151</sup> The new government further diminished the importance of elections and representation, implementing restrictions on women's rights and dismantling pathways to citizenship in the empire.<sup>152</sup>

Around this same time, Trinidadian George Padmore and the Martiniquais Louis T. Achille debated the legacy of the "progressive" nature citizenship laws in the French empire on the pages of the NAACP's official magazine *The Crisis*.<sup>153</sup> Padmore criticized Achille's defense of the changes that had been made in the French colonies, arguing that the façade of a liberal and progressive Republic masked a despotic reality in which only a "very minute" percentage of the vast colonial population had access to the most basic civil liberties. When giving an overview of the various citizenship statuses in the empire, Padmore used an unusual reversed structure, noting that "a privilege of great significance allowed to the Moslem citizens of Senegal is the right to many wives, a privilege denied to white Frenchmen under the constitution."<sup>154</sup> He argued that by following a "divide and rule"

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<sup>151</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 28-9.

<sup>152</sup> Law of 7 October 1940.

<sup>153</sup> George Padmore, "Subjects and Citizens in French Africa," *The Crisis* (March 1940): 76-7, 82; and Louis T. Achille, "Upwards to Citizenship in the French Empire," *The Crisis* (June 1940): 172-3, 186.

<sup>154</sup> Padmore, "Subjects and Citizens," 82.

strategy, the French imperialists created a “caste” system that separated assimilated citizens and marginalized subjects, thereby “cloak[ing] its truly rabid character so cleverly” and “hold back the growth of the national liberation movement” while gaining “misplaced admiration [from] non-French Negroes – particularly Americans – for what they consider more liberal French methods.” Padmore further criticized Blaise Diagne as among the worst of the “Black-white-men” acting as “the hacks of French imperialism” by wrongly defending “the interests of his imperial masters.”<sup>155</sup> In this way, the political stakes of who was or was not French were gaining a new international significance.

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<sup>155</sup> Also see the lively follow-ups from Martinique-born Catholic writer Louis T. Achille (then a Professor of French at Howard University) and conservative speculative fiction author and NAACP business manager George S. Schuyler in “Letters from Readers,” *The Crisis* (July 1940): 219.

## Chapter Two

### “Woman in her Primitive State”:

#### Gender and Race in France and the Empire

In a posthumous 1875 treatise entitled *The Pornocratie, or, Women in Modern Times*, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon collected the arguments he had made against feminists and other “so-called emancipators” to assert that women were essentially “inferior” beings.<sup>1</sup> Evidenced by the title alone, Proudhon disapproved of women’s participation in politics, likening it to a “pornocratie,” or a “reign of whores.” In this and other similar texts, he detailed the ways in which modern women had wrought havoc on French politics and society, not only through their efforts to influence French public life, but through their bodies and the clothes they wore. He called particular attention to the dangers exemplified by the wearing of immodest “fantasies of chiffonnière drawn from the most ancient and most barbaric customs: Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Arab, Russian, Swiss.”<sup>2</sup> While women who wore such things and thus embodied such horrors may be represented in art, music, and literature, they were fundamentally unmoored from philosophy, politics, and law and thus any effort they made to influence such fields amounted to little more than a grotesque farce. In this way, French women’s wearing of “barbaric” and sexualized clothing was shorthand for their unsuitability for “rational” public thought.

The figure of the “barbaric” or “savage” women was a recurrent theme in Proudhon’s works on gender, standing in as a foil to the properly “civilized” woman by exemplifying the

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<sup>1</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *La pornocratie, ou Les femmes dans les temps modernes* (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1875). Also see Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: SUNY, 1984), 151-158.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1865), 307.

behaviors that “proper” women should avoid, regardless of how enticing they may be to a male viewer. In one such passage, he argued that “woman in her primitive state, Edenic in nature, may well arouse in us a sexuality, as do the women of the Pacific Isles.” However, he continued that “such a woman has little right to our affection or esteem” as “the less the civilized woman departs from this primitive state, the less right she has to exercise her dominion, unless it is that of the flesh or the senses.”<sup>3</sup> In this sense, women’s ability to “exercise her dominion” (restricted as it might be) was fundamentally tied to and limited by male perceptions of her beauty or sexual desirability as well as the varying degree of “savagery” and “civilization” she was understood to express with her body, dress, and comportment.

This sexualized and gendered distinction between “civilized” and “barbaric” behavior thus interpellated white and non-white women as particular types of legal and ideological subjects in which each was defined in relation to the other according to the observations of a male spectator. This chapter draws on the ways in which such “types” were described in French texts from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, particularly those found in travel literature, ostensibly scientific assessments of the various types of “natural” female character, and geographical historical texts about “peoples of the world” and their relative characteristics. The ideas within these documents went beyond discourse to shape the ways in which gendered and racialized hierarchies of power and citizenship were implemented, maintained, and challenged across both metropolitan and colonial space.

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<sup>3</sup> Proudhon, *La pornocratie*, 158.

Across the French colonies, different “types” of women were ideologically coded as having differing relative positions within political and social hierarchies.<sup>4</sup> The concept of “women’s status” that emerged from this assessment was not a neutral metric, but a shifting ideological evaluation with serious political significance. In tracing the way that this concept developed in modern France, this chapter examines how non-legal texts related to “women’s status” in the metropole and colonies shaped the limits of imperial citizenship, emphasizing the importance of a broader social and cultural pool of ideas that reinforced political systems and legal codes.

The ostensibly “abject” treatment of women within “native culture” justified French conquest and control, regardless of the degree to which women’s rights across the colonies might have been eroded, rather than fortified, by the expansion of the French colonial state and regardless of the ways in which French women in the metropole were themselves the subject of profoundly unequal political treatment. Debates over “women’s status” were in this way both a theater of imperialist operation and a metric by which to evaluate the modernity (or in this case the backwardness) of a given society. Ideas about gender, race, class, and political “capacity” were therefore linked across metropolitan and colonial space, creating mutually reinforcing ideas about “civilized” and “uncivilized” female behavior. While most metropolitan or “civilized” women were considered to be relatively more capable or elevated than non-white women in the colonies, ideas about all women’s potential for debased sexuality, inherently emotional nature, or innate irrationality precluded their access to formal political representation in metropole and colony alike.

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<sup>4</sup> Jennifer Anne Boittin, Christina Firpo, and Emily Musil Church, “Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the French Colonial Empire, 1914–1946,” *Historical Reflections* 37, no. 1 (2011): 60-90.

Both colonial and metropolitan women's "worthiness" for rights was often articulated in two major ways: her sexual comportment and the sort of household structure in which she lived. The linkages between the two were particularly visible in debates over polygynous societies. The claim that women in colonial spaces were subordinate or even "enslaved" in their own societies and households and therefore in need of "saving" justified the expansion and maintenance of the French empire. The "oppressed" colonial woman thus stood in for the larger civilizing mission, representing the inherently unfree nature of a faraway land in desperate need of "emancipation" through colonial control.<sup>5</sup>

In a similar way, feminist critiques of imperialism were often not necessarily anti-colonial, but instead asserted that France was making poor use of its colonial authority by not taking a firm enough hand with the "barbaric" traditions that marginalized colonial women. Before the mid-twentieth century, such efforts at improving women's status were primarily focused on domestic life and household organization, particularly practices of marriage and motherhood. Imperial feminism or feminist imperialism played a key role in this process, as French women and their allies transplanted metropolitan conceptions of domesticity to the colonies. By seeking to make indigenous women into "better" mothers, wives, and daughters, such feminism promoted assimilation towards a patriarchal French political model in which women ran the home and men ran the state.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 622-633; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30 (1988): 61-88.

<sup>6</sup> Fauré identifies the roots of the modern French state in the contradictory theories of liberalism and patriarchy, the dual celebration of both the abstract individual and the traditional male-dominated family unit with "natural" female subordination in which the only way to become an unmarked individual before the law is through fighting for the right to assimilate, making it a virtue to be like a (white, heterosexual) adult male. Christine Fauré, *La démocratie sans les femmes: Essai sur le libéralisme en France* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1985).

Ideas about the family and household were tied to colonial citizenship. Anxieties over women's "status" therefore tracks moments in which the French feared for the security of their colonies, making it a useful source in historicizing ideas about statecraft and gender. In this way, articulations of "women's status" were not only about gender ideology but also central pillars in a larger effort to legitimate and challenge European colonial control.

This tangled history of sexualization, domesticity, and citizenship was put under the spotlight after the Second World War, when the question of political rights for women in the colonies became a major issue. Although the French empire had created limited avenues for men in the empire to gain French citizenship through the "proper" forms of political and cultural assimilation, there was no equivalent pathway for women, as the ideological work of the French empire had long endeavored to "teach" women in the colonies how to be better mothers rather than be better citizens. This longer history indicates why the issue of enfranchising colonial women after the Second World War became such a fraught endeavor.

This chapter charts the changing political significance attributed to different "types" of women represented within a range of French documents, including law, fiction, travel literature, ethnographies, popular science, and other cultural productions from the seventeenth century to Second World War. Such a source base means that this chapter is not a comprehensive narrative of how gender was expressed or understood "on the ground" or within daily life across the parts of the world that were incorporated into the French empire. This is not an exploration of the differences in gendered comportment between, say, an enslaved woman in eighteenth-century Saint Domingue and a white French woman working with the *Pères Blancs* missionaries in 1930s Algiers. Instead, this chapter considers why one woman may have been considered "civilized"

and one “savage” and how this reinforced French imperial legitimacy and gender hierarchy in a cross-imperial space, emphasizing the cultural foundations of political processes.

The regulation of marriage, the household, and “women’s status” were pillars in the construction and regulation of colonial “difference” and therefore the creation of citizenship.<sup>7</sup> Even in instances where women’s right to vote was not up for discussion, their position within a given society was taken as evidence of the sorts of citizenship laws or imperial hierarchies that should be extended. Following Edward Said’s work on Orientalism, descriptions of women’s status revealed more about French conceptions of their own superiority than they did about the societies in which the women lived. As Lara Wildenthal argues in her discussion of German colonialism, such descriptions of women’s status bolstered the civilizing mission by positing a “relationship among the condition of women, progress, and hierarchical cultural comparison... the maxim presented women as symbols of their respective societies backwardness or advancement.”<sup>8</sup>

Interpreting texts about “depraved Hindoo dancing girls” and “destitute and savage Negresses” as significant for the history of French colonial citizenship builds on Ann Laura Stoler’s theoretical reimagining of Michel Foucault’s work on sexuality. I draw in particular on Stoler’s insights that the discursive management of colonial spaces and sexualities was “fundamental to the colonial order of things” as systems that both “classified colonial subjects into distinct human kinds, while policing the domestic recesses of imperial rule.”<sup>9</sup> Ideas about why certain people were not suitable for citizenship enabled colonial expansion and shored up

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<sup>7</sup> Joshua Schreier, *Arabs of the Jewish Faith: The Civilizing Mission in Colonial Algeria* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 164.

<sup>8</sup> Lara Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press), 4.

French people's own idea of themselves as superior and "civilized." The racialized and gendered identification of "marginal members" of the body politic helped to establish the "hidden fault lines" and boundaries that existed both inside and outside the nation, marking out "those whose claims to property rights, citizenship, and public relief were worthy of recognition and whose were not."<sup>10</sup> In this sense, such racialized and gendered ideas about citizenship and moral comportment are "formative features of modernity" rather than aberrant offshoots of them."<sup>11</sup> Establishing moral bankruptcy as something that occurs only in subject populations strategically buttresses one's own righteousness to rule.

In connecting definitions of "savage sexuality" or the "debased nature" of the polygynous family to histories of citizenship, this chapter also connects political history to more "cultural" or "social" approaches to understanding the past. In other words, suffrage law alone cannot tell us why polygyny was seen as such an impediment to French citizenship. Furthermore, as Chapter One outlines, representation and formal citizenship in France before the Second World War was heavily male oriented and, despite the tenacious interventions of feminist intellectuals and activists, women were therefore typically absented from formal discussions of suffrage.<sup>12</sup> (Christine Fauré puts it starkly: "Women in France before World War II did not enjoy a single political right."<sup>13</sup>) While this absence does not mean that women were not in fact political actors or that masculine citizenship was not gendered, it does mean that we must look beyond the letter of citizenship law to better understand gendered ideas about citizenship and rights. This chapter

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<sup>10</sup> Stoler, *Race*, 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Stoler, *Race*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Leora Auslander, "Women's Suffrage, Citizenship Law, and National Identity: Gendering the Nation-State in France and Germany, 1871-1918," in *Women's Rights and Human Rights: International Historical Perspectives*, ed. Patricia Grimshaw, Katie Holmes, and Marilyn Lake, 138-152 (New York: Springer, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> Fauré, *La démocratie*, 11.

therefore draws on a variety of more socio-cultural texts, including travel literature, ethnography, and images to illuminate how these linked debates over religion, race, and gender informed ideas about various women's ability to act as political agents and to be worthy of certain rights.

While these can certainly be read "against the grain," it is important to bear in mind that they are mostly metropolitan perspectives. In texts written mostly by French men, descriptions of women living in the French empire reveal more about the author and his expectations than the lives of the women and other non-males in the colonies. Travel literature is a particularly useful source, with descriptions of women often folded into passages describing of the local scenery (of which women are often considered to be a part), anecdotes about domestic arrangements (particularly meal-time rituals or food preparation) that the traveler may have experienced on their journey, as well as in descriptions of marriage and conjugal arrangements that may have been witnessed or related in passing. Such texts typically linger on women's appearance (often their exotic beauty or sensuality) as well as their perceived degree of freedom (or lack thereof). Scientific texts are also a useful source here, and, although many of these would today be described as "pseudoscience," at the time many of the texts in question were understood as objective sources of authoritative knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

### **Gender and Race in the Early Modern Empire**

In the Early Modern period, French philosophical texts about women stressed their domestic importance as wives and mothers and their fundamental incompatibility with matters of public political life. As Diderot's *Encyclopedie* argued, women (along with servants and

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<sup>14</sup> Arthur Still and Windy Dryden, "The Social Psychology of 'Pseudoscience': A Brief History," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 34, no. 3 (2004): 265-290.

children) were “not true citizens” at all.<sup>15</sup> As access to rights was premised primarily on social standing or wealth, elite women had a measure of formal civic rights, including participation in municipal councils and bodies such as the Estates General.<sup>16</sup> Such opportunities were limited however, and women were considered subordinate to men with less access to formal political authority.<sup>17</sup>

Female activists often used such stereotypes to their advantage. For example, female leadership in the “Flour Wars” of 1775 capitalized on the fact that women were often punished less severely than men for certain crimes. Because women were considered more impulsive and beholden to their natural constitutions than were men, the image of the “disorderly” or “irrational” woman who was unable to control her own behavior was used as strategic cover within political protest and activism.<sup>18</sup> A mother’s protest about not being able to feed her family was in this sense excusable in the way that a father’s was not; while the former could be excused for being helpless to the whims of her “natural constitution” and lost in the confusing tussle of

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<sup>15</sup> Denis Diderot, *Encyclopedie, ou dictionnaire raisonne des sciences, des arts, et des métiers*, vol. 8 (Geneva: Pellet, 1778), 181.

<sup>16</sup> Charlotte C. Wells, *Law and Citizenship in Early Modern France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 8, 107, 118, 135-6; Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women’s Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3 – 4; Steven D. Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (2002), 130n34.

<sup>17</sup> Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Jean Haechler, *Le règne des femmes: 1715-1793* (Paris: B. Grasset, 2001); Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Colette V. Michael, *Sur les femmes en France au dix-huitième siècle: un âge de ténèbre* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006); Samia I. Spencer, ed., *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Wells, *Law and Citizenship*.

<sup>18</sup> Cynthia Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class, and Community in Late Ancien Régime French Society* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1993), 18.

the public sphere, the later would be seen as acting under his own self-control in a calculated, rational, and deliberate effort to influence his political world.<sup>19</sup>

The discursive relegation of women to the home remained fraught, marked by tensions between the role of mothers as domestic beings and their duty to actively develop the personal, civic, and moral capacities of the next generation.<sup>20</sup> For example, Rousseau's ambiguous take on gender tacked back and forth between the importance of "nature" and "physiology" on the one hand and "society's interests" on the other, including the idea that man was both the natural "master" of the female and "dependent on her... by an inexorable law of nature."<sup>21</sup> Such language reinforced a gendered division between public and private spheres while at the same time linking the two by asserting women's domestic role as being of fundamental importance to the continuation and stability of the public civic order.

Feminist intellectuals exploited this tension, suggesting the ways in which gender roles were socially constructed – and therefore able to be changed – rather than natural and static.<sup>22</sup> In

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<sup>19</sup> The very historiography of such movements can sometimes reveal a similar bias in discussing women's capacity for political activity, in which women's participation is understood to be "biological" or "traditional" and with leadership coming from "outside," if not by nature itself than from a male authority such as clergy, nobles, or other political elites. The work of Yves-Marie Bercé is a case in point here, see his *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 100-107; and his *History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 174-5.

<sup>20</sup> As Lesley Walker describes it: "it is generally the virtuous daughter who, thanks to her mother's indefatigable labor, emerges, neither emancipated nor enslaved, but as self-possessed and capable of managing, in Fénelon's words, a small republic." Adrian O'Connor, "Nature, Nurture, and the Social Order: Imagining Lessons and Live for Women in Ancien Régime France," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 1 (2012), 5; Spencer, *French Woman*, 84; Lesley H. Walker, *A Mother's Love: Crafting Feminine Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008), 22.

<sup>21</sup> He takes up the question of gender and women in *Émile* as well as *The Social Contract*.

<sup>22</sup> The secondary literature on this topic is vast, and includes Lydia Lange, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*; Jennifer Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters*:

these writings, the figure of the “primitive” or “natural” woman was often used as a blank slate through which to specify the ways in which society or civilization shaped gendered identity and comportment, drawing on archetypes such as Rousseau’s “state of nature” or “natural man” and adding an additional gendered aspect.

For example, Louise d’Épinay’s 1774 *Conversations d’Emilie* and used tropes such as the “primitive” or “pre-social” woman as well as the “Amazon girl” or tomboy character to argue that the typical woman of late eighteenth century France was the product of a particular sociocultural environment rather than nature alone.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, women’s supposed “weakness” was due to social mistreatment rather than natural character and could be corrected, particularly with the proper education.<sup>24</sup> Similar framing devices appear in Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’s 1793 use of the “natural” and “pre-social” woman in *De l’éducation des femmes*. Although some of these texts advocated certain reforms, most stopped short of the idea that women should enjoy full political rights and instead focused their discourse on the ways in which women could be made better mothers and companions to their husbands.<sup>25</sup>

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*Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008); Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997); Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Also see Barbara Guetti, “The Old Régime and the Feminist Revolution,” *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982): 139-162; and O’Connor, “Nature, Nurture,” 7-16.

<sup>24</sup> Stéphanie Félicité, *Adèle et Théodore, ou Lettres sur l’éducation; contenant tous les principes relatifs aux trois différens plans d’éducation des princes, des jeunes personnes, & des hommes* (Paris: Lambert, 1782); Charlotte-Catherine Cosson de La Cressonnière Riballier, *De l’éducation physique et morale des enfans de deux sexes* (Paris: Nyon l’ainé, 1785). Also see O’Connor, “Nature, Nurture, and the Social Order,” 9-14; and Michèle Bissière, “Riballier et l’éducation des femmes,” in *Sexualité, mariage et famille au XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Olga B. Cragg and Rosena Davison, 361-370 (Quebec City: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1998), 366-7.

<sup>25</sup> Riballier, *De l’éducation physique et morale*, 351; O’Connor, “Nature, Nurture, and the Social Order,” 10.

The Revolution of 1789 transformed the concept and practice of French national belonging, codifying system of rights built on a shared idea of “Frenchness” in which citizens became sovereign participants in the formation of public laws and political life.<sup>26</sup> Not all members of the state were equal however, and the process of creating a more unified body politic required formalized sets of both inclusions and exclusions. Building on Enlightenment conceptions of women’s inherently domestic nature, the category of “women” became imbued with new significance as a collective of bounded members who – regardless of other status markers or affiliations – were excluded from full political rights.<sup>27</sup> Formal exclusion did not stop women from acting politically within public and private life, including critiques of women’s second-class citizenship, grievances over food security, and the very nature of the French state.<sup>28</sup> However, women’s actions in the public sphere were

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<sup>26</sup> William Rogers Brubaker, “The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship,” *French Politics and Society* 7, no. 3 (1989): 30-49; Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *Les citoyennetés en Révolution, 1789-1794* (Paris: PUF, 1992); Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le sacre du citoyen* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); and Renée Waldinger et. al., *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Suzanne Desan, “Reconstituting the Social after the Terror: Family, Property, and the Law in Popular Politics,” *Past and Present* 164 (1999): 81-121; Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: Démocratie et exclusion des femmes en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995); Jennifer Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Olwen H. Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*; Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Abrey, “Feminism in the French Revolution,” *American Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (1975): 43-62; Lisa Beckstrand, *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009); John R. Cole, *Between the Queen and the Cabby: Olympe de Gouges’s Rights of Woman* (Montréal: Queen’s University Press, 2011); Rudolf M. Dekker and Lotte C. van de Pol, “Republican Heroines: Cross-Dressing Women in the French Revolutionary Armies,” *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 3 (1989): 353-363; Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Aix-en-provence: Alinéa, 1988); Heuer, *Family and the Nation*, 49-50; Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*; François Larue-Langlois, *Claire Lacombe: citoyenne révolutionnaire* (Paris: Punctum, 2005); Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W.

often dismissed or mocked (in one example, a male observer of a political session about women's participation in the storming of the Bastille described how he found the women's claims to be full political subjects both grotesque and laughable).<sup>29</sup>

Questions of gender and rights were all the more complicated within colonial settings in the early modern period, shaped not only by additional conceptions about race and religion but also by existing non-French forms of political organization and gendered comportment. Starting in the early sixteenth century, French sailors, merchants, and mercenaries moved through the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds, bringing large numbers of French men into new spaces of interaction and exchange in coastal cities around the world, including New France (in what is now Canada and the United States), the French West Indies, French Guyana, a handful of enclaves in India, and a string of ports around the African coast.<sup>30</sup>

Scholars have examined the bombastic gendered language of colonial conquest, including the ways in which non-European spaces were themselves coded as feminine, passive, and

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Rabine, eds., *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, 98.

<sup>30</sup> Olive Patricia Dickason, "The Sixteenth Century French Vision of Empire: The Other Side of Self-Determination," in *Decentering the Renaissance: Canada and Europe in Multidisciplinary Perspective, 1500-1700*, ed. Germaine Warkentin and Carolyn Podruchny, 87-109 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 88; Jordan Kellman, "Beyond Center and Periphery: New Currents in French and Francophone Atlantic Studies," *Atlantic Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 1-11; Roger Schlesinger and Arthur P. Stabler, *Andre Thevet's North America: A Sixteenth Century View* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1986); Frank Lestringant, *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage: L'Amérique et la controverse coloniale en France, au temps des guerres de religion* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 2004); Silvia Castro Shannon, "Polyphemus and Cain of America: Religion and Polemics in the French New World," in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe, 325 - 344 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Charlotte Wells, "Loathsome Neighbors and Noble Savages: The *monde inversé* of Antoine de Montchrétien," *L'Esprit Créateur* 48, no. 1 (2008): 96-106.

therefore receptive towards the active masculinity of the metropole and its representatives.<sup>31</sup> For example, one French account from 1704 noted that “we have always regarded Asiatics as a soft and effeminate people, and in that we have been correct.”<sup>32</sup> In fiction and narrative depiction of the conquest, this gendered encounter is often portrayed as a happy romance, in which a virile European man seduces and wins over a beautiful and typically noble indigenous woman, representing a positive type of conquest in which the non-European world is itself seduced and therefore welcoming of the European newcomers.<sup>33</sup>

Despite such discursive representations, on the ground relationships within these early encounters were often characterized by European men adapting to local patterns of rule, intimacy, and marriage. Even within French-controlled enclaves, white traders typically relied on local societies to access trade resources, resulting in relationships that ranged from brief *ad hoc* exchanges made at the docks to permanent trading relationships that were passed down through generations of merchants.<sup>34</sup> In an era when religion was one of the most important factors of identity, the Catholic Church even encouraged men to start families with non-European women

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<sup>31</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>32</sup> De la Crequiniere, *Conformite des coutumes des indiens orientaux* (Brussels, George de Backer, 1704), 232.

<sup>33</sup> Patricia Scully, “Malintzin, Pocahontas, and Krotoa: Indigenous Woman and Myth Models of the Atlantic World,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 6, no. 3 (2005): n.p.

<sup>34</sup> One 1685 account describing the “French habitation” in Saint Louis, Senegal described not only how reliant any visiting Europeans were on the goodwill of their African benefactors and the close social world in which they lived, as “if the *nègres* [blacks] were wicked, they could easily slaughter the whites, who are very dispersed and not on their guard.” Michel Jajolet de La Courbe, *Premier voyage du sieur de La Courbe fait à la coste d’Afrique en 1685* (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1973), 25.

as a means to encourage Christian conversion.<sup>35</sup> However, this practice is not to characterize this period as idyllic or peaceful, as sexual violence (and violence of all kinds) also saturated many early encounters, particularly in the Caribbean and the Americas, where warfare and disease resulted in demographic devastation for indigenous societies.<sup>36</sup>

Patterns of European accommodation to local norms were more common along the African coast, where European men interested in commercial or romantic relationships typically accommodated local norms. According to one account of the late eighteenth century, for example, European men who wished to “contract” a local marriage in the French enclave of Saint Louis (in what is today Senegal) were required to go through several “formalities,” including securing the “previous consent” of the woman’s family and making the requisite bridewealth payments.<sup>37</sup> Once everything had been made official, the men “live freely with these women, who consider themselves as being in some measure legitimate wives, and make the children adopt the name of their father... it is very common to find many negroes and mulattoes with French, English, and Portuguese names.” Women were thus key intermediaries in cementing trading relationships, and professional interactions with local women could include not only trading intermediaries but also family life.<sup>38</sup> Such an arrangement could be mutually

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<sup>35</sup> Jessica Namakkal, “Transgressing the Boundaries of the Nation: Decolonization, Migration, and Identity between France and India, 1900 – 1972,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2013), 37.

<sup>36</sup> Hilary Beckles, “Kalinago (Carib) Resistance to European Colonisation of the Caribbean,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 38 no. 2/3 (1992): 1-14, 123-124; Doris L. Garaway, *The Libertine Colony: Creolization in the Early French Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Lennox Honeychurch, “Crossroads in the Caribbean: A Site of Encounter and Exchange on Dominica,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 291-304.

<sup>37</sup> Sylvain Meinrad Xavier de Golbéry, *Travels in Africa, performed by Silvester Meinrad Xavier Golberry* (London: Jones and Bumford, 1808), 111-2.

<sup>38</sup> George E. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); Hilary Jones, “Mariage à la Mode to Weddings at Town Hall: Marriage,

beneficial for both parties, providing new networks of trade, routes to status, and a trusted translator of language and cultural norms.

One of the most famous (and most elite) of these “mixed marriages” occurred in French India in 1741, when a Tamil-, French-, and English-speaking Catholic known as Jeanne Albert (and herself the daughter of a French father and Portuguese-Indian mother) married Joseph François Dupleix, a man who went on to become the Governor General of French India.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes referred to as Johanna Bégum or simply Madame Dupleix, Jeanne Albert presents a useful example of how gender, race, and political power may have intersected in eighteenth-century French India. According to a diary kept by Ananda Ranga Pillai, a Tamil man who served as Governor Dupleix’s middleman and interpreter (and who himself wielded a considerable degree of influence), Jeanne Albert was a crucial part of Dupleix’s administration, holding and paying out bonds over disputed property, dealing directly with local merchants over labor and payment issues, doling out and collecting payment on loans, working with local poorhouses, handling supplies, and generally managing access to her husband.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Pillai himself did not approve of Jeanne Albert, citing her involvement with politics, her negative views of Hindu and Muslim religious practices, and her insistence on the superiority of European ways.<sup>41</sup>

While there are several high-profile case studies such as the relationship between Dupleix and Jeanne Albert, the majority of available texts describing women in the French empire in this

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Colonialism, and Mixed-Race Society in Nineteenth Century Senegal,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (2005): 27-48.

<sup>39</sup> Namakkal, “Transgressing,” 37-9.

<sup>40</sup> Ananda Ranga Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai: A Record of Matters Political, Historical, Social, and Personal, from 1736 to 1761* (Madras: Government Press, 1904), 14-16, 19-20, 28, 77, 173, 228, 245-6; Joseph François Dupleix, *Lettre de Madame Dupleix au Chevalier Law* (Paris: L. Cellot, 1764). Also see Namakkal, “Transgressing,” 38.

<sup>41</sup> Namakkal, “Transgressing,” 39.

early period emerge from travel literature. Such works typically dwell on physical appearance interspersed with commentary on women's position within a particular society. For example, one French traveler writing in 1750 described the Isle of Sor (today part of Saint-Louis, Senegal), noting that "it is said that the blacks of Senegal are the most beautiful in *Nigritie*... Many are perfect beauties. They are vivacious, and above all an easy air of freedom that is a delight to behold." Such references that connected an "easy air of freedom" to women's beauty were fairly common. However, the author went on to express consternation that the religious "custom of the country" did not allow such carefree and delightful women to eat with him and his male hosts, describing how "no woman has ever had this benefit, because, as good *mahométans*, they believe that there is no heaven for [the women], so they ate after us."<sup>42</sup> In this sense, women's degree of "freedom" and standing in society was compromised by the idea that her beauty was not sufficiently available to the male traveler.

Descriptions of the beauty and allegedly extreme sexual appetites of non-European women remained common tropes throughout the end of the eighteenth century, with one writer in the 1780s describing West African dances "the likes of which are unknown in Europe."<sup>43</sup> However, this shifted in the nineteenth century, as increasing numbers of French works asserted the "objective" superiority of the beauty of European women, increasingly couched in the language of science and reason.

For example, Jacques L. Moreau's 1803 multi-volume *Natural History of Women, Followed by a Treaty on Hygiene* drew on Linné, Buffon, other proponents of scientific racism

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<sup>42</sup> Michel Adanson, *Histoire Naturelle du Sénégal, avec la relation d'un voyage fait en ce pays pendant les années 1750, 1751, 1752, 1753* (Paris: Chez Claude-Jean-Baptiste Bauche, 1757), 22, 32.

<sup>43</sup> Chevalier de Boufflers, *Correspondance du Chevalier de Boufflers et de la Comtesse de Sabran* (Paris: E. Plon et Cie, 1875), 175-6.

to identify a connection between female beauty and civilizational development. After asserting that the “ideas of female beauty are arbitrary and relative,” Moreau determined that his own particularly “enlightened mind, and very advanced civilization” enabled him to objectively “judge beauty and analyze the causes of error and diversity of opinion on what constitutes beauty.”<sup>44</sup> From this premise, he criticized the “monstrous,” “repulsive,” “frightful,” and “deformed” appearance of women outside of Europe, including viciously disparaging descriptions of women from Asia, the Americas, and Africa.<sup>45</sup> He argued that true “beauty is without doubt a product of civilization,” comparing civilized women to “savage” women whose lives of “violence and oppression” turn them “robust and virile... unable to acquire pleasant contours and enchanting shapes... these women are not women in the full meaning of the word, as they are in civilized nations.”<sup>46</sup> One could in fact map the different “degrees of civilization” by charting “the mass of nuances and degrees of corresponding beauty... a woman’s features improve as her social state and human perfectibility advances and develops.”<sup>47</sup> In this sense, he argued that aesthetics were not in fact “arbitrary and relative,” but instead that the “opinions and feelings of savage people in uncivilized nations” were invalidated as their very savagery made them unable to be objective in their evaluations.<sup>48</sup>

Despite Moreau’s vitriol, he nonetheless acknowledged exceptions to the rule, women who “without being beautiful, nonetheless possess the advantages attached to their sex,” including women of northern India whose “voluptuousness... and animated expression can make one forget about their browned skin and other non-European women whose “flower of beauty

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<sup>44</sup> Jacques L. Moreau, *Histoire naturelle de la femme: suivie d’un traité d’hygiène* (Paris: L. Duprat, 1803), 242, 238.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 239, 244.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

and youth can have such an effect on civilized people” traveling within their midst.<sup>49</sup> Such hints of beauty indicate that the region may be ripe for civilizational development through colonization. In referencing Tahiti, for example, he argues that the fact that “Europeans have found that in general the women partly have the charms of their sex and their pleasant physiognomy” means that the regions will “likely make rapid progress.”<sup>50</sup> He further identifies historical precedents for such development, such as the ways in which paired civilizational and aesthetic development done through “crossbreeding with Caucasians races” had allowed “Persians became so beautiful... correcting the hideous model of the Kalmuks, becoming less ugly, purifying and adding embellishments.”<sup>51</sup> Such development also had class-based components within France, as he gives an examples of a large village in northern France where “half a century ago the women were more ugly than pretty,” a situation that changed after a detachment of elite royal cavalry officers stayed there for several years and “improved” the beauty of the population.<sup>52</sup>

The “degraded” lives of women living outside of Europe was another popular theme in nineteenth century travel writing. One 1805 work about the island of “Hinzoûân” near what is today Comoros in the Indian Ocean described the author’s encounter with the “harem of Prince Sélym,” which consisted of “two or three miserable creatures with heads covered by veils.” Their invisibility to the European traveler was used to characterized their lack of freedom, as seen in one description of the Princes “favorite, as we supposed” who “stood behind a rough drape that revealed only her toes, covered in silver rings.” This characterization presents her as victimized but unable to realize her own plight, as “if she was capable of thinking, she would have

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 244, 356.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 356-7.

considered these to be glittering chains rather than ornaments, as any reasonable being would have preferred to be a savage beast, roaming wild in the forests of hunger and danger, rather than to have the deplorable honor of being the wife or mistress of Sélym.”<sup>53</sup> A volume of works entitled *The Hindus* published in Paris between 1808 and 1812 similarly described the “inferior condition” of Hindu women, who are “slaves rather than wives, forced to bear humiliations for her husband, who is alone the master and head of the family.”<sup>54</sup> (The fact that such texts were written in the era of Napoleon’s Civil Code, which, among other things, legalized male supremacy within the married household and barred French women selling or buying property, seems to have been lost on the authors.)

Scientific writers such as Julien-Joseph Virey popularized shifting nineteenth century ideas about women’s bodies for mass audiences, including the idea that women were more subject to their physical constitution than were men, inherently docile and submissive, and closer to nature.<sup>55</sup> Thanks to their natural characteristics, women were destined to care for – but not lead – the home and the nation itself.<sup>56</sup> Virey’s work used the body as a site where conceptions about race, class, and gender mingled. His 1825 *De la femme, sous ses rapports physiologique, moral, et littéraire* expands upon this premise within a global imperial context, outlining the “varieties of the female sex according to the different climates and races of men.”<sup>57</sup> Drawing theories of Cuvier and Buffon, Virey argued that racial hierarchies emerged from arrested

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<sup>53</sup> Antoine Gilbert Griffet de la Beume, *Recherches asiatiques: ou, Mémoires de la Société établie au Bengale* (Calcutta: Imprimerie Impériale, 1805), 136.

<sup>54</sup> F. Balthazard Solvyns, *Les Hindous* (Paris: Saint-André-des-Arcs, 1808-1912).

<sup>55</sup> Martin S. Staub, *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815-1848* (Kingston: Queen’s Press, 2003), esp. 40-48.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Lynn Stewart, *For Health and Beauty: Physical Culture for Frenchwomen, 1880s–1930s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2003), 23-4.

<sup>57</sup> Julien-Joseph Virey, *De la femme, sous ses rapports physiologique, moral, et littéraire* (Paris: Crochard, 1825), 1-14.

development within and across various “racial” groups.<sup>58</sup> As women’s “delicate organization” was more susceptible to nature, they “show” the characteristics of their race more than do men, including any early signs of “degeneration.” This abstracted version of “women” thus became a subject for conceptualizing and presenting racial difference, an ideological space (rather than a real individual) to establish political, cultural, social norms and differences.

Virey’s first set of case studies alleges that places where women are considered superior to men typically exist in states of “extreme barbarism,” citing examples of such societies in Africa (including in Ethiopia, Congo [the Kingdom of Kongo], Monomotapa [Mutapa], Malimba, and Angola)<sup>59</sup> as well as among American Indians, in Nepal, among the Amazons, in greater Russia, as well as among “our own savage ancestors.”<sup>60</sup> He argues that a lack of female “oppression” was the result of a society in which men are “occupied far away with hunting and war” and unable to govern. In these examples, Virey posits an inverse relationship between the development of a civilization and the status of women, noting that “the more extreme the barbarism, the more the woman seems to gain status,” leading in some outlier cases to female-led governments. In a later aside, he posits that the same general “insouciance” that leads to the peaceful “sharing of women” as sexual partners amongst the “American or Carib race” also enables some of these groups to allow “women to share in the running of government.”<sup>61</sup> In both

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Corsi, *The Age of Lamarck: Evolutionary Theories in France, 1790-1830* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988); Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Anne Fausto-Streling, “Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of ‘Hottentot’ Women in Europe, 1815-1817,” in *Deviant Bodies: Critical Perspectives on Difference in Science and Popular Culture*, ed. Jennifer Terry and Jacqueline L. Urla, 66-95 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Virey, *De la femme*, 7. For examples, see Francisco Álvares, *Historiale description de l’Ethiopie* (Anvers: J. Bellere, 1558); and Duarte Lopez and Filippo Pigafetta, *A Report of the Kingdom of Congo And of the Surrounding Countries* (London: John Murray, 1591).

<sup>60</sup> Virey, *De la femme*, 8-14.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

such examples, women's participation in government comes from the combined effects of a lack of civilizational advancement and sexual debauchery.

Much of Virney's descriptions of the various "types" of women focus on questions of beauty. He warns that female beauty can be dangerous, as while the women of Oceania can be beautiful and "very attractive to [European] sailors," they are also "naturally jealous" and likely to poison any who might be unfaithful to them. He further outlines the ways in which beauty can be compromised by systems of female "oppression," particularly related to Islam. For example, he argues that while white women from around the Caucasus are the most beautiful in the world, the state of oppression in which they live "stains and morally degrades these admirable creatures... all these sites of beautiful women have become the great brothels of Asia... raised from their youth to serve the pleasures of the true believers of Islam... lowered into a state of demeaning degradation."<sup>62</sup> He argues that in Persia and Turkey, "there is nothing more insignificant than the physiognomy of all the Muslims, as they are always veiled" and therefore unavailable to the European male gaze.<sup>63</sup>

Questions of women's sexual propriety feature heavily in Virney's descriptions of racialized bodies, including his argument that the "Mongols of non-white Asia" who have "so little idea of virginity" that "nature does not produce girls amongst these peoples, they are born already women."<sup>64</sup> As a prominent polygenist, his writing about the "black race or rather the black species" is particularly vile, as he attributes to them characteristics of ostensive sexual lasciviousness (which includes "lesbian habits") as well as intellectual underdevelopment.<sup>65</sup> He further argues that black women's bodies and extreme closeness to the animal world makes them

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 22-4.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 38-9.

“excellent mothers,” and it is for this reason that “in the colonies, one always has a *négresse* to nourish the children of whites.”<sup>66</sup> By contrast, a comparable level of sexual “moral abandon” among the “Malay” race produces bad mothers instead of good, including women who kill their own children out of shame if their father is not of sufficiently high status.<sup>67</sup> Class-based ideas of sexual propriety thus play an important role, confirmed with his argument that less “respectable” white women from the “lower class” (including white European prostitutes) had more “primitive” sexual appetites and negative pathologies, putting them closer both in morals and in physical form to non-white women.<sup>68</sup>

One of the central claims of Virney’s work asserts the superiority of monogamy over polygamy, specifically polygyny, which he argues is common in the “barbaric state of savage nations” in which women are “enslaved” to become mere “instruments of her husband’s sensuality.”<sup>69</sup> In such societies, “all women are prostitutes and all children are bastards... polygyny is inseparable from a very imperfect state of civilization, and even of a government more or less despotic.”<sup>70</sup> In linking forms of marriage with forms of government, he argues that the certain types of household organization lead to certain types of state structures. Polygyny is “contrary to custom in civilized nations” as it “introduces despotism into the family and therefore the *état civil*, and it finally results in a sort of barbarism in every society where the woman is not equally allowed to share everything with the man... such is why polygamous nations are fiercely

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-8.

<sup>68</sup> Also see Stewart, *For Health and Beauty*, 23-4; Sander Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (1985): 204-242.

<sup>69</sup> Virney, *De la femme*, 144-5.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-6, 142-3.

callous.”<sup>71</sup> In a polygynous system, women are subordinated to a degree that leads to a moral corruption and a “despotism of the family, and by a natural course, in the political government.”

Although Virey maintains that female *supremacy* only emerges in certain non-polygamous yet barbaric societies, monogamous marriage can bring about a near “equality” of the sexes.<sup>72</sup> In civilized societies that properly “esteem” women, elites can become queens and gain certain civil liberties. Citing Plutarch and Aristotle, he argues that it was this correct “cherishing” of women that they were respected among “the *Gaulois* and the *Germaines*, our free and generous ancestors, and why they held rank in the councils of these nations.”<sup>73</sup> In this sense, ancient “Western” societies and contemporary “savage” societies can achieve higher status for women, provided of course there is no polygyny. This, however, is not as desirable as the sort of “equality” that can be found in contemporary French gender relations, where women are respected yet restricted in power to their “proper place” within an order that is simultaneously natural and civilized.

Virney’s critique of polygyny has explicit political significance in signaling the benefits of the colonial civilizing mission in correcting certain faults, noting that French missionaries have helped start a “complete moral reform” by diminishing polygyny, abortion, child abuse, infanticide and the other “sad fruits of general disorder and libertinage.”<sup>74</sup> The institution of French-style practices of formalized monogamy is particularly important in providing morality,

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 255-6.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-8.

happiness, and stability within colonial society. As monogamy has existed “only amongst civilized peoples,” its introduction can lead to a reform of state structures themselves.<sup>75</sup>

Virey’s influential work represents a larger French preoccupation about the differences that were thought to characterize polygynous and monogamous societies. For example, a statement attributed to Napoleon I from September 1816 frames the core of the differences between “Westerners” and “Orientals” was rooted fundamentally in their different treatments of women and liberty. Arguing that the “entire difference” boiled down to the “two great relationships: women and servants,” he differentiated realms in which “Orientals have slaves, our servants are free; the Orientals shut up their wives, ours share all our rights... and never, at any time, has polygyny been admitted into the West.”<sup>76</sup> He further explains that women must be respected and given rights so they can be trusted to look after their husband’s interests while he is at work. He notes that women of the Orient have petty or frivolous domestic rights, equating their desire to “go to the public baths” as equivalent to French women’s attendance at church. In considering the particular issue of polygyny and race, he argues that men in the Orient have multiple wives because there are so many “forms and colors” of women there, as opposed to the homogenous racial makeup of the West, where everyone is “one people, one family” and monogamy comes easier. In the Orient, conversely, one may have “one white wife, one black wife, one *mulâtre* [mixed], one *cuivrée* [copper]... bringing the different colors into a single

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<sup>75</sup> It is unclear how this idea of the possibility for change worked with his polygenist ideas about racial or civilizational change – see his comments endorsing Walckenaer’s conjectural history model of development towards civilization in Virey, *Histoire naturelle* (1800), 125-6, 128, 132-7; and *De la femme*, 132-6, 142-3.

<sup>76</sup> Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonné comte de Las Cases, *Napoléon, Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène: ou, Journal où se trouve consigné* (Paris: Magen et Comon, 1822), 334-337.

family” and establishing “union and equality among all.”<sup>77</sup> Polygyny thus arises naturally out of the need to assert a patriarchal control over a chaotic racial order.

Questions of colonial women’s place in the family and household remained major fixations within much of nineteenth century European travel literature and imagery. With the growth of the British Raj, depictions of Indian and “Hindu” women became particularly popular. One 1832 French review of a book of British illustrations of India focused on women in family contexts, generally presenting Indian women as servants within the household (especially to their husbands) and backwards in their beliefs about childcare.<sup>78</sup> Other texts considered Indian women’s “excessive” sexuality, as seen in one 1838 dictionary about India that includes a number of lengthy passages describing why “les Hindoues” are among the most beautiful women in the world.<sup>79</sup> This reputation for beauty was connected to sexual promiscuity, as exemplified in one French travelogue from 1836 that described Indian woman as “pretty and well made” yet “brought to the most disgusting lustfulness.”<sup>80</sup>

In the realm of artistic production, the figure of the *bayadère* (sometimes translated as “temple dancer” or “Hindu dancing girl”) became a common trope in literature and opera, often used to personify a feminine colonized “Other.”<sup>81</sup> Fictional works of the nineteenth century drew

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 337-9.

<sup>78</sup> Société asiatique, “Twenty-four plates illustrative of Hindoo and European manners in Bengal, drawn by Colin, from sketches by Mrs. Belnos – London, Smith and Elder – Paris, chez Colin, rue d’Enfer, n°33,” *Journal asiatique* 9 (1832), 477-9.

