Following the Second World War, the people of the French island of Martinique opted for an unusual transformation of their colonial status: in March 1946 they voted – along with Guadeloupe, French Guyana, and Réunion – to become a regular department of France. Eschewing independence in favor of complete integration with the metropole, Martiniquans affirmed their Frenchness in an important decision that would define their citizenship and shape the politics of their island in the decades to come. Exactly two years later, in March 1948, Martiniquans made plans to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the colonies. As French citizens in the metropole remembered the June Days of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, these citizens of the new department were intent on recognizing those who had been instrumental in gaining their forbearers' freedom, for these three dates of 1848, 1946, and 1948 were intrinsically linked. In Martinique, the celebrations of 1948 took on a resonance and scope that involved participants of all political parties, skin colors, and social classes in a discussion about the legacy of the past, the meaning of French citizenship, and the prospects for assimilation in the future. Saturated with ambiguity and conflicting aspirations, the commemoration of the abolition was a microcosm of the experience of departmentalization and its inherent contradictions.

The centenary laid bare the problems of the inclusiveness of French culture, race relations, the Cold War, and economic
inequality that would plague attempts at assimilation in the French Fourth and Fifth Republics. It also speaks more widely to the dilemma of decolonization in the late twentieth century: is the French attempt at integration an alternative path to decolonization or a continuation of patterns of inequality? Can relations between former colonizers and colonized ever be rendered more equal by ritual acts and well-meaning social policies? This article addresses these issues by examining the politics of commemoration as they were expressed in French parliamentary debates, Martiniquan newspapers, French government records, and United States consular reports from the late 1940s and early 1950s. Drawing on multiple national and political perspectives on the abolition of slavery will demonstrate the difficulties inherent to this unique model of decolonization and examine its decreasing effectiveness in the 1950s.

In January 1944, General de Gaulle recognized the contributions of the colonies to the war effort and in a speech at Brazzaville promised greater rights and representation for citizens of the French Union, as the empire was to be called. This first attempt at reformulating the relationship between the metropole and its overseas territories was not meant to set the stage for independence; nonetheless, it provided a new framework for imagining the ties of dependence upon France. The Second World War and the Vichy regime were pivotal in shaping Caribbean notions of the French nation in the late 1940s. Martiniquans, in fact, envisioned two distinct and opposing Frances, one represented by Admiral Robert, who ruled

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Martinique from 1940 to 1942 in the name of the Vichy regime and their Nazi allies, and the other represented by General de Gaulle and the Free French. Admiral Robert was widely supported by the white minority on the island, the békés, and stood in the eyes of the black majority of Martinique for the reactionary, authoritarian regimes that had established or reinstituted slavery on the island. The other "true France" was republican France, grantor of liberty and democracy, a bulwark against white minority rule in Martinique. General De Gaulle and the Free French represented all that was good about the nation's history, and it was this France, an idealized nation of universal suffrage and universal principles, which Martiniquans chose to join in 1946.

Scholars have pointed to various factors in explaining the vote for departmentalization in the French Antilles. The desire to participate in the new social security system set up in France following the war has figured largely in these explanations.\(^2\) In addition, the black majority's desire to escape from the political, economic, and social domination of the white minority békés through integration with France has been a consistent explanation for assimilation in 1946.\(^3\) While these justifications certainly played a part in the decision for departmentalization, they fail to address two fundamental causes for this unique approach to the problems of postwar colonialism. First, the

\(^2\) See, for example, Robert Aldrich and John Connell, *The Last Colonies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

citizens of Martinique voted for assimilation because they genuinely identified with a France of transcendent culture and humane principles that was above the regime of "colonialist jackals" who claimed to represent France in Martinique. Second, departmentalization would safeguard the island from the designs of a new postwar colonial power they associated with racism and the békès: the United States.

The United States was keenly interested in political developments in Martinique, principally because voters returned an entire Communist slate in the first elections following the war, sending the distinguished poet and intellectual Aimé Césaire and another communist, Leopold Bissol, to the Chamber of Deputies. French and U. S. sources were unanimous in their appraisal of Césaire as a brilliant thinker and orator and realized that much of the Communists' appeal on the island was not ideological but due to Césaire's charismatic leadership. In a memo to the State Department from Martinique, J. R. Stevenson wrote that "the U. S. interest is primarily strategic because the islands guard the eastern approaches to the Panama Canal. It is the opinion of some that assimilation was hastened because of France's fear of our intentions towards the islands." Stevenson went on to write that many Frenchmen felt the U. S. simply did not understand the deep attachment that citizens of the "old colonies" felt for France.

