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AT HOME IN EMPIRE:

THE POLITICS OF DWELLING IN FRANCE AND SENEGAL, 1914-1974

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AP | Archives de Paris |
| APP | Archives de la Préfecture de Paris |
| ADBR | Archives Départementale de la Bouche du Rhône |
| ADG | Archives Départementale de la Gironde |
| ADSSD | Archives Départementale de la Seine-Saint Denis |
| ADV | Archives Départementale du Var |
| AMF | Archives Municipale de Fréjus |
| AMSD | Archives Municipale de Saint-Denis |
| ANS | Archives Nationales du Sénégal |
| ANF | Archives Nationales (Pierrefitte) |
| APSCSC | Archives Privée des Sœurs Catéchistes de Sacré-Cœur |
| CAOM | Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer |
| CCIM | Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Marseille |
| CICR | Comité International du Croix Rouge |
| CHETOM | Centre d'Historique et d'Études des Troupes d'Outre-Mer |
| ECPAD | Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense |
| IFAN | Institut Fondamentale de l'Afrique Noire |
| IHTP | Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent |
| SHD | Services Historique de la Défense |
| SICAP | Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert |
| SICAP-Archives | Archives du Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert |

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Introduction: The Politics of Dwelling

In March 1927, Thierno M'Baye sent a letter to Dakar. Writing from Marseille, he asked for help from the Governor General of French West Africa, Jules Carde. M'Baye penned his request on behalf of the *Association Amicale des Originaires de l'A.O.F.*, a mutual-aid society run by men from French West Africa. Like the vast majority of the group's members, M'Baye hailed from Senegal. In his message to Governor Carde, M'Baye bemoaned the fate of the “three thousand Senegalese men” living unchecked lives in this bustling port city, many of whom he described as “bad boys.” To solve this problem, the *Amicale* wanted Carde to fund “our *foyer* and our little mosque.” A *foyer*, which roughly translates to “hearth” or “home,” would have been a familiar sight on Marseille's streets. Since the mid-nineteenth century, *foyers* provided accommodations and support services to young rural migrants in France's industrializing cities.¹ The mosque, by contrast, may have stood out, although not for the “bad boys” the *Amicale* hoped to shelter. Senegalese Muslim communities have long oriented themselves physically and socially around sacred spaces like mosques. In foreign or non-Islamic areas, these sites brought worshipers together and connected them to the global *dar-al-Islam*, or house of Islam.² By merging these French and Islamic spaces, M'Baye hoped to give his compatriots in this Mediterranean metropolis a new home and what he called “a real family.”³

M'Baye was not the *foyer*'s only supporter. In his own message to Governor Carde, the colonial official M. Harlée wrote from Marseille to describe a meeting he had with the *Amicale* members about this *foyer*. They wanted the space to house the *Amicale*'s headquarters, “a refuge

¹ Roldan Lovatt, Christine Whitehead, and Claire Levy-Vroelant, “Foyers in the UK and France – Comparisons and Contrasts” *European Journal of Housing Policy* 6, no. 2 (August 2006): 151-166.

² Cheikh Anta Babou, *The Muridiyya on the Move: Islam, Migration, and Place Making* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2021).

³ Thierno M'Baye to Governor of AOF, March 15 1927, 14 Miom/3034, CAOM. “de mauvais garçons...une véritable famille... une aide morale et réelle sur tous les compatriotes.”

for unemployed compatriots,” a cooperatively-run restaurant, a courtyard, and a room to receive marabouts, that is, clerics who held considerable sway among many Senegalese Muslims.⁴ The *Amicale* sought to create a site to give Marseille’s West African residents material, spiritual, and administrative support. Harlée praised this project as a way to give these men “a shelter where they are at home, where they could find a reasonably priced meal with healthy distractions. It would provide the essence of a distant family through a protective France.”⁵ Helping these men feel “at home” meant providing familial comforts through the “protective” French imperial state.

Governor Carde did not share Harlée’s enthusiasm. Writing from his office in Dakar, he commended the *Amicale*’s work but declined their request for financial support. As he explained in a letter to a colleague, managing the “mentality” of West Africans in France was certainly a worthwhile goal.⁶ However, Marseille’s West African population was just too small to justify the expense. The *foyer*, as well as its courtyard, cafeteria, and mosque remained a dream.

This discussion among three men flung across France’s empire – one Senegalese in France, one French in Senegal, and another French in France - demonstrates the importance that people in both France and Senegal placed on dwelling spaces throughout the twentieth century. A decade before M’Baye sent his request, thousands of indigenous Lebu residents in Dakar demanded restitution for the state’s destruction of their homes during a plague epidemic. Over fifty years later, Senegalese, Mauritanian, and Malian labor migrants launched militant and often successful rent strikes in state-sponsored *foyers* across the Paris region to demand, as one tract

⁴ “Rapport de M. Harlée, Administrateur-adjoint des Colonies sur la Société Amicale des originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française à Marseille.” 3SLOTFOM/27, CAOM. “un refuge pour leurs compatriotes sans travail”

⁵ Ibid. Le foyer serait en outre le refuge, l’abri où l’on est chez soi, où l’on trouve une table à des prix adorables et de saines distractions ; ce serait l’émanation de la famille éloignée au sein de la France protectrice.”

⁶ “A.S. d’établissement d’un ‘Foyer à Marseille pour les originaires de l’A.O.F.’,” April 1927, 14Miom/3034, CAOM. “mentalité”

put it, “the conditions of a decent life.”⁷ In all these cases, West Africans as well as their French interlocutors debated how much the French government should help make spaces that could anchor lives in changing worlds. In short, they struggled over what it would take to feel at home and what role the state should play in helping West Africans find that elusive feeling.

Placing these and similar events together inspired my central questions: when, where, and why did West Africans’ ability to feel at home become politicized in France and Senegal during the twentieth century? In the sixty years between the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the restrictions on labor migration to France in 1974, wars, plagues, urbanization, migration, as well as the rise and fall of various political regimes transformed where and how West Africans lived in both France and Senegal. Over time a growing number of West Africans, either by choice or by force, turned to French governmental agencies to manage these changes. This trend reflected the increasing number of French bureaucratic institutions trying to manage the domestic lives of West African subjects, citizens, and immigrants. Many agents of the French government came uninvited into West Africans’ intimate worlds. But sometimes people like M’Baye pulled reluctant French bureaucrats or civilians into their domestic spaces. By examining these entanglements, I explain how changing domestic experiences produced new political expectations.⁸ In particular, I argue that between 1914 to 1974 a growing number of people linked West Africans’ ability to feel at home to the stability of the French imperial project.

The very idea of feeling at home in an empire raises a fundamental question: how can we reconcile the violence, social hierarchy, and racism built into to the French imperial state with West Africans’ decision to turn to this same government to find the comfort and belonging often

⁷ “Extraits Tirés d’un Enregistrement de la Déclaration Faite Par Les Travailleurs du Foyer Raymond Losserand Au Cours du Meeting du 10 Janvier 1974,” ARC 3019 (12), IHTP.

⁸ Reinart Koselleck, “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories” *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 267-288.

associated with home? Explaining this tension builds on recent scholarly trends that challenges older emphases on distance as the essential paradigm of colonial societies.⁹ Moving away from this focus on imperialism's fundamental divisions also challenges a persistent emphasis in French imperial historiography on political representation as the central axis to understand how colonized subjects interacted with the colonial state. This study examines how struggles over the material, social and emotional resources needed to feel at home structured processes of inclusion and exclusion in colonial and postcolonial France and Senegal. In doing so, it traces the decades-long rise of a political framework that grounded West Africans' relationship with the colonial regime in their ability to get the government to help them forge meaningful domestic lives in changing worlds. I call this framework the politics of dwelling.

Concretizing Inclusion and Exclusion in France's Empire

Why did people like M'Baye turn to the French state to get help creating homes, and why did some French officials or civilians support these efforts while others did not? The politics of dwelling answers these and other questions by examining the changing ways that domestic spaces and expectations structured West African engagements with French colonial authorities. Doing this challenges scholars of France, West Africa, and imperialism writ large to focus on access to everyday resources, rather than abstract concepts like citizenship, to understand how people related to colonial and postcolonial states throughout the twentieth century.

Over the past few decades, scholars of France and the Francophone world have increasingly emphasized how people of African descent tried to reimagine the social, economic,

⁹ For examples see Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Ranajit Guha, "Not At Home in Empire," *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (1997): 482-493; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

and political boundaries of France's imperial order. From the Haitian Revolution to the *banlieue* uprisings of 2005, studies have examined how people of African-descent have tried to claim their place in France's "universal" republic.¹⁰ These studies often focus on how people denied the full benefits of citizenship debated the meaning and uses of this category in France and its colonies. Exemplary of this trend is Gary Wilder's analysis of how *négritude* intellectuals participated in a wider interwar reimagining of the French "imperial nation-state" by reconceptualizing the racial and social boundaries of France's republic.¹¹ Wilder's follow up book on Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire's work in the postwar era as well as Annette Joseph-Gabriel's study of writers like Andrée Blouin, Paulette Nardal, or Jane Vialle demonstrates how Afro-descended thinkers tried to transform, rather than simply reject, French imperial citizenship after 1945.¹² Like Frederick Cooper's recent work on federalism and decolonization in French West Africa, these studies demonstrate how many leaders of African-descent tried to change citizenship to transform France and its empire.¹³ These vital studies reveal Afro-French debates not only about who can be a citizen, but also what citizenship even meant.

¹⁰ Lorelle D. Semley, *To Be Free and French: Citizenship in France's Atlantic Empire*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Félix F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016). Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (eds.), *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Jean-Philippe Dedieu, *La Parole Immigrée: Les migrants africains dans l'espace public en France (1960-1995)* (Paris: Klincksieck: 2012); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-180* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); for older examples see Philippe Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres En France, 1919-1939* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985); Marc Michel, *L'appel à L'Afrique: Contributions Et Réactions à L'effort De Guerre En A.O.F. (1914-1919)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).

¹¹ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-state: Negritude & Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹² Annette K. Joseph-Gabriel, *Reimagining Liberation: How Black Women Transformed Citizenship in the French Empire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

¹³ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

Many cultural historians and literary scholars have contributed to this focus on citizenship in the French imperial nation-state by examining the cultural bases of Afro-descended peoples' exclusion or inclusion in France and its empire. Many of these studies examine the role artistic, literary, or discursive representations of black people and communities in France and its empire have played in structuring African and Afro-Caribbean peoples' changing social positions within French society.¹⁴ While often avoiding the term "assimilation," these studies largely follow this concept's connection between cultural identification and political or social inclusion.¹⁵ Actors not-identified as black as well as people of African descent used paintings, poems, novels, or music to reinforce or resist racially exclusive notions of who belongs in France. These studies help reveal the long historical cultural construction of France's boundaries.

Senegal's unique political history has given it a key role in these debates about inclusion and exclusion in French and Francophone African history. As will be explained later on, Senegal's coast has been central to French imperialism in the Atlantic world for centuries. However, the decline of the overseas slave trade at the beginning of the 19th century raised questions about this region's relationship with France. In 1848, France's short-lived Second Republic brought its Senegalese subjects into a new political order. Spurred by revolution in the metropole and challenges to slavery across the Atlantic, the Republic abolished slavery and made

¹⁴ Robin Mitchell, *Vénus Noire: Black Women and Colonial Fantasies in Nineteenth-century France* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2020); Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003); T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, et al., *Negritude Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

¹⁵ For more on French assimilation theory see Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Gérard Noiriel, *Le Creuset Français: Histoire De L'immigration, XIXe-XXe Siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1988); Martin Deming Lewis, "One Hundred Million Frenchmen: The 'Assimilation' Theory in French Colonial Policy." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (1962): 129–53.

all residents of its colonies' citizens, regardless of race or religion.¹⁶ Male inhabitants of France's coastal outposts of Gorée and Saint-Louis, and later Dakar and Rufisque, gained access to French courts and the right to vote in local and national elections. These municipalities became known as the Four Communes and their residents *originaires*.¹⁷ The *originaires* blurred the lines between citizen and subject, a unique position that has led historians of France and Senegal to make the communes key to the aforementioned debates about the relationship between citizenship and exclusion or inclusion in the French empire.¹⁸ Senegal's coastal inhabitants have thus proved essential to historical understandings of how West Africans fit into centuries-old struggles over what it meant to belong in France's modern imperial polity.

The politics of dwelling pushes the study of people of African descent's relationship to the French state beyond the realm of ideas by placing it squarely in bedrooms and courtyards. As important as all these aforementioned studies are, they prioritize abstract rights and ideas associated with citizenship or cultural representations over concrete experiences. This approach downplays the role everyday needs played in forging colonized peoples' relationships with the French colonial state and its successors. My perspective complements a largely liberal framework that grounds political participation in juridical, electoral or discursive acts by focusing on the material constraints or bases for political engagement. Pursuing a materially-

¹⁶ Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802-1848*. (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2000); Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité et Citoyenneté en Afrique Occidentale Française: Originaires et Citoyens dans le Sénégal Colonial," *The Journal of African History* 42 (2), 2001: 285-305.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Ann Foster, *Faith in Empire: Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal: Urban Life and Politics in French West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); Jean-Loup Amselle. *Affirmative Exclusion: Cultural Pluralism and the Rule of Custom in France*, trans, Jean Marie Todd. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Nationalité et Citoyenneté en Afrique Occidentale Française"; Mamadou Diouf, "Assimilation Coloniale Et Identités Religieuses De La Civilité Des Originaires Des Quatre Communes (Sénégal)." *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 34, no. 3 (2000): 565-87; G. Wesley. Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900-1920* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

grounded study of West Africans' relationship to France takes up Pap Ndiaye's call for scholars to focus on the socially embedded nature of black politics and history in France. Ndiaye argues that understanding the role race plays in black communities in France depends on probing the distinct relationships that Africans, Antilleans, and other people identified as black have had with the French state and economy.¹⁹ The politics of dwelling takes up this call by examining the unique forms of political participation that evolved as French agents and agencies got increasingly entangled with the intimate lives of people moving to, from, and through Senegal.

This socially grounded approach pushes scholars of French colonial history to question the centrality of legal status to colonial subjects' interactions with the French colonial state and its postcolonial successors. Focusing exclusively on how citizenship rights structured peoples' ability to make claims on the state obscures how West Africans deemed "subjects" or "foreigners" made successful demands for French governmental resources. This is not to say that peoples' political categories were not important. Rather, I examine how demands for domestic assistance emerged out of a dialogue between legal rights, domestic conditions, and the specific relations West Africans had with French institutions. This socially-embedded approach to political practice reflects what Partha Chatterjee calls the politics of the governed. Chatterjee argues that many peoples' relationship to state institutions, particularly in the Global South, depends less on abstract rights than the connections that emerge through the processes of modern governance.²⁰ Migrants referred to Senegal's past ties to France to demand state support for their postwar *foyers*. Decades earlier, women in Saint-Louis invoked their status as war widows to get money to rebuild destroyed homes. These people grounded their demands in their social

¹⁹ Pap Ndiaye, *La Condition Noire: Essai Sur Une Minorité Française* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2008).

²⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections On Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

positions or domestic needs as well as their rights as citizens, foreigners, or subjects. Examining these claims challenges scholars to think beyond formal rights to understand the intimate relationships between the French state and the West Africans it governed.

West Africans' ability to get or even demand state assistance was not automatic or timeless. I argue that throughout the twentieth century French and West African actors increasingly used domestic assistance programs to debate, transform, and adapt the nature of political inclusion in France and Senegal. The connections and ideologies these programs forged often traversed the binaries used to organize imperial societies, and to some extent imperial histories: colonizer and colonized, European and African, colony and metropole, citizen and subject. As a growing number of West Africans tried to forge stable lives in landscapes transformed by late nineteenth century imperial expansions, French officials and civilians tried to manage the new abodes they inhabited, as well as how they felt about these spaces. During and after World War I, government offices in Senegal began filling up with requests for domestic assistance funds while diverse activists in France tried to find shelter for the country's West African soldiers or workers. By World War II, people folded these kinds of demands into a broader welfare system that survived imperialism's formal demise. This solidified a political framework that pinned the legitimacy of the French empire, and its postcolonial successors, in part on West Africans' ability to dwell comfortably. Sometimes this framework led French urbanists to design new houses for Senegalese bureaucrats in 1950s Dakar. Other times it inspired Senegalese migrants in 1960s Paris to demand greater autonomy in state-sponsored *foyers*. Connecting disparate archival records made by people trying to describe, control, or support West Africans' domestic needs reveals the mutual construction of French institutions and West African domestic lives throughout the twentieth century.

Dwelling in State Archives

The politics of dwelling emerged out of governmental concerns and intimate aspirations. To see how this process operated on the ground, let us turn to a note Gunne Keita wrote from a prison camp in France during World War II. “Many thanks from a poor Senegalese man for the package received today.” Keita wrote, “I am happy that you are thinking of us who are so far from our people. We feel less alone.”²¹ Keita was one of the thousands of West African troops who ended up in German-run prison camps after France’s defeat in 1940. The packages he described arrived as part of efforts by France’s authoritarian Vichy government to use care packages with food, clothes, and other goods to combat what one official called a “sensation of isolation and abandonment” among colonial soldiers.²² Thus when Keita said his package made him “feel less alone,” he echoed the language of this project’s architects. Like dozens of other men whose notes on these packages sit in France’s National Archives, Keita may have used these words to keep these packages coming. However, this tactical motivation did not mean that Keita did not appreciate the clothes, food, and other goods contained in these packages. This note evoked the language of state assistance programs as well as the needs of their recipients. Words of isolation responded to West African soldiers and French officials’ effort to structure and adapt their relationship amidst changing conditions. People used these and other institutional documents to record and create the politics of dwelling.

The politics of dwelling is not a phrase found in archival sources. However, the terms “*habiter*” (to dwell) and “*habitations*” (dwellings) appear frequently. One can think of the

²¹ Letter from Gunne Keita to M. le Président du Comité d’Assistance aux troupes Noire, La Fère, Aisne, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, Internes dans les Camps ou Arbeit-Kommandos de la Zone Occupée, F/9/2965, ANF. “Grand merci de la part d’un pauvre Sénégalais pour le colis reçu aujourd’hui. Je suis heureux que vous pensiez toujours à nous qui sommes si loin des nôtres. Aussi nous nous sentons moins seuls.”

²² L’Amiral Secrétaire d’État to the Marine et aux Colonies to Monsieur le Général Directeur du Services des Prisonniers de Guerre, Vichy August 7, 1943, F/9/2966, ANF.

politics of dwelling as an influential, yet often unstated, political logic that structured how many West African dwellers interacted with different organs of the French imperial state. In some ways, this focus on dwelling as a kind of interaction echoes Heideggerian notions of dwelling as the means by which individuals forge relationships with their surroundings.²³ However, I combine phenomenological approaches to space with perspectives from Marxist and humanist geographers to think of dwelling as a historically specific and political practice, rather than an abstract ethical system.²⁴ Dwelling triangulates minds, bodies, and spaces in historically specific ways that structure peoples' self-understandings and relationships to the outside world. The politics of dwelling emerged as a growing number of people tied the stability of the French state to its ability to manage how its West African subjects made these triangulations in changing landscapes. People like Keita or Harlée forged or utilized this conceptual link by trying to make these dwelling practices legible in official records. Through letters, indemnity claims, or surveillance reports about different "*habitations*," people reinscribed or reinvented the relationship between imperial political systems and West Africans' everyday dwelling practices.

Researching dwelling demands recognizing its expansive meaning beyond shelter. Dwelling combines an emphasis on spatial practices with the various forms of labor associated with homemaking. As feminist scholars and activists have long noted, homemaking entails the often gendered emotional, physical, and spiritual labor needed to reproduce individuals, their

²³ David J. Gauthier, *Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and the Politics of Dwelling*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011); Nicholas Dungey, "The Ethics and Politics of Dwelling." *Polity* 39, no. 2 (2007): 234-58; Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971): 143-161.

²⁴ Daniel Miller, "Possessions" in *Home Possessions: Material Culture behind Closed Doors*, ed. Daniel Miller, 107-122 (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Orion Press, 1964).

senses of self, and their social connections.²⁵ The records I examine do not reveal a consistent idea about what West Africans needed to make a home. Furthermore, linguistic differences means that the actors these archives discussed did not use the same language to describe homes. For example, many of the Senegalese men and women these records describe spoke Wolof, whose term *kër* refers to physical dwellings and relatives in and beyond that house.²⁶ While *kër* echoes how *habiter* captures dwelling's physical and social aspects, it carries culturally specific ideas about gendered labor and collective property. Similarly, *kër* evokes a genealogical sense of connection to a place not always captured by the more individually-focused French term *chez soi* (at home).²⁷ Dwelling thus has no single meaning in records or the live they sought to capture.

Despite these linguistic difficulties, archival records do reveal the contextually specific ways that people engaged with the growing link between domestic well-being and governmental legitimacy. Letters sent to and from West African POWs reconnected these men with external and often female supporters, thus combatting soldiers' sense that they were, as Keita put it, "far from their own." By contrast, Senegalese and French actors in interwar Senegal used petitions to debate how many rooms, beds, or neighbors it would take to rebuild the *kër yi* upended by plagues and segregation.²⁸ Archives reveal how people articulated the politics of dwelling and how they enacted it through petitions, letters, and various other files that crossed official desks.

Hearing Domestic Expectation Amidst Archival Silence

²⁵ Clyde Plumauzille and Mathilde Rossigneux-Méheust, "Le Care, Une 'Voix Différente' Pour l'Histoire du Genre" *Clio. Femmes, Genres, Histoire* 1, No. 49 (2019): 7-22; Berenice Fischer and Joan Tronto, "Toward a feminist theory of caring" in *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, ed. Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 35- 62; bell hooks, "Homeplace (a site of resistance)" in *Yearning: Race, gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 382-390, Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (London: Power of Women Collective, 1975).

²⁶ Abdoulaye Bara Diop, *La Famille Wolof: Tradition Et Changement* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2012).

²⁷ Sabine Vassart, "Habiter," *Pensée plurielle* 2, no. 12 (2006): 9-19.

²⁸ *Kër yi* is the plural version of the wolof term *kër* described above.

My interest in the politics of dwelling began after finding one such set of records, specifically M'Baye and Harlée's exchange located in France's colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence. I stumbled upon these documents weeks after encountering dozens of indemnity claims in the Senegalese National Archives in Dakar detailing Senegalese efforts to get paid for domestic goods the government had burned during bubonic plague outbreaks. These files provided tantalizing glimpses into intimate lives. In a way, they shocked me by their mere existence. I began my research wary of the infamous silences of colonial archives that erased voices, possibilities, and narratives that threatened imperial regimes.²⁹ As scholars like Saidiya Hartman and Gayatri Spivak argue, colonial regimes excluded non-Europeans in part by producing records that demonized or erased their intimate lives.³⁰ Yet within a few weeks, in both France and Senegal, I found archival sources that seemed to defy this logic. In these pages, Senegalese actors described their intimate feelings, desires, and spaces. I ask why these kinds of records emerged to challenge scholarly framings of colonial archives about the domestic realm solely as records of silence or domination. I wanted to see which intimate worlds made it into archival pages, and what those arrivals said about the changing nature of colonial governance.

Silences are not total, and they have a history. Within these records, I found pronounced absences alongside profound details. Rather than bemoan the lack of complete accounts, I dived into these records' unevenness. I asked why certain aspects of West African domestic life ended up in these files at all. Just as Ann Stoler read "along the archival grain" to see how Dutch colonists' intimate lives became legible in state archives, I examine when and how aspects of

²⁹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

³⁰ Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" *Small Axe*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (June 2008): 1-14; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "History" *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 198-311.

West African domestic lives showed up in archives to trace intimate changes to French colonial governance.³¹ Silence became an assumption, and articulation the historical problem to resolve.

Even as I focused in on what these state archives and their silence could reveal, I still sought out non-official records to understand the domestic worlds West Africans inhabited in France and Senegal. Whenever possible I followed the lead of scholars working in Senegal who use oral histories, visual sources, or material culture to study the role place-making has played in peoples' relationship with state authorities.³² I conducted interviews, read magazines, collected photographs, combed through private collections, and examined physical remains.³³ Beyond getting non-official views on dwelling, these sources reveal how the state was simply one of many institutions influencing how peoples dwelt and what that dwelling meant. However, I use these non-state sources to complement rather than replace state archives. I place photographs and interviews in conversation with the fragments found in government records to understand why certain domestic experiences got official attention at particular moments. This approach reveals why contestations arose in barracks, government offices, and living rooms about what domestic lives the colonial state should examine or ignore.

Over time I noticed that the spaces, actors, and lifestyles that drew this archival attention had one thing in common trait: a seeming displacement from “traditional” domestic life. French observers regularly feared that imperialism had upended the familial relations, racial geographies, and economic practices colonists saw as fundamental to West African social reproduction. Migration to France, residence in colonial cities, or engagements with “modern”

³¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

³² Babou, *The Muridiyya on the Move*; François Richard, *Reluctant Landscapes: Historical Anthropologies of Political Experience in Siin, Senegal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Ibrahima Thiaw, “Histoires, espaces et identités sénégalaises” *Espaces, culture matérielle et identités en Sénégal*, ed. Ibrahima Thiaw (Dakar: Codesria, 2010), 1-16.

³³ All interviewees first names have been changed to protect their identities.

forms of domestic consumption upended the static family lives colonists believed had sustained Africans for generations. In response, certain French actors advocated a colonial-version of the maternalist politics gaining steam in Western Europe and North America. As Seth Koven and Sonya Michel explain, maternalist politics “exalted women’s capacity and extended to society as a whole the values of care, nurturance, and morality.”³⁴ The archives around the politics of dwelling reveal a similar desire to use state resources and the domestic spaces they created to “care” for Africans to guarantee stable social reproduction. However, the maternalist policies directed at West Africans in France and Senegal emerged within the violence and asymmetries that characterized colonial societies. Records around these maternalist policies reflect confrontations between an authoritarian yet severely underfunded colonial state and West Africans trying to forge meaningful lives within the landscapes this state claimed to control.