<sup>79</sup> Jean Ferdinand Dupeuty-Trahan, *Le moniteur indien, ou, dictionnaire contenant Description de l’Hindoustan et des différents peuples qui habitent cette contrée* (Paris: Caüet, 1838), 99.

<sup>80</sup> G. L. Domeny de Rienzi, *Océanie ou cinquième partie du monde: revue géographique et ethnographique de la Malaisie, de la Micronésie, de la Polynésie et de la Mélanésie* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1836), 265.

<sup>81</sup> Examples include: Charles-Simon Catel, “Les Bayadères” (1810); Filippo Taglioni, *Le Dieu et La Bayadère: Opéra en Deux Actes, ou, La Courtisane amoureuse* (1835); R.C. Guilbert-Pixerecourt, *La Fortresse du Danube* (1805); and Joseph Méry, *Les joyaux, fantaisie par Gavarni* (1850). Also see Michel Gardaz, “La bayadère, le gymnosophe, et le tigre:

on eighteenth century travelogues and engravings that depicted the *bayadère* as a sexualized and spiritual dancer.<sup>82</sup> In French fiction, the *bayadère* often appears as a generic and depersonalized “type” to function as a spectacle of exotic female beauty existing to thrill European audiences.<sup>83</sup>

The idea of Indian women’s beauty and promiscuity had political significance connected to characterizing India’s “capacity” for certain types of rights or political systems. For example, an 1840 lecture by a Belgian historian described India as an almost unworldly “enchanted land of imagination of sentiment... it’s beauty is that of a delicate and frail woman... with faintly blushing cheeks... an empire of dreams and soft affections.” At the same time, he argued that any effort to move “into this flowered ground with our ideas about liberty and human dignity, then, oh sorrow, the facade will be shattered: goodbye to rubies and pearls, to luxurious fabrics and to precious oils.”<sup>84</sup> In this sense, the exotic feminine beauty of India was linked to its “primitive” nature, making it necessarily incompatible with liberty and equality. In describing India’s gendered political organization, he argued that the “Brahmin desire to dominate” led to the “proclamation of the inferiority of women,” who were “chained for fear that man should cease to be free... she was degraded because she was frightening, equality was denied to her as

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l’orientalisme français et l’exotisme indien au XIXe siècle,” *Religiologiques* 31 (2005): 173-188; Dhana Underwood, “La Bayadère: la femme représentée et la femme représentante de l’Inde coloniale au XIXe siècle,” *IJFS* 5, no. 2 (2002): 85-94; Priyadarshini Vijaisri, *Recasting the Devadasi: Patterns of Sacred Prostitution in Colonial South India* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2004); and Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory, and Modernity in South India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>82</sup> Examples include Joseph-François Charpentier de Cossigny, *Voyage à Canton* (Paris: André, 1798); G. Le Gentil de La Galaisière, *Voyage dans les mers de l’Inde* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1779-1781); Pierre Sonnerat and Jean-Baptiste Marie Poisson, *Illustrations de Voyage aux Indes orientales et à la Chine* (Paris: Froule, Nyon et Barrois, 1782), 40.

<sup>83</sup> Underwood, “La Bayadère,” 85-7.

<sup>84</sup> Jean Jacques Altmeyer, *Cours de philosophie de l’histoire fait publiquement à l’université de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Meline, Cans, et Compagnie, 1840), 256-8.

her tyranny was feared.”<sup>85</sup> While the West is characterized as an “ideal” realm of “changing forms” and new knowledge moving into a wonderful future, the East is trapped in the past, “uniform, closed... [and] passive.”<sup>86</sup> Cultural production on the practice of *sati* also become more prevalent through the nineteenth century, describing Indian women as simultaneously beautiful and barbaric, objectified for their sexuality and in need of saving from savage marital practices.<sup>87</sup>

Etienne de Neufville’s 1842 *Physiologie de la femme* capitalized on the early nineteenth century trend of books on “women’s physiology” by presenting his own “lighthearted and comical” take.<sup>88</sup> The premise of one joke built on the idea that through Christianity, “the sun of love and liberty” has enabled progression since “antiquity” that has finally allowed women (and the enslaved) to be emancipated, although it was left up for debate if “women had become happier” with their new status.<sup>89</sup> The text takes a slightly more serious tone in the last section, which details the author’s first time in “the Orient” seeing “women veiled in white... miserable creations trailing behind their master like a pack of dogs following the hunter... theirs is a life of ignorance, idleness, and passive servitude. Reclining on their divans behind the trellis of the harem, crowded one on top of the other... the poorest trailing their yellow slippers along the uneven walkway... they have a look that is half dismal and half bored.” Following further descriptions of women being forced to dance and lavish attention upon their husband, he sadly concedes that such creatures “know no other way of life” and have no “internal ambition or worries,” as they have been “softened” by this “Oriental idleness which has an ecstatic beatitude all its own.” In comparison, he facetiously describes how French women are “perfectly free...

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>87</sup> See for example Jacob Haafner, *Voyages dans la péninsule occidentale de l’Inde et dans l’île de Ceilan* (Paris: Arthus-Bertrand, 1811), 53-55.

<sup>88</sup> Etienne de Neufville, *Physiologie de la femme* (Paris: Aubert et Ce et Lavigne, 1842).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 105.

free to go to mass under strict escort... free to marry the first titled or rich oaf accepted by their parents... and after their sweet consummation [*hyménée*], they are free to follow their sullen and sometimes brutal husband to Cochinchina if he sees fit... French women have so much liberty that it is frightening!”

Comparison between different “types” of women around the world remained popular through the mid-nineteenth century. One such work was by Clément Ollivier, whose 1857 *Histoire physique et morale de la femme* was intended to be a description of the different “types” of women across the world that would be more “serious and moral” counterpoint to the overly “erotic” works that he argued characterized the early nineteenth century.<sup>90</sup> Alongside his division of the world into four “extremely well divided... perfectly distinct” racial groups, his text characterizes three major “moral” divisions of women: “the enslaved woman subjected to the pagan laws of the Koran,” the “free woman living in the shelter of Christ’s doctrines,” and the “women of savage peoples.”<sup>91</sup> The point of the book is to explain these distinctions using historical, physical or racial, and “moral” criteria to make an argument for the “advantages of the Christian or free woman over the pagan or enslaved woman.”<sup>92</sup>

While some parts of his text assert a harmonious complementary harmony existing between men and women, he notes that although men are “incomplete” without women, women are “nothing” without men.<sup>93</sup> His text also includes a sustained celebration for white feminine beauty and reproduction, as evidenced in his lengthy evocation of the “brilliance of puberty, which is her age of triumph of admirable perfection” as well as a lecherous ode to young

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<sup>90</sup> Clément Ollivier, *Histoire physique et morale de la femme* (Paris: Germer-Baillière Imprimeur-Libraire, 1857), 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 13-15.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 14-15.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

women's "desire provoking" bodies when used for the purposes of reproduction and motherhood.<sup>94</sup>

Ollivier's divisions establish a gendered white supremacist hierarchy, arguing the white race "has distinguished itself to the highest degree by its beauty and intelligence" particularly the white woman, who is "perfectly formed."<sup>95</sup> In the West, "woman reigns supreme" only with her "desires repressed by modesty" and is therefore "free" to "enjoy the benefits of civilization."<sup>96</sup> All other races are found lower on the hierarchy and closer towards the animal kingdom, although while there is "barely any distance... from a Papou [Papuan] to an orangutan... the Papou is still a human."<sup>97</sup> In "unhappy" countries women are forced to "crawl and obey" and compete with each other over who can "provoke" the most desire in men.<sup>98</sup> The part of their "moral faculties" that should make them abhor such actions has been repressed by their condition of enslavement and barbarism.<sup>99</sup>

With higher levels of civilization come higher levels of morality, although it is not always clear which is taken to be the cause of the other.<sup>100</sup> For example, even white women can become immoral if "enslaved" in "harems," as is the case for Georgian women sold into "tyranny and barbarism" in Persia and Turkey.<sup>101</sup> Non-Christian religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism can weaken the civilizational ascendance of the "white races of Asia" (including the "Arab" and "Indian" peoples) and put them into inferior barbarous states.<sup>102</sup> In his

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 15, 18, 22-4, 54-5.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 31, 64.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 15, 22-24.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 27-8.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 62.

historical overview, Ollivier similarly characterizes Jesus as the “first defender of the feeblers sex” as he “defended women against the barbarous laws and practices of the Orient” and “Jewish law.”<sup>103</sup> At the same time, “women of the Orient” were not accountable for their fallen state; because “woman is made to please man,” their “lascivious” nature only comes about because the “tastes of their masters demand it of them.”<sup>104</sup> Women are not at fault as they are not familiar with the sort of “liberty” that characterizes the West, and this ignorance means they may “barely consider themselves oppressed.”<sup>105</sup> In this sense, treatment and status of women is directly tied to the type of political organization of a particular society.<sup>106</sup>

Furthermore, he argues that is the “sequestration” of women that is responsible for the fact that “Oriental society” has remained static. While men are better suited to discuss “serious and grave interests,” it is “only women, through their witty pleasantries and delicate conversation” who are able to “animate male society.”<sup>107</sup> Keeping women “enslaved” and away from all men who are not their husbands has “given Oriental society a serious and monotonous tone... turning the expanse of countries subject to Islamism into a vast tomb. There, where neither love nor liberty reigns, there can be no activity nor imitation.”<sup>108</sup> The arrival of “civilization” will force polygyny and other barbaric practices to “cease,” as “liberty is the cherished sister of love, one cannot exist without the other.”<sup>109</sup> In this sense, gender relations and civilizational advancement are mutually reinforcing.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 31-2, 55.

The belief that women were responsible for a race's "improvement" or "stagnation" remained a common preoccupation through the mid-nineteenth century. For example, Michelet's 1860 *La Femme* asserts that French civilization is uniquely well suited to "regenerating" and elevating non-white peoples by working through women.<sup>110</sup> While he mostly focuses on physical descriptions of women's beauty, his text contains a relatively positive if racially essentialist assessment of non-white women, noting that "the women rule in many of the black tribes of Central Africa, and they are as intelligent as they are amiable and kind."<sup>111</sup> In describing racial differences, he argues that the "virtue of black blood" is in its reinvigorating properties, as it is a veritable "fountain of youth... an element, like an inextinguishable volcano."<sup>112</sup> However, the key part of his argument is that this sort of transformation can only happen thanks to the "resurrection" of the "African race" by "its first contact, by love, with the white race."<sup>113</sup> More specifically, it is the French nation that is so well suited for this sort of racial "regeneration," both in specific unions between French men and non-white women and in broader cultural terms.

Michelet also draws a connection between a civilization's morality and the appearance of the women living within the borders. He draws a distinction between "the Negress" and "the true black woman" that is emerging in Haiti, as while the former has "coarse and bloated features," the later has "straight nose and thin lips... even her hair is changing" and all "without mixing." While he argues that such a transformation is occurring women in Haiti thanks to "liberty" and "intelligent culture," he argues that the "frightful anarchy of petty wars and the slave trade" means that this change cannot occur for women in Africa or the United States, where such women may be "very pretty" yet will always "remain a negress."

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<sup>110</sup> Jules Michelet, *La femme* (Paris: Hachette, 1860).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

In particular, Michelet argues that a defining characteristic of non-white women is their high degree of infatuation with French men, including as their “gentle, child-like humility” and their overwhelming eagerness to please.<sup>114</sup> As “superior males,” French men in particular are highly desired by women in the colonies, and the “Negress” naturally “thirsts” for the white man in the same way that the “desert thirsts for the river.”<sup>115</sup> The French man is in this way superior to English and German men, who might “appear strong and well formed” but are not as “robust” or “generative... they can do nothing with the foreigner... if the English or German woman is not always at hand following them on their journeys, their race dies out.”<sup>116</sup>

It is therefore through non-white women that entire races can be “elevated,” as if such women are “loved, she will do anything, learn anything... through such love she will elevate the men and children” around her. His suggestion for achieving this includes a particular type of educational system that first “cultivates what she already has so richly, the sense of rhythm (dancing, music, etc.) and through this art, lead her on to reading, to the sciences, and to the agricultural arts.”<sup>117</sup> Because the earth is itself “so feminine,” women will be particularly susceptible to “fall in love” with such knowledge. He compares the African past to the future of the Americas, arguing that although Africa had only Egypt (or “Red Isis”) to lead her, the Americas will have a “Black Isis, a burning female genius, to fertilize nature and revive the exhausted races,” particularly in the former Spanish colonies.<sup>118</sup> His ideal model is therefore Haiti, who he addresses directly as “the youthful... black France,” who “kindly people” love the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 137, 140.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 135, 142.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

French although they had “oppressed your fathers.”<sup>119</sup> He argues that France offer it protection in “atonement” for this past and allow it to “develop a free genius, the genius of a cruelly slandered race, of whom you are the sole civilized representative in the world.”<sup>120</sup> In the same way, it is “representative of the genius of women... your charming women, so loving and intelligent” who make such “tender mothers” and will therefore become “admirable instructors.”<sup>121</sup> Rooted in their profound love of French men, women of the empire in this way become the ultimate vessels for civilizational “evolution” towards French norms.

In particular, Muslim women’s susceptibility to such “civilizational influence” became an increasingly pressing issue as the French sought to expand their holdings in North Africa. One 1842 report by a French Jew hoping to convince the government to start a relocation program of Russian Jews to newly French Algeria emphasized the difference between the “backwards” Muslim women and the more “civilized” Jewish woman who could more easily assimilate to French life, as the former “remains enclosed within the narrow walls of their dwellings or under thick veils, avoiding our civilization” while the later “goes out with an exposed face, or happily entertains guests in her home for friendly evenings.”<sup>122</sup> This distinction between different types of non-Christians was particularly important in Algeria, where the population of indigenous Jews complicated French civilizational hierarchies. In general, Algerian Jews were positioned “above” Algerian Muslims in hierarchies of political evolution, with the argument that since their “emergence” from Ottoman despotism, Jews were more able to assimilate to French norms.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 141-2.

<sup>122</sup> Cited in Joshua Schreier, “‘They Swore upon the Tombs Never to Make Peace with Us,’ Algerian Jews and French Colonialism: 1845-1848,” in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia Lorcin (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 106.

<sup>123</sup> Schreier, *Arabs*, 178-9.

As in the above example, some Jewish reformers capitalized on this colonialist discourse to promote Jewish rights, further consolidating the idea that family structure dictated the bounds of French citizenship.

In establishing French legal systems, the colonial administration therefore promoted the idea that Muslim households and systems of justice were corrupt and inadequate, particularly for regulating women.<sup>124</sup> French legal scholars argued that the main challenges in convincing Algerian men to assimilate to French citizenship was that it would conflict with “Oriental beliefs... on the condition of women” in matters of household and state.<sup>125</sup> Arguments about sovereignty thus pivoted around women’s status, with the idea that the acceptance of French law would enable Algerian women to “escape” from their marginalized status and positioning French colonialism as a means of female liberation.<sup>126</sup>

Racial and religious identities blurred the limits of citizenship categories in the colonies, not only in large colonies such as Algeria, but also in the smaller enclaves of French India. For example, an 1849 government census changed the formerly used category of “Indian” to the new category of “Hindu,” reflecting a new emphasis on religious difference.<sup>127</sup> While most of these partitions were considered “very distinct,” the “mixed” categories continued to gain a high degree of attention from French politicians and legal scholars.<sup>128</sup> For example, while the “topas” were originally associated with specifically Portuguese ancestry, in the early twentieth century

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<sup>124</sup> Michael Brett, “Legislating for Inequality in Algeria: The Senatus-Consulte of 14 July 1865,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 51, no. 3 (1988), 446.

<sup>125</sup> J. E. Sartor, *De la naturalisation en Algérie* (Paris: Retaux frères, 1865). Also see Schreier, *Arabs*, 164

<sup>126</sup> Decree of 31 December 1859; Brett, “Legislating for Inequality,” 448.

<sup>127</sup> Francis Cyril Antony, ed., *Gazetteer, Union Territory of Pondicherry* (Pondicherry: The Government Press, 1982), 301. Also see Namakkal, 34.

<sup>128</sup> N. Hullet. *Hygiène des blancs, des mixtes et des indiens à Pondichéry* (Pondichéry: Imprimeur du Gouvernement, 1867), 12-15.

the term became more general term for *métis* people in general, including French-descended persons. Colorism within the “mixed” category remained pronounced, with one British description of French India noting the “infinite variety of the breed from the *type chocolate* of the bazaars to the *topas sans vouloir l’avouer* [those who do not want to admit they are *topas*], who frequent the boulevard and the state reception.”<sup>129</sup> The author also made mocking reference the degree to which the “mixed” population appropriated French titles, describing how “a sign of respectability is the taking of a high-sounding name – that of a Merovingian King for preference. Some, like the Hooligans of Montmartre, affect both a name and a nickname; and Jean Cussay dit Bec en L’air, with his cloth cap and shabby pajamas, makes an effective contrast to Le Sieur Pharamond in his three-storied helmet and impeccable alpaca. Both are a tint lighter than your boot; but they live on the aristocratic side of the canal.” This passage suggests the ways in which urban space, gender, cultural signifiers such as name or clothing, religious practice, and racial categorization all came together to shape status and social identity.

Cotton also describes in detail the beauty of the so-called female *topazine*, who he argues is “seen at her best” at mass amongst the other “Eurasians” in the front row. In describing the scene, he compares the beauty of the beautiful yet modest “creole” girls with their “peculiar languid grace” to the “harshness of Indian singing” which “grates on the ear... in her own home, the daughter of Pondicherry is hardly so enchanting.” The “*créole* type” of women are thus able to bridge the cultural gap: exotic enough to be alluring, chaste in their beauty and Christian devotion, and without any of the “grating” cultural baggage associated with the “Indian” women.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Julian James Cotton, “Pondicherry,” *Macmillans Magazine* 517 (1902): 125 – 135.

<sup>130</sup> Namakkal, “Transgressing,” 44-5. The trope of the French (or European) man observing a beautiful mixed-race Indian women in an audience is a common one, also seen in A. Maufroid’s

By the mid-nineteenth century, women had thus become firmly positioned as both symbols and agents of a particular societies advancement or barbarism. It is not surprising that it was in 1869 that JS Mill famously stated that “the surest test and most correct measure of the civilization of a people or an age” is its “elevation or debasement of women.” In France, this connection would become particularly important during the late nineteenth century advent of the Third Republic, where the civilizing mission took on such powerful significance and women’s “status” became further tied to the legitimation of new colonial conquests.

### **The Third Republic**

The Third Republic saw the emergence of a wide range of women’s rights organizations advocating a number of platforms related to women’s place in France and the world.<sup>131</sup> While diverse, the majority of such groups continued to connect women’s role in politics to their role in the household, supporting various rights and reforms in language that celebrated a domestic femininity centered around motherhood and the family.<sup>132</sup>

Arguments against women’s rights often used language that echoed French discussions of women’s status in the colonies. Religion remained a common refrain, with the idea that women’s greater religiosity and susceptibility to indoctrination made them a risk to the secular French state. Medicalized “natural” explanations for why women should not have the same rights as men also proliferated, ranging from arguments about why women should not work in “male”

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1911 description of an orchestra audience of beautiful Franco-Indian “demi-négresses” who could speak French with a Marseillaise accent. A. Maufroid, *Sous le soleil de l’Inde* (Paris: Plon, 1911), 108-9.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Smith, *Feminism and the Third Republic: Women’s Political and Civil Rights in France, 1918-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>132</sup> Fauré, *La démocratie*, 6.

spaces to why it was justified to kill a woman who committed adultery.<sup>133</sup> Alexandre Dumas fils's 1872 *L'Homme-Femme* is a particularly strong example of this approach, arguing that any liberty extended to women will directly reduce the freedoms accorded to men, who must use their strength to "shut up and subordinate the feminine" and teach her to joyfully submit to her "eternal destiny" and natural role.<sup>134</sup> Any feminist attempt to "undermine" this natural order was not only "ridiculous" but a danger to the stability of society itself, which rested on a "triangle" containing an "all-powerful God, man the intermediary, and women the assistant... man can do nothing without God, woman can do nothing without man, such is the eternal, absolute, and immutable truth."<sup>135</sup>

One partial exception to the typical French perspective on Islam and women can be found in an 1895 book by the Radical mayor of Constantine Ernest Mercier.<sup>136</sup> In the text, he argues that the French in fact know very little about "indigenous" society and that the widespread European notion that Muslim women's condition is "the most miserable in existence" is therefore not based on actual evidence.<sup>137</sup> If things were as bad as they were imagined to be in European discourse, surely more women would "from time to time escape their tormenters and seek the protection of our magistrates... abandoning this wretched life and adopting the condition of French women."<sup>138</sup> To further establish his point, Mercier argues that Islam "imposes duties but also confers rights."<sup>139</sup> He then provides an historical overview of "pre-Islamic Arabia" and contemporary Algeria, which he argues held and continue to hold a range of

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>134</sup> Alexandre Dumas fils, *L'Homme-femme* (Paris: Lévy, 1872), 91-6.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 94-5.

<sup>136</sup> Ernest Mercier, *La Condition de la femme musulmane dans l'Afrique septentrionale* (Alger: Adolphe Jourdan, 1895).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 11.

diverse religious practices (including Christianity), vocations, cultural forms, class distinctions, gender relations, and languages.<sup>140</sup> Through the era of the French conquest, women had a range of rights within different forms of marriage and household-building, commercial operations, political systems, and military engagements.<sup>141</sup>

While Mercier argues that the rise of Islam in northern Africa “profoundly changed” women’s condition by imposing new legal rights and obligations” that “diminished individuality,” he makes a theological argument that Mohammed himself was “constantly preoccupied” with trying to “uplift women, to assure her of her rights, to protect her against the violence of her husband and her parents, to ensure she did not fall into poverty and abjection, and to conserve the dignity and status of the family.”<sup>142</sup> As women’s “nature” is essentially “weaker” than man’s, the best place for them is at home with their children freed from all “material worry” and “treated with sweetness and respect by her husband and relatives.”<sup>143</sup> Mercier argues that it was because Islam was “too successful” at achieving this goal that women found themselves “morally separated” from men and “sequestered in harems.”<sup>144</sup> While Mercier opposes the particular gendered organization of the Muslim household, he is unusual among his contemporaries in that he argues the system emerged from a place of love and respect rather than barbarism and hate.

Following the “scramble for Africa” and the imposition of European control over the continent in the late nineteenth century, a new wave of ethnographies sought to account for the changes that were thought to be occurring, particularly focusing on the idea that certain

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 13-28, 75-121, 135-154.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 1-31.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 31-2.

“primitive” cultures would inevitably fade away and must therefore be documented for European analysis. One such example is Adolphe Louis Cureau’s 1912 ethnography about Equatorial Africa, in which he laments the “disappearance of the last savage peoples of the world.”<sup>145</sup> In Cureau’s framework, “the rising tide of European invasion” will pollute the “rare remnants of primitive humanity” by “interrupting the normal succession of their history with a sudden break,” making it necessary to use ethnography to “hurry to save this past” before it evaporates completely and we can no longer “understand the soul of the primitives... living testimony of humanity in the first ages... the first draft of civilization.”<sup>146</sup> Working in collaboration with French colonial administrators and missionary workers in the French Congo, Cureau therefore sought to “examine all degrees of their progress, from the men of pure nature to citizens... watching them like a series of living paintings.”<sup>147</sup>

Among Cureau’s assessments of the population’s inferior intelligence (“the Black is an assimilator, but not a creator... the Black sincerely recognizes the superiority of the white race”), general homogeneity (“the negro soul is that of an entire race; the white soul is essentially diverse... one Black differs very little physiologically from another Black... the civilized, in contrast, span the gamut”), and lack of history (“here we find neither monuments nor traditions”), he also comments on the “condition of women” in the region.<sup>148</sup> In language that echoes his nostalgia for the disappearing “noble savage,” he emphasizes the particular qualities of African women as being “unconscious and passive” with a “triple destiny as precious animal,

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<sup>145</sup> Adolphe Louis Cureau, *Les sociétés primitives de l’Afrique équatoriale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1912), v.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, vi-xli.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 69-70, 74,

beast of burden, and sexual tool.”<sup>149</sup> He hazards some criticism of metropolitan feminist groups who advocated colonial policies directed towards changing women’s position in “native society,” asking “you women of the civilized world” to not “pity this savage woman... she is resigned in advance, she accepts... do not try to remove her from this, she would not understand.”<sup>150</sup> He did argue that women’s status as sacred or occult figures within the society would soon be changing, as “as the *indigène* is civilized, this semi-mystic semi-sacred character will weaken or transform, at least in practice.”<sup>151</sup>

Despite language that criticized alleged gender imbalances outside of Europe, women remained legally inferior to men in this time in the metropole as well, including clear subordination within the household to her husband. (On such example was the 1913 “Couriau Affair,” in which a female typographer was not only denied admission into the local printer’s union because of her gender, but her husband was expelled from the union for “allowing” his wife to work in a union shop.<sup>152</sup>) As the previous chapter notes, between 1919 and 1933, numerous bills sought to introduce female suffrage in France, but none were able to make it out of the Senate, where a majority of politicians maintained that enfranchising women was a danger to the nation.<sup>153</sup> The formal opposition did not, of course, mean that feminist groups ceased to organize for the expansion of women’s political rights.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>152</sup> See Madeleine Guilbert, *Les Femmes et l’organisation syndicale avant 1914* (Paris: CNRS, 1966), 409-27; Charles Sowerwine, “Workers and Women in France before 1914: The Debate over the Couriau Affair,” *Journal of Modern History* 55 (1983): 411-41.

<sup>153</sup> Martin Thomas, *French Empires between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics, and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 152.

<sup>154</sup> Joseph Barthélemy, *Le Vote des Femmes* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1920).

In the post-WWI era, one way that French female disenfranchisement was often critiqued was by comparing the rights of French women to the rights of women in other parts of the world. For example, in 1919 socialist politician Alexandre Bracke pointed out that the expansion of women's suffrage would no longer be happening in "isolation... now, in more than two thirds of Europe, the entirety of political rights is assured to women of the most diverse races, cultures, and religions." He contextualized this not only in terms of socialist ideology about proletarian labor creating an equality of rights, but also "growing pressure from outside is matched by internal pressure... the fact that *la femme* has become an individual capable of desiring her liberty, the chains that bound her to the foyer have begun to break away... having become '*personnes*' it is only too natural that they become '*citoyennes*'"<sup>155</sup> The implicit (or sometimes explicit) assumption that the degree of "advancement" in a particular country could be measured by women's suffrage was a relatively new idea in determining women's "status" within a particular region. In a context where a greater number of nations expanded voting rights among women, such a critique had increased purchase. The French feminist Cécile Brunschvicg similarly argued that it was "humiliating to think that a daughter of the country of the Revolution' still had to beg rights granted to women in 'backward' countries."<sup>156</sup> In other words, the division between the "backward" and "civilized" world was starting to include voting rights as a metric.

Into the interwar period, the French administration continued to endorse the idea that the colonies had "backwards" gender relations, a clear sign of their need for imperial control. At the same time, they drew on works by ethnographers such as Cureau to argue that any intervention

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<sup>155</sup> Alexandre-Marie Desrousseau, "Quand les femmes voteront," *L'Humanité* (19 May 1919), 1.

<sup>156</sup> Cécile Brunschvicg, "Les Femmes et le suffrage," *L'Humanité* (19 May 1919): n.p.

on their part could disrupt “ancient” patterns of social stability and throw the region into chaos. For example, one circulated report by an interim Governor General of French West Africa agreed that the administration must help aid the “evolution of custom to gradually bring it into harmony with a more elevated conception of the condition of women.”<sup>157</sup> However, he cautioned that any too great of a change to family structure (and especially the power of fathers over their daughters and husbands over their wives) was “dangerous” from both a philosophical and political point of view.<sup>158</sup> Because the family was the “foundation of indigenous society,” the “emancipation of the individual” could “deeply disturb the native order and shake a social system on which our own domination rests... I need not remind you that it is through the authority of the father in the household, and, by extension, of the village chief, that we have been able to ensure the recruitment of troop quotas destined for European battlefields.”<sup>159</sup> Any change must happen gradually through education, making sure France’s “generous impatience to evolve these customs” do not “conflict with the promises we have made with the indigenous populations not to upset their traditions.”<sup>160</sup>

In this way, education became a central component of the new French civilizing mission, as it was seen as a way to shape society towards French norms without causing too much social “disruption.” The administration implemented a host of new programs in the interwar period, including pairing with missionary societies to create direct pathways to administrative jobs for those who completed a missionary education.<sup>161</sup> Female education comprised an important part

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<sup>157</sup> Charles Désiré Auguste Brunet, “Mariage indigène et les droits résultant de la puissance paternelle, tutélaire ou maritale,” (5 October 1920), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541, 1-2.

<sup>158</sup> Brunet, “Mariage,” 2.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>161</sup> These included raising upper limits on age requirements, giving students more time to complete the program, paying missionary organizations for every student who not only

of this plan, particularly in efforts to create “better” wives, mothers, and local female leaders who could “improve” African families by raising healthy and more affluent children to become better workers and consumers.<sup>162</sup> As women were considered the “corner stone” of the African family and therefore of African society, they would be natural allies in securing social transformation.<sup>163</sup> For example, the first French governor of Haute Volta (Burkina Faso) instructed his subordinates to protect the rights of women by modifying traditions in an “evolutionary” way, particularly through the implementation of training schools where girls could learn domestic skills and gain an appreciation for French ways of life that they could then pass on to their families.<sup>164</sup> Programs also emphasized the importance of teaching women and girls the French language, which was considered a more efficient way to spread French culture and ideals by educating not only the female individual in question, but also any children she might bear.<sup>165</sup> Schools for “domestic science” were also intended to supplement girls’ education and create better — and more French — wives and mothers, although enrollment in such institutions often remained low.<sup>166</sup>

At the same time that women were considered valued French intermediaries for shaping society, they continued to be considered “inferior” members within African social structures. In this, the primary target of most missionary groups’ ire were the intuitions of dowry and bride

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graduated but went on to serve in the French administration for at least ten years. Asenju Callistus Tamanji, “Three Instances of Western Colonial Governments and Christian Missions in Cameroon Education: 1884-1961,” (PhD diss., Loyola University Chicago, 2011), 223.

<sup>162</sup> Kenneth J. Orosz, *Religious Conflict and the Evolution of Language Policy in German and French Cameroon, 1885-1939* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 263-4.

<sup>163</sup> Achille Mbembe, *La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun, 1920-1960* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1996), 100.

<sup>164</sup> Lawrence Rupley, Lamissa Bangali, and Boureima Diamitani, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013).

<sup>165</sup> Orosz, *Religious Conflict*, 263-4; Tamanji, “Three Instances,” 223.

<sup>166</sup> Tamanji, “Three Instances,” 224; Orosz, *Religious Conflict*, 263.

wealth in both polygamous and monogamous contexts, which they argued transformed the holy sacrament of marriage into a tawdry commercial exchange. For example, in the words of one missionary at Ebolowa in Cameroun, women in the African family “possess nothing, have the right to nothing, and belong not even to themselves... they exist in terms of market value, as beings who can be bargained for or inherited, as if they were material goods.”<sup>167</sup>

While missionary and administrative groups sometimes worked together, they often had differing ideas of how best to “save” African woman and children.<sup>168</sup> For example, in Cameroon, the Spiritans criticized Governor Marchand’s colonial policies as little more than forced labor directed primarily at women and children. Marchand counterattacked in the spring of 1930, leading to a debate between the two groups over the status of women in French colonial policy.<sup>169</sup> Missionary groups often framed their work as more advanced than the initiatives of the government, as seen in one 1936 Pères Blancs report that asserted that the “condition” of women in French West Africa remained “deplorable,” leaving it up to the Mission to “improve the situation by establishing a sense of the human personality” and pick up the government’s slack in suppressing “family slavery and dependence.”<sup>170</sup>

Along with such missionary groups, the expansion of the French administration and private enterprise led to larger numbers of metropolitan French women moving to the colonies.

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<sup>167</sup> Cited in Mbembe, *La naissance du maquis*, 100.

<sup>168</sup> Elizabeth Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>169</sup> Tamanji, “Three Instances,” 228.

<sup>170</sup> Pères Blancs, “Mission Catholique des Pères Blancs en AOF,” (1 September 1936), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

As this population grew, an increasing number of texts sought to address this new audience.<sup>171</sup> Co-founders of the French Colonial Institute's *Entr'aide coloniale feminine*, Germaine André-Hesse and Clotilde Chivas-Baron, wrote a book in 1933 for preparing white women to living in the colonies.<sup>172</sup> An article from February of that same year asked why there were not any journals available for French women in the colonies, particularly for those women who wanted to keep themselves (and their children) beautiful and fit even in the "most arid deserts" or more "primordial locations" of the empire (the short article suggested morning exercise).<sup>173</sup> The increased presence of white midwives and nurses became a particular focus of medical groups, missionary societies, and the French administration. One French doctor described them as "beautiful... missionaries of colonization, saviors of human life."<sup>174</sup> At the same time, he warned women not to go into the colonies expecting riches or adventure, as they must be ready to "adapt to local life and inspire confidence within your clientele. This is not as easy as might be thought, to penetrate into indigenous environments where there is more faith in fetishes than in science."<sup>175</sup> As women were simultaneously considered stalwart outposts of French civilization and suggestible creatures of fancy, this tension between the need to "adapt" to local conditions while still preserving their beauty was particularly fraught.

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<sup>171</sup> See Grace Corneau, *La Femme aux Colonies* (Paris: Nilsson, 1900). Also see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Marie-Paule Ha, *French Women and the Empire: The Case of Indochina* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>172</sup> Margaret Anderson, *Regeneration Through Empire: French Pronatalists and Colonial Settlement in the Third Republic* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2015), 103.

<sup>173</sup> "Art - Gout - Beauté," *Le Réveil de la côte Ouest* (16 February 1933): 2.

<sup>174</sup> Foveau de Courmelles, "L'Exercice de la profession de sage-femme aux Colonies," *La Sage-Femme et Le Puériculteur* (February 1932): 4-6.

<sup>175</sup> G. Claudel, "Lettre du Maroc," *La Sage-Femme et Le Puériculteur* (September 1933): 1.

## Marriage reform and the Popular Front

The installation of the Popular Front government brought a renewed push towards colonial reforms, including changes to the regulation of “indigenous marriages.”<sup>176</sup> In the summer of 1936, Governor General of French West Africa Joseph Jules Brévié framed marriage reform as the new “foundation of colonial policy” which will ensure the “progression of indigenous society.”<sup>177</sup> However, as any reforms would “call into question the very organization of the family and social organization,” they required a “flexible” hand during implementation. The French were therefore in a “delicate” position, as they had made a “formal commitment at the time of the conquest – a commitment we have since repeated many times” that they would “respect the customs, morals, and traditions of subjugated populations,” meaning that any interference with local marriage practices was beyond their remit. However, Governor General Brévié also observed that “our civilizing actions and the contact or the diffusion of our ideas within the native milieu have aroused the aspirations of moral and material wellbeing,” presenting French modes as inherently superior and more modern than “native” traditions. He therefore argued that reforms or social change could not be “repressed under the pretext that they break with customs that are of course respectable but which are called to be surpassed by the tide of new ideas and needs.” As local society was understood to be static, any change would have to come from French pressure. In considering marriage in particular, he argued it was impossible to “brutally substitute” French laws for “established institutions,” and “progressive” changes must

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<sup>176</sup> This built on unfinished work from December 1934 and January 1935 when the administration conducted a preliminary series of investigations about the place of women within the “traditional cultures” of the colonies. Joseph Jules Brévié, Letter to the Minister of Colonies (8 June 1937), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541; Joseph Jules Brévié, Letter to the Minister of Colonies (27 June 1936), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

<sup>177</sup> Joseph Jules Brévié, Circulaire to the Lieutenants-Gouverneurs des Colonies du Groupe (25 June 1936), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

instead be slowly established to bring about a “new step in the path towards the humanization of local customs” towards “civilization” and away from “barbarism.”<sup>178</sup> At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that the administration “never loses sight of the fact that the maintenance of the stability of the indigenous family must remain a dominant factor in shaping their decisions.”

This question of women’s role in promoting family stability (and thereby colonial stability) remained a major preoccupation for Brévié and his peers. In a letter to the Ministry of Colonies in the summer of 1937, Brévié asserted that the tension was not in the need to establish a colonial hierarchy, but that African “customs” could not be easily reconciled with “individual liberties.”<sup>179</sup> Local customs were in a new state of “constant evolution” due to the new “external influences of our civilization and of religion.”<sup>180</sup> It was therefore necessary to “constantly observe these modifications which are bringing more evolved ideas and morals to the indigenous” to be sure any new programs could be properly adjusted and applied. Within this, he argued that the “fate of women” within these newly “elevated social milieus” was one of the governments “primary duties.” Similarly, in October 1937, Minister of Colonies Marius Moutet asserted that “respect for local traditions by French authorities does not, of course, imply a desire to crystallize indigenous society in the state in which we found it when we arrived or to thwart its development towards a form of civilization more like our own.” When transitions must be made, they must be done gradually through the “slow persuasion of the people” so that that the “current framework” was replaced with something more appropriate.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Such as the regulation of marriage and divorce in the Decree of 3 December 1931.

<sup>179</sup> Brévié, Letter (8 June 1937).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Marius Moutet, Letter to the Minister of Colonies (9 October 1937), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

In pursuit of such goals in the summer of 1938, deputy Louis Marin and Ministry of Colonies Director of Politics Gaston Joseph requested copies of all official government documents that “favored the freedoms of indigenous women in French West Africa or that have been given in their favor since our occupation of these regions.”<sup>182</sup> The response came later that fall from the acting Governor General of French West Africa Léon Geismar, who provided an official French narrative of actions in favor of women’s rights the area since the early nineteenth century.<sup>183</sup> He begins his narrative in the wake of the abolition of the slave trade, when problems arose due to the “large number of women and children without means or employment” who “found themselves” in French territory. While minors could be apprenticed, women had practically no choice other than “prostitution or vagabondage.”

Geismar therefore emphasized the vocational education of women as an official government priority in French West Africa, a new program to be carried out in conjunction with local religious organizations to target young women in particular. While he argues that Christian or “animist” Senegalese girls took excellent advantage of the training, Muslim female students were “always refractory to this education, which was too foreign to their psychology.” Despite this resistance, “generous initiatives” continued to appear through the mid-nineteenth century, including programs to provide nanny-nurses (“*nourrices*”) to the children of black women who had been hospitalized in Saint Louis, a program which “raised the health and morality” of all it touched. While the administration (and Faidherbe in particular) continued to “exhort *mulâtres* and Muslims” to “raise the status of their women,” such programs met “with little success.” During the “development of the conquest” of the hinterland, the French established “freedom

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<sup>182</sup> Louis Marin, Letter to the Ministry of Colonies (25 June 1938), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541; Gaston Joseph, Letter to the Governor General of AOF (4 July 1938), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

<sup>183</sup> Léon Geismar, Letter to the Minister of the Colonies (5 September 1938), ANOM 1AFFPOL/541.

villages” to house the captives of Samory and other “indigenous tyrants,” although the freed women and children remained “subject to the rules of animist and Muslim custom.”

The report further characterizes this period as one in which “the problem of the evolution of the indigenous woman and child rested, from the start, with the question of education.” When studied “realistically,” measures to “favor the liberation of women from the overly strict rules of custom” should aim to “preserve” indigenous ethnics as long as they are not “contrary to French civilization” while “freeing woman from a servitude that is incompatible with our notion of individual liberty and the dignity of the human person.” He argues that it is “particularly in the realm of private law (marriage and divorce) that are found the most appropriate means to develop the movement for the emancipation of the indigenous woman in the framework of traditional society.” It was hoped that such efforts would “guarantee the maximum efficiency” in a way that is “compatible with the harmonious evolution of the populations that we have under our guardianship.” However, the rising tide of war meant many of these plans went unrealized.

## **Towards Vichy**

By the early 1940s, the Vichy administration implemented anti-Republican policies that gutted electoral and parliamentary institutions, connecting changes in government structure to ideologies about gender roles in the state, nation, and empire. The new National Revolution promoted the idea that women’s duty was to be mothers in the home while men’s duty was to provide for their families and address public issues of state.<sup>184</sup> The composition and operation of

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<sup>184</sup> Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine: A Contribution to a Political Sociology of Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); François Rouquet, “Le sort des femmes sous le gouvernement de Vichy (1940-1944),” *Politiques*

the patriarchal family unit was in this way an explicitly political formation that was both the bedrock of the nation-state as well as a microcosm of a larger authoritarian government structure.

The close connection between gender roles and state power meant that a critique of certain types of gender roles or practices could be used to critique the types of state structures or sociocultural milieus that were thought to enable them. For example, the misogynist figure of “la Gueuse” (variously translated as “harlot,” “slut,” or “whore”) was used by pro-Vichy commentators to personify the excesses and failings of a disordered and immoral Third Republic in which short-haired women wore pants and smoked cigarettes, worked outside of their home and possibly even within formal political office, or wore too much make up and watched too many frivolous American films.<sup>185</sup> To correct these failings, Vichy sought a return to a more “traditional” world in which the only way a woman could approach political subjecthood (if one can call it that) was by doing her part to sustain and nourish the “natural” family unit in her capacity as a mother and wife. Women were in this sense glorified, upheld in propaganda as domestic goddesses crucial to the continuation and flourishing of the family unit, while young girls were shown as the pink-cheeked byproducts of clean country living and moral virtue. However, daily life for the vast majority of women (and men) in war time France was very different from these rosy images: grim, precarious, and often deadly, particularly for persecuted or “undesirable” populations such as Jews or Communists.<sup>186</sup>

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*familiales et vies de femmes* 36 (1996): 61-8; Antoine Prost, “L’évolution de la politique familiale en France de 1938 à 1981,” *Mouvement sociale* 129 (1984): 7-28.

<sup>185</sup> François Rouquet, “Women in Vichy France,” in the *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>186</sup> Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France* (London: Longman, 1999); H el ene Eck, “Les Fran aises sous Vichy: Femmes du d sastre - Citoyennes par le d sastre?” in *Histoire des femmes: Le vingti me si cle*, ed. Fran oise Th baud, 185-211 (Paris: Plon, 1992); and Shannon L. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

On one hand, National Revolution ideologies were intended to erase the legacies of the organized feminism and progressive politics of the interwar years.<sup>187</sup> At the same time, these policies cannot be described as a total break with pre-Vichy years. For example, the 1939 Family Code was developed during the Third Republic after decades of interwar pro-natalist advocacy and, during Vichy, became an important model for wartime family policy.<sup>188</sup> In many ways, the image of a strong paternal figure was a common one across French discussions of family or state structures, including in Republican systems of governance.<sup>189</sup>

The war interrupted colonial changes as well as gender reforms, although many in the colonies remained hopeful that certain promises would continue to be fulfilled. One upper-level missionary in Burkina Faso wrote to the Vichy Secretary of Colonies in August 1941.<sup>190</sup> He celebrated the general “moral evolution which has occurred in West Africa thanks to contact with our civilization and missions,” calling particular attention to the 1939 Mandal Decree, which was to “bring a large improvement to the condition of the indigenous woman.” While the outbreak of war had prevented the full implementation of the decree, the missionary hoped to nonetheless secure the new government’s approval on the “spirit” of the decree. He argued that the decree was needed to combat the “repugnant practices so contrary to natural rights,” a goal, he argues, that was in line with the “respect for the human person written into the program of Marshal Pétain” and would enable “our indigenous populations” to enjoy the “moral advantages

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<sup>187</sup> Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 100.

<sup>188</sup> Rouquet, “Women in Vichy France,” 384-5; Elisa Camiscioli, “Producing Citizens, Reproducing the ‘French Race’: Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France,” *Gender and History* 13, no. 3 (2001): 593-621.

<sup>189</sup> Hunt, *Family Romance*, 5, 153; Sarah Hanley, “Engendering the State: Family Formation and State Building in Early Modern France,” *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 1 (1989): 4-27. The language was even more marked in the colonies: Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>190</sup> Joanny Thevenoud, Letter to M. le Contre-Amiral (6 August 1941), ANOM 1AFFPOL/639.

and benefits envisioned and desired by the Savior of France for all those whom... he would consider to be his children.” The administration responded ambiguously, noting that “the present circumstances require particular caution in the establishment as well as the implementation of political policies that relate to the family structure of African populations.”<sup>191</sup>

Although feminist imperialism and colonial policy did seek to reproduce French domestic norms or marriage practices in the colonies, the question of rights for women as a whole was more complicated. If men could vote and women could not, were women supposed to become more like men in order to gain voting rights? As the next chapter outlines, intertwining ideas about both gender and race remained central in determining the limits of colonial citizenship, although their significance would shift as the postwar regime emerged.

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<sup>191</sup> Charles Platon, Letter to Thevenoud (1941), ANOM 1AFFPOL/639.

