

## Identifications and Kinships among Haitians in French Guiana

### Observations on a Diaspora

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In her pioneer work on French Guiana, *La question créole*, Marie-José Jolivet maintained, more than twenty years ago, “that there are as many Creole cultures as there are places where they have been able to take form and develop in accordance with, on the one hand, the diversity of cultures imposed during servitude and the bits of the African past masters allowed to filter through, and on the other hand, the regional variations in the conditions of pre- and post-slavery formations” (Jolivet 1982: 88).

These lines remind us of the logic of creation from which Creole societies and cultures were formed.<sup>1</sup> From this viewpoint, the processes of creolization that gave rise to these social formations unveil their unity as much as their diversity. To return to the cases of Guiana and Haiti, upon which the following reflection is based, the diversity of Creole unity can be read as dissimilarity within proximity. Both stemming from French colonization, Guianese and Haitian societies have been formed by several colonizing sequences followed by very different “liberations.” In these two contexts, the processes of social structuring, and correlatively “the Creole identity,” as well as the relationships of domination transposed in relationship to “the civilization of whites,” have led to the organization of singular social and cultural models. Today, Haitian migration to Guiana brings into contact these two contexts. Although it is little known, this migration adds new perspectives to the study of Haitian emigration.<sup>2</sup> It reveals and thereby illustrates the contemporary diversity of Creole unity.

In Guiana, Haitians constitute one of the most numerous migrant groups. In 2006, they officially number more than 15,000 and represent approximately 30 percent of the immigrant population (INSEE, 2006). Although these numbers signal the important sociological weight of this migration,

locally, Haitians remain surrounded by a certain misappreciation. Despite their proximity with elements of Guianese culture, Haitians are socially labeled. The national origin is transformed into an “ethnic origin” and the process of ethnicization functions with the help of cultural traits set down as characteristic: differences that are allegedly unchanging fix “Haitian identity” as a monolithic image.

These findings provide grounds for reflecting upon the specificity of the Haitians’ migratory situation in Guiana according to two complementary reasonings. The first reasoning reflects upon the Haitian question in Guiana by associating the French framework, the singularity of the Guianese social space, and the migrants whose sense of identity is part of this dynamic situation. The second reasoning originates in a reflection on the dissimilarities and proximity of Creole cultural systems. It examines the notion of “black diaspora” used to account for the singularity of the black Americas.

I will successively pursue three main lines of research. It is initially important to understand the situation of Haitian migration in regard to the process of cultural and political affirmation in Guiana that specifically addresses the question of immigration within the social structure since the 1980s. Secondly, I will present the migratory networks, the living situations of the migrants, and the sense of identity claimed. Finally, this evidence will lead to a broader reflection on the theoretical notion of “diaspora” and, more precisely, the “black diaspora.” Is this category of analysis—retracing the first migratory experience to the slave trade—applicable to the study of contemporary migrations since it brings out a unity of the black Americas, valid in different places and times?

### The Guianese Context and the Haitian Presence

French Guiana, a former French colony of the Americas that has become an overseas *département*,<sup>3</sup> has been historically characterized by the presence of Amerindian, *Bushinenge*,<sup>4</sup> and Creole populations.<sup>5</sup> Since the end of the nineteenth century, Guianese society has been constituted by numerous migratory movements. While population movements are an integral part of the Guianese sociocultural fabric, the sheer magnitude and diversity of migrations during the past thirty years have brought out the specificity of Guiana. Since the 1970s, migrations have generated demographic shifts and have contributed to the threefold increase of the population. The number of “strangers” is now estimated at 50,000, or nearly one third of the total population (29.7 percent, INSEE 2006).<sup>6</sup> From a sociodemographic

perspective, migratory movements have led the Creole group—for a long time the majority—to lose its numerical preeminence to the point that it has become a minority among others, even though it remains politically dominant (Jolivet 1997). This transformation of the sociological context, which continues to be modified by the constant arrival of migrants, has changed the way Creoles construct their sense of identity. Their relationship to “others” has progressively become modified. Leading to controversy and speculation, the issue of migration continues to cause concern as far as a possible calling into question of “Guianese identity.” While the politicization of ethno-cultural pluralism acutely poses the question of the “Other,” sociodemographic transformations place the processes of creolization at the heart of Guiana’s destiny. The dynamic of these processes no longer allows for the absorption of different migrants as was previously the case. The phenomenon of “ethnic” belonging and the notion of “community” now dominate individual and collective relationships. Despite the widespread representation of Guiana as a multicultural society, the migrant population is rejected. Economic dependency, rising unemployment, an upsurge in immigration, increasing academic failure, and the spread of delinquency have become important arguments to denounce the migrants’ presence.

In this context, as previously mentioned, Haitians constitute the most numerous migrant group. In the opinion of the local population, in particular of Creoles, the Haitian presence is perceived as an invasion. The relative social marginalization of migrants within society reinforces their negative cultural representation.