As this maternalist impulse gained influence in France and Senegal, it produced particular gendered geographies of statecraft. Domestic assistance programs in Senegal focused on making dwelling spaces for urban African families living outside “traditional” rural spaces. By contrast, authorities and activists in France directed their attention to young male migrants supposedly displaced from female domestic labor. Despite these differences, officials running these programs believed that they had to reinforce or entirely replace the social stability once provided by imperiled rural compounds and families.

While this administrative belief largely emerged out of an ahistorical colonial fantasy about African rural pasts, many West African homemakers and dwellers did forge radically different domestic lives than their predecessors. Male migrants in France, for example, lived far

³⁴ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, “Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origin of Welfare States in France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States, 1880-1920” *The American Historical Review* 95, no. 6 (Oct. 1990): 1079.

from the domestic labor female relatives provided as well as the spiritual and genealogical mooring provided by familial compounds. Similarly, men and women in Dakar or Saint-Louis had to find new ways to support themselves and their dependents amidst economic precarity and violent segregation. Yet alongside these obstacles, many West African dwellers actively reimagined the gender relation, spatial forms, and domestic practices needed to feel at home. Soldiers in barracks or POW camps reconsidered what it meant to be a man, son, father, or patriarch. Some of these men turned comrades in arms or French women into new relatives, while other tried to use the resources found abroad to gain the capital needed to return home as a respected patriarch. Similarly, suburbanites in postwar Dakar selectively engaged with the postwar spaces meant to promote “modern” Western-style monogamous nuclear families to create their own “modern” lifestyles. Some patriarchs turned state-sponsored suburban courtyards into rooms for multiple wives. Alternatively, some women sent magazines photographs of homes filled with African and European-style décor to present women as builders of homes and the “modern” Senegalese nation writ-large. Aspirations and anxieties mixed together in particular ways to bring domestic worlds into archival pages.

While domestic changes occurred across France and Senegal, my project focuses on three West African groups whose domestic well-being inspired the most frequent discussions in official archives: soldiers, labor migrants, and Senegalese families living around “slums.” These groups were relative minorities both in Senegal and French West Africa more broadly. Yet their growing access to literacy, presence near central nodes of state power, and official beliefs that they lived without rural life’s stability produced a disproportionate number of records about their intimate lives. However, the scale and nature of these records fluctuated over time. For example, military records fastidiously recounted soldiers’ daily lives. By contrast, I spent months digging

through national, municipal, or missionary archives as well as private family collections to find details about the *foyers* made for West Africans in interwar France. Yet when I found myself inundated by photographs, films, interviews, and police reports while researching their postwar successors, the so-called *foyers africains*. Similarly, while Senegal's national archives hold rich records about "slum" dwellers' during plague crises between 1914 and 1921, this paper trail turned into muttered frustrations about public housing programs for the rest of the interwar era. When I turned to files about Dakar's postwar suburban housing projects, I found extensive administrative meeting notes and applications from women and men trying to leave the city's "slums." I examine why these silences or choruses arose when they did to explain how these groups' dwelling became so important to official efforts to stabilize imperial or post-imperial societies. Focusing on when record keepers turned toward West African domestic lives allows me to trace the new political dynamics behind efforts to create maternalist institutions.

I thus accept the limitations of colonial state archives while arguing that a unique materially and socially grounded history of home life can emerge when historians examine how state archives of domesticity evolved over time. The growing size and bureaucratization of records discussing how West Africans did or should live demonstrates a rising belief in, or demand for, official domestic assistance. Before 1940, records contained debates about whether French state resources should support West Africans' domestic well-being at all. By contrast, when this question arose during and after World War II, the answer almost always seemed yes. However, the type of families or domestic lifestyles these policies promoted became new points of contention. These change did not simply stem from new archival discourses. They also reflected transformations to how West Africans reproduced themselves and their sense of personal, familial, or collective belonging. These records demonstrate how evolving

governmental institutions and changing domestic realities helped the politics of dwelling go from a contested idea to a central framework.

The distinction between the focus on male migrants in France and urban families in Senegal reflects the need to see the politics of dwelling as emerging out of specific economic, social and political changes. As Arlette Farge argues, official records serve as contact points between average people and forces of authority, illuminating how actors articulated, navigated, or transformed historically specific social and political parameters.³⁵ Understanding how these parameters operated across vast distances demands thinking of the French empire less as a uniform space than a set of connected yet distinct locales.³⁶ To ground the politics of dwelling within these locally specific contexts, I place records from domestic assistance programs alongside sources that reveal how people imagined or created homes in specific contexts. For example, to study postwar suburbs in Dakar, I examined the city's massive urban expansion after 1945 before combing through official records on housing projects in this growing metropolis. I then combine official photographs of couples in the gardens of their state-funded 1950s home, Senegalese homemaking guides depicting smiling African woman surrounded by verdant plants, and remarks I collected during interviews about Dakar's bucolic postwar suburbs. (Fig. 1 & 2). This combination raises questions about why some people responded to urbanization by focusing on who could or could live amidst Dakar's bougainvillea bushes. This locally grounded analysis reveals how people politicized domestic spaces, how they linked access to domestic comfort to political authority, and who this imperative benefited or left behind.

³⁵ Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. by Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

³⁶ Jennifer Heuer, "The One-Drop Rule in Reverse? Interracial Marriages in Napoleonic and Restoration France" *Law and History Review* 27, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 515-548; Gregory Mann, "Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 110, No. 2 (April 2005): 409-434.



Figure 0. 1: Photograph of suburban home garden in 1950s Dakar. Album C 3185, SB000, SICAP-Archives.



Figure 0. 2: Cover of magazine *Bingo* showing West African woman tending to verdant flowers in special edition entitled “Indispensable Guide to Modern Homemaking.” *Bingo*, May 15, 1960, Copyright M. de Breteuil.

Homes and France’s Empire in Senegal

Understanding the politics of dwelling’s evolution in France and Senegal demands a wide historical lens. France and Senegal’s histories have been entwined for centuries, and homes have long structured the relations between these two nodes of the Atlantic world. Before the twentieth century, the political importance of homes across modern-day Senegal largely stemmed from elite efforts to use dwellings to manage relationships with various regional powers. By the twentieth century, however, people began to argue that it was the French government that should create homes to manage connections and conflicts with the West Africans it governed.

These pre-twentieth century political uses of domestic spaces stemmed from the landscapes people inhabited and made in Senegal. Sitting at the Western edge of the Sahel, the broader Senegambia region has long been a space of mobility and resettlement. By the seventeenth century, Senegambian settlements, particularly along the coast, were increasingly structured by the extractive and destructive Atlantic slave trade.³⁷ Scholars of West Africa have noted the key role of households in this violent commerce.³⁸ Ibrahima Thiaw and Mark Hinchman demonstrate how European and Senegalese elites in eighteenth century Gorée and Saint-Louis used their homes to bolster their political and economic positions locally and within the Atlantic world.³⁹ However, as the overseas slave trade diminished in the nineteenth century, questions arose about these outposts' future. As mentioned earlier, France's Second Republic turned male subjects of its Senegalese communes into enfranchised *originaires* in 1848. However, this status was denied to women. Furthermore, the irrevocability of *originaires'* citizenship only became law in 1916. Despite these limits, the Communes became privileged spaces as France expanded its West African empire in the late nineteenth century and formed protectorates whose inhabitants became disenfranchised subjects.⁴⁰ *Originaires* constituted a small minority in Senegal, never exceeding five percent of the colony's total population. Yet they exerted outside influence on the political history of this divided colonial world.

³⁷ Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁸ François Richard, "Thinking Through 'Vernacular Cosmopolitanisms': Historical Archaeology in Senegal and the Material Contours of the African Atlantic." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 71, no. 1 (2013): 40-71; 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); Peter Mark, *"Portuguese" Style and Luso-African Identity: Precolonial Senegambia, Sixteenth-nineteenth Centuries* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

³⁹ Mark Hinchman, *Portrait of an Island: The Architecture and Material Culture of Gorée, Sénégal, 1758-1837* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Ibrahima Thiaw, "Every House Has a Story: The Archaeology of Gorée Island, Sénégal," in *Africa, Brazil, and the Construction of Trans-Atlantic Black Identities*, eds. Livio Sansone, Elisée Soumonni, and Boubacar Barry (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2008), 45-62.

⁴⁰ Conklin. *A Mission to Civilize*.

Within this fractured terrain, Senegalese homes became tools to forge positions in France's republic and its empire. As Hilary Jones argues *métis*, or mixed-race, men and women in Saint-Louis used domestic spaces and relations to cement their status as economic and political elites. French colonists balked at *métis* efforts to exert power, often responding by asserting their own authority.⁴¹ These connections between domestic life and political power in colonial Senegal echoed the growing link between adherence to bourgeois domestic norms and a right to rule during France's Third Republic.⁴² *Originaires* did not passively adopt these French domestic ideologies. Many *originaires* used their houses to reinforce personal and commercial ties to Wolof or trans-Saharan Islamic communities.⁴³ Beyond the communes, Sufi leaders used sacred spaces and dwellings to safeguard their autonomy vis-à-vis the expanding colonial state.⁴⁴ By the turn of the century, Senegalese and French elites alike thus used domestic spaces to broadcast diverse positions of power. By 1914, I argue, homes began to do something new.

The politics of dwelling's emerged in France's West African empire amidst military policies put in place during World War I. As Chapter One explains, France mobilized hundreds of thousands of men from across French West Africa during the war, with over 160,000 serving at least some time in France itself. This unprecedented state-sponsored migration forced many French observers to reconceptualize the racial geographies that organized the empire. Furthermore, the war provoked a unique homemaking crisis. Early on in the conflict, French commanders banned West African women from military camps. In earlier campaigns, these

⁴¹ Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*.

⁴² Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴³ Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*; Mamadou Diouf, "Islam, the 'Originaires,' and the Making of Public Space in a Colonial City: Saint-Louis du Senegal," in *Tolerance, Democracy, and Sufis in Senegal*. Ed. Mamadou Diouf (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 180-204.

⁴⁴ Cheikh Anta Babou, "Contesting Space, Shaping Places: Making Room for the Muridiyya in Colonial Senegal, 1912-45," *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 3 (2005): 405-26; Eric S. Ross, "From *Marabout Republics* to *Autonomous Rural Communities*: Autonomous Muslim Towns in Senegal" in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, eds. Toylin Falola and Steven J Salm. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005): 243-265.

women supported men's mental and physical survival. Their absence raised questions about who would help soldiers survive from day to day. Improvised efforts to support these men's morale and bodies led civilians, commanders and soldiers alike to reconsider the French government's role in helping West Africans forge stable domestic lives.

The war led many French colonial authorities to radically reconsider the kinds of West African dwellings the French government should support. In the interwar years, officials increasingly sought to bolster "traditional" lifestyles amongst West Africans. French proponents of this neo-traditionalist turn argued that migration, urbanization, and war had imperiled the stability of the West African communities they governed. Alice Conklin links these interwar concerns about "detrribalization" in French colonial thought after World War I to a broader rejection of assimilation, which emphasized French cultural homogenization, in favor of association, which promoted reified cultural divisions. Advocates of association empowered "traditional" patriarchs and other leaders connected to supposedly age-old social structures to combat disruptive social, political, or economic changes.⁴⁵ However, this focus on tradition collided with the new expectations of greater rights or material support fueled by wartime sacrifices. Furthermore, as Gary Wilder argues, interwar "colonial humanists" regularly tried to reconcile imperialism's destructive nature with strongly held beliefs in the developmental possibilities of the French imperial project.⁴⁶ These tensions informed the debates about the empire's obligations towards its West African subjects and citizens that French officials entered into when faced with individuals living outside "traditional" villages or households.

⁴⁵ Conklin. *A Mission to Civilize*, for more on the impact of this neo-traditional turn on family law in French West Africa see Emily Burrill, *States of Marriage: Gender, Justice, and Rights in Colonial Mali* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015).

⁴⁶ Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*.

In this context, the period from 1914 to 1939 saw competing ideas arise about how the French government should use its resources to reproduce the supposed stability of village households for West Africans in both France and Senegal. Chapter Two examines how this perceived need to reproduce village lifestyles informed battles over home destructions, segregation, and indemnifications during plague outbreaks across coastal Senegal. French colonists used Senegalese families' supposed attachment to insalubrious village lifestyles, exemplified by thatch huts, to justify destroying Senegalese homes in Dakar, Saint-Louis, and along the coast. Yet Senegalese protesters forced the government to repay dispossessed dwellers, giving people across coastal Senegal new bureaucratic channels to articulate their ideas about what domestic lifestyles the government should help them forge. Chapter Three, by contrast, examines how these interwar domestic debates played out in France. Various French and Senegalese actors tried to convince local, national, and imperial agencies to fund *foyers* for male West African migrants. Many wanted to recreate the social control they believed familial authority or female labor provided, preventing these men from challenging certain sexual, social, or political norms. At the same time, anti-colonial radicals tried to make their own *foyers* to restructure West African migrants' social and political networks. At a time when a focus on "traditional" villages was supposed to distance French officials from West African affairs, some people tried to bring French agents deeper into its West African subjects' everyday worlds.

The programs discussed in Chapters Two and Three sparked debates about the place of the French government in West Africans' domestic lives. Records from these conflicts regularly invoked the idea of feeling "*chez eux*" (at home). Yet this term almost exclusively arose in French descriptions of spaces believed to recreate the hierarchies, social networks, and material comforts of West African villages. While rooted in ahistorical visions of African family life, the

domestic aspirations that Senegalese claimants evoked did at times echo French ideas of village life. For example, as mentioned earlier, the Wolof term *kër* evokes family residences and the family-unit itself. In an effort to rebuild *kër yi* after their plague-era destruction, Wolof patriarchs tried to get French funds to recreate multi-family compounds that aligned more with colonial ideas about expansive village networks than individualistic bourgeois notions of single family homes. One saw similar trends among West African labor migrants to France, who overwhelmingly came from Soninke villages in the Senegal River Valley. In France, these men often inhabited spaces full of relatives or other compatriots directly tied to rural communities. The similarities between the collective living arrangements these men created and the social solidarity many French observers saw as vital to West African village life helped make some of migrant's domestic needs or demands legible to French officials. These overlaps sometimes convinced French observers to argue for greater domestic support. However, this alignment could also reinforce a belief that the French state needed to stay out of Senegalese social reproduction. In the interwar years many French people continued to argue that West African domestic spheres merited little to no attention, let alone material support.

World War II radically upended French officials' reluctance to get involved in West African home lives. By the end of the war, new welfare ideologies and challenges to the empire led French authorities and West African subjects alike to agree that domestic care was vital to the empire's survival. Chapter Four examines this transformation by focusing on domestic support for West African prisoners of war during World War II. After the fall of France in 1940, maintaining the empire became key to the survival of the Vichy regime.⁴⁷ Vichy authorities felt that the German imprisonment of West African soldiers threatened the French empire's future.

⁴⁷ Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

Confinement undermined French military authority, unmoored these young men from pre-existing rhythms of daily life, and placed them in precarious conditions. To solve these problems, French leaders deployed care packages and female care-workers to give prisoners material comforts and emotional connections to guarantee their loyalty to France. However, West African prisoners and French female agents regularly used the forms and relations these programs created to argue that domestic care was not an act of benevolence, but an official obligation. After the war, these precedents helped connect West Africans' domestic well-being to new ideas about what the French government owed those it governed.

In the postwar years, migration and the rise in welfare institutions transformed how the politics of dwelling structured colonial and post-colonial landscapes. Chapter Five explains how French authorities responded to rapid growth in Dakar by embedding the city in globally circulating ideas about state-led suburbanization. They hoped that suburban single-family homes would create “modern” subjects in colonial Senegal. Senegalese leaders and citizens kept this enthusiasm for suburbanization after independence as France continued to bankroll these projects to maintain its postcolonial influence. These suburban programs raised persistent questions about who's domestic needs the late colonial and early postcolonial government served.

If suburbanization reveals how the politics of dwelling developed in postwar Senegal, Chapter Six examines how migration from Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal living to Paris during the 1960s brought colonial-era expectations into post-imperial France. As a growing number of young men from the Senegal River Valley began living in “slums” across Paris, many politicians and civilians, as well as a number of migrants themselves, argued that the French government should build *foyers* for these men. Planners wanted these *foyers* to recreate the social connections of village life within sanitary conditions. After these *foyers*’ construction, however, waves of

migrant protests swept across these dwellings. *Foyer* residents demanded greater autonomy and investments. Put together, French *foyers* and Senegalese suburbs revealed how the politics of dwelling structured institutions, demands and expectations even after the empire disappeared.

In the 1970s, economic crises and ideological transformations weakened the politics of dwelling's salience in France and Senegal. Policy shifts in France around 1974 imposed new immigration restrictions, ending the relatively-privileged position of Senegalese, Malian, and Mauritanian migrants in France's labor market. Furthermore, changing demographics and weakening support for state welfare for migrants made it harder to convince French officials to pay for West African migrants' domestic well-being. In Senegal, the lowering of French assistance, economic crises, and early structural adjustment programs slashed state domestic assistance. The expectations and engagement the politics of dwelling fostered since 1914 waned as state resources retreated from West Africans' domestic lives across the former empire.

The Politics of Dwelling and Imperial Adaptation

At its core, the politics of dwelling was a fluid structure that promoted a dynamic relationship between West Africans and French domestic assistance. Examining this framework's influence reveals how many institutions and expectations in France's empire emerged through adaptation, rather than simple imposition. Focusing on adaptation demonstrates the benefits of studying inclusion and exclusion by examining quotidian and material interactions between colonized subjects and officials trying to manage their bodies, spaces, and minds.

My understanding of adaptation builds on older approaches to the history of Europe and Africa's entangled pasts. In the early decades after decolonization, leaders like Kwame Nkrumah and radical historians like Walter Rodney argued that colonialism in Africa provided the material basis of Europe's prosperity. In particular, the trade in enslaved peoples and the resource

extractions of the colonial era provided the accumulation needed for capitalist growth and later provided the material basis for welfare redistribution in postwar Europe.⁴⁸ I build on these observations by examining how Africans influenced European institutions, but less through the well-studied histories of economic exploitation than everyday processes and political engagements. The political engagements I study entailed West Africans' dynamic interactions with institutions meant to structure their domestic lives in France and Senegal. This engagement was always marked by the inequities and discrimination that defined French imperial governance. Yet this did not stop many West Africans from trying to use or bend French programs to support their goals. This focus on adaptation builds upon three historical subfields in particular that examine the ideologies, institutions, and practices that structured peoples' relationship to modern colonial and postcolonial regimes in France and West Africa: studies of imperial domesticity, intermediaries and imperial welfare. Whether they were homeless veterans or disgruntled homeowners, many West Africans tried to use French government structures to obtain the resources they needed to form stable domestic lives.

Imperial Domesticity

The politics of dwelling pushes scholars of imperial domesticity to ground their analysis in the quotidian realities of everyday life. Over the past few decades scholars have examined domestic worlds to reveal the intimate bases of imperial inequalities. Ann Stoler's pioneering work demonstrates the key role intimate realms played in forging European racial ideologies. Stoler argues that many colonists believed that the private sphere reproduced the racial categories upon which imperialism depended.⁴⁹ Stoler's work has inspired historians to examine

⁴⁸ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981); Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas, Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1965).

⁴⁹ Ann Laura Stoler. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

the domestic construction of French racial classifications. Emmanuelle Saada, for example, shows how French lawmakers linked mix-raced children's national and racial identity to the kind of homes they grew up in and whether they adhered to certain French domestic norms. These and other studies reveal how people used homes to promote, challenge or normalize racial categories.⁵⁰ These domestic discriminations undermined the Republic's color-blind claims

I do not challenge the link between structural racism and the management of domestic life in France's colonies. In fact, my work depends on this linkage. However, I use the consensus these discussions have produced to move beyond debating whether or not French or other imperial regimes demonized African domestic habits to promote racialized domination.⁵¹ Instead, this dissertation explains how and why people like M'Baye, Harlée, Keita, and thousands of others in France and Senegal turned to this same state to create meaningful lives. Explaining why people made this decision, and why some received state support while others did not, demands connecting top-down plans or ideologies to the concrete acts of dwelling.

Only by bridging colonial policies and residential realities can historians understand how people built and transformed the relationship between the French colonial state and its West African subject's domestic worlds. Studies on imperial domesticity frequently follow Ann Stoler's lead and examine domesticity as a structuring logic for imperial rule. However, they do not always take up Stoler's emphasis on placing these ideas in dialogue with actual domestic

⁵⁰ Françoise Vergès, *Le Ventre des Femmes: Capitalisme, racialisation, féminisme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2017); Margaret Cook Andersen, *Regeneration Through Empire: French Pronatalists and Colonial Settlement in the Third Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire's Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa, 1895-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Frances Gouda and Julia Clancy-Smith (Eds.) *Domesticating the Empire: Race, Gender, and Family Life in French and Dutch Colonialism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998).

⁵¹ This consensus is in part indebted to the pioneering volume Cooper, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (eds.) *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

practices. Whether due to lack of sources or preferences for discursive analysis, this approach presents domesticity as an ideology, policy or set of discourses. Rather than place lived reality and ideological structures in dialogue, these analyses tend to prioritize how people imagined homes over how they created them on a daily basis. Furthermore, this approach tends to center European actors over the non-European dwellers who constituted the overwhelming majority in most colonies. To correct this oversight, I follow the lead of new scholarship on domesticity that places “individual experiences over ideology and the particularities of everyday life over the universalities of teleologies.”⁵² Domestic life and its political implications in France and Senegal stemmed from everyday interactions between those enforcing imperial policies, the West African dwellers they faced, and the objects and spaces people used to create homes.

This socially grounded approach connects Europeanist debates about the construction of imperial domesticities to Africanist studies of the social impact of imperial domestic norms. Karen Tranberg Hansen argues that studying domesticity in colonial Africa means probing European efforts to “contain African women and men on terms unfamiliar to them, imposing Western notions of household organization and gender on local conceptualizations.”⁵³ Historians of colonial Africa have examined not only how these impositions disrupted pre-existing forms of social reproduction, but also how Africans resisted or adapted to changing domestic circumstances. In her hallmark study of sex-workers in colonial Nairobi, Luise White explains how many women used domestic and sexual labor to form urban economies that served their own ends and undermined British colonists’ ambitions.⁵⁴ Scholars working across the continent

⁵² Annelise Heinze and Elizabeth LaCouture, “Unsettling Domesticities: New Histories of Home in Global Contexts” *American Historical Review* 124, no. 4 (October, 2019): 1247.

⁵³ Karen Tranberg Hansen, “Introduction: Domesticity in Africa” *African Encounters with Domesticity*, Ed. Karen Tranberg Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 5.

⁵⁴ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

have echoed White's findings to demonstrate how Africans tried to control domestic spaces and their associated means of reproduction.⁵⁵ The politics of dwelling follows this lead to move beyond examining the tensions within French domestic ideologies. I study how West Africans lived with and changed these tensions and how their efforts to survive or empower themselves in modern France and Senegal influenced the institutions these domestic ideologies inspired.

As state institutions meant to manage West Africans' domestic lives grew, West African soldiers, labor migrants, and urbanites transformed these programs by imbricating their agents and funding into personal efforts to create new domestic lives, spaces, and aspirations. Examining peoples' interactions with these agencies builds on a growing scholarly focus on how Africans and other racialized actors used sites of reproduction to support their personal and political aspirations within Europe and its colonies.⁵⁶ Through everyday adaptations, West Africans tried to get the French government to support a wide variety of domestic expectations. *Originaires* used indemnity petitions to insist on their entitlement to build homes as they pleased. Migrants used investment in their *foyers* to get state agents involved in their efforts to find wealth and status abroad. And after decolonization, Senegalese families turned suburban homes into symbols and engines of an emerging nation that prioritized domestic flourishing.

Intermediaries in Colonial Africa

⁵⁵ Anne Hugon, *Être mère en situation coloniale: Gold Coast, années 1910-1950* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020); Rachel Jean-Baptiste. *Conjugal Rights: Marriage, Sexuality, and Urban Life in Colonial Libreville, Gabon* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Burrill. *States of Marriage*; Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Terri Barnes, "We Women Worked so Hard": *Gender, Urbanization, and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999); Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); T. Dunbar Moodie and Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Tabitha M. Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905-63*. (London: J. Currey, 1987).

⁵⁶ Minayo Nasiali. *Native to the Republic: Empire, Social Citizenship, and Everyday Life in Marseille Since 1945*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Abosede A. George. *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014; Jean-Baptiste. *Conjugal Rights*.

If the politics of dwelling promotes a grounded approach to studying modern imperial domesticity, it also pushes for an expansive view of the intermediaries this empire depended upon. Over the past two decades, African historians have increasingly focused on colonial intermediaries. African interpreters, clerks, and soldiers procured or produced the information, revenues, and paperwork Europeans needed to run colonial states. This challenges binaries of colonizer versus colonized by demonstrating how certain African actors “used the new opportunities created by colonial conquest and colonial rule to pursue their own agendas.”⁵⁷ This literature has inspired work on intermediaries’ ambitions and subjectivities, their impact on colonial bureaucracies, and the relationships between intermediary classes and pre and post-colonial social stratifications.⁵⁸ These studies demonstrate the need to focus on processes of negotiation, alongside domination or resistance, to understand African reactions to colonial rule. Intermediaries play a key role in my research, with one group in particular standing out: soldiers.