Part of this veneration for the metropole centered on France's reputation in Martinique as a beacon of tolerance. Aimé Césaire had been exiled from Martinique to Haiti by Admiral Robert during the war. This period was critical in Césaire's personal and political development, for he came back to Martinique determined to raise his fellow citizens' consciousness about race and class issues in the French Caribbean. The U. S. consul wrote:

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Hitherto the French had established a reputation as humanists where color was concerned. However, there is color prejudice in Martinique. Césaire, communist Deputy, has made several appeals to electors by raising the color question. This appeal is based on the fact that the wealth of the island is concentrated in hands of whites whereas political power is entirely in hands of Negroes – in the case of Martinique in the hands of negro communists. There have been spontaneous outbreaks in Guadeloupe, such as the killing of a white by a mob of negroes. Whites are worried and look to the future with uncertainty.  

Although 1948 was to mark one hundred years of freedom, for the majority of Martinique's population the memory of slavery was always just beneath the surface. In the mid-twentieth century, large sugar cane plantations owned by white descendents of slave-owners still dominated the island's economy, and many poor Martiniquans worked as laborers on these plantations, albeit as "free" workers. Labor relations were fraught with many of the same antagonisms as a century before, and violence frequently erupted between field workers and their employers. One example involved the 1948 murder of Guy Fabrique, manager of a sugar mill and member of the "planter class." An angry mob of his workers pursued Fabrique into a sugar cane field and hacked him to death with machetes. Slavery on the plantations was not a distant memory but seemed ever-present in political and social conflicts of the 1940s and 50s. The American consul in Martinique remarked that "although slavery was abolished nearly a hundred years ago, there remains a slave psychology which is at the basis of most questions in the West Indies." The commemoration of 1948 was sure to be an emotionally and politically charged event in a context in which

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5 Ibid., 2.
6 Dispatch No. 27, "Communist Inspired Massacre in Martinique" American Consulate, Martinique, F. W. I., to the Secretary of State, Washington, 10 Sept. 1948. NARA RG 59 851b.00/1-146 to 851b.00/12-3149.
7 Dispatch of 18 Mar. 1946, NARA RG 59 851b.00/1-146 to 851b.00/12-3149.
the inequalities engendered by the slave system remained relevant. 

In the context of a tense racial situation in Martinique, the United States frequently featured as a fundamentally racist society whose ideals were closer to those of the white békés than to the black majority of Martinique. Consul William H. Christensen wrote that white Martiniquans had approached him on several occasions about U. S. military assistance in the case of race riots on the island, some going so far as to request dual citizenship or asking for a warship to be ready in the French Antilles in case of violence. In addition to appearing as the ally of the white oligarchy, the United States' own dubious record of race relations was well known.

It is unfortunately a fact that the communist party in Martinique... feels that an effective line of propaganda in so far as United States-Russian relations are concerned, is to emphasize the color question. They do not lose an opportunity to point out the sordid side of race relations and it goes without saying that it does not make pleasant reading for French West Indians to read that an American Senator has expressed the opinion that negroes should not be allowed to vote.8

In the political confusion of the postwar years, the Communist Party was extremely effective in tapping the resentment many felt at the colonial system that had dominated Martinique for the past three hundred years. French and American officials were deeply concerned with the appeal of the Communists in the postwar years, especially the way in which they pointed to racial injustice to mobilize voters.

It was actually Socialist deputies from Guadeloupe who in 1947 sponsored a resolution in the Chamber to celebrate the abolition of slavery as well as the anniversary of the Revolution of 1848.9 Yet according to Consul William H. Christensen, the

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8 Anti-Democracy Campaign in Martinique, 14 Jan. 1946, NARA RG 59 851b.00/10-1446.