#### Haitian Immigration in Guiana: From Past to Present

The first Haitians arrive in Guiana during the early 1960s. Between 1963 and 1967, a French landowner by the name of Lily Ganot, previously established in the Haitian region of Fond-des-Nègres (*Département de la Grande Anse*, south of Haiti) organizes an initial migration. He decides to develop a farm in Guiana and recruits workers in his Haitian home region. Jean-Jacques Chalifoux (1988) holds that this first migratory movement may be considered to have initiated the others. This explains the overrepresentation of individuals originally from the south of Haiti. In fact, on the island of Cayenne, most migrants are originally from those rural communities and are former agricultural workers.<sup>7</sup> They cultivated the land, sold their crops, and bred livestock. The relative familiarity among migrants in Guiana can often be explained by this common regional origin. People frequently know each other before migrating, then meet up in Guiana and discover, often with

surprise, that the other also managed to travel. Similarly, two individuals who were not necessarily acquainted in Haiti often know from which village the other person is from. The other, the compatriot (*kompatryot*), is situated in terms of his/her home village.

While Haitian migration in Guiana begins in the 1960s, it is from the beginning of the 1980s that their arrivals become numerically significant. The need for a large workforce at building sites (notably the spatial base of Kourou) encourages these arrivals. Furthermore, the relative closure of the American and Canadian borders contributes to the migrants’ orientation toward Guiana. According to the 1978 census, there are 1,600 annual arrivals and in 1979 there are 1,800 (Calmont 1988a). In 1980, the added requirement of a visa momentarily makes the number of arrivals drop to 1,000 per year (Gorgeon 1985a, 1985c; Calmont 1988b). Crossings through neighboring Suriname are organized and this network progressively ensures the majority of entries into Guianese territory (migrants pass through Paramaribo before reaching Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni and then Cayenne). From this period onward, family networks start to play an important role and allow migration to acquire autonomy. It must be noted that the memory of the “first migration” mediated by L. Ganot, “a white” person, no longer exists for most migrants. This episode provides a framework for a genealogy that traces the contours of a “mythical” narration of the “origins of Haitians in Guiana” as a construction of memory, defined temporally, spatially, and in terms of identity. It is, however, most present among educated people who, at the head of associations, want to be representative of a “Haitian community in Guiana.”

Although during the 1980s, the need for workers allows for their relative integration in the labor market, the increase in the migratory influx is nonetheless cause for concern and leads municipalities to take measures. Joined together in an association, the mayors systematize the problems posed by Haitian immigration on the island of Cayenne. The rural origins of the migrants, their lack of formal schooling and professional qualifications, their participation in the informal economy, and their spatial marginalization are pointed out in the media and in local political discourse. “Characterized” in this way, Haitians are in no way considered beneficial for Guiana.<sup>8</sup> And, to the social and cultural boundaries are soon added those of political discrimination which reinforce the sense of separation. Haitian migrants become the emblematic symbol of the “clandestine.” The relationship to otherness is no longer solely dependent upon the “Haitian subject,” in relation to whom foreignness is determined, but also to the judicial status defined by

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the state. Within a context that becomes more and more culturally heterogeneous, local politicians begin a general reflection in 1984 on the ways in which the different migrations affect the *département*. This reflection leads to the drafting of a document entitled *Trente mesures pour une politique de l'immigration en Guyane* [*Thirty measures for a policy on immigration in Guiana*]. Globally speaking, the immigration policy hoped for is the establishment of legislation specific to Guiana and justified by a concern for the protection of "Guianese identity."<sup>9</sup> It is revealing that a policy controlling the migratory influx is still current at the local level.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, one finds the same arguments that stigmatized Haitians during the 1980s still expressed today by popular media and in ordinary political discussions. On the island of Cayenne, where Haitians represent one of the most numerous migrant groups, the same terms are used to denounce their presence. Today, within a supposedly multicultural context, this representation has remained unchanged: "the Haitian" represents "the stranger." This relegation, linked to the process of ethnicization and rooted in its hierarchical organization, turns Haitian migrants into distinctive units at the heart of Guianese society.

Identity and "Origin" in Multicultural Circumstances:  
"Tell Me Where You are From, and I Will Tell You What You Are"

The idea of "origin," which combines culture and nationality, sets Haitians apart. They become stereotypical social figures because of the national and cultural exteriority they embody. Viewed through elements that position them outside of modernity, they appear endowed with a cultural substratum that prevents them from attaining modernity. Their clandestine existence further impedes this process. People often evoke their poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, violence, and involvement with magic when speaking about Haitians. The color of their skin is considered darker than that of Guianese Creoles. They are believed to be capable of sacrificing their energy for money, living in housing that is unfit for habitation, and fall prey to the magic of Vodou. According to a logic that subordinates the individual to the group in a metonymic way, each migrant is identified with stereotypical actions according to the behavioral model known and founded by the idea of "community." Embodying an image that is ethnologically centered on a *postulated nature*, "the Haitian" plays a primordial role in the imaginary construction of "the Other." Because the role of migrants in the local economy and in the process of cultural exchange is too often neglected, interactions are either minimized or occulted and often marginalized. This

process of designation, through which power is enacted, erases the realities of the Haitians' living conditions while immediately impacting their daily life. It simultaneously falls within a taxonomic operation and that of a subjective identification of the members. In the process of identity construction, the notion of "origin" is a relevant category that "explains" individual and collective actions. This same notion is also an integral part of the migrants' self-construction. The idea that "identities" are elaborated through the notion of "origins" corresponds with the concept of "cultural existence" incorporated into the migrants' perception of identity. Haitians have sometimes internalized (as are internalized the power relations in which they are caught) this conception which can play an important role in the way they present themselves to others. The migrants' identity constructions thus appear as elaborations marked by the imposition and reappropriation of an "*exo-identification*."