The military played a vital role in the politics of dwelling’s evolution. The very idea that the French state had to support West Africans’ well-being on a large scale first emerged amidst the haphazard mobilizations of World War I, and it solidified into state policy amidst the crises of World War II. One seemingly small example reveals how soldiers’ domestic adaptations influenced state policy amidst these wars. When thousands of West African men went to barracks across southern France during World War I, military administrators reluctantly let many

⁵⁷ Benjamin Lawrence, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts “Introduction: African Intermediaries and the ‘Bargain’ of Collaboration” in *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, eds. Benjamin Lawrence, Emily Lynn Osborn and Richard L. Roberts, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 7.

⁵⁸ Françoise Blum and Ophélie Rillon. “Une histoire de famille dans l’empire colonial français. Penser les trajectoires individuelles et familiales au prisme de l’intersectionnalité,” *20 & 21. Revue d’histoire* 146, no. 2, (2020): 39-52; Moses E. Ochonu, *Colonialism By Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Pascale Barthélémy, *Africaines Et Diplômées à L’époque Coloniale (1918-1957)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

of them cook outdoors despite concerns about its impropriety or potential danger. As one commander put it, they had to give up challenging “customs that we cannot suppress.”⁵⁹ The decision not to “suppress” these practices stood at odds with the imposition of European domestic norms that scholars argue was key to modern imperial ideologies. Rather than seeing this adaptation as a sign of a fundamental tension within colonial domestic ideology, I frame these and similar decisions as contextually informed adaptations. Permitting outdoor cooking helped feed soldiers amidst a haphazard mobilization. Furthermore, French commanders banned women from colonial military camps after 1914 forcing soldiers and commanders to figure out how to access vital domestic labor women previously provided. Letting men cook outdoors seemed like a small price to pay to keep the colonial army fed.

Soldiers’ deployment also fed a persistent belief that West African men in particular needed material as well as emotional support, leading officials and civilians in France to reimagine the goals and roles of colonial state assistance well beyond the war. Studies of French colonial welfare often examine programs that targeted Algerian families during and after the Algerian War.⁶⁰ However, welfare systems for West Africans in France before 1974 focused almost entirely on men. In part, this reflected the overwhelmingly male nature of West African migration to France at this time. However, this does not explain why some officials promoted these assistance programs rather than ignore these relatively small populations, as Governor Carde did in response to M’Baye’s request. West African soldiers’ status as vital intermediaries

⁵⁹, Rapport Particulier de Monsieur le Médecin-Major LOUSTE, Adjoint Technique de la IV^e Région, à Monsieur le Sous-Secrétaire d’Etat du Service de Santé sur l’INSTALLATION DES CAMPS SENEGALAIS de FREJUS-St RAPHAEL, Mars-Avril 1918, GR 9 NN 7 1152, SHD.

⁶⁰ Muriel Cohen, *Des familles invisibles: Les Algériens de France entre intégrations et discriminations (1945-1985)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, Paris: 2020); Elise Franklin, “Defining Family, Delimiting Belonging: Algerian Migration after the End of Empire” *Gender & History* 31, Issue 3, (2019): 681-698; Amelia H. Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State During Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

led many French actors to promote institutions, ideologies, and practices that supported West African men in France. These linkages grew in the interwar years and flourished after World War II, forging persistent links between West African male domesticity and French governance.

Connecting welfare systems made for West African soldiers to political institutions operating during peace time pushes scholars to consider the broader implications of governmental structures made for or by intermediaries. In part, this link between war and domestic assistances reflects the broader welfare-warfare nexus, whereby industrialized wartime mobilizations produce political dynamics and infrastructures that foster new forms of governmental assistance.⁶¹ As several scholars have shown, military recruitment created new categories of West Africans whose well-being was monitored by the French government and who in turn made ever greater political demands.⁶² Following the politics of dwelling's evolution reveals how wartime links between the survival of the French state and West African soldiers' well-being influenced long-lasting ideas about the French government's obligations. We will see how one French novelist imagined a more egalitarian empire after hosting Senegalese soldiers in her home. We will also observe *originaires* in Saint-Louis who invoked their sons' military sacrifices to defend their houses from the same state their children died defending.

It is this focus on the widespread emergence of a set of political relations first forged around soldiers that distinguishes the politics of dwelling from standard studies of intermediaries. Research on African intermediaries emphasizes how certain African individuals

⁶¹ Herbert Obinger, Klaus Petersen, and Peter Starke (eds.), *Warfare and Welfare: Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2018).

⁶² Sarah J. Zimmerman, *Militarizing Marriage: West African Soldiers' Conjugal Traditions in Modern French Empire* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020); Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Iba der Thiam, *Le Sénégal Dans La Guerre 14-18, Ou, Le Prix Du Combat Pour L'égalité* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines du Sénégal, 1992); Myron J. Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991).

or groups inserted their interests into colonial state structures. By contrast, the politics of dwelling constituted a new form of political engagement and imagination that gained broader traction over time. This process facilitated new opportunities for West African domestic lives and ambitions to structure where French state resources went and what they did. In the interwar years, living in a home that Dakar officials had condemned or in a *foyer* that French philanthropists sought to manage linked West Africans' domestic well-being to the legitimacy of the state that had just called up hundreds of thousands of men to fight. During and after World War II, challenges to French colonial rule helped the politics of dwelling gain greater traction, giving more West Africans opportunities to adapt French institutions. This focus on African political frameworks' influence on colonial governance echoes research on how pre-colonial patron-client relations informed many African engagements with colonial and postcolonial regimes.⁶³ Yet the politics of dwelling did not emerge out of pre-existing regimes or ideologies. Rather, it arose out of colonial rule itself and survived its formal demise.

While not intermediaries in the same way as soldiers, *originaires*' particular position in the French empire also helped them embed their domestic well-being into colonial debates. As mentioned earlier, *originaires* blurred the lines between colonial subject and French citizen. Furthermore, Dakar and Saint-Louis served as nerve centers for French rule in West Africa. The centrality of the region to imperial rule, and the power of *originaires* and other regional leaders, forced French authorities to accommodate the ambitions of influential Senegalese groups or individuals.⁶⁴ This accommodationist approach helped explain why Moustaphe Malie Gaye

⁶³ Jonathon Glassman, *Feasts and Riot: Revelry, Rebellion, and Popular Consciousness On the Swahili Coast, 1856-1888* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995); Steven Feierman. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

⁶⁴ David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000).

reacted as he did when officials destroyed his mother's home after a plague outbreak in Saint-Louis. In a letter to the Governor, Gaye cited French eminent domain laws to demand repayment for his mother's goods, threatening to take his demand directly "to the courts."⁶⁵ While French colonial officials condemned Gaye's mother's home as public health threat, Gaye invoked republican law to make it the basis of a material demand. Similar dynamics led West African POWs to complain about lack of payments to their wives in rural Senegal or suburban dwellers in Dakar to push for sanitation services to take care of their neighborhoods. Senegalese families used the institutions available to them to feel at home in changing worlds. As a result, they created locally specific claims within an expansive political framework linking certain West Africans' domestic needs to the future of France's empire and its postcolonial successors.

Imperial Welfare

Placing intermediaries at the heart of the politics of dwelling also points to the dynamic view this framework provides to the study of imperial welfare in the twentieth century. As stated earlier, the politics of dwelling gained its greatest influence after 1945 as welfare states rapidly expanded across Europe. In France and Senegal, welfare's rise created programs directly focused on West Africans' ability to feel at home. The politics of dwelling reveals not only the elite plans within these welfare programs, but also the popular expectations these institutions inspired.

This focus on assistance programs' relationship to popular political expectations fits into a broader reconceptualization of the welfare state in modern French history. For decades, scholars argued that welfare programs emerged as elite tools to manage the disruptions caused by industrialization without actually challenging the exploitation at the heart of modern capitalism. Jacques Donzelot and François Ewald use Foucauldian notions of biopolitics to argue that

⁶⁵ Moustaphe Malie Gaye to Monsieur le Gouverneur, April 9, 1920, H/78, ANS.

welfare programs sought to guarantee the survival of French workers without interrupting capitalist production.⁶⁶ Later scholars developed these arguments by demonstrating how welfare states reinforced elite ideas about familial order and gender relations.⁶⁷ Welfare officials in France often saw themselves as stabilizers of the working-class, a paternalist attitude that justified policing workers and minority populations. However, focusing on official plans downplays the demands that welfare institutions responded to and inspired.

Welfare politics are not predetermined. Rather, they were forged by state agents as well as those they tried to manage. Many workers in France demanded better housing, healthier spaces for children, and greater insurance benefits because they came to believe that states ought to provide these services to their citizens.⁶⁸ Furthermore, welfare bureaucracies provided new channels for people to engage with the French state and its agents. For example, Nimisha Barton argues that many migrant women in the Third Republic co-opted welfare agencies' natalist imperatives to acquire support and bolster their positions in French society.⁶⁹ These studies reflect a growing emphasis on the ways that working-class people used welfare programs to make demands and challenge their exploitation.⁷⁰ Making new demands did not necessarily upend elite control or capitalism's destructive impacts. However, the rise of welfare politics in twentieth century France did inspire new expectations within and beyond the metropole.

⁶⁶ François Ewald, *L'État Providence* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1986); Jacques Donzelot, *La Police Des Familles* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977).

⁶⁷ Laura Levine Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependence, and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶⁸ Laura Lee Downs, *Childhood in the Promised Land: Working-class Movements and the Colonies De Vacances in France, 1880-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Annie Fourcaut, *La Banlieue En Morceaux: La Crise Des Lotissements Défectueux En France Dans L'entre-deux-guerres* (Grâne: Créaphis, 2000); Tyler Stovall, *The Rise of the Paris Red Belt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

⁶⁹ Nimisha Barton, *Reproductive Citizens: Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

⁷⁰ Steven Klein, *The Work of Politics: Democratic Transformations in the Welfare State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

This focus on the tension between elite plans and popular demands also informs new works on imperial welfare. In his study the “labor question” in postwar Africa, Frederick Cooper pins the collapse of France and Britain’s African empires in part on African workers calls for the welfare benefits given to their European counterparts after 1945.⁷¹ These demands ran up against the basis of colonial economies: extraction of resources using cheap or coerced labor. More recent works build on Cooper’s link between welfare and decolonization by examining welfare policies directed at non-white populations within postwar Europe.⁷² However, these studies tend to ignore Cooper’s emphasis on colonial populations’ own demands, focusing instead on how elites used imperial welfare systems to recycle or reinforce European control in the twilight or afterlife of empire. The politics of dwelling connects welfare projects targeting homes to West Africans’ own efforts to manage radical transformations to their domestic lives. The politics of dwelling emerged out of a growing belief among French and West African actors alike that the French government could, or at least should, help West Africans find the stability associated with home. This growth can be seen when comparing the terse rejection M’Baye received for his *foyer* request in 1927 with the concessions won by protesters at *foyers africains* across Paris in the early 1970s. Support for French domestic assistance towards West Africans was far from universal even at its postwar peak. Furthermore, these programs did not counteract the exploitative logics embedded in many housing or domestic assistance programs targeting West Africans. Yet the very idea that the French government should support West Africans provided a framework to make new demands before and after the empire fell.

⁷¹ Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁷² Ed Naylor (ed.), *France’s Modernising Mission: Citizenship, Welfare and the Ends of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Nasiali. *Native to the Republic*; Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole*; Jordanna Bailkin. *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

Bringing diverse West Africans into the historiography of imperial domesticity, intermediaries and imperial welfare does not question the violence or exclusions of France's imperial system. Rather, it helps historians see how everyday efforts to find food, shelters, or a sense of belonging could at times transform imperial programs in unexpected ways. Emphasizing adaptation reveals how many West Africans reoriented French imperial domestic projects in ways that often transformed their real world impacts. The politics of dwelling captures how West Africans restructured or reimagined French imperial governance by trying to feel at home.



Through all these twists and turns, a belief that the French state had an obligation to support its West African subjects' domestic lives grew into an increasingly powerful framework structuring relationships between the French government and different West Africans it tried to govern. While this belief did not fundamentally undermine French imperial or postimperial power, it informed how and why so many West Africans tried to get assistance from a violently exploitative regime. Requests or demands for support revealed the productive role many people felt the French government could or should play in West Africans' lives. The politics of dwelling demonstrates how and why some people came to expect help from the French colonial state and its successors. While I regularly examine the shortcomings of these efforts, I also point to their transformative potential. Sitting with the politics of dwelling's limits and promises invites us to envision horizons pointing towards political relations grounded in comfort and support. In doing so, we can understand what it meant to inhabit or imagine the kinds of dwellings that M'Baye and Harlée tried to create

Chapter One - Housing the “*Force Noire*”: Dwelling, Displacement, and France’s West African Soldiers in World War 1

“I send you views of this cosmopolitan camp” a Senegalese soldier wrote on a postcard August 1917, “where French, Russian, Czech, and Annamite are brought together.” He assured the reader that “we are in clean barracks and I am just with my men.”¹ The “view” on the card depicted several *tirailleurs sénégalais*, the term applied to French West African colonial soldiers, standing with a few white soldiers in the military camp of Corneau outside Bordeaux (Fig. 1). On each side of this card, masculine unity and “clean barracks” forged a healthy home for France’s colonial soldiers. One may wonder, though, who kept these barracks so clean. It may have been the figure in the card’s corner. Hidden in plain view, a black woman with a bowl atop her head strode behind these men. She may have helped keep these barracks tidy and the men at ease.



Figure 1. 1: Postcard showing West African troops and French commanders in front of a long line of barracks, with a black woman behind them carrying a bowl atop her head, the text reads “Military camp of Corneau – Group of barracks, dated August 15, 1917. “*Tirailleurs sénégalais, témoignages épistolaires 1914-1919*” in online collection *14-18 Mission Centenaire*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181115220743/http://centenaire.org/fr/tresors-darchives/fonds-prives/archives/le-fonds-darchives-de-louvrage-tirailleurs-senegalais>).

¹ “Texte du cap de Corneau le 15 août 1917 verso de la carte postale No. 5 du camp,” Postcard dated August 15, 1917 in “*Tirailleurs sénégalais, témoignages épistolaires 1914-1919*” in online collection *14-18 Mission Centenaire*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181115220743/http://centenaire.org/fr/tresors-darchives/fonds-prives/archives/le-fonds-darchives-de-louvrage-tirailleurs-senegalais>. “Je t’envoie des vues du camp cosmopolite où sont réunis Français, Russes, Noirs, Tchèques, Annamites...nous sommes dans des baraques bien propres et je ne suis qu’avec mes hommes.”

Alternatively, this happy scene may have just been an artifice. A few months before this postcard went to Senegal, hundreds of West African soldiers died from diseases caught in similar barracks outside Bordeaux. French Parliamentarians launched an official investigation and decried the army's failures. In addition to concerns about the impact these maladies would have on soldier's fighting capacities, French authorities feared that stories about disease-ridden barracks would fuel already strong resistance to recruitment in West Africa. To combat negative stories, some officials advocated making postcards depicting healthy men and clean barracks. Authorities hoped that these images would assure their subjects in West Africa that the French military would take care of their sons, brothers, and husbands.

Each side of this postcard demonstrates how World War I provoked personal and political reconsiderations of the politics of dwelling in France's empire. The message on the card's back reflects a Senegalese soldiers' effort to reassure someone thousands of miles away. The image on the front, by contrast, came out of French officials' desire to broadcast their ability to give West African soldiers healthy dwellings in France. In word and image, this card captures how military migration forced officials, soldiers and civilians alike to answer an increasingly important question during this war: what would it take to make West Africans feel at home?

This question constantly arose as wartime mobilization fostered unprecedented West African migration across the empire. Like other imperial powers, France brought thousands of colonial laborers to Europe during the Great War. Almost 500,000 (mostly) men from France's colonies and China came to the hexagon to work in trenches and factories. Nearly 160,000 men came from French West Africa.² Unlike other non-European migrants, West Africans almost

² Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard Standish Fogarty, eds., *Empires in World War I: Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict* (New York; London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Richard Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

exclusively served as soldiers. French officials had to suddenly manage thousands of West Africans donning French uniforms and living on French soil. At the same time, West African soldiers in France and Senegal, as well as the civilians they encountered, navigated landscapes transformed by military migration. Efforts by civilians, officials, and soldiers to manage these conditions laid the groundwork for the politics of dwelling in the twentieth century.

The politicization of West African's domestic well-being during World War I arose out of disparate efforts to manage military displacement's impact on West African households, bodies, and the French empire as a whole. Soldiers abruptly, and often violently, left the networks they depended upon as well as the environments that French military leaders believed shaped West African minds and bodies. Anxieties about this displacement influenced treatment from the moment soldiers came to training camps in Senegal. These soldiers' arrival in France significantly amplified these concerns. West African recruits' presence in the heart of the empire forced many soldiers, and French civilians, to reconsider where colonial subjects belonged. Troops, officials, and citizens tried to manage these changes by making military spaces feel like home. However, people rarely agreed on what home looked like. Disparate domestic practices became entangled in barracks, trenches, and other sites housing France's West African warriors.

This chapter deploys the concept of dwelling to reveal the quotidian ways the war inspired new expectations about what the French government owed its colonial subjects. Focusing on dwelling reveals how efforts to manage the interactions between military spaces, soldiers' bodies, and imperial ideologies forged new ideas about what the colonial state could or should do. These efforts were far from uniform. As Iris Rachamimov argues in her work on prisoners of war in World War I, soldiers' strategies turn make military spaces into homes both

reinforced and challenged elite domestic norms.³ Similar tensions arose in the sites this chapter examines. French officials tried to control how men ate, socialized, and relaxed to minimize the impact of military service on men's bodies while fostering attachments to the French empire. Soldiers, by contrast, tried to survive by forging new relationships that could sustain their minds and bodies and, whenever possible, advance their own patriarchal aspirations. Whether officials and soldiers' efforts conflicted or aligned, they consistently linked how soldiers dwelt in military spaces to political stability. By the end of the war, this fostered a framework that tied the empire's future to the ways that certain West Africans inhabited its changing landscapes.

Focusing on dwelling grounds the demands made by colonial soldiers during and after World War I in the everyday experiences of life in a colonial army protecting the imperial center. Since the 1980s, historians have demonstrated how West African soldiers' role in World War I fostered calls for veterans' equality in the French empire grounded in the notion of a "blood debt."⁴ Many scholars connect these egalitarian expectations to France's republican military tradition. Since the French Revolution, the French army has tried to act as a factory making young men French while also dictating who can be part of the French nation.⁵ As Gregory Mann, Sarah Zimmerman, and Dónal Hasset argue, colonial soldiers combined this military framework with their own ideas about state obligations to challenge political and socioeconomic exclusion.⁶

³ Iris Rachamimov, "Small Escapes: Gender, Class, and Material Culture in Great War Internment Camps," in *Objects of War: The Material Culture of Conflict and Displacement*, eds. Leora Auslander and Tara Zahra (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 164-188.

⁴ Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999); Iba der Thiam, *Le Sénégal Dans La Guerre 14-18, Ou, Le Prix Du Combat Pour L'égalité* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Editions Africaines du Sénégal, 1992); Marc Michel, (*L'appel À L'Afrique: Contributions Et Réactions À L'effort De Guerre En A.O.F. (1914-1919)*). Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).

⁵ Christopher J. Tozzi, *Nationalizing France's Army: Foreign, Black, and Jewish Troops in the French Military, 1715-1831* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016); Eugen Weber, "Migration of Another Sort: Military Service" in *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 292-302.

⁶ Sarah Zimmerman, *Militarizing Marriage: West African Soldiers Conjugal Traditions in Modern French Empire* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020); Dónal Hasset, *Mobilizing Memory: The Great War and the Language of*

Yet, as Tyler Stovall and Richard Fogarty demonstrate, colonial migration during the war also intensified racialized antagonisms in the metropole.⁷ These studies link calls for equality and growing racial tensions during and after the war to specific military ideologies or policies. Commanders' plans certainly informed the expectations this chapter examines. However, I argue that these egalitarian ideas became salient to so many people in part because they emerged out of everyday efforts to manage bodies, minds, and landscapes that the war transformed.

This belief that the French state had to support these men's domestic well-being evolved in response to the racial imaginaries structuring West African soldiers' service. Many French authorities believed that West Africa's social and physical climate made the men of this region ideal warriors. However, bringing these men to France removed them from the environment that produced this warrior spirit. Furthermore, this migration upset the colony-metropole binary that racial notions of climate-induced particularity reinforced. As a result, many French officials believed they had to manage how West African soldiers dwelt in military spaces to protect their warrior spirit and the empire as a whole. However, this growing interest in soldiers' domestic lives led some soldiers to entangle state agents and resources in their own efforts to find the social, material, and affective comforts of home. These efforts led certain soldiers, civilians, and officials to argue that West African soldiers had the right to government assistance, challenging the exclusionary logics of imperial racial divisions. While these claims faced opposition, they forged a conceptual link between domestic well-being and political inclusion across the empire.

To underline the centrality of dwelling to soldiers' interactions with the French state, this chapter follows West African soldiers from recruitment to repatriation. What dwelling entailed

Politics in Colonial Algeria, 1918-39 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁷ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*; Tyler Stovall, "Colour-blind France? Colonial workers during the first world war" *Race & Class* 35, no. 2 (1993): 35-55.

changed as men moved through Senegalese barracks, frigid French trenches, and overwhelmed hospitals. However, managing how soldiers dwelt remained a constant concern. Civilians, military inspectors, and soldiers themselves consistently tried to make troops' ability to feel at home key to any discussion about how to win the war and create a stronger empire.

Mobilizing and Sustaining France's "Force Noire"

The French state's newfound investment in West African soldiers emerged out of old ideologies and new policies. French military leaders had long seen West African men as naturally inclined to combat. General Charles Mangin became the most famous proponent of this "force noire" or "black strength" ideology. In his 1910 book *La Force Noire*, Mangin characterized French West Africa as a "reservoir of military strength."⁸ He proposed plunging into this reservoir to compensate for France's relatively low birth rate, as well as the widespread anxieties about Frenchmen's virility this trend provoked.⁹ Key to the *force noire's* mythology was the belief that West Africa had a unique way of turning men into warriors.

Promoters of the *force noire* believed that West Africa's social and physical environments turned the region's men into natural soldiers. Mangin saw war as a permanent part of West Africa's pre-colonial landscapes, rather than the product of instability caused in no small part caused by centuries of slave raids and European intervention.¹⁰ "The negro races were conserved in the same milieu of constant combat," he argued, "which further reinforced their warrior qualities, which we are using today."¹¹ Inhabiting this "milieu of constant combat" made

⁸ Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: Hachette, 1910), 225 "reserve de forces militaires," for more on the impact of this ideology on recruitment before 1914 see Fogarty, *Race and War in France*, 17-24.

⁹ Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁰ For more on the causes of warfare in pre-colonial Senegambia, and the role of French actors, see Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹¹ Mangin, *La Force Noire*, 226. "les races nègres se sont conservées dans le même milieu de lutes continuelles, qui a renforcé encore leurs qualités guerrières, que nous utilisons aujourd'hui."

certain West Africans ideal recruits. Like other colonial powers, the French military deployed notions of “warrior races” to categorize colonial subjects and repackage formerly feared enemies as useful subordinates.¹² Arming members of a dominated colonized population raised the specter of rebellion, but resource-poor colonial administrations had few other choices.

Recruiters’ concerns about insurrections were likely somewhat allayed by the fact that many early *tirailleurs* were formerly enslaved men who depended on military connections for their own social mobility.¹³ Furthermore, by World War I *tirailleurs sénégalais* had already supported conquests in Madagascar, the Congo, and Morocco. Mangin and other commanders cited these engagements to demonstrate the utility of France’s West African soldiers. “In the current state of Europe” Mangin declared “the *Force Noire* will make us the most fearsome of adversaries.”¹⁴ However, Mangin ignored what had sustained these fighters on earlier deployments: women.

West African women provided crucial services for France’s colonial armies. Like other colonial militaries in Africa, access to indigenous women’s bodies and labor was essential to *tirailleurs sénégalais* regiments since the mid-19th century.¹⁵ Women took various paths to these battalions. Some joined to escape oppressive households or find new patrons while others were sold as captives or violently coerced to join. At times these women became soldiers’ conjugal partners or dependents, which bolstered men’s own claims to patriarchal authority.¹⁶ Once in these military encampments, these women provided domestic, affective, and sexual labor for the *tirailleurs*. Contingents’ dependence on this work led many of these *mesdames tirailleurs*, as

¹² Vincent Joly, “‘Races guerrières’ et masculinité en contexte colonial. Approche historiographique”, *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 1, no 33 (2011): 139-156.

¹³ Myron Echeneberg, *Colonial Conscripts: the Tirailleur Sénégalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960*, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1991), 7-24.

¹⁴ Mangin, *La Force Noire*: 313, “Dans l’état actuel de l’Europe, la Force Noire fait de nous le plus redoutable des adversaires.”

¹⁵ For a comparison with German East Africa see Michelle R. Moyd. *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014).

¹⁶ Zimmerman, *Militarizing Marriage*.

they were often called, to accompany soldiers on their distant campaigns. If West African soldiers used these women to manage military migration, many French observers used them to erase the potential disruptions colonial conscription caused. Items like this postcard (Fig. 2), made in early twentieth century Rabat, presented *tirailleurs* camps as familial spaces to French observers. Uniforms symbolized the military transformations of West African men while the *mesdames* stood in for “tradition.” Depicting bare-chested West African women with children in their arms and pots at their feet framed camps as sites that sustained African bodies, families, and the alterity upon which imperial exclusion depended.



Figure 1. 2: Postcard showing *tirailleurs* and their “wives” and possibly their children at a military camp in Morocco, the text reads, “*Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and their Wives at Camp.” 4FI-0162, ANS.