9 Proposition de Résolution No. 924, Assemblée nationale, Session de 1947, Annexe au procès-verbal de la séance du 13 mars 1947, présentée par MM. Ninine, Valentino. Centre des Archives Contemporaines, Fontainebleau,
idea of making the centennial a major celebration in the overseas departments originated with Communist councilors in Martinique who in 1946 refused to attend a ceremony honoring the landing of Pierre Belain d'Esnambuc on the island three centuries before. Outraged by this "glorification of the colonialist system," according to the Martiniquan Communist paper, Justice, the party had immediately decided to plan a significant event in 1948 to elucidate the real history of the island. The consul wrote,

It is significant, in this officer's opinion, that West Indian negroes constantly remind themselves of their past slavery by ceremonies, in speeches, press, etc. The liberator of the French West Indian slaves, Schoelcher . . . is constantly being mentioned in speeches and newspaper articles, and at least once a year a ceremony is held in front of this statue which stands in the courtyard of the Palais de Justice in Fort-de-France.

The communist party in Martinique is preparing already for a huge celebration in 1948. . . . The communist press constantly reminds its readers that they once were slaves.¹⁰

Christensen went on to report that a white Catholic priest had expressed a desire to be far from Martinique on the occasion of the centennial due to the racial violence he believed the celebrations would provoke.

Despite the fact that it was French Martiniquans who had enslaved people before 1848 and who held a virtual monopoly on political, cultural, economic, and social life on the island, France still represented a culture and system of values of which many Martiniquans yearned to be a part. Far from sullying French universalist ideals, the békés were treated as separate

from the core values of republican France and as remnants of an unjust colonial system. Many politically active Martiniquans believed that the békés were a breed apart from the forward-thinking metropolitan administrators who were assisting in the process of departmentalization. Black Martiniquans contrasted the racist attitudes of the local white minority to the liberal traditions of France itself, where racial prejudice theoretically did not exist. Victor Sablé, a deputy from Martinique who had been active in the Resistance during the Second World War, wrote about the liberating power of French culture in the lives of black Martiniquans:

Previously Antilleans, self-conscious about their ethnic origins, felt a certain pride in penetrating Western civilization through the medium of French culture, whose secrets they had stolen from their former masters. In many ways they wished to give the world an example of a little people whose color was not a hindrance in the accomplishment of its destiny. For them, it meant demonstrating, based on the ideal of the equality of races, that man was first and foremost a universal being and capable, contrary to the affirmations of de Gobineau, of succeeding at all the arts and professions at every latitude of the earth.  

Despite the injustices that had been dealt out over centuries, Sablé explained, the idealism of the postwar years held that social inequalities would inevitably be erased for those who reached a certain level of education and talent.

A 1958 study commissioned by UNESCO on the problems of "Minorities in the New World" echoed the sentiment that French culture appeared to Martiniquans as a bulwark against racial discrimination. Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris explained the paradox that blacks in Martinique were considered a "minority" in their study, despite the fact that they constituted the overwhelming majority on the island:

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It would seem doubtful then that we could consider the people of color in Martinique as a minority group. Yet, not only are they, as a group, depressed economically, but their Negroid physical characteristics (or the memory of a Negroid ancestor) remain as a symbol of slave status and as a barrier to their complete assimilation into French national society. They are subject . . . in varying degrees to prejudice deriving from highly visible special stigma, namely Negroid appearances. Taken as a group, however, the people of color of Martinique, like many minorities throughout the world, form a majority in numerical terms.12

This bizarre mathematical reasoning did nonetheless correctly capture the notion that assimilation into French society was a goal for many Martiniquans. The authors continued,

The most "French" of the people are the educated mulattos. The mulatto of Martinique is noted for his polished Parisian accent and elaborate figures of speech. For him, "refined" behavior and "educated" speech are weapons against color prejudice. It is notable that the first Martinique authors neglected native subjects. Nineteenth-century newspapers printed little but news from Paris. Only in the last generation have intellectuals modified their identification with French values and fashions, daring to treat native subjects and venturing to describe life as it is.13

French culture, founded upon the genius of Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Tocqueille, would liberate Martiniquans from the oppression of local plutocrats who sullied the name of a nation that was dedicated to the liberation of all peoples. The abolitionist Victor Schoelcher was only one in a long line of Frenchmen who embodied the democratic principles of the French Revolution and the humane values of French tolerance.