The sense of identification is tied to the notion of nationality and the feeling of representing a singular entity at the heart of Guiana ("we, the Haitians") is a central aspect of identity constructions. Without being elaborated into a dominant ideology, this "origin" constitutes an axis around which discourses and practices find their meaning. It is through the "origin" that individuals recognize their common belonging. In contrast to Guianese Creoles, Haitians are not very sensitive to defining the Creole aspect of their identity. The belonging to a national collectivity is based on common references to the past, history, and tradition—to which is added a shared "migratory destiny." However, in Guiana, it is interesting to note that the emergence of this "ethnic subjectivity" (Wieviorka 1993) is articulated within the migratory context of the *département*. The organization of "foreigners" into a hierarchy is determined by the specificities characterizing each group and adopted by migrants against other migrants. Hence, Haitians, whose arrival was posterior to that of Brazilians, replaced the latter at the bottom rung of society. The more recent and massive arrival of Surinamese has modified this hierarchy and Haitians have sometimes appropriated cultural clichés against highly stigmatized maroons who make up the majority of Surinamese migrants. For instance, "taki-taki," thought to be the language of maroons, has become the target of constant mockery from Haitians (Laëthier 2007b)<sup>11</sup> In other words, the Haitians' identity formation inscribes itself in a context where each individual belongs first to a "community." This is one possible path to constructing the intercultural in a context of extreme "community protectionism." Nonetheless, the identity process which leads Haitians to share one and the same definition of themselves and to elaborate a "sense of

togetherness" must be considered in light of another organizing principle: networks of fellowship. In fact, Haitian migration in Guiana is structured by networks of family and friends as primary systems of available resources and belonging.

### **Migratory Networks and Processes of Territorialization: Behind the Scenes Identity Formation**

Even though Guiana acts as an interface with metropolitan France, it is far from corresponding to the representation of the United States, Canada, or France in the Haitians' migratory imaginary. Nonetheless, since the 1980s, the demographic weight of Haitians in Guiana has continually grown.<sup>12</sup> According to the most recent census, they represent 30 percent of the immigrant population in the *département*. This figure, which only takes into consideration those individuals who have legalized their status and agreed to be included in the census, is probably inaccurate. There are, in fact, a number of illegal immigrants. Among this group, some entered illegally while others arrived legally but did not renew their visas;<sup>13</sup> they are not accounted for in the official census. In order to understand the evolution and maintenance of emigration to Guiana, one must investigate the networks of family relations and friends within which each individual trajectory inscribes itself, rather than focusing on clandestinity—an aspect of emigration that is not characteristic of Haitians. These networks influence the cost of migration, allow migrants to maintain links, and determine who can migrate. A migratory resource, these valuable support networks provide recent arrivals with emotional, material, and legal support in the framework of family reunifications. While this migratory movement is characterized by an expansion that is not the result of a specific Guianese labor demand, the networks allow migrants to have access to certain socioeconomic spheres, and sometimes even to determine those spheres. The presence of compatriots already implanted in a specific market constitutes an important nexus for economic insertion, even though this insertion tends to perpetuate the ethnicization of certain professional openings. In light of the economic saturation of Guiana, these networks have become independent. However, the networks do not prevent the clash of realities: rural and urban, linguistic and cultural, social and political. In the hierarchy of migratory spaces, Guiana is situated at the bottom. If migrants have this image of Guiana, and if the idea of reemigration or of repeated migration exists, it is primarily because this idea is reinforced by the living conditions in the *département*. The hostility

from the local population and the economic marginalization make the stay in Guiana sometimes difficult and increases the desire to leave or sometimes even to return to Haiti. Some of those who live clandestinely, whose work is unstable, and who are subjected to xenophobic comments do not want to stay and say that they would not repeat their migration to Guiana. Some even regret having left Haiti to come to Guiana, imagining that it would "be like France." Dozens of testimonies show that illegality, social precariousness, and racism generate dissatisfaction. In general, "traveling to Guiana" is connected with exclusion. However, despite these difficulties, few return permanently to Haiti. Migration continues to be a way of acquiring monetary and symbolic capital, and from this point of view Guiana continues to be attractive.

The confrontation with a new universe of norms reinforces the networks organized by family, friends, and regional belonging. These ties tend to intensify the sense of belonging to the same "community" and a shared "identity." To illustrate this point, I will discuss the organization of living quarters and the process of territorialization.

#### **Kinship and Neighborhood: From the Space of Regulation . . .**

It is on the island of Cayenne that the majority of migrants are concentrated.<sup>14</sup> The principal city of the *département*, Cayenne is Guiana's urban space par excellence. It is in this city and its periphery that the majority of the population resides and that most of the political and economic activities take place. In an urban setting that is characterized by socioeconomically differentiated living conditions, many migrants live in peripheral zones of the city, sometimes unfit for habitation.<sup>15</sup> There are no specifically Haitian living quarters, although there are areas of greater concentration. Despite their marginalization, these neighborhoods engender a sense of appropriation among the inhabitants. Reproducing the functioning of migratory currents, living quarters are organized by family ties, friends, village origins, and relationships.