## **PART II**

### **Postwar Transformations (1943-1946)**

## Chapter Three

### “The Stumbling Block”:

#### Women’s Suffrage and the Making of the French Union, 1943-1946

In August 1945, the French Conseil d’Etat responded to a decree proposed by the Ministry of Colonies to regulate political representation in the French empire. The Conseil called particular attention to the difference between the bill’s introductory language and the text of the law itself. Given that the decree created a voting system that disadvantaged non-Europeans by limiting suffrage rights to narrowly defined “certain categories of people” that excluded most men and women living in the colonies, the Conseil suggested that the Ministry modify or remove the preliminary remarks that asserted the law to be “affirmation of the principle of the fundamental equality between all those whose union constitutes the great French community.”<sup>1</sup> In explaining this position, they argued that “it is better to avoid the proclamation of a principle that is contradicted by the following dispositions.”<sup>2</sup>

This was an unusual move on the part of the Conseil, as a wide gap between idealistic front matter and the text of the laws they preceded was common in French legislation. This was particularly true for laws that regulated the empire, which often paired a general universalist preface with more specific legal language outlining who got to enjoy certain rights or be subject to certain obligations. In the above instance however, the Conseil acknowledged the clear asymmetries between what the law claimed it was going to do and what it actually did. Their solution? Remove the offending line rather than alter the content of the bill. The Ministry did not

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinance °45-1874 of 22 August 1945.

<sup>2</sup> Council d’Etat Commission Permanente, “Dossier n.27,” (17 August 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1072.

take their advice, however, and retained the contradictory language in the final law, asserting the “fundamental equality” of all inhabitants of the French empire and the importance “in principle, of universal suffrage” to introduce a law that in fact kept the vast majority of colonial inhabitants disenfranchised. This debate over law and language reveals the postwar French government’s anxiety about the growing visibility of cracks within its ostensibly democratic empire. While universal suffrage was celebrated as foundational to France’s image as an enlightened colonial leader, disenfranchisement remained a primary means of creating tiered citizenship hierarchies. In the years following the Second World War, such disjunctures were not only increasingly identified, but interpreted as a problem for the administration.

The rights of women across the empire played a key role within this larger debate. As Chapters One and Two outlined, the French administration had long considered inhabitants of the empire and women across the metropole and colonies to be politically “immature,” an ideological stance that helped to legitimate a French imperialist patriarchy. The enfranchisement of metropolitan women in 1944 constituted one step towards bringing the language of universalism closer to a legal reality. However, the rights of women in the colonies was much harder to legislate, so much so that the Commissioner of Colonies referred to it as the “stumbling block” of the creation of France’s postwar political regime.<sup>3</sup> While gender was removed as a barrier for metropolitan voters, gender defined citizenship across the colonies, and it is this asymmetry that the present chapter examines. In particular, I focus on the significance of the racialized and gendered limits of citizenship in the creation of the French Union, during the

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<sup>3</sup> René Pleven, Telegram to Bayardelle n°1239 COLALG/AP.I (22 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; René Pleven, Telegram to Cournarie n° 1804 COLALG/AP/I (22 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; René Pleven, Telegram to Cournarie n°1643 COLALG/AP/I (18 August 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

eventful sliver of time between the formation of the French Committee of National Liberation in June 1943 and the formal installation of the Fourth Republic in October 1946.

While the institution of French women's right to vote was a major factor for instigating the expansion of female suffrage in the colonies, it does not explain why gender remained a pervasive way of categorizing citizens in some colonies but not in others. This chapter therefore situates the 1944 expansion of metropolitan women's suffrage in a larger colonial landscape, illuminating the connections between gender, race, and the limits of French citizenship. In one sense, debates over the limitations of female suffrage represented a continuation of old colonial methods, as the French administration framed the "improvement" of women's status as part of their "progressive" approach to imperialism. However, the postwar concern over public political rights differed from earlier debates about marriage and the family in both metropole and empire, holding particular challenges for a regime that had long insisted that women's proper place was the home rather than the voting booth.

### **Democracy and the legitimation of the Resistance**

World War II brought about a crisis of French national identity and Republican legitimacy. The many fragments of anti-Vichy Resistance movements needed to build a united front and assert to the French nation and the international community who they were, what they stood for, and why they were now France's rightful authority.<sup>4</sup> Yet the experience of war made this goal difficult for the various Resistance factions, who were apprehensive about the failures of the prewar Popular Front, weakened by human and material losses, territorially dispossessed, given little authority in the realm of international diplomacy, and decentralized in pockets of

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Davies, *France and the Second World War: Occupation, Collaboration and Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 49-62.

exile. As the Free French general Georges Catroux acknowledged following his taking of Syria and Lebanon from Vichy control in the summer of 1941, the Resistance had “little materiel, and only moral capital with which to recapture Great Power status.”<sup>5</sup>

Two of the major bases upon which this “moral capital” would come to be built were French imperial power and the establishment of progressive, Republican, and democratic institutions. The empire was important for several reasons, most obviously due to the fact that Free France had often operated from outside of metropolitan territory.<sup>6</sup> Spokesman for the Free French Charles de Gaulle framed the colonies as crucial strategic symbols as early as his famous “Appeal of 18 June” made from exile in London in 1940, in which he stated “for France is not alone! She has a vast Empire behind her.”<sup>7</sup> While the French metropole might have been under German or Vichy control, the Resistance could make a claim on an alternate form of French sovereignty rooted in colonial space. Along with the empire, the repression of elections and universal suffrage under Vichy gave them particular symbolic importance, making the restoration of democratic institutions paramount for the new regime. Putting these two strands together, democratic authority over a wide empire was the key to securing legitimacy, authority, and power. The image of a democratic “greater France” – composed of the metropole and all its willing colonies – was in this way crucial in the effort to restore the nation’s weakened global prestige.

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<sup>5</sup> George Catroux, *Dans la bataille de Méditerranée: Egypte, Levant, Afrique du Nord, 1940-1944* (Paris: Julliard, 1949), 217-8.

<sup>6</sup> Those who rallied to the Resistance often tended to be pro-empire in general; Jean Suret-Canale refers to them as sharing “sans réserve l’idéologie colonial la plus traditionnelle.” Jean Suret-Canale, *Les Groupes d’études communistes en Afrique noire* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994), 12.

<sup>7</sup> French Press and Information Service, *De Gaulle Leads French Resistance* (New York: French Press and Information Service, 1943), 4.

From their position in exile in Algiers, the Resistance soon coalesced into a more formal government structure. In summer and fall of 1943, they formed the French Committee of National Liberation, which in turn created a deliberative body known as the Provisional Consultative Assembly (PCA) to establish the legal foundations for a new Republican government.<sup>8</sup> Membership was drawn from a number of bodies, including representatives from Resistance organizations in the metropole and the colonies, The mere formation of this assembly did not result in international recognition however, and the fledgling French leadership remained troubled over their perceived lack of Allied respect, particularly amongst the British and Americans.<sup>9</sup>

PCA representatives of colonial territories emphasized the importance of imperial unity, making statements about the existence of “only one France,” “banishing the word empire on behalf of all those who live beyond the sea and sing the Marseillaise,” and the “indivisibility of the Homeland.”<sup>10</sup> Interior Minister André Philip spoke to prolonged applause criticizing “those who have tried to divide France by concepts of race or politics” arguing that “republican France, eternal France responds by recognizing, in its territories, only its children, equal before her and

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<sup>8</sup> The Committee’s leadership included de Gaulle (co-president), Georges Catroux (Commissioner of Muslim Affairs and the Governor General of Algeria), André Philip (Commissioner of the Interior), and René Pleven (Commissioner of Colonies). The assembly was not elected, but comprised of appointed leaders of resistance movements (including several women and individuals from the colonies), union representatives, as well as those members of the National Assembly under the Third Republic who had refused to vote full powers to Philippe Pétain in 1940. The women included Marthe Simard (Free France in Canada) and Lucie Aubrac (Libération-sud), both of whom were appointed *in absentia*, Simard in November 1943 and Aubrac in January 1944.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 79.

<sup>10</sup> Statements made by Albert Darnel (representative from Guyane) in “Déclarations des représentants de la France d’outre-mer,” *Journal officiel de la République Française: Débats de l’Assemblée consultative provisoire (JORF: DACP)* (10 Novembre 1943), 6.

before the law.”<sup>11</sup> This image of a responsible parent responding to the needs of its maturing children was echoed in other language that simultaneously posited an indivisible unity between the metropole and the colonies while at the same time setting up a relationship in which the colonies remained clearly subordinate. For example, while the PCA endorsed a “politics of total union between France and its Empire, understanding and satisfying the legitimate demands of the populations of the empire, without distinction of race or religion,” it left the definition of “legitimate demand” undefined.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, despite such rhetoric that insisted on a future of democratic institutions within a united empire, colony-specific laws persisted in dividing the inhabitants of the empire into variety of different categories depending on their degree of “evolution,” which was measured by factors that included gender, race, education, and religion. As an administration looking to assert itself as both a progressive democracy and a global empire, these issues had to be resolved in a way that affirmed imperial space as democratic while at the same time under firm French control.

Global violence and instability – particularly the growing tensions within France’s Middle Eastern and Asian colonies – also informed the way in which the PCA framed the importance of democratic reforms in the colonies. Nationalist electoral victories in the French mandates of Syria and Lebanon resulted in the exclusion of French authority within these territories, a situation made all the more humiliating for the French when their attempts to arrest and imprison the newly-elected nationalist government were rebuffed by international

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<sup>11</sup> André Philip, “Déclarations des représentants de la France d’outre-mer,” *JORF: DACP* (10 Novembre 1943), 6.

<sup>12</sup> François Billoux, “Fixation de l’ordre du jour,” *JORF: DACP* (25 Novembre 1943), 6.

intervention.<sup>13</sup> Days later in the PCA, French deputy Joseph Costa warned that any future electoral forms must be more carefully controlled, lest “recent events of Syria and Lebanon... find echoes on African territory.”<sup>14</sup> At the same time Costa recognized that “for France to make its place in the world, Overseas France must be integrated into the nation” so that “France and its Empire must form a bloc.” Within this new political framework, it was further “necessary that representation work for the evolution of the indigenous masses” in order to “give France a foreign policy worthy of its past, worthy of its dead” by creating “a France and a Republic in which the words liberty, equality, and fraternity will find their deepest meaning and true value.” Elections were therefore both a risk to the empire as well as its potential salvation, as while a nationalist victory could force the French out, the implementation of French-oriented democratic institutions could both ensure global prestige and secure imperial continuity. The administration needed to ensure that any democratic reforms work to reinforce greater colonial integration rather than encourage nationalist separatism.

Such a concern became particularly important in Indochina, where anti-colonial political parties were growing in influence. De Gaulle attempted to stave off separatist activity by arguing that such nationalism reflected a new political maturity or “sense of responsibility” that should be rewarded not with independence, but with a more elevated position firmly within the structure of a French empire who would continue to “carry out her mission in the Pacific.”<sup>15</sup> In this framework, the colonial relationship was mutually desired and beneficial to all parties.

Furthermore, he framed the possibility of any change in status as a generous reward given by an

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<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), especially 247-252.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Costa, “Politique extérieure de la France,” *JORF:DACP* (25 November 1943), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Jean de la Roche, *Indo-China and French Colonial Policy* (Ninth Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Hot Springs, Virginia, 1945), 62.

enlightened imperial metropole rather than a right demanded and won by anti-colonial nationalists.

As the PCA embarked on the creation of a postwar French constitution, the role of the colonies in the election of a constitutional assembly therefore loomed large. The PCA decided to continue but not expand colonial representation in the new assembly, allocating seats only for those colonies who had both supported resistance efforts and already had legislative representation before 1940. Wartime participation thereby became a means to secure or expand colonial representation, as seen in the statement of a delegate from Cameroon who requested an additional seat for Cameroon by arguing that it was “in Douala [Cameroon] that General de Gaulle set his foot on French soil for the first time after his exile.”<sup>16</sup>

However, this dual emphasis on pre-war representation and wartime valor created a problem for French Equatorial Africa (AEF), whose leadership had been amongst the earliest to rally to de Gaulle yet had been the most disadvantaged in terms of prewar legislative representation.<sup>17</sup> The Governor of Chad was at that time the black Guyana-born Félix Eboué who, on 26 August 1940, declared his support for Free France, and, in return, was awarded the newly-created Order of Liberation and appointed governor-general of AEF. Eboué and his allies worked to parlay their wartime service into increased representation, reminding the PCA that “it was in AEF and in Cameroon that for the first time after June 1940 that the Cross of Lorraine could fly freely... we have been too long neglected, treated as poor relations, deprived of

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Guillery in “Propositions de résolutions tendant a modifier l’ordonnance du 17 septembre 1943 et à compléter le règlement de l’assemblee [sic],” *JORF:DACP* (20 November 1943): 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Félix Eboué, *La nouvelle politique indigène pour l’Afrique équatoriale française* (Paris: Office française d’édition, 1945 [1941]).

representation.”<sup>18</sup> However, in debating what sorts of representation should be extended to the territory, its French Governor General clearly distinguished between the right to have representation and the right to elect that representation. He argued that while AEF should have a number of representatives “in line with its importance and the preeminent role that this colony has played in the History of Free France,” the pool of electors must be carefully limited, ensuring that such representation benefited Europeans in the territory rather than its African population.<sup>19</sup>

While the PCA agreed in principle on the importance of the expansion of democratic institutions, the specifics were left foggy. In December 1943, the new Commissioner of Colonies René Pleven started to elaborate on these visions of colonial reforms in his tour throughout the “liberated” colonies of the French empire. In Madagascar, he spoke to an estimated 50,000 people in a stadium, pledging that the administration would enlarge the electorate, revitalize and reorganize the *fokonolona* (local village councils), and establish an advisory council comprised of mixed French and Malagasy membership to study the ways in which “improvements” could be made in local society.<sup>20</sup> The selection of Madagascar was no accident, but a deliberate move on the part of the administration to convince the increasingly dissatisfied population that significant reforms were forthcoming.

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<sup>18</sup> Henri Seignon in “Propositions de résolutions.”

<sup>19</sup> André Bayardelle, Telegram to the Commissaire of Colonies in Alger (28 May 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Bavoux, “La Libération à Madagascar entre 1942 et 1945: Les méprises de l’inconstance politique,” in *L’Empire Colonial sous Vichy*, ed. Jacques Cantier and Eric Jennings, 365-387 (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2004); Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain’s National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-44* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Martin Shipway, “Madagascar on the Eve of Insurrection, 1944-47: The Impasse of a Liberal Colonial Policy,” in *The Decolonization Reader*, ed. James D. Le Sueur, 80-102 (New York: Routledge, 2003); and V. Thompson and R. Adloff, *The Malagasy Republic: Madagascar Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 39.

Following his visit to Madagascar, Pleven traveled to Brazzaville in the French Congo to preside over a conference of all upper colonial administrators working to clarify France's postwar imperial policy. Throughout the first week of February 1944, the assembled administrators worked to forward the Conference's stated purpose to "ensure the progress of the French populations of the African continent" and show the "good will that animates our country, its faith in democratic principles and in the future of the races with which it is associated" as well as create a "progressive and generous colonial policy that fully conforms to the democratic ideal of the French people."<sup>21</sup>

Pleven's opening speech outlined his postwar vision of a "new phase of recovery" in which France would "clear the debris of the past, the ruins of the present, and look toward our future."<sup>22</sup> The colonies would enable France to show just how skilled it was at leading democratic reform, bringing "radical change to the African" by "incorporating the indigenous masses into the French world."<sup>23</sup> While emphasizing the importance of reform, Pleven connected the future to the past, asserting that any new policies would be the "simple continuation of France's great colonial traditions, which has always taken the material, moral, and civil elevation of the population as its supreme objective."<sup>24</sup> This framed imperialism as beneficial, a benevolent process through which France "imposed order and peace over these vast territories." Pleven argued that racial divisions did not actually exist and therefore racism could not be abolished, it was simply a matter of "populations who feel French, who want to take part, and to

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<sup>21</sup> French Ministry of Colonies, *La Conférence africaine française, Brazzaville* (Algiers: Commissaire des Colonies, 1944), 8.

<sup>22</sup> René Pleven, "Discours prononcée le Dimanche 30 Janvier 1944, à l'ouverture de la Conférence Africaine Française," *La Conférence africaine française, Brazzaville* (Algiers: Commissaire des Colonies, 1944), 19-20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

whom France wants to give, a greater and greater part of the life and democratic institutions of the French community.” At the same time, any hint of independence was firmly off the table, as “step by step development” was best for enabling colonial populations to establish “their own unique personality” and accept “more mature political responsibility” but not “an independence other than the independence of France.”<sup>25</sup> Pleven’s tour and conference exposed the tensions inherent in the postwar imperial project, which attempted to emphasize the importance of reform without explicitly stating that previous modes of French imperialism had been unjust.

### ***Electrice and eligible***

In the aftermath of the Brazzaville Conference in March 1944, the administration formally adopted a charter that tasked itself with restoring the “establishment of the fullest democracy possible by returning speech to the French people through the re-establishment of universal suffrage.”<sup>26</sup> Such language created a narrative in which universal suffrage had existed before the war and now it was simply a matter of restoring it to the nation and empire. The language of democratic reform promised both radical change and traditional continuity, asserting that in some instances they were one in the same.

Along with colonial representation, the question of woman’s suffrage was of primary concern. The official commission formed to examine the issue asserted that although they were in favor of women’s suffrage as a “principle,” the bureaucratic process involved in adding

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Conseil national de la Résistance, “Programme du Conseil national de la Résistance,” (Paris: Imprimerie centrale de la presse, 1944). On this “blind spot” see Tumblety, 284; Peter Novick, *The Resistance versus Vichy, The Purge of Collaborators in Liberation France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 198; Siân Reynolds, “Le Sacre de la citoyenne? Pierre Rosanvallon and the significant other,” *Modern and Contemporary France* 3, no. 2 (1995), 212.

women to the electoral rolls would too greatly delay the much needed postwar elections.<sup>27</sup> As future Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi argued, it was not “very wise” to “abruptly launch into this adventure that is women’s suffrage” when other more important reforms needed to be made.<sup>28</sup> Others expressed concern that expanding the female franchise before the return of male deportees, soldiers, and prisoners of war would result in a distorted female majority, suggesting that the question should be revisited when “at least 75 to 80% of the masculine electors” have returned, a number that would allow a more “sincere” count of national will. However, the commission allowed that women would be able to stand for office and serve if elected, thus requiring any potential female official to be approved by the male citizenry of the nation. In this sense, a woman deemed politically mature (essentially appointed) by a majority of the male electorate could, in this special circumstance, be allowed to serve the nation in a public political capacity. However, following the conclusion of the commission and announcement of their decision, Communist deputy Fernand Grenier raised the issue of women’s suffrage as a means to more effectively secure a popular mandate for any new governmental institutions while also “restoring the sovereignty of the French people.” Grenier forced an amendment in favor of women’s enfranchisement, requiring the issue to be formally debated.

In March 1944, the PCA in Algiers therefore took up the question of female suffrage. Opponents continued to frame their position as practical, arguing that they were not opposed to the “principle” of women’s suffrage, but constrained by the more important desire to hold elections as soon as possible to “repair cracks that Vichy was able to create...it is essential to

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<sup>27</sup> The question was discussed in the meetings of 23 and 27 December and 8 January.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in W. Guéraiche, *Les femmes et la République: essai sur la repartition du pouvoir de 1943 à 1979* (Paris: Editions de l’Atelier, 1999), 40-1.

renew the municipal administration by staying true to the rules.”<sup>29</sup> Giacobbi reiterated his fear that enfranchising so many French women would create not only bureaucratic “difficulties” and “complications” for the local government, but also “open the door to all sorts of frauds and irregularities in this uncertain time.” To move forward, the administration needed to keep one foot in the past.

The absence of male prisoners of war created additional problems for those concerned with gender ratios in the franchise. For example, Giacobbi asked that “whatever the merits of women may be, is it really appropriate to replace universal male suffrage with universal female suffrage?” Others pointed out the “disequilibrium” that female suffrage would produce in a context where so many men were absent, asking how, in an election where women would outnumber men almost two to one, “would we get a true picture of the sense of the country?”<sup>30</sup> In this framework, men were able to be universal bearers of national will while women could only enact particular female desires. Although a male voter could represent his countrywomen, a female voter could not represent her countrymen. Another politician suggested that if there was a majority female electorate for the upcoming Constitutional Assembly and the Constitution was not a success, women might find themselves the targets of additional “responsibility and undeserved reproaches.”<sup>31</sup> This stated concern to save women from their own incompetence indicated the degree to which they were still considered political minors in need of protection from their more responsible male counterparts.

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<sup>29</sup> Stated by Paul Valentino. All material about this debate taken from Provisional Consultative Assembly, “Débat du 24 mars 1944 à l’Assemblée consultative d’Alger,” Supplément to the *Journal Officiel de la République française* (30 March 1944): 2-3, 8. Also see E. Choisnel, *L’Assemblée Consultative Provisoire (1943-1945): Le sursaut républicain* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), 335.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest Bissagnet.

<sup>31</sup> André Hauriou.

Grenier and his allies rejected the claim from practicality, arguing that creating new lists at departmental and communal levels was not actually difficult if the local government was simply willing and organized, pointing out that if the local infrastructure could distribute ration cards to women during a time of war, electoral registration should not be a problem. They further framed women's inclusion as emerging from their role in the Resistance, with Grenier that "France, men and women alike, resisted as a whole. It would therefore be unjust to deny women access to these elections... the participation of women in universal suffrage is a right that cannot be questioned."<sup>32</sup> Another advocate recalled that "we resisted with our wives and our daughters... why then should women not bring their intellectual involvement as they have already given their physical involvement?" Female suffrage was thus framed as connected to wartime service rather than a natural right.

Women's place as "wives and daughters" remained a key theme, with Grenier arguing that the very absence of male deportees made it all the more important that their wives were there to "replace them in their tasks." Others argued that "the women who are in France and whose husbands are prisoners in Germany will vote in the same spirit as would their husbands" and argued that "the wives of the prisoners and those who have died for France will replace their husbands [at the polls]...as for the question of balance, it shall be restored to the Nation by the sacrifices and the courage of women."<sup>33</sup> In this way, women could represent the nation's interests primarily by reflecting the will of their absent husbands or fathers.

Delegates also used the debate over the female franchise to signal the sorts of breaks and continuities they sought within a reformed French state. For example, one delegate criticized the opponents of female suffrage for echoing "the traditions of the old French Parliament, so many

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Antier.

<sup>33</sup> Pierre Ribière and Marcel Duclos.

of which were detestable... over and over, the Parliament agreed on the principle of women's right to vote yet every time they procured procedural arguments to prevent the reform from succeeding." To applause, he called for "these little subterfuges to end, we have to know when to take risks."<sup>34</sup> In this sense, the deputies wanted to draw a distinction not only from Vichy, but also from the now-maligned Third Republic and Popular Front, which was understood to have failed to protect the nation during the war.<sup>35</sup>

Grenier's amendment ultimately passed, and an extension of suffrage to French women was officially incorporated into the PCA's legislation for the organization of public powers in postwar France.<sup>36</sup> Delegates representing the colonies voted overwhelmingly in favor of the amendment to include women's suffrage and played a majority role in assuring its passage, with only one colonial deputy out of the twenty-four total voting against.<sup>37</sup> To put it another way,

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<sup>34</sup> Louis Vallon.

<sup>35</sup> Sylvie Chaperon, "The Difficult Struggle for Women's Political Rights in France," in *The Struggle for Female Suffrage in Europe: Voting to Become Citizens*, ed. Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz and Ruth Rubio-Marín, 305-320 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); and Steven C. Hause and Anne R. Kenney, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 251.

<sup>36</sup> Ordinance of 21 April 1944.

<sup>37</sup> Representatives of the colonies (and their affiliations) who voted in favor included: Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie (Resistance in Algeria); Paul Aurange (Resistance in Morocco); Raymond Blanc (General Council in Algeria); Jean Bourgoïn (Resistance/Raillement in Indochine); R. P. Anselme Carrière (Resistance in the Middle East); Joseph Costa (Resistance in Tunisia); Paul Cuttoli (General Council in Algeria); Albert Darnal (General Council in Guyane); Jean Debiesse (Resistance in Tunisia); Marcel Duclos (General Council in Algeria); Roger Gervolino (Resistance/Raillement in New Caledonia); Joseph Girot (Resistance/Raillement in Madagascar); Pascal Muselli (General Council in Algeria); Pierre Parent (Resistance in Morocco); Auguste Rencurel (General Council in Algeria); Paul Tubert (Resistance in Algeria); Michaël de Villèle (General Council in Reunion). Votes against included only Paul Valentino (General Council in Guadeloupe). Not taking part in the vote due to excused absences were: Ely Manel Fall (General Council in Senegal); Henri Seignon (Resistance/Raillement in AEF/Gabon); Déïva Zivarattinam (General Council in French India); Mohamed Bendjelloul (General Council in Algeria); Ernest Bissagnet (Resistance/Raillement in AOF); and Pierre Guillery (Resistance/Raillement in Cameroon).

seventeen of the forty-three deputies (40%) who publicly backed the amendment in some way represented the colonies.

As the new Republican government was formally established in Paris that autumn, Charles de Gaulle addressed the nation from the Palais de Chaillot, framing the enfranchisement of metropolitan French women as one component of a larger reaffirmation of French national sovereignty. The public reaction to the announcement about women was surprisingly muted, with most media reactions examining not the expansion itself but how women needed to focus on truly “sacred tasks,” such as preparing “maternally” for the return of deportees and volunteering in aid organizations.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, an October 1944 poll to determine public attitudes towards the expansion of women’s suffrage found that only 64% of the public was in favor, with the remainder being totally opposed (28%) or in favor of voting with certain “conditions” (3%).<sup>39</sup>

Metropolitan propaganda films showed women voting as part of a new national duty that was explicitly connected to wartime service. One clip shows a group of lipstickied young ladies wearing smart military dress chatting and saluting outside of the Palais de Justice courthouse in Paris before moving into another building and voting under the watchful eye of male officials.<sup>40</sup> Other films reinforced this image of women voting under masculine supervision, with one depicting a group of women (including one who would be elected deputy) lining up at the gate of a barred courtyard, showing their identification and voting registration to men in suits, and

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<sup>38</sup> Joan Tumblety, “Responses to Women’s Enfranchisement in France, 1944-1945,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 26, no. 5 (2003): 483-497; Hilary Footitt, “‘The Politics of Political Women,’ Reassessing the First Députées,” in *The Uncertain Foundation: France at Liberation 1944-47*, ed. A. Knapp, 87-102 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Another 5% had no opinion. *Bulletin d’information de l’Institut Français d’Opinion Public* 3 (1 November 1944).

<sup>40</sup> France Libre Actualités, Marie Bell, and Claudine Michaud, “Les femmes dans la vie civique,” (3 November 1944), *Archives des Actualités françaises* (via ina.fr).

finally being shuttled in to cast their ballots.<sup>41</sup> An article from October 1944 about voter registration noted that women were also eligible to monitor voting booths, although this position could only be held by the “two eldest and the two youngest electors... will coquetry have a say in the matter?”<sup>42</sup> In this way, women’s participation in French electoral democracy was framed as an apprenticeship of sorts, with supervised participation of individuals whose tendency towards flirtatious insouciance might detract from their more important duties as mothers and wives.

### **Imperial reconfigurations**

The April 1944 ordinance that actually enfranchised French women and “organized public powers” made only a brief mention of the empire. While noting that any specifics regarding colonial elections would be determined by future decrees, the document affirmed that only those who had representation before the war would have a seat in determining the upcoming constitutional assembly.

In Algeria, the existence of an ostensibly secular French state belied the fact that religion had long been a primary category in determining one’s access to full citizenship. In October 1943 the PCA reinstated the Crémieux Decree, reversing the Vichy ban on citizenship for Algeria’s Jewish population while leaving room to determine the precise ways in which “indigenous Israelites... and other categories of the indigenous population” would actually be

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<sup>41</sup> Elisabeth Kapnist and France 3, “Evoquant l’assemblée constituante, présentation de femmes députées, notamment de Marie Claude Vaillant Couturier,” (16 November 1945), *Archives des Actualités françaises* (via ina.fr)

<sup>42</sup> M. G., “Electeurs, électrices, attention! A partir du 10 novembre révision des listes électorales de la Seine,” *Le Figaro* (29-30 October 1944): 1.

able to exercise these rights.<sup>43</sup> A March 1944 ordinance had provided a limited expansion of masculine Muslim citizenship in Algeria, stating that Islamic faith was no longer in itself a barrier to acquiring full French citizenship.<sup>44</sup> However, to vote in the first college, Muslim men needed to fulfill additional requirements (such as having an upper-level military decoration, French education credentials, or employment in the colonial administration).<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, despite the much larger population it represented, the second college was 2/5 the size of the first college, thus guaranteeing underrepresentation for the majority of the Algerian population (and certainly the bulk of the Muslim and non-European population). The French administration hoped that the limited expansions of citizenship to an estimated 65,000 Muslim men would help to stave off anti-colonial critique.<sup>46</sup> However, nationalists increasingly argued that the reforms were too little too late, evidence not of a benevolent reformed empire, but of a system in which ostensibly democratic reforms continued to favor imperialist goals.

French policy continued to emphasize the utility of gradually increasing the electorate, arguing that it was only with colonial administration that subject peoples could be properly taught to be voters. For example, at a press conference held in Rabat in March 1944, the Resident-General of France in Morocco endorsed a “new” French civilizing mission, as “France’s task here is far from finished.” He asserted that before France’s presence in Morocco it had been “living under the economic and social conditions of the thirteenth century” and it was

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<sup>43</sup> “Déclaration en date du 21 octobre 1943 du Comité français de la Libération nationale concernant la situation juridique des israélites indigènes de l’Algérie,” *JORF* (28 October 1943), 224.

<sup>44</sup> Ordinance of 7 March 1944.

<sup>45</sup> Decree of 9 February 1919.

<sup>46</sup> Martin Evans, *Algeria: France’s Undeclared War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 78-9.

only thanks to French guidance that the “way to the future is open and clear.”<sup>47</sup> France’s duty was therefore to help “adapt” the country to “world civilization” through the training of a “new Moroccan elite” who needed continued assistance in their process of “slow maturation” so their country will not “fall into disaster.” Key within this effort to bring Morocco in line with “Western ideals” was convincing the population of the “importance of social service and civic duties.” French imperial control was in this way necessary for democracy, a process that would involve gradual reform carried out at a pace controlled by French administrative expertise.

To better determine the exact limits of this new wave of citizenship reform across the empire, Commissioner of Colonies René Pleven wrote to the heads of various territories in the summer of 1944 to request advice on modes of representation and what kinds of candidates might be voted into office.<sup>48</sup> He emphasized that any colonial delegate must be “free of any local pettiness” and instead be “clearly and energetically French” to ensure that any future assembly showed “radiant,” and “permanent” evidence of France’s “absolute unity,” a “demonstration that may be particularly useful at the moment when a new global organization will be discussed.” Despite the widely publicized aims of the Brazzaville Conference some months before, the electoral body was to be restricted only to French citizens, a fact that Pleven recognized would disappoint the “evolved non-citizens elements of the indigenous population” but was necessary to preserving imperial stability.

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<sup>47</sup> Gabriel Puaux cited in “Program of Moroccan Reforms,” *Free France* 5, no.5 (1 March 1944): 192-4.

<sup>48</sup> René Pleven, Letter to Pierre Cournarie n° 6954 (13 June 1944), ANS 20G25; René Pleven, Telegram to André Bayardelle n° 1069 COLAG/DC (15 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; René Pleven, Telegram to Jean Alexandre Léon Rapenne (16 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; René Pleven, Telegram to André Cappagory 400AP (16 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210.

More importantly, Pleven requested feedback on the possibility of women voting in the colonies, noting that this was a right that could be “set aside” if need be. Responses to the specific question of female enfranchisement varied greatly. Most members of the administration were relatively unopposed to the proposal to enfranchise women provided they were already French citizens. In most of the French empire, the number of women who had actually become citizens was a restricted pool, most of whom would have been reliably counted among the “assimilated” population of individuals that had been educated in French schools or worked for the colonial administration.

Governor of Cameroon Hubert Carras argued that any broader expansion of the franchise would require a comprehensive study to determine how it would affect the larger empire and therefore must be delayed for the present.<sup>49</sup> While he opposed the expansion of the franchise amongst non-citizens women, Carras did favor allowing any women who were already citizens to vote, noting they had “assiduously and unselfishly” contributed their part to the *ralliement* [rallying to the Free French] of the colony during the war, shown “proof of the best spirit... some of them ran the business of husbands who were mobilized. The *Françaises du Cameroun* [Female French of Cameroon] would not understand being refused a right accorded explicitly to female French of the Metropole.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Briefly the “Administrateur en chef des colonies” for Free France as well as present at Brazzaville, Carras is described by Louis Sanmarco as what might be translated “old-school Cameroonian” (“vieux-Camerounais”). Note that in the period between the end of the Mandate era and the beginning of the Trusteeship era, the office of (High) Commissioner was changed to “Governor.” Hubert Carras, Letter-Avion to the Commissaire aux Colonies at Alger n°481/CF/CJ (12 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; Louis Sanmarco, “Robert Delavignette, Haut-Commissaire au Cameroun (1946-1947),” in *Robert Delavignette, savant et politique: 1897-1976* (Paris: Karthala, 2003), 206.

<sup>50</sup> Hubert Carras, Letter to René Pleven n°538/CF/CJ (26 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

However, as Cameroon was a United Nations Trusteeship and under increased international scrutiny, both Plevin and Carras wanted to at least appear to make democratic overtures to the larger population. The concern for France's international image is laid bare in a typed draft of a letter from Plevin to Carras, heavily edited with hand-written additions and subtractions in pencil and pen, revealing his thought process, anxieties, and strategic self-censorship:

due to the probable intentions of the ~~American~~ <sup>^certain</sup> Government<sup>^s</sup> to push the question of mandates, I feel that — in contrast to the point of view I expressed in my [earlier telegram] — it is essential to admit the *indigènes évolués* to participate in the election. I will ask for two assembly seats for Cameroon, one reserved for French citizens, the other for autochthones... including (1) ~~all~~ <sup>^some</sup> traditional chiefs (2) *commerçants* and planters (3) high-level *fonctionnaires* (4) Catholic and Protestant priests (5) ~~holders of honorific French distinctions~~ (6) eventually veterans.<sup>51</sup>

However, Carras remained “absolutely adverse” to the envisioned proposal, arguing that even the most “evolved natives of Cameroon possess none of the comprehension necessary for international or imperial politics.” French citizens of Cameroon, he argued, would also strenuously oppose the implementation of a single electoral college that would force them to share representation with “the non-citizen natives who are not obligated to pay the blood tax” by serving in the military and who had “no sense of the general interest of the empire.” He further warned that “once the principle of elections is admitted and put into practice, it will be impossible to turn back the clock,” advising caution rather than kneejerk reform.<sup>52</sup>

In the colonies slated for departmentalization and total assimilation to metropolitan laws, the question of female suffrage should have been fairly straightforward. As official departments of France, all female citizens should have the same voting rights as citizens in the metropole.

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<sup>51</sup> René Plevin, Telegram to Hubert Carras 626, draft/edited copy (no date [10 July?], ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>52</sup> Hubert Carras, Telegram to René Plevin n°1885 (17 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

Some colonial administrators accepted this logic, as did the Governor of Réunion, who argued that given the plan for “absolute assimilation with the Metropole,” the “population would not understand why an exception to this principle would be made for their region.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the Governor of Guyane argued that there was “no major reason” to oppose such an expansion.<sup>54</sup> In Martinique, the Governor also agreed that the policy of “complete assimilation” required women to be enfranchised as well.<sup>55</sup> However, this was not the case for Guadeloupe, where the Governor argued that he was “a strong supporter of the women’s vote, but not in Guadeloupe... the masses here are too ignorant.”<sup>56</sup> Although not a future overseas department, similar arguments about the “unreadiness” of the populations occurred in French India, where the Governor argued that voting rights should not be expanded for “native women” as their participation in elections “seems at the very least to be premature.”<sup>57</sup>

As the following chapter will discuss in greater detail, this argument took on particular significance in the Four Communes of Senegal, where citizenship was automatically extended to all those born in the region (women and men alike) regardless of race or religion. The French administration concurred that Senegalese women – even those with full French citizenship – should not be enfranchised, with the Governor stating very plainly that it would be a “very great error to accord them the right to vote.”<sup>58</sup> Drawing on the advice of his administrators, the Governor General of French West Africa Pierre Cournarie advised the Ministry of Colonies that the racial and religious character of Senegal meant it was not a suitable place for full democracy,

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<sup>53</sup> André Cappagory, Telegram to Ministry of Colonies (29 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210

<sup>54</sup> Jean Rapenne, Telegram to Colonies Alger (29 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>55</sup> Ponton, Telegram to Ministry of Colonies n° 481 (19 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210.

<sup>56</sup> Bertaut, Telegram to Colonies Alger n.337 CAB (11 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210

<sup>57</sup> Louis Bonvin, Telegram to Colonies Alger n°259 (3 July 1944), ANOM Inde-\*F//4.

<sup>58</sup> Mercadier, Letter to Cournarie n°109/C (22 June 1944), ANS 20G15.

and for female suffrage in particular.<sup>59</sup> He argued that while the “equitable character” of female enfranchisement was “obvious when it comes to European or exceptionally evolved African women,” offering it to all females born in the Communes was “inopportune” and would bring about “not only inconveniences but indeed dangers if it were to apply to the whole of indigenous women who have the status of French citizens.”<sup>60</sup> Any expansion of the female franchise should therefore be strictly limited to those living in the metropole or the new overseas departments.<sup>61</sup>

While all agreed that some limits needed to be put into place, the administration as a whole found itself under pressure to at least appear to meaningfully expand the franchise. Commissioner Pleven reiterated to his subordinates the importance that “for reasons that you can guess” a “certain number of non-citizens” should be allowed to vote in certain parts of the empire, particularly in the internationally-monitored territories of Cameroon and Togo. Even in French Equatorial Africa (AEF), the region with the most restricted franchise in the entire empire, Pleven suggested that it would also look bad “from the national and international point of view” if the “evolved notables” who were “qualified by their social and intellectual evolution” and to whom promises of an expanded franchise were made were at the Brazzaville Conference were “denied the chance to exercise this responsibility precisely on the first occasion it presents itself.”<sup>62</sup> The Governor General of French West Africa agreed that a limited extension of the

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<sup>59</sup> Cournarie, Letter to Pleven, (24 June 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>60</sup> Governor General of French West Africa, Letter to the Commissaire aux Colonies (1944), ANS 20G15. NOTE document says 1 June in some versions but other archival copies are corrected to be 1 July (see copy in 1AFFPOL/209 for example).

<sup>61</sup> René Pleven, Telegram to Bayardelle n°1239 COLALG/AP.I (22 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; Pleven, Telegram to Cournarie n° 1804 COLALG/AP/I (22 July 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; Pleven, Telegram to Cournarie n°1643 COLALG/AP/I (18 August 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>62</sup> Pleven, Telegram to Gouvernal Bayardelle n°1306 COLAIG/API draft LP/JO (3 August 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209; Pleven, Telegram [#1] to Bayardelle (s.d. August 1944?), ANOM

franchise to those who had proven themselves through their “intellectual or economic activity” would be “extremely useful to increase the strength of our Empire’s constitution.”<sup>63</sup> He recognized that a targeted expansion of voting rights only to narrowly-defined categories of people was “not very democratic,” but would be “sufficiently representative of Indigenous Society, adequately enlarged that no criticism could be leveled against us in this regard, and that would sufficiently be able to express public opinion.”

However, the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa, André Bayardelle remained skeptical, arguing that the new class of assimilated elites in the region were too “recently instituted... lacking in civic education and susceptible to venal pressure” to make a decision on “as important as that on which will depend the status of the French Nation.”<sup>64</sup> While Bayardelle wanted more representation for AEF as a whole, he intended this to be representation for administration interests, not for an expanded franchise representing the African population of the colony. Although he recognized that an expansion would be politically expedient on an international stage, he argued that potential electors in AEF were “essentially different” from those in other colonies and therefore riskier to enfranchise.<sup>65</sup>

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1AFFPOL/209; Pleven, Telegram to Cournarie n°1643 COLALG/AP/I (18 August 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>63</sup> He also had a “scruple” about colonial representation, particularly the composition of the electoral college and the “number and quality” of representatives sent to the Assembly. After having consulted M. Heitz — president of the Dakar Cour d’Appel — he expressed a concern that any expansion of the electorate made by administrative decree would be “rendered unlawful.” Cabinet du Gouverneur General, Letter to the Commissaire aux Colonies n°62 Cab/DIR (24 August 1944), ANS 20G25.

<sup>64</sup> Bayardelle, Telegram n°416/C (10 August 1944), ANOM 1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>65</sup> Telegram [#1].

## Légalité Républicaine

By autumn of 1944, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana, and Réunion were made into official overseas departments of France, meaning all inhabitants would be made into French citizens with the same rights as those in the metropole.<sup>66</sup> The day after this departmentalization was formalized, foreign minister George Bidault spoke to the French provisional assembly to define France in explicitly imperial terms, a “greater France with 110 million inhabitants and unlimited resources” that was “located in Algiers and Tunis just as Marseille” and “is and will remain a major African power.”<sup>67</sup> Bidault addressed anxieties about France’s loss of global prestige by insisting on France’s imperial power and democratic credentials, stating that “we do not have to feel crushed by an inferiority complex... we have what it takes to play the role of a great nation, a member of the family of democratic nations, surrounded by the respect and friendship of our allies.” Indeed, with its vast holdings, France was a primary force in assuring global “stability” and working as the “guardian of the great interests of civilization” in the postwar world.

Members of the provisional assembly echoed Bidault’s sentiments, with trade union representative Louis Saillant in particular emphasizing the significance of France’s leadership role in the empire and in the world to “show other peoples the way forward... raise the flag of social progress” as the best means to ensure “French grandeur and the universal mission of our

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<sup>66</sup> Ordonnance of 20 November 1944. Also see Kristen Stromberg Childers, “Departmentalization, Migration, and the Politics of the Family in the Post-War French Caribbean,” *The History of the Family* 14, no. 2 (2009): 177-190; and Rene Larrier, “Sont-ils encore gens de Guadeloupe? Departmentalization, Migration, and Family Dynamics,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (2008): 171-187.

<sup>67</sup> “Meeting of 21 November 1944: 7. Débat sur la politique extérieure du gouvernement,” *JORF: DACP* (22 November 1944), 308-318.

country.”<sup>68</sup> He connected the future to a renewed expression of the past, arguing that the nation must “shake off our torpor” to properly express the “intellectual influence and strength of French civilization... committing ourselves to the way forward at the forefront of international social progress.” It was only through this sort of progressive global leadership that “we convince ourselves (which is easy) and convince other countries (which is not so easy) of the greatness of the French nation and the universality of its power.” The French empire figured centrally in this effort, as Saillant’s progressive vision of French power required that “metropolitan France remain undivided from overseas France... we must secure the union of extra-metropolitan French strengths forming the entirety of French political policy, a politics of balance and of global security, which are the only guarantees of lasting peace.”

While unity between metropole and colony was much celebrated, a profound cleavage between the rights of the inhabitants of the metropole and those of the colonies remained a legal reality not only in citizenship law, but in all new policies developed by the new French regime. For example, a December 1944 debate in the PCA about the application of a law regulating labor in the empire revealed a great deal about how legislators conceived of the legal and ideological distinctions between the metropole and various overseas territories.<sup>69</sup> Within the draft of the labor law, the metropolitan language was made to be “applicable to Algeria and to the colonies” without any region-specific alterations, an unusually equitable way of legislating colonial space. However, Gaston Monnerville and the Commission of Overseas France suggested an amendment which would apply the full law to Algeria but extend it to the colonies only by particular decree. Monnerville acknowledged that the impetus to apply any law wholesale to the entire empire

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<sup>68</sup> “Meetings of 22 November 1944: 4. Suite du débat sur la politique extérieure du gouvernement,” *JORF: DACP* (23 November 1944), 320-333.

<sup>69</sup> “Meeting of 13 December 1944: 5. Institution de comités d’entreprises (suis de la discussion de l’avis sur le projet d’ordonnance),” *JORF: DACP* (14 December 1944), 504-522.

without distinction is “inspired by the worthiest intentions” and would certainly paint the Assembly as the “spokesman for the new France.” However, it would be “particularly rash” to consider the empire as a whole to exist on the same plane by instituting a law that is considered to be “revolutionary even for the metropole.” They must instead “act wisely” to avoid “serious disappointments” or “create confusion where clarity is needed” in achieving “the legislative and social harmonization that we all wish for in the metropole and in overseas France.”

