Felix Germain, Assistant Professor, Africana Studies Department


The article analyzes the intellectual and social responses of the Black French West Indians to the White supremacy ideology in the French world. It examines how these subjects of the French empire have, throughout the last hundred and fifty years, negotiated French citizenship. Dr. Germain juxtaposes the counter discourses and alternative social practices that the former colonial subjects have presented to the different strains of White supremacy thoughts that have defined the French public from the late nineteenth century to the present. By so doing, he sheds new light on the arduous journeys of the West Indians in attaining full citizenship in modern France. His article problematizes the contemporary sanitized image of France as a bastion of liberty and freedom, showing instead the struggle of those – e.g., the Black French West Indians - who have been excluded from that promise, despite the role of these marginalized groups as member-architects and workers of the French modernity.

=====================================================================

Felix Germain, Assistant Professor, Africana Studies Department


Set in the context of the historical and contemporary roles of Vodou religion in the Haitian society, Dr. Germain examines the recent life-threatening attacks that the followers of this Africa-derived religion have faced in recent years in the hands of Evangelical Christians, mostly from North America. Historically, at Bois Caïman, Vodou inspired Haitians to rebel against the French for their freedom (setting the stage for the Haitian Revolution), and more recently Vodou priests and priestesses have served as healers, counselors, and conflict mediators. Yet, in the past three decades, Christian missionaries from various Protestant churches have been swarming to Haiti, condemning the Afro-Haitian belief system, and labeling it a satanic cult. Combining sociological and historical analyses, Dr. Germain explains that the tragic earthquake of 2010 has created new opportunities for the Christian missionaries. He shows that a substantial portion of the foreign aid arriving in Haiti - school, orphanage, and medical supplies - is controlled by the various missionaries who use these resources to mask their constant attack on Vodou religion in order to gain new recruits and a strong foothold in the Western Hemisphere’s first republic. The result has been an intensification of assault on the practitioners of this Afro-Haitian religion. No doubt, foreign aid helps alleviate material suffering. However, in the face of material desperation that many Haitians face, especially the poor, Dr. Germain documents how Evangelical Christians are reconfiguring gender relations, disempowering poor women, and generating sentiment of self-hate among Haitians who are misled into believing that their faith is the source of their plight. He concludes that in a country where political, class and racial differences already create social tensions, the role of the evangelists in creating a climate hostile to religious differences cannot bode well for nation building and plural democracy as a foundation for the future of Haiti’s socioeconomic growth.