The physical organization of living quarters is often similar. Certain aspects of the *lakou*—found in rural and urban Haiti—make their appearance: groups of contiguous dwellings with an open space in the middle.<sup>16</sup> This organization is significantly different from residences in urban centers in New York, Montreal, or Paris. From the point of view of social organization, the comparison with dwellings in Haiti should be nuanced. In Guiana, *lakous* are not exclusively composed of relatives. Their foundation is also tied to migration: the date of arrival, the village origin, and interpersonal

affinities structure these groupings. At the heart of these spaces, daily life is organized by parents, neighbors, symbolic parents, and other individuals constituting the networks. The social units, relatively reduced in size, are organized around certain principles of life that could justify applying the term *lakou* to the Guianese context: the behavior of individual actors defines the social context where mutual aid and assistance produce solidarity. Daily cooperation, loans, and the exchange of work organize the socialization and “functioning” of living quarters around the social utility of respect, sharing the same codes, complicity, and familial and affective links. By superposing themselves to compose a common inhabited space, these elements express a common belonging to a place and a group. These sociospatial, self-perpetuating forms of organization are characterized by a strong feeling of attachment founded upon definitions of identity and otherness. The ensuing processes of territorialization show that these spaces take advantage of the borders they establish. For the inhabitants, the borders exist and they like to repeat that “strangers” (those who do not live there) cannot enter. While the creation of a sociospatial “us” is linked to the awareness that local acknowledgement does not come without stigmatization, the relationship to space mixes spatial sharing with the spatialization of relationships.<sup>17</sup> This creates a specific mode of sociality that works on the principle of inclusion and exclusion. Transformed into useable resources which are integrated into daily conversations and practices, these living spaces make identity affirmations conceivable. In the migratory context, territorial reconstruction becomes an instrument defining belonging. Social construction through territorialization appears then like a game between a stigmatized, imposed identity and, in the private sphere, a mobilized heritage, in order to build a sense of belonging within this gap. One must nonetheless keep in mind that these processes of territorialization do not necessarily bring about inward-looking communities; the point is not to take up the idea of rootedness. While the living space becomes an identity anchor, the concrete and daily experience of the habitat does not embody a fixed identity. In the last part of this paper, I will further discuss the questions posed by this approach in light of analyses that develop the notion of “black diaspora.” For the moment, I want to insist that the sense of belonging to a group—which repeats itself in multiple residential units—is first envisioned spatially before supporting ethnical community logic. Certainly, the recourse to nationality in the process of self-definition and definition of others influences the construction of a collective entity in which each one recognizes him/herself. However,

the sharing of a collective reference does not engender discourse around a community-centered identity.

#### ... to Differentiated Identity Constructions

In Guiana, collective “self comprehension” (R. Brubaker, 2001)<sup>18</sup>, implied by the Creole word *nasyon*, exists, but takes on a different meaning at an individual level. From there, the migrants’ identity constructions reveal different individual associations. The differentiated perceptions and reappropriations of unified and homogenous self-identification impel going beyond the paradigm identifying migrants as a coherent and stable whole.

Let’s take, for instance, the example of individuals born in Guiana (between ages fifteen and twenty-five) to illustrate the way in which association inscribes itself in the networks. In general, the youth born in Guiana do not found the construction of their identity upon a claimed “Haitian origin.” The interviews reveal a relative lack of comprehension of Haiti and a set of negative representations of life in Haiti. Not very interested in Haiti—which often appears removed from the horizon of possibilities—youth born in Guiana tend to stigmatize poverty, material destitution, and political life in Haiti. Their relationships with “the country of origin” differ from those of the elders. The identity claims are more motivated by the will to find an “anchorage” locally or an imagined investment in other places such as France or the United States. The depreciatory look at Haiti, which affects a whole combination of practices and values attributed to the “culture” of the elders, marks a distance and allows the claiming of a different belonging. The latter is often self-defined in terms of “Guianese” and/or “Haitian born in Guiana.” Individuals who define themselves in these terms accentuate the fact that they relate primarily to the “Guianese.” From their point of view, even if Guiana is far less desirable than French or American models, the image of successful westernization is embodied by the Creoles. In the context of the territory of origin, the use of the term “Guianese” continually oscillates between definitions: if the speakers include themselves, “Guianese” signifies “being born in Guiana,” while if they put forward their friendly relations with non-Haitians, “Guianese” refers to Creoles. Practically speaking, the declarations regarding friendly relations are invalidated by observations: relations are principally—and often exclusively—developed with individuals whose parents are Haitians and with persons born in Haiti. As with their elders, the networks inscribe themselves primarily at the heart of the living quarters. Young people are very conscious of the differences between the

groups. And, while they are not very interested in Haiti and do not emphasize their "Haitian origin," some admit that this search for identity is linked to the "racist" attitudes encountered because they are Haitian. For instance, the term "haïchien" [Haitian dog] is often used instead of "Haïtien" [Haitian]. While some believe these to be isolated verbal manifestations from racist individuals rather than the reflection of Guianese society as a whole, others feel restricted when labeled as Haitian and deplore the distance and suspicion they perceive from the "Guianese." It is interesting to note that these individuals may in turn use certain aspects of Haitian culture as signs of a modern "Haitian identity." This is the case, for instance, with the music *konpa*, which is unanimously appreciated.