Other delegates argued that while it was important to show that “the French administration cannot have two attitudes, one for its metropolitan departments, the other for its African departments,” extending the legislation through colony-specific bodies was an acceptable solution, particularly as the “particular conditions” of the various colonies would only benefit from specialized application. Algerian representative Mohamed Bendjelloul applauded this amendment, particularly the fact that it would be applied in Algeria without any modifications and thereby “affirmed that Algeria constitutes a French province, that the Algerian departments are French departments.” Yet Algerian communist deputy Pierre Fayet remained skeptical, reminding the PCA of the difference between law and practice by noting that “we find that whenever it is a matter of social laws, it takes many years for them to travel across the Mediterranean to be applied.”<sup>70</sup>

The lack of any mention of the protectorates within this set of legislation caused further debate, with one delegate noting that such territories were frequently ignored by the PCA despite them needing “certain laws in force in the metropole” to aid in the “evolution of the autochthones” and enable “all overseas territories to be treated on equal footing.” He called out the role of Islam in particular, noting that “Muslims of the protectorates must be considered in

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<sup>70</sup> Pierre Fayet.

the same way as Muslims of Algeria and the colonies.” Another delegate similarly argued that such inclusion of the protectorates would ensure that these regions “that we represent do not remain poor relations, outside of the French community. We intend that every time a measure is taken in favor of metropolitan populations, the same concern guide the legislator regarding the indigenous populations we represent.” However other delegates countered that the international visibility and additional “diplomatic negotiations” involved the protectorates made this sort of equal treatment “not logical” and “impossible,” further noting that these areas were not “attached to the French empire like Algeria or the other colonies” but instead affiliated “only through treaties.” As seen in the uneven application of new legal regimes, the relentless emphasis on the “unity” of the postwar empire was rarely reflected on the ground.

As the February 1945 elections loomed, the administration began to finalize the exact limits of the female franchise in overseas France, particularly how the enfranchisement of metropolitan women would affect laws in Algeria, the new overseas departments, and the remaining French overseas territories. In February 1945, the Conseil d’Etat finalized the limits of the female franchise in a way that judiciously avoided any explicit mention of racial discrimination by relying on religious and geographic signifiers.<sup>71</sup> For the most part, women who had already acquired French citizenship (a very limited pool) had the right to vote in some capacity. For example, women who had already gained French citizenship were formally enfranchised in the soon-to-be-department of French Guyane and the colony of Madagascar.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Colonies, Telegram to Cournarie n°395/AP/I (4 February 1945), ANS 20G25; Giacobbi, Telegram to Cournarie n°2411 AP/I (26 December 1944), ANS 20G25; Conseil d’Etat, “Extrait du Registre des Délibérations, Séance du 8 Février 1945,” (8 February 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; Decree n°45-266 of 19 February 1945; Decree n°45-267 of 19 February 1945; Decree n°45-268 of 19 February 1945.

<sup>72</sup> Decree n°45-267 of 19 February 1945; Decree n°45-268 of 19 February 1945.

While the new laws expanded female suffrage in some regions, the provisions are better characterized as a policy of exception.

In Algeria, the decree that implemented the expansion of citizenship for Muslim men clarified that women were indeed excluded from its provisions, noting only that any other French “women who have already become electors” should be added to electoral lists.<sup>73</sup> A later decree added a provision to allow metropolitan voting for “male and female French Algerian Muslims” who had been residing in “continental” France continuously since 3 September 1938.<sup>74</sup> Such laws belied French claims of erasing the territorial distinction between Algeria and continental France, showing that despite consistent assertions of Algeria’s inherent “Frenchness,” women in the metropole were “more French” than their Muslim Algerian counterparts.<sup>75</sup> Civil status was also extended in Oceania, expanding citizenship for certain populations while taking care to exclude all Chinese immigrants and their descendants as well as all non-naturalized children born of any “foreign” parents.<sup>76</sup>

Carefully worded exceptions narrowed the field of female suffrage in Senegal and India, the two colonies with the largest numbers of women with full citizenship. In the case of Senegal, the Conseil noted that although the exact wording of provision might “seem complicated,” it as actually “straightforward” in seeking to “exclude from voting — without pronouncing absolutely inopportune formal bans – natives whose husbands were conscripted and thereby enfranchised by the law of 29 September 1916, and especially to exclude the Catholic *natives* who do not have, as do the Muslim *natives*, a personal status that excludes them from the franchise, as

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<sup>73</sup> Decree of 23 November 1944; Decree of 27 November 1944.

<sup>74</sup> Decree n°45-405 of 14 March 1945.

<sup>75</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 41n.63.

<sup>76</sup> Ordonnance n°45-482 of 24 March 1945. Also see Regnault, “Citoyen et/ou sujet,” 159.

Koranic law is opposed to [women voting].”<sup>77</sup> Parsing the convoluted language, the results of the law simply barred black female citizens in Senegal from voting, using an argument about the supposed incompatibility of female suffrage and Koranic law to disenfranchise Muslims and Catholics alike. Women who were “citizen or not” in India were also singled out to be “deprived of the exercise of political rights” as the Conseil had judged it “inopportune.”<sup>78</sup> The only women who would be allowed to vote in these colonies would be those individuals who had the right to vote based on their status in some other French territory, including the metropole, Algeria, the Antilles, Réunion, New Caledonia, Oceania, Guyane, or Madagascar.

As Chapter Four discusses in greater detail, this exclusion was widely protested by women and men in the Four Colonies of Senegal. While the Governor General of French West Africa warned his Parisian counterparts of a growing protest movement against Senegalese women’s exclusion, the activism was initially dismissed as an inevitably short lived affair that was likely the result of “foreign propaganda” among a suggestible population rather than a true grievance.<sup>79</sup> As the protests continued to grow through the spring of 1945, however, the administration became increasingly worried that the movement might “challenge the principles of our democratic action” in front of a global – and particularly American – audience. Anxieties also escalated around the possibility of the protests turning “bloody,” particularly as a violent colonial crack-downs on people demanding the right to vote would not align with France’s

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<sup>77</sup> Conseil d’Etat, “Extrait du Registre des Délibérations, Séance du 8 Février 1945,” (8 February 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>78</sup> Decree of 17 February 1945; Minister of Colonies, “Rapport à Président du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française: Décret modifiant le décret du 17 Fev 1945,” (17 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>79</sup> Giacobbi, Telegramme to Cournarie n°765 AP/1 (7 March 1945), ANS 20G15; Cournarie and Barlet, Letter to the Minister of Colonies n°1467/AP (8 March 1945), ANS 20G25.

postwar desires to appear as the leaders of global democratic reform.<sup>80</sup> As word of the Senegalese protests spread through the French political elite, deputy for AOF Maurice Kaouza pushed the Minister of Colonies Paul Giacobbi to come to a solution, prompting the Ministry to respond that the extension of suffrage had seemed not only “premature” but had been opposed by the Muslim populations of Senegal themselves, an assertion that appeared ever more unlikely with each day the protests continued to grow.<sup>81</sup>

The strong negative responses to France’s lackluster reforms were at odds with the way in which the Giacobbi described the goals of his postwar “indigenous policy” to the upper administrators of the empire. In a widely circulated policy document, he advocated the use of “a politics of trust to assemble around us all the indigenous masses,” who, in exchange for “our good will and good faith,” would provide a “public and lasting testament of their absolute preference for France.” This would enable those in the metropole and the colonies to “present ourselves as mature and strong peoples who have chosen each other for companions,” framing empire as a mutual endeavor.<sup>82</sup> He suggested that while the sort of progressive citizenship programs that France was “famous” for might alarm some of the more conservative colonial administrators, “evolution is an inevitable fact” that had been “provoked” by “white penetration in Africa” and would “continue through the mere fact of our presence.”

Yet at the moment, the main “public testament” of French colonial citizenship was negative, reinforced by nationalist victories in Indochina to the growing protests over the

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<sup>80</sup> A growing reality in the wake of the French massacre of protesting veterans at Thiaroye. Giacobbi and Defond, Telegram to Gougal Dakar n°814/AP (10 March 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; Cournarie, Telegram to Gouverneur Senegal-St Louis n°144/Cab (11 March 1945), ANS 20G3.

<sup>81</sup> Maurice Kaouza, “Question écrite n.261,” *JORF:DACP* (18 March 1945), 554; Robert Boudry, “Note pour la Direction des Affaires Politiques,” N°566/CAB (24 March 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>82</sup> Giacobbi, Letter to the Ministres des Colonies n°3687 (23 March 1945), ANS 20G15.

exclusion of female suffrage in Senegal. As Chapter Four examines in greater detail, the Senegalese protests show the alternate ways in which French imperial unity was envisioned, with activists and politicians insisting that any sort of renewed imperial citizenship must be acceptable to them. As one delegation of female protesters argued, that “French Senegalese female citizens benefit from the same rights accorded to our comrades in the French metropole and elsewhere,” arguing that the fact that they were Senegalese did not prevent them from being French nor in having access to the same other rights as metropolitan French women.<sup>83</sup> The protesters were not therefore opposed to Giacobbi’s stated wish that the inhabitants of the empire support a continued affiliation with France, but only under conditions in which all “French” women were in fact treated equally. In this way, the protesters insisted that French rhetoric about the equality of imperial laws be made more real on the ground.

While the French administration continued to worry that a reversal of the Senegalese exclusion would make them appear weak, the continuation of the protests into April 1945 convinced them that holding out on the policy would discredit the regime even further at a critical moment in its establishment. The Governor General of French West Africa reframed the issue as a window of opportunity rather than a shameful defeat, writing to his superiors in Paris that: “giving the right to vote to women during this period of calm would allow a feeling of sincere gratitude towards France.”<sup>84</sup> In submitting the formal modification to change the law, Minister of Colonies Giacobbi similarly characterized the protest as nothing more than “some agitation” comprised mostly of a series “perfectly moderate petitions” that simply “highlight the ardent patriotism of Senegalese citizens, who misunderstood the discrimination and felt deeply

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<sup>83</sup> Sureté General, “Renseignements,” (4 April 1945), ANS 20G25.

<sup>84</sup> Giacobbi, Letter to the Vice-Président de Conseil d’Etat n°5507 (1 [7] April 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

the injustice of inequality.” The fault was therefore not that of the French being forced to cave in to an organized political movement, but of “moderate” Senegalese “misunderstandings” of a policy that had, in the end, helped them mature to the point of earning full citizenship.<sup>85</sup>

The enfranchisement of all Senegalese female citizens in May 1945 raised questions about the limits of the franchise in French India, the only other space in the empire where female citizens were explicitly excluded by the initial postwar law on female suffrage. In letters to the Conseil d’Etat about any future changes to female suffrage in the colonies, Giacobbi argued that the enfranchisement of Senegalese women had itself created new “inequalities... it now seems abnormal that the female French of India are not admitted to vote in and run for elections... it is not understandable why they would be further refused a right that was just accorded to female citizens of Senegal.”<sup>86</sup> Such language suggests the ways in which different women in the empire were placed on a hierarchy of political capacity with several distinct levels, as the existence of different voting regimes for the women of Africa and the metropole was acceptable but a system in which Senegalese women could vote and Indian woman could not vote was “unequal.”

Minister Giacobbi informed the Governor of Pondicherry about the possibility of extending partial female suffrage in India in July 1945.<sup>87</sup> However, the particular way in which citizenship rights and electoral lists were created in India entailed additional complications. French India had three official “statuses,” including French citizen (by birth or naturalization), renonçants (literally “renouncers,” those who had rejected their Muslim or Hindu “personal

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<sup>85</sup> Decree n°45-1160 of 30 May 1945; Curton, Note n°8088 (7 June 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; Cournarie, Telegram to Gouverneur of Senegal n°293/AP (6 June 1945), ANS 20G25; Cournarie, “Arrête promulguant en Afrique occidentale française le décret du 30 mai 1945 modifiant le décret du 19 février 1945,” (6 June 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>86</sup> Giacobbi, Letter to Monsieur le Vice-Président du Conseil d’Etat (17 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>87</sup> Giacobbi, Telegram to Gouverneur Pondichery 240AP (18 July 1945), 1AFFPOL/211.

status” and agreed to follow the French Civil Code), and non-renonçants (almost everyone else). When it came to voting, beneficial representation was extended to all “electors of European origin or descent” as well as all renonçants who had also fulfilled an additional set of requirements.<sup>88</sup> All others who were men (including renonçants who did not fill the additional conditions) were extended the right to participate in universal manhood suffrage but were not considered citizens and were significantly underrepresented.<sup>89</sup>

As Giacobbi’s plan was to maintain “equality” in female suffrage by only enfranchising female citizens in the empire, such an extension would have allowed only a small percentage of Indian women to actually vote. The French administration in Pondicherry noted two major problems with the law, the first being its construction of a division between the rights of male and female renonçants. Like with other citizenship regulations in the empire, almost all of the requirements needed to secure the more elite electoral status favored (or were only available to) men, which would, the administration argued, “compromise” the “equality between female and male renonçants,” as men would be able to qualify for a more elite electoral status than their “equivalent” female relations.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The additional requirements *renonçants* needed to vote on the first list included holding a certain level of French educational credentials or, failing that, having “renounced” their personal status for at least three years as well as either occupying a “*fonction administrative ou judiciaire*” for at least five years, being an elected officer for at least five years, having obtained the *brevet élémentaire* or the first part of the *baccalauréat*, or having risen in the ranks to *sous-officier* in the army. If a *renonçant* did not meet any of these requirements, they were to register on the list of the non-*renonçants*. In addition, all the conditions must be personally fulfilled, meaning a man could not pass them along to his children or his wife (as was sometimes the case for citizenship rights elsewhere in the empire).

<sup>89</sup> A 1937 law specified that for parliamentary elections, there would only be a single list on which “all the electors living in the Establishments” would be registered. Decree of 20 September 1899; Decree of 19 September 1937; Decree of 28 September 1937.

<sup>90</sup> Direction des affaires politiques, “Note n°8903” (29 June 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

The second problem related to the enfranchisement of female citizens in a colony that already had universal manhood suffrage even for those who did not qualify for (or seek) full citizenship. While the administration acknowledged that it was “not good policy” to maintain an “exceptional” regime in India, “it would not be admissible” if voting access be extended only to the few women of metropolitan origin and female renouçants, a “discrimination between the various elements of the population that would be contrary to the principle of absolute equality that led to the granting of political rights” in French India in the first place. Although it was not strictly the case, the Governor closed by noting that “no such distinction is made between the various inhabitants of India; whether they be of metropolitan origin, renouçants, or non-renouçants, all the French of India vote.”<sup>91</sup>

A temporary solution came in the form of a female suffrage that provided rights based not on a woman’s status, but on the status of her male relations, extending additional rights not only to children of renouçants, but also to women who married into a renouçant family.<sup>92</sup> Although this pacified most of the worries of the local French administration, it profoundly limited the actual scope of female suffrage in French India.<sup>93</sup> At the same time, Indian candidates in the October elections addressed their platforms to “female citizens... and sisters,” and various political parties scrambled to take credit for “obtaining” female suffrage in the colony.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Minister of Colonies, “Rapport à Président du Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française: Décret modifiant le décret du 17 Fev 1945,” (17 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>92</sup> This included a *brevet élémentaire* or the “first part of a Baccalauréat.”

<sup>93</sup> Deschamps, “Extrait du registre des délibérations: Séance du 2 août 1945 n°237.062,” (16 August 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>94</sup> Gallois-Montrbrun et l’Union Socialiste Républicaine Démocratique, “Profession de foi,” ANF C//10061; Front National et Démocratique de l’Inde Française, *Pour le regroupement des forces patriotiques et démocratiques: Manifeste* (Imprimerie Soudandirame, Pondichéry, 30 September 1945), ANF C//10061.

## **Elections and representation from spring to autumn 1945**

In the middle of this debate about the limits of the female franchise overseas, white women in the metropole voted for the first time in the municipal elections of 29 April 1945, a contest that saw the election of over 10,000 women to local council seats across the nation.<sup>95</sup> Women won electoral victories in the empire as well, such as in Madagascar where three women “of Malagasy origin” were elected to municipal bodies in the regions of Mahajanga, Toamasina, and Antsiranana in July 1945.<sup>96</sup> One of the women’s political connections raised new questions about the ethics of representation, as the telegram that announced her election to the central administration was sure to ask if it was possible for “two spouses” to be elected at the same time on one municipal council.

Along with the makeup of the electorate, the exact form of colonial representation was also in the process of overhaul throughout the spring and summer of 1945. Presided over by Gaston Monnerville, a commission was founded in late March 1945 to study the question of overseas representation in the upcoming Constituent Assembly as well as any future “permanent assemblies.”<sup>97</sup> In considering how the Brazzaville recommendations might be applied across the empire, debates erupted over how territories with different statuses might be defined and

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<sup>95</sup> This number that would peak at 14,899 in 1947 and then decline throughout the remainder of the Fourth Republic. Hause, *Women’s Suffrage*, 251.

<sup>96</sup> The elections were on 1 and 8 July. Ministry of the Colonies, “Note pour le Ministre: Elections Municipales à Madagascar” (1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; Saintmart, Telegram to the Ministère des colonies (4 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211; Gougal Tananarive, Telegram to the Minister of Colonies (10 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>97</sup> Minister of Colonies, “Arrete n°13 créant une Commission d’Etude de la représentation des territoires d’Outre-Mer à l’Assemblée Constituante,” (26 Mars 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215; Minister of Colonies (Paris), Letter to Colonel Spillman and Monsieur le Résident Supérieur Eckert n°7/RC (26 March 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215.

incorporated into any future “French Federal Union.”<sup>98</sup> Questions of semantics (and their legal consequences) persisted as members quibbled over the difference between “colonial territories” and “overseas territories” one day and the pros and cons of separate colonial statuses as opposed to one single overarching policy vision the next.<sup>99</sup> They noted the wide variety of legal statuses that existed in the empire, including the white “citizens of French status” in Algeria, the “indigenous citizens” of Senegal, the “*protégés*” of Morocco, the “subjects” of Equatorial Africa, the “French administered populations” of Cameroon, and a host of “partial” categories such as the “non-citizens electors” of India.

The Committee defended prior French colonial policies while advocating future changes, arguing that the restrictive citizenship regimes of the past were not due to “the relative importance of the territories or the degree of evolution of their populations” but instead a simple matter of “the length of time they had belonged to the French Community.”<sup>100</sup> In this way, past actions were excused while changes to future policies were “just and necessary... desirable and even indispensable.” They acknowledged that some representation was even required for non-citizens, particularly those whose had a “sentimental attachment to the Motherland” or had fought “on behalf of France and for its liberation.” Above all else, the “essential element” in favor of colonial representation was France’s “affirmation of the principle of the fundamental equality of all men, of all the races whose union constitutes the great French community... only

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<sup>98</sup> Minister of Foreign Affairs, Letter to Giacobbi n°381 (17 March 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215; Giacobbi, Letter to the Ministre des Affaires etrangers n° 10RC6 (March 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215.

<sup>99</sup> Commission chargée de l’étude de la représentation des territoires d’outre-mer a la future assemblée constitutante, “Rapport de la commission chargée de l’étude de la représentation des territoires d’outre-mer a la future assemblée constitutante,” (1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215.

<sup>100</sup> The constitution had limited representation for Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, Guyane, Senegal, Cochinchine, and India.

this principle, clearly affirmed and resolutely applied, can permit the construction of a French Union in which France will be the focal point [*foyer*].”<sup>101</sup>

Focusing on this message of unity, the Commission forwarded a majority recommendation to the government that “all male and female French, citizens, subjects, protégés, or constituents... be represented in the Constitutional Assembly.”<sup>102</sup> Despite such inclusive language, they also advised that any future representative institutions vary depending on the specific colony, leaving room for a non-universal franchise, indirect elections, tiered electoral colleges, and positions appointed by French administrative or commercial interests.<sup>103</sup> For example, while voters in French Equatorial Africa would only be able to elect delegates to consultative bodies, those in Oceania would have universal suffrage in a local representative assembly, and those in French Somalia would only be able to vote for representatives that matched their own “race.”

As elections for the new Constituent Assembly approached through late summer 1945, the administration became increasingly anxious that this new wave of reforms would be better received than their failed efforts in Senegal. As one administrator working in French West Africa argued in September 1945, the new postwar elections were the “first concrete manifestations of the French Union” and the reputation of the shaky new administration could be made or lost on their success.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Note double meaning of *foyer* as household and focal point or center.

<sup>102</sup> D. Serruys, Letter to le Président de la Commission d’études de la Représentation des Territoires français d’Outre Mer à l’Assemblée Constituante (9 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/215.

<sup>103</sup> Laurentie, “Note sur les Assemblées Représentatives Coloniales n°9455,” (13 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>104</sup> “Renseignements politiques, période du 1er au 31 août 1945,” (September 1945), ANS 17G140.

Following the publication of the electoral regime later that autumn, Giacobbi wrote a confidential letter to all the upper colonial administration to present his vision of how France would manage the dangers posed by a new “colonial future” in the shape of a reformed and democratic French Union.<sup>105</sup> Using a combination of medical and modernization analogies, Giacobbi argued that although rival imperialist powers (particularly the Americans and the British) would indeed pounce on any sign of “sickness” or “obsolescence” in the empire, this “false Anglo-Saxon peril” risked distracting the administration from its real task, correcting the “urgent problems already posed by the evolution of the African world” whose “solution will preoccupy, as we must convince ourselves, all of our colonial future.” Because “colonial elites” had not only desired more autonomy but also “found a general sympathy for this in the world,” the colonial powers had to take note and adapt by “substituting for colonization a form of association,” sketched out at Brazzaville and reinforced by de Gaulle’s “many declarations” about unity and reform. This so-called “France of the future” would “replace the Empire and in this way accomplish a decisive revolution: there will no longer exist in the world France and its colonies, but an association of peoples.”

Rather than threats of foreign infiltration intended to rile up anti-colonial sentiment, it was the risk of French failure to adapt to changing circumstances which was the true “principal danger which threatens all of our colonial work.” He further argued that despite their anti-colonial posturing, Americans did not in fact understand “Black Africa” as well as the French, further evidence of why it was France’s own particular “destiny” and “moral obligation” to use economic, social and political reforms to show that “France is in step with the times” and understood the hopes of the “people she is leading... in an enlarged nation that, all equal in rights,

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<sup>105</sup> Paul Giacobbi, “Confidentiel: Le Ministre des Colonies à MM. les gouverneurs généraux,” (20 October 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

have the freedom to give themselves the institutions that suit their personality and specific needs.” In its success, the French Union would “render useless all foreign suggestions” by “safeguarding the moral and political unity of all of French lands in a specifically French framework, designed following a doctrine that conforms to our own particular genius.” This insistence on “Frenchness” had a dual purpose: not only would it repel American or British interference but also stave off the risk of “nominal” nationalist independence along with “the illusory benefits purported to be granted to them by the institution of international trusteeship,” a not-so-subtle dig at the United Nations.

However, Giacobbi warned that reforms could not properly serve the new “enlarged French nation” if its members (specifically those in the colony) put their own needs above those of the community as a whole. Rather than selfish demands for rights, all must pull together to create a community that was “living, organic, as little institutionalized as possible, and capable of adapting to continuous social, economic, and political transformations.” For this reason, different colonies would continue to have different statuses, a “realistic and flexible” approach that depended on the “political personalities” of the different regions and would “evolve, depending on their affinities.” Although full independence was off the table, “the French Union will everywhere promote democratic freedoms,” although the exact limits of these freedoms would differ in various colonies.

The only opportunities for change were those the French deemed “legitimate” or wanted to “facilitate through the birth of a public spirit, to prepare the paths so that all elements of the population, European and indigenous, collaborate in a French spirit.” This collaborative “spirit” was to exist in a controlled democratic context, in which French electoral policy would progressively “call the masses to exercise voting rights” and therefore move overseas

populations from “dependence” to “liberty.” He emphasized that this goal would fail if it did not seem like France was acting to “free” the populations from dependence or seemed to be making “forced concessions” under duress. This was a particularly pressing concern due to the risk of competing ideologies that might “lure” the inhabitants of the colonies away from the French, including “American wealth, Soviet ideology, or illusions of pan-Africanism, more likely all of these at once, which promise them a better and more free life, or in any case, something else... We must now, without fanfare and without hesitation, inform the native that the time has come for him to take his share in the management of his own affairs, to make him understand the reforms we will introduce.”

Properly managed, this Union would benefit all involved, “ensuring the grandeur of our country and the radiance of our civilization, while satisfying the aspirations of the populations of our mature overseas territories. It will bring to the world an element of equilibrium and stability.” Giacobbi also defended France from critics who argued its colonial policies were all talk and no substance, insisting on the importance of “executing our design, to give proof of our will to act... to keep our promises.” The ideal of an expanded electorate therefore remained at odds with the requirements of imperial control, meaning that actual representation remained limited by restricted franchises and representative systems designed to minimize non-European voices.

### **Constitutions, elections, and fraud**

The process of colonial elections themselves also came under close scrutiny, with widespread reports of fraud in the of October 1945 elections to the Constituent Assembly. Accusations of vote rigging often played into racial stereotypes of “immature” political actors

across the colonies, characterizing colonial populations as easily swayed by bribes that ranged from cases of rum to piles of money to promises of religious salvation.<sup>106</sup> Upon losing a deputyship election in October 1945 to a non-white competitor, one French politician argued that “there are some who call French India the Land of Fraud. For my part, I say it is the Capital.”<sup>107</sup> An upper level administrator in French West Africa similarly argued that the “black population... moves around like a herd on election day” while engaging in various types of fraud and deceit, a “spectacle that is shocking for newly-arrived Europeans, but those that already know the place just shrug their shoulders and abstain from voting.”<sup>108</sup>

Women’s presence at the polls was also a consistent refrain in administration reports and political commentators seeking to explain the supposed disorder, with one French election monitor in the Antilles arguing that the new female voters needed to learn to be “more worthy” in their electoral responsibilities.<sup>109</sup> Even non-voters came under scrutiny, with populations described as too “tribalist” or caught up in ethnic divisions to participate in any true representative democracy. For example, one government report arguing that the “Arab inhabitants” of Mauritania (which had no deputy of its own and was grouped with Senegal for the purposes of the Constitutional Assembly) felt “betrayed” by the French administration not because they remained largely disenfranchised, but because they were “supremely ashamed to be represented by a black.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Xavier Dessayne, “Extrait du Procès-Verbal de la Commission de Recensement des votes en date du 6 November 1945,” ANF C//10061.

<sup>107</sup> Armand Gallois-Montbrun, “Memoire sur les elections du 21 octobre 1945,” (27 November 1945), ANF C//10061.

<sup>108</sup> Mercadier, Letter to the Governor General of French West Africa n°188/ADC (30 October 1945), ANS 20G15.

<sup>109</sup> Masselot, Letter to Minister of Colonies (6 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210.

<sup>110</sup> “Mauritanie: Rapport n°401,” (October 1945), ANS 17G140.

At the same time, behavior that was glossed as fraud in the metropole could be its own form of directed (and often anti-French) political protest, including absenteeism, the submission of blank ballots, or destroying communication lines.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the French administration found itself a target of the newly-enlarged electorate for failing to hold up its own end of the democratic bargain, such as allowing too short of a window for newly-enfranchised women to register or providing insufficient polling facilities.

For example, one protest from French Somaliland argued that the French lawyer and politician René Bernard-Cothier had secured his election by taking advantage of his position within the local Office of Former Combatants, distributing pensions to Somali veterans and “threatening to stop caring for them if they did not vote for him.”<sup>112</sup> While Bernard-Clothier defended himself by stating that he was only trying to help veterans “who wanted to become electors to be able to exercise their rights,” a statement by a man named Ahmed Saleh Fara indicated that he handed out the money alongside voting ballots, essentially paying veterans to vote for him.<sup>113</sup> A similar situation unfolded in Ubangi-Shari (then part of AEF) in summer 1946, as African politician Aristide Issembe lost to Guy de Boissoudy, a French military officer.<sup>114</sup> Issembe accused de Boissoudy of using fraudulent means and the resources of his administrative position to secure his victory, including winning 1,121 votes in a subdivision

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<sup>111</sup> Bertaut, Telegramme to Laurentie n.600/CAB (12 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210; Governor of Guadeloupe, Letter to Minister of Colonies n°31 (31 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210; Maire adjoint de Cayenne, Telegram to Colonies Paris n° 503 (24 July 1945), ANOM 1AFFPOL/210.

<sup>112</sup> Xavier Dessaigne, "Extrait du Procès-Verbal de la Commission de Recensement des votes en date du 6 November 1945," (November 1945), ANF C//10061.

<sup>113</sup> Office Colonial des Ancients Combattants de la Cote Française des Somalis, “Proces Verbal: Seance du 13 Decembre 1945,” (December 1945), ANF C//10061; Alphonse Lippman and Ahmed Saleh Fara, Statement of 13 December 1945 (13 December 1945), ANF C//10061.

<sup>114</sup> Bernard Lanne, *Histoire politique du Tchad de 1945 à 1958: administration, partis, élections* (Paris: Karthala, 1998), 79.

where only eighty-four people were registered as well as giving money to newly-enfranchised veterans to try to secure their votes.<sup>115</sup>

The extent to which women were able to vote in the October 1945 elections varied. In places like the Four Communes and the “old colonies” of Guadeloupe, all female citizens had the legal right to vote and stand for office. However, in Equatorial Africa, the profoundly constricted citizenship laws were limited for men and women alike. For example, one electoral list from Congo-Brazzaville for the elections of October 1945 suggests that out of the 1,020 voters registered, twenty-six were women, almost all of whom were French women married to colonial administrators.<sup>116</sup> Similar situations prevailed in Cameroon and Gabon, where the majority of new female voters were the white wives of administrators, missionary leaders, or employees of French businesses.<sup>117</sup>

The October 1945 contest in Guadeloupe exemplify many of these tensions, including the importance of local concerns, the increasingly prominent political visibility of women, and the use of the franchise to critique imperial dynamics. Before the elections of autumn of 1945, the Socialist and Communist parties in Guadeloupe had agreed to send one deputy each to the Constituent Assembly in Paris, agreeing on the popular Socialist Paul Valentino and the Communist candidate Rosan Girard. However, at the very last minute, Valentino added Eugénie Eboué-Tell, a fellow Socialist and the widow of the recently deceased and immensely popular

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<sup>115</sup> Aristide Issembe, Letter to the President of the Assemblée Nationale (28 June 1946), ANF C//10067.

<sup>116</sup> The majority of new female voters were explicitly labeled as “spouse” or “religieuse.” Those without explicit labels include Sophie Turpin N’Diage and Denise Kari-Diop. Administrateur-Maire de la Commune Mixte de Brazzaville, “Décision n°228,” (27 October 1945), ANF C//10061; Directeur du Service de Sante, “Etat numérique du personnel du Service de Santé remplissant les conditions de séjour pour voter (Militaires et Agents): Moyen-Congo - Gabon,” (28 October 1945), ANF C//10061.

<sup>117</sup> Letter to Monsieur n°11 (27 October 1945), ANF C//10061.

Félix Eboué, to the electoral rolls. Eboué-Tell defeated Girard, resulting in Guadeloupe sending two Socialists to the new Assembly and incurring widespread political resentment, with Communists labeling Valentino as a traitor and a “bad Frenchmen” for his actions.<sup>118</sup> One op-ed from Guadeloupe critiqued the election for giving new voters such a “sad image of elections” and calling upon young women in particular to “rehabilitate universal suffrage... even if they must decide to spill blood” to ensure the “expression of popular will on which the Democratic Republic depends.”<sup>119</sup>

Criticism was directed at Valentino just as much if not more than at Eboué-Tell herself, with the mayor of Sainte-Anne and former deputy Maurice Satineau arguing that it was this contest in particular that “discredited universal suffrage in Guadeloupe.”<sup>120</sup> Satineau’s accusations of fraud followed Eboué-Tell in her subsequent election to the Senate in summer of 1946, when he wrote to the National Assembly to emphasize how Eboué-Tell’s consistently fraudulent electoral victories “violated” the principle of “universal suffrage” which has been such a “long tradition” in the territory.<sup>121</sup> Arguing that the results of the summer 1946 contest were even more “tarnished” than those of the previous autumn, he urged the assembly to annul the elections entirely in order to “rehabilitate Universal Suffrage in Guadeloupe and show that the National Assembly wants to be a living expression of popular will.” He argued that if such

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<sup>118</sup> “Une femme noire elue à l’assemblée française,” *African Morning Post* (22 November 1945), ANS 17G140; “Africains élus au parlement français,” *Daily Echo* (1 December 1945), ANS 17G140; Kristen Stromberg Childers, *Seeking Imperialism’s Embrace: National Identity, Decolonization, and Assimilation in the French Caribbean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 57.

<sup>119</sup> Arvède Kancel, “La Fraude électorale et la Jeunesse Féminine,” *La Voix du Peuple de la Guadeloupe: Organe Socialiste de Paix Sociale* (7 July 1945), ANF C//10061.

<sup>120</sup> Maurice Satineau, Letter to President de l’Assemblée Nationale Constituante and the Chambre des Députés (30 October 1945), ANF C//10061; Gerty Archimede, Letter to Presidents and Membres of the Commission (10 June 1946), ANF C//10067.

<sup>121</sup> Maurice Satineau, Letter to Le Président et les Membres de l’Assemblée Nationale Constituante n°56 (4 July 1946), ANF C//10067.

frauds were allowed to stand, it would be better to totally “remove the right to vote in Guadeloupe” and simply allow the Ministry of Overseas France to select whichever deputies they wished.

Similar difficulties marked the October 1945 elections in French Guinea, as protesters critiqued the small size of the non-citizen electorate and the fact that one of the men running to represent the second non-citizen college opposed the very idea of Africans representing Guinea in any French Assembly.<sup>122</sup> Protests elevated as the Governor rejected their demands, with thousands gathering to demonstrate in front of police headquarters and city halls across the colony, making their dissatisfaction clear by calling out their grievances and sabotaging French communication equipment. Repression of the protests turned violent, resulting in dozens of protester deaths and hundreds of injuries. On election day, protesters accused the French of simply rigging the elections to ensure the victory of their chosen candidates.

Despite such controversies and the strict limits on the actual franchise, the idea of an expanding citizenship remained central to France’s image of itself as an imperial power and its plans to remain one. In contrast to the example that opened this chapter, however, the French administration found itself increasingly unable to sustain the significant disjunctures between emancipatory language and restrictive law, promising one thing while implementing another.

The outlook for women’s rights within the new system remained particularly uncertain, with one local French administrator working in French Guinea warning that the future expansion of women’s right to vote was the “primary difficulty.”<sup>123</sup> He argued that opposition to female suffrage remained widespread and would be considered an “utter aberration” by Africans and

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<sup>122</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), 15-18.

<sup>123</sup> Pruvost, “Les élections législatives en Guinée, Oct-Nov 1945, Collège des non citoyens,” (1945), ANS 20G105.

Europeans alike. To buttress his argument, he asked that as “the vast majority of male electors act without discretion and in ignorance, how much more will that be the case for women, whose mentality is even more elementary and who are even less acquainted with public life?” He further argued that while African women’s social rights merited the greatest attention, it was and would remain “very premature” to accord them the right to vote. Echoing arguments from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, he argued that polygyny was a key factor, as “married women will no doubt vote for whoever their master tells them to, the polygamous husband will therefore have the loudest voice. Rich men only need to pay to have more wives, the institution of suffrage for African women will therefore only enrich these men further.”

Such anxieties caused the upper administration to scramble to determine what form of suffrage rights should be implemented in the colonies, hoping to appease critics while controlling the expansion of nationalism. While the much celebrated Lamine Guèye law of May 1946 deemed that all inhabitants of the overseas territories had the same quality of citizenship as metropolitan nationals, it left room for future “specific laws” to establish the various “conditions under which they will exercise this right” within the different colonies, meaning that suffrage itself was unevenly applied.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps more important than France’s image of itself as a leader of progressive imperialism, the administration increasingly hoped that policies that highlighted their success in “productively enlarging” the voter base could ward off violent anticolonial sentiment.<sup>125</sup> However, pressure on the administration mounted as movements inside and outside of the empire emphasized the centrality of universal suffrage and women’s rights to their own

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<sup>124</sup> Law n°46-940 of 7 May 1946; Law of 13 April 1946.

<sup>125</sup> Moutet, Telegram to Gougal Brazzaville n°840AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Moutet, Telegram to Haussaire Yaounde n°541AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Moutet, Telegram to Haussaire Tananarive n°1081/AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; “Extrait d’une lettre du Gouverneur des Somalis,” (26 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

competing programs. As the next chapter outlines, the limits of franchise and the significance of representative democracy became increasingly difficult for the French to control or use to their own advantage.

## Chapter Four

### “I Will Vote Like All Women”:

#### Protest and Suffrage in the Communes of Senegal, 1943-1945

A year after the enfranchisement of metropolitan French women in April 1944, the colonial administration announced that all female citizens of the empire – including non-white citizens – would also gain the right to vote. However, a special exception withheld this right in the Communes of Senegal, four urban centers comprised of Dakar, the Isle of Gorée, Rufisque, and Saint Louis. Juridically unique within the French empire, the Communes were political spaces where citizenship was extended automatically to all those born within their borders. Known as *originaires*, African residents of the Communes had a relatively enlarged set of formal rights compared to other inhabitants of the French colonies. This resulted in a higher number of non-white, non-Christian, and, crucially, non-male citizens than almost anywhere else in the empire.

Given their relatively privileged citizenship status within the imperial political hierarchy, the targeted disenfranchisement of Senegalese women shocked and insulted the local population. Protesters and politicians challenged the law, building a broad movement that mobilized elite political figures as well as lower profile female representatives from small neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> The discourse used by activists within the movement combined French universalist rhetoric with Senegalese modes of protest, ranging from petitions signed by the “population of Dakar and

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<sup>1</sup> While there has been relatively little scholarship on the protests, exceptions that provide an overview of the protest include Pascale Barthélémy, “AOF 1945: le droit de vote des Africaines en débat,” Séminaire “*Genre et citoyenneté*” (Lyon, France: 2011); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 46-50; and Saliou Mbaye, “Le vote des femmes au Senegal,” *Ethiopiennes* 6 (1976): 26-43.

surrounding areas” that argued that the exclusion was “anti-democratic, anti-Republican, and contrary to the liberalism of France” to mass rallies of thousands who cheered on passionate speeches made in the Wolof language that demanded equality for Senegalese women.<sup>2</sup> Protesters and activists joined together to challenge and reshape the French colonial state, a movement that one female participant described as “truly democratic,” “electric” and “exhilarating.”<sup>3</sup>

In the face of overwhelming protest, the French government was forced to respond. While the colonial administration knew that an abrupt policy reversal made under duress could make them appear weak, maintaining the voting exclusion would look even worse, particularly for an incoming postwar government working desperately to distance itself from the racist and anti-democratic stain of the Nazi-allied Vichy regime. They reversed the ban. Following the announcement that all female citizens would in fact be admitted to the franchise, inhabitants of the Communes celebrated their victory, with one woman from Dakar writing to her husband that “everyone is in the street yelling with joy! I registered to vote, although with much difficulty... but all’s well that ends well, and on the first of July I will vote like all women.”<sup>4</sup>

Although a significant watershed, the 1945 enfranchisement of Senegalese women is not celebrated as a feminist milestone nor a nationalist triumph in France or in Senegal. In part, this is due to the colonial context of the expansion, particularly the fact that it was only women living in the Communes of Senegal who were considered full citizens and therefore enfranchised by the law. Such timing and exclusion rests uneasily with the common reasons that a nation – be that France or Senegal – might choose to commemorate a democratic landmark. This absence itself

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<sup>2</sup> Délégués de la Population de Dakar et Banlieue, “Letter au Gouverneur Général,” (21 March 1945), Les Archives Nationales du Sénégal (henceforth ANS) /20G25; Amadou Cisse, Cablogramme to Ministre Colonies Paris (13 March 1945), ANS/20G25; “Motion,” [11 March 1945], ANS/20G25.

<sup>3</sup> Cherisse Diallo, “Extrait d’une lettre ordinaire interceptée,” (6 March 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>4</sup> Ange, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (18 May 1945), ANS/17G415.

suggests a great deal about the nature and significance of the movement, supporting recent scholarship that has shown the range of ways in which anti-colonial protest did not always entail pro-nationalist activism.<sup>5</sup> It was as originaire citizens with special status in the French empire that female inhabitants of the Communes gained voting rights, and relatively few at the time pushed to expand suffrage into a wider “national” set of privileges. This is not to frame the originaires as colonial apologists, but rather as advocates of a transformed French imperial system in which they played an active and equal role. While rights in a colonial context are often framed as something either “given” by a progressive metropole or “taken” by nationalists in the process of decolonization, the history of the Communes shows a more complicated middle ground, a case in which the French administration was forced to acknowledge rights that originaires claimed for themselves in defining the terms of their own inclusion.

The protests similarly illuminate the multiplicity of forces that shaped colonial citizenship, showing the range of ways in which political membership was envisioned, challenged, and enacted within spaces of empire.<sup>6</sup> Protesters drew on local traditions of gendered representation and censure alongside French Republican vocabulary, and not all participants had the same motivation for their support of the broader movement.<sup>7</sup> For some male elites in the Communes, the protests were less about women’s equality and more a means of challenging

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Foster, *Faith in the Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Rachel Jean-Baptiste, “A Black Girl Should Not Be With A White Man: Sex, Race, and African Women's Social and Legal Status in Colonial Gabon, c. 1900–1946,” *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 56-82; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Mamadou Diouf characterizes this as hybrid form of “indigenous civility.” Mamadou Diouf, “The French Colonial Policy of Assimilation and the Civility of the Originaires of the Four Communes (Senegal): A Nineteenth Century Globalization Project,” *Development and Change* 29, no. 4 (1998): 671–696.

French laws that compromised their control of public political space. At the same time, many female participants saw the protest as a clear assertion of women's rights in particular, drawing on specifically female modes of local representation and activism to make their own claims in a more feminist framework. Because many of these modes of female protest were not understood as legitimate political actions in the eyes of the French administration, they emerge only in a critical reading of the colonial archives. In this way, the protests indicate the importance of non-European actions and individuals for understanding the history and nature of European overseas colonialism.

The ban and the subsequent activist movement also highlight the centrality of gender in the establishment colonial hierarchies of political citizenship. While there has been a great deal of work done on colonial citizenship within the framework of the French empire, relatively little of this scholarship has focused on the ways in which gender played a role equal to that of race or religion in shaping political rights.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the question of gender is crucial, as colonialist ideology had long maintained through law and discourse that women in the empire were the very least “capable” of all political actors. Repeatedly characterized as politically immature, the figure of the “indigenous woman” stood in total opposition to the “universal” white male citizen of the

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<sup>8</sup> There has been a great deal of recent scholarship on the role of French Republican universalism and colonial citizenship, although the question of gender has been less evenly explored. Jennifer Anne Boittin, Christina Firpo, and Emily Musil Church, “Hierarchies of Race and Gender in the French Colonial Empire, 1914-1946,” *Historical Reflections* 37, no. 1 (2011): 60-90; Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “Nationalité et citoyenneté en Afrique occidentale française: Originaires et citoyens d'ANS/le Sénégal colonial,” *The Journal of African History* 42, no 2 (2001): 285–305; Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Lorelle Semley, *To Be Free and French: Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

French metropole. Because her enfranchisement was fraught with multiple and overlapping logics of marginalization and exclusion, debates over the limits of the female franchise illuminate the conflicting range of ways that ideas about race and gender were mobilized for political purposes across metropolitan and colonial cultures.<sup>9</sup> Women's suffrage is therefore a crucial yet overlooked factor in understanding broader histories of decolonization, citizenship, and feminism, particularly modern democracy's ambiguous colonial crucible.

### **Making the Communes**

The Communes were a unique political structure within the framework of the French empire. What are now the city of Saint Louis and the island of Gorée were first put under shifting forms of French control in the mid-seventeenth century, small enclaves of French commercial and political influence that existed only at the behest of local rulers and states.<sup>10</sup> With the addition of Dakar and Rufisque, these two were expanded to four, a set of geographically distinct but legally united French "Communes" along the Atlantic coast.<sup>11</sup> While inhabitants of the Communes were of diverse backgrounds, a growing percentage of the population developed a strategic and personal sense of themselves as explicitly (if not exclusively) French.<sup>12</sup> Women played a highly visible role within the Communes, running

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<sup>9</sup> Leora Auslander, "Women's Suffrage, Citizenship Law and National Identity: Gendering the Nation-State in France and Germany, 1971-1918," in *Women's Rights, Human Rights* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>10</sup> Boubacar Barry, *The Kingdom of Waalo: Senegal Before the Conquest* (New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Ibrahima Seck, "The French Discovery of Senegal," in *Brokers of Change: Atlantic Commerce and Cultures in Precolonial Western Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 149-50; and Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 185.

lucrative business based on interpersonal and commercial networks that crossed the Atlantic world and West African hinterland.<sup>13</sup>

These originaires, as the population of the Communes came to be called, took advantage of changing systems of colonial rule, shifting political alliances, and their economic power to defend their own rights and autonomy, including limited representation in the Paris-based National Assembly and universal manhood suffrage. Even in instances where formal representation was not endorsed by the French administration, inhabitants of the Communes formed and maintained their own local forms of political organizations to advocate for their interests. In one example from 1823, originaires shut down a French effort to appoint a white mayoral candidate by asserting that “since time immemorial we have had our own mayor; he is always locally born and is elected by the people.”<sup>14</sup> In this way, originaires consistently asserted their right to exert local autonomy within the framework of a colonial political structure.