It would be easy to denigrate this assimilationist impulse on the part of Martinique's elite and even to second the suggestion of some postcolonial theorists that Martiniquans were essentially psychologically "sick" in their internalization of French norms of

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13 Ibid., 116.
society and culture. Yet this would be to ignore the clear benefits that Martiniquans themselves saw in adopting French identity. Although disappointment with the promises of French culture would, by the end of the 1950s, lead many of Martinique's leaders to question the entire process of departmentalization, in the late 1940s and early 1950s high hopes far outweighed the ominous potential for disenchantment. American observers were keenly aware of the powerful attraction France exercised on the Martiniquans. Sheldon B. Vance, American consul in the French West Indies in 1950, noted that despite the economic difficulties engendered by assimilation, "there has been no indication of any relaxation in the traditional and unquestionably firm attachment to France of all local inhabitants, without exception, non-Communist and Communist alike." In another memo he wrote,

Probably the most important single fact to remember when considering the French West Indies is that these people are 100% French. The negroes are even physically different from their counterparts elsewhere in the Caribbean. France may be justly proud of her political and cultural assimilation of the entire population of these old colonies.

The France to which Martiniquans felt one hundred percent allegiance was the France of Victor Schoelcher and the liberating principles of the Republic, in stark contrast to the France of a white minority that continued to exert power on the island.

The Communist newspaper Justice expressed this view succinctly in a 1951 issue that covered the acquittal of sixteen Guadeloupeans who had been charged with murdering their white planter-employer. Due to the potentially volatile nature of the trial, the sixteen accused had been flown to France and

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15 Dispatch 28, 8/7/1950, Sheldon B. Vance to secretary of state, NARA RG 59 250 CDF 1950-58 851b.00/1-150 to 851b.00/12-3158 Box 4997.
16 Dispatch 2/9/50 NARA RG 59 250 CDF 1950-54, Box 3665.
imprisoned for over two years awaiting trial for the death of a plantation manager whose body had been found dismembered in a sugar cane field. The defendants were eventually acquitted in France because there were no eyewitnesses to the crime, and many Antilleans took this as a sign of solidarity between the French people and their fellow citizens across the Atlantic. An editorial in Justice proclaimed, "Martiniquans can count on the people of France, our surest ally, which is not to be confused with the colonialist bandits who govern here in the name of France."17 Time and again, Martiniquans drew a distinction between the ideal France of a classical education and the France of local békés who continued to oppress their workers.

In the minds of many Martiniquans, the racist assumptions of the white minority on the island could be linked to the discredited racial theories of the Nazis in the 1930s and 40s. Victor Sablé expressed the pride that citizens of the overseas territories felt when Henry Lémery, senator from Martinique, responded to Hitler's accusation that France was a nation "bastardized by Jews and Negroes." His rejoinder, printed in all the Parisian press, finished with the declaration: "No, Mr. Hitler, France is not becoming nigrified; it is black humanity that is becoming French."18 It was a short mental leap for many Martiniquans to consider that the békés, many of whom continued to display portraits of the collaborationist Vichy leader Marshal Pétain on their walls, were imbued with the racist ideology of the Third Reich.

The association of true French ideals with resistance to the Nazis came together in a fund-raising effort surrounding the commemoration of 1848. In metropolitan France, a group of concerned citizens from the overseas territories calling themselves the "Federal Committee on the French Commemoration of the Centenary of 1848 for the Overseas Departments" launched a campaign to raise money to replace a

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17 Extract from 13 Sept. 1951 issue of Justice, Dispatch 17, 21 Sept., 1951, NARA RG 59 CDF 1950-54 Box 3665.
18 Sablé, 3.
The elaborate ceremonies held each year on the anniversary of the liberation of the slaves have become an occasion for glorifying Negro genius and ability. The Communists and Aimé Césaire took the leading part in this year's celebration, as they have in the past. Excessive veneration is paid on every occasion to Victor Schoelcher, a Frenchman of Swiss origins, who initiated the bill during the Second Republic (1848) which granted freedom to all slaves in French territory. Although probably very few persons in either the Dutch or British possessions in the Caribbean could identify the corresponding individual in England or the Netherlands, everyone in the French islands is constantly reminded of Schoelcher by orators, statues, and even his name in lights in front of the Court House in Fort-de-France. The Consulate, for instance is on Schoelcher street, and it was in the Lycee Schoelcher that Aimé Césaire rose to prominence.

In the early years of the Fourth Republic, identification with France among many Martiniquans came as part of a desire to be fully embraced and recognized as French by metropolitan who often behaved indifferently toward the assimilation of the "old colonies."