Generally speaking, the data recorded among individuals born in Guiana lead one to wonder if the creolization process has not already begun. An in-depth study would need to be conducted. Clearly, the next few years will provide important elements to answer this question. For the moment, Haitians have reappropriated and internalized a sociocultural hierarchy in which they do not appear at the top. One can furthermore observe the conscience of a stigmatized "Haitian community" produced from the exterior. This production originates in a type of power that spreads into categories of identification. The production of groups is intricately linked to social relations of domination that shape and reproduce "ethnic" inequalities. This leads to another question: are we witness to networks staging a "Haitian community from Guiana" that could be qualified as voluntary diasporic networks?

The notion of "Haitian community" does not exist among all migrants, but is used by associations. This reappropriation takes on considerable significance. While I do not wish to enter into a detailed analysis here, I would like to point out that the leaders of associations represent an identifiable group among migrants. They constitute an active minority around a small founding group that has ensured the continuity of associations and/or the birth of new ones. These individuals—all born in Haiti—belong to a modest but not underprivileged socioeconomic section of the population. The persons in charge of these associations have all benefited from more than ten years of schooling and are Francophone even if they consistently speak Creole with their kin and with the members of their association. Nonetheless, the manipulation of the notion of "Haitian community from Guiana" by these individuals sheds light on contradictory interests and a double meaning. Vis-à-vis other Haitians, on one hand, one can observe how social links are forged through the recollection of a collective belonging and a shared

migratory trajectory. On the other hand, in their search for legitimacy in the Guianese context, these individuals aspire to go beyond the symbolic violence and assignation inherent to this Haitian belonging.<sup>19</sup> This second logic shows that they are more or less at a remove in their relationships with the rest of the migrants.

These different logics of identity—sometimes entangled, sometimes antagonistic—and the diverse relationships of domination, contradict the readings which postulate homogeneity among the migrant group. Presupposing a singular organization of identifications, the experience of migration allows identity configurations that empower multiple referents. The migratory situation implies a selection of the modes of belonging. The maintenance, reinforcement, or, on the contrary, negation of otherness ("self-otherness"), form overlapping patterns which influence and modify each other. Despite a context in which representations immemorialize "identity," identity processes retain their interactive dynamism. This dynamism testifies to the fact that the social existence of a group is developed over time and results from a historicity that is linked to "a group's capacity to transform itself by re-employing the means at its disposition to other ends and for new uses" (De Certeau 1985: 161).

Even though there is no "fundamental or permanent similarity" between the migrants, a similarity is nonetheless experienced and perceived subjectively. While these identity constructions cannot be summarized by community representation, all nonetheless work around the borders they create. In this case, the consciousness of a common belonging is transformed into a "category of practice" to use Pierre Bourdieu's expression, used in certain daily situations to tell what is shared and what differentiates. Going back to the twofold question of territorialization and the elaboration of belonging, networks of family and neighbor relations shape a sense of identity that possesses a symbolic effectiveness in the foundation of a relationship and the resettlement of a place. While this internal reference is not yet used as support for communal representation in the Guianese context, it nonetheless progresses through recompositions of "micro-territories." This territorial logic unveils the elaboration of an identification marked by the imposition of an "exo-identification" and the appropriation of a place to which meaning has been attributed. From this perspective, the problematic of territorialization remains a privileged tool to analyze enunciations of identity which the notions of "community" and "diaspora" have rendered difficult to understand.

## Diaspora and the Black Americas

The theoretical orientations of recent analyses of the Caribbean, and more generally, of what one may call the black Americas, shed light on enunciations about territorial relationships. In fact, the analyses of sociohistorical contexts generally referred to as “Afro-American” tend to no longer define the latter negatively as has been previously done. Instead, they consider the diversity of social, cultural, and territorial patterns of organization from the perspective of “transversality” and “hybridity.” Postmodern spheres of social apprehension tend to consider the pair memory/territory somewhat outdated. The paradigm of “everything mobile” seems more innovative to apprehend references of identity in regard to “the diaspora of the black Americas” (Chivallon 2002, 2004).

### From Diasporic Communities to Diasporic Identities

The history of the “black Americas” specifically questions the notion of diaspora. According to the classic definition of diaspora, dispersion linked to the enslavement of Africans in the Americas would seem appropriate.<sup>20</sup> Characterized by the Jewish experience, the interpretations that have led to the generalizing of the term “diaspora” have nonetheless allowed groups that left their territories while maintaining a collective memory and myths linked to their past as part of a shared sense of ethnicity, to be qualified as “diaspora.”<sup>21</sup> It is this iconoclastic vision of diaspora that applies to Caribbean migrations of the twentieth century. An Anglo-Saxon trend of postmodern sociology sees in the experience of Caribbean migrants a paradigmatic example of “hybridity” and “postmodernity.”<sup>22</sup> The populations descendant from slaves who migrate today to former colonial metropolis constitute a “naturally hybrid diaspora” (Cohen 2002b) while the Caribbean is a place of “double diasporization” (ibid.).