The fact that the originaires possessed a relatively larger set of formal rights did not prevent racism or discrimination within political life. Formal representative structures over-represented the numerically smaller number of white French individuals living in the Communes and debates over the exact extent of manhood suffrage were highly contested. Administrators often characterized the originaires as childishly loyal to France, gullible, and incapable of acting in their own long-term benefit. For example, a 1924 article about the possibility of universal suffrage in the colonies argued that while “France proclaims the equality of the human races,” African voters had “not reached the same degree of development” as had Europeans and they

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<sup>13</sup> George Brooks, “The *Signares* of Saint-Louis and Gorée: Women Entrepreneurs in Eighteenth-Century Senegal,” in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, ed. Nancy J. Jafkin et. al., 19-44 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Philip Havik, *Silences and Soundbytes: The Gendered Dynamics of Trade and Brokerage in the Pre-Colonial Guinea Bissau Region* (Münster: LIT, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Johnson, *Emergence*, 42.

therefore must be “monitored and led to advancement when considering the expansion of their political rights.”<sup>15</sup> French imperialist ideology continued to frame the acquisition of rights as a process of “colonial education” in which an enlightened imperial center slowly elevated the politically immature of the empire, maintaining that any too-rapid expanse would be dangerous to the empire and civilization itself.

The French stereotype of the voting African as a ridiculous figure supported the idea that non-Europeans were incapable of “rational” political action. For example, following his electoral loss to the *métis* or mixed-race Barthélémy Durand-Valantin in the autumn of 1848, the Governor of Senegal August Baudin complained bitterly, arguing that the expanded suffrage laws in Senegal were “absurd and nonsensical” and the scene on election day would be enough to “frighten even the most dedicated partisan of universal suffrage.”<sup>16</sup> The French were particularly vocal about the dangers of a corrupting “Muslim influence” on representative institutions, with one French governor arguing in August 1871 that Senegal was in fact “not ripe” for democratic institutions as its European population was too small and business-focused while the majority Muslim population was too impervious to “French civilization” to meaningfully participate in the democratic process.<sup>17</sup> The French “gift” of democracy thus became bundled within the larger ideology of the colonial civilizing mission, with representation framed as a reward for assimilation or “maturation” towards French norms or ideals.

Alongside such race-based hierarchies of citizenship, originaire rights were also profoundly gendered. The sheer number of female citizens was one key factor, a characteristic that marked the Communes as different from other parts of the French empire. In most French

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<sup>15</sup> Pierre Mille, “Nos colonies et le suffrage universel,” *Courrier Colonial* (17 October 1924).

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Johnson, *Emergence*, 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in H. O. Idowu, “Establishment of Elective Institutions in Senegal, 1869-1880,” *The Journal of African History* 9, no. 2 (1968), 269.

colonies, it was almost exclusively men who could become citizens, as the necessary requirements to acquire citizenship included criteria that were either denied to females or favored males (such as acquiring a certain level of French-approved formal education in an area that might have had schools only for boys). The Communes of Senegal were therefore something of an exception, as the stipulation that all those who were simply born within the territory had automatic French citizenship rights resulted in a relatively high number of non-white women who were able to claim full colonial citizenship.

However, in a time when women could not vote in metropolitan France, the question of female suffrage was rarely broached.<sup>18</sup> Alongside debates over the nature of masculinist citizenship regimes, the gendered aspects of political rights in the Communes emerged most visibly within debates about the ability of *originaires* to pass on their status to their families and kin. In one 1932 example, a woman from Saint Louis named Diarra Saw was unable to acquire citizenship for her non-*originaire* husband. Despite a 1914 law that suggested that marriage partners could extend *originaire* status to their spouse, the colonial court denied Saw's request, arguing that the law "only applies to male natives and their descendants... because women do not have the right to vote nor to serve in the army."<sup>19</sup> The nature of polygamous households in Senegal provided another sticking point in the wording of this law, as the language that technically enabled a plural number of "wives" to acquire citizenship rights through their husbands was quickly revised to specify that only one "wife" could acquire this right, emphasizing the incompatibility of polygamous marriage structures with French notions of "appropriate" citizenship.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> One notable exception is Hubertine Auclert.

<sup>19</sup> Coquery-Vidrotitch, "Nationalité et citoyenneté," 291-2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

## Postwar citizenship in the empire

The enfranchisement of metropolitan French women in spring of 1944 prompted changes in colonial citizenship, requiring the colonial administration to determine how the new law would shape female suffrage in the empire. The administration decided that in general, female suffrage would expand to any woman in the empire who was already a full French citizen. For the most part, female French citizens living in empire were white: married to a colonial administrator, working for a French company, or inhabiting an area of the empire with a large European settler population. Those few non-white women who had gained French citizenship were considered to be among the most “assimilated” individuals of the empire, women who were not considered a “risk” to enfranchise as it was assumed that they could be counted on to support French interests.

However, the unique juridical status of the Communes changed this calculus, and the administration expressed great concern at the idea of enfranchising a wide swath of black French female citizens. The colonial administration solicited reports on the question of female suffrage in Senegal, resulting in a flurry of opinions by administrative personnel, various experts, and politicians. Governor General of French West Africa Pierre Cournarie opposed the expansion, arguing that while the “equitable character” of female enfranchisement was “obvious when it comes to European women or exceptionally evolved African women,” there would be “not only inconveniences but indeed dangers” if voting rights were extended to all women in the Communes with French citizenship.<sup>21</sup> Taking a similar line, the Governor of Senegal Charles Dagain argued that it would be a “very great error” to accord such women the right to vote, as

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<sup>21</sup> [Cournarie], "Letter to the Commissaire aux Colonies Lycée Fromentin," ([1 July] 1944), ANS/20G15.

these “mostly Muslim” women were “possibly the most backward in the federation.”<sup>22</sup> While full rights should be extended to French women from the metropole as well as other colonies where female citizenship was more carefully monitored and limited, additional requirements (such as the acquisition of certain educational credentials) should be required for any female inhabitants from Senegal. Originaire women were thereby doubly disenfranchised, marked by their race and their gender as incapable of “modern” political action.

At the same time, administrative descriptions of Senegalese women’s past participation within local elections is revealing, both in what it suggests about originaire political culture as well as the nature of French colonial biases. For example, in making his case against female enfranchisement, Governor Dagain argued that women in Senegal were “certainly involved — unfortunately — in politics, but they do not know to what ends.” He described the scene of a past election day, noting that it was “enough to have seen the women circulate, shouting the merits of the candidate of their choice with banknotes pinned to their boubous [clothing] to realize the very special and personal meaning they give to politics.” A government report similarly noted that “the women of Dakar play an important political role at the moment of the elections... they cheer on their chosen candidates, supporting them with praise while booing their opponents.”<sup>23</sup> While the report details a population that, by the evidence presented, was in fact highly politically active, it concludes that “if the political education of the male Senegalese elector is still weak, the indigenous woman still has everything to learn.” The administration interpreted women’s consistent presence at the polls and vociferous public endorsement of competing candidates as evidence for their political immaturity, asserting that the specific ways in which

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<sup>22</sup> [Dagain], “Letter to GG AOF n°109/C” (22 June 1944), ANS/20G15.

<sup>23</sup> [Pierre Cournarie], “Extrait,” (24 August 1944), Archives nationales d’outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence, France (hereafter ANOM), 1AFFPOL 211.

they manifested their advocacy was too “personal” to merit the franchise. Despite the fact that their legal disenfranchisement made it so that their only means of public political action was by definition “informal,” this was taken as further evidence that such women lacked the rational comportment or appropriately public-minded outlook required by modern electoral democracy.

This consensus around women’s lower political capacities was reinforced by colonial conceptions about polygamy and the Muslim household. As Socialist French deputy Elie Bloncort argued, “native women” remained generally “less evolved than men... and polygamy makes the question of married women’s right to vote even more difficult.”<sup>24</sup> While he acknowledged that suffrage was “one of the essential prerogatives of French citizenship,” African women’s “mediocre political education” left them exposed to influence by their “unscrupulous” husbands, which would essentially enable “system of plural voting based on the family.” He suggested reserving the right to vote for women who had “opted for French personal status” and thereby rejected their right to partake in polygamous marriages, a solution that would have the added bonus of “fighting against the scourge of polygamy.” Bloncort’s statement reflects a number of general trends that characterized the debate over women’s suffrage as a whole, including a general bias against the political capacity of non-white women, anxieties about enfranchising Muslim subjects, and tensions over the practice of polygamy by French colonial citizens. Polygamy became a political shorthand that justified both exclusion and inclusion: clarifying why the French administration found Muslim women unsuitable candidates for suffrage and justifying the continued French colonial presence as a larger fight against the “scourge” that oppressed women.

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<sup>24</sup> Elie Bloncort, Letter to Cher Camarade [1944?], ANS/20G25.

At the same time, black and particularly Muslim men became the scapegoats for this exclusion, as evidenced in an oft-referenced government report circulated through the administration that cited a vaguely defined “many notable natives and various members of the Senegalese colony” who were themselves “unanimously unfavorable” towards the idea of women voting.<sup>25</sup> Muslim men were flagged as particularly “angered by the news that the vote will be accorded to women for the next elections... they declare that Koranic law does not permit this and that if such a reform is extended to Senegal they will use all means to prevent women from voting.”<sup>26</sup> Islam therefore stood in for two seemingly opposite aspects of the debate. On the one hand, the administration claimed it wished to respect and honor the autonomous wishes of its Muslim male interlocutors, who were — ostensibly — themselves against women’s suffrage for reasons related to their Islamic faith. At the same time, the administration used the figure of a “retrograde” Muslim family structure, with its authoritarian patriarch and tractable co-wives, to argue that women from such households were unready to responsibly exercise suffrage.

As the French administration debated their next move in the autumn of 1944, rumors of the exclusion of Senegalese women from the franchise began to circulate through the Communes. By January 1945, Senegalese politician Lamine Guèye wrote to the Governor General, referencing the “long-standing rumors” about the administration’s proposition to “exclude Muslim women from the electoral college.”<sup>27</sup> Guèye referenced the administration’s concern with Islam and argued that their decision must have been based on “faulty or biased information... [as] the Muslims of the Communes (men and women) ... are French citizens before the law and do not at all oppose women’s suffrage.” He warned that if true, such

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<sup>25</sup> [Cournarie], “Extrait” (24 August 1944), ANOM/1AFFPOL 211.

<sup>26</sup> Pierre Cournarie, Telegram to Colonies Paris, n°38Cab (12 October 1944), ANS/20G25.

<sup>27</sup> Lamine Gueye and Ch. Graziani, Letter to Monsieur le Délégué (17 January 1945), ANS/20G25.

exclusionary measures would “provoke protests and could bring trouble, even mass Muslim abstention from elections, something that is sure to dim the prestige of the government of General de Gaulle, a man whom all the indigenous hope will ease their plight and affirm their rights and privileges.” Administrative silence on the issue only fanned the flames of political rumor, and a leaked administration telegram discussing specific plans for the exclusionary law further escalated public concern.<sup>28</sup>

Such fears proved correct, as the French law that formally barred originaire women from voting was finalized in the Paris-based Conseil d’Etat in February 1945. The law extended voting rights for all female French citizens in the empire *except* for those in the Communes of Senegal and French India, the one other French colony with a sizable population of non-white female citizens. The actual wording of the exception avoided explicitly racial language in favor of geographic and religious terminology. The Conseil noted that although the wording of the law might “seem complicated” it was actually very straightforward, in it sought to “exclude from voting — without pronouncing absolutely inopportune formal bans – the natives of the [Communes] whose husbands were conscripted and thereby enfranchised by the law of 29 September 1916, and especially to exclude the Catholic natives who do not have, as do the Muslim natives, a personal status that excludes them from the franchise, as Koranic law is opposed to [women voting].”<sup>29</sup> While the result of the provision was to exclude Senegalese female citizens from the franchise, the convoluted language of the provision is indeed

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<sup>28</sup> Cournaire, Letter to Gouverneur du Senegal n° 11/Cab-Dir-SP (17 February 1945), ANS/20G3; Dagain, Letter to the Governor General of AOF n°145 (1 March 1945), ANS/20G3.

<sup>29</sup> Conseil d’Etat, “Extrait du Registre des Délibérations,” (8 February 1945), ANOM/1AFFPOL/211; “Décret n 45-266 du 19 février 1945,” *JORF* (21 February 1945), 912-3; “Décret n°45-267 du 19 février 1945” *JORF* (21 February 1945): 913; “Décret n°45-268 du 19 février 1945” *JORF* (21 February 1945): 913-4.

“complicated,” particularly the puzzling distinction made between a “formal ban” and an “exclusion.” The language of the provision also curtails the very history of representation in the Communes, suggesting it was phenomenon dating from 1916 rather than a long-standing institution with roots in local political culture and the eighteenth-century creation of French parliamentary democracy itself.

Contrary to the administrative belief that the exclusion would stir little fuss in the Communes, opposition to the provision was forceful and immediate. Rooted in Dakar and Saint-Louis, the months of March and April of 1945 were consumed with meetings, rallies, letter-writing, information-gathering, publishing of op-eds, recrimination, spying, electoral campaigning, and violence, as citizens made their opposition clear.

### **Protest and power in spring 1945**

Lamine Guèye immediately wrote the French administration to describe the “deep and painful emotion felt in the Senegalese community” due to the “unjust and vexing” exclusion.<sup>30</sup> Referencing specific laws that had made both male and female Senegalese full “French citizens without restriction” for “more than one hundred years,” he argued that the new regulation divided French citizens of Senegal and French citizens of other colonies and thereby “strikes the *Sénégalaises* [Senegalese women] with a humiliation as unjust as it is excessive to common rights in a democratic regime.” Public opinion was, he asserted, on his side, as “there are not ten Senegalese in all the Colony” who would allow to such a “monstrosity,” and, if the administration were to have any doubt, they only need ask “any elected official, former elected official, notable, or citizen” if it is “just and normal” to deprive *Sénégalaises* of voting rights

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<sup>30</sup> [Lamine Gueye], Letter to [Cournarie], (1 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

while simultaneously extending them to any “*Européennes, Antillaises, Guyanaises, Algériennes, Malgaches, Néo-Calédoniennes, etc.*” resident in the area. Guèye emphasized the Senegalese women’s particular exclusion by pointing out that non-white women who had gained citizenship in the French Caribbean or in other African colonies did have the right to vote, and theoretically would be able to do so if they relocated to Senegal.

Governor General of French West Africa Pierre Cournarie described the growing “agitation” to his superiors in Paris, suggesting that despite his earlier opposition, the vote might be expanded to Senegalese women solely in order to prevent further unrest. Although Cournarie remained “personally convinced that the *Sénégalaises* are not yet ready to participate in political life,” he argued that “rabble-rousers have seized on the matter as a weapon to use against France,” and therefore an expansion would be in France’s best interest.<sup>31</sup> To explain his failure to anticipate the public outcry, he argued that the protesters were not citizens with a rational grievance, but suggestible mobs egged on by politicians and “professional agitators” looking towards “electoral concerns and vote counting.” Cournarie further argued that women themselves were unconcerned with the debate, claiming that “the great majority, if not the near-totality” of Senegalese women were “totally disinterested in the question.”<sup>32</sup>

The assertion that women were an insignificant part of the movement was common in administrative reports. While there surely were women who were not invested or interested in representation within the structure of the French colonial state, Cournarie’s characterization of women as “totally disinterested” was demonstrably not the case. Part of the French failure to comprehend the extent of women’s investment in the movement resulted from a more general inability to recognize the range of ways in which women in Senegal (and indeed in other

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<sup>31</sup> Cournarie, Telegramme n°743 (7 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>32</sup> Cournarie and Barlet, Letter n°1467/AP (8 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

European colonies) adapted pre-colonial or non-European modes of political protest to critique the colonial state.<sup>33</sup> As they did not recognize differently gendered forms of political action as legitimate, they underestimated women's presence in the movement.

Women were indeed involved from the early days of the protest, although not always in ways that were legible to observers within the administration. Indeed, police reports of rallies and public meetings in the early days of the movement often make note of the low numbers of women present. One such example that bears out the relatively low numbers of women was a massive Senegalese Socialist Federation (SSF) rally that occurred on 3 March, an event the SSF publicized by handing out tracts outside of the Cinéma Palace that encouraged people to gather in front of the Mosque of Yakhe Dieuff and mobilize to "save your rights."<sup>34</sup> Although the event drew a large crowd of over 1,500 men, police reports note that only "some fifteen" of the attendees were female.

However, other rallies attracted large numbers of women who not only attended the events but addressed the crowd, including one rally of about eight hundred people in Saint Louis that occurred on the same day as the SSF event in Dakar.<sup>35</sup> At this event, women got on a makeshift stage to demand the "total application" of female suffrage in the communes and criticized the idea of any Muslim man opposing them, arguing such individuals "should occupy themselves with religion and not politics."<sup>36</sup> The female speakers further asserted that the exclusion had occurred "against the wishes of a Senegalese population" who wanted to "reclaim

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<sup>33</sup> Dorothy L. Hodgson, "Pastoralism, Patriarchy and History: Changing Gender Relations among Maasai in Tanganyika, 1890-1940," *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 1 (1999): 41-65; and Judith Van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 6 no. 2 (1972): 165-181.

<sup>34</sup> Service de la Sûreté-Dakar, "Renseignements: Source indigène," (6 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>35</sup> Dagain, Telegramme n°126/C (5 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>36</sup> P. Barlet, "Renseignements," n°153 (3 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

the totality of their citizenship rights... in accordance with France's long-standing tradition." In this way, the aggrieved women framed their rights as emerging from their own status within the French imperialist hierarchy and asserted that religious qualifications had no place in a "secular" French republic.

Meetings that occurred in private dwellings included even greater numbers of female participants, including events in which hundreds of women gathered at homes and compounds across the Communes.<sup>37</sup> One meeting at the residence of local notable in Saint Louis on 8 March was attended by almost one thousand people, roughly equal numbers of men and women, who gathered in order to further "diffuse among the feminine element of the Saint-Louis population the decision taken by the government to deny Senegalese women the right to vote and run for office."<sup>38</sup> Another meeting in the Sor neighborhood of Saint Louis occurred at the home of Madame Diariatou Dia and included several female speakers who declared their "common cause with the women of other neighborhoods" in their shared "commitment to fighting the Public Powers until the very end so that the injustice would be repaired... all female citizens should vote without distinction of color, as the enemy bullet strikes black as well as white."

French police reports that measure female participation only in raw numbers also fail to capture the local ways in which female representation and networks were deployed in the context of mass mobilization. For example, one woman named Cherisse Diallo who attended several protests in Saint Louis wrote of her experiences to her brother, an employee of the colonial administration in Rufisque. She described the prevention of female originaires from voting as an "arbitrary measure... we assembled in mass to thwart these administrative doings... women have

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<sup>37</sup> Bureau Politique, "Rapport Politique du mois de Avril 1945," (11 May 1945), ANOM/14Miom 2705; Colonies du Sénégal, "Bulletin des renseignements politiques du mars 1945 n°336," (29 April 1945), ANS/17G140.

<sup>38</sup> Sureté General, "Renseignements n°4238C/SU," (8 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

made a public declaration, and we intend to vote if French women are voting.”<sup>39</sup> Complicating administration reports that spaces of protest were “mostly masculine,” Diallo’s letters point out that even at the events where there were numerically few women, those that were present had been strategically selected by other women in the region to act as their representatives or liaisons, illuminating the larger networks of female affiliation that operated outside of the purview of the colonial state.

Female networks and alliances encouraged protest assemblies to grow, with one event on 11 March in Saint Louis attended by at least 3,000 people (including larger numbers of women) that produced a “unanimously supported motion” signed by the “Population of Saint Louis.”<sup>40</sup> The rhetoric of the protesters began to escalate, with one man taking the stage to announce that “if all the means of compromise are exhausted, if all the doors remain closed, the time comes to break the windows.” Two women also addressed to crowd, the older one speaking in Wolof and the younger one translating her words into French. Among other criticisms, the senior woman argued that the deeds done to Senegalese women was all the more “inadmissible” given all that “their husbands, their sons, and their brothers” had fought for France in the recent war. While there is little in the way of specifics on their oration, one police report notes that “the intervention of these female citizens threw a bit of cheerfulness among the attendees,” suggesting that their words were well received and highly regarded. The rally impacted even those who could not attend, evidenced by the “lively commentary” it elicited among the market women of Saint Louis, who were “heard to comment that they had self-respect and would never let themselves be treated as inferiors.”

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<sup>39</sup> Cherisse Diallo, Extrait d'une lettre ordinaire interceptée to M. Alassane Diallo (6 March 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>40</sup> Amadou Cisse, Cablogramme to Ministre Colonies Paris, (13 March 1945), ANS/20G25; “Motion,” [11 March 1945], ANS/20G25.

Tactical language united ideas about French Republican ideology, promises of colonial reform, and the colonial administration's desire to distance themselves from the recently-ousted Nazi-aligned Vichy regime. One veterans' group noted that the exclusion was premised on "racist sentiments that the war and its unhappy lessons have not managed to uproot."<sup>41</sup> They further pointed out that "at the moment when democracies triumph against Nazism and all the injustices it engendered, at the moment at which rights and justice seem to overpower force" the exclusion of Senegalese women stood out as a particularly racist measure.

Protesters deployed such appeals and references to French ideologies within local traditions of power and representation. For example, one group who wrote a letter of protest to the administration identified themselves as the delegates of the "population of Dakar and surrounding areas," asserting their authority by gathering at the traditional location of the local Lebou political assembly (the Diambour-i-Pintch) that existed before and alongside French colonial systems of political organization.<sup>42</sup> Acting within a Lebou framework, they cited French law and ideology, describing the exclusion to be "anti-democratic, anti-Republican, and contrary to the liberalism of France...[we] do not accept the decree and consider it a flagrant violation of our rights accorded by the royal ordinance of 1833 and confirmed by the law of 1916."<sup>43</sup> By drawing on Lebou systems of authority alongside French laws and statutes, these originaires held up local tradition as equally important to French law.

While local systems of female affiliation and traditional authority were important, protesters often presented their rights as emanating from their relatively privileged place within an explicitly colonial system, emphasizing that the benefits of citizenship in the empire were

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<sup>41</sup> I. Seydou N'Daw and Fall Matine, Telegram to Gougal Dakar (5 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, *Emergence*, 12.

<sup>43</sup> Délégués de la Population de Dakar et Banlieue, Letter to GGAOF (21 March 1945), ANS/20G25.

distinct from the burdens of subjecthood. For example, one Saint Louis resident argued that it was “all the more ridiculous that the Governor General says that Muslim French subjects are against women’s vote,” expressing bafflement that the administration “reached out to French subjects about a question that does not concern them... it would be more normal and rational to refer the question only to French citizens, in the interest of whom, they pretend, this illegal and illegitimate decree was made.”<sup>44</sup>

Although in some instances religious affiliation was used to draw a line between ostensibly Muslim subjects from outside the Communes and Christian citizens living in the Communes, this division was not always so clear. While many originaires did practice Christianity, a great many others were Muslim, a fact that they argued in no way affected their “capacity” for rights on the same level as their Christian peers. In one such example (and after expressing what turned out to be perfectly a valid concern over their letter being intercepted by the colonial police), a protester in Dakar wrote to Auguste Gomis, a Radical-Socialist municipal councilor in southern Senegal, arguing that “as French, we demand the application of the legal law for everyone. It is very easy to say that our women are not yet mature and that they are mostly Muslim, but the Republic is secular and can only be secular; therefore, the question of religion will be irrelevant.”<sup>45</sup> In this sense, the movement gives strong evidence for diversity within a temporary strategic alliance, emphasizing that originaires were not a homogenous group and did not consider themselves to be such.

By early April 1945, the protesters grew increasingly certain of their eventual victory. The departure of a delegation of women from Saint Louis to Dakar for the purpose of “claiming their rights” was described to have “aroused a general enthusiasm with every hope that their

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<sup>44</sup> Keke A. Lamine, “Extrait d’une lettre ordinaire interceptée,” (9 March 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>45</sup> “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée to A. Gomis,” (10 April 1945), ANS/17G415.

demands will be met.”<sup>46</sup> Governor General Cournarie wrote to the Paris ministry about the “very marked calm” that has come over the population due to their “great confidence” in the government’s “interventions” to “obtain the vote for Senegalese women.”<sup>47</sup> However, he warned that the “agitation would undoubtedly return” if the expansion did not pass by the time of the upcoming elections, and indeed, while protesters may have been confident that they would prevail, they did not shy away from using aggressive language to make sure the administration was listening. In one example, one group of women gave a public speech stating that if their demands were not met, they would use “any methods to prevent all women from voting on the day of the elections.”<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, fear of violence was in the front of the minds of the colonial administrators. Although the infamous December 1944 massacre of protesting West African veterans in Thiaroye was never explicitly mentioned, constant references to the importance avoiding “any bloody incidents” make the connection clear.<sup>49</sup> The administration further argued that “giving the right to vote to women during this current period of calm would allow a feeling of sincere gratitude towards France as well as bar the entrance of further foreign propaganda.”<sup>50</sup> In this way, the administration emphasized that their reaction was less about the degree to which the originaires did in fact deserve equal rights and more about their supposed susceptibility to outside influence.

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<sup>46</sup> “Renseignements,” (4 April 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>47</sup> Cournarie, Telegram to Giacobbi n°1119 (12 April 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>48</sup> “Renseignements,” (4 April 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>49</sup> M. Guèye, “Le 1er décembre 1944 à Thiaroye,” *Revue sénégalaise d’histoire* (1995).

<sup>50</sup> Cournarie, Telegram to Giacobbi n°1119 (12 April 1945), ANS/20G25.

## An ambiguous triumph

While the official language did not go through until late May and the law was not officially promulgated until June, the administration publicly announced the changing of the decree in mid-April 1945, ultimately replacing the offending language with a phrase that simply said that “female French citizens are electors and eligible on the same conditions as male French citizens” and thereby erasing any mention of regional exceptions.<sup>51</sup> In framing the rationale for changing the law, the colonial administration noted that “no one is opposed to the idea that, like female French citizens of other colonies, the female originaire citizens of Senegal be admitted to take their part of public life,” a somewhat astonishing example of speedy historical revisionism.<sup>52</sup>

Senegalese inhabitants of the Communes celebrated their victory. Police reports noted that the originaires “comment very favorably about the results obtained... regarding votes for women.”<sup>53</sup> An African sergeant stationed near Dakar wrote to his superior to describe a city in which “life has again blossomed... the electoral campaign is perpetually changing, but racial unity constitutes a solid bloc, homogenous, true, and overwhelming, and the female voters unanimously support Lamine [Guèye],” suggesting the ways in which the momentary cross-political unity coalesced and fractured as candidates competed for votes.<sup>54</sup>

In contrast to the positive reception in most of the Communes, members of the small yet substantial white population were scandalized by the legal reversal. In a letter to friends in

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<sup>51</sup> Giacobbi, Telegramme to Cournaire n°1152/AP (17 April 1945), ANS/20G25; « Décret n° 45-1160 du 30 mai » *JORF* (31 May 1945), 3122; Arrête n°1966 (6 June 1945), ANOM/1AFFPOL/209.

<sup>52</sup> Giacobbi, Letter to the Vice-Président de Conseil d’Etat n°5507 (1 [7?] April, 1945), ANOM/1AFFPOL/211.

<sup>53</sup> “Rapport Politique du mois de Avril 1945,” (11 May 1945), ANS/2G45/126.

<sup>54</sup> Cisse, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (19 June 1945), ANS/17G415.

France, one person living in Dakar derided the fact that the “vote has been granted to Senegalese women who barely understand French, have the instincts of a monkey, and now will have a voice just like mine to elect someone-or-other? How can such errors be made in a place where is it so easy to see the profound ridiculousness of such an innovation?”<sup>55</sup> A comment made by a French air force officer emphasized the quality of disgust as well, describing the expansion of female suffrage as “a rather revolting twist,” expressing bafflement that “negro women – or, rather, the negresses who have recently become French – wearing rags, uncivilized, yet possessing rights” should be able to vote. While it was a “big enough error in the case of black men, those human dregs afflicted with every possible ailment unknown to man... this woman’s vote is absurd.”<sup>56</sup>

Coupled with comments of revulsion, the white commentary belittled the women’s intelligence, typically measured in their ability (or lack thereof) to speak and write in French. One commenter from Rufisque described how “the women are even voting, the majority of whom don’t know how to speak French, read, or write, and probably don’t even know their own birthday, all being born in the year ‘I-don’t-know.’”<sup>57</sup> For some, the enfranchisement of Senegalese women reflected on the poor state of the system as a whole, as seen in the words of one man wrote to his wife in Normandy that “as far as I am concerned, I will not vote for the gang that is in power. Apart from our General de Gaulle, I’d dump the lot of them in the trash, I have enough on my plate without all of this. You know what I mean? Do you realize that *les fatous* are voting here? Us poor wretches, de Gaulle will have his work cut out for him...”<sup>58</sup>

In this framework, black women’s vote cheapened the political system as a whole and impinged upon the rights of the white population in particular, leading to mass abstentions. A

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<sup>55</sup> “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée to Mr Torbent,” (26 April 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>56</sup> Chipot, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (13 June 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>57</sup> Finateu, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (4 June 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>58</sup> R. [S]prat, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (30 April 1945), ANS/17G415.

French man living in Dakar wrote to the mayor of Blida, Algeria to say that Senegalese women would soon “cast bulletins alongside our dear sisters... most of the European women are not going to participate in the vote, the wives of military officers are not even registering... meanwhile [the Muslim women here] spend all day dressed like fools, strolling around, dragging their feet along the pavement.”<sup>59</sup> One resident informed her French parents that she planned to abstain rather than vote alongside “*négresses* [black women] who are even more ignorant and stupid than the wretched *noirs* [black men], so stubborn and incapable! What a wrong-headed policy! I won’t be voting.”<sup>60</sup> An administration report from late April confirmed the trend, noting that “European women have not expressed any urgency in registering to vote. In Saint Louis, there are a total of four registered” indicating a profound white anxiety based around the idea of sharing metaphorical and literal political space with non-white women.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, the white female voter was understood to be in greater need of protection by a “correctly” racialized imperial state and was therefore particularly imperiled by a political system that admitted a relatively broad base of non-white women into a shared female franchise.

This European disinterest mattered little for Senegalese political parties, the leaders of which sought to capitalize on their roles in the recent suffrage expansion in order to expand their base. Yet gendered identities and connections continued to shape the nature of the campaign here as well, particularly in debates about family life and female affiliation. Lamine Guèye was certainly the most popular choice for the national legislature (and, unsurprisingly, the eventual victor), and his allies and supporters instigated a broad mobilization movement to transform the energy of the protest into votes for their candidate. One group of supporters tasked the “most

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<sup>59</sup> “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée to [Georges] Astay,” (27 April 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>60</sup> R. Gayraud, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (30 April 1945), ANS/17G415.

<sup>61</sup> “Bulletin des renseignements politiques du mars 1945,” n°336 (29 April 1945), ANS/17G140.

convinced” women of each neighborhood in Saint Louis to help their female acquaintances register on electoral lists, with five women acting as the “committee leaders” in each neighborhood to further facilitate the registration, and, if they wished, to present themselves as candidates for upcoming local elections.<sup>62</sup>

Registration indeed could be a complicated bureaucratic process. One female originaire named Ange recalled the messy affair, which combined administrative hurdles with family drama, noting that she “registered with much difficulty” due to her name being erased from the voting rolls and her very status as an originaire repeatedly challenged.<sup>63</sup> The plot twist in her plight emerged in the fact that it was her own uncle – a man she refers to as “old Seck” – who was trying to keep her from voting. Ange described Seck as “truly out to get me... he does not want me to vote at all,” and, while details on her circumstance are not fully clear, her uncle accused her father of being a British man and argued she was not even born in Dakar. After Ange provided incontrovertible documentation of her rightful originaire status, Seck “was then rather ashamed and had nothing else to say and registered me at last.” Overlapping questions of gendered authority, birth and naturalization, and changing political systems created a moment in which arguments over family life became newly relevant in determining the limits of a new female franchise that could exceed the bounds of local masculine authority.

Questions of gendered kinship connections affected the candidates as well, including high profile men such as Lamine Guèye. For example, at one assembly of one thousand people gathering to support one of Guèye’s rivals, a woman identified as Magatte Diene (who was likely the same woman also referred to as Maguette Niang who herself was running for a municipal

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<sup>62</sup> “Bulletin de renseignements politiques” n°398 (April 1945), ANS/17G140.

<sup>63</sup> Ange, “Extrait d’une lettre avion interceptée,” (18 May 1945), ANS/17G415.

council chair) spoke to the crowd to “address our dear women.”<sup>64</sup> She made a pointed reference to the fact that Guèye had married a Guadeloupian woman that he had met in France, arguing that his “election will be the harbinger of your eternal misery, you, the Senegalese woman... Lamine has disowned his own race for a second marriage with a woman of different stock and he advises the militants of his party not to make love to black Senegalese women as they are dirty.”<sup>65</sup> Diene was not the only commentator to politicize Guèye’s marriage to a non-Senegalese individual as a rationale for voting against him, as hecklers at some of his assemblies were heard to yell out “if you support the rights of Senegalese women, why did you marry a Guadeloupian?”<sup>66</sup>

Guèye’s allies responded to such attacks in a variety of ways. A woman named Assiatou N’Diaye publicly thanked Guèye for his hard work and “struggles to get her the right to vote,” urging women in particular to recognize his efforts by voting for him. Similarly, “all the female Bloc Africain supporters” gathered after the meeting to receive Guèye and thank him “for the mission that he had just accomplished on their behalf.”<sup>67</sup> Tactics directly related to women’s realms and interests became particularly common, consolidating a new idea of “women’s issues” in political contests.

For example, at a political rally of 4,500 people in Saint Louis, one speaker accused Guèye’s rival Alfred Goux of abusing his position as mayor of Dakar and using ration distributions of rice and sugar to mobilize female votes. Other critics accused Goux of planning to bring in non-originaire women from rural Senegal to artificially inflate his numbers. Supporters of Guèye were thereby instructed not to “loan any boubous or jewels to any trashy

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<sup>64</sup> “Reunion du Bloc Français (Parti Dioufiste),” (7 June 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Mercadier, Letter n°56/BPA (12 April 1945), ANS/20G102.

<sup>67</sup> “Renseignements,” n°501/M (9 June 1945), ANS/20G25.

women from the interior” who had recently arrived to “lend themselves to the fraudulent machinations of Mr. Goux... if Goux had really done as good of work as he is claiming to have done here, there would not still be such long lines of women queuing up in front of the few existing public faucets to fill up their calabashes with water.”<sup>68</sup> The particularly gendered content of these comments pitted the “trashy women of the interior” – that is, non-originaire French subjects from outside the Communes – against the concerns of “real” originaires, French citizens already owning jewels and fine clothes whose concerns over access to fresh water had gone unresolved under Goux’s watch.

### **Election day: 1 July 1945**

As the campaign drew to an end, electoral cards were distributed on 25 June, approximately one week before the elections. A Senegalese commentator described how the inevitable complications and delays of passing out so many cards to so many new electors was met by the population with good humor rather than unchained anti-white violence, with women patiently “lining up since dawn along the railings of the town hall... waiting in the sun... remaining stoic, calm... waiting for days to be added to the electoral lists... waiting until the middle of the night, much to the admiration and astonishment of the judiciary.”<sup>69</sup>

Statistics about voting numbers are uneven across different sources (and sometimes even within the same source). Rough estimates of Dakar suggests about 14,000 registered voters, about 80% of them “autochthones,” and, within that population, about 20% female.<sup>70</sup> The day of

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<sup>68</sup> “Renseignements,” (June? 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>69</sup> Fatou Diop, “Civisme Féminin,” *l’AOF* (20 July 1945).

<sup>70</sup> Including 8,345 “autochtones hommes” and 3,066 “autochtones femmes,” compared to 2,300 “européens hommes” and 485 “européennes femmes.” Direction des services d’information, “Elections municipales de Dakar & Dépendances,” ANS/20G98; Maire de Dakar, “Elections

elections themselves, police reports note that “indigenous women voted in impressive numbers” with a “respect for order and discipline” that resulted in a “calm usually unknown” in Senegal on election day.<sup>71</sup> However, Dakar police reports suggest a “near total disinterest in elections among the European men and especially among the European women,” with only twenty out of the estimated 1,900 European men and zero out of the estimated 2,000 European female residents going to the polls.<sup>72</sup>

Apart from several minor incidents relating to electors using a card with a supposedly “incorrect” name on it, the elections were smooth, with polls staying open two hours late to try and accommodate the large numbers of citizens casting their ballots.<sup>73</sup> One administrator described the setting in Saint Louis as a “remarkably tranquil,” citing the women in particular as showing “the most discipline” and whose turnout swung the balance of the vote in favor of Lamine Guèye.<sup>74</sup> The Governor General offered his “warmest congratulations” to the new voters, arguing the election was “manifest testimony” of Senegal’s “profound attachment to the principles of liberty, shown its will in efficiently participating in the restoration of Republican institutions, and again proved its deep affection and total loyalty to France.”<sup>75</sup> Such statements were common within the French administration, belying the widespread opposition that had presided only weeks earlier and framing the enfranchisement as one more successful example of France’s civilizing mission.

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municipales provisoires du 1er Juilliet 1945 pour le Renouvellement du conseil municipal,” ANS/20G98.

<sup>71</sup> “Report n°4284,” (16 July 1945), ANS/17G132.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Cournarie, Telegramme to Gouverneur Senegal-St Louis, (2 July 1945), ANS/20G98.

Local commentary in the wake of the elections celebrated women's participation, with one article by Fatou Diop describing how women had provided "an absolutely unprecedented example of public spirit."<sup>76</sup> She derided the contradictory ideas presented at the outset of the debate, namely that women were either totally disinterested in public life or that their participation in formal political structures would have such profound negative effects as to rend apart the social fabric of the region:

We were told that politics, that is to say public life, does not interest us. At the same time, it was suggested that our customs would be undermined if we had the chance to express our desires and our will. Well, without rehashing old debates, let us simply note that these two propositions must have been mutually exclusive, otherwise it is not clear how our indifference — which would be bound to lead to our abstention — could in any way affect the foundation of our Islamic institutions.

Diop also looked towards the future, noting that "Senegalese *électrices*... your success will allow you and your daughters to go even further, with a level of security and legitimacy matching that of the most experienced citizen."

An article by Alsine Fall celebrated the achievements of his "sisters," who voted not only with "solemnity... an impeccable order... and elegant discipline" but also with "charming dress and style... an abundance of smiles... *boubous* in flamboyant colors, head wraps of multicolored hues, bursting under the bright sunshine of freedom that only served to brighten this popular event."<sup>77</sup> At the same time that he highlighted their physical attributes and dress, he asserted that women's participation was "one more step in the creation of a world where one can breathe the air of justice and freedom provided by the country that gave birth to the Rights of Man... and given in love to a France composed of a hundred million inhabitants."

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<sup>76</sup> Diop, "Civisme Féminin."

<sup>77</sup> Alsine Fall, "Les Sénégalaises ont voté," *l'AOF* (20 July 1945), ANS/17G419.

Reaction to the law outside the Communes varied from disinterest to support, although motivations (and interpretations of motivations) varied. One report from southern Mauritania argued that locals “recognizing that their women have neither the education nor the instruction necessary to vote and that this measure might have serious consequences for the structure of a patriarchal society” but were nonetheless in favor of female suffrage “primarily for racist and religious reasons... and securing an electoral majority for Wolof Muslims against Christian Europeans.”<sup>78</sup> An article written by a woman in French Guinea positioned the enfranchisement of women as part of a larger movement of “civilization... in a slow and progressive ascension towards a goal that they will inevitably attain.”<sup>79</sup> In French Soudan, the administration noted that news of the expansion “passes in the background of the preoccupations of young evolved blacks... it has nonetheless held their attention, because they wish that this same right will perhaps soon be expanded in Soudan as well.”<sup>80</sup>

The enfranchisement of Senegalese female citizens also raised questions about the limits of the franchise in French India, the only other space in the empire where female citizens had been explicitly excluded by the initial suffrage law. The expansion in Senegal prompted the administration to reverse the Indian ban, as, in the words of the new Minister of Overseas France argued, the very enfranchisement of Senegalese women had created new “inequalities... it now seems abnormal that the female French of India are not admitted to vote in and run for elections... it is not understandable why they would be further refused a right that was just

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<sup>78</sup> “Bulletin de renseignements pour la période du 1er mars au 31 mars 1945,” n°103/APAM (November 1945), ANS/20G25.

<sup>79</sup> Marie Jeanne Puvis, “Vote des Femmes,” *La Guinée Française* 188 (28 September 1945), ANS/20G15.

<sup>80</sup> “Rapport sur la Situation politique d’ensemble du Soudan Français pour le mois d’avril 1945,” (13 June 1945), ANS/17G140.

accorded to female citizens of Senegal.”<sup>81</sup> Such language suggests the ways in which different women in the empire were placed on a hierarchy of political capacity with several distinct levels, as the existence of different voting regimes for the women of Africa and the metropole was acceptable but a system in which Senegalese women could vote and Indian woman could not vote was “unequal.”

The history of women’s suffrage within a colonial franchise presents a key vantage for understanding the creation of modern democratic systems within the postcolonial world. Through the protests, activists in the Communes redefined their access to the workings of the colonial state as well as their political roles within local communities, indicating the range of ways that rights, political identities, and legal systems come into being. The colonial state did not “bring” democracy to the Communes. However, these particular rights did not come into existence through an explicitly nationalist program of decolonization either. The protests around female suffrage in the Communes of Senegal therefore provides an alternative perspective to arguments that frame the history of democracy or the late imperial era as possible only within a narrative about a progressive and generous colonial state with a successful assimilationist program on the one hand or a nationalist and decolonization-centric framework in which rights exist can only at the level of the nation-state. While these protests focused on the importance of suffrage and the right to vote, the actions and abilities within the movement show how effective political activism – even within a marginalized imperial context – did not require formal access to or recognition by the colonial state in order to make a profound impact. In the Communes, ostensibly apolitical and very literally disenfranchised women overturned colonial law to forge a place for themselves within the rapidly-shifting borders of French citizenship.

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<sup>81</sup> Giacobbi, Letter to Monsieur le Vice-Président (17 July 1945), ANOM/1AFFPOL/211.

## **PART III**

### **The French Union and Community (1946-1974)**

## Chapter Five

### “Her Entrance into History”:

#### Women’s Citizenship between Nation and Empire, 1946-1962

In French Guinea in September 1945, a woman named Marie-Jeanne Puvis wrote an opinion piece in the local newspaper that framed the expansion of women’s suffrage as a key force driving the “slow and progressive ascension of humanity.”<sup>1</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in a campaign statement written that same month by a male politician and teacher in French Soudan. “For the black to evolve,” wrote Fily Dabo Sissoko, “education and work must bring about the emancipation of women... the development of the masses depends on this.”<sup>2</sup> A decade and a half later in 1959, the Martinican intellectual Frantz Fanon echoed such arguments in commenting on the ongoing violence in French Algeria, arguing that “the liberty of the Algerian people is identified with the liberation of women and her entrance into history.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, politicians and activists across the metropole and colonies connected concepts of national liberation and humanitarian “progress” with the expansion of women’s political rights. In this way, the racialized and gendered limits of citizenship became battlegrounds in competing efforts to retain, reform, or even dismantle the French empire.

While the “protection” of women had long been a pillar of French colonial policy, it took on a new urgency as nationalist groups mounted increasingly effective challenges to French sovereignty. In order to assert why colonialism remained morally legitimate and to frame the

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Jeanne Puvis, “Vote des Femmes,” *La Guinée Française* 188 (28 September 1945), ANS 20G15.

<sup>2</sup> Fily Dabo Sissoko, “Elections à l’Assemblée Constituante (21 October 1945): Collège de sujets française - Profession de foi, Bamako,” (5 September 1945), ANS 20G102.

<sup>3</sup> Frantz Fanon, *L’An V de la Révolution Algérienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1959), 93.

French empire as a democratic institution, policy makers asserted that it was only with continued French guidance that women's rights could be properly guarded and modernized. Drawing on the older stereotype that women were more accessible to outside influence and therefore easier to control than were men, the administration promoted the development of a new "ideal" female colonial subject as a newly-enfranchised voter who elected to remain in the framework of the French empire.

However, politicians and activists in the colonies had long been exploiting the words and deeds of the French administration to advocate for colonial reforms or implement their own systems. In highlighting France's inability to properly address women's emancipation, anti-colonial politicians argued that such failures could be best corrected within a new postcolonial nation-state or federation.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, much of the language used by nationalist leaders remained patriarchal, framing women as citizens who "belonged to" the nation or as mothers whose job was to metaphorically and literally give birth to a new generation of nationalist citizens.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, this period was one of competing paternalist nationalisms, not only on behalf of anti-colonialists pushing for some form of independence, but also from those advocating the maintenance of the French empire. While anti-colonial efforts are often framed as nationalist, the history of female citizenship therefore highlights the ways in which French efforts to retain the empire were also nationalist projects.

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<sup>4</sup> Neil MacMaster, *Burning the Veil: The Algerian War and the 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Marc André, *Femmes dévoilées. Des Algériennes en France à l'heure de la décolonisation* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2016); Elizabeth Perego, "The Veil or a Brother's Life: French Manipulations of Muslim Women's Images During the Algerian War, 1954–62," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 349-373.