Many Martiniquans fervently wished for assimilation but wished for it to be a two-way process in which the metropole

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20 Memo to Department of State, 7/30/51, Subject: Aimé Césaire, Head of the Communist Party in Martinique, NARA RG 59 CDF 1950-54 751b.001/3-2050 Box 3666.
also engaged actively with the concerns of the old colonies. Instead of mutual adaptation, however, most observers noted that assimilation was almost always a one-way street toward the dominant culture of France. A memo from the interior minister, for example, reiterated that it would be inconvenient for the overseas departments to celebrate different legal holidays from the metropole and that the anniversary of the abolition of slavery would not become a national holiday. The minister noted that people in the Antilles already took the day off for Victor Schoelcher's birthday, implying that these local celebrations were more than sufficient.\(^{21}\) French citizens of the Antilles wished for official metropolitan recognition of the wrongs of slavery, but rather than incorporating such a date in the national calendar, administrators in France considered slavery a local concern.

This view was again apparent in correspondence between the minister for overseas territories and the minister of the interior surrounding the celebrations of 1948 in the Caribbean. The overseas minister reported that many members of local assemblies in French West Africa had expressed a desire to travel to the Antilles to represent their territories at the celebrations commemorating the abolition of slavery. "I would consider that such a journey could only be justified by the universal nature of such celebrations," the minister wrote on 9 April 1948.\(^{22}\) The reply that came back at the end of April was clear, however. The interior minister declared that "the demonstrations that will take place in the Antilles will take place within a purely local context." Most significantly, the president of the Republic's planned voyage to the Antilles for the occasion had been postponed indefinitely. Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guyana would not get an official visit from a French head of state until 1960, when Charles de Gaulle arrived to great


\(^{22}\) Overseas minister to the interior minister, 9 Apr. 1948, CAC 940180, Art. 259.
public acclaim. However the abolition of slavery was commemorated in the French Caribbean in 1948, it would not have a "national character," so the proposed addition of local officials from West Africa hardly seemed worthwhile.23

The absence of Vincent Auriol, president of the Republic, denied the celebrations the "special brilliance" for which the people of the Antilles had hoped. Socialist deputies from the islands had asked that the government take particular care to celebrate the centenary of the abolition with "at least as much dignity, importance, and grandeur as the celebration a decade ago of the tercentenary of the islands' attachment to France." Arguing that the law on departmentalization in 1946 had "only just now abolished the last remnants of slavery," Deputies Ninine and Valentino pleaded that the occasion not pass unnoticed in France itself.24 The populations of the new departments expected recognition of their history as part of the Revolution of 1848; the president's last-minute cancellation was hardly reassuring.

The French government did make an attempt to mark the centenary of 1848 with dignity and did, in fact, advance funds to aid in the celebrations. Some of these gestures, however, were open to interpretation and were not primarily concerned with the people's wishes. When questioned as to the nature of the French Navy's participation in this matter, the interior minister wrote that this was an occasion of great solemnity, but it fell short of a national celebration. Considering the political situation of the islands, though, and the fact that the president had cancelled his trip, he proclaimed that there was a great interest in giving these events the maximum resonance.25 In practical terms, "maximum

23 Interior minister to overseas minister, 28 Apr. 1948, CAC 940180, Art. 259.
resonance” meant that a French warship would be docked off the port of Fort-de-France, standing at the ready with French troops in case of civil disturbances fomented by the Communists. This was, in fact, the preoccupation lurking behind most speeches, memos, and police surveillance reports concerning the centenary in Martinique: how would the Communists use the memory of slavery to generate violence and unrest?

As it turns out, the parades and the demonstrations of that day in April 1948 unfolded without great incident in Martinique. In a meticulously detailed memo sent back to Paris, the Service de l’information de la Martinique described the day’s events, from the heartfelt applause of the crowd upon first seeing the prefect to the Te Deum in the cathedral and the football matches organized in the local stadium. The calm and serene atmosphere at the end of the day was “etched in the heart of Martiniquans.” The only disorder that troubled the day came about when the Communists on parade refused to walk past the prefect in the viewing stands. Instead, they broke away from the group, threw off their scarves, and sang the Marseillaise with their fists raised in the air. The Communists were protesting the fact that the prefect had prohibited a political demonstration that evening, but no violence occurred on that day.26