The work of Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* (1993), is significant in this regard. His notion of a transatlantic culture, made up of connections between continents, envisions a political and cultural formation where national and ethnic boundaries are transcended. Identity is no longer conceived as a stable form, but as continually modified moments of belonging. In order to capture the range of Caribbean identity references, the sociologist Stuart Hall also takes up the term diaspora (Hall 1993). According to his work, diaspora studies show that identity affirmation can do without spatialized and state controlled normative systems characterized by stability and permanence. Diasporas contradict the notion of inward-looking cultures that are rooted

in a place. Instead—allowing the maintenance of ethnicity (Médam 1993; Sheffer 1993)—unity defines itself in relation to the paradox of the preservation of unitary identity within dispersion.

These approaches, which define social formations of the black Americas through the notion of “black diaspora,” favor an analysis of evolving hybrid identities. This analytic framework liberates the groups from all territorial reference and rootedness that found social relations and collective symbols. In the same perspective, the geographer Christine Chivallon (1995, 1996, 1997, 2004) questions the use of the term diaspora to describe the experience of peoples descendent from the African slave trade. Chivallon (2004) interrogates the methodology of analysis that emphasizes a certain unity of the black Americas. The violence of the conditions characterizing the implantation of slaves in the New World is essential to comprehending the social, political, and cultural universe of Afro-Americans. The black diaspora corresponds to two time periods: an initial dispersion which constitutes the first stratum of the diaspora formed by the slave trade, and a second stratum constituted by the migratory movements of the twentieth century. By defining the black diaspora from these two sources, Chivallon argues that in both dispersions, social formations formulate similar “cultural responses” that are characterized by a multiplicity of identity orientations. This plurality, which differs from the stabilized configuration of registers of identity (of all cultural norms erected into a system), exists in direct relationship to the particularly violent foundation of these societies. These social constructions “against politics” can be referred to as “de-centered communities” originating in long-lasting schemas (related to the constraints of the slave regime). Their common expression is the prolongation of oppression by the other beyond the initial traumatic event. The same dynamic can be found among Afro-Americans stemming from current migratory movements. Applied to the analysis of contemporary migrations, this approach challenges the view which considers migrant groups—spread throughout diverse and multiple political spaces—to be reliant on the existence of “micro-territories.” It also challenges the definition of “black diaspora” as fulfillment of a unity that escapes “the collective structuring dependent upon a unifying ideology of identity” (Chivallon 2004: 229).

### Towards Diasporic Dynamics

Without calling into question the pertinence of these theoretical orientations, it seems to me that a series of questions remains unanswered. Do plural and diversified identity constructions signify the end of demarcated

territorial forms that play on the borders they establish? Does recognizing the emergence of identity references—upon which are superimposed a dynamic of transnational networks of relations—imply notions of stability, cohesion, or “ethnic” unity? Does the apprehension of migratory movement with the help of the notion of diaspora—in its classical sense or according to the vision outlined by the studies presented in this paper—provide information on a specific mode of “being in migration?” To what extent is the differential value of diverse diasporas built upon this notion? In the case studied here, what connects Haitians living in Canada, the United States, France, Venezuela, and Guiana? Does the term “black diaspora” offer a perspective allowing one to analyze with the same effectiveness in all places and times the presupposed cohesion of groups? These are important questions that can only be answered by specific case studies.

I would like to recapitulate the examples provided in the framework of this article. One can, without hesitation, adhere to an analysis encompassing the multiplication of identity orientations. However, one must be cautious not to adopt a vision that puts all forms of identity production in the same category of refusal of limits and envisions groups that organize themselves through the activation of “structuring schemas” (Chivallon 2004: 108). According to the approach presented here, “the Caribbean diaspora, similarly to Caribbean cultures in general—intimately aware of the constraint the Other can impose—may formulate an identity project that diverts the direction of dual constructions and of the borders that fashion them” (Chivallon 1996: 54). In the case of Haitian migration in the Guianese context, despite the noted polyphony, social constructions do not renounce modes of difference, separation, or the hierarchy that structures them.

The data presented here have raised questions about the relationship between sociocultural groups, the territory, and migratory phenomena. The apprehension of identity registers built on spatially mapped out social links does not preclude thinking their diversity. In addition, the absence of a collective unitary narration does not prevent the expression of territorial forms. Considered an elaboration of space permitting the visibility of a group through an identifying “we,” territorialization is also a moment of negotiation between self-definition and identity assignation. From this perspective, it becomes possible to consider the networks in terms of their links with territories by scrutinizing their territorial foundation. A juxtaposition of space becomes a part of the migrants’ identity constructions. In this regard, the migratory networks correspond to “social terrains” where

practices are deterritorialized, reterritorialized, and integrated into the construction of various belongings.

Finally, as Sidney Mintz (1998) has shown by questioning the applicability of the term “transnational” based on the Caribbean model, “multi-local communities” are no more removed from the historical backdrop than the relationship between dispersed individuals implies that “uni-local communities” cease to exist. Identity constructions do not go beyond a reference to the nation any more than the autonomy of individuals appears in relationship to national consciousness.<sup>23</sup> National identification, even if it does not give rise to a unitary experience, is no less experienced and claimed. This is true whether the established link is ambivalent, complex, temporary, or paradoxical. The national territory no longer limits the space of identification but remains a major referent (Fibbi and Meyer 2002; Jolivet and Léna, 2000).