<sup>5</sup> Nedjib Sidi Moussa, "Les visages de l'émancipation: l'action des femmes messalistes durant la révolution algérienne," *Le mouvement social* 255, no. 2 (2016): 103-118.

For example, the 1954 creation in Algeria of categories such as “French of European Extraction” and “French of North African Extraction” served a number of ideological purposes, emphasizing a common sense of “Frenchness” in a region locked in civil war while also maintaining a sense of geographically racialized difference that omitted any direct mention of religion. As this chapter will highlight, the limits of female suffrage in Algeria became particularly contentious, as the length of Muslim women’s exclusion amplified the stakes of female suffrage.<sup>6</sup> By the highpoint of the Algerian War of Independence in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the French government was spending heavily on propaganda that framed women’s political rights as a uniquely French gift, a strategy that became a key part of their last desperate attempt to hold onto their quickly decolonizing North African territory.

Debates over women’s political rights illuminate the stakes of these competing forms of postwar nationalisms, as different parties argued that it was only in their preferred geopolitical formation that women could be “properly” emancipated. In asserting that it was only in an as of yet unrealized state that women’s rights could be fully actualized, both pro- and anti-colonial figures made a case for their brand of reform, either in the shape of a French Union or some form of independent polity. Although these groups envisioned different futures, both can be characterized as competing forms of a masculinist paternalist state that existed to use representation to “protect” rather than empower women.

This paternalist struggle was, however, complicated by the presence of women and feminists who worked tenaciously to institute a new wave of reforms for female equality. While historians continue to debate the extent to which women’s rights groups had a long term effect on the nationalist policies of various anti-colonial groups, women and feminists across the

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Perego, “Veil as Barrier to Muslim Women’s Suffrage in French Algeria, 1944-1954,” *Hawwa* 11, no. 2/3 (2014): 160-186.

colonies used the upheaval of decolonization to assert their own goals and agendas.<sup>7</sup> In French Sudan for example, activists such as Aoua Keita asserted that women's rights could only be realized through an anti-imperialist struggle that challenged the linked marginalizations based on both gender and race.<sup>8</sup> As scholars such as Natalya Vince and Jean Allman have shown, the later rigidification of masculinist political regimes in postcolonial nations should not overshadow the very real feminist activism that animated this era of decolonization.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, Marnia Lazreg has highlighted the difficulty of categorizing and interpreting feminist and women's groups in the colonies, pointing to factors such as the manipulation of female associations by colonial authorities and an unwillingness of some individuals to critique the gender relations in their society out of fear that their words would be taken up by the administration as evidence of local "barbarism."<sup>10</sup> Even the use of the word "feminist" is complicated in this context, as it posits a close association with an imperial feminism focused on questions of the veil and marriage practice rather than the sorts of political and economic reforms that female protesters in the colonies often prioritized. As debates over representation were fundamental to the processes of decolonization, colonial reform, and

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<sup>7</sup> Ferial Lalami, "L'enjeu du statut des femmes durant la période coloniale en Algérie," *Nouvelles questions féministes* 27, no. 3 (2008): 16-27; and Rose Ndengue, "Mobilisations féminines au Cameroun français dans les années 1940-1950: l'ordre du genre et l'ordre colonial fissurés," *Le mouvement social* 255, no. 2 (2016): 71-85.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Turriffin, "Aoua Keita and the Nascent Women's Movement in the French Sudan," *African Studies Review* 36, no. 1 (1993), 82.

<sup>9</sup> Natalya Vince, *Our Fighting Sisters: Memory and Gender in Algeria 1954-2012* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Jean Allman, "The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism, and the Tyrannies of History," *Journal of Women's History* 21, no. 3 (2009): 13-35; Adwoa Kwakyewaa Opong, "Rewriting Women into Ghanaian History 1950-1966," (PhD Thesis, University of Ghana, 2012); Renata Pepicelli, "Rethinking Gender in Arab Nationalism: Women and the Politics of Modernity in the Making of Nation-States," *Oriente Moderno* 97, no. 1 (2017): 201-219.

<sup>10</sup> Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139.

feminist activism, the expansion of women's suffrage illuminates the stakes of these competing nationalist projects as well as the postcolonial geopolitical formations that emerged from them.

### **Enfranchising the Postwar French Union**

The first French Constituent Assembly met from November 1945 to May 1946, finalizing a constitutional draft that much of the French left and a majority of colonial deputies found acceptable. The document was relatively progressive, including provisions for the implementation of a unicameral popularly elected National Assembly, a weak executive, and a single college system within colonial elections.<sup>11</sup> However, the constitutional draft failed in an empire-wide referendum in May 1946, a defeat that has largely been attributed to metropolitan Center and Right fears that the left-leaning constitution would too greatly strengthen the French Communist Party.<sup>12</sup> In the colonies, the only people who were allowed to vote on the referendum were those individuals who already had French citizenship as of October 1945, meaning that the electorate was largely composed of white French men. For these groups as well, the proposed constitution would have given too much influence to non-metropolitan colonial interests, particularly through its abolition of the dual college system. The only part of the French empire where the constitution was approved was Senegal, an unsurprising outcome given the colony's uniquely large number of African voters who, for the most part, supported the proposed reforms.

Despite the constitution's failure, some of its provisions were incorporated into law, including the abolition of forced labor and the *Code d'indigénat*, a legal system that

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Schmidt, *Cold War*, chapter 1.

discriminated between French citizens and colonial subjects.<sup>13</sup> The so-called Lamine Guèye law also formalized some of the failed constitution's citizenship provisions, adopting the language that stated that "all nationals and nationals of metropolitan France and overseas territories" had the same "quality" of citizenship.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the law left room for "particular laws" to establish the condition in which such rights were able to be exercised and maintained distinctions of citizenship status in the realm of "private" law, a duality which enabled the persistence of legal discrimination against non-European populations.<sup>15</sup>

One French administrator in Senegal noted that the proposed expansion of suffrage amongst the region's elites had been "welcomed with satisfaction" and caused a "relaxation" among the nationalist tendencies in the region.<sup>16</sup> However, it also encouraged a growing "discontent" towards local "colonialist" Europeans who were compared unfavorably to the more "liberal French of the Metropole."<sup>17</sup>

In preparing a new constitutional draft, colonial administrators debated which language to keep and what changes to make. They focused in particular on how to balance demands for citizenship with concerns over the ability of nationalist groups to take advantage of colonial elections. Minister of Overseas France Marius Moutet queried his upper administration about their specific concerns and any possible solutions they might have, including their opinion on the "psychological" implication of reducing the expanded citizenship rights that had been part of the

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<sup>13</sup> Gregory Mann, "What was the Indigénat? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009): 331-353.

<sup>14</sup> Law n°46-940 of 7 May 1946.

<sup>15</sup> Schmidt, *Cold War*, 22; Edward Mortimer, *France and the Africans, 1944-1960: A Political History* (New York: Walker, 1960), 82; D. Bruce Marshall, *The French Colonial Myth and Constitution-Making in the Fourth Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 222.

<sup>16</sup> Berlan, "Secret: Evènement intérieurs," (March 1946), ANS 17G140.

<sup>17</sup> He further hopefully suggested that the newly enfranchised were in fact less interested in any further widening of the franchise, as they realized that their "privilege will disappear... drowned among the masses."

failed constitution, strategies to deal with the enfranchisement of illiterate voters, and, in particular, the danger of “separatist” momentum.<sup>18</sup> Overall, the administration agreed that it would be “psychologically difficult” but not impossible to walk back the extent of colonial citizenship. However, as the possibilities of expanded suffrage and the advent of a single electoral college had already been circulated across the colonies, it would create a “delicate situation... refusing the right to vote to people who had just been specially identified” as recipients.<sup>19</sup>

For example, Acting Commissioner of Togo argued that the new provisions were too well known among the “evolved elements” of the population, and therefore suggested that the electoral provisions of the new constitution must be “rigorously identical” the first.<sup>20</sup> The Governor General of French West Africa agreed that it was “politically and psychologically impossible” to return to any more limited systems.<sup>21</sup> The High Commissioner of Cameroon similarly noted that despite the opposition of “European elements” in the territory, the “current psychological climate... born of knowledge in evolved circles” made it important to retain any provisions that had placed “Africans on the same political footing as metropolitans.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite this broad consensus that it was not possible to implement new limitations, a strategy for what should actually be done next was much less clear. While the Governor General of French West Africa suggested that a “uniform system” might be used across “Black Africa,”

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<sup>18</sup> Marius Moutet, Telegram to Gougal Brazzaville n°840AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Moutet, Telegram to Haussaire Yaounde n°541AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Moutet, Telegram to Haussaire Dakar n°1647AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Moutet, Telegram to Haussaire Tananarive n°1081/AP/1 (21 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>19</sup> M. Frederic, “Rapport,” (1946), ANF C//10067.

<sup>20</sup> Gaudillot, Telegram n°246CAB (8 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>21</sup> Barthes, Telegram n°1850 (15 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>22</sup> Haussaire Yaounde, Telegram n°618AP2 (25 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

the governor of French Somaliland strenuously objected, arguing that the “degree of evolution” of Somali populations “does not allow, in all conscience” him to support that the same system be implemented in Somalia as in Senegal.<sup>23</sup> He continued to emphasize his position in later telegrams, arguing that the implementation of enlarged single college as it existed in other colonies would have the “inevitable consequence of electing a native deputy who will be a Somali and a nationalist... thus we will have brought with our own hands a stone to the building of the Somali Federation, it is a simple question of arithmetic.”<sup>24</sup>

High Commissioner of Madagascar Jules Marcel de Coppet was similarly concerned with how “populations with separatist tendencies” who had been recently enfranchised would be able to take advantage of any new voting systems for their own gain.<sup>25</sup> He argued that a “strictly monitored” universal suffrage might better enable the administration to adapt citizenship to the “local conditions and the social state of the backwards races that form the majority,” enabling an expansion of rights while controlling what any new voters could actually accomplish at the polls.

The question of which if any new colonial populations should be enfranchised was therefore a linked concern. In the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa pointed out that “the inertia of the very evolved populations” meant that any further enfranchisement would have to be done among “the masses of workers from the forestry workshops or the mines,” who would be “manipulated at will by employers who are hostile to a single college and social reforms.” (The description of such populations as “very evolved” is unusual in French documents of this

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<sup>23</sup> Jean Chalvet, Telegram n°155AP (24 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Henri Siriex, “Extrait d’une lettre du Gouverneur des Somalis,” (26 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>25</sup> Decree of 23 March 1945; Law of 13 April 1946; Jules Marcel de Coppet, Telegram n°I.381 (29 May 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

era, and indeed, the recipient has circled the word “very” and written in a question mark.<sup>26</sup>) In each case, some new system of identifying potential voters would have to be established, with the Commissioner of Cameroon suggesting that to enfranchise new voters (including the “approximately 1,500,000” women who might become eligible in Cameroon alone), lists be drawn that include “all people who can be identified by any means” and then requiring potential voters take the initiative to register and have their identity verified.<sup>27</sup>

The challenges of an illiterate electorate thereby became all the more pressing, with suggestions from the administration in Madagascar and Cameroon about the possible use of “easily recognizable graphic sign” to identify candidates or the implementation of ballots with distinctly different colors, two suggestions that the Ministry was initially reluctant to consider.<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that someone at the ministry had written “no no and no” next to such suggestions, Commissioner de Coppet of Madagascar ultimately convinced the Ministry of the effectiveness of such visual strategies not as a tool of larger enfranchisement, but as a way to prevent voting fraud on the part of “separatist electoral agents” who might take advantage of illiterate voters by falsifying their ballots.<sup>29</sup> The Ministry framed the use of visual ballots not as a measure to minimize nationalist victories, but as a “warm endorsement” of such strategies born out of “the concern we have for ensuring genuinely sincere votes and freeing voters from the influence of unscrupulous electoral agents.”

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<sup>26</sup> Bayardelle, Telegram n°357AP (19 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391; Law n°46-680 of 13 April 1946.

<sup>27</sup> Haussaire Yaounde, Telegram n°618AP2.

<sup>28</sup> The recipient of the telegram wrote “no, no, and no” in the margins near the suggestion about symbols and colors. Haussaire Yaounde, Telegram n°618AP2; Jules Marcel de Coppet, Telegramme n°I.620 (29 June 1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/391.

<sup>29</sup> Direction des affaires politiques, “Note pour Monsieur le Ministre (Conférence du 16 Juillet 1946): rapport sur un avant-projet de loi électorale à soumettre à la Conférence des Gouverneurs Généraux,” (1946), ANOM 1AFFPOL/216.

The constitution that was ultimately approved in October 1946 shared a number of similarities with its predecessor, although it was less progressive in terms of colonial citizenship. The most striking difference was its retention of the double electoral college, a feature that had been supported by many in the colonial administration (and almost all of the Europeans living in the colonies) but strenuously opposed by colonial deputies and populations. On the one hand, the document emphasized a centralized doctrine of assimilation and echoed the Lamine Guèye law of May 1946 in establishing all inhabitants as citizens of the French Union. At the same time, the exact significance of those new rights varied from region to region, as distinctions were not only maintained between “French nationals” and “overseas citizens” but also through the use of “particular laws” that established the “specific conditions under which” the new citizenship rights could be exercised. The overseas departments, territories, and states thus remained in an ambiguous position between a centralized French Union in which everyone was a citizen “without distinction” and an empire built on a hierarchy of capacity and rights.

Pressure on the administration to further expand the franchise continued to mount from multiple sources, as movements inside and outside of the empire emphasized the centrality of universal suffrage to their own demands or alternative programs. For example, in proclaiming independence from France in the form of a Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh asserted the right of universal suffrage for both men and women.<sup>30</sup> While the Vietnamese elections of January 1946 were marked by fraud and violence, all men and women over eighteen years old found themselves newly enfranchised, and a majority turned out in support of

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Neville, *Britain in Vietnam: Prelude to Disaster, 1945–46* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 54; Hy V. Luong, *Tradition, Revolution, and Market Economy in a North Vietnamese Village* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 155.

nationalist candidates (who were often the only candidates available).<sup>31</sup> The new Vietnamese legislative assembly included a number of women, and gained symbolic importance as an example of a nominally democratic body that existed outside of French control and assured full political rights for women.<sup>32</sup> To further mark themselves as French competitors, the new Vietnamese constitution of autumn 1946 took explicit influence from the French Constitution but applied the provisions more widely across the former colony.<sup>33</sup> In this way, nationalist movements capitalized on French fears that they were not the sole directors of a region's political "evolution" nor the best guarantor of liberty for the region's inhabitants.

### **Controlling female nationalism in the French Union**

Women and women's rights played an increasingly visible role in the proliferating nationalist groups across the empire, including by running in elections themselves. In what may have been a first for the empire, two women of African descent – the Communist Gerty Archimede and the Socialist Eugénie Eboué-Tell – were both elected to represent Guadeloupe in the new Fourth Republic, Eboué-Tell in the Senate and Archimede in the National Assembly.

Women's groups in the metropole quickly adapted to the existence of women as candidates and voters, with associations like the Communist-affiliated Union des Femmes Française endorsing female candidates and promoting issues that spoke to "women's concerns." However, the growth of women's political movements was also used to sequester female voters,

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<sup>31</sup> Ellen Joy Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), 143; Stein Tonnesson, *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began* (Stanford: University of California Press, 2011), 26.

<sup>32</sup> David Elliott, *The Vietnamese War: Revolution and Social Change in the Mekong Delta, 1930-1974* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 58.

<sup>33</sup> Tonnesson, *Vietnam*, 92; Colin Long and Marc Askew, "Arena of the Cold War," in *Vientiane: Transformations of a Lao Landscape*, ed. Marc Askew, William Logan, and Colin Long, 111-150 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 114.

establishing a “women’s section” rather than retooling the central tenants of a political program or party to take feminist critiques into account.<sup>34</sup> For example, *La vie heureuse*, the magazine designed for the women’s committee of the French Socialist party (SFIO), explicitly minimized any overly detailed political content, instead publishing features on the home and family lives of female politicians, instructions on how to vote, and perspectives on France’s birth rate.<sup>35</sup>

New and established political parties in the colonies also increasingly sponsored women’s branches or organizations dedicated to increasing female participation in the political parties by appealing to specific “women’s issues” in a context of anti-colonial activism. The groups were diverse, with actions that ranged from petitions demanding increases in family allowances to mass protests against the existence of the colonial state to the organization of women’s military training in campaigns of guerilla warfare.

In Algeria, for example, the liberal political party Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD) was formed in 1946 to support a platform of national independence within colonial elections.<sup>36</sup> They sponsored a woman’s branch known as the Association des femmes musulmanes algériennes (AFMA) in 1947.<sup>37</sup> Membership in AFMA was exclusively Algerian, and, along with support for candidates that promoted independence, the organization worked to aid the families of men who had been arrested by the French administration for “political activity” and encourage wider political engagement of Algerian women.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Claire Duchon, *Women’s Rights and Women’s Lives in France, 1944-1968* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 47-8.

<sup>35</sup> Duchon, *Women’s Rights*, 47.

<sup>36</sup> The postwar reincarnation of the PPA.

<sup>37</sup> Some sources also refer to the MTLD group as the Union des Femmes Musulmanes d’Algerie or the Union des Femmes Musulmanes.

<sup>38</sup> Lazreg, *Eloquence of Silence*, 139.

Growing numbers of metropolitan women's movements also turned their attention to female rights in the colonies, although their focus was typically on "social" questions related to marriage or family life rather than suffrage or political citizenship. Organizations led by metropolitan women often promoted their particular role in carrying out the French civilizing mission, positioning themselves as the protectors of women in the empire. In Algeria, the existence of a large white settler population shifted the ways that French and colonial organizations made alliances and solicited local membership. For example, at its 1937 formation, the Union Franco-Musulmane des Femmes d'Algérie counted thirty-six wealthy Algerian women among its members, targeting more upper class or elite Muslim women.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the center-left Rassemblement des Femmes Républicaines turned their attention to Algeria shortly after their 1947 formation, seeking to "combat feminine movements from the extreme left" through the institution of more centrist or Republican leaning programs.<sup>40</sup>

Many of these women's groups grew out of larger established political parties, as was the case with Parti Communiste Algerian affiliate the Union des Femmes d'Algérie (UFA). Formed in 1944 alongside a subsidiary group for girls known as the Jeunes filles communistes d'Algérie, the UFA had targeted both European and Muslim women for members. Despite the plural composition of the organization, early leadership was provided by European communists, notably Alice Sportisse and Lise Oculi. In its early days, the group's activities were divided by

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid. Some sources put their date of formation in 1955 rather than 1937, although it is not clear if these refer to different groups or different iterations of the same group. Ghada Hashem Talhami, "Algerian Revolution," in *The Historical Dictionary of Women in the Middle East and North Africa* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2013), 22.

<sup>40</sup> Police des renseignements généraux, Préfecture d'Alger, "Renseignements n°3441 sur Rassemblement des femmes républicaines," (11 July 1947), ANOM ALG-ALGER-3F/64; Direction des Renseignements Généraux, Afrique du Nord, "Object: Activités de l'Union des Femmes d'Algérie (UFA)," (6 September 1947), ANOM 81F/1218; Union des femmes marocaines, Oran, "Note," (11 March 1950), ANOM 81F/760; Préfecture de Police, "Entr'aide coloniale féminine," (19 August 1949), ANOM ALG-GGA-9CAB/21.

origins, with Europeans intended to work on anti-fascism and Algerians to focus on colonial rights.<sup>41</sup> Yet in some issues their members worked together, such as protests and social assistance for high food prices and discriminatory rationing during the food shortages of 1944-45.<sup>42</sup> The group also promoted the expansion of female suffrage, a cause championed in particular by Alice Sportisse.

Through the late 1940s, the UFA worked to widen its appeal amongst Muslim and non-literate women in Algeria, using theater, film, and music as well as holding meetings at religious and family-oriented activities such as weddings and baptisms.<sup>43</sup> In one UFA event in late August 1947 for example, around 350 “mostly Muslim” women gathered in a local hall to discuss the rising costs of living, the need of government aid for children’s education, and the wearing of the veil.<sup>44</sup> Women’s political rights were another key topic, with one speaker arguing that Muslim women had a “civil education” and could therefore “participate in the political life of the country with discernment.” The assembled crowd also sent a collective telegram to absent UFA leader Sportisse, thanking her for her “plea for the Muslim woman’s vote.” The meeting closed with an “artistic” presentation, including a number of songs and dances.

As greater numbers of Algerian women joined through the 1940s, the organization paid greater attention to local concerns and its leadership became increasingly diverse, establishing local branches across the territory (as well as alliances with women’s groups in other colonies)

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<sup>41</sup> Allison Drew, *We Are No Longer in France: Communists in Colonial Algeria* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 129.

<sup>42</sup> Drew, *We Are*, 134.

<sup>43</sup> Drew, *We Are*, 157.

<sup>44</sup> The meeting was held under the leadership of a mixed group of women, including Mme Ganoby, Mme Djelmane (member of the Commission d’organisation de l’UFA) and Mme Halimi (secretary of UFA). Direction des renseignements généraux, “Object: Activités de l’Union des Femmes d’Algérie.”

and electing women like Baya Allaouchiche to upper leadership positions.<sup>45</sup> The UFA continued to promote female citizenship and suffrage, including the organization of a protest in Sidi bel Abbes in which an estimated one thousand women wore veils and marched on the town hall to demand the right to vote.<sup>46</sup>

Women's groups emphasized the particular role of mothers in rallying successful anti-colonial actions. For example, at one private social event hosted by the Union des Femmes Musulmanes Algériennes, a women referred to in French police surveillance as Madame Benosmane (whose husband was the leader of the local branch of the MTLD) allegedly exhorted the estimated sixty women in attendance to raise healthy children to provide Algeria with "strong and healthy men... ready for anything," establishing a strong "Union of Muslims against the oppressor."<sup>47</sup> A women "dressed in rags" then addressed the audience to declare that she was unable to properly clothe herself because of "the thefts to which she had been subjected by French colons who had robbed her of her land." This question of which types of "mothers" would raise the next generation became a common refrain, with nationalist visions of motherhood challenging the French emphasis on creating "Westernized" women to follow French norms of motherhood and family in support of the continuation of the French imperial project.

The question of family life remained a constant refrain within debates about women's changing place in postwar political life across the empire. For example, in a 1950 issue of *Marches Coloniaux du Monde*, Leopold Senghor wrote an article about the "evolution of

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<sup>45</sup> Allaouchiche also served in the central committee of the PCA. Local branches were established in Algiers, Oran, Relizane, Sidi bel Abbes, Constantine, Bone, and Setif. Union des femmes marocaines, "Note"; Drew, *We Are*, 129, 157, 166; Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne, *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie: entretiens* (Paris: Karthala, 1994), 20.

<sup>46</sup> Drew, *We Are*, 172.

<sup>47</sup> "Union des Femmes musulmanes algériennes, Tlemcen," (11 July 1950), ANOM 81F/760.

women's situation in AOF for the past forty years to determine the social advantages as well as the dangers," historicizing the major transformations that had marked "the eternal... universal enigma" that is woman.<sup>48</sup> He noted a great "contrast" in the women of the past and the women of the present, arguing that women's status had by and large improved with time. At the same time, he warned the reader not to be "mistaken," as in "ancient Negro-African society, women were not considered inferior," they simply had different tasks and responsibilities. In this mythic past, both males and females were equal in their status as "muntu," a Bantu language word for "human," and therefore not all comparisons between African and "so-called civilized nations" give an accurate depiction.

Senghor's article focused not only on questions of education and employment, but also family life and kinship as crucial markers in assessing women's status in the modern world. Senghor argued that polygamy and bridewealth payments were not indicative of women's subservience, but simply of a tradition in which "society and family prevail over the individual." It was "because the girl is a person" and that her "departure constitutes a loss of 'vital force' for her family" that compensation in the form of bride payments was required, framing dowry as the marker of women's elevation rather than degradation. He further argued that polygamy provided women with "dignity" by preventing them from the "degradation of the mistress or the prostitute." In this way, polygamy was "no more immortal than marriages of convenience or of adultery." In this way, debates about women's political status remained closely connected to their place in family life.

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<sup>48</sup> Leopold Sédar Senghor, "L'Evolution de la Situation de la femme en AOF," *Marches Coloniaux du Monde* (11 March 1950), n.p.

## Expanding the electorate for “mothers of two children”

Into the late 1940s, politicians and activists across the colonies were remained critical of the slow pace of democratic reforms. Yet colonial administrators such as the High Commissioner of Cameroon continued to characterize the electorate as politically “underdeveloped,” arguing that “despite certain progress, the political education of the territory is not yet advanced enough” for truly universal suffrage.<sup>49</sup>

The continued use of the double electoral college in the empire was a major point of contention, with even those administrators who favored implementing single colleges fearing how it would impact representation of metropolitan interests.<sup>50</sup> The Ministry of Overseas France emphasized such concerns, arguing that the main purpose of voting systems in the colonies was “less to determine a majority than it is to allow representation for all respectable interests.”<sup>51</sup> Pro-colonialists also emphasized the danger of nationalist political influence. In Madagascar, for example, the nationalist “insurrections” of 1947 and 1948 resulted in huge losses of life (estimates are around 100,000) and a number of deputies and politicians sentenced to death for their alleged “treason.”<sup>52</sup> The French High Commissioner pointed to the violence to argue that the “considerations that motivated the creation of the double college remain valid,” noting that almost seventy percent of the members of the second college had been arrested for “conspiracy,” including fraud and “separatist” leanings.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> A. Soucadaux, Letter to Minister of Overseas France n°13CCT (2 December 1950), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>50</sup> High Commissioner of the Republic, Lettre-avion to the Minister of Overseas France n°1998/AP (21 March 1948), ANOM 1AFFPOL/228.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Tor Sellström, *Africa in the Indian Ocean: Islands in Ebb and Flow* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 78-80.

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Gabriel de Chevigne, Telegram n°109 (15 March 1948), ANOM 1AFFPOL/228.

The Governor General of French Equatorial Africa also emphasized the importance of double colleges, particularly for ensuring European economic representation in a “backwards” part of an empire where trade and labor were so crucial.<sup>54</sup> The governor used racial developmentalism to frame his arguments against political rights, claiming that any local arguments in favor of the implementation of single colleges were less a matter of a “studied and impartial position on a question of principle” but rather the result of “agitated” elections (and electors) that had become “too numerous too quickly.”<sup>55</sup> He further argued that elections themselves risked “opening the field for troubled elements,” leading to a “malaise... an agitation that would also entail a significant slowdown in labor.” The issue of labor remained a primary motivator in his explanation of African “backwardness,” as several months later he further argued that “the inertia of the African – too often the craftsman of his own misery – must be overcome... the masses have not yet understood that well-being can only be achieved through work... The spirit of individual initiative is still lacking in this population that lives only day-to-day and loath the constraints and requirements imposed by a modern economy.”<sup>56</sup>

Despite such sentiments on the part of the administration, politicians from the colonies were quickly losing patience with the pace of actual legal changes. Led by Senegalese politician Léopold Senghor, a number of overseas deputies of the Assembly of the French Union united in October of 1950 to criticize France’s utter lack of “satisfactory progress” in expanding colonial citizenship.<sup>57</sup> The group argued that previous elections had proved that overseas electors were

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<sup>54</sup> High Commissioner of French Equatorial Africa, Letter to the Minister of Overseas France n° 446/C (23 March 1948), ANOM 1AFFPOL/228.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> High Commissioner of French Equatorial Africa, Letter to the Minister of Overseas France (1 Dec 1948), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2150.

<sup>57</sup> Assembly of the French Union, “Rapport n°249,” (24 October 1950), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078; Leopold Senghor, “Proposition de loi n°11113,” (24 October 1950), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

“politically mature” and that there was therefore “no reason to leave the barriers” in place any longer. In order for the administration to “complete” the promises of reform they made in 1945, they were urged to implement single electoral colleges across the empire, increase the number of deputies per territory in line with metropolitan ratios, and enfranchise greater numbers of men and women who filled a relatively relaxed set of qualifications. Among the new proposed voters were all tax-paying men who were also heads of household, who they proposal characterized as “the basic unit of African society” and a group who therefore “should have been the first to be included” in the right to vote.

The Ministry of Overseas France mulled over the proposal, conducting a number of studies on the existing practices of colonial voting and a comparison between French and British policies on elections. Of particularly interest was a recent program deployed in the Gold Coast, where a campaign of public education resulted in units of men and women canvassing the colony, armed with “mobile cinemas, speakers, microphones, maps, diagrams, movies, phonographs and discs, brochures and printed materials in English as well as six local languages” to explain the workings of registration and elections, the new constitution, and the composition of various representative bodies.<sup>58</sup> The administration closely followed such developments in British Africa, remaining particularly concerned that the new electoral regimes appeared “much more democratic” than those applied in French territories yet unwilling to model their own colonies on the Anglo approach.<sup>59</sup>

Despite concerns of appearing to languish behind their British analogues, the Ministry argued that Senghor’s proposed reform on the implementation of single colleges would be “virtually impossible to achieve at this early time” and “sacrifice metropolitan interests” within

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<sup>58</sup> “Revue de la presse étrangère n°987,” ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>59</sup> Chambon, Letter to the Minister of Overseas France (7 May 1951), ANS 20G106.

the colonial territories.<sup>60</sup> French Director of Political Affairs Pierre Delteil argued that a double college was itself democratic as it was “fair and wise” to ensure representation for the European minority. He further emphasized the problems that would emerge if a standardized law was applied uniformly across France’s “diverse” territories, highlighting the dangers of a “rigid and inflexible policy” that would be in “contradiction to the very principles which presided over the birth of the French Union.” Other ministerial departments agreed that any new policy must ensure representation for “all respectable interests” as determined by the “geographical and historical circumstances” of each territory, the “type of political result that is desired,” and, above all, to prevent representation for “political minorities with tendencies that may seem dangerous to the government.”<sup>61</sup>

The question of women within the imperial franchise was overlooked until Francine Lefebvre, a French deputy from the Seine, added a new provision that stated that women of two children should also be made electors. In an effort to avoid fraud and promote the women’s participation in the French colonial project, she emphasized that any women who sought to register under the law must provide not only their own identity credentials but also prove the “filiation and existence of their children.”<sup>62</sup>

In some versions of this provision, the language further required these children to have “lived or died for France,” implying service in the French military. In this sense, expansion of the female franchise was founded on women’s quality of motherhood rather than any inherent or natural right, based on the existence of children as well as the woman’s willingness to register

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<sup>60</sup> Delteil, “Note n°9061,” (10 November 1950), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry of Overseas France, Section d’Etudes, “Note pour Monsieur le Directeur: Mode de scrutin,” (20 November 1950), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>62</sup> This is apparently a cite from an older telegram. Mitternad, Telegram n°5253 (25 May 1951), ANS 20G108.

these children as full members of a colonial bureaucracy or even give their lives in service of France. In this sense, African women would be the mediators for creating a new empire based on stable family units oriented towards military service and participation in the French colonial project.

However, the addition of such mothers was roundly criticized, with opponents arguing that there was no way to identify such women and therefore the expansion would be a bureaucratic nightmare.<sup>63</sup> In Djibouti, Governor Numa Sadoul made an argument from practicality, noting that a revision of electoral lists to accommodate the registration of such mothers would be impossible to complete within the proposed time frame.<sup>64</sup> Similar concerns occurred for Commissioner Jean Cédile in Togo, who argued that the enfranchisement of such women “seems impossible in a territory where women do not pay taxes and where civil status is nearly inexistent.”<sup>65</sup> In the case of New Caledonia, Governor Pierre Cournarie echoed such language of the “impossibility” of enfranchising all “mothers of two children,” suggesting that any of the proposed changes would take up to five months to complete.<sup>66</sup>

The proposal was also criticized by those who feared it would “destabilize” indigenous society, which was understood to require total female submission to male authority. Governor Cournarie pointed out that given the tax laws of New Caledonia, there would be numerous households with two or more children and a male head of household who did not pay sufficient

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<sup>63</sup> Council de la République, “Séance du 30 Décembre 1951,” *Journal officiel de la République française, Débats parlementaires (JORFDP)* 97 (31 December 1951).

<sup>64</sup> Sadoul, Telegram to the Minister of Overseas France n°28 (30 April 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>65</sup> Conrep, Telegram to the Minister of Overseas France n°63-64-65 (30 April 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>66</sup> Haussaire Noumea, Telegram to FOM n°62-63 (2 May 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

taxes to vote, meaning that disenfranchised husbands would watch their wives go to the polls.<sup>67</sup> Such a system would, he argued, “not be well-received.” When it was suggested that such problems would be eased by enfranchising all women on the same terms as men or simply expanding the right to vote to everyone with an “official identity,” critics further emphasized the wide gulf that continued to separate metropolitan and colonial political capacities, as “a principle that might seem sound for metropolitan electoral law could not be applied in overseas France, where experience with democracy is infinitely more recent.”<sup>68</sup>

The proposal was ultimately indeed added to a May 1951 that enfranchised a relatively large percentage of Africans, quadrupling the number total number of voters in French West Africa to about 3 million by June 1951.<sup>69</sup> However, this expansion – the first to include large numbers of non-elite women in AOF – was not celebrated as a feminist milestone. Senghor himself remained skeptical, stating how “numerous husbands watched their wives go vote while they were refused suffrage. For social peace in the overseas territories, this anomaly must cease.”<sup>70</sup> Women’s role in the political process remained the promotion of stability and order, either through being rewarded for having male children to serve in the army or by remaining disenfranchised to ensure gender hierarchies remained firmly in place.

The composition of the colonial electorate remained a key concern throughout fall and early winter of 1951, with Senghor urging the National Assembly to make reforms, as France could only “complete this apprenticeship in democracy” by instituting greater numbers of representative bodies and ensuring they operated in a fair and free manner in a “way that is

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Council de la République, “Séance du 30 Décembre 1951.”

<sup>69</sup> Law n°51-586 of 23 May 1951.

<sup>70</sup> Leopold Senghor, “Rapport n°1544,” (14 November 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251.

adapted to overseas realities.”<sup>71</sup> In particular, Senghor drew attention to the importance of extending suffrage rights to all “heads of household” in regions where women with two children were able to vote in order to avoid the “anomaly” of families in which women can vote but their husbands cannot.<sup>72</sup> In response, High Commissioner of Cameroon André Soucadaux articulated a concern about the “considerable” amount of work that such a reform would require, noting that it was “difficult to juridically determine what qualifies one as a head of a household and how it would be proven.”<sup>73</sup> However, he agreed that it was “necessary to grant political rights to any man whose spouse is already entitled to vote, for the superiority of the rights of women over their husbands contradicts custom... extension, in these conditions, would be entirely opportune.” In this way, any concerns about “emancipating” women needed to be done in such a way that gendered hierarchies remained stable.

Others in the Conseil de la République opposed the blanket extension of suffrage to all “heads of household,” proposing an amendment with a more limited enfranchisement.<sup>74</sup> Senghor rejected the amendment and included all “heads of household,” arguing it was more “faithful to the progressive spirit of the Constitution.”<sup>75</sup> Yet the limits of the enfranchisement of certain mothers remained unclear to administrators across the empire, with senator from Gabon Luc Durand-Reville requesting additional clarification in December 1951, particularly the ways in which it would affect women who were exempt from personal taxes and if the electorates would

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<sup>71</sup> Senghor, “Rapport n°1544.”

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Soucadaux, Minister of Overseas France n°199-201 (8 December 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251.

<sup>74</sup> Council de la République, “Avis n°2316,” (30 December 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251.

<sup>75</sup> Léopold Senghor, “Rapport n°2348,” (3 January 1952), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251.

be the same for local and empire-wide elections.<sup>76</sup> The Ministry of Overseas France continued to emphasize the need to better “educate” women in the empire before extending further political rights, arguing that “slow and patient, the education of the African woman manifests itself in the form of domestic education, prenatal care, and the protection of children (hygiene and childcare).”<sup>77</sup>

Nationalist groups challenged this emphasis on “slow” reform. For example, at their annual conference in October 1954, the Communist Senegalese Democratic Union (UDS) emphasized the importance of incorporating greater numbers of women into their movement, an task they argue had been too long “neglected.”<sup>78</sup> The leadership urged members to “do their best” to “penetrate into women’s circles” and take advantage of a fuller scope of recruitment, to “resolutely tackle the task of creating a feminine framework of combat capable of engaging women in the struggle for their demands and against colonialism. “Communist parties and their allies also advocated the expansion of women’s groups in Cameroon, where the formation of the Union démocratique des femmes camerounaises (UDEFEC) marked a new front in female-oriented anti-colonialism. The French administration did not initially know how to respond to such groups, describing UDEFEC as an extremist group but a “recent creation that is still finding its way and its adherents.”<sup>79</sup>

Individual surveillance of nationalist “agitators” included greater numbers of women, such as Marguerite Marie Omog, a twenty-two year old Cameroonian nursing student who had

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<sup>76</sup> Letter to Durand-Reville (17 December 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251; Durand-Réville, “Rapport n°855,” (23 December 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/251.

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Colonies, Affaires Politique, “Programme d’Action Sociale et realisation culturelles,” ANOM 1AFFPOL/2150.

<sup>78</sup> Senegalese Democratic Union, “Résolution sur les Problèmes d’organisation, du deuxième Congrès Annuel de l’ UDS,” ANOM 1AFFPOL/2142.

<sup>79</sup> Ribo, “Exposé: Les Mouvements Extrémistes au Cameroun,” (1954?), ANOM DPCT//19.

initially come to France on a scholarship to study at the Ecole Régionale d’Infirmière de Nantes and was active within the Paris-based elements of the UPC by autumn 1955.<sup>80</sup> According to French surveillance, Omog had done “more activities than all the other girls in the UPC together,” a task that had been aided by her “social milieu” and family connections, including her parents Thomas Dikabo Omog (an teacher at the Mission catholique d’Edea) and Marthe Ngo-Nkanga Omog.<sup>81</sup> The administration was particularly concerned about her siblings, including her elder sister Madame Joachine Eyiké in Edéa, who was described as the de facto president of the Comité Féminin de la Région de la Sanaga-Maritime of the UPC and was thought to be “on the run” due to the “events of the UPC.”<sup>82</sup> Their brother, Louis Dikabo, was a student on scholarship in Nantes at the Lycée Clémenceau, a midfielder for the Football Club de Nantes, and also a member of the UPC.<sup>83</sup> “In other words,” an anonymous note continued, “all the children of Mr. Dikabo Omog vote for the UPC... it is a trivial fact, perhaps, but I prefer you to appreciate it yourself... especially with regard to these two students for whom Cameroon supports the cost of studies in France.”<sup>84</sup>

This heightened surveillance of students indicates the growing administration anxiety that the sorts of “crimes... perpetrated in the territory of the Republic” by French citizens would enable foreign “detractors” to criticize French policy.<sup>85</sup> Working for the Ministry of Overseas France, long-time colonial administrator Léon Pignon wrote to the administration in AEF to ask

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<sup>80</sup> It is unclear exactly which school this was. “Note à Monsieur le Délégué,” (9 November 1955), ANOM DPCT//19.

<sup>81</sup> Délégation Cameroun, “Note de renseignements concernant Melle OMOG Marguerite,” (16 November 1955), ANOM DPCT//19; “Note to Monsieur le Délégué.”

<sup>82</sup> “Note to Monsieur le Délégué.”

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Pignon, Letter to the High Commissioner of French Equatorial Africa n°201 AP/6 (17 February 1955), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2296.

for any suggestions as to “any methods – social, cultural, etc. – to hasten the evolution of populations... the most objective means of development within the framework of international agreements... as stated in the Convention de Saint-Germain en Laye of 1919, we are committed to leading the populations ‘in the path of progress and civilization.’” He was particularly concerned that the French find a way to reach “superstitious” populations to convince them of assimilation towards French norms and support of French goals, reiterating an earlier request for more information on the “relationship between indigenous nationalism and fetishism.”

As nationalist activity grew across the colonies, the administration worked to position their own colonial reforms as superior substitutes for the rights that would be bestowed within independent nation-states. While the Ministry of Overseas France framed the “generalization of the right to vote” as a central part of their offerings, they worried that such reforms “would not bear fruit if the ground has not been prepared... divested of everything that might provoke or maintain suspicion or disaffection with our administration.”<sup>86</sup> In this way, they needed to carefully frame any liberalizations in voting rights law as a product of French developmental policies rather than administrative concessions to nationalist demands.

This anxiety of the balance between tradition and reform was also clear within French president Vincent Auriol’s speech on New Year’s day 1954, made at Versailles in front of members of the Assembly of the French Union.<sup>87</sup> In his address, Auriol emphasized the consistency of France’s role in ensuring the continued “evolution” of the colonies, a policy that would be the fulfillment of the “dream” of the “greatness and radiance of our dear fatherland” in the form of a “magnificent and united French Union.” His language asserted that any future

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<sup>86</sup> Ponchelet, Letter to the Commissioners and High Commissioners n°569 (17 July 1951), ANS 17G641.

<sup>87</sup> “Informations Politiques et Parlementaires,” (January 1954), ANOM 1AFFPOL/220.

reform should be read as part of France's long-standing traditions of progressive colonial policies. Former Minister of Colonies Albert Sarraut then took the stage, celebrating the Fourth Republic's constitution as "not initially perfect" but "flexible" enough to "adapt to circumstances of an age... in which the master word is that of evolution."

However, anti-colonial activity continued to threaten French interests, pushing the administration to use elections to control French territory rather than enable greater "flexibility" for local demands or grievances. In Senegal, for example, the 1955 municipal election results were annulled as "numerous registered electors" were removed from electoral lists and prevented from voting due to their alleged nationalist sympathies.<sup>88</sup> In Cameroon that same year, the French High Commissioner advocated the creation of new voting districts and other electoral methods to minimize the "anti-French campaign in the south."<sup>89</sup> The French administration sought to balance the need to implement meaningful reforms with the need to keep their colonies French, scrambling to identify exactly who was responsible for the internal and external threats that had made the "French West African situation... so instable and difficult."<sup>90</sup>

In the wake of a 1956 law that abolished the double electoral college system, increased representative bodies, and implemented universal suffrage for men and women, electoral conflict continued, acting as a focal point for larger grievances about the shape of the empire. The French administration became increasingly concerned that anti-colonial protests and defeats of French candidates at the ballot box would make it appear that their version of "progress" would be seen

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<sup>88</sup> Conseil d'Etat, "Elections Municipales de Dakar n°26.915," (12 July 1955), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2142.

<sup>89</sup> Roland Pre, Telegram n°2663-2664 (17 November 1955), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078; "Note au sujet de la création d'une circonscription électorale unique au Cameroun," (1955), ANOM 1AFFPOL/1078.

<sup>90</sup> "Situation politique, économique et sociale de l'AOF en 1956," (15 May 1956), MAE AL/AOF/5359/11.

to have failed or fallen short. In one such example, a working group consisting of male legal experts and politicians was established in summer of 1957 to determine how to best reform Muslim and Kabyle women's "personal status" in Algeria particularly related to questions of marriage.<sup>91</sup> In considering the proposal, however, the Algerian Secretary of State became concerned, writing to the Minister of Algeria Robert Lacoste about how fact that nationalist groups had "given women an active role in the rebellion" might change the scope of the reforms.<sup>92</sup> "In such conditions," he wrote, "one might ask themselves if the reform... proposed by the Government would be held in check if a public position had already been taking by the rebels on the evolution of the condition of Muslim women." If the government wanted to prevent the nationalist by making such an "intervention" before the French were able to do so, they must balance the need for careful deliberation with the need to act as soon as possible as to avoid the appearance that they were conceding to nationalist demands.<sup>93</sup>

Another administration strategy involved the shifting of blame for colonial "disorder" (and the defeat of French candidates in elections) by calling into question the maturity of the colonial populations themselves. For example, one administration report on French West African elections in 1956 argued that any electoral strife was simply the result of "human evolution" that had been too greatly rushed, an expansion of citizenship made without concern for the fact that the new voters were not yet ready.<sup>94</sup> The "African transformation" therefore resulted in anti-French "national-racist" protests as the administration had not sufficiently warned the masses of the difficulties that lay ahead in their "accelerated" transition from "tradition to modernity." In

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<sup>91</sup> M. Chaussade, Report n°1006/07 (11 June 1957), ANOM ALG-GGA-12CAB/44; Ministry of the Interior, Direction of Algerian Affairs, "Projet de reforme du statut personnel de la femme musulmane et de la femme kabyle en Algerie," (8 June 1957), ANOM 81F/74.

<sup>92</sup> Secretary of State of Algeria, Telegram n°ALG/ADM n°124-2 (1957), ANOM 81F/1220.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Lacoste, Telegram n°3968/CC (24 April 1957), ANOM ALG-GGA-12CAB/44.

<sup>94</sup> "Situation politique, économique et sociale."

describing the growing success of nationalist parties in local elections, the report continued that “it turns out that Black Africa is not ripe for representative plurality... like all backwards countries, they develop a tendency towards single-party methods.” In this way, nationalist victories were not legitimate political statements, but simply evidence of African “backwardness” and unsuitability for electoral democracy.