Commemorations and parades would continue to have great potential for violence and racial conflict, however. Another important commemoration in Martinique came about on the fifty-year anniversary of the eruption of Mount Pelée, a volcano that wiped out the town of St. Pierre in 1902. Whites and blacks in Martinique saw the anniversary in very different ways, and tensions mounted as different groups made preparations for its remembrance. Whites wished only for a somber and restrained service in the cathedral, because so many people in St. Pierre, the former social and political capital of Martinique, had died in the eruption. When St. Pierre was wiped out in the early twentieth

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century, however, power in Martinique had shifted to people of color in Fort-de-France, which some blacks saw as a hidden blessing in the natural tragedy. In 1952, a compromise was reached whereby 8 May would be given over to mourning, whereas 11 May would be a day of celebration for the "rebirth" of St. Pierre, complete with speeches, floats, and a charity ball.27

The memory of slavery again became a politically potent anniversary during the 1980s, when the Socialist government of François Mitterrand embarked on a program of decentralization that aimed to give local councils in the overseas departments more power. In May 1983, a series of bombs exploded in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guyana, killing one person and causing extensive property damage. In addition, three people were injured in two bomb explosions in central Paris, one of which took place at an employment agency for workers from France's overseas territories. Georges Lemoine, secretary of state for overseas departments, decried the violence of Caribbean independence groups, for whom the symbolism was clear. The attacks were clearly linked to the anniversary of the abolition of slavery, celebrated on 27 May, and their targets, such as the Air France office in Fort-de-France, represented the continued colonial oppression that these independence groups vowed to contest.28

More recently, the official memory of slavery has been the subject of increasing political concern in France and, through a long and rather circuitous route, has finally been recognized with a national day of commemoration in the metropole itself. In 2001, the French Senate adopted a bill proposed by Christiane Taubira, a parliamentarian from French Guyana, declaring slavery a "crime against humanity." The Committee for the Memory of Slavery, chaired by Maryse Condé, a writer from Guadeloupe, continued to press for a national day of

27 Foreign Service Dispatch, American Consulate, Martinique, 21 Apr. 1952. NARA RG 59/250 851c.424/4-2452.
remembrance, and in 2006, President Chirac declared that "starting this year, metropolitan France should honor the memory of the victims of slavery and commemorate its abolition." The day finally chosen was 10 May, the anniversary of the adoption by the Senate of the law recognizing slave trading and slavery as crimes against humanity. The French government also passed measures calling for a more prominent place for the history of the slave trade and slavery in the school curriculum.

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It had taken almost sixty years, but the recognition of slavery sought in 1948 by new French citizens in the Caribbean had finally come to pass. From the confusion, ambiguity, and conflicting expectations surrounding the anniversary in the early years of the Fourth Republic, France had become the first country to recognize slavery as a crime against humanity. What do the politics of commemoration in 1948 tell us about postwar French history, about decolonization and the politics of departmentalization? First of all, it is clear that the desire for assimilation among citizens of the French Caribbean in 1946 was deeply felt and they held high hopes for the liberating power of full French citizenship. Rather than being subject to a psychological weakness, many Martiniquans saw assimilation as a two-way process of mutual adaptation that contained the potential to wrest power away from a local white oligarchy and recognize the suffering of French citizens of color. In their desire to be fully embraced by the French nation, Martiniquans identified two distinct Frances: one ideal, republican, and grantor of liberties, represented by Charles de Gaulle; the other, a France of white racist békés working in league with the United States.

In 2006, President Jacques Chirac could declare that "the Republic is incompatible with slavery." In 1948, however, the Republic was far more hesitant in its response to the raw emotional appeals of its citizens of the new departments. The French government granted Martiniquans political assimilation in 1946, but social and economic assimilation was to be a long and tortured process that remains unachieved. In metropolitan France, the failure to embrace the departmentalization of Martinique and engage in profound social reform prefigured an ambiguous approach to the incorporation of these new citizens that has kept the question of independence on the political agenda. As colonies became increasingly untenable in the postwar international climate, France was forced to confront issues of migration, integration, racism, and social welfare long before the notion of a multicultural Europe came to the fore in the 1990s. French successes and failures in this process illuminate the creation of democratic pluralistic societies in the late twentieth century, with obvious implications for the twenty-first.

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