Similarly, one must dismantle the notion of homogenous immigration whose actors are subjected to the same situations in the same way. Parallel to collective identification, which affirms itself and is conserved in the historic memory of a group, it is important to envisage the subjects’ processes of identification—coexisting within the same group—by analyzing individual experiences. The social processes giving rise to “self-identifications” pass through variable networks of categories and relationships. At the risk of seeming banal, the data remind us that cultural productions do not produce a stable “culture,” a permanent “mysterious totality.” They indicate, on the contrary, the necessity of problematizing evolving situations and contexts. It is at this level that the social existence of a group is constructed and that its historicity participates in a transformation one cannot alienate by identifying it as an origin.

Overall, the reflections in this article lead to a reading of migration from the open-ended perspective of a “dynamic diaspora”<sup>24</sup> by privileging an analysis of identity elaborations. The application of the category “black diaspora” to the study of different social worlds descendent from slavery is intriguing. Does the definition of this category based on the superposition of dispersion (the slave trade and contemporary migrations) and of socio-identity organization, contravening against a centralized community due to its rapport with an initial constraint, account for an open and unfinished reality?

*Translated from the French by Catherine Reinhardt*

## Notes

1. In the fields of French sociology and anthropology we owe the introduction and development of Afro-American research to R. Bastide. Bastide demonstrated that cultures born in servitude can only be understood in terms of creation, as constructions of models that are different from those produced by the original cultures. Bastide developed the notion of "negro culture" to render the new sociocultural forms born of a process of creolization that he defined as "a spontaneous movement, internal to Afro-American culture, by adaptation to the environment and assimilation of European elements" ([1967] 1996: 184).

2. There are more than 3 million Haitians living outside of Haiti and 8 million living in Haiti (IHSI, 2003). The importance of economic, political, and cultural relations between Haiti and its emigrants, called *moun dyaspora*, has led the first government of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to consider all the territories inhabited by persons claiming to belong to the "Haitian nation" as a new *département*. It has been called the "Tenth *Département*," to which has been assigned the Ministry of *Haitiens Vivant à l'Étranger* [Haitians Living Abroad], institutionalized as a legitimized territorial extension by the claims of national belonging (the Tenth *Département* has become the "Eleventh *Département*" since the creation of a Tenth *Département* within the national boundaries in 2005).

3. The law of March 19, 1946 transformed the "old colonies" into overseas *départements* by pursuing the process of political and juridical assimilation. This law is also called "loi d'assimilation" [law of assimilation].

4. The different groups of slave descendants who fled Surinamese plantations since the seventeenth century are called Bushinenge and black maroons. Many have migrated to Guiana. The political unrest that broke out in Suriname beginning in 1986 contributed to the recent migrations to Guiana. Today, Ndjuka, Aluku, Saramaka, and Paramaka are present on Guianese territory, notably in the west.

5. In Guiana, the group of white Creoles was not able to "survive" after the abolition of slavery: the "non-emergence" of a plantation economy contributed to its disappearance as an economically dominant group. The term "Creole" remained to refer to former slaves and freedmen as well as their descendants. While for more than one century, the descendants of migrants could also "become" Creoles, currently this is a precise group which designates itself that way (Jolivet 1982, 1997, 2006).

6. According to the 1999 census there were 46,576 inhabitants including 46,576 "foreigners." In 1954, the 3,449 "foreigners" represented 12.38 percent of the population. In 1982, the 16,868 "foreigners" constituted 23.1 percent of the total population (INSEE, 2006).

7. The majority of migrants come from the *département de la Grande Anse* and the *département du Sud* and more precisely from the cities of Aquin, Vieux-Bourg d'Aquin, l'Asile, Fonds-des-Nègres, Bouzi, Morisseau, Fonds-des-Blancs, La Colline, and Saint-Louis du Sud. A lesser number come from the *arrondissement de la villes des Cayes*. Others come from the communes of Miragoâne and Petite-Rivière de Nippes. Still others are from the *département de l'ouest*: from the *arrondissement de Port-au-Prince* and the

peripheral communes of Carrefour and Delmas, the *arrondissement de Léogane* and its communes (Petit-Goâve and Grand-Goâve), the *arrondissement de l'Arcahaie*, and the commune of Cabaret. A few come from the *arrondissement de Baintet* in the *département du Sud Est* (Laëthier 2007a).

8. In 1976, during the meeting of the Association des Maires de Guyane [Association of the Mayors of Guiana]—Eighteenth Congress—the rise in unemployment, the migrants' lack of skills, their impact on the ecosystem, the cost of their presence, and the upsurge in the malaria epidemic were arguments used to make a case against the presence of migrant workers.

9. These measures were based on two ideas: stopping immigration and integrating the foreigners already settled in Guiana. In 1985, a regularization program was organized for those whose papers could be put in order (individuals who did not compete with the "Guianese," whose children were born in Guiana, or whose spouse was "Guianese"): 2,500 visas and work permits were issued.