As anti-colonial activity increased throughout the late 1950s, women’s groups increasingly used their organizational power to advocate on the behalf on individuals arrested by the colonial state, including amnesty programs and support for their families. In one such example, a delegation from Femmes Musulmanes d’Algérie led by two women referred to as Madame Chentouf and Mademoiselle Mufti met with nationalist leader Messali Hadji to assure him of the “ever increasing commitment of Muslim women in Algeria,” particularly in working to aid those who had been imprisoned.<sup>95</sup> Growing numbers of women’s associations in Algeria launched protests to advocate for release of Algerian political activists.<sup>96</sup> As Chapter Six outlines in greater detail, female associations across Cameroon and Togo played similar roles, including writing to the United Nations to critique the actions of the French in their electoral crackdowns and arrests of nationalist politicians.

### **Suffrage and violence in Algeria in the late 1950s**

In the growing violence that was engulfing North Africa in the late 1950s, de Gaulle headed an aggressive political campaign to fully integrate Algeria and France in the framework

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<sup>95</sup> “Femmes musulmanes d’Algérie - Alger,” (3 October 1950), ANOM 81F/760.

<sup>96</sup> One member named Raymonde Peschard organized a women’s campaign in Constantine to advocate on behalf of MTLD members of the OS who had been arrested. Following the governments dissolving of the PCA in September 1955, the UFA was disbanded. Drew, *We Are*, 165-6; Lazreg, *Eloquence*, 139.

of a new Fifth Republic, a referendum that would be voted on in the autumn of 1958 by a more truly universal suffrage that included women voting within the framework of a single electoral college. The promise of universal female suffrage in Algeria became part of a larger desperate attempt to justify and secure the empire, presenting a truly integrated franchise where women could vote in Algeria in the same way they could in France.

In new political campaigns in Algeria and in presentations to international bodies such as the United Nations, the French administration and their allies in Algeria increasingly highlighted the promotion of women's suffrage as a particularly French attribute, funneling huge amounts of money into propaganda and even deploying the French army to force Algerian women to go to the polls. French propaganda described that Algerian women voting was a "clear sign of evolution" that marked the rise of a "new Algeria, where women and men are equal," all thanks to the work of the French.

For example, in one government report from summer 1958, women's status was reframed as the heart of the entire French effort to colonize Algeria, as "assimilation of laws between France and Algeria is, on the whole, the entire aim of French polity carried out since [the] 1830 [conquest]... It is clear that the basis of this assimilation is mostly related to the status of women." The proposal described in the report changed a number of laws about Algerian marriage law, changes that were framed as a "revolutionary" program that would allow "Algerian society to move from the stage of the patriarchal family to the level of the conjugal family." The language of this government report draws on the late nineteenth century work of French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who coined the phrase "conjugal family" which he argued was a modern evolution from the older "patriarchal family" form, thus framing French colonial policy as a motor of social evolution. Thanks to France's presence in Algeria, "women in this

society are therefore somewhat prepared through their daily contacts to receive the rights of the modern world.”

As a massive new part of the electorate, the French were not the only ones vying for Algerian women’s votes. However, while the FLN sought female support, it opposed participation in French elections, threatening violence against Algerians who participated in the September 1958 Referendum. In spite of this call for boycott, almost 80% of eligible Algerians voted, the overwhelming majority in favor of de Gaulle’s new constitution. Following his victory, de Gaulle instigated a new series of reforms known as the Constantine Plan, which included provisions for land redistribution as well as a host of reforms to “thank” women by promoting their social, economic, and educational position. However, subsequent elections did not go as well in France’s favor, with subsequent elections seeing dwindling turn out (down to 65% in the parliamentary election held only months after the referendum) alongside the increasing success of FLN military tactics.

Scholars have debated the extent to which women were able to meaningfully influence the actions of nationalist groups such as the Algerian Front du Liberation nationale [FLN] or the degree to which substantive changes in gender roles actually came into being.<sup>97</sup> In the case of the FLN, since its 1954 formation, women were almost entirely absented from positions of governance, and female participation was sometimes banned at lower levels as well.<sup>98</sup> For example, one FLN order from Oran in November 1960 asserted that “I remind you a final time that it is forbidden to recruit *djoundiates* [female soldiers] and female nurses without the zone’s

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<sup>97</sup> Lazreg, *Eloquence*, 139; Anne Lippert, “Algerian Women’s Access to Power: 1962-1985,” in *Studies in Power and Class in Africa*, ed. Irving L. Markovitz, 209-32 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Vince, *Our Muslim Sisters*.

<sup>98</sup> Natalya Vince, “Transgressing Boundaries: Gender, Race, Religion, and ‘Françaises Musulmanes’ during the Algerian War of Independence,” *French Historical Studies* 33, no. 3 (2010): 463.

authorization. In Independent Algeria, the Muslim woman's freedom stops at the door to her home. Women will never be equal to men."<sup>99</sup> On the one hand, this language is clearly exclusionary to women, framing a national project where the state is run by men and women are confined to the home. On the other hand, the fact that the order references the multiple occasions on which this policy had been broken ("I remind you a final time") suggests the ways in which women in the FLN played a much more active and complicated role. In the words of Algerian anticolonial activist Fatima Benosmane, even when they were overlooked by larger male-led organizations, "women participated in a thousand and one small actions," profoundly shaping the course and content of the process of decolonization.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Vince, "Transgressing," 467.

<sup>100</sup> Amrane, *Des femmes dans la guerre d'Algérie*, 20-1.

## Chapter Six

### “Prove That the French Taught Us Nothing”:

#### Gender and Citizenship in an International Empire, 1947-1974

In late 1949, representatives from the United Nations traveled to what was then French Cameroon to assess the territory’s political, economic, and “moral” development. Unlike its colonial neighbors in other parts of French Equatorial Africa such as Gabon or Chad, Cameroon was a United Nations Trusteeship, a territory administered by France with international oversight at the level of the UN. Much of the Mission’s official report of their 1949 visit contains language common to developmentalist and French imperialist discourse of the era, contrasting the progressive work of the Western administration with observations of “backwards” Africans in need of guidance.<sup>1</sup> In one representative passage, the authors expresses how “the [new] highway, wide and well-kept, permitted a high speed reminiscent of excursions in western countries. It was an odd experience to drive past parties of primitive Natives going about their usual business.” In a later description of a play that had been staged for the UN visitors, the report complains that “themes and plot were practically non-existent” and that “the [Cameroonian] participants are quite unconcerned with the fact that the monotony of the music and dancing must sorely try the patience of the foreign visitor... [the performers] seem to find extreme pleasure in the repetition of these exercises *ad infinitum*.” In addition to theatre criticism and leisurely drives in the countryside, the mission toured schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and orphanages, noting the careful “attention paid by the [French] Administration to the improvement of the social

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Trusteeship Council, “Report on the Cameroons under French Administration (16 February 1950), UND T/798,” *Official Records (OR)* (Lake Success: United Nations, 1947-).

conditions and educational and economic development” and thereby framing the French presence as a boon to this “backwards” region.

However, the records left by this and subsequent UN Visiting Missions indicate that the system of Trusteeship was not simply an example of unidirectional developmental policy that commented on and attempted to shape the “non-Western world.” People living in the Trusteeships were also able to take strategic advantage of the system, although not necessarily in the ways that the administering powers intended. For example, during a later Visiting Mission to French Cameroon in 1955, Cameroonian nationalists capitalized on the intended logics of Trusteeship to critique and embarrass the French on an international stage. In preparation for the Mission, a young Cameroonian woman named Gertrude Omog made a speech to her fellow nationalists about the kinds of behaviors they should perform for the Mission, urging her compatriots to strategically “dress in rags to prove that the French have taught us nothing” and to “refrain from speaking in French, so interpreters will notice the ignorance in which France has left the masses.”<sup>2</sup> While some of these efforts required deliberate and strategic concealment, she also encouraged the population to expose the very real infrastructural failures of the French presence, saying that “all those who suffer from any infirmity – and pregnant women too – will be on the Mission’s route, to prove that Cameroon has neither hospitals nor clinics nor pharmacies.” In this way, the nationalists could intentionally make it appear that developmental aims had fallen short and publicly challenge the purpose of French administration in the region.

And indeed, in thousands of written petitions sent to the UN headquarters in New York and Geneva and hundreds of oral statements made before Visiting Mission members, inhabitants of

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<sup>2</sup> Gertrude Omog, “Declaration fait par Gertrude Omog, militante,” Document Annexe n.4 to Jean Dupuy, Directeur p.i. UNIC (17 April 1957), ARMS S.0504.0044; Gertrude Omog, “Petition from Mme Gertrude Omog, Maquis,” 14 June 1955, T/Pet.5/674, *OR*.

French Trusteeships took advantage of developmentalist language to further a number of their own goals, including self-determination. The petitioners illuminate the range of ways that non-French actors shaped the colonial state and its place in the international sphere. The fact that activists in trusteeships such as Cameroon focused their efforts on international audiences suggests the broad range of ways that people in the colonies conceived their own place within global political structures.<sup>3</sup> As Meredith Terretta argues, the engagement of petitioners at the level of the UN indicates the ways that individuals in French trusteeships in fact saw the European administrations as “outsiders within their territory, and non-essential to the Cameroonian political process.”<sup>4</sup>

The published and archival records of the Visiting Missions and Trusteeship Councils are particularly valuable in providing female perspectives on the late French colonial state, Cameroonian nationalism, and feminist or women-oriented solidarity. Their grievances ranged from disputes over land use rights to bold demands for an end to racial discrimination itself (to which the French administration somewhat astonishingly responded that since racism was not allowed by French law, the petitioner must have been mistaken).<sup>5</sup> Because the majority of petitioners were women or other non-French citizens without the right to vote in French elections, this paper trail indicates the often-obscured voices of the legally disenfranchised, showing alternative ways in which individuals in the colonies made political claims and represented their own interests.

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<sup>3</sup> Karen C. Knop, *Diversity and Self-Determination in International Law* (Port Chester: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 327-8.

<sup>4</sup> Meredith Terretta, “Cameroonian Women, the Act of Petitioning, and the Creation of a Popular Nationalism, 1949-1960,” (Madison: African Studies Program, 2004), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Voix du Peuple Camerounais, “Petition from ‘La Voix du Peuple Camerounais’ (Mr. Akono) concerning the Cameroons under French administration (19 December 1949), UND T/Pet.5/28,” *TCOR*.

As people, goods, and ideas traversed regional and global spaces, historians of empire have increasingly learned to work beyond and across national or imperial units of analysis.<sup>6</sup> While their influence should not be overstated, such networks enabled individuals across the empire to interact with wider groups of people and in front of different audiences in a global context of decolonization and rising Cold War tensions. This chapter traces that history, focusing in particular on the example of women's petitions and activism in the pursuit of citizenship and political rights within French Cameroon in the 1940s and 1950s.

This chapter also builds on Chapter Five to clarify how the system of Trusteeship can better illuminate the French approach to empire-building as a particularly nationalist calling. For the French colonial administration, institutions such as the UN Trusteeship Council were understood as a threat rather than a resource, infringing on France's postwar reconfiguration of empire in the form of a cohesive and bounded French Union. French conflict with the UN is in this way useful for understanding the contours of their particular national vision of empire, one in which France was to be a natural global leader who set the pace on progressive colonial reform rather than a reluctant follower who had to be forced to catch up to its peers.

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<sup>6</sup> On traversing colonial boundaries, see: Alan Lester, "Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire," *History Compass* 4, no. 1 (2006): 124-141; Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c.1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gregory Mann and Baz Lecocq, "Between Empire, Umma, and the Muslim Third World: The French Union and African Pilgrims to Mecca, 1946-1958," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 367-383; and Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). On the connections between global and local histories, see: Sanjam Ahluawlia, "Rethinking Boundaries: Feminism and (Inter) Nationalism in Early-Twentieth-Century India," *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 4 (2003): 188-195; Prasenjit Duara, "Transnationalism and the Challenge to National Histories," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender, 25-46 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Patrick O'Brien, "Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History," *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3-39.

## League of Nations: Making the Mandates

The Trusteeship system has its roots in aftermath of the First World War, when the victorious Allied powers divided the territories of the defeated German and Ottoman states amongst themselves. Stemming partly from a desire avoid the impression that the peace treaty was simply a colonial land-grab in disguise, the seized enemy colonies were transformed into Mandates, which were legally defined as spaces “inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world... entrusted to advanced nations and managed according to the stage of the development of the people.”<sup>7</sup> This “management” would be carried out by a multi-tiered organization in which a Mandatory Power would work in conjunction with the newly-formed League of Nations.<sup>8</sup> The League monitored the Mandates via the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC), whose primary function was to examine reports created by the Mandatories and advise how a given territory might be advanced along a path of “universal development.”<sup>9</sup>

While inhabitants of the Mandates had no say in how their territory was being parceled out, some politicians and activists approved of the new designation, seeing it as an opportunity to

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<sup>7</sup> Article 22, *The Covenant of the League of Nations* (28 June 1919), in The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>. The PMC identified three “classes” of mandates groups by their “level of development.” Cameroon was placed in the “B Class.”

<sup>8</sup> See “German Rights and Interests Outside of Germany,” *The Peace Treaty of Versailles* (28 June 1919), in The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu>; Article 22, *The Covenant of the United Nations*.

<sup>9</sup> Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 264; Susan Pederson, “Back to the League of Nations,” *American Historical Review* 112 no. 4 (2007): 1091-1117; Dieudonné Oyono, *Colonie ou mandat international: La politique française au Cameroun de 1919 à 1946* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992), 70; and David E. Gardinier, *Cameroon: United Nations Challenge to French Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 9-12.

leverage a heightened global visibility to correct colonial abuses.<sup>10</sup> A limited petition system was intended to enable inhabitants of the Mandates to inform the PMC of any grievances they might have. However, all petitions had to be approved by the Mandatory power (in this case France), seriously compromising any oversight the system might have provided. Furthermore, representation on the first PMC was given to states sympathetic to imperial aspirations, including the four Mandatories of France, Britain, Belgium, and Japan along with Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

The French administration initially welcomed the Mandate system, as it enabled them to acquire the new territories of Togoland, Cameroon, Syria, and Lebanon at a moment where the French state was actively seeking further overseas expansion.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, France's imperial ideologies were then shifting to promote the idea of a close connection between metropole and colony that could extend the concept of the indivisibility of national territory to France's overseas holdings.<sup>12</sup> The presence of international oversight compromised the new colonial assets, threatening France's particular imperialist ideology by diluting the territories' "Frenchness" and enabling outside interference. As the proud creators of the "civilizing mission," the French administration took serious umbrage at the implication that they needed guidance on how to run an empire. In agreeing to League terms, they were therefore careful to

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<sup>10</sup> Martin René Atangana, "French Capitalism and Nationalism in Cameroon," *African Studies Review* 40, no. 1 (1997): 83-111; Charlotte Walker, "Legal Revolutions and Evolutions: Law, Chiefs, and Colonial Order in Cameroon, 1914-1955," (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2009), 64ff; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Benjamin Lawrence, *Locality, Mobility, and "Nation": Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland 1900-1960* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> The other Mandates included Palestine, Transjordan, Mesopotamia, British Togoland, British Cameroons, Ruanda-Urundi, Tanganyika, and South West Africa.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 14-23.

secure the right to administer the Mandates “in accordance with French law... as an integral part of [French] territory,” initiating a legal tension between the national and international systems of control and administration that would plague the territories until formal decolonization.<sup>13</sup>

The civilizing mission took on a particularly nationalist cast in the former German colonies of Togo and Cameroon, where the incoming French administration framed their colonial policies as correctives to past German abuses by contrasting “good” French forms of colonialism against “bad” German practices. To better promote the ideology of a unified colonial space, the French instituted a program of “Gallicization” to remove lingering traces of German influence by monitoring German colonial propaganda, restricting all European movement into the territory, eradicating pro-German African associations, and limiting any contact between African and Germans.<sup>14</sup> (The League’s “equality clauses” stipulated that no distinction could be made based on nationality within these territories, outlawing only German movement was technically not allowed, a distinction the French worked around by trying seventy-one of accused Germanophiles in court for being “pro-German in their sympathies” and therefore also for “having conducted anti-French propaganda.”) As Albert Sarraut’s influential 1923 work on

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<sup>13</sup> The French mandates had a variety of unique administrative institutions not shared by other French colonies, which Callahan argues were used to “remind the outside world of the distinctive status of Togo and Cameroon [and] give French colonial officials an effective response to those critics who tried to accuse France of ‘annexation’ or ‘old-fashioned’ imperial expansion.” League of Nations, “Instrument of 20 July 1922,” *League of Nations Official Journal* 2 (1922): 874-77; Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921); Michael Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa, 1929-1946* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2004), 10-16, 24, fn 56-57; Walker, “Legal Revolutions,” 64; Christine Manigand, *Les Français au service de la Société des Nations* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003); Marie-Renée Mouton, *La Société des Nations et les intérêts de la France, 1920–1924* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995); and Pedersen, “Back to the League of Nations.”

<sup>14</sup> Callahan, *A Sacred Trust*, 11; Richard A. Joseph, “Settlers, Strikers, and Sans-Travail: The Douala Riots of September 1945,” *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 4 (1974), 670; Jonathan Derrick, “The ‘Germanophone’ Elite of Douala under the French Mandate,” *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 2 (1980): 255-267; Richard A. Joseph, “The German Question in French Cameroon, 1919-1939,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 (1975): 65-90.

colonial development asserted, it was because France took the “sacred mission of civilization” so seriously that it would “save” the native peoples of Cameroon from “Germany’s unworthy colonization.”<sup>15</sup> The Minister of Colonies similarly framed the French take-over of the German colonies as being done in the “name of human rights” and “in defense of oppressed races.”<sup>16</sup>

At both French and League levels, ideas about women’s lives in these territories played a crucial role in the development of “women’s status” as a regularized metric for evaluating a given state or society within a comparative international framework. While this was nothing new, the process did take on particular forms within the shifting networks of interwar international diplomacy. Within the League itself, the actual participation of women was after all limited, and the organization did not initially include any subcommittees specifically oriented towards questions of women or gender. While the Covenant stated that women were eligible for “all positions under or in connection with the League,” the organizers initially rejected the inclusion of special female representation. Several women’s groups rallied against this exclusion, including the French Union for Women’s Suffrage as well as the London-based Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations.<sup>17</sup>

In its early years, League engagement with questions related more specifically to women’s lives and rights focused on questions of trafficking, prostitution, “correcting” non-Western forms of marriage or household-building (including bridewealth and polygamy), and promoting girls’ schooling.<sup>18</sup> Trafficking was a particular concern, with the League forming a

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<sup>15</sup> Albert Sarraut, *La mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris: Payot & cie, 1923), 91.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Ward D’Itri, *Cross Currents in the International Women’s Movement, 1848-1948* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999), 142.

<sup>18</sup> Magaly Rodríguez García, “The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women,” *International Review of Social History* 57 (2012): 97-108; Donna J. Guy, *White Slavery and*

special committee in 1921 intended to investigate charges of “white slavery” and efforts directed towards protecting European women overseas.<sup>19</sup> Although they eventually replaced the term “white slavery” with “international traffic in women and children,” the committee’s remit did not cover any “native born” women, focusing instead on the movement of women from Europe to Central and South America, particularly Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.<sup>20</sup> The French were also concerned about the dangers posted to “white women in savage places,” as one 1929 pamphlet entitled *An Open Letter by a Man Addressed to Young Girls* that warned women against those who “under the pretext of marriage, promise them a trip...to Buenos-Aires” where they would be forced to “live a life of debauchery and prostitute themselves to men of every color, race, and social condition.”<sup>21</sup>

Into the 1930s, League concern over women’s status continued to focus on the question of white women as imperiled sexual commodities, although there was a slow uptick in attention to the status of non-white women in colonies and, increasingly, within non-European independent nations. At the same time, this was largely used as a way to critique “savage” societies that had failed to correctly “protect” women. For example, in 1933, a French Roman-Catholic priest informed the League that women were being sold on the coast of Cameroon under the pretense of marriage but were instead being brought into the interior to be “disposed

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*Mothers Alive and Dead: The Troubled Meeting of Sex, Gender, Public Health, and Progress in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 26-32.

<sup>19</sup> Magaly Rodríguez García, “The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women,” *International Review of Social History* 57 (2012): 97-108.

<sup>20</sup> Guy, *White Slavery*, 26-32.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Guy, *White Slavery*, 30.

of' for profit.<sup>22</sup> While a resulting inquiry into the "condition of women" took place in the British sector of Cameroon between April 1933 and May 1934, little changed within French territory.

French concern over women in the Mandates focused primarily on the question of girls' education, as it was considered it to be a particularly efficient way to spread French language and culture and thereby promote the civilizing mission, reduce local "barbarism," and, of course, dispel any lingering German influence. While previous expansions of education tended to target men and boys, the education of women and girls became increasingly important through the interwar era. As a 1923 French government report on the Mandates argued, "when one brings a boy to a French school, it is a single unit that is gained... but when one brings a girl, it is one unit multiplied by the number of children that she will have as an adult."<sup>23</sup> In this sense, women were considered key vectors in spreading the values of French civilization largely through their status as mothers of new "units" to be "gained" for the French imperial project.

While government sources therefore frame African women as largely passive subjects, missionary sources in Cameroon note the consistent and vocal presence of women in public political life and protest movements through the interwar period.<sup>24</sup> For example, because agriculture in Cameroon was considered to be the domain of women, female farming associations spearheaded resistance to unwanted French changes in agricultural and tax policy. Of particular note is one female-led protest that occurred in Cameroon in the wake of the global

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<sup>22</sup> Emmanuel Konde, "Cameroonian Women in National Politics since the Second World War," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1991), 85.

<sup>23</sup> Although girls were allowed to attend French-supported *cours préparatoire* in regional schools by 1921, enrollment remained low throughout the interwar era. *Rapport annuel* (1923), 24-25; Konde, "Cameroonian Women," 2-3; Orosz, *Religious Conflict*, 263; Madiba Essiben, *Colonisation et évangélisation en Afrique, l'héritage scolaire du Cameroun, 1885-1956* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1980), 121; Jean-Francois Bayart, "L'Union des Populations du Cameroun et la décolonisation française," *Cahiers d'études africaines* 18, no. 71 (1978), 450; and Terretta, "Cameroonian Women," 6.

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Mbembe, *La naissance du maquis*, 100.

Great Depression, when, faced with declining revenues, the French administration increased the pool of tax-payers to include large swaths of women.<sup>25</sup> In retaliation, over a thousand women converged on a police station outside of Douala to protest the measure and demand the release of a local chief who had been arrested in connection with the protest movement.<sup>26</sup> The local gendarme not only arrested but also fired on the unarmed women, causing several serious injuries.

Setting aside all evidence to the contrary, the French administration refused to acknowledge the women's active political role, instead arguing that there were clandestine male "agitators" working behind the scenes to direct the women's actions.<sup>27</sup> The French Ministry of Colonies maintained that the "incidents" were "without importance" and that a state of "absolute calm" had prevailed in the face of the expanded tax collection.<sup>28</sup> While the protest movement gained international attention and embarrassed the French administration, it had little impact on policy and the tax was retained.<sup>29</sup> In this sense, the Mandate era offered the inhabitants of the colonies an expanded global audience for anticolonial critiques, but did not offer many tools that could force the French administration to act.

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<sup>25</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "L'Afrique coloniale française et la crise de 1930: crise structurelle et genèse du sous-développement," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 63 no. 232-233 (1976); Félix Kouo, "Les Répercussions de la Crise Economique de 1929 au Cameroun," *Afrika Zamani* 10-11 (December 1979): 100-131; and Jane Guyer, "The Depression and the Administration in South-Central Cameroun," *African Economic History* 10 (1981): 67-79.

<sup>26</sup> Moume Etia, "La révolte des femmes en 1931," *Wife* 6 (April 1973): 12-16; Permanent Mandates Commission, *Official Records*, session 22 (3 November-6 December 1932), 350-1; Ralph Austen & Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 151-2; Derrick, "The 'Germanophone' Elite," 265-6; and Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's "Agitators": Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233.

<sup>27</sup> Austen, *Middlemen*, 151-2; Etia, "La révolte des femmes."

<sup>28</sup> Bleu, Telegram to Colonies Paris n°154 (23 August 1931), ANOM AGEFOM799.

<sup>29</sup> Austen, *Middlemen*, 151-2.

However, the global outcry over the protest and repression was relatively large, particularly considering it pertained to something as niche as female farmers' tax grievances in a part of the world that got very little in the way of global press attention. Some of the global allies capitalized on the anti-colonial nature of the protest, as was the case with the Indochinese Communist Party's rallies in support of the women at the Paris-based Colonial Exhibition of 1931.<sup>30</sup> Racial solidarity was site of alliance, as the League for the Defense of the Black Race further publicized the movement by circulating and posting a copy of a telegram sent by representatives of the Cameroonian women around the streets of Paris.<sup>31</sup> The document outlined the woman's grievances and informed the French public that "they are shooting women in Cameroon!!!" and asked for help in informing the League of Nations about the plight.<sup>32</sup> Feminist movements also defended the women's position, as the protest prompted the creation of a "Colonial Commission" in the Women's International League, including the presence of one French female delegate who criticized the "growing menace of imperialism" that caused such "unrest and suffering among colonized people," calling for an end of military repression in the French colonies and mandates, and even going so far as suggesting independence to be the best solution to the repression.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Brigitta Kuster, "Sous les yeux vigilants: Under the Watchful Eyes: On the International Colonial Exhibition in Paris 1931," *Transversal-Multilingual* 5 (2007): n.p.

<sup>31</sup> Including in the Bel-Air neighborhood around Avenue Daumesnil, the Rue de Toul, the Rue de Picpus, and around the metro station Michel Bizot. André Bonamy, Letter to Governor Marchand (3 September 1931), ANOM agefom799.

<sup>32</sup> Minister of Colonies, Letter to the Commissaire de la République française au Cameroun n°CAI1016 (22 August 1931), ANOM agefom799; "Sauvons nos colonies," *Le Charivari* (29 August 1931), ANOM agefom799.

<sup>33</sup> Leila J. Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 78.

## World War II: From Mandate to Trusteeship

The end of the Second World War saw a massive reorganization of the French imperial and democratic structures, including a barrage of voting and electoral regulations that restructured the limits of the franchise. In the Mandates, a somewhat expanded electorate included fourteen different “types” of newly-enfranchised “capable indigenes” had the right to vote for limited representation in a Second College, including rights for certain chiefs, notables, veterans, clergy, factory owners, and those with a hunting permit or driver’s license.<sup>34</sup> Although the letter of the law stated that suffrage was open to men and women, in practice there were very few if any women who would have been able to fulfill any of the prerequisites.

While the limits of the French franchise were being established, the League of Nations was transforming into the United Nations. As an “Administering Authority,” France was instructed to “accept as a sacred trust” the wellbeing of its charges – now known as Trusteeships rather than Mandates — whose peoples “have not yet attained a full measure of self-

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<sup>34</sup> Initiated in 25 October 1946, the Territorial Assembly went through a number of name changes, from the Assemblée Représentative du Cameroun (ARCAM) to the Assemblée territoriale du Cameroun (ATCAM) in 1952 and would become the Legislative Assembly (ALCAM) in May 1957. In an effort to reduce confusion, I will refer to it only as the Territorial Assembly. To be elected to the second section of the Assembly, one had to be 23 years old, able to speak, read, and write in fluent French, and not hold any administrative office. In addition, fourteen regional councils were created for the stated purpose of “teaching the population in matters relating to local administration.” The first college was composed of French citizens, the second of “indigenous voters.” The full list of those allowed in the second college included: chiefs; notable *évolués*; past and present members of the local assemblies or customary tribunals; medal winners; veterans; *fonctionnaires*; clergy; licensed businessmen, factory owners, planters, and artisans; persons who had been salaried workers or members of cooperatives or unions for at least two years; owners of real estate registered under the Code Civil; persons possessing a labor record, a hunting permit, or a driver’s license. See: Law of 5 October 1946; Decree of 26 October 1946; Law 46-2151 of 5 October 1946; Decree 46-2149 of 5 October 1946; 1946 Constitution of the Fourth French Republic; Decree 45-1829 of 17 August 1945; Ordinance 45-1837 of 17 August 1945; Ordinance of 22 August 45; Decree 45-1960 of 30 August 1945, Decree 45-1961 of 30 August 1945.

government.”<sup>35</sup> The system included the United Nations Trusteeship Council (UNTC), half of which was comprised of Administering Authorities and the other half of a rotating selection of UN member-states.<sup>36</sup> As had been the case in the League, the predominance of colonial powers on the UNTC tempered its ability to challenge colonial policy.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these limits, the incoming French government was troubled by the seemingly wide-ranging purview of the UN, leading French delegates to emphasize United Nations Charter language which denied the UN’s right to “intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”<sup>38</sup> By defining the colonies as somehow “domestic” or at least an “integral part” of the French Union, the administration hoped to rebuff unwanted international oversight.<sup>39</sup> French delegates disputed the necessity of Trusteeship, going so far as calling its legality into question.<sup>40</sup> In order to avoid committing themselves to any firm or explicit laws and principles established by the international body, the French government viewed the UN as a

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<sup>35</sup> The Territories included were Western Samoa, New Guinea, Nauru, the Cameroons (split between French and British administration), Togoland (also split between French and British administration), Ruanda-Urundi, Tanganyika, and the former Japanese-mandated islands in the Pacific.

<sup>36</sup> The rest included the permanent members of the Security Council and a rotating set of non-trust administering states. The administering authorities of Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States all had seats on the council, as did the Republic of China and the Soviet Union due to their membership in the Security Council. There was not veto, and decisions were made by majority rule of members present and voting. The transfer from French Mandate to French Trusteeship occurred officially on 13 December 1946, and the Trusteeship Council officially replaced the Permanent Mandates Commission in March of 1947. Image from “Voting in the United Nations,” *U.N. Bull.* 4, no. 396 (1948), 396.

<sup>37</sup> One key exception was Haiti’s Max Dorsinville.

<sup>38</sup> Article 2, paragraph 7 of the UN Charter.

<sup>39</sup> “Statut du territoire et de ses habitants,” *Rapport annuel du Gouvernement français a l’Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies sur l’Administration du Cameroun* (1951), 31.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Stephen Wood, *France in the World Community: Decolonization, Peacekeeping, and the United Nations* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1973), 23.

meeting space where sovereign states could engage in negotiation rather than a site for international oversight or place to gather input from the Trusteeships themselves.<sup>41</sup>

Despite a large number of structural similarities between the Mandate and Trusteeship systems, several key features differentiated the two, including the implementation of Visiting Missions.<sup>42</sup> While the French would have preferred to have no such international oversight, their ability to send French delegates to participate within these Missions somewhat assuaged their concerns. For example, following his participation on the first Visiting Mission to East Africa in 1947, the French representative noted the importance of the visit for “bringing back clear and concrete impressions of the territories ...and in some way bringing the peoples of the Trust Territories nearer to the UN.”<sup>43</sup> This positive evaluation was, however, largely due to the fact that the East Africa tour consisted only of visits to the non-French trusteeships of Ruanda-Urundi, Tanganyika, and British Somaliland, about which the French were only too glad to share their expertise.

A second major difference between Mandate and Trusteeship was the Trusteeship Charter’s explicit embrace of eventual independence, stating that one of the administering authority’s primary duties was to aid the development of “self-government” by taking “due account of [the people’s] political aspirations” and “assist them in the progressive development of their free political institutions.”<sup>44</sup> While the Visiting Missions were deemed acceptable by the

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<sup>41</sup> Wood, *France in the World Community*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Dietrich Rauschnig, “United Nations Trusteeship System,” in *Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, vol. IV, 369-76 (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1983); H. Duncan Hall, *Mandates, Dependencies and Trusteeship* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1948); C.E. Toussaint, *Trusteeship System of the United Nations* (London: Stevens & Sons Ltd., 1956).

<sup>43</sup> Henri Laurentie, “Impressions of Mission to East Africa,” *UN Bulletin* 5 (1948): 865.

<sup>44</sup> United Nations, Charter of the United Nations (26 June 1945), [un.org/en/charter-united-nations](http://un.org/en/charter-united-nations), article 73b.

French administration, this focus on eventual self-determination was not, as it contradicted both the core values of French colonialism as well as the Constitution of the Fourth Republic. The Trusteeship Agreement eventually forged between the French administration and the UN resolved none of these tensions, as it both suggested that the French would prepare the population for the eventual attainment of self-determination while simultaneously insisted that the Mandates were and would remain “integral parts” of French territory.<sup>45</sup>

A third major innovation in the Trusteeship organization was the strengthening of the petition system, creating a more formal process through which individuals in the Trusteeships could contact the UNTC. Petitions trickled in slowly at first, tending towards the idiosyncratic and personal rather than the organized mass movements that would characterize the 1950s. For example, the first letter from French Cameroon came from a German hoping to use a sample of his handwriting to prove that he was not in fact a Nazi, while the second came from a man who wrote to demand redress for the fact that that while he was at war in Europe, a French colonist had “alienated his wife’s affections.”<sup>46</sup> Following a few slow years, a range of political and activist organizations seized on the ways in which petition system offered space to critique the French administration in front of an international audience, particularly the provision related to

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<sup>45</sup> More specifically, the document asserted the French duty of promoting the “political, economic and social advancement of the inhabitants in accordance with Article 76 [relating to self-determination] of the Charter of the United Nations” as well as increasing the “development of representative democratic bodies, and, in due course, to arrange appropriate measures to enable the inhabitants freely to express an opinion on their political regime and ensure the attainment of the objectives prescribed in Article 76b of the Charter. Local practices were to be respected, or at least “taken into consideration” in order to “promote the economic and social progress of the native population.” See “Trusteeship Agreement,” 136, 140, 142.

<sup>46</sup> T/Pet.5/1 and T/Pet.5/2, *Trusteeship Council Official Records (TCOR)* (Lake Success: United Nations, 1947-). They ultimately decided it was not required to intervene, although the story received enough notoriety to be covered in the American press. See Trusteeship meetings of June 21-23, 1949; and “Husband Solicits UN Aid to Get Back Stolen Wife,” *New York Times* (26 January 1949), 20.

the granting of future autonomy.<sup>47</sup> In this way, the full force of the petition system came into being not through the generosity of the UNTC or the Administering Authorities, but through the direct actions of the petitioners themselves, indicating their central role in shaping the direction and content of the Trusteeship system as a whole.<sup>48</sup>

Activists working outside of the Trusteeships also petitioned the Council for various policy changes. International women's organizations were among the early adopters, pressuring the UNTC to "free" women from "barbarous" customs within Trusteeship territories. In 1947, the International Alliance of Women argued that additional legal protections must be extended to "women of native races" who were "frequently depressed and even enslaved by tribal custom, those very 'local conditions' to which competent authority is to have regarded in affording them protection," in this way criticizing policies that catered towards "cultural difference" as enabling gender discrimination.<sup>49</sup> Religious organizations also emphasized the potential of Trusteeship for matters relating to women's status, with the London-based St. Joan's' Social and Political

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<sup>47</sup> The UPC was formed in April 1948 in Bassa (near Douala) and led by Ruben Um Nyobé, with the initial goals of uniting British and French Cameroon to promote "rapid evolution of the peoples" and an increased standard of living. It eventually transformed into a full-fledged anti-colonialist and nationalist organization. Ruben Um Nyobé and the UPC, *La Pensée de Um Nyobé: L'UPC veut travailler dans la légalité démocratique* (Bureau national provisoire de l'UPC, 1961), 19; Richard Joseph, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun: les origines sociales de l'UPC* (Paris: Karthala, 1986), 247.

<sup>48</sup> On petitioning in trusteeships, see: John Dugard, *The South West Africa/Namibia Dispute: Documents and Scholarly Writings on the Controversy between South Africa and the United Nations* (Stanford: University of California Press, 1973); Ullrich Lohrmann, *Voices from Tanganyika: Great Britain, the United Nations, and the Decolonization of a Trust Territory, 1946-1961* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2008); Z. Ngavirue, *Political Parties and Interest Groups in South West Africa* (Basel: P. Schlettwein, 1997), 181-183; Basutoland Congress Party, *Basutoland petitions the United Nations* (Cairo: External Mission of the Basutoland Congress Party, 1962).

<sup>49</sup> International Alliance of Women, "Petition from the International Alliance of Women, Wembley, England," *TCOR* (March 1947), Doc. T/Pet./General/1.

Alliance demanding that the Trusteeship system be used to abolish “child marriage; forced marriages; lending out of wives; [and] inheritance of widows.”<sup>50</sup>

Despite the growing interest in such questions, the Trusteeship Council rejected any dedicated representation for issues of women or gender, resolving that while “it goes without saying” that women would not be prevented from becoming a delegate on the council should she have the appropriate qualifications, there would be no explicit place held for them or their “issues.”<sup>51</sup> Along with advocates from outside, there was some pushback on this decision within the UNTC itself, with one delegate from Iraq noting that “since there are so many women in Africa, as well as everywhere else, the presence of a woman ... would be a very great help.”<sup>52</sup> However, in the words of a representative from Belgium, it was ultimately decided that “the matter does not concern us at all,” but rather should be taken up “elsewhere” at the United Nations.<sup>53</sup>

The concerns that were taken up “elsewhere” in this earlier period did sometimes relate to questions of women and shed some additional light on the French efforts to balance questions of rights, sovereignty, and gender in their empire. For example, after the United Nations adopted the International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children in 1947, the French delegates immediately concerned themselves with limiting the Convention’s effects in the empire. Their efforts intensified following a Soviet amendment that eliminated the right of

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<sup>50</sup> St. Joan’s Social and Political Alliance, “Petition from St. Joan’s’ Social and Political Alliance in London,” *TCOR* (March 1947), Doc. T/Pet./General.

<sup>51</sup> The suggestion was made by the NGO the International Alliance of Women and the UN-organ the Committee on the Status of Women (organized under the Economic and Social Council at the UN) to include specific representation for questions of women’s rights on the Trusteeship Council.

<sup>52</sup> Statement from Khalidy (Iraq), in “47: Consideration of petitions presented (T/Pet./General 7, T/Pet.2/27) continued (20 November - 16 December 1947),” *OR* (1947).

<sup>53</sup> Statement from Ryckmans (Belgium),” in *ibid*.

“Colonial powers” to exclude their overseas territories from any United Nations conventions they accepted.<sup>54</sup> If this amendment passed, any convention on women or gender that applied to metropolitan France would automatically apply to overseas territories as well. This exposed the tension at the heart of the French imperial project, which had long maintained a “colonial exception” to regulate colonial law while at the same time insisting on the French empire as a unified space. The debate over the amendment pitted representatives from France, Britain, and the US against those from the USSR, Haiti, and Pakistan, who the French delegate characterized as having trotted out “their usual arguments against colonialism.”<sup>55</sup> Despite the French (and more importantly American) critique, the amendment passed by an overwhelming margin of 52-3, with Britain and America voting against and France abstaining.<sup>56</sup>

More importantly, a place for “women and their issues” was eventually established with the 1947 formation of the UN Commission of the Status of Women (CSW). All fifteen of its founding members were women, several of whom played major roles in implementing a broader discussion over questions of gender across new UN policies, such as Mexican representative Amalia de Castillo Leon’s major role in securing a discussion of gender and rights in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>57</sup> The implementation of the CSW also initiated a new focus on question of women’s citizenship in member nations and their “dependent areas,” increasing attention paid to political questions as opposed to earlier focuses on social questions related

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<sup>54</sup> Vincent Broustra, Letter to the Minister of Overseas France (9 December 1947), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2296.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Resolution 217 III of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

mostly to trafficking and marriage practices.<sup>58</sup> However, issues of jurisdiction remained fraught, particularly in debates over if the CSW had the right to interfere with questions related to governance in the Trusteeship territories.

For example, at a 1949 meeting of the CSW in Beirut, tempers flared over the fact that the Trusteeship Council had not provided the CSW with accurate information on the status of women in the dependent territories. At the meeting, members of the CSW repeatedly criticized the fact that in “most of the dependent areas, women have no political rights whatsoever” despite the fact that UN Member States such as France asserted the existence of total gender equality in their borders.<sup>59</sup> Chaired by French representative Marie Lefauchaux, the CSW proposed transferring the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women, signed at Bogotá in May 1948, to “countries which have not yet removed existing discrimination against women in this field,” including the right to vote and hold office.<sup>60</sup> The resolution further requested additional information about how the Trusteeship territories might fit into this designation, criticizing Trusteeship Council members for failing to provide it in the first place.<sup>61</sup>

The fact that the meeting to discuss women’s political rights was held in the former French Mandate of Lebanon was of particular interest to the members present, who noted that future meetings should continue to be held in “different parts of the world, as a means of establishing even closer contacts with all regions... and bring about a greater understanding

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<sup>58</sup> “Further Steps for Women’s Equality: Report on Commission’s Beirut Session,” *UN Bulletin* (May 1949), 454.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 455; Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), “Report on the Third Session, UN Doc. E/1316,” in *United Nations Economic and Social Council Report on the Third Session of the Commission on the Status of Women* (Lake Success: United Nations, 1949).

<sup>61</sup> CSW, “Report on the Third Session,” 5-6; “Further Steps,” 454.

between women of the West and East.”<sup>62</sup> Chairperson Marie Lefauchaux’s later description of the 1949 conference illustrates a shifting mix of imperialist feminism with new forms of international cooperation, as she portrayed Beirut as “an ancient crossroads of civilization” that enabled a particularly fruitful discussion:

Because, as many Lebanese friends and I feel, of the contact of France with this country, Beirut is choice ground for the modern evolution of women. I do not mean to say that there is not in the other States of the Middle East an elite female population perfectly ready to exercise the same rights, and to assume the same responsibilities as the male population; the delegation of the Syrian Government to the Commission, the women representatives or observers of Iran or Iraq offered eloquent proof that there is. But Lebanon must play a leading role in this work and the Lebanese people seemed to be quite conscious of this fact.<sup>63</sup>

The CSW continued to push the Trusteeship Council on the question of women’s status, asking for more information about women’s suffrage and what measures were being done to expand women’s political rights within the Trust territories.<sup>64</sup> On the whole however, CSW members sought to cooperate with rather than work against the Trusteeship Council and UN member states, with CSW leaders arguing that they needed to establish their own programs to better serve the “wheels of the great international machine” rather than indulge nationalist “panegyrics” about the “perfections of the systems in their [the speakers] own countries.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Petitioning and nationalism in the 1950s**

Women’s parties, organizations, and sub-committees in the colonies other parts of the “dependent world” existed in tension with more global feminist or women-oriented movements.

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<sup>62</sup> “Further Steps,” 455.

<sup>63</sup> Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux, “Impressions of Beirut,” *UN Bulletin* (May 1949): 453.

<sup>64</sup> CSW, “Report on the Second Session, UN Doc. E/615,” in *United Nations Economic and Social Council Report on the Second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women* (Lake Success: United Nations, 1949), 13, 17-18.

<sup>65</sup> Marie-Helene Lefauchaux, “Work for Women’s Equality of Status,” *UN Bulletin* (April 1948): 343.

In many instances, women increasingly mobilized local gender-defined concerns (such as their particular rights as mothers or as farmers) on an international stage alongside larger scale questions related to self-determination. In Algeria, for example, the Union of Algerian Women decided to hold a rally in Algiers to celebrate the 1951 International Day of Women with a series of protests promoting colonial reform.<sup>66</sup> While the rally was initially outlawed by the French administration, it eventually went forward with about four hundred women in attendance, about one third of whom were described as “Muslim” in French documents.<sup>67</sup> Along with an “artistic program,” male and female public speakers discussed a number of issues that the French police characterized as “anti-colonialist,” “communist,” and “extreme left,” including questions of gender within the “colonial policies” of France in Algeria as well as the wars in Vietnam and Korea.<sup>68</sup> The visibility of such anti-colonial protest movements connected to questions of women’s rights continued to grow, leading the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to request that the Ministry of Overseas France send documentation that would “allow our delegates to respond to the eventual attacks” that would be made against them in international circles, including the applicability of international statutes on women’s status within Overseas France.<sup>69</sup>

By the 1950s, the practice of petitioning the United Nations Trusteeship Council was becoming increasingly popular as well. By the mid-1950s, nationalist groups used the protest system so widely that the massive backlog of documents at the UN Headquarters required the hiring of extra workers to transcribe the documents before their sheer number caused Trusteeship Council to stop reading them altogether. In the example of Cameroon, men and women’s

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<sup>66</sup> “Union des femmes d’Algérie - UFA,” (March 1951), ANOM 81F/760.

<sup>67</sup> “UFA - Alger,” (12 March 1951), ANOM 81F/760; “Union des femmes d’Algérie.”

<sup>68</sup> “Union des femmes d’Algerie”; “UFA - Alger.”

<sup>69</sup> Vincent Broustra, Letter to M. Gabriel (28 June 1951), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2296; Vincent Broustra, Letter to Minister of Overseas France n°1041 (23 June 1952), ANOM 1AFFPOL/2296.

demands became increasingly nationalist, with hundreds of individuals using their thumbprints to sign petitions created by a centralized political party.<sup>70</sup> Many such petitions were sent during periods of politically-motivated voting abstention, during which activists argued electoral participation only served to legitimate the French administration and should therefore be rejected. Directing mass petitions to the UN while at the same time abstaining from participation within French-oriented democratic institutions was a political statement in and of itself, indicating the degree to which the petitioners viewed their representative goals as existing explicitly outside the French realm.