These *mesdames* helped manage service’s social and emotional toll on soldiers. Bakary Diallo, whose 1926 memoir *Force Bonté* provides the only known published account by a West African soldier who served in World War 1, fondly recalled these *mesdames* when describing his camp in Morocco around 1912. “They make dinner, do the laundry, and submit sweetly to the principles of their female destiny” Diallo wrote, “they are so strong, gay, tenderly disposed

towards their spouses, comforting them, those who have such a need of comforting.”¹⁷ Diallo described these *mesdames* as enthusiastic providers of what Luise White in her study of sex workers in colonial Nairobi calls the “comforts of home.”¹⁸ The women White discussed sold domestic or sexual labor to male migrants to support their own socioeconomic positions. While not selling their labor in the same way, *mesdames tirailleurs* did provide men with the affective, sexual, and material services previously provided by household members. For men like Diallo, inhabiting unfamiliar and often violent worlds, these comforts provided the means to survive.

However, the *mesdames tirailleurs* ended their travels by 1914. For the first time, the French army barred West African women from joining men on their deployments. This *ad hoc* decision possibly stemmed from fears about African families settling in France.¹⁹ While French officials periodically proposed sending West African women to *tirailleur* camps during the war, *mesdames tirailleurs* never moved at previous scales. Without female labor, French commanders and West African recruits sought new ways to find the comforts of home. Failure to do so, officials feared, might erode the virility at the heart of the *force noire* mythology.

The haphazard nature of this policy shift echoed the broader way that mobilization produced conflicts over who should serve, and what that service meant. By the end of 1914, it became clear that the war would not end quickly. As a result, French commanders increasingly turned to West Africa as a source of military labor. Colonial subjects constituted the overwhelming majority of the 160,000 West African men shipped off to France. In Senegal’s

¹⁷ Bakary Diallo, *Force Bonté* (Paris: Rieder, 1926), 99. “Elles font les repas, la lessive et, douces [sic.], soumises aux principes de leur destine des femmes, elles sont ici fortes, gaies, disposes tendrement à l’égard de leurs époux, les réconfortant, eux qui ont tant besoin de réconfort” For more on Diallo see Koffi Anyinefa, “Scandales. Littérature francophone africain et identité,” *Cahiers d’Études Africains* 48, no. 191 (2008) : 457-486 ; János Riesz and Aija Bjornson, “The ‘Tirailleur Sénégalais’ Who Did Not Want to Be a ‘Grand Enfant’ : Bakary Diallo’s ‘Force Bonté’ (1926) Reconsidered,” *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 157-179.

¹⁸ Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

¹⁹ Zimmerman, *Military Marriages*, 132-137.

Four Communes, where men were French citizens rather than subjects, conscription was either voluntary or tied to men's obligations as citizens. By contrast, recruitment in the rest of French West Africa depended on extreme pressure. French officials required village chiefs to provide able-bodied recruits.²⁰ In Senegal, French authorities combined these tactics with appeals to Islamic leaders to convince their followers to enlist.²¹ When these approaches failed, recruiters turned to coercive violence. As the war dragged on, people across French West Africa rose up against conscription, in some cases launching full-scaled rebellions. Other subjects fled to British colonies.²² However, many men could not escape the French army's grasps.

Amidst this violence, some male subjects hoped that fighting for France would give them the social and material resources needed to attain various local forms of masculine respectability. Bakary Diallo's memoir dramatized these aspirations. Born in the village of M'Bala in Senegal's northern Dagan region, Diallo chafed against his father's expectations that he would become a herder. Furthermore, his status as the son of his father's second wife limited his social horizons. Like many of his contemporaries across the Sahel, Diallo migrated to escape this inferior household position.²³ Once in Saint-Louis, the military seemed to provide a new life. "All these men before your eyes are from diverse races" a military recruiter told Diallo, "however, they are not different, because brotherhood brings them together."²⁴ Diallo regularly linked the military and equality. While many other recruits shared Diallo's expectations, his ability to choose to

²⁰ Michel, *L'Appel à l'Afrique*, 73-99 and 117-137.

²¹ Thiam, *Les Sénégalais dans la Grande Guerre 14-18*, 149-160.

²² Lunn, *Memoirs from the Maelstrom*, 33-58; Mahir Saul and Patrick Yves Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001).

²³ James F. Searing, "God Alone Is King": *Islam and Emancipation in Senegal: The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajour and Bawol, 1859-1914* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); François Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997); Richard Roberts and Martin A. Klein, "The Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the Decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan." *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 3 (1980): 375-94.

²⁴ Diallo, *Force Bonté*, 38. "Tous ces hommes devant vos yeux sont de diverses races. Ils ne sont points différents pour autant, car la fraternité les unit."

fight was exceptional.²⁵ In the early years of the war especially, most soldiers from French West Africa had no choice but to live with military service's consequences.

Many *originaires*, by contrast, echoed Diallo's decision to sign up for military service to advance their own aspirations. Recruitment came at a volatile time in Senegal's Four Communes. As will be discussed in the next chapter, violent government efforts to control a plague outbreak in Dakar in 1914 coincided with the election of France's first African deputy, Blaise Diagne. This fostered widespread confrontations about *originaires*' steadily eroding political rights. Many *originaires* saw military service as an opportunity to solidify their precarious positions in the Republic.²⁶ "Can we see in 1915 the permanent end of this miserable and cruel question of skin and origin," Moctar Diallo wrote to his friend Awara Sarr, "arriving at universal peace bringing us to *fraternité, égalité, and liberté*."²⁷ Diallo's message, as well as other letters Sarr received from mobilized friends, provide invaluable insights into the expectations of republican equality that led many *originaires* into France's military ranks.

In some ways, the egalitarian hopes that Diallo and his peers expressed materialized. In 1915 and 1916, France's National Assembly passed the "Diagne Laws," which guaranteed French citizenship for *originaires* and their descendants. This change was immediately linked to military service, since the Third Republic required able-bodied male citizens to fight for their nation. As the war dragged on, this link between military service and political privileges seeped beyond the communes. By 1917, widespread resistance to drafts across French West Africa had not abated, leading French leaders, already concerned about worker and soldiers uprisings in

²⁵ Mann, *Native Sons*, Joe Lunn, "Kande Kamara Speaks: An Oral History of the West African Experience in France 1914-1918," *Africa and the First World War*, ed. Melvin Page (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 28-53.

²⁶ Thiam, *Les Sénégalais dans la Grande Guerre 14-18*.

²⁷ Moctar Diallo to Awara Sarr, Nioro, January 7, 1915 in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre: Lettre de Tirailleurs et Recrutement (1912-1919)*, eds. Guy Thilmans and Pierre Rosière, Gorée: Éditions du Musée Historique du Sénégal: 52. "Pussions-nous voir en 1915 disparaître à tout jamais les misérables et les mesquines questions d'épiderme et d'origine, arriver la paix universelle amenant la fraternité, l'égalité et la liberté."

France that same year, to seek alternatives to forced conscription. Blaise Diagne presented a solution. He agreed to lead a recruitment drive across the French West African Federation in 1918 in exchange for improvements to soldiers' benefits. Diagne's recruitment campaign did not promise subjects' full citizenship. It did however inspire many West African men to believe that service would provide them with social and material benefits, from better jobs to exemption from the brutal *indigenat* legal system.²⁸ These expectations broadened the link between military service and political inclusion that Diallo evoked soon after donning his uniform.

These wartime decisions to exclude women and link recruitment to legal or economic benefits came together to make the politics of dwelling central to West African soldiers' interactions with French authorities. Without the female labor that once fueled *tirailleurs* bodies, the French military became the primary provider of these domestic services. Failure to produce adequate food, shelter, and moral support seemed like a threat to the male virility at the heart the *force noire* myth. Furthermore, the link between military service and equal treatment infused everything the French state did for its West African soldiers. French officials came to believe that West African troops, and their distant families, used the domestic services the military now needed to provide as litmus tests for France's commitment to the new expectations undergirding recruitment. Failing this exam, many officials feared, would fuel further rebellions. This anxiety infused each site these men occupied, from barracks in Senegal to trenches in France.

Inhabiting Senegal's Barracks

These dwelling-related anxieties arose at the very beginning of men's military journeys in coastal Senegalese camps. French authorities hoped to use these camps to control recruits' daily lives and turn them into disciplined soldiers. However, military commanders' efforts ran up

²⁸ For more on the Diagne laws, Diagne's recruitment drive and its broader political implications across Senegal and French West Africa see Mann, *Native Sons*, 68-72; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*: 59-90.

against soldiers' own attempts to meet their domestic needs in homosocial and often poorly supplied camps. In and around Senegal's military compounds, soldiers and officials struggled to manage the social, physical, and mental impact of joining France's colonial army.

Part of this discipline entailed inscribing colonial military divisions into the services men received and the spaces they inhabited. *Originaires'* status as citizens gave them far more benefits than their subject peers, including larger family allowances. Furthermore, while subjects joined colonial battalions and took on the famous title *tirailleurs sénégalais*, *originaires* served in metropolitan units.²⁹ Dakar's military landscape reinforced this divide. Between 1914 and 1916, the military built four camps in the capital's Cap-Vert region. Barracks in the Dakar suburbs of Ouakam and Thiaroye and the commune of Rufisque housed subjects.³⁰ *Originaires*, by contrast, lived in the inland city of Thiès. As service became tied to political privileges, these arrangements revealed how military practices reinforced certain imperial inequalities.

However, military inspections demonstrate how some pre-existing divisions took on different forms once men began dwelling in these camps. Health reports regularly bemoaned the poor accommodations in camps for both subjects and *originaires*. After complaining about a lack of beds for *tirailleurs*, an inspector at the Rufisque camp in 1918 noted that while European officers had access to three showers, African soldiers had nothing but sea water.³¹ Similarly, one 1916 inspection from Thiaroye decried how European officers stayed in pre-existing stone houses while *tirailleurs* slept in tents or newly erected "huts."³² Associating "permanent" stone buildings with Europeans and temporary "huts" with Africans had informed racialized imperial

²⁹ Sarah Zimmerman, "Citizenship, Military Service and Managing Exceptionalism: *Originaires* in World War I" in *Empires in World War I*, 219-248.

³⁰ "Compte-Rendu d'Inspection sanitaires des Bataillons de nouvelle formation," GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD.

³¹ "Rapport d'Inspection des Camps de Rufisque Thiès Pout et Ouakam" March 8, 1918, 5 H 2, SHD.

³² "Rapport d'Inspection Sanitaire No. 1 par le Médecin Principal de 1ère classe Gouzien, Médecin Chef de la Place de Dakar," March 24, 1916, GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. "cases"

hierarchies in Senegal since the late eighteenth century.³³ Now this difference threatened France's soldiers. Inspectors at Thiaroye bemoaned these structures' lack of windows, writing that "local hygienic conditions lead to the desire for numerous openings for fresh air."³⁴ As Chapter Two explains, French hygiene critiques about poor air-circulation in African homes often justified dispossession in Senegal. These inspectors responded differently. Rather than condemn these buildings' West African dwellers, they criticized their French builders.

As inspectors condemned these camps, some soldiers improvised to make these spaces suit their needs. In one 1918 report, colonial inspectors pinned recent disease outbreaks in the Ouakam camp on overcrowding caused by the military's poor coordination of soldiers' movements.³⁵ These shortcomings often found *ad hoc* solutions. One 1916 inspection from Ouakam noted with seeming approval that verandahs on an officer's "vast" stone residence were used by "about 90 natives per building for sleeping."³⁶ This impromptu adaptation cost little and gave *tirailleurs* sleeping areas with better ventilation. While public health concerns motivated segregation and destruction across Senegal, French officials' desire to sustain *tirailleurs* brought French and West African bodies closer together in this villa. Shortcomings in this mobilization could upend military plans to preserve as many of Senegal's imperial divisions as possible.

This lack of adequate preparations or resources accentuated military inspectors' anxiety about soldiers' displacement. The medical official G. Hébrard bemoaned the dearth of clothes,

³³ Mark Hinchman, *Portrait of an Island: The Architecture and Material Culture of Gorée, Sénégal, 1758-1837* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

³⁴ "Rapport d'Inspection Sanitaire No. 1 par le Médecine Principal de 1ère classe Gouzien" March 24, 1916, GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. "les conditions hygiéniques du local laissaient à désirer du fait de ces ouvertures nombreuses à l'air libre."

³⁵ "L'Inspecteur de 1ère Classes des Colonies, Revel, Chef de la Mission d'Inspection en A.O.F. à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, September 2, 1918, 4 D 81, ANS.

³⁶ "Compte-Rendu d'Inspection sanitaire des Bataillons de Nouvelles formations – Camp de Ouakam – Pyrotechnique," GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. "vastes verandas qui ont été utilisées pour le couchage des indigènes à raison de 90 par bâtiment"

beds, or blankets for *tirailleurs* in Senegal's capital city of Saint-Louis. He barely hid his frustration when he told superiors that these same details appeared in an earlier letter that "had no effect."³⁷ Inadequate supplies fueled broader anxieties among military inspectors about how to handle migration's impact on West African recruits. In 1916, the inspector M. Delrieu said that while Europeans could acclimate to Dakar's coastal climate, men from West Africa's interior would struggle. "These men were suddenly taken from their homes" he explained, "rapidly transported to a different climate, arrived disoriented, more or less depressed in instruction camps, where installations were made in haste, necessarily incomplete in certain cases."³⁸ Delrieu prescribed warm blankets and familiar dishes of rice or millet to mitigate these problems. Anxieties about degeneration and dislocation echoed widespread concerns about nostalgia amongst French military doctors in the nineteenth century.³⁹ Along with theories of climatic determinism linking racial and climatic differences, fear that nostalgia caused disease or even death fed doubts about intra-imperial migration. In the eyes of some officials, helping West Africans manage the toll of a sudden departure from home became a state imperative.

Part of habituating men to barrack life meant using military drills to structure their days and bodies. Like many other military sites these men occupied, Senegal's camps served as temporary residences whose utility was linked to the next phase in soldiers' deployment. Like similar camps across the world, these spaces provided sites to discipline recruits' bodies before sending them to battle. These efforts often went on full display in and beyond Dakar. Since the turn of the century,

³⁷ "Rapport No. 5 De Monsieur le Médecin-principal de 2^{ème} el : G. Hebrard sur l'état sanitaire des Bataillons de nouvelle formation," GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. "Cette lettre est restée sans effet"

³⁸ "Le Médecin Inspecteur Delrieu Directeur du Service de Santé de l'A.O.F. to Monsieur le Général Commandant Supérieur des Troupes du Group de l'Afrique Occidentale Française" Dakar April 10, 1916, GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. "Les hommes enlevés brusquement à leurs foyers, transportés rapidement sous un climat différent, sont arrivés dépaysés, plus ou moins déprimés dans les camps d'instruction, où l'on avait préparé à la Hâte des installations de fortune, forcément incomplètes dans certains cas."

³⁹ Thomas Dodman, *What Nostalgia Was: War, Empire, and the Time of a Deadly Emotion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

many postcards depicted *tirailleurs* marches through the city's streets. Some cards showed men walking alongside government buildings (Fig. 3) while others portrayed them marching through camps (Fig. 4). When explaining these marches to his friend Awara Sarr, Amadou Cissé said that after a quick coffee around six “the exercise commences.”⁴⁰ Another of Sarr's friends, Moctar Diallo, described a similar schedule and the burdensome 25 kilo bags that he had to carry during these drills.⁴¹ After these tasks, Diallo explained, he had “rifles to clean” and “laundry to change.”⁴² Soldiers across the globe faced similar disciplinary tasks. Yet for many West African soldiers, especially those from rural areas, these military exercises constituted a daily engagement with a once-distant colonial state. For some it was the first time they interacted with white officials, or even heard the French language.⁴³ Barracks became areas where French authorities tried to turn West African recruits into disciplined servants of the colonial project.



Figure 1. 3: Postcard showing march of West African soldiers in front of port-side government buildings in Dakar, the text reads, “West Africa – Senegal – Dakar – The Port Palace.” 4FI – 0017, ANS.

⁴⁰ Amadou Cissé to Awara Sarr, Thiès, January 14, 1916 in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*, 30. “l’exercice commence”

⁴¹ Moctar Diallo to Awara Sarr, Thiès, July 3, 1916 in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*: 71.

⁴² Ibid. “le fusil à nettoyer, le linge à échanger.”

⁴³ For more on these drills see Munn, *Memoirs from the Maelstrom*, 95-96.



Figure 1. 4: Postcard depicting march of *tirailleurs* at training camp in Dakar’s Madeleines neighborhood, the text reads, “West Africa – Dakar – Madeleines (II) *tirailleurs* camp.” 4FI – 0755, ANS.

If drills emphasized top-down discipline, notes on food distribution revealed more dynamic approaches to managing soldiers’ everyday lives. One specific item raised repeated concerns among commanders: rice. Rice has a long history across West Africa.⁴⁴ Despite this deep past, this staple elicited heated debates in camps. “Rice given as a vegetable has not always been appreciated by our Senegalese of the communes” one inspector wrote from Thies. However, he assured his superiors that “they have gotten used to it since.”⁴⁵ In Saint-Louis, by contrast, French officials objected to this staple. “The Natives have been compelled towards a millet diet,” one inspector wrote “to the total exclusion of rice.”⁴⁶ The restriction aimed to combat beriberi, a disease caused by a thiamine deficiency often linked to rice-heavy diets. This inspector reported that beriberi had disappeared since rice’s removal. Millet now served as soldier’s principal grain, which this

⁴⁴ David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History: Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 5 (2007): 1329-358; Judith Ann Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁴⁵ “Compte-Rendu d’inspection Sanitaire des Bataillons de nouvelle formation – Camp de Thiès,” GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. “le riz donné comme légume sec n’a pas toujours été apprécié au début par nos Sénégalais des communes, mais ils s’y sont habitués depuis”

⁴⁶ “Rapport de Mr Le Médecin-Principal de 2 Cl. De réserve G. Hébrard, Chef du Service de Sante de la Place de Saint Louis sur l’état sanitaire des 31^e et 37^e Bataillons,” GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD. “Les Indigènes ont été, sur ma demande, astreints à l’alimentation par le mil à l’exclusion absolue du riz...” Underline in original.

inspector assured his superiors that “the natives appreciate enough.”⁴⁷ These discussions highlight the negotiations that went into deciding the food that sustained these new recruits.

Whatever food arrived, soldiers themselves often had to do the cooking. Without the women who typically prepared food in many West African households or earlier military camps, many soldiers had to find new culinary providers. “The auxiliaries cook,” Moctar Diallo told Awara Sarr in a letter, “[they are] the boys of the sergeants and the corporals.” Diallo proceeded to extend this scene to mock Sarr’s own masculinity. “Since you like to play the boy,” he wrote, “I would like to see here the advantages and the ribbons of the boy shining on your wrists.”⁴⁸ Diallo’s comment may have reflected the kind of joking relationships found across West Africa, whereby people exchange jokes and light insults to reinforce amicable relations between members different ethno-linguistic groups.⁴⁹ However, by describing how lower ranked individuals cook in his camp and then making a joke that labeled Sarr with the pejorative term “boy,” Diallo redeployed colonial military titles to create a new gendered division of labor. He placed Sarr at the servile bottom of this ladder to imagine new masculine hierarchies.

Yet many men defied French military camps’ homosocial restrictions and turned to women to get food and other domestic comforts. Barring women from military camps did not stop many from moving in next door. Hundreds of women ended up living in a community near the Ouakam camp that became known as the *abattoir*, named after nearby slaughterhouses. In 1916, one Colonel Herrison said that many soldiers in Ouakam went to the *abattoir*’s brothels to

⁴⁷ Ibid. “les indigènes l’apprécient assez.”

⁴⁸ Moctar Diallo to Awara Sarr, Thiès, April 12, 1916 in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*: 69. Diallo actually wrote out “boy,” recycling the English term to describe male colonial servants. “Les auxiliaires sont ceux qui font la cuisine, [ce sont] les boyes des sergents et caporaux. Enfin comme tu aimes beaucoup à faire le boye, je crois bien y voir ton avantage et tes galons de boye qui brille [sic] sur tes poignets.”

⁴⁹ Tal Tamari, “Joking Pacts in Sudanic West Africa: A Political and Historical Perspective,” *Zeitschrift Für Ethnologie/Journal of Social and Cultural Anthropology* 131, no. 2 (2006): 215–43. While uncertain, Sarr and Diallo likely came from different ethnic groups as Sarr is a common Serer name while Diallo is often associated with Tukolor families.

find women who “make a deal sometimes with ten or fifteen *tirailleurs*, an agreement according to which in exchange for their favors and some sort of food, a lump sum is given.”⁵⁰ Soldiers were so invested in this system, Herrison wrote, that they attacked any officer trying to close these brothels.⁵¹ Removing female labor from camps forced soldiers seeking food, sex, or other “favors” to reconfigure masculine relations or defy military orders.

Living in the *abattoir* reflected how many West African women, like men, had to adapt to the displacements military migration caused. “Everything that has been done to make them stay in their villages has been in vain,” one official explained when discussing the women of the *abattoir*, “they are waiting for their men in the same spot from where they left.”⁵² This official presented women’s decision to stay in Dakar as a problem to be solved. Yet many of these women likely had no rural household waiting for their return. Whether due to violent removal or voluntary departure, many of these women had long since cut ties with distant relatives.⁵³ “Waiting for their men” was not simply a product of stubbornness. It was most likely a reaction to these women’s sense that they had nowhere better to go. At least in Dakar, some of them could make a living in the *abattoir* to complement meager military allowances. *Tirailleurs’* partners received about 15 francs a month, while *originnaire* soldiers’ wives received slightly more.⁵⁴ However, as one military commander noted, rent in Dakar averaged 12.50 francs, making it impossible “for these women to survive without getting money through unmentionable

⁵⁰ “Rapport de Colonel HERRISON Commandant le 4e Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais au sujet des villages indigènes avoisinant le camp du 4e Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais” Recrutement indigène, August 17, 1916, 4 D 71, ANS. “elles passent quelquefois avec dix ou quinze tirailleurs, une convention suivant laquelle en échange de leurs faveurs et d’une vague cuisine, le prêt intégral leur est remis.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Procès-Verbal October 8 1915, 4 D 67, ANS. “Toutes les démarches faites pour les faire rester dans leurs villages sont restées vaines...Elles attendent leur hommes à l’endroit même d’où il est parti. » (52)

⁵³ Zimmerman, *Militarizing Marriage*, 136-137.

⁵⁴ Lettre from Général de Division Lasserre, Commandant Supérieur des Troupes du Group de l’Afrique Occidentales Française to Monsieur le Gouverneur General de L’Afrique Occidentale Française, August 25, 1916, 4D/71, ANS.

means.”⁵⁵ These “unmentionable means” became part of Dakar’s wartime economy, responding to mobilization’s impact on men and women across French West Africa. People bought and sold domestic comforts in illicit exchanges that commanders seemed unable to control.

For many soldiers and officials, Senegal’s camps provided the first site where the promises of military inclusion and the imperatives of daily life collided. Instilling discipline ran up against material limitations and the practices soldiers and civilians developed to manage the rupture conscription caused. As soldiers left these camps, the tensions between official plans and everyday practices followed them into what many saw as the most perilous space of all: France.

Acclimating to France

The concerns officials had about displaced soldiers in Senegal took on a new intensity when these men arrived in France. “The particular susceptibility of black troops to the cold and the humidity is well known” a French commander wrote in September 1915, “and has produced a large waste on the Western front.”⁵⁶ By “waste” this commander likely meant death. During the winter of 1914, commanders said widespread frostbite, bronchitis, and pneumonia among West African troops stemmed from their inability to survive the Western Front’s cold weather. To prevent future “waste” military leaders developed a policy of “*hivernage*” or wintering. After 1914, West African troops left the front each winter and were sent to camps made in warmer climates.⁵⁷ After inspecting several such camps in the Occitane region, one colonial official M. Logeay said that while these sites had good beds and cabins, they lacked “something essential for

⁵⁵ Ibid. “Il n’est pas possible, en effet, étant donné que le seul loyer de leur chambre absorbe sensiblement leur allocation entière, qu’elles puissent vivre sans se procurer de l’argent d’une façon inavouable.”

⁵⁶ “Note. Sur les inconvénients résultant de maintien des troupes Indigènes sur le front des Dardanelles Durant la mauvaise saison et l’hiver,” 20 N 16, SHD. “La susceptibilité toute particulière des troupes noires au froid et à l’humidité sont bien connues, et ont donné un gros déchet sur le front Occidental.”

⁵⁷ Fogarty. *Race and War in France*, 87-89; Michel, *L’Appel à l’Afrique*, 363-375.

the Senegalese: a temperature that suits them.”⁵⁸ The belief that West African bodies could not handle France’s climate reflected a broader concern about mobilization’s impact on the empire’s racial geography. If Senegalese barracks were supposed to discipline men’s bodies, French barracks had to make sure their bodies survived living in the country they served.

Beyond preserving soldiers, these camps became experimental stations where French medical officials explored the relationship between racial and climatic difference. Many medical observers in French camps for colonial soldiers came to see climatic barriers as surmountable through acclimation.⁵⁹ The biologist Amédée Borrel noted that while many of the black soldiers he studied struggled during their first year of service, disease levels dropped off dramatically afterwards. He argued that after a year of acclimation, West African troops could serve anywhere.⁶⁰ Many officials saw the Mediterranean coast as the ideal site for this adaptation. This thesis adapted older notions of climatic determinism to new ideas about the adaptability of human bodies emerging out of efforts to manage injuries inflicted by this mechanized war.⁶¹ Acclimation reflects how this war changed ideas about the links between race and space.

Adapting foreign bodies to France became colonial camps’ *raison d’être*. Camps specifically for colonial recruits were first erected in the southeastern Cote d’Azur region, with the neighboring towns of Fréjus and Saint Raphael serving as the epicenters. Camps were also built around Bordeaux, although many felt the region’s humidity made it a less than ideal

⁵⁸ “Rapport du Contrôleur des Troupes Sénégalaises LOGEAY sur le 84 Bataillon Sénégalais au camp de Vernat d’Ariège,” 4 D 81, ANS. “Mais à côté de tous ces avantages, il manque, chose essentielle pour des Sénégalais, une température pouvant leur convenir.”

⁵⁹ Richard Fogarty and Michael Osborne, “Constructions and Functions of Race in French Military Medicine,” in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, eds. Tyler Stovall and Sue Peabody (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 230-236.

⁶⁰ “Rapport de Mission du Professeur Borrel, Directeur de l’Institut d’Hygiène et de Bactériologie de la Faculté de Médecine de Strasbourg,” September 1920, GR 9 NN 7 1154, SHD.

⁶¹ Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers, *The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe: Brittleness, Integration, Science, and the Great War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

choice.⁶² Starting in 1915, experienced colonial troops dwelt in these sites from late autumn to early spring and new arrivals stayed in these areas for initial training. One 1916 edition of the newspaper *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustré* presented these unique spaces to its readers. While advocating physical acclimation, the issue warned against similar social adaptations. “Some of our brave Senegalese,” one article bemoaned, “have become truly intolerable and the return of these ‘emancipated men’ to West Africa could have the most disastrous consequence.” To alleviate the social unmooring of life in France, planners tried to recreate a “Senegalese milieu” by “accumulating in the camp the greatest possible number of little things that evoke African life.”⁶³ With these “little things” officials hoped to give troops the right kind of acclimation.

Providing these culturally specific provisions stemmed from French authorities’ effort to keep soldiers mentally attached to West Africa even as they physically adapted to France. Like their European peers across Africa, French colonial administrators linked Africans’ racial or ethnic identities to discrete geographic locations, promoting a static vision of where Africans belonged.⁶⁴ These notions of geographic embeddedness justified efforts to control internal migration while also reinforcing the colony-metropole binary. Creating a “Senegalese milieu” in French camps reinforced this racial geography even as it was being upended by state-sponsored migration. Many of the goods that built this “milieu” came from the Paris-based *Comité d’Assistance Aux Troupes* (CATN). Founded in 1915, this organization served West African soldiers as well as their families “through both material and moral means.”⁶⁵ With branches

⁶² Osborne and Fogarty, “Construction and Functions of Race in French Military Medicine,” *The Color of Liberty*, 221-224.

⁶³ Dr. Maclaud, “L’Hygiène des Tirailleurs Sénégalais en France,” *La Dépêche Coloniale Illustré*, Janvier 1916: 25 “accumuler dans la formation le plus grand nombre possible de ces petits riens qui évoquent la vie africaine”

⁶⁴ Sara Berry, “Hegemony on a Shoestring: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land.” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62, no. 3 (1992): 327-55.

⁶⁵ “Comité d’assistance aux Troupes Noires” 4-DEP-001-615, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris. “sous le double rapport matériel et moral.” For more on the CATN see Mann, *Native Sons*: 81-85.

across France and French West Africa, the CATN distributed West African foods, instruments, games and other goods to soldiers as well as financial support to their dependents. These services sought to limit mobilization's disruptive fallout, especially the estrangement of soldiers from their families and their natal villages. After all, acclimation was temporary. Even if soldiers' bodies adapted to France's climate, groups like CATN worked with military partners to keep their hearts and minds tied to West Africa.

Official discussions of West African soldiers' diets reveal the tensions embedded in these efforts to use "familiar" domestic comforts to preserve racial and imperial divisions. In Fréjus camps, soldiers from West and Central Africa received 100 more total grams of food a day than their Southeast Asian comrades, who in turn received 300 grams more of rice. In addition, African soldiers received daily supplies of ten grams of kola nuts, a caffeine rich West African product.⁶⁶ Beyond responding to supposedly distinct embodied needs, many military officials believed that planning meals along racially distinct lines demonstrated respect for colonial soldiers' preferences.⁶⁷ This belief in the importance of providing familiar foods at least once led to the questioning of the military's ban on West African female migration. During a 1916 CATN meeting in Dakar, one government delegate convinced the committee to pay for several "native women" to go to France to cook in *tirailleurs* camps. The delegate believed these men "would be happy to eat some food from their country."⁶⁸ Few others official records discuss any West African women sent to French camps. Yet the postcard at the opening of this chapter

⁶⁶ Le Ministre de Guerre to Général Gouverneur Militaire de Paris, Généraux Commandant les 3, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18 Régions, Général Commandant Supérieur des Dépôts des Troupes Coloniales, Général Inspecteur des Troupes Coloniales, Paris, August 24, 1916, GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD.

⁶⁷ Emmanuelle Cronier, "Feeding Muslim Troops during the First World War," in *Far From Jihad: Combattants of Muslim Origin in European Armies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche, and Cloé Drieu, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 47-71.

⁶⁸ Procès-Verbal de la Séance de 8 Janvier 1916 du Comité d'Assistance aux Troupes Noires de Dakar, 4 D 67, ANS. "femmes indigènes... seraient heureux de pouvoir manger quelques mets de leurs pays."

demonstrated that some black women did end up in these sites. This undermined the army's newfound desire to limit female mobility. Sustaining bodies marked as distinctly "African" could thus contradict other military imperatives.

Difference, however, was not always an official imposition. Some West African soldiers cooked for themselves by recreating practices they carried across continents. Commanders in Fréjus anxiously noted West African troops' desire to cook next to, rather than within, kitchens. Many of these men likely came from areas where cooking was done outdoors.⁶⁹ Certain authorities feared this practice would spread fires or fumes. Rather than ban outdoor cooking, officials designed outdoor stone kitchens with a smokestack, which one official called a sign of respect for "customs that we cannot suppress."⁷⁰ Similarly, when confronted with soldiers' preference to eat outside, camp planners attached hangers or heating equipment to kitchens rather than trying to convince soldiers to move indoors.⁷¹ They even put these hangers into the blueprints for new kitchens (Fig. 5). These adaptations emerged in dialogue with soldiers' own daily practices and preferences. Official imperatives to preserve "customs" opened pathways that West African men could use, if only indirectly, to exert some control over their dwellings.

This link between sustenance and stability made many French observers worry about these barracks' material inadequacies. Government inspectors made this clear in scathing critiques of camps around Bordeaux. Several hundred soldiers in these camps died from infectious diseases during the winter of 1916-1917, provoking investigations by medical and political authorities. "We do not eat" one soldier told an inspector, "in these conditions we are

⁶⁹ Jean-Paul Bourdier and Minh-ha, *Vernacular Architecture of West Africa* (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 68-73.

⁷⁰ "Rapport Particulier de Monsieur le Médecin-Major LOUSTE, Adjoint Technique de la IV^e Région, à Monsieur le Sous-Secrétaire d'État du Service de Santé sur l'INTALLATION DES CAMPS SENEGALAIS de FREJUS-St RAPHAEL, Mars-Avril 1918," GR 9 NN 7 1152, SHD. "les coutumes que nous ne pouvons supprimer"

⁷¹ Ibid.



Figure 1. 5: Blueprint for kitchen in West African section of Fréjus military camp, bottom image shows awning that allowed for outside dining., Rapport Particulier de Monsieur le Médecin-Major LOUSTE, Adjoint Technique de la IV^e Région, à Monsieur le Sous-Secrétaire d’État du Service de Santé sur l’INSTALLATION DES CAMPS SENEGALAIS de FREJUS-St RAPHAEL, Mars-Avril 1918, GR 9 NN 7/1152, SHD.

not capable of doing the work asked of us.”⁷² This report then said some *tirailleurs* needed money to buy extra food, which they got by leaving the camp to work on Bordeaux’s docks or soliciting support from relatives in West Africa. This lack of food did more than just imperil soldiers’ bodies. Working on docks or sending anxious letters home threatened to broadcast these failures across the empire. One scathing 1917 parliamentary inquiry into the Corneau camp said these “Senegalese men will be happy enough to return to their countries, not missing a chance to complain and spread amongst them this idea that France did not fulfill their commitments towards them.” France had to respond to these “sadly justified” critiques to prove “that everything was done so that those who did not fulfill their service towards the soldiers of French West Africa, who so kindly shed their blood on our battlefields, were severely punished.”⁷³

⁷² “Rapport du Contrôleur des Tirailleurs Sénégalais Casernes à Luchey,” 4 D 81, ANS. “Nous ne mangeons pas, dans ces conditions nous ne sommes pas capables de pouvoir fournir les travaux que l’on réclame de nous.”

⁷³ Paris, May 31, 1917, GR 7 N 1990, SHD. “Les Sénégalais qui seront assez heureux pour retourner dans leurs pays, ne manqueront pas de se plaindre et de propager autour d’eux cette idée que la France n’a pas rempli à leur égard les engagements pris. A ces reproches, malheureusement justifiés, il faut que la mère Patrie puisse répondre

These “commitments” reflected the mutual obligations undergirding colonial recruitment.⁷⁴ Service gave soldiers the ability to demand state assistance, especially after Diagne’s 1918 recruitment drive. However, this inspection came before Diagne’s mission, demonstrating how officials at the highest levels of France’s government were already linking adequate dwellings to recruitment. Camps had to sustain soldiers’ bodies and a belief in imperial benevolence.

Civilian Connections

Instilling this faith in imperial unity often meant managing the links between soldiers and civilians. Postcards became a primary site of this contact and control. “I send this card for you to see” Mebeye M’Baye told Yacine Goyd in one such missive.⁷⁵ Writing from Saint-Raphael in October 1915, M’Baye penned this message on the back of a postcard to Senegal. “You must reshaw [it] to everyone” he explained, before assuring Goyd of his continued love. Cards like these constituted one of the many tools soldiers used to reach civilians near and far. Authorities tried to manage intercontinental connections to broadcast their support for soldiers’ well-being to West African audiences. At the same time, visual presentations and official policies in France tried to alleviate French locals’ anxieties about living near colonial soldiers. However, officials could not stop interactions that led some soldiers and civilians to reimagine where people belonged in intercontinental households and an increasingly interconnected empire.

que des sanctions ont été prises et que tous ceux qui n’ont pas rempli leur devoir envers ces soldats de l’Afrique Occidentale qui versent si généreusement leur sang sur nos Champs de Bataille, ont été sévèrement punis.”

⁷⁴ Mann, *Native Sons*.

⁷⁵ Postcard from Mebeye M’Baye to Yacine Goyd, Saint-Raphaël, October 20, 1915, from exhibit, “Le Fonds d’Archives de L’Ouvrage Tirailleurs Sénégalais” in online collection *14-18 Mission Centenaire*. <https://web.archive.org/web/20181115220743/http://centenaire.org/fr/tresors-darchives/fonds-privés/archives/le-fonds-darchives-de-louvrage-tirailleurs-senegalais> “Je vous envoie cette carte pour vous regarder...il faut remonter à tout le monde.”

Letters gave deployed men vital links to distant loved ones. Soldiers and civilians of all backgrounds used letters to reconnect with pre-war lives and imagine post-war futures.⁷⁶ Despite lower literacy levels than their European peers, West African soldiers sent millions of letters back to West Africa throughout the war.⁷⁷ Many French officials wanted to make sure these messages supported the military's interests. All sides in World War I censored soldiers' letters to protect official narratives on the home front.⁷⁸ For those managing West African messages, this meant defending the link between military service and equal treatment. As J. M. Le Cesne, president of the CATN, explained to the Governor General of French West Africa, recruitment had gone so horribly in some regions that "rumors have been spreading little by little, that our men were taken as slaves." Letting soldiers "write home, to give news of their health, to send money orders to their family, to explain that they are being treated and cared for like Whites, this, indirectly, renders service to the French cause in Africa."⁷⁹ Cesne, likely unknowingly, echoed the connections many West Africans made between slavery and conscription.⁸⁰ He wanted correspondences to foster another view. Money orders and assurances of colorblind care supported the claim that *tirailleurs* were firmly attached both to their families and their empire.

Many officials saw postcards as ideal vessels for these benevolent narratives. Linguistic diversity, racist notions about West African ignorance, and a relatively low level of French

⁷⁶ Clémentine Vidal-Naquet, "Écrire ses émotions. Le lien conjugal dans la Grande Guerre," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 47 (2018): 117-137; Michael Roper. *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Amos Hongla, "Les communications postales et télégraphiques en A.O.F. pendant la Première Guerre mondiale" *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 82, no. 306 (1995): 37-38.

⁷⁸ Eberhard Demm, *Censorship and Propaganda in World War I: A Comprehensive History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); Lionel Lemarchand, *Lettres Censurées Des Tranchées 1917: Une Place Dans La Littérature Et L'histoire* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001).

⁷⁹ President Le Cesne to Governor General Angoulvant, August 10, 1916 Paris, France, 4 D 70, ANS. "le bruit s'en est peu à peu répandu, - que nos hommes étaient emmenés en esclavage. Leur permettre d'écrire chez eux, de donner des nouvelles de leur santé, d'envoyer des mandats à leur familles, d'expliquer qu'ils sont traités et soignés comme les Blancs, c'est, indirectement, rendre un service signalé à la cause française en Afrique et je m'étonne que certains de nos Administrateurs ne l'aient point encore compris."

⁸⁰ For more on this link see Mann. *Native Sons*; Lunn. *Memoirs from the Maelstrom*: 45-50.

literacy among West African recruits led many French leaders to focus on visual communication like postcards.⁸¹ Le Cesne, for example, wanted the CATN to help wounded African soldiers send weekly postcards to their families.⁸² General Charles Rabier explicitly explained why postcards seemed most useful to the French cause in Africa. Most Africans, Rabier claimed, “cannot be affected by anything but images.”⁸³ He wanted soldiers to send postcards that evoked, “their camps, scenes of their military life in France, their black officers.” Rabier fit these curated images of everyday lives into a broader propaganda campaign. “These cards which would spread across West Africa” he declared, “will have, I believe, a positive effect.”⁸⁴ For decades, French postcards depicting orientalist visions West African domestic spaces fostered metropolitan understanding of their distant colonies.⁸⁵ Now, Rabier wanted to flip this script and send out idealized presentations of dwelling spaces in France to drum up support in West Africa.

Soldiers, however, imbued correspondences with their own often-patriarchal ambitions. Letters helped soldiers begin using their access to military resources to become respected men in distant households. This came across clearly in monthly reports the French military interpreter Joula wrote about *tirailleurs*’ correspondences. In January 1917, for example, he said that *tirailleurs* sent 7,028 letters with a total of 8,040 francs back to West Africa. Most of this money went towards “buying cows, animal capital that black soldiers want to accumulate to cover their needs when they return to the colonies.”⁸⁶ Joula’s description hinted at the key role cows likely

⁸¹ For more on practices around language and literacy see Fogarty. *Race & War in France*: 154-167.

⁸² Comité d’Assistance Aux Troupes Noires, Procès-Verbal de la Séance du 28 Février 1916, 4 D 67, ANS.

⁸³ “Note au Sujet de l’Armée Noire,” February 28, 1918, GR 9 NN 7 1990, SHD. “Ils ne peuvent être touchés que par l’image”

⁸⁴ Ibid. “leurs camps, les scènes de leur vie militaire en France, leurs grades noirs, etc... Ces cartes répandraient dans toute l’Afrique Occidentale, auraient, je crois, un heureux effet.”

⁸⁵ David Proschaska, “Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal,” *African Arts* 2, no. 4, Special Issue: Historical Photographs of Africa (Oct. 1991): 40-47+98.

⁸⁶ “Rapport Mensuel” L’officier interprète de 1ere classe Joula to Monsieur le General Commandant la 15ème Région, Saint-Raphaël, February 1, 1917, 4 D 70, ANS. “l’achat de bœufs, capital animal que veulent se constituer les militaires noirs pour se mettre à l’abri du besoin à leur retour dans la colonie.”

played in many soldiers' households and aspirations. As the end of slavery and colonial expansion transformed household economies across the Western Sahel, cattle provided a key investment many individuals used to improve their household positions.⁸⁷ However, misspelt names, missing addresses, and other technical problems could hinder these payments' delivery. In March 1916, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Senegal-Niger told the Governor General of French West Africa that many *tirailleurs* had gotten so frustrated with failed money orders that they had sent follow up letters that were "more numerous with each delivery."⁸⁸ Inquiries piling up in colonial post offices attested to soldiers' persistent desire to connect with distant homes. Doing so could preserve their dreams of returning with wealth, prestige, and cattle.

Alongside economic links, these letters also preserved and produced the affective bonds connecting intercontinental households. Amadou Cissé often wrote to Awara Sarr, his so-called "alter-ego," to ask about his wife. "I thank you for the help you have given for my wife's happiness" Cissé wrote in one letter, "continue taking care of her, and I will be very satisfied."⁸⁹ Letters became Cissé's surrogate, allowing him to feel that physical distance had not undermined his marital responsibilities. As his own reliance on Sarr demonstrates, epistolary connections were not always private. Reading wartime letters was an emotionally laden performance that linked interlocutors near and far.⁹⁰ Illiterate soldiers in particular depended on interpreters, a practice captured by a military photographer in France's southeastern camps (Fig. 6). As one West African soldier read a message, another man stood behind with his own note. Letters

⁸⁷ Richard Roberts, "Conflicts over Property," *Litigants and Households: African Disputes and Colonial Courts in the French Soudan, 1895-1912* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005), 179-208.

⁸⁸ Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Haut-Senegal Niger to Monsieur le Gouverneur General de l'Afrique Occidental Française, Bamako, March 25, 1916, 4 D 71, ANS. "à chaque courrier plus nombreuses"

⁸⁹ Amadou Cissé to Awara Sarr, Hyères, September 7, 1917, *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*: 40. "Je te remercie des soins que tu te donnes pour le bonheur de ma femme. Continue donc à t'occuper d'elle, je n'en serais que très satisfait."

⁹⁰ Vidal-Naquet, "Écrire ses émotions."

created new interpersonal dynamics across the empire. However, the unreliability of postal services likely led many soldiers to look much closer for regular connections with civilians.

Many of the local residents these soldiers turned to wrestled with their own senses of displacement. Building colonial camps transformed local landscapes. “The need to house around



Figure 1. 6: Photograph showing tirailleur reading message for another soldier at a Southeastern camp before a large crowd, as another soldier stands behind with another letter in his hand. SPA 5 O TS, ECPAD.

35,000 men at all times of the year requires us to think of this site not as a simple camp” the writers of a 1918 report on colonial barracks explained, “but as a veritable city in the making.”⁹¹ In Fréjus, which hosted France’s largest set of colonial barracks, colonial soldiers typically lived far from the town’s residential core. However, the military often requisitioned local residences for French officers. Payments for these lodgers likely provided some locals with much-needed income. However, many other residents did not appreciate their new neighbors. In a series of

⁹¹ “Projets d’installations de camps pour sénégalais dans le midi de la France, avis de la direction du service de santé: Rapport de la Commission chargées d’examiner les emplacement proposés pour l’établissement de Camps pour Sénégalais dans les 15^e-16^e-17^e-et 18^e Régions” March 31 1918, GR 9 NN 7/1158, SHD. “La nécessité de loger 35,000 hommes environ à toutes les époques de l’années oblige à considérer cette installation, non comme un simple camp, mais comme une véritable ville à créer.”

furious letters to Fréjus' mayor, A.F. Guerin decried the abrupt transformation of a town that has “never done anything to attract either winter residents, or especially summer ones.”⁹² Even when military developments did not actively displace residents, some Fréjus inhabitants balked at the changes to their local surroundings. Lucie Cousturier opened her memoir about life in Fréjus during the war with the shock caused by construction in the town's hinterlands. She seethed as soldiers chopped down her beloved olive trees for wood to make *tirailleurs*' barracks.⁹³ She mourned these fallen trees and felt “only hate towards the negro soldiers who will replace them.”⁹⁴ Many of Fréjus' residents shared Cousturier's sense that African soldiers' sudden arrival had made them strangers in their own land.

Efforts to manage this disruption in Fréjus echoed broader attempts to make African soldiers seem both distant and harmless for French observers. As this map shows (Fig. 7) the main camps for colonial soldiers, Sables, Caïs and Gallieni, were far from the center of Fréjus or Saint-Raphael. Pragmatically, this reflected the need for territory large enough for barracks, hospitals, and training grounds. However, it also fostered a physical and imagined distance between Fréjus and its colonial outskirts. One postcard of the 26th *Tirailleur Sénégalais* battalion and their tents dramatized this separation (Fig. 8). “In the distance,” the postcard declared, “the panorama of Fréjus.”⁹⁵ The camp's tents and *tirailleurs* in the foreground contrasted with the brick belltower and tile roofs of Fréjus' skyline on the horizon. Balancing distance and proximity fed Fréjus growing reputation as a “non-stop colonial exhibition.”⁹⁶ This effort to balance the familiar and foreign reflected how visual representations of *tirailleurs sénégalais* across France

⁹² Letter to Monsieur le Maire de la ville de Fréjus, Draguignan November 29, 1915, H39, AMF. “elle n'a jamais rien fait pour attirer ni hivernants, ni surtout estivants”

⁹³ Lucie Cousturier, *Des Inconnus Chez Moi* (Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1920), 12.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 8. “Je ne trouve que de la haine à vouer aux soldats nègres qui les remplaceront.”

⁹⁵ 10Fi32, AMF.

⁹⁶ Mann, *Native Sons*: 164-166.

increasingly sought to alleviate anxieties about bringing armed African men heralded for their virile strength to France. Postcards, advertisements, and cases of *banania* chocolate drinks gave viewers images of smiling and infantile African soldiers.⁹⁷ These caricatures appeared on a variety of objects, literally domesticated these men by bringing them into French homes while preserving an exoticism that assured viewers that they did not truly belong on French soil.

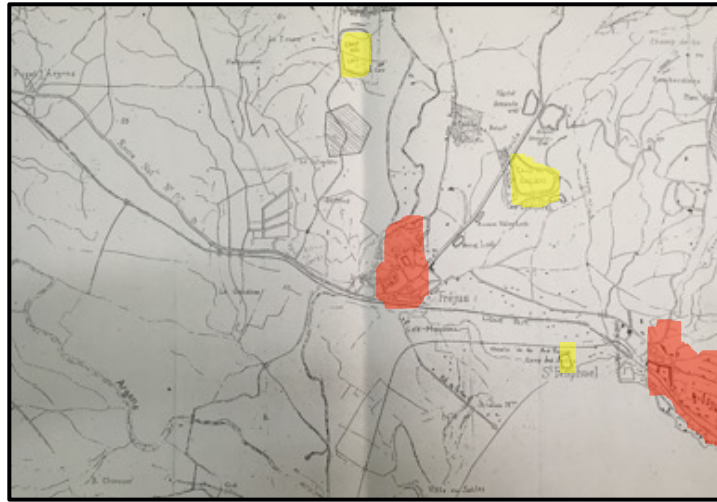


Figure 1. 7: Map of the towns of Saint-Raphaël and Fréjus during World War I with colonial military camps indicated in yellow, and town centers of Fréjus (middle) and Saint-Raphael (right) indicated in red. Camp Implantation, CHETOM.



Figure 1. 8: Postcard depicting *tirailleur* camp in Fréjus, the text reads, “Senegalese – In the distance, panorama of Fréjus. 10 Fi 32, AMF.”

⁹⁷ Dana S. Hale, “French Images of Race on Product Trademarks during the Third Republic” *The Color of Liberty*: 137-140; Jean Garigues. *Banania, Histoire D'une Passion Française* (Paris: Du May, 1991).

Visions of a stable divide between French civilians and West African soldiers did not reflect daily realities in these military landscapes. While colonial troops slept and trained in camps in Fréjus or Saint-Raphael, they often interacted with locals during their periodically permitted time to go into town. In these moments, soldiers and civilians turned to one another to compensate for wartime deprivations. Like civilians across Europe, residents of Fréjus faced strict rationing. In the name of guarding supplies, Fréjus' town government banned the sale of bread to colonial soldiers in 1916. By the end of the war, at least 49 residents received fines for these illegal sales. Individuals convicted were often widows or wives of husbands at the front.⁹⁸ Many French women struggled to manage household finances upended by total war and the departure or death of male breadwinners. While some turned to pensions or new jobs, black market activities like these exchanges could provide a vital lifeline.⁹⁹ These connections created zones of illicit commerce. In 1920, the battalion chief Chauvin told superiors that the *quartier du Sables* by the Sables camp had become a den of thieves, barmaids, and prostitutes, with West African recruits as a key clientele. Chauvin felt unable to stop this trade. "Officers, given away from a distance by their uniforms" he declared, "are often powerless."¹⁰⁰ Like in Dakar, men and women reached across camp boundaries to find the comforts of home. However, these interactions provoked distinct anxieties in France. Sexual relations between French women and West African soldiers, whether real or imagined, inspired widespread fears about white male

⁹⁸ 10 U 834, 10 U 835, 10 U 836, 10 U 837, ADV.

⁹⁹ Evelyne Morin-Rotureau, *1914-1918, Combats De Femmes: Les Femmes, Pilier De L'effort De Guerre* (Paris: Autrement, 2004), for an example of the impact of wartime deprivation in another part of continental Europe see Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ "Rapport du Chef du Btn Chauvin, Major de la Garnison as. De la police dans le quartier des Sables," H46, AMF. "La gendarmerie, signalée au loin par son uniforme, est souvent impuissante."

prestige.¹⁰¹ In the *quartier du sables*, civilians and soldiers searched for various kind of sustenance in ways that challenged official calls for sexual and social separation.

Women often wrestled with the new relationships to local and imperial communities these interactions forged. Local archives do not reveal what women selling bread or working in the *quartier du sables* felt about their West African clients. However, sources about two women's reactions to *tirailleurs*' search for daily provisions reveal the divergent paths these interactions could take.

One of these women has already appeared: Lucie Cousturier. Leaving behind a relatively successful painting career in Paris, Cousturier and her family moved to Fréjus in 1913. Soon after the fall of her beloved olive trees, Cousturier began interacting with the men inhabiting these freshly cleared fields. The title of her memoir about these experiences, *Des Inconnus Chez Moi* or *Strangers in My Home*, highlighted the transformative experience of suddenly living near thousands of African "strangers." As the title implied, Cousturier often situated these interactions within her home. Her first exchange with a *tirailleur* occurred when one suddenly appeared at her door. After an initial shock, she quickly realized he had come to cook. Cousturier's father reported this to a local military commander, who said the soldier meant no harm and had similarly gone to homes across Fréjus seeking food or company. This search for connection led Cousturier to realize that these soldiers "were actually the most simply human of people, those who surrender themselves to loving, as if they were their own, all human homes."¹⁰² West

¹⁰¹ Fogarty, *Race & War in France*, 205; Annabelle Melzer, "Spectacles and Sexualities: The 'Mise-en-Scène' of the 'Tirailleur Senegalais' on the Western Front, 1914-1920," in *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870-1930*, ed. Billie Melman (New York: Routledge, 1998), 213-244.

¹⁰² Cousturier, *Des Inconnus Chez Moi*, 22. "les plus simplement humains, ceux qui s'abandonnent à aimer, comme les leurs, toutes les maisons humaines."

African soldiers' search for the comforts of home humanized them in Cousturier's eyes, leading her to sympathize with the men whose arrival she once saw as a blight on Fréjus' landscape.

After this initial encounter, Cousturier welcomed a litany of soldiers into her home for French lessons and cooking sessions, often leading to eye-opening dinner table conversations. She recounted how one soldier's inability to understand French gendered honorifics "delivered me from the 'Madame' cage."¹⁰³ While she did teach these men French, she did not echo popular derision of so-called *tirailleur français*.¹⁰⁴ Rather, she presented their unique style of French as a welcome liberator. Later on, while speaking with one of her favorite students, Demba Diä, Cousturier and Diä connected how French men dominated French women and West African men alike by using derogatory stereotypes.¹⁰⁵ Tables became stages upon which Cousturier and her West African guests forged new self-understandings. These new perspectives emboldened Cousturier to critique imperial racism and join interwar colonial humanists who promoted a reformed imperial culture as the key to the mutual development of France and its colonies.¹⁰⁶ She used the tales from her "human home" to imagine a more egalitarian empire.

The account of another local woman who faced a West African soldier knocking on her door presented a far less positive story. On September 9, 1919, Amadou Fating showed up at the farm of Marius Poussibet and his wife Léonie in Saint-Raphaël. The next morning, Poussibet's two Indochinese employees found Fating's body in the grass.¹⁰⁷ Poussibet told investigators that

¹⁰³ Cousturier, *Des Inconnus Chez Moi*, 38, "me délivrait de la cage 'Madame'"

¹⁰⁴ Cécile Van den Avenne, "'C'est français seulement pour les tirailleurs': Côté des hommes et contact de langues, l'expérience linguistique des tirailleurs sénégalais pendant la première guerre mondiale," in *La langue sous le feu. Mots, textes, discours de la Grande Guerre*, eds. Roynette Odile, Siouffi Gilles and Steuckardt Agnes (Rennes, Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2107), 67-82.

¹⁰⁵ Cousturier, *Des Inconnus Chez Moi*, 229

¹⁰⁶ For more on Cousturier's thoughts and writing see Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 193-208; Roger Little (ed.), *Lucie Cousturier, les tirailleurs sénégalais et la question coloniale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Affaire Meurtre: Inculpé Poussibet Marius, Procès-Verbal, Henri Mosier, December 10, 1919, 2 U 736, ADV.

he had fired two warning shots at Fating but did not intend to kill him. He said Fating had been showing up in the area for months demanding money and wine.¹⁰⁸ Their neighbor Jean Caze said Fating had burst into his home months earlier, refusing to leave while declaring, “I am not afraid, I went to war.”¹⁰⁹ Léonie echoed this narrative in her own interrogation. “The black troops stationed on our shores have the habit of indulging in all sorts of brutalities towards isolated farmers” she said. “A year and a half ago,” she declared, “I myself was accosted three times by these Senegalese who I had great difficulty getting rid of.”¹¹⁰ Investigators believed these accounts and declared these shots legitimate self-defense. Poussibet returned home a free man.

We can never determine what happened when Fating came knocking. However, these testimonies reveal the power of certain racialized anxieties during the war. At the center of all these interrogations was Fating’s alleged violations of French farmers’ homesteads. These testimonies’ credibility to investigators may have reflected growing racialized antagonisms by the end of the war.¹¹¹ However, Poussibet and Léonie were not the frustrated French soldiers or resentful workers often discussed in analyses of these racial conflicts. Poussibet himself had two colonial employees. However, this couple lived in a local landscape transformed by colonial conscription. Léonie described African soldiers as threats to her fellow rural French women. Poussibet and Léonie claimed colonial soldiers made them feel unsafe in their own home.

Prosecutors found this fear sufficient grounds to free Fating’s killer. These accounts provide a

¹⁰⁸ Affaire Meurtre: Inculpé Poussibet Marius, Procès-Verbal Henri Moser, December 10 1919, 2 U 736, ADV.

¹⁰⁹ Déposition du 20 Septembre 1919, Nom du Témoin Caze, September 20, 1919, 2 U 736, ADV. “je n’ai pas peur, je suis allé à la guerre”

¹¹⁰ Déposition du Témoin Puzin Léonie épouse Poussibet, September 13, 1919, 2 U 736, ADV. “Les troupes noires qui sont cantonnées dans nos parages ont coutume de se livrer à toutes sortes de brutalités envers les fermiers isolés... il y a un an et demi, j’ai été assaillie par trois fois par des Sénégalais dont j’ai eu beaucoup de peine à me débarrasser”

¹¹¹ Melzer, “Spectacles and Sexualities;” Tyler Stovall, “The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War.” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 737-69.

sobering counterpoint to Cousturier's memories of civilian-soldier relations. Fating survived the front, but not life in the town that was supposed to be *tirailleurs'* surrogate home in France.

Dwelling in the Trenches

Fating likely spent much of this war dwelling in trenches. While soldiers of all backgrounds struggled in these spaces, French commanders had specific worries about West Africans in these frontline dwellings. In a report on his West African soldiers' morale on the Western Front, Major Montoya told his superiors that "everything comes down to material well-being."¹¹² Like officials running barracks, frontline commanders claimed that specific provisions would assure West Africans' effective service. Presenting *tirailleurs* as fighting machines simply in need of refueling helped officials ignore the fact that these men, like their European counterparts, often simply hoped to survive in the trenches long enough to leave.

Many West African soldiers served in the scarred terrain of the Western Front. While these troops fought throughout Europe, most went to northern France, Belgium, and western Germany. They inhabited rural houses, cabins, and of course, the infamous trenches that stretched across landscapes marred by years of war. Millions of men turned to comrades in arms, divine forces, or distant relatives to persevere through the horrors of the front.¹¹³ West Africans fighters were no exception. Many *tirailleurs* carried Islamic *gris-gris* charms for protection or sang songs in their native languages to inspire one another.¹¹⁴ However, these private coping mechanisms rarely appeared in official frontline reports. Instead, many inspections focused on how West Africans coped with the climate of the trenches. The inspector Logeay exemplified

¹¹² "Compte rendu du chef de bataillon Montoya Commandant le 45e Bataillon de Tirailleur Sénégalais relative du moral de la troupe," GR 16 N 1507, SHD. "tout se résume la une question de bien-être matériel"

¹¹³ Vidal-Naquet, "Écrire ses émotions;" Roper, *The Secret Battle*; Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008); Annette Becker, *War and Faith: The Religious Imagination in France, 1914-1930* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998).

¹¹⁴ Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*: 120-156.

this attitude in a 1917 report attributing West Africans' suffering on the front to trenches' damp and cold conditions.¹¹⁵ While these concerns reinforced officials' belief in Africans' inability to handle European climates, they also echoed soldiers' own fears about these frigid conditions. In 1916, Moctar Diallo told Awara Sarr that "frozen feet" had forced many of his comrades to evacuate. "My turn will come," Diallo predicted, "because I can barely walk anymore."¹¹⁶ Another of Sarr's enlisted friends, Moumar Diallo, felt that the trenches themselves made life unbearable. "We are like foxes who hide in their holes during the day and at night leave to prowl along our lines," Diallo told Sarr, "my poor friend, you see, that our life is hardly pleasant."¹¹⁷

Concerned about making lives at the front more "pleasant," military officials demanded more information on West African soldiers' conditions as the war dragged on. By the summer of 1917, in response to mass uprisings by French workers and soldiers that included some *tirailleurs*, battalion majors started providing periodic reports on their West African troops' morale.¹¹⁸ Every few weeks commanders responded to questions about *tirailleurs'* sentiments, provisions, relations with locals, influence of letters or outside news, and their feelings about leave time. Responses ranged from elaborate paragraphs to terse sentences. Regardless of length, the answers typically assured superiors of soldiers' good spirits and loyalty. Commanders often linked this support to material conditions. "Among the Senegalese, the troupe's morale is in

¹¹⁵ "Rapport de l'Administrateur des Colonies LOGEAY charge du contrôle de l'emploi des Tirailleurs Sénégalais," 4 D 70, ANS.

¹¹⁶ Moctar Diallo to Awara Sarr, Aux Armées, November 5, 1916, in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*, 59. "pied gelés" "Mon tour viendra sans doute car je ne marche presque plus et j'ai des douleurs aux pieds."

¹¹⁷ Moumar Diallo to Awara Sarr, Aux Armées, October 21, 1917, in *Les Sénégalais et la Grande Guerre*: 75. "Nous sommes comme des renards qui se cachent le jour dans leur trou et le soir sortent rôder à travers les lignes. Donc tu vois, mon pauvre ami, que notre destinée n'est guère agréable."

¹¹⁸ Michel. *L'Appel à l'Afrique*: 352-353.

direct relation to health,” one captain explained, making sanitary conditions a “veritable barometer” of morale.”¹¹⁹ Residential cleanliness kept men not only alive, but content.

Like in camps, commanders claimed that food played a key role in keeping up men’s spirits. “The Senegalese are large eaters who will always be content if their stomachs are satisfied,” the same captain quoted above explained, “but they cannot, like whites, bear its privation.”¹²⁰ In this frame, West African men’s survival and service depended on placating racially distinct tastes. The Battalion chief Deveaux asked his superiors to get his men, “products from their country (kola, peanuts, etc.)” that would be “the most appreciated compensation that one could give them.”¹²¹ The kola nut appeared regularly in front-line reports. The aforementioned inspector Logeay said that “the kola nut is integral to the native, the *pinard* of the *tirailleur* is kola.”¹²² *Pinard* referred to the ration wine given to French soldiers that became both a palliative against the trauma of trench warfare and an increasingly popular symbol of patriotic consumption.¹²³ Wine rations likely meant little to Muslim *tirailleurs*. In its place, the kola nut could boost morale and energy. *Tirailleurs* may have appreciated these familiar and energizing snacks. However, repeated references to kola nuts’ reflected how these reports reinforced officials’ belief that Africans’ had distinct bodily needs and capacities.

By reinforcing commanders’ belief in the embodied distinction at the heart of the *force noire* mythology, these reports assured commanders that these men belonged on battlefields. In

¹¹⁹ 61 Bataillon Sénégalais November 12 1917 16 N 194, GR 16 N 1507, SHD. “Chez les Sénégalais, le moral de la troupe est en raison directe de l’état de santé...véritables baromètre”

¹²⁰ Ibid. “Les Sénégalais est un gros mangeur qui sera toujours content si son ventre est satisfait mais qui ne pourrait comme le blanc supporter longtemps les privations.

¹²¹ 53e B.T.S. July 1/2 1918, GR 16 N 1507, SHD. “des produits de leur pas (Kolas, arachides, etc.)...la récompense les plus apprécié que l’on pourrait leur accorder.”

¹²² “Rapport de l’Administrateur des Colonies LOGEAY,” 4 D 70, ANS. “la noix de kola fait partie intégrante de l’indigène; que le pinard du tirailleur, c’est le kola”

¹²³ Christoph Lucand, *Le pinard des Poilus: Une histoire du vin en France Durant la Grande Guerre (1914-1918)* (Dijon: Éditions universitaires de Dijon, 2015).

May 1918, the commander of the 44th Battalion of *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* assured his superiors that when it came to combat, his soldiers brought the “tenacity of their warrior temperament.”¹²⁴ One commander described *tirailleurs*’ “contempt for death” while another feared his soldiers might be so eager to fight that they would rush into no-man’s land unprepared.¹²⁵ Logeay happily relayed Sergeant Lansiné Tararoré’s response when asked about returning to West Africa. “No” Tararoré apparently said, “I only dream of fighting the *boches*.”¹²⁶ Belief in West Africans’ predilection for battle helped justify decisions that led to contemporary and retrospective accusations that French commanders treated *tirailleurs* as disposable cannon fodder.¹²⁷ Tropes of the battle-ready *tirailleur* supported often fatal convictions that West African men lived to fight.

Some commanders, however, acknowledged soldiers’ desire for a life beyond the trenches. The most notable crack in the image of the enthusiastic *tirailleur* arose around one topic in particular: leave. Since the start of the war, many French leaders framed periodic leave for soldiers’ every four months as a kind of right to pleasure.¹²⁸ Only *originaires* from Senegal’s four communes enjoyed this right. Many commanders argued that *tirailleurs* did not need leave since they spent several months each year in southern camps.¹²⁹ Commander Poulot of the 43rd *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* battalion proposed making these camps more appealing by adding, “black villages with black women.”¹³⁰ He linked leave time with access to women while implicitly

¹²⁴ 44^e Bataillon du Tirailleurs Sénégalais May 2, 1918, GR 16 N 1507, SHD. “ténacité de leur tempérament guerrier.”

¹²⁵ “Quelques exploits des tirailleurs sénégalais,” 4 D 70, ANS. “Mépris de la mort”; “Rapport de l’Administrateur des Colonies LOGEAY chargé du contrôle des Tirailleurs Sénégalais, 51^{ème} Bataillon de Sénégalais” Paris, July 5, 1917, 4 D 81, ANS. No-man’s land refers to the battlefield between trenches.

¹²⁶ “Rapport de l’Administrateur des Colonies LOGEAY,” 4 D 70, ANS. “Non...je ne songe qu’à combattre les boches.” *Boche* was the pejorative term used by the French to refer to the Germans.

¹²⁷ For debates on differential death rates of African and European soldiers on the front see Michel, *L’Appel à l’Afrique*: 405-407, Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*: 46; Lunn, *Memoirs from the Maelstrom*: 140-147.

¹²⁸ Emmanuelle Cronier, *Permissionnaires dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris, Éditions Belin, 2013).

¹²⁹ 43^e Bataillon de Tirailleurs sénégalais, Compte Rendu décadaire relatif au moral de la Troupe, November 5, 1917, GR 16 N 1507, SHD; Michel, *L’Appel à l’Afrique*: 353-354.

¹³⁰ 43 Bataillon des Tirailleurs Sénégalais November 16 1917, GR 16 N 1507, SHD. “des villages noirs avec les femmes noires.”

connecting giving *tirailleurs*' normal leave time to interracial sex. He sought to give these men sanctioned sexual partners to make them more comfortable in surrogate southern homes.

Some commanders did express concern about these men's frustration over leave inequalities. While soldiers in the 61st Senegalese Battalion made no explicit complaints, their commander told superiors that, "this question often ends up the object of little discussions amongst them."¹³¹ The leader of the 5th Battalion of *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* expressed more direct anxiety about similar chatter amongst his men. "From the bottom of these men's heart there is a muffled irritation" he claimed, "caused by the different treatment between them and the Senegalese of the 4 communes serving as Europeans. Although it has not yet presented any danger, this state of mind is a grave menace."¹³² Hearing echoes of the mutinies rocking the French military in 1917, the army's morale service relayed this report to the Minister of War. Within a few months, *tirailleurs* who served for four years could return to West Africa for four months, an implicit acquiescence to soldiers' frustrations.¹³³ However, this change did not help the majority of soldiers who joined after 1914. Winter sojourns in Corneau or Fréjus remained these men's only escape. That is, unless they defected or succumbed to the violence of the front.

Making Space for Wounded West African Soldiers

Many men who suffered injuries on the battlefield ended up in new spaces built upon particular ideas about how to heal West African minds and bodies. "Sky without clouds, made by men, to receive the sick who left the inferno and came to heal wounds from the flames."¹³⁴

¹³¹ Bataillon Sénégalais November 12, 1917, GR 16 N 1507, 61 SHD. "je sais que cette question fait souvent chez eux l'objet de petites discussions."

¹³² "Note: Service de Moral" November 27, 1917, GR 16 N 1517, SHD. "Il y a au fond du cœur des hommes une sourde irritation due à la différence du traitement entre eux et les Sénégalais des 4 communes servant au titre Européen. Sans présenter de dangers encore, cet état d'esprit est gros de menaces."

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Diallo, *Force Bonté*, 136, "Ciel sans nuage, construit par les hommes, pour recevoir des malades sortis de l'enfer et venus guérir les blessures de la flamme »

Bakary Diallo used this divine imagery to describe the Parisian hospital he awoke in after losing consciousness during battle. Diallo praised the facility's interracial harmony, echoing many French hopes that medical spaces would foster loyalty and contentment. They also wanted these spaces to promote the stabilization officials hoped to provide in other military dwelling. These persistent efforts to manage soldiers' displacement, however, faced new obstacle in sites serving wounded troops. Bodies in these spaces had been profoundly transformed. Injured soldiers forced French authorities into debates about where West African soldiers should adapt to their scarred bodies. These conflicts stretched across the empire and lasted long after the war.

Officials often tried to create medical facilities that catered specifically to colonial soldiers. The military built hospitals in Paris and across southern France for colonial recruits. However, their distance from battlefields meant many West African troops ended up convalescing alongside Europeans. Diallo claimed to be the only African patient at crowded a hospital in Epargny.¹³⁵ The inspector Molard bemoaned this mixing. He advocated separating West Africans patients according to ethnicity to respect men's unique needs and give soldiers "tangible proof of the recognition of the country towards them."¹³⁶ Officials framed separation as a way to help men heal by placing them with their supposed compatriots. One military circular said distinct treatment would "prove to native soldiers that they receive the same attention and are encircled by the same care as the soldiers of the mother land."¹³⁷ Differentiation became equality, proof that the military respected the specific needs of its wounded African warriors.

¹³⁵ Diallo, *Force Bonté*, 129.

¹³⁶ "L'administrateur des colonies MOLARD à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies," 4 D 81, ANS. "preuves tangibles de la reconnaissance du pays à leur égard."

¹³⁷ "Hospitalisation des militaires indigènes des troupes noires," September 15, 1916, GR 9 NN 7 1151, SHD "Prouver aux militaires indigènes qu'ils reçoivent les mêmes soins et sont entourés de la même sollicitude que les soldats de la Mère-Patrie."

This led some of those tending to wounded *tirailleurs* to try to recreate West Africa within hospitals. Military designers in Fréjus often believed that making facsimiles of soldiers' perceived cultural milieus could regenerate colonial recruits' bodies as well as their loyalty.¹³⁸ The gates leading to hospitals in Fréjus made this goal clear. One film of the camp contrasted the entrance to the "Annamite Hospital," (Fig. 9) whose dragon statues and slanted roofing reflected orientalist visions of Southeast Asian architecture, with the wooden beams and straw roofing of the "Senegalese Hospital" (Fig. 10) that evoked the perceived markers of West African design.¹³⁹ Built distinctions went beyond ornamental entrances. One Dr. Maclaud, who ran a colonial hospital in the town of Menton, painted images of Soudanese villages on the walls and gave instruction in French and the West African language Bambara. He hoped this would facilitate a process of "re-senegalization." Efforts to "resenegalize" *tirailleurs* responded to concerns that service abroad threatened these soldiers' ability, or willingness, to return to the communities they had left behind.¹⁴⁰ Through familiar domestic comforts, figures like Maclaud hoped to prepare wounded soldiers to return to West Africa and their pre-war lives.

If kola nuts and painted walls sought to provide continuity, contact with French women appeared like a dangerous disruption. Military circulars advised limiting "all visitations by female personnel with the natives."¹⁴¹ The inspector Logeay echoed this position after visiting hospitals in the city of Troyes, arguing that female personnel were unprepared to treat West Africans. "These women are not at all familiar with native names, or with diverse races" Logeay

¹³⁸ Christiane Gruber, "The Missiri of Fréjus as Healing Memorial: Mosque Metaphors and the French Colonial Army (1928-1965)." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 1, no. 1 (2012): 25-60.

¹³⁹ For more on these racialized architectural styles see Naomi Davidson. *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); P. A. Morton. *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation At the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁰ Mann, *Native Sons*, 166-167; Lunn, *Memoirs from the Maelstrom*, 162.

¹⁴¹ "Personnel Feminin dans les Hospitaux Specialement Réservés Aux Militaires Indigènes," GR 9 NN 7 1152, SHD. "...toute fréquentation du personnel féminin avec les indigènes."



Figure 1. 9: Scene from military film depicting “Annamite Hospital” in Saint Raphael/Fréjus area with gate depicting stereotypical “Indochinese” designs. Screen capture at 1:45 in film, “Instruction des armées coloniales: Sénégalais et Annamites à Saint-Raphaël dans le Var, juin 1917,” 14.18 A 864, ECPAD.



Figure 1. 10: Scene from military film depicting “Senegalese Hospital” in Saint Raphael/Fréjus area with wooden gate depicting stereotypical “West African” design. Screen capture at 4:53 in film “Instruction des armées coloniales: Sénégalais et Annamites à Saint-Raphaël dans le Var, juin 1917,” 14.18 A 864, ECPAD.

explained. This led them to, “simply call them all ‘natives’ as if all the patients are completely treated, cared for, and fed the same way.”¹⁴² Many authorities similarly worried that female nurses would upend racial boundaries through either ignorance or attraction.¹⁴³ Yet faced with a constant need for women’s labor in hospitals, it often seemed easier to reframe rather than

¹⁴² “Compte Rendu à la Suite d’une Visite dans les Formations Sanitaires de Troyes St-Dizier-Chalons s/Marne,” August 6, 1918, 4 D 81, ANS. “Ces dames ne sont points familiarisés avec les noms indigènes, pas d’avantage avec les diverses races...sont dénommés tout simplement ‘indigène’ comme tous les malades sont absolument traités, soignés, nourris de la même façon.”

¹⁴³ Fogarty, *Race and War in France*: 212-216.

remove these women. Many military photographs showed nuns or female philanthropists attending to wounded soldiers, emphasizing women's role as charity givers (Fig. 11 & 12). Maternal figures like the attentive nun or philanthropist de-sexualized these interactions. However, anxieties about interracial intimacy persisted throughout the war.¹⁴⁴ The only solution, it seemed, was removing these soldiers from France entirely.

Men's injuries complicated plans to repatriate West African soldiers back to where they supposedly belonged. Logeay said that convalescing *tirailleurs* in Troyes who realized they would never return to the front, "told me that they would be happy to get leave for the Colony instead of staying for such a longtime in hospitals." He proposed permitting some returns to the colonies, but generally advocated improving services at camps in southern France to give convalescing soldiers, "complete relaxation."¹⁴⁵ In another report, Logeay said he told several



Figure 1. 11: Photograph from November 1916 of Marseille auxiliary hospital showing convalescing West African soldier surrounded by four French caretakers, including two nuns. "Marseille, hopital auxiliaire 223, Sénégalais. Une Salle," SPA 34 L 1786, ECPAD.

¹⁴⁴ Jean-Yves Le Naour, "La question de la violation de l'interdit racial en 1914-1918. La rencontre des coloniaux et des femmes françaises" *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 1, no. 61 (2000): 171-186.

¹⁴⁵ ANS 4 D 81, "Compte Rendu à la Suite d'Une Visite dans les Formations Sanitaires" August 6, 1918 "m'ont dit qu'ils seraient heureux d'avoir une permission pour la Colonie au lieu de séjourner aussi longtemps dans les hôpitaux" "détente complète"



Figure 1. 12: Picture from July 15, 1916 from Parisian hospital room reserved for West African soldiers depicting one Madame d’Haussonville giving a toy to a wounded recruit. SPA 29 S 1639, ECPAD.

blind *tirailleurs* who hoped to return to West Africa that they needed “care that they cannot hope to obtain in their homes.”¹⁴⁶ His response reflected the lack of services for wounded soldiers in French West Africa, especially outside Dakar. Logeay believed that the best solution was keeping these men in French hospitals until they were ready to return to West Africa.

Beyond logistical problems, many officials worried that men’s disfigured bodies would erode support for the war in West Africa. Jean Pourroy, the police commissioner in the Guinean capital of Conakry, directly linked recruitment difficulties to wounded returnees. “The seriously wounded, the sick repatriated from the front, recount in their ways the horrors of the war,” he explained. “This adds to the perspective of going to kill for a cause that was still so far from their primitive mentality,” he continued, “which if not completely paralyzing recruitment, has at least considerably complicated the task of civilian administrators.”¹⁴⁷ To control how these potentially

¹⁴⁶ “Rapport du Contrôleur des Tirailleurs Senegalais à l’Hôpital Complémentaire No. 18 à Bordeaux,” 4 D 81, ANS. “Soins qu’ils ne peuvent espérer pouvoir obtenir chez eux.”

¹⁴⁷ “Rapport de M. Jean Pourroy, Commissaire Centrale de police de Conakry (Guinée Française) en congé de convalescence, 46 rue Lecourbe à Paris, sur le recrutement possible de travailleurs indigènes pour le chargement des obus.” 4 D 67, ANS. “De grands blessés, des maladies rapatriés du front, racontaient à leur façon les horreurs de la Guerre... Ceci ajoute à la perspective d’aller se faire tuer pour une cause qui était encore éloignée de leur mentalité primitive, avait sinon complètement paralysé le recrutement, tout au moins gêné considérablement la tâche de l’Administration civile.”

subversive men moved through West Africa, some officials advocated establishing posts that wounded veterans could stay in before returning to their natal villages. By contrast, the Brigadier General Pineau said wounded returnees should go to convalescence centers in Dakar, “instead of sending them to their homes, thus averting all regrettable news that could be spread by these wounded men about the war in France.”¹⁴⁸ Within a few weeks though, Pineau changed his mind as soldiers from across West Africa increasingly poured into Dakar. “News travels fast and far among native populations,” he told West Africa’s Governor General. Grisly tales or sights would discourage troops before they even left for France. “For these reasons” Pineau concluded, “remaining in France seems to me preferable in all ways.”¹⁴⁹ Concern about opinion in West Africa motivated official attention to soldiers’ dwelling throughout the war. When it came to maimed soldiers, this concern led authorities to keep them in the metropole as long as possible. Wounded warriors and their traumatic memories had no place in French West Africa.

Many medical and military officials said that the solution to the disruptions of wartime injuries lay in fitting these men into the households and social positions that they held before the war. “We must not permit the establishment of the idea that the *tirailleurs sénégalais*, physically diminished in service to France” Governor General François Clozel wrote, “can end up, even momentarily, in destitution.”¹⁵⁰ His comments reflected concerns across Europe about how to turn wounded veterans into productive fathers and workers. Alongside new drugs and therapeutics, prosthetic limbs became one of the most ubiquitous tools to rebuild war torn bodies,

¹⁴⁸ General de Brigade Pineau Commandant Supérieur des Troupes du Groupe de l’Afrique Occidentale Française to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar, August 24, 1915, 4 D 67, ANS. “d’éviter tout propos fâcheux pouvant être tenu par ces blessés sur la guerre en France”

¹⁴⁹ “A.S. du retour en A.O.F. des tirailleurs blessés et réformés,” September 12, 1915, 4 D 67, ANS. “Les nouvelles se répandent vite et loin dans les populations indigènes... Pour ces raisons, le maintien en France me paraît en tous points préférable. »

¹⁵⁰ Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française Clozel to Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, September 25, 1915, 4 D 67, ANS. “nous ne devons laisser s’établir l’idée que des tirailleurs sénégalais, physiquement amoindris au service de la France, peuvent demeurer – même momentanément – dans la misère.”

families, and labor forces.¹⁵¹ This was no different for West African soldiers. Commanders hoped prostheses would help these men return to West Africa as productive breadwinners.

As had been the case since they first entered the military, the belief in West African men's natural strength informed their treatment in amputee centers. Like their French counterparts, many West African amputees learned how to live with these new prosthetic limbs at "reeducation" or "rehabilitation" centers across France.¹⁵² "According to the doctors," Logeay declared after a visit to one such institution, "the natives acclimate much quicker than Europeans to crutches, wooden legs, and devices of all sorts."¹⁵³ He pinned this quick convalescence on African patients' lack of fear to take their first steps. The belief in West Africans' power imbued in the *force noire* mythology now convinced Logeay of their rapid recovery. He seemed even more optimistic when discussing a rehabilitation center in Bordeaux. In this clinic, the "remarkable" Doctor Gourdon helped African amputees acclimate to prosthetics and acquire literacy skills rarely taught to colonial subjects. Logeay advocated expanding this system across France and West Africa to help *tirailleurs* become literate intermediaries.¹⁵⁴ The fate of Logeay's plan for an imperial network of rehabilitation centers is unclear. But the idea reflected the enduring belief that Africans could serve the empire as long as they ended up in the right spaces.

While these rehabilitation plans reflected how some French authorities linked West African veterans domestic well-being to imperial stability, turning this link into official policy

¹⁵¹ Heather R. Perry. *Recycling the Disabled: Army, Medicine, and Modernity in WWI Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014); Joanna Bourke. *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁵² Jean-François Montès, "La formation professionnelle des adultes invalides après la Première Guerre mondiale" *Formation Emploi* no. 37 (1992): 14-21.

¹⁵³ "Rapport du Contrôleur des Tirailleurs Sénégalais sur l'Hôpital Complémentaire No. 35," 4 D 81, ANS. "D'après les dires des médecins, les indigènes s'habituent beaucoup plus vite que les européens aux béquilles, aux pilons, aux appareils de tous genre."

¹⁵⁴ "Rapport du Contrôleur des Tirailleurs Senegalais sur la Section des Africains a École de Rééducation des Mutilés 6 rue de Hamel à Bordeaux," 4 D 81, ANS.

ran into administrative and ideological obstacles. In theory, repatriated soldiers were supposed to go through a series of camps across French West Africa that would assist them before they returned to their home villages. However, misinformation during recruitment led many men to camps far from their natal communities. Furthermore, many veterans did not want to return to their previous households at all.¹⁵⁵ In response, Governor General Joost Van Vollenhoven advocated increasing funding for welfare services to make sure wounded veterans received supportive homecomings. His successor did not agree. In a June 1918 circular, the new Governor General Gabriel Angoulvant rejected the notion that wounded veterans would be “isolated” without state assistance. Believing this “would ignore the generous character and hospitality of the black race” he declared.¹⁵⁶ Instead of direct medical or domestic assistance, he advocated giving men fields to tend and money to spend. These solutions would let veterans “recover an existence that conformed to their habits,” and prevent them from becoming “idlers living off private or official charity, but free men working according to their means.”¹⁵⁷ Angoulvant’s position echoed the resistance metropolitan reformers faced as they pushed for local and national expansions of the welfare state in interwar France.¹⁵⁸ Across France and its empire, the war fostered unprecedented investments in how people lived and survived. In French West Africa, figures like Angoulvant wanted this kind of support to end when men took off their uniforms.

¹⁵⁵ Richard S. Fogarty and David Killingray, “Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, No. 1 (January 2015): 100-123.

¹⁵⁶ “Circulaire au sujet des tirailleurs réformés ou licenciés de retour dans leur Colonies d’origine” Dakar, June 24, 1918, 4 D 81, ANS. “méconnaître le caractère généreux et hospitalier de la race noire.”

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. “retrouver une existence conforme à leurs habitudes; elles auront l’avantage de ne pas en faire des oisifs vivant de la charité officielle ou privée, mais des hommes libres travaillant suivant leurs possibilités »

¹⁵⁸ Timothy B. Smith, *Creating the Welfare State in France, 1880-1940* (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

Limits to official assistance fueled vigorous debates. Across interwar Europe, wartime sacrifices became a rallying cry for wounded soldiers making political and material demands.¹⁵⁹ In France, veterans similarly pushed for state support in exchange for defending the nation.¹⁶⁰ While veterans' political demands in West Africa never reached the destabilizing level they did in Europe, veterans there made similar claims for support by invoking the link between service and equality embedded in the Diagne Laws and the 1918 recruitment campaign.¹⁶¹ Two letters sent years after the war demonstrate how concerns for wounded West African soldiers domestic well-being linked metropolitan and colonial welfare trajectories after the guns fell silent.

In 1927, the writer and veterans-rights activist Binet-Valmer demanded that the French president come to the aid of veterans across West Africa. In his letter, Valmer recounted tales of men having to walk over fifteen kilometers to get prosthetics. Recycling Mangin's own phrasing, Valmer feared France was on the verge of "losing this reserve of magnificent soldiers."¹⁶² Valmer's letter prompted an investigation across French West Africa. As part of this search, the commander of Cote d'Ivoire's Daloa region told the colony's Governor that one veteran, Doua-Bi-Daouan, had not received a pension despite having lost his hands and feet in France.¹⁶³ The Governor decried this "injustice" and warned the Governor General that "this will hardly help annual native recruitment."¹⁶⁴ This concern reflected the decision to maintain a standing army of

¹⁵⁹ Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁶⁰ Chris Millington, *From Victory to Vichy: Veterans in Inter-war France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Antoine Prost, *Les Anciens Combattants Et La Société Française: 1914-1939* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).

¹⁶¹ Fogarty and Killingray, "Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War"; this concept of "unruly clients" comes from Mann, "Ex-Soldiers as Unruly Clients, 1914-194," *Native Sons*, 63-107.

¹⁶² Binet-Valmer to Monsieur le President, Paris, April 4, 1927, 1AFFPOL/192, CAOM. "perdre ce réservoir de magnifiques soldats que représentait l'Afrique Occidentale française"

¹⁶³ L'administration du Cercle de Daloa to Monsieur le Gouverneur, a.s. mutilé Doua-bi-Douan Rejet de Pension, Bingerville, 1AFFPOL/192, CAOM.

¹⁶⁴ Lieutenant-Gouverneur de la Cote d'Ivoire to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Bingerville, March 9, 1927, 1AFFPOL/192, CAOM. "injustice...ne pourra guère favoriser dans la region de Daloa les opérations annuelles du recrutement indigene"

West African soldiers after 1918.¹⁶⁵ While this recruitment reflected the survival of the “*force noire*” mythology, calls to support men like Daouan reveal another continuity. During the war, officials often promoted domestic assistance to bolster recruitment. This concerned communiqué demonstrated that this link survived this global conflict.

Another letter demonstrates how at least one Senegalese veteran explicitly evoked welfare programs for veterans in France to get domestic support in Senegal. As the next chapter explains, Dakar’s 1914 plague outbreak provoked widespread debates about housing rights for the city’s African residents. This eventually led to the creation of the *Office d’Habitation Économique* to provide the city’s African residents with land and money to build homes. However, official disregard and underfunding enfeebled the Office’s operations.¹⁶⁶ On April 2, 1931 the president of a local veteran’s association, identified as M’Baye, decried the Office’s disregard for veterans in a letter to Senegal’s colonial authorities. Housing demands were “one of the principal preoccupations of the wounded” he explained, a sentiment fueled by veterans’ awareness of the entitlements in “the Loucher law in France vis-à-vis their comrades from the Metropole.”¹⁶⁷ The Loucher law M’Baye invoked increased funding for affordable housing and loans for prospective homeowners.¹⁶⁸ This law emerged out of a push for greater housing assistance in the 1920s that presented wounded veterans as particularly deserving of state-support.¹⁶⁹ M’Baye’s letter exemplified how calls for a right to housing traversed France’s

¹⁶⁵ Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*: 47-69.

¹⁶⁶ Raymond Betts, “The Problem of the Medina in the Urban Planning of Dakar, Senegal,” *African Urban Notes* 4, (1969): 8-9.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from The President of the Amicale des Mutilés de la Grande Guerre to Monsieur le Gouverneur des Colonies, Secrétaire Générale du Gouvernement Général de l’A.O.F. and Président de l’Office des Habitations Économiques, April 2, 1931, 4 P 2773, ANS.

¹⁶⁸ Pierre Grelley, “Contrepoint - Coup d’œil sur la loi Loucheur,” *Informations sociales*, 4, no. 184 (2014): 31.

¹⁶⁹ Romain Gustiau, “L’empreinte de la grande guerre sur le logement social en France (1912-1928)” *Revue d’histoire de la protection social*, no. 9 (2016): 88-109.

empire. He tried to marshal the belief that the French state had to help soldiers' dwell comfortably, whether in the metropole or in the colonies.

Conclusion

West African men brought many things back from the front. They bore traumatic memories of dying comrades and marks on their very flesh of what they had lost. They also carried new ideas about what they could expect from the French government. These expectations inspired calls by French observers like Lucie Cousturier, Logeay, and Binet-Valmer or West African veterans like M'Baye or Backary Diallo to turn soldiers' service into the bases for new bonds and obligations. These convictions did not simply arise from abstract ideas of equality, but through everyday efforts to make these men feel at home across a warring empire.

Ironically, this new idea came out of French officials' consistent efforts to keep the war from changing anything. Officials sought to use domestic comforts to preserve men's warring bodies, as well as the racial divisions predicated on these perceived bodily differences. However, something novel emerged within military spaces meant to produce continuity. Dwelling in trenches, barracks, or hospitals inspired new ways of imagining and enacting the relationship between West Africans and the French colonial state. Soldiers, officials, and civilians tried to make these spaces comfortable, familiar or at least bearable. In doing so, they forged expectations that the French state had to provide for some West Africans' domestic well-being, or at least look like they were to outsiders. This belief in state responsibility for West Africans' dwellings' was far from universal. As the following chapters show, deciding the state's role in West Africans' domestic lives inspired heated debates across France and Senegal in the decades that followed this cataclysmic conflict

Chapter Two - “Everything Contained in Your Home”: Plague, Homes, and State Responsibilities in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1921

“Do you know everything contained in your home?” an officer asked. Mademba Gueye recounted this query in a letter to Senegal’s Governor in September 1919. “I responded yes,” Gueye wrote, “and he told me to note what was inside because the house was going to burn.”¹ Sure enough, Gueye’s house fell to ashes. He subsequently asked the state to pay for his destroyed belongings. Gueye’s home, like thousands of others across Senegal, perished in a drawn out fight against the bubonic plague. In 1914, the disease embedded itself in coastal Senegal’s landscape. In response, French authorities targeted what many medical experts saw as a key vector of the disease: Senegalese dwellings. In the name of public health, officials destroyed thousands of houses as well as the building blocks of domestic life they contained, from straw beds to fishing rods. Senegalese residents resisted these destructive measures and made their opposition heard. Protests as well as the longstanding legal rights of Senegal’s *originaires* led the government to agree to indemnify individuals whose homes they destroyed. Over the following years, people like Gueye used these petitions to demand that the state repay them for the houses and lifestyles it had upended. As a result, French bureaucrats and Senegalese claimants used dwellings, whether they were being destroyed or imagined, to articulate their views on the responsibilities of colonial governance.

Senegalese dwellers were far from the only people whose lives were upended by this outbreak. Within months of its 1914 arrival, this plague killed 4,000 people in Senegal. However, the disease had already travelled the globe for years. This bubonic plague pandemic had its first recorded cases in southern China in the 1890s before spreading to ports across the

¹ Mademba Gueye to Monsieur le Lieutenant Gouverneur du Sénégal à Saint-Louis, Saint-Louis September 19, 1919, H78, ANS. “savez-vous tous ce que vous avez fermé dans votre baraque ? J’ai lui (sic.) répondu oui, il m’avait dit marquez-vous ce qui est dedans, parce que la baraque va bruler.”

world.² From South Asia to South Africa, colonial officials targeted indigenous houses to fight the disease. These policies segregated cities across Africa, making the plague key to modern African urban histories.³ However, this historiography looks slightly different in Senegal.

Studies of Senegal's plague outbreak have largely been histories of failed colonial ambitions. Political historians fit the plague into broader studies of democratic institutions in Senegal's Four Communes, emphasizing how Dakar's *originaires* used their legal rights to prevent complete segregation.⁴ Alternatively, medical historians connect French plague responses to evolving colonial approaches to infectious diseases. Elikia M'Bokolo, Myron Echenberg, and Kalala Ngalamulume argue that Eurocentric notions of disease and French leaders' unwillingness or inability to work with indigenous leaders fostered widespread, and often, unequal suffering.⁵ This chapter does not focus on what the colonial state failed to do amidst this outbreak. Rather, it examines how the plague provoked debates about what the government *should* do. Like the military migrations the previous chapter examined, the plague led people to connect West Africans' domestic well-being to the colonial regime's stability. This

² Myron J. Echenberg, *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894-1901* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

³ Carl Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Godwin R. Murunga, "Inherently Unhygienic Races': Plague and the Origins of Settler Dominance in Nairobi, 1899-1907" in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, eds. Toylin Falola and Steven J Salm, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005): 98-130; Philip Curtin, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa" *The American Historical Review* 90, No. 3 (June 1985): 594-613; Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909." *The Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387-410.

⁴ David Nelson, "Defining the Urban: The Construction of French-Dominated Colonial Dakar, 1857-1940." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 33, no. 2 (2007): 225-55; Iba der Thiam. *Les Origines Du Mouvement Syndical Africain, 1790-1929* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993); Raymond F. Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 41, no. 2 (1971): 143-52.

⁵ Kalala J. Ngalamulume. *Colonial Pathologies, Environment, and Western Medicine in Saint-Louis-du-Senegal, 1867-1920* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Myron J. Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914-1945* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); Elikia M'Bokolo, "Peste Et Société Urbaine à Dakar: L'épidémie De 1914 (The Plague and Urban Society in Dakar: The 1914 Epidemic)," *Cahiers D'Études Africaines* 22, no. 85/86 (1982): 13-46.

link forced French bureaucrats, Senegalese residents, and politicians at every level of Senegal's government to wrestle with the politics of dwelling.

Home destructions intended to control the plague epidemic pushed people across Senegal to articulate their views on the colonial state's role in individuals' domestic lives. Home destructions remained central to public health policy into the early 1920s. During this time, Senegalese dwellers consistently demanded that French officials help them rebuild the dwellings they destroyed. Many of the mechanisms used to claim this assistance emerged out of the specific context of Dakar in 1914. However, these techniques flowed throughout Senegal. When the plague hit Saint-Louis and the rural Cayor region years later, residents used policies established in Dakar to demand official help rebuilding imperiled homes. Claims came from individuals across the binaries often used to analyze colonial societies: citizen and subject, male and female, rural and urban. Urban citizens, rural patriarchs, and female household heads filed demands that recorded their viewpoints during a moment that was formative in and illustrative of the politics of dwelling's contested evolution. Attempts to make West Africans' domestic well-being the French state's responsibility took many forms during this crisis, and these efforts often faced stiff resistance. French bureaucrats disagreed about the legitimacy of various Senegalese demands. Furthermore, many claims evoked local concerns rather than generalizable principles. Ideas about domestic assistance for Senegalese dwellers thus reflected the diverse attitudes towards state welfare in France and its colonies during the interwar years, a theme that reappears in the next chapter. However, this variety of opinions and strategies demonstrates how the politics of dwelling brought a wide array of people and objects into debates about how the French colonial state should relate to its African subject's everyday lives.

In particular, plague-era home destructions integrated Senegalese dwellers' domestic spaces into widespread conflicts over the colonial politics of "tradition" during and after World War I. These home destructions came at a time when people across the empire were reconsidering how much the French government should try to change its African subjects' daily lives. As the previous chapter explained, the link between military service and equal treatment led many people to demand domestic assistance for West African soldiers and veterans. However, these calls for equal treatment ran up against a growing conviction among many colonial administrators that stability depended on preserving "traditions" upended by war, migration, and urbanization.⁶ Scholars have shown how this neo-traditionalist turn reinforced patriarchal power, curtailed the rights of African urbanites and workers, and demonized strategies that many Africans, especially women, used to defend household autonomy and collective well-being.⁷ This tension between providing assistance and preserving tradition also informed intellectual debates in Dakar and Paris about the meaning of republican inclusion in France's imperial nation-state.⁸ Examining Senegal's home destruction conflicts expands scholarly understandings of the people, and objects, involved in these struggles.

In very different ways, bureaucrats and residents used domestic spaces and practices to determine what, if anything, the French colonial state owed its Senegalese subjects and citizens.

⁶ Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁷ Charlotte Walker-Said, *Faith, Power and Family: Christianity and Social Change in French Cameroon* (Woodbridge: James Curry, 2018); Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Nervous State: Violence, Remedies, and Reverie in Colonial Congo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Emily Burrill, *States of Marriage: Gender, Justice, and Rights in Colonial Mali* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015); Judith Byfield and Sheryl McCurdy (ed.). "Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001); Judith Van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man": Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women." *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 6, no. 2 (1972): 165-81.

⁸ Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-state: Negritude & Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

French officials' tended to focus on preserving stability. Their attitudes towards home destructions and the socioeconomic or political exclusion this policy enforced reflected their own ideas about Senegalese dwellers' attachment to "traditional" domestic practices supposedly at odds with public health and liberal republicanism. By contrast, Senegalese claimants focused on convincing state agents to help them rebuild specific domestic worlds. Islamic rites or Wolof domestic economies that predated colonial rule informed residents' ideas about what it would take to feel at home again. However, colonial wars, taxes, and citizenship laws had transformed where and how many Senegalese people lived. These diverse contexts led Senegalese claimants to deploy a variety of strategies to justify their demands for restitution. Some cited property rights as "citizens," others claimed the government had to pay for spaces it destroyed, while some people evoked their households' integration into the colonial economy. As French authorities asked if Senegalese houses' "insalubrious" quality justified exclusion on liberal terms, claimants demanded the benefits of inclusion by invoking their homes' specific links to the colonial regime. Through street protests and debates over burned beds, people staked out their positions in debates about what intimate lives the colonial state should demolish or create.

Deciding Who "Must Feel at Home" in Dakar

In October 1914, Senegal's Governor Raphaël Antonetti warned Dakar's General Council of the "danger and mutual discomfort of letting cohabit two groups whose lifestyles and views are completely distinct."⁹ Many listeners had likely already come to this conclusion. The perils of living alongside non-Europeans had long been on the minds of many colonists in Dakar. Capital of the French West African Federation and an increasingly important Atlantic port,

⁹ "A.S. de l'aménagement du nouveaux village de Dakar Le Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Sénégal à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale française," Saint-Louis July 18, 1915, 11D1-1284, ANS. "Il y a danger et gêne mutuelle à laisser cohabiter deux groupements qui ont sur la façon de vivre des vues aussi complètement distinctes"

Dakar had nearly 30,000 residents by 1914. This included a small European minority, several hundred Syrian and Lebanese residents, and an African majority mixing indigenous Lebu families and migrants from across French West Africa.¹⁰ Observers would have seen this variety in the city's architecture. As this early 20th century postcard documented, Dakar's streets had a mix of circular or rectangular houses made of materials ranging from cement, to wood, or straw (Fig. 1). When the plague hit, this mixture went from postcard tableau to pathologized peril.



Figure 2. 1: Postcard from the early 20th century Dakar showing the diversity of houses lining the city streets, the text reads “Senegal – Dakar – Grammont Street.” 4FI – 0793, ANS.

Homes became central to public health measures soon after this pestilence arrived.

Dakar's government declared a state of emergency in late May 1914. Official responded with vaccinations, quarantines, and rat removal campaigns. However, early vaccines' ineffectiveness and highly mobile insect vectors' role in spreading the disease limited these measures' efficacy. Policies targeting homes had a similarly questionable impact.¹¹ Germ theory's recent rise made these problems apparent to some observers. However, contemporary French medical experts frequently mixed Pasteurian theories with older ideas linking infectious disease to personal hygiene, justifying policies that demonized poor urbanites and missed many outbreaks' root

¹⁰ Assane Seck, *Dakar, Métropole Ouest-africaine* (Dakar: Institut Fondamentale de l'Afrique Noire, 1970).

¹¹ For more information on these public health policies, their effectiveness, and their discriminatory nature see Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*, and M'Bokolo, “Peste et société urbaine à Dakar.”

causes.¹² However, actually combatting the plague was not officials' only concern. As Aro Velmet argues, home destructions persisted in part because they provided highly visible interventions that projected the illusion of state control over the disease.¹³ Furthermore, home hygiene policies promoted the separation Governor Antonetti advocated above. After the plague broke out, decrees required buildings in Dakar to use the supposedly healthier materials of stone or cement. Antonetti knew that buying these materials, rather than the cheaper straw or wood Dakar's African majority typically used, produced "onerous conditions compared to average salaries."¹⁴ These measures disproportionately impacted Africans, forcing them to move to Dakar's edges or outside its boundaries entirely. These measures provided a legal basis to create a "European city and a native city."¹⁵ One made of stone, the other of straw.

Officials used this focus on domestic design to downplay the role race played in these segregationist projects. Bans on explicit racial labels in French Republican law and *originaires*' property rights informed official framings of plague-related segregation. "In this separation of the two cities," one report declared, "one does not see any idea of opposition of races and no tendency to restrict the rights of the indigenous population."¹⁶ Rather the term "European city" meant a "city of people who agree to be subject to the sanitary regulations applicable to Europeans." In this vein, any "natives who would want to strictly submit to this regulation must

¹² David S. Barnes, *The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-century Struggle Against Filth and Germs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

¹³ Aro Velmet, *Pasteur's Empire: Bacteriology and Politics in France, Its Colonies, and the World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 170-188.

¹⁴ "A.S. de l'aménagement du nouveaux village de Dakar Le Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Sénégal à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale française," Saint-Louis July 18, 1915, 11D1-1284, ANS. "conditions trop onéreuses comparativement aux salaires moyens."

¹⁵ Ibid. "une ville européenne et une ville indigène."

¹⁶ "Améliorations apportées et à apporter à l'hygiène du Sénégal et surtout du port et de la ville de Dakar" Dakar, 19 Février 1915, 3G2-160, ANS. "On ne saurait donc voir, dans cette séparation des deux villes, aucune idée politique d'opposition de races, aucune tendance restrictive des droits de la population indigène."

be able to live in the European city at the same title as any European.”¹⁷ “European” appeared not as an inherited racial category, like those justifying segregation in contemporary English colonies, but a behavioral and legal sensibility.¹⁸ Being “European” meant choosing to build in stone or cement and to “strictly submit” to governmental authority. This voluntaristic language masked these measures’ racialized forms of economic coercion. As mentioned above, officials knew that most Africans in Dakar could not afford stone or cement. By destroying straw dwellings and making residents build new expensive stone homes, these reforms effectively forced many Africans to leave the “European city.” Focusing on design and choice helped reorganize Dakar along racial lines without mentioning race.

Far from being a plague-related innovation, “permanent” dwellings had long been associated with racial hierarchies in colonial Senegal. Since the late 18th century, stone or cement buildings in French outposts in Senegal were known as “*en-dur*” or “permanent” constructions. In conjunction with rectilinear designs, “*en dur*” design became part of a “European” architectural style associated with French colonial authority.¹⁹ In the 1850s, public health laws in Saint-Louis formalized this link by banning constructions made of straw or wood in the city. While unevenly enforced, these policies linked colonial medical authority and domestic design.²⁰ Decades later Dr. Leon d’Anfreville de la Salle, one of Senegal’s head medical inspectors, made this pairing clear in a 1908 conference on hygiene. “One recognizes the people’s degree of

¹⁷ Ibid. ‘ville européenne’ doit s’entendre dans le sens ‘ville des gens qui acceptant l’assujettissement aux règlements sanitaires applicables aux européennes et tout indigène qui voudra se soumettre strictement à cette réglementation doit pouvoir habiter la ville européenne au même titre que n’importe quel européen.’

¹⁸ Nightingale, *Segregation*; Liora Bigon, *A History of Urban Planning in Two West African Colonial Capitals: Residential Segregation in British Lagos and French Dakar (1850-1930)* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

¹⁹ Mark Hinchman, *Portrait of an Island: The Architecture and Material Culture of Gorée, Sénégal, 1758-1837* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

²⁰ Ngalalume, *Colonial Pathologies*, 26.

civilization” d’Anfreville declared, “by the beauty of their dwellings.”²¹ He went on to describe the importance of sufficient sunlight and aeration as well as the perils of indoor spitting. Like many colonial medical officials across the world, d’Anfreville paired domestic and embodied alterity to justify colonial domination.²² Many French observers also saw straw houses as haphazard structures at odds with the rootedness at the heart of European bourgeois domesticity. One 1908 Dakar Public Works publication visualized this by contrasting an old and new “native village” in the city. The “old” empty compound contained only straw huts while the “new” zone was filled with pedestrians and stone rectilinear houses (Fig. 2 & 3). Notably, African pedestrians filled this new zone. This supported the claims made by French officials during the plague that their urban reforms did not promote racial divisions, but public health and order.



Figure 2. 2: Photograph of dilapidated and empty straw huts in front of baobab tree in Dakar, labelled “a corner of the old native village.” Georges Gabriel Ribot, *Dakar, Ses Origines, Son Avenir* (Bordeaux, Imprimerie G. Delmas, 1907), 138. (Courtesy of Hathi Trust)

²¹ Léon Anfreville de la Salle, *Conférences sur l’hygiène coloniale, faites aux instituteurs et institutrices de Saint-Louis pour les élèves indigènes des colonies de l’Afrique occidentales (par M. le Dr. d’Anfreville. Préface de M. Camille Guy)* (Paris : Librairie D’Education national A. Picard, 1908), 61. “On reconnaît le degré de civilisation d’un peuple à la beauté de ses habitations.”

²² For more on this in Senegal see Ngalalume, *Colonial Pathologies*, for a seminal work on this see David Arnold. *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-century India*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).



Figure 2. 3: Photograph a of “new” neighborhood in Dakar with stone houses, pedestrians, and mosque in the background, labelled “a street of the new native village – The mosque.” Georges Gabriel Ribot, *Dakar, Ses Origines, Son Avenir* (Bordeaux, Imprimerie G. Delmas, 1907), 141. (Courtesy of Hathi Trust)

Health officials turning these medical perspectives into public policies during the plague first had to determine if African dwellings connected to plague victims could be disinfected. Houses deemed salvageable were doused with sulfuric compounds and creosote solutions and their residents were sent to a quarantine camp on the city’s outskirts for at least ten days. Homes deemed incapable of disinfection, a label largely applied to straw “huts,” were condemned to incineration.²³ While home destructions had been used in previous epidemics, the scale during this outbreak dwarfed these precedents. Official statistics indicated that 1,594 dwellings in Dakar were incinerated in 1914. By contrast, only 120 homes burned during the city’s 1912 yellow fever outbreak.²⁴ Yet destruction was just the first step. Dakar’s Hygiene Committee defined their approach as, “the segregation of the native population to a point far from the European city and the destruction or demolition of all cabins [or] huts incapable of being disinfected.” They argued this “constitutes the only realistic measure to stop the extension of the current

²³ M’Bokolo, *Peste et société urbain*, 39.

²⁴ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*, 99.

epidemic.”²⁵ Officials connected the state’s responsibility to protect the city to dictating where and how Africans lived within its borders.

While some health agents concentrated on incinerating or disinfecting houses, others discussed what happened within their walls. Many French authorities focused on one practice in particular: home burials. Colonists berated Senegalese families for supposedly burying dead bodies beneath their homes instead of reporting deaths to health officials. Governor Antonetti said that because of this practice, “the very earth of the village, of the huts where the bodies were washed on the sand or the bare ground that constitutes the floor, gets contaminated.”²⁶ Home burials threatened Dakar’s very soil. Senegal’s chief medical inspector M. Huot echoed these concerns. Huot said that the absence of any members of the city’s indigenous Lebu community in his office’s death counts, despite common knowledge that Lebu residents had died from the plague, meant that “natives stricken by the plague are interred clandestinely by their relatives.” Without information on these deaths, hygiene agents had no “homes to disinfect or destroy.”²⁷ Huot implicitly pointed to a likely motivation for this lack of information. By not reporting these deaths, Lebu families avoided dispossession and relocation. However, many French observers saw this behavior as a selfish refusal to accept private sacrifices for the public good.

Many French journalists felt home burials epitomized Senegalese residents’ refusal to act like responsible citizens. “Whether you are a Muslim, Fetichist, or free thinker” Pierre Mille

²⁵ Comité Local d’Hygiene Reunion du 7 Juillet, 1914, H73, ANS. “la ségregation de la population indigène en un point éloigné de la ville européenne et la destruction ou la démolition de toutes baraques, paillottes, non susceptibles de désinfection, constituent la seule mesure susceptible d’arrêter l’extension de l’épidémie actuelle.”

²⁶ “A.S. de l’aménagement du nouveaux village de Dakar Le Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Sénégal à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale française”, Saint-Louis July 18, 1915, 11D1-1284, ANS. “le sol même du village, de ces cases où l’on avait lavé les morts sur le sable ou la terre battue qui en forme le plancher se contaminait.”

²⁷ “Rapport au sujet de l’épidémie peste à Dakar” Chef du Service du Santé du Sénégal to Monsieur le Lt-Gouverneur du Sénégal, Saint-Louis May 29, 1914, H73, ANS. “les indigènes atteints de peste sont enterrés clandestinement par leurs proches...nous n’aurons plus aucun foyer à désinfecter ou à détruire.”

wrote in the colonial newspaper *L.A.O.F.*, “it is always infinitely unpleasant to see your house burned.” While “these desires are legitimate in ordinary times” Mille wrote, “this is not how one prevails against the plague.”²⁸ Mille felt Africans had to adapt to face Dakar’s new epidemiological peril. Others pointed to home burials to argue that Africans did not belong in republican society at all. Another writer for *L’A.O.F.* asked if “civilized people bury their dead in their huts underneath a few centimeters of sand, at the foot of the livings’ bed?” They asked readers, “what mentality have these voters shown who, in the 20th century, were able to send one of their own to vote in the Chamber on social laws?”²⁹ Like many French colonists, this journalist pathologized indigenous social practices to justify excluding them from liberal voting and property rights.³⁰ This effort had particular power in early twentieth century Dakar, as *originaires* fought to defend their political and legal positions. Sleeping near dead bodies demonstrated that Dakar’s Senegalese residents had superstitious or unhygienic habits incompatible with a voter’s “mentality.” Campaigns against home burials demonstrated how plague responses fit into broader struggles over Dakar’s political future.

While home burials’ actual frequency is hard to ascertain, widespread critiques of the practice reflected French colonists’ anxiety about their control over Dakar. Government records lack precise information on home burials during the plague. By the twentieth century, this practice occurred most commonly in rural Serer communities far from Dakar, where they

²⁸, “La Peste à Dakar” *L’A.O.F. Écho de la Côte Occidentale Française*, June 27, 1914, H69, ANS. “qu’on soit musulman, fétichiste, ou libre penseur, il est toujours infiniment désagréable de voir brûler sa maison...ces désirs sont légitimes en temps ordinaire: mais ce n’est pas comme cela qu’on triomphera de la peste.”

²⁹ “L’Élu et la Peste” *L’A.O.F. Écho de la Côte Occidentale D’Afrique*, 27 Juin 1914, H69, ANS. “Est-ce le fait de civilisés que d’enterrer les morts dans l’intérieur des cases sous quelques centimètres de sable, au pied du lit des vivants?... De quelle mentalité ont donc fait preuve, au XXe siècle, ces électeurs, qui ont pu envoyer un des leurs voter à la Chambre les lois sociales?”

³⁰ Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison, *L’empire Des Hygiénistes: Vivre Aux Colonies* (Paris: Fayard, 2014); Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*.

provide social and familial anchoring points.³¹ Similar battles over home burials in cities like Accra reflected elite efforts to impose European norms on urban spiritual and physical space.³² In Dakar, many colonists attacked home burials to promote their visions of how to inhabit the city. The living belonged in homes, the dead in cemeteries. Home burials reflected subjectivities at odds with urban rationality. If Senegalese urbanites would not stop practices like home burials, many colonists saw only one solution: remove them from the city.

Concern over what went on underneath houses' floors echoed colonial authorities' hope that segregation would end longstanding debates about who controlled Dakar's land. Officials proposed dividing Dakar between a European quarter in the center, known as the "Plateau" and an African quarter called the "Medina" on the city's northern edge (Fig. 4). "The natives must be convinced that once in the Medina" an inspector for the colonial health services wrote, "they will be in their home in a definitive way and that they will not be expelled."³³ This inspector felt such assurances were needed because of the dispossession members of indigenous Lebu communities had suffered "since the first arrival of Europeans in Dakar."³⁴ Dakar's growth in the late nineteenth century fostered widespread land speculation. Many French authorities or investors fueled this process by trying to take Lebu lands without indemnifying the owners, fueling frequent legal battles. These conflicts stemmed in part from conflicting readings of Wolof history. To justify expropriation without indemnification, which contradicted French property law, some French colonists argued that France had inherited the total control over local land

³¹ Charles Becker and Victor Martin, "Rites de sépulture préislamique au Sénégal et vestiges protohistoriques," *Archives Suisses d'Anthropologie Générale* 46, no. 2 (1982): 261-293.

³² John Parker, "The Cultural Politics of Death & Burial in Early Colonial Accra" *Africa's Urban Past*, ed. David M. Anderson and Richard J. A. R. Rathbone --, et al (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999), 219-235.

³³ ANS, 3G2/160, "Envoi de deux projets de décret relatifs à Médina" September 1916. "Il faut que les indigènes soient bien persuadés qu'une fois à Médina, ils seront chez eux d'une façon définitive et qu'on ne les en expulsera pas."

³⁴ *Ibid.* "Depuis la première installation des Européens à Dakar."

exerted by *damels*, the leaders of the region’s pre-colonial Wolof kingdoms.³⁵ In Senegal’s protectorates, French authorities invoked this power to control who bought or sold land. However, Dakar’s Lebu leaders, as well as their French allies, argued that the *damels* had lost control over the Cap-Vert peninsula where Dakar stood in a series of rebellions in the 1790s, long before the French conquest. “The property which belongs to our Lebus,” Dakar’s general council M. Pattison argued in 1907, “was consolidated by them through the sacrifice of spilled blood.”³⁶ French advocates like Pattison supported Lebu claims that the colonial government had to respect the collective family land ownership system of this post-rebellion polity by paying landowners a fair price or leaving them alone.³⁷ In 1914, planners argued that marking off the Medina as permanently “African” would end these protracted disputes.



Figure 2. 4: Map of Dakar in 1925, note location of the “Medina” in the northwestern edge of the city far from central business and residential areas along the coast and port. Édouard de Martonne “Plan de la ville de Dakar au 5. 000e d’après photo-aérienne / dressé et publié par le Service géographique de l’A. O. F. sous la direction du Commandant Ed. de Martonne” 1925, Source: gallica.bnf.fr.

³⁵ Seck, *Dakar, Metropole Ouest-Africaine*, 122-128, for more on the *damels* and colonial conquest see Mamadou Diouf, *La Kapoor au XIXe siècle: pouvoir cedido et conquête coloniale* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1990).

³⁶ Conseil Général, “Discussion et adoption du vœu déposé par M. Herbault tendant à la modification de l’article 5 du décret du 24 juillet sur l’immatriculation,” *Session Ordinaire d’Octobre 1907, Procès-verbal de la séance du 17 octobre 1907* (Dakar, Imprimerie du Gouvernement, 1907), 81. “La propriété à laquelle tiennent tant nos lébous, Messieurs, a été consolidée chez eux par le sacrifice du sang versé.”

³⁷ Assane Sylla, *Le Peuple Lebou De La Presqu’île Du Cap-Vert* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines du Sénégal, 1992).

Making the Medina distinctly African also reinforced colonial binaries between African “traditions” and urban modernity. “The natives must feel at home in the Medina,” one public works inspector wrote “and this village is and will remain an exclusively native quarter.”³⁸ For Senegal’s Governor Antonetti, making Africans feel at home meant preserving their domestic habits. “On one side the European city with all the requirements of modern hygiene” he declared, “and on the other, a native city with the freedom to build in wood or straw, play *tam-tams* all night and pound millet until four in the morning.”³⁹ Antonetti evoked the “traditions” that interwar administrators increasingly valorized, framing segregation as a way to defend Africans from the onslaughts of modernity. This village facsimile on Dakar’s edge, filled with tam-tam drums and huts, would clarify where and how Africans should live in this colonial capital.

Framing urban life as fundamentally opposed to Senegalese residents’ well-being helped colonial officials argue that the Medina would give Africans a permanent place in a changing Dakar. Many of the plan’s promoters insisted that people who moved to the Medina would receive large inalienable plots of land. Owners could rent this land out or sell buildings on their plots as they liked. However, they could not sell the land itself. Governor Antonetti claimed that this would, “protect the new village’s character as a collective inalienable reservation destined for the natives of French West Africa [and] protected by us against their own imprudence.”⁴⁰ A footnote justified this defense against “imprudence” by citing similar trends in Algeria.

³⁸ “Envoi de deux projets de décret relatifs à Médina 16 Sept 1916,” 3G2/160, ANS. “il faut que les indigènes se sentent chez eux à Medina.”

³⁹ Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Sénégal to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale française, “A.S. de l’aménagement du nouveau village de Dakar,” Saint-Louis July 18, 1918, ANS 11D1/1284. “d’un côté la ville européenne avec toutes les exigences de l’hygiène moderne, de l’autre, la ville indigène avec tout liberté de bâtir en bois ou en paille, de faire des tam-tams toute la nuit et de piler le mil dès 4 h. du matin.”

⁴⁰ “A.S. de l’aménagement du nouveau village de Dakar” Lieutenant-Gouverneur p.i. du Sénégal to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale française, Saint-Louis July 18, 1918, 11D1/1284, ANS. “garder au nouveau village son caractère de réserve collective inaliénable destinée aux indigènes de l’Afrique Occidentale Française protégés par nous-même contre leur propre imprévoyance.”

According to this note, Arab residents frequently sold their plots to Europeans whenever they needed money, “which is to say always.” In a few years, three-quarters of Algerian “native villages” belonged to Europeans who rented properties at exorbitant prices, forcing Arab residents to live in crowded conditions, “like they do in Dakar.”⁴¹ French colonists claimed that non-Europeans, whether in Senegal or Algeria, had to be defended from capitalist real-estate markets. Like the emphasis on choice in discussions of racial segregation, describing poverty as inevitable overlooked how the ambiguous legal position of Dakar’s African residents made it difficult for them to guard their land against well-financed and well-connected developers. This erasure supported the static vision of Africans as fundamentally anti-urban promoted by interwar neo-traditionalism. If home burials proved that Africans were incapable of liberal self-sacrifice, visions of inevitable poverty proved they could not navigate urban capitalism. In the Medina these financial and legal problems would disappear under the cloak of “tradition.” However, African voters had just voiced a very different position about their place in the city.

Battling over Dakar’s Divided Future

On May 10, 1914, as plague deaths went largely unnoticed by colonial officials, an election upended Senegal’s political landscape. The Gorée-born bureaucrat Blaise Diagne upset the local white and *métis* political establishment by narrowly winning local elections for a seat in the French National Assembly. The very existence of this seat reflected the unique political rights of the *originaires* in Senegal’s Four Communes. However, this distinct status was not secure. By the turn of the century, many French officials tried to curtail *originaires*’ legal and political rights. In 1912, legal reforms subjected *originaires* outside the Communes to native

⁴¹ Ibid. “c’est à dire toujours...comme ils le faisaient à Dakar”

courts and the brutal *indigénat* legal code.⁴² This infuriated many *originaires* and directly tied disenfranchisement to displacement. As Chapter One explained, many *originaires* hoped that enlisting in World War I would defend their legal equality. Even before the war, Diagne made defending *originaires*' rights key to his campaign.⁴³ Many *originaires* saw home destruction, which started days after the election, as retribution against Diagne's supporters.⁴⁴ Homes replaced voting booths in the struggle for Dakar's political future.

Many of Dakar's African residents quickly organized resistance campaigns to home burnings. Within a week of the first incineration, an estimated 1,500 Lebu citizens protested in front of Dakar's City Hall. "They have chosen to burn straw huts while respecting the houses of Europeans" one protester reportedly cried out, "we have had enough of the whites' manner of doing things."⁴⁵ The Governor General of French West Africa William Ponty eventually met with several Lebu leaders to explain these sanitary measures and assure homeowners that they would receive indemnification for all lost goods. Ponty's responses did not appease protestors. Soon after this meeting, African workers organized the first general strike in French West Africa.⁴⁶ For five days in May 1914, fishermen, market women, and other workers crippled the city's food supply. "It was impossible for Europeans and their employees" one report explained, to get "the green vegetables, eggs, chicken and fish that they needed for their diet."⁴⁷ Even Ponty

⁴² Rebecca Shereikis, "From Law to Custom: The Shifting Legal Status of Muslim *Originaires* in Kayes and Medine, 1903-1913" *Journal of African History* 42, no. 2 (2001): 261-283; Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. "Nationalité Et Citoyenneté En Afrique Occidentale Française: Originaires Et Citoyens Dans Le Sénégal Colonial," *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 2 (2001): 285-305.

⁴³ Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*.

⁴⁴ M'Bokolo, "Peste et Société Urbaine;" Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*: 65-68.

⁴⁵ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*: 60.

⁴⁶ Thiam, *Les Origines Du Mouvement Syndical Africain*: 84-103; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Émeutes urbaines, grèves générales et décolonisation en Afrique française," in *Les Chemins de la Décolonisation de L'Empire Français, 1936-1956: Colloque organisé par l'IHTP les 4 et 5 octobre 1984*, ed. Charles-Robert Ageron (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1986), 495-504.

⁴⁷ "Conditions Dans Lesquelles Fut Créé Le Village Indigène De Medina," 11D1-1284, ANS. "il ne fut pas possible aux européens et à leurs employés de se procurer...les légumes vert, les œufs, les poulets et le poisson nécessaire à leur alimentation."

conceded that this protest was “perfectly organized and a complete success.”⁴⁸ Within days, he suspended home destructions and reiterated the promise to repay homeowners for destroyed belongings. When Dakar’s African urbanites found their domestic lives under attack, they demonstrated their centrality to French colonists’ own ability to live comfortably.

Like home burials, many journalists framed protests as evidence that Africans could not behave like democratic subjects. One writer for *L’A.O.F.* denounced the “invasion” of Dakar’s City Hall by a “horde” of protestors before saying that “the same discipline the blacks showed during their electoral campaign was shown in this revolt. It would not take much eloquence from the marabouts for the sound of the tam-tams of war to start the stampeding, pillaging, and bloodshed that could follow.”⁴⁹ Far from being the rational autonomous individuals seen as the basis of electoral politics, protestors were easily swayed dependents of violent religious fanatics. Jean Daram D’Oxoby, the French editor of the Diagne-aligned newspaper *La Démocratie du Sénégal*, responded to these attacks by defending protestor’s liberal credentials. He criticized one *L’A.O.F.* article in particular that described the protests as a “riot.” Protestors were “exasperated by the partiality of the measures ordered by the municipality” D’Oxoby wrote. They simply sought to “protest against the abuses to which they had been victimized.”⁵⁰ He even highlighted Lebu leaders’ decorum when giving Governor Ponty their demands. In these articles, French journalists used protests to prove that Lebu voters embraced or rejected republican norms.

Senegalese leaders hoped to use their political power to enshrine their constituents’ domestic demands into law. Senegalese representatives continued to meet with Ponty after the

⁴⁸ M’Bokolo, “Peste et société urbaine”, 40. “parfaitement organisée et eut un plein succès.”

⁴⁹ “L’ élu et la peste” *L’A.O.F.* *L’A.O.F. Echo de la Côte Occidentale Française*, June 27, 1914, H69, ANS. “La même discipline que les noirs avaient montrée dans la lutte électorale ils allaient la montrer dans la révolte. Il n’eut pas fallu grande éloquence des marabouts pour qu’au son du tam-tam de guerre commençassent les bousculades, le pillage et les effusion de sang qui pouvaient s’ensuivre.”

⁵⁰ “Mise au Point” *La Démocratie du Sénégal* May 29, 1914, H69, ANS. “exaspéré de la partialité des mesures ordonnées par la municipalité...protestaient contre les abus dont ils étaient victimes.”

strike, gaining new leverage as colonial officials started worrying that tensions in Dakar would hamper Senegal's ability to support France in the war that began that summer.⁵¹ This new bargaining position may have inspired the two Senegalese representatives in Dakar's Municipal Council, Aly Diop and Aly Diene, to demand greater state support for Senegalese urbanites' housing. When the council's chairman asked these men how to manage the displacement of residents caused by the high cost of new building requirements, Diop proposed letting "blacks build how they know." French delegates could not accept such a proposal. Diene then said Africans would follow new building requirements "if monetary support was offered to them."⁵² This proposal had more appeal. The Council decided to keep the new requirements and look for funds to help Senegalese residents build stone houses. Diop and Diene presented contrasting positions: accept pre-existing dwelling forms or give Senegalese urbanites the means to meet new standards. These men tried to change the relationship between the colonial government and Senegalese peoples' homes by pushing for either greater respect or greater support.

In addition to the personal loss of leaving home, the importance of remaining in Dakar for protestors and politicians reflected the centrality of where *originaires* lived to the local legal regime. Many *originaires* feared that segregation would place them outside the communes' borders, stripping them of their electoral and juridical rights. The fear was fed by the fact that the city government did not extend Dakar's boundaries to include the Medina until August 1915.⁵³ Blaise Diagne had a vested interest in this situation. During meetings with Governor Ponty throughout the summer and autumn of 1914, Diagne said he would encourage his supporters to

⁵¹ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*: 73-84.

⁵² "A.S. de vœu émis par le Comité Local d'Hygiène pour la reconstruction des cases détruites pendant l'épidémie," H69, ANS. "préférable de laisser les noirs construire comme ils l'entendront...si un aide pécuniaire leur reste offert."

⁵³, "Conditions dans lesquelles Fut Créé Le Village Indigène de Medina," 11D1-1284, ANS.

follow health measures if Ponty promised indemnities and respect for *originaires*' rights.⁵⁴ In one such meeting, Diagne raised his concerns about "political inconveniences resulting from the transfer of natives to a point located outside the limits of the commune of Dakar." Instead of segregation, Diagne advocated "replacing destroyed huts and cabins with well-priced dwellings built by the municipality that meet the required hygiene conditions." Residents could then purchase the homes through annual payments.⁵⁵ He called on the city to help his voters stay within Dakar's borders. He also wanted to give them access to the "hygienic" dwellings and property protections that had become directly tied to legal rights in plague-era Dakar. The plague had shifted struggles about displacement away from decades-old disputes over Lebu land rights. Now leaders like Diagne focused on what was built on this land, and who did the building.

Colonial officials appeared divided on how to respond to these various Senegalese demands. Official records do not clearly indicate the fate of Diene or Diagne's proposals. However, a rise in plague cases in September 1914 led the government to escalate home destructions and organize the only forced eviction to the Medina during the entire outbreak.⁵⁶ These measures ignited often violent protests. When soldiers tried to burn one condemned home, one report said armed protestor arrived crying out that "they would all be killed before they let them touch these new huts."⁵⁷ In addition to a "seditious movement" against health measures, this investigator linked protests to the, "slowness of administration operations determining

⁵⁴ M'Bokolo, "Peste et société urbaine à Dakar": 43-44.

⁵⁵ "Conditions dans lesquelles fut Créé Le Village Indigène de Medina," 11D1-1284, ANS. les inconvénients d'ordre politique résultant du transfert des indigènes sur un point situé en dehors des limites de la commune de Dakar... remplacer les cases et baraques détruites par des habitations à bon marché remplissant les conditions de salubrité requises et construites par la municipalité."

⁵⁶ Curtin, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa": 608-609.

⁵⁷ "Conditions dans lesquelles fut Créé le Village Indigène du Medina," 11D1-1284, ANS. "se feraient tous tuer plutôt que de laisser toucher à ces nouvelles cases."

allocation amounts to pay and the resulting delays in the dispersal of these indemnities.”⁵⁸

Governor-General Ponty echoed this conclusion in a letter to Senegal’s Governor Antonetti.

While condemning these protests, Ponty noted that 130,000 francs were still owed to displaced homeowners. “The first rule of native policy” Ponty wrote, was to “keep your promises.”⁵⁹