10. This is shown by the article published in "Le Monde" on September 19, 2005, in which the politicians denounce "the genocide by substitution of the Guianese people" (remarks made by the senator Georges Othily, February 2004) or "the rupture of the equilibrium of the Guianese population" (remarks made by Antoine Karam, president of the Conseil Régional and secretary of the Parti Socialiste Guyanais [Guianese Socialist Party]). Along the same lines, the recent proposition of the Ministre de l'Outre-mer (French Minister of Overseas Territories) limiting the *jus soli* in the overseas territories was favorably received even though it was only a "partial solution" (Karam).

11. Surinamese migrants are principally maroons, locally referred to as bushinengue, and belong to the groups aluku, ndjuka, paramaka, and saramaka. The bushinengue Creole languages combine several linguistic variants some of which are present in Guiana. Sranan tongo, the most common language in Suriname, is also common in the region of Saint-Laurent du Maroni. This language is used in exchanges between different groups present in the region and Haitians have been in contact with it. Its common appellation, "taki-taki," is generally depreciatory.

12. During my fieldwork, I was constantly in contact with migrants who had recently arrived to join members of their family. Among these migrants were men, women (an increase in women migrants increased the birthrate in Guiana), children, and young adults.

13. It must be pointed out that illegality does not only characterize recent migrants; it also concerns the "old timers" who arrived in the *département* in the 1980s.

14. The island of Cayenne consolidates three communes: Cayenne, Rémire-Montjoly, and Matoury.

15. The urban inequalities in Guiana, especially in Cayenne, give rise to discourses on the theme of "ghettoization." Substantialist thought about space and the theme of the "ghetto," nourished by clichés, plays a role in the debates on city policy.

16. The Creole term *lakou* comes from the French *la cour* [the courtyard]. For a detailed analysis of *lakou* in Haiti, principally in rural settings, see: Bastien ([1951] 1985); d'Ans (1987); Moral ([1961] 2002).

17. The analysis of socioterritorial identities must take into account the constraints

imposed by local discriminatory processes and by sociocultural norms which originate in a repertory with multiple entries.

18. Brubaker speaks of "self-comprehension," understood as a "dispositional" term to designate "the conception one has of who one is, one's localization in social space and the way (in terms of the first two) one is prepared for action" (2001: 77).

19. See Laëthier 2007a.

20. A Greek word, the term "diaspora" was first used to signify the destiny of the Jewish people, its geographic dispersion, and the maintenance of an "identity" regardless of the places of settlement (Lacoste 1989; Fossaert 1989; Scheffer 1986, 1993; Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1996; Cohen 1997; Cohen 2002a, 2002b).

21. Many authors propose typologies combining different criteria according to which migrant groups can be defined as being more or less diasporic. From this perspective, the term "diaspora" taken as a "metaphoric designation" can, in fact, qualify dissimilar populations such as expatriates, expelled people, political refugees, and minorities . . . (Safran 1991). Other authors (Médam 1991; Clifford 1994) highlight the fact that identity movements of diasporic groups are a constitutive characteristic of the contemporary world.

22. On the subject, Chivallon writes: "Where post-modernism has flourished—the anglophone world, the Black world has been endowed with new qualities and truly consecrated as a diasporic people. In the francophone world, with its more conventional sociology, the use of the term diaspora does not work as well for this same world which one expects to perfectly adapt to the contours of a classical diaspora with the production of a strong community consciousness" (1997b: 67).

23. Cohen's words are interesting in this regard: "The postmodern vision is sometimes overly hasty when declaring the death of national sovereignty and the nation state, considered products of a bygone modernity. One does not need to entirely adhere to this vision to recognize that among Caribbean migrants exists an exceptional historical predisposition to the construction of hybrid identities and to the transnationalization of their horizon" (Cohen 2002b: 88).

24. On this subject see Hovenessian (1998).

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## Medical Humanitarianism and Health as a Human Right on the Haitian-Dominican Border

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In December of 2001, the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance published a 116-page report entitled "Incidence of Demand of Health Services by Foreigners," which tracked the frequency and cost (down to fractions of pesos) of visits to government hospitals and clinics by foreigners during a three-month period in the same year. The document reported that over 98 percent of these foreigners were Haitians (SESPAS 2001: 14). The report was widely disseminated and frequently referenced by Dominican media in the months that followed. Many Dominicans consider the presence of Haitians in their country to be a major social problem, and the report confirmed suspicions that Haitians were using up scarce resources in the form of public health care services.

This paper examines the discourses and practices that accompany the provision of medical services to Haitians in the Dominican Republic. My analysis draws from research I conducted during the summer of 2003 in a Dominican government hospital adjacent to the Haitian-Dominican border, which Haitian patients regularly cross in search of health care.<sup>1</sup> While individuals traveling outside of Haiti for brief periods are not generally considered to be part of the Haitian diaspora, an examination of their encounters and interactions with foreign governments and populations helps to illustrate the diversity of transnational processes that shape life for Haitians in Haiti and abroad.

Over the course of my research, I identified two coexisting but contrasting rhetorics, that of health as a human right, and that of medical humanitarianism.<sup>2</sup> While I examine these rhetorics in a specific geographic and temporal setting, they have gained prominence on a global scale in recent decades. Anthropologists have called for grounded and contextualized studies of human rights in recent years (Wilson 1997) and the subject now appears prominently in a variety of the discipline's subfields. In contrast,

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