Although increasing numbers of these petitions were written by women's groups and organizations, the French delegates at the UNTC continued to downplay female nationalism, arguing that the very existence of women's political organizations was nothing more than a cheap ploy used by men to artificially inflate membership and allow women to act as human shields by "participating in demonstrations and by their presence paralyzing the action of the police."<sup>71</sup> Male Cameroonian nationalists also often downplayed the importance and breadth of women's mobilizations; for example, one high profile Cameroonian nationalist who addressed the UN in 1952 inaccurately described the woman's branch of his party as "the only female organization in Cameroon."<sup>72</sup> Yet politically active women did not see of themselves as simply unthinking human shields for colonial police unsure of how to handle "unruly" women or summoned into existence at the whim of male nationalists, but as representing a range of interests depending on their particular sets of goals, including not only self-determination but

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<sup>70</sup> Most signed with UDEFEC, but there are also a great number from "One Kamerun."

<sup>71</sup> "Observations of the French Government" (6 December 1955), UN Doc T/OBS.5/71, ARMS.

<sup>72</sup> "Ce que veut le peuple camerounais: mémoire et document relatifs à l'intervention de Ruben Um Nyobé," (17 & 18 December 1952), ARMS Series 191, Box 2, File 7.

also in their overlapping roles as heads of households, farmers, medical practitioners, parents, educators, and intellectuals.<sup>73</sup>

Questions of racial equality were of major concern for female petitioners, who were highly critical of the French administration's unequal maternity leave policies. This resulted in a series of strategic alliances between female petition-writers in Cameroon and a UNTC delegate from the Philippines, who drew on the Cameroonian women's petitions to repeatedly lambast the French. The delegate particularly criticized the French administration's uneven treatment of state employees, such as the fact that white women on maternity leave were given two months on full pay and two months on half pay while black women were entitled only to "eight weeks rest," all of it unpaid. The French delegate on the council defended the discrepancy as being due to both race and heat, as "the strain of childrearing was more readily endured by an African accustomed to the climate of the Territory than by a European already tired by the tropical climate."<sup>74</sup> Although limited and circumscribed (the maternity law remained as it was despite the criticism), the Trusteeship system therefore did present new venues for strategic alliances that existed beyond the control of the French administration.

Women also demanded gender equality in political rights, a question that was, for the most part, ignored. Debates over women's political rights briefly surfaced in one exchange over the extent of suffrage in Cameroon (which was still very limited), in which the French delegate insisted that there was no sexual discrimination in political rights as there was no law that explicitly barred women from voting if they fulfilled the necessary requirements. Although he

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<sup>73</sup> The biggest women's group was the nationalist-allied UDEFEC, but other large scale organizations included the Association for the Emancipation of the Cameroonian Woman, the National Union of Cameroonian Mothers, the Association of Women of the French Union in Cameroon, and the Union of Cameroonian Women.

<sup>74</sup> Watier (France) in "36. Examination of annual reports on the administration of Trust Territories," *OR* (1949), 183.

conceded that many of means by which one could satisfy these requirements to get these rights were themselves closed off to women (such as membership in local assemblies or the military), he argued that “literate women, women who had a trade, as well as women in possession of hunting or driver’s licenses, could vote.”<sup>75</sup> As he framed it, the French concern over explicitly enfranchising all women in Cameroon related to fears over polygamy, as universal suffrage would enable polygamous men to not only have their own vote, but also the vote of their wives, who would be easily “swayed” to vote in the same way as their husbands. As a result, he argued, “rich Cameroonians who had many wives could thus have more votes than poorer Cameroonians who had fewer wives. The circumstance...well illustrates the need for prudence in the matter.”<sup>76</sup>

In this and other instances, the blame for women’s inequality was accorded to “local custom” rather than colonial policies. As one article on French trusteeship described the situation, women were not disenfranchised because of French law, but because African practices “denied” women “an independent legal status... indigenous males hold a dominant position in society have been reluctant to encourage any rapid change in the status of women.”<sup>77</sup> This French view of local gender dynamics applied more broadly, particularly in places thought to be dominated by holdovers from “traditional” life. One administrator wrote that women in Cameroon “possessed no civil capacity and, young or old, they were all placed under the authority of the man of the family: father, husband, or brother.” Yet “missions and contact with

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<sup>75</sup> Watier (France) and Inglés (Philippines) in *ibid.*, 182.

<sup>76</sup> The issue of polygamy played an ambiguous role. One particularly infamous case from the British Cameroons concerned the efforts of the Fon of Bikom to retain his 110 wives in the face of international criticism. George Barrett, “The Centenarian Fon of Bikom Convinces UN Mission That He Needs His 110 Wives,” *New York Times* (10 February 1950): 13; Watier (France) in “36. Examination of annual reports,” 183.

<sup>77</sup> “Trusteeship in Action: Cameroons Under French Administration” *UN Bulletin* 6 (15 February 1949): 144.

our civilization” had enabled many to “escape the savagery to elevate themselves socially and morally.”<sup>78</sup> Administrative reports echoed this assertion that women were trapped, as

we have noted no important evolution in the condition of the Cameroonian woman... Both the administration and private organizations have made efforts to release the hold of tradition. Results are not yet satisfactory, due to the indigenous resistance, where the male masses and customary chiefs have no desire to see rapid change.<sup>79</sup>

One of the major if limited ways in which the French state engaged to “improve” Cameroonian women continued to be at the level of education, a fact which they consistently touted at Trusteeship Council meetings. A 1947 French report cited above asserted that “a number of *évolués* have expressed a desire to find women who are at their same level of evolution. The administering authority could shape nurses, midwives and teachers...these women will form the nucleus of the female indigenous society of the future.”<sup>80</sup> However of the four secondary schools established in French Cameroon after the war, girls could enroll in only one. Despite this asymmetry, French reports touted efforts to narrow this gap by increasing the rate of “academic” and “domestic” education, especially among the daughters of *évolués*. French language continued to be a major aspect of education, even (or especially) at the expense of not only German, but also indigenous languages.<sup>81</sup>

When UNTC members criticized the French intolerance for local languages, the French delegate defended himself by stating that the eighty dialects spoken in Cameroon were “very little developed; their grammar was primitive; they possessed no literary tradition; and they were rapidly disappearing. It would be difficult to find in any of those languages an adequate medium

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<sup>78</sup> Jean-Claude Froelich, *Cameroun Togo: territoires sous tutelle* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1956), 57.

<sup>79</sup> United Nations Trusteeship Council, *Conseil de tutelle: rapport annuel* (Lake Success: United Nations, 1947), 91.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> This was the case not only in education but as a path to political rights, as one way that a Cameroonian could gain voting rights was by showing competence in the French language.

of expression for all the ideas that had to be communicated to students in the course of their education. In view of all these considerations, it had been decided to choose a civilized language in which to teach, since that would raise the general standard of education.”<sup>82</sup> A second representative elaborated, stating that the French aim was to introduce the inhabitants of the Cameroons to a “higher civilization... an aim that would only be retarded if for the purposes of education a language was to be created from the numerous dialects and new words were to be invented for the many modern ideas in the intellectual and technical field... [France] is trying rather to give the Cameroons a language which would help them towards a higher level of civilization, in accordance with the Charter.”<sup>83</sup> In this way, the French administration reframed their civilizing mission as being in accordance with the goals of Trusteeship.

With some exceptions, the other delegates on the UNTC commended French efforts in this regard, particularly one ever eager-to-please representative from Belgium, who, among his many praises, applauded “the generous spirit which had motivated the daring political reforms instituted in the Cameroons by the French administration.”<sup>84</sup> Even one relatively critical representative from the Philippines (who had earlier questioned the existence of racial asymmetries in maternity leave) lauded the fact that “every trace of racial discrimination had disappeared from the Trust Territories of the Cameroons,” even while he encouraged the administration to continue on their path of “hasten the political advancement of the indigenous populations” by abolishing the double college.<sup>85</sup> The ostensibly anti-imperialist United States

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<sup>82</sup> Watier (France) and Soldatov (USSR), “40. Examination of annual reports on the administration of Trust Territories (14 February 1949),” *OR* (1949), 211.

<sup>83</sup> Garreau (France), in *ibid.*, 212.

<sup>84</sup> “60. Examination of annual reports on the administration of Trust Territories,” *OR* (1949), 362; and “Trusteeship in Action: 2.”

<sup>85</sup> Carpio (Philippines), in “59. Examination of annual reports on the administration of Trust Territories (25 Feb 1949),” *OR* (1949), 357; “Trusteeship in Action: 2.”

had only mild criticism, suggesting only that “the Council might ask the Administering Authority to increase its efforts to induce more voters to cast their vote.” The major censure emerged – not unexpectedly – from the USSR, who bluntly critiqued the French reports as “insufficient, inexact, and failing to give a true picture” while asserting that the French administration was simply “continuing a policy actually directed to strengthening a colonial regime” in which “the great mass of the population was deprived of all political rights; legal power and judicial authority were in the hands of French officials; Europeans had special political rights; and the anti-democratic tribal system was being maintained.”<sup>86</sup>

While the French administration denied this to be true, even the partial enfranchisement that existed did not always transfer to voting rights on the ground. Laws established in Paris were left to the local bureaucracy to implement, and any voters identified as being nationalists were routinely denied access to documents required to register, such as business licenses, identity cards, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and census documents.<sup>87</sup> Women’s petitions indicate the degree to which the enfranchisement of women (which was by that point supposed to include all French citizens, all Cameroonian mothers with at least two children who had “lived or died for France,” as well as those with certain credentials such as a formal French degree) was in reality quite limited, as a 1952 petition to the UN Visiting Mission to Cameroon by a Nkongsamba women’s group requested the right to vote, to run for public office, and to hold administrative posts in the colonial civil service. Claims of voter fraud also called into question the elections themselves, particularly the widespread accusation that the administration had

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<sup>86</sup> Sayre (US) and Solotov (USSR) in “59. Examination of annual reports on the administration of Trust Territories,” *OR* (1949), 355; and “Trusteeship in Action: 2.”

<sup>87</sup> Terretta, “Cameroonian Women,” 24.

nullified votes that had been won by nationalist parties.<sup>88</sup> Shut out of the franchise, nationalists increasingly turned to protest and petition.

Reports of election monitoring give a more comprehensive idea about what the Trusteeship system (and its limits) looked like in action, and, although the archival file on supervised elections in Cameroon remains sealed, several reports on Togo (France's other African trusteeship, and known for its relatively progressive legal framework compared to that of Cameroon) provide some clues as to how this de facto disenfranchisement might have worked.

The Haitian representative from the UNTC Max Dorsinville who led the electoral supervision in Togo reported how inequalities often existed at the level of practice rather than law. He described the “serious problem” of voter registration, in which “the spectacle of hundreds of people – many of whom are women with small children – after having walked dozens of kilometers [to the administrative office] waiting patiently in the sun for hours and hours only to be told to come back another day.” Out of 52,316 voter registration requests received by the administration that spring (a number he judged to be well below the real number of registration attempts), only 40,518 were passed on to the civil judges, of which 13,591 resulted in “orders of registration,” 2,678 resulted in “orders of refusal,” and the rest seemed to simply disappear, as “thousands of demands for electoral registration are not examined every day.” The results of a recent law ostensibly implemented to encourage easier voter registration were even more grim: out of 481 people who appealed to revise electoral lists, 471 registration demands of registration were refused, nine demands that someone be removed from a list were

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<sup>88</sup> Joseph, *Le mouvement nationaliste*, 247.

approved, and one demand for removal was rejected, meaning the “practical result” of a law intended to expand the franchise was therefore zero registrations and nine removals.”<sup>89</sup>

Although the 1952 UN Visiting Mission to Cameroon noted a similar concern over the lack of practical universal suffrage and advised that it “should be introduced as soon as possible,” their official report stated that “for the time being such a step might appear premature... the people of the Cameroons – except in the South – had not reached electoral maturity...and a large proportion of the population do not understand the electoral system.”<sup>90</sup> The “hope” that France would “continue its efforts to achieve adult universal suffrage in the near future” continued to be a refrain at Trusteeship Council meetings. French impressions of Cameroonian electoral culture were also critical. The Minister of Overseas France explained the abstention to the Minister of Foreign Affairs using “tribalist” arguments, stating that when “one of theirs is a candidate” people will vote, but they “snub the voting booth when rival tribes are the only ones represented.” In this way, African democratic practice was read as a manifestation of “tribal rivalry” or “electoral clienteles,” as “the votes reflect the cohesion of ethnic groups.”<sup>91</sup>

The Secretary of State for Overseas France and European representative from Cameroon Louis-Paul Aujoulat expressed a mix of optimism and wariness about Cameroon’s political future, asserting that while Cameroon requires “the assistance of France,” existing representative

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<sup>89</sup> Max H. Dorsinville, “Rapport succinct couvrant la période du 23 mars au 7 avril 1958, Lomé, Togo,” (8 April 1958), ARMS Series 0287 Box 1 File 13; and Dorsinville, “Rapport succinct couvrant la période du 8 au 19 avril 1958, Lomé, Togo,” (19 April 1958), ARMS Series 0287 Box 1 File 13.

<sup>90</sup> “Report on the Cameroons under French Administration,” ARMS Series 191, Box 2, File 7 [0040].

<sup>91</sup> Pierre Pflimlin, Letter to The Minister of Foreign Affairs (14 May 1952), MAE NUOI/4459/506; “Cameroons Under French Administration: Evolution and Application of the 1957 Statute, VMWA/1958/CF1,” (25 September 1958), ARMS Series 191, Box 2, File 7 [0040]; “Report given to Visiting Mission to West African Trust Territories (1958),” ARMS Series 191, Box 2, File 7 [0040].

assemblies (of which he was an elected member) “have supplied proof that it is not premature to invite the Cameroonians themselves to participate more and more in the democratic management of their own interests.” The positive aspects of Cameroon’s political development were not a result of “international engagements,” but rather due to the “superior goals” of “traditional” and French-defined values.<sup>92</sup> High Commissioner of Cameroon André Soucadaux similarly lauded the French (rather than international or local) role in promoting democracy in Cameroon, and argued that his nation’s true aim in the territory was to “reveal to this country its own personality and to have it find its rhythm of life in the modern world by shifting every day more of our effort to one of its own inhabitants,” a job that cannot be rushed, but required “time and reflection.”<sup>93</sup>

Political parties within Cameroon were impatient with France’s timeline for the completion of this process. Nationalist petitions to the UN spiked in 1954; estimates suggest that the main nationalist group UPC and its linked organizations sent more petitions to the UN in 1954 than all the petitions sent from all over the world in 1952 and 1953 combined. Women demanded the release of their imprisoned male relatives or UPC allies, protested administrative violence, and the way in which French repression disrupted family life.<sup>94</sup> Rumors spread that the administration was arresting anyone who dared to petition the UN with nationalist or anti-French sentiments.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Louis-Paul Aujoulat, “Introduction,” to *Le Cameroun: aspect géographique, historique, touristique, économique et administratif du territoire* (Paris: Alépée, 1953), 6-7.

<sup>93</sup> André Soucadaux, “Preface” to *Le Cameroun*, 10.

<sup>94</sup> Office of UDEFEC, “Petition from the Office of UDEFEC concerning the Cameroons under French Administration (1 October 1954), T/Pet.5/365,” *TO* (1954); Babimbi branch of UDEFEC, “Petition from the Babimbi branch of UDEFEC (13 December 1954), T/Pet.5/409,” *TO* (1954); Marthe Penda, “Petition from Mrs. Marthe Penda, Secretary Bon Mbenge Branch of UDEFEC, Babimbi (21 January 1955), T/Pet.5/409Add1,” *TO* (1955).

<sup>95</sup> These rumors had existed since 1950, but grew in the mid-decade. “Africans in a Plea to UN Charge French Retaliation,” *New York Times* (16 June 1950): 9.

In turn, French representatives to the UN argued that such measures were only “hindering the normal development of political, economic, and social evolution of the Cameroonian population,” allowing nationalists to “unduly benefit” from Cameroon’s trusteeship status, and sought to “draw from it the maximum profit” through writing counterfeit petitions, lying to the Visiting Missions, and grandstanding before the General Assembly to convince that world that the Cameroonians – rather than the French – represented the “legitimate aspirations” of the population.<sup>96</sup> They criticized nationalists for taking “UN values” to “mythic levels,” including the “particularly unfavorable” right of peoples to decide their own leader as well as those enshrined in the Charter or the Declaration of Rights of Man.<sup>97</sup> Complicating the increasingly fractious and accusatory climate of late 1954 and early 1955 was the upcoming UN Visiting Mission, now on its second return trip to French Cameroon. In preparation, the UPC organized a “crescendo” of propaganda, causing panic amongst the French administrations that the inhabitants of Cameroon were conspiring to make them look bad out of spite or ill-will.<sup>98</sup>

With growing violence in Cameroon alongside growing numbers of nationalist supporters, the French Council of Ministers outlawed the most vocal of the nationalist groups, including the women’s organization UDEFEC.<sup>99</sup> The administration stated that it was impossible for the French administration to tolerate the existence of a “subversive” movement, even if this

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<sup>96</sup> The French cite the fact that many petitions from a variety of supposed parties give an address identical to that of UPC headquarters (PO Box 22) in Douala, including petitions from “notables Bafin de Douala” (T/Pet.5/366 et 532); “syndicat des planters de Mandjap (T/Pet.5/397 et 398); and “Population autochtone de New-Bell” (T/Pet5/515). “Chronologies des incidents (May 1955),” 12-13, ARMS S.0504.0044, folder #1.

<sup>97</sup> “Les Mouvements extrémistes au Cameroun,” (22 April 1955), ARMS S.0504.0044, folder #1.

<sup>98</sup> Jean Dupuy, Letter to Mr. J. Rapoport (17 April 1957), ARMS S.0504.0044; Omog, “Déclaration.” Reprints of and references to this document emerged several times in the archives. Also see Gertrude Omog, “Petition from Mme Gertrude Omog, Maquis,” (14 June 1955) T/Pet.5/674.”

<sup>99</sup> “Chronologies des incidents”; Dupuy, Letter to Mr. J. Rapoport; Terretta, “Cameroonian Women,” 30.

meant taking “extreme measures, before which a democratic government must hesitate.” Legal justification for the ban drew on both colonial law as well as the power vested in France by the Trusteeship Accords “not only for assuring public order, but also to ensure the respect and development of democratic liberties...the Administrating Authority would consider itself to have betrayed the UN’s confidence and failed in its duties toward the Cameroonian population if it lets the UPC resume its efforts...”<sup>100</sup> It became officially illegal for the banned nationalist parties to contact the UN, either in person or by petition, and the administration monitored their mail and correspondence.<sup>101</sup> A censorship system was implemented in preparation for the Visiting Mission, in which any petitioner seeking an audience was asked “whom he represented,” and all stating to be from any of the banned organizations were turned away. In one example, a speaker who first claimed to be representing the UPC later argued he was in fact representing “all Cameroonian people,” after which he was informed that “there was no such association” and if there was, the petitioner “had no mandate” to speak for them in any case.<sup>102</sup>

However, despite the “severe punishment” they faced for doing so, the banned groups petitioned the UN in even greater numbers, calling out the contradiction between the ideals of Trusteeship and the violence of French repression. In response, the French asserted that the groups had “abused” and unjustly “monopolized” the petition system in order to make themselves appear more legitimate and popular than they in fact were. The French administration informed the Visiting Mission that the UPC had used propaganda to lead the “public mind” to become “confused and perturbed even to the point of becoming hostile to the United Nations and

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<sup>100</sup> “Chronologies des incidents,” 20; “Cameroons Under French Administration.”

<sup>101</sup> The repression was particularly pronounced in the Bamiléké and Sanaga-Maritime regions.

<sup>102</sup> “Draft: Note verbal for Mr. Lefèvre, representative of the High Commissioner with the Visiting Mission,” ARMS, S.0504.0044.

to the Visiting Mission which is to them its tangible representation.”<sup>103</sup> In return, the chairman of the Visiting Mission – Max Dorsinville of Haiti – indicated “surprise” at this sentiment, as in their experience in Cameroon had never been one of hostility but “on the contrary...[the Mission] deeply appreciates the many courtesies and friendly welcome accorded it at all places.”<sup>104</sup>

In 1956, formal universal suffrage was officially instituted, although this did little to turn the tide of increasing violence.<sup>105</sup> Although the French were looking to “avoid another Algeria,” they turned to heavily military occupation and forced relocation to “pacify” nationalist regions and seek out those rebels living in exile or in hiding. The administration also increased its bureaucratic efforts to prevent nationalists from registering to vote, despite their party already being outlawed. Through large-scale abstention (almost 80% in Douala), the 1956 elections resulted in a large victory for the moderate Union Camerounaise, headed by future-president Ahmadou Ahidjo.<sup>106</sup> The election also saw Julienne Ngoumou-Niat become Cameroon’s first

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<sup>103</sup> The Mission was chaired by Max Dorsinville of Haiti, perhaps explaining to some degree why this document was uncharacteristically defensive of the territory in the face of French attacks. “Draft: Note verbal for Mr. Lefèvre, representative of the High Commissioner with the Visiting Mission,” ARMS, S.0504.0044.

<sup>104</sup> “Draft: Note verbal.”

<sup>105</sup> Originally the Loi Cadre was not to apply to Cameroon at all. Several of the electoral reforms that it eventually bestowed had already occurred in Togo, which had lost its double college in February 1952. Gareau referenced these differences in describing Togo as a “pilot state for all of Overseas France.” Cameroon changed from a “Trust Territory” to a “Trust State,” and instead of simply being “Administrées,” the inhabitants gained “Cameroonian citizenship” as well as the right to determine their own flag, although they did *not* acquire a legal “Cameroonian nationality.” “Evolution and Application of the 1957 Statute, VMWA/1958/CF1,” (25 September 1958), ARMS Series 191; “Le Statut du Cameroun (1957),” ARMS 26/557/box 7 file 7; and Frederick H. Gareau, “The Impact of the United Nations upon Africa,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16, no. 4 (1978), 570.

<sup>106</sup> Although 1,752,902 voters were now registered, only about 725,000 cast their votes. Nicodemus Fru Awasom, “Politics and Constitution-Making in Francophone Cameroon, 1959-1960,” *Africa Today* 49, no. 4 (2002), 8; “Cameroons Under French Administration”; “Report Given to Visiting Mission,” 2, 7.

female parliamentarian in the Territorial Assembly.<sup>107</sup> Petitions continued to flood the Trusteeship Council, with Cameroonians criticizing the nationalist ban, rigged elections, French violence, voter fraud, and the suppression of civil liberties.<sup>108</sup> Women writing from rural areas reiterated the damage the repression did to the welfare of children, as well as continuing to focus on the needs of female farmers, highlighted women's role as mothers, and criticized the dangers of European birthing techniques.<sup>109</sup>

The French assassination of several UPC leaders in 1958 and 1960 further increased the numbers of petitions, many of which were sent “illegally.”<sup>110</sup> Women and youths dominated the smuggling process, hiding UN-bound documents – “hand-written on scraps of paper” and with “thumb-prints more often than signatures” – under their dresses and coats into British Cameroon from where they could be posted.<sup>111</sup> By 1960, nationalists had submitted thousands of petitions to the United Nations, at least 500 of which were from women.

In confronting the assassination of political leaders with demands for local control over farming and maternity, these documents indicate the importance of transnational networks in shaping the history of both national and colonial spaces. Transnational feminist groups, non-

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<sup>107</sup> Ngoumou-Niat had ran for a second time in the French legislative elections of 2 January 1956, and although she lost she did secure 861 votes. French Ministry of the Interior, *Les élections législatives du 2 janvier 1956* (Paris: National Assembly, 1957), 457.

<sup>108</sup> Landis, “UN Stepchildren,” *Africa Today* 5, no. 1 (1958), 7.

<sup>109</sup> There are many examples, including Louise Mpaye, “Petition from Mrs. Marie Louise Mpaye concerning the Cameroons under French Administration (29 October 1954), T/Pet.5/449”; UDEFEC Fonkouakem, “Petition from UDEFEC, Fonkouakem, Bafang region (22 November 1954), T/Pet.5/512”; Femmes Camerounaise, “Petitions from the Editorial Board of Femmes Camerounaise (7 June 1955), T/Pet.5/618”; Anne Langue, “Petition from Anne Langue, a dealer, mother of six children, widow of the late Leuton Augustin (4 April 1955), T/Pet.5/573.”

<sup>110</sup> UPC leader Ruben Um Nyobe was assassinated by French gendarmes near his natal village of Bourmnyebel (in Nyong-et-Kellé, Bassa) in September 1958; the man who succeeded him in UPC leadership — Félix-Roland Moumié — was killed by an ex-SDECE agent (French intelligence agency) in Geneva in 1960, while another high official named Osende Afana was allegedly killed by a French ambush in Ghana.

<sup>111</sup> Oral interviews by Terretta, “Cameroonian Women.”

aligned solidarity networks, UN committees, and the networks who fed into them challenged the limits of the colonially-bound “French” world, connect local forms of activism to new audiences and pursue rights and representation at international, colonial, local, and — as the movement for independence swelled — national registers.

## **Conclusion:**

### **Gender in a Postcolonial Empire**

In the past few decades, scholarship on gender and sexuality within colonial cultures has proliferated, resulting in a wide range of works that connect questions of empire, feminism, and political activism within France and the colonies from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. This dissertation emphasizes the importance of colonial female suffrage within this broader field, particularly the post-World War II era in which debates over the gendered and racialized limits of political rights within a “democratic” empire imbued the abstracted figure of the non-white female voter with new significance. Starting in the late eighteenth century, French colonial citizenship marginalized women in the empire while simultaneously justifying the imperial project as a way to raise women’s status. Indeed, as females and as non-white imperial subjects, women’s doubled exclusion from full citizenship transformed their potential enfranchisement into the ultimate test case of the “civilizing mission” that legitimized the French empire. However, the actual enfranchisement of such individuals raised troubling questions: would giving colonial women the right to vote in French elections mean that the civilizing mission had “worked” or, conversely, suggest that it was never needed to begin with? The French difficulty in answering this question was emblematic of a larger crisis of decolonization that was restructuring the nation and empire. Feminist, imperialist, and anti-colonial groups and individuals created alliances and fractures around the mobilization of the female franchise, marking continuities as well as changes in the creation of postcolonial democracies. In this way, the post-World War II debate over the limits of the colonial female franchise illuminates the

mutual entanglement of democracy and imperialism, showing how the racialized and gendered limits of citizenship have shaped the modern world.

The question of female political citizenship (and the citizenship of non-white people more generally) has remained contentious in postcolonial France as well as its former colonies. There has been a great deal of not always historical (if historicized) work on the more recent postcolonial or contemporary period, focusing on 21<sup>st</sup> century issues such as the so-called “headscarf debate,” immigration and multiculturalism, and intersectional feminisms. However, linked questions of race and gender between these two eras — in particular the 1960s and 1970s — remain less evenly examined, meaning the specific nature of the connections between the colonial and the more recent postcolonial era remains hazy.

Yet race and the former empire remained central issues within French and francophone feminist and women’s groups of the 1960s and ‘70s. In this period, transnational French and francophone women’s organizations articulated gendered conceptions of rights and political activism in the 1960s and 1970s that were connected to yet diverged from the concerns of the colonial period and the more recent era, giving a more comprehensive picture of the ongoing process of decolonization as well as more contemporary debates about gender, race, and religion in postcolonial France today.

French associations that focused on questions of both gender and race also existed within a broader network of organizations in newly-independent former colonies as well as more explicitly transnational groups. As people, goods, and ideas traversed regional and global spaces, it is necessary to consider regional developments within broader international contexts, including how new networks enabled individuals across the empire and postcolonial world to interact with wider groups of people and in front of different audiences.

One limit here is the fact that the diversity of these groups calls into question the utility of putting them into a shared framework of analysis. However, I would suggest that this very fact is a crucial part of the narrative, prompting us to consider how and why alliances were both made and broken within the postcolonial francophone world. Continuities as well as the changes marked the shift from the colonial to the postcolonial period, particularly in the ways that activist organizations worked across and against imperial and national borders to critique government policies and articulate new versions of feminism in a francophone world linked by a very recent imperial past.

In postwar France, mainstream (and largely white) French metropolitan feminisms of the 1960s and 70s showed the ways in which gender inequalities persisted despite female enfranchisement. For example, the emergence of the Mouvement de libération des femmes (or MLF) in the late 1960s represented a renewed feminist focus on the body, particularly in securing female autonomy and reproductive rights and challenging patriarchal laws that kept women under the legal control of their husbands and fathers. In some ways, the MLF was a heterogeneous movement in bringing together different branches of feminist ideology from across the left-wing political spectrum. At the same time, it was overwhelmingly white and middle-class and focused on the problems and challenges that were most pressing for white and middle-class French women. In this way, the MLF was unable to account for the specific challenges, experiences, or problems faced by immigrants, poorer white working-class women, and racial or religious minorities.<sup>1</sup>

In the wake of May '68 and into the 1970s, metropolitan women of color challenged the priorities of the MLF by arguing that racial and gendered discrimination could not be

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<sup>1</sup> Danièle Joly and Khursheed Wadia, *Muslim Women and Power: Political and Civic Engagement in West European Societies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 47-84.

disentangled. New groups and associations formed to address the broader failure of French feminisms to recognize how systems of sexism and racism intersected to produce different types of inequalities.<sup>2</sup> For example, in 1972, women in a Paris-based Moroccan student movement formed a new organization they called the Association of Moroccan Women in France (*Association de femmes marocaines en France*, later renamed the *Groupe femmes marocaines*), which they used to coordinate critiques of political repression in Morocco and the Arab world as well as promote the rights of female immigrants in France. A similar group formed several years later (the *Groupe femmes algériennes*) united Algerian women with women of Algerian descent born or living in France to both critique the restrictive Algerian Family Code and work to support immigrant women and their descendants in France. In emphasizing the linkages between French and overseas political struggles, such groups articulated a vision of the francophone world that was decidedly postcolonial and entangled, connecting the repressive political structures of many post-independence regimes to the colonial era, masculinist nationalism, and the lives and challenges of people living in the diaspora.

Some groups shared the MLF's emphasis on questions of the body and reproductive rights. For example, in 1976, the *Coordination des femmes noires* was founded to combine arguments about class, race, anti-imperialism, and anti-authoritarianism with feminist activism, particularly relating to contraception and abortion. By identifying themselves as an organization of "black women" rather than women of a particular former colony or nation in either Africa or the Caribbean, the founders sought to appeal to a wider range of individuals and emphasize their shared histories of colonialism and marginalization. Awa Thiam, one of the founders of the group, was herself a student from Senegal, and hoped to connect her own particular experiences

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<sup>2</sup> Nadia Châabane, "Diversité des mouvements de 'femmes dans l'immigration'," *Les Cahiers du CEDREF* 16 (2008): 231-250.

in France and West Africa to those of other women. In her 1978 book *La parole aux Nègresses*, Thiam critiqued French feminism for sidelining race, arguing it framed sexism as something that happened to women and racism something that happened only to black men. This push to bring race into questions of reproductive rights had broader influence within French feminisms, including prompting organizations working on abortion and contraception to highlight the fact that white French women under eighteen in mainland France were banned from accessing contraception while young disadvantaged black women in France's overseas departments could have it imposed upon them.

Novels, literature, and other forms of cultural production also became major tools of feminist political engagement. For example, in 1974 a group of young French women of Algerian descent living in the Seine-Saint-Denis suburb of Paris founded a theater group, Troupe La Kahina, named after a 7<sup>th</sup> century Berber warrior queen. Initially comprised of ten women and three men, their productions focused on the daily lives of Algerian women and their families and descendants in both Algeria and France. The group soon established an active presence in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood of Paris, gaining a reputation for their ability to speak not as temporary students or political exiles, but as the children of immigrants born in France.<sup>3</sup> In this way, they challenged the popular perception of the North African community in France as composed primarily of single male workers and highlighted the particular experiences of women and young French-born people within the population.<sup>4</sup>

Their first major production was a play entitled *So That These Tears of Our Mothers Should Become A Legend* (*Pour que les larmes de nos mères deviennent une légende*), first

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Derderian, "Confronting the Past: The Memory Work of Second-Generation Algerians in France," in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. Patricia Lorcin, 247-256 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 250.

performed around 1976. As evidenced in the title, the play contrasts the celebrated nationalist image of the mother-heroine with the lived experiences of Algerian women in North Africa and France, drawing on the writers' perspectives of their own immigrant mothers and families.<sup>5</sup> The narrative focuses on the French Algerian War and its aftermath, depicting the torture of Algerian women by the French and the post-independence government's imposition of the strict Family Code. The play illustrates the connections between the colonial era and the present, the metropole and the former colony, and the ways in which different governments and administrations have failed to protect women's freedoms.

The members of the group used theater, art, literature, and music as political tools to comment upon and shape their own communities and societies. For example, one of the main founders of Kahina was a woman named Salika Amara, who worked not only within theater, but also in creating one of the first newspapers specifically for immigrants (*Without Borders* or *Sans frontière*), the widely popular radio station Radio Beur, and a community-aid based organization called the Association of the New Generation of Immigrants (*Association de la nouvelle génération d'immigrés* or ANGI). Kahina's plays became influential outside of Paris as well, leading to tours across the country and the establishment of similar theater groups in Nanterre and Valence, anticipating the widespread rise of cultural production by immigrants and the children of immigrants (particularly those from North Africa) that would characterize 1980s France.

In the former colonies as well, new women's organizations and feminist groups defined themselves and their goals in a range of different ways. While all postcolonial constitutions enshrined some form of gender equality as a founding principle, arguments about female

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<sup>5</sup> Laura Chakravarty Box, *Strategies of Resistance in the Dramatic Texts of North African Women* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

representation, parity, and social citizenship remained highly controversial. In some cases, existing nationalist women's groups pivoted to address the changing concerns of the independence era, framing themselves as feminists for a new generation of citizens. Yet for other groups, feminism became framed as "oppositional" to postcolonial national regimes, such as in a 1963 debate in the Alger republican which denounced feminism as inherently European and anti-Islamic.

While some female activists in this way argued for the need to distance themselves from the French colonial period, others emphasized the linkages that emerged from their shared experiences. For example, at the 1964 establishment of the one of the first francophone African women's magazines (*AWA: La Revue de la femme noire*), the founders emphasized how their shared access to the French language would enable them to forge new alliances that were able to move beyond and across the borders of postcolonial nations.<sup>6</sup> In appealing to a broad social audience across a transnational space, the magazine connected the everyday experiences of African women in postcolonial francophone nations to larger intellectual and theoretical debates about race, political reportage, and consumer culture.

For example, the first issue of the magazine included news about a recent women's conferences in Madagascar and Russia, articles about how to navigate new female career opportunities, as well as poetry, short fiction, and artworks.<sup>7</sup> In a statement outlining the purpose of the journal, the founders stated that their aim was "not forging a blunt weapon for a senseless feminism, but rather of crafting an instrument that can highlight our possibilities and our

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<sup>6</sup> Ruth Bush, "'Mesdames, il faut lire!' Material Contexts and Representational Strategies in Early Francophone African Women's Magazines," *Francosphères* 5, no. 2 (2016), n.p.

<sup>7</sup> See online database of issues of AWA at <https://www.awamagazine.org/>

femininity.”<sup>8</sup> The statement critiqued the Western preoccupation with the promotion of a vague “emancipation of African women” by arguing that “all this is outdated, everywhere women have already proven themselves.” In acknowledging the “particular problems” faced by black women in the postcolonial world, they emphasized the connected experiences of women across the planet, citing their own “inspiration” from other “marches towards process and means of struggle against the brakes which have been applied against women’s ability to flourish.” While they in this way sought to provide support, they also saw their role as that of the “pitiless mirror to reflect our weakness and blunders.” Alongside more explicit statements on the nature of feminist activism, the magazine also highlighted beauty and style, including photo spreads on young women’s fashion trends and modern furniture for the home.

Women’s groups in France and its former colonies thus engaged with a world caught between empire and postcolony in ways that were novel while building on older modes of activism. In linking the colonial era with a more recent past and present, such organizations illuminate the broader stakes over the decolonization of feminism, the challenges of postcolonial citizenship, and the enduring legacies of empire.

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<sup>8</sup> “Editorial: Reflexion,” *AWA: La revue de la femme noire* 1 (January 1964): 3.

**Appendix:**

**Legislative codes regulating suffrage in France and the empire**

Legislature Dates	Total #	Outre - mer #	% outre-mer	Electoral regime	Electors (metropole)	Election dates	Laws, Texts, and sources
Etats généraux	1200	17	1.4%				
Assemblée nationale législative 1 October 1791 - 20 September 1792	746	1	0.1%	suffrage censitaire, two degrees		1 September 1791 (and following days)	Décret du 22 décembre 1789, relatif à la constitution des assemblées primaires et des assemblées administratives Instruction du 8 janvier 1790 sur la formation des assemblées représentatives et des corps administratifs
Convention nationale 21 September 1792 - 26 October 1795	745	34	4.6%	universal manhood suffrage, two degrees		2 September 1792	Décret des 11-12 août 1792 relatif à la formation des assemblées primaires pour le rassemblement de la Convention nationale Décret des 21-22 août 1792 relatif à la formation de la Convention nationale Décret du 22 août 1792
Council des Cinq-Cents Conseil des Anciens 27 October 1795 - 26 December 1799 (5 brumaire an IV - 5 nivôse an VIII )	500	11-15		suffrage censitaire, two degrees		April - May 1795 (Germinal - Floréal an IV) 12 - 21 October 1795 (20 to 29 Vendémiaire an IV) March-April 1797 (Germinal an V) March-April 1798 (Germinal an VI) March-April 1799 (Germinal an VII)	Constitution du 5 fructidor an III (22 août 1795) : articles 8 à 56 Décret du 5 fructidor an III sur les moyens de terminer la Révolution Décret du 13 fructidor an III concernant le mode de réélection des deux tiers de la Convention nationale Loi du 27 pluviôse an V
Corps législatif 1 January 1800 - 4 June 1814 (11 nivôse an VIII)	300	0	0.0%	universal manhood suffrage, four degrees		25 December 1800 (4 nivôse an VIII)	Constitution du 22 frimaire an VIII (13 décembre 1799), Titre premier (articles 1 à 14) et article 20, 91 Sénatus-consulte organique du 16 thermidor an X (4 août 1802) (dit Constitution de l'an X), esp. article 54
Chambre des députés des départements 4 June 1814 - 20 March 1815	237	0	0.0%	direct suffrage censitaire		x	Charte constitutionnelle du 4 juin 1814 : articles 35 à 42
Chambre des représentants 3 June - 13 July 1815	629	0	0.0%	universal manhood suffrage, two degrees		6 and 10 May 1815	Acte additionnel aux constitutions de l'Empire du 22 avril 1815 (articles 7 à 13 et 27 à 33)

395	0	0.0%	Suffrage censitaire à deux degrés		14 and 21 August 1815	Charte constitutionnelle du 4 juin 1814 (cf. supra) Ordonnance du 13 juillet 1815 portant dissolution de la Chambre des députés, convocation des collèges électoraux, et règlement provisoire pour les élections
						art. 3 de l'ordonnance du 5 septembre 1816 et tableau annexé
262	0	0.0%	Suffrage censitaire à deux degrés		25 September and 4 October 1816	Ordonnance du 27 novembre 1816
258	0	0.0%	Suffrage censitaire direct		20 September 1817 20 October 1818	Law of 22 September 1817 Loi du 5 février 1817 sur les élections (complétée par la loi du 25 mars 1818)
430	0	0.0%	Suffrage censitaire direct avec double collège		4 November 1820 25 February 1824 17 November 1827 23 June 1830	Loi du 29 juin 1820 sur les élections Loi du 9 juin 1824 relative au renouvellement intégral et septennal de la Chambre des députés Loi du 2 juillet 1828
459	0	0.0%	Suffrage censitaire direct		5 July 1831 21 June 1834 4 November 1837 2 March 1839 9 July 1842 1 August 1846	Charte constitutionnelle du 14 août 1830 (articles 30 à 46) Loi du 19 avril 1831 sur les élections à la Chambre des députés Law of 23 April 1831 Loi of 22 June 1833
900	16	1.8%	Suffrage universel direct.	Français 21+ Resident 6+ mo.	23 April 1848	Décret du 5 mars 1848 qui convoque les assemblées électorales et fixe le nombre de députés à élire
750	11	1.5%	Suffrage universel direct.	Français 21+ Resident 6+ mo.	13 May 1849	Constitution du 4 novembre 1848 (articles 20 à 31). Loi électorale du 15 mars 1849
261	0	0.0%		Français 21+ Resident 6+ mo.; non-resident Français 25+	29 February 1852	Constitution du 14 janvier 1852 (articles 34 à 38) et Sénatus-consulte fixant la Constitution de l'Empire du 21 mars 1870 (articles 31 et 32).
267	0	0.0%	Suffrage universel direct.		21 June 1857	
283	0	0.0%			31 May 1863	Décret organique du 2 février 1852 pour l'élection des députés du Corps législatif
292	0	0.0%			24 May 1869	
768	15	2.0%	Suffrage universel direct.		8 February 1871	Décret du 28 janvier 1871, portant convocation des collèges électoraux à l'effet d'élire l'Assemblée nationale

Chambre des députés 8 March 1876 - 10 July 1940	534	8	1.5%	20 February and 5 March 1876 14 and 28 October 1877	Loi organique du 30 novembre 1875 sur l'élection des députés
	557	16	2.9%	20 August and 4 September 1881	Loi du 28 juillet 1881
	585	16	2.7%	4 and 18 October 1885	Loi du 16 juin 1885 ayant pour objet de modifier la loi électorale
	576	16	2.8%	22 September and 6 October 1889	
	581	16	2.8%	20 August and 3 September 1893	
	586	16	2.7%	8 and 22 May 1898	
	591	16	2.7%	27 April and 11 May 1902 6 and 20 May 1906	Loi du 13 février 1889 rétablissant le scrutin uninominal pour l'élection des députés Loi du 17 juillet 1889 relative aux candidatures multiples
	596	16	2.7%	24 April and 8 May 1910	
	602	16	2.7%	26 April and 10 May 1914	
	626	16	2.6%	no election?	Loi du 12 juillet 1919 portant modifications aux lois organiques sur l'élection des députés et établissant le scrutin de liste avec représentation proportionnelle
	612	19	3.1%	22 and 29 April 1928	
	615	19	3.1%	1 and 8 May 1932	Loi du 21 juillet 1927 portant rétablissement du scrutin uninominal pour l'élection des députés
	618	20	3.2%	26 April and 3 May 1936	

Première Assemblée nationale constituante 6 November 1945 - 5 June 1946	586	64	10.9%	Suffrage universel direct.	Français et françaises 21+. Sont éligibles les électeurs de vingt-cinq ans.	2 June 1946	Ordonnance n° 45-1837 du 17 août 1945 Ordonnance n° 45-2119 du 15 septembre 1945 article 2 de l'ordonnance du 17 août 1945 Ordonnance n° 45-1988 du 3 septembre 1945 Ordonnances n° 45-1836 et n° 45-1837 du 17 août 1945. Loi - adoptée par voie de référendum - du 2 novembre 1945 portant organisation des pouvoirs publics (Textes, p. 157). l'ordonnance du 21 avril 194
Deuxième Assemblée nationale constituante 17 June 1946 - 27 November 1946	586	64	10.9%	Suffrage universel direct.		2 June 1946	Loi du 2 novembre 1945 portant organisation provisoire des pouvoirs publics. Constitution établie par l'Assemblée élue le 21 octobre 1945 loi n° 46-679 du 13 avril 1946
Assemblée nationale I (Vème) 28 November 1946 - 8 December 1958	619	75	12.1%	Suffrage universel direct.	Sont électeurs les Français et les Français de vingt-trois ans	10 November 1946	Constitution du 27 octobre 1946 (article 6).
	626	82	13.1%			17 June 1951	Loi n° 46-2151 du 5 octobre 1946 relative à l'élection des membres de l'Assemblée nationale (Textes, p. 162).
	596	52	8.7%			2 January 1956	Loi n° 51-519 du 9 mai 1951 modifiant la loi n° 46-2151 du 5 octobre 1946 relative à l'élection des membres de l'Assemblée nationale
Assemblée nationale I (Vème) 9 December 1958 -	579	114	19.7%	Suffrage universel direct.	deux sexes majeurs de vingt et un ans		Ordonnances portant loi organique n° 58-1065 du 13 octobre 1958 et n° 59-225 du 4 février 1959(2) et loi organique n° 61-817 du 29 juillet 1961
	553	88	15.9%				
	482	17	3.5%				
	482	17	3.5%				
	487	17	3.5%				
	490	17	3.5%				
491	17	3.5%					
577	22	3.8%					
							Loi organique n° 66-501 du 12 juillet 1966
							Loi organique n° 72-521 du 29 juin 1972
							Loi organique n° 75-357 du 15 mai 1975
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- ANOM. Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer. Aix-en-Provence, France.
- ANS. Archives Nationales du Sénégal. Dakar, Senegal.
- ANFF. Archives Nationales du France, Fontainebleau. Fontainebleau, France.
- ADMAE. Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères. La Courneuve, France.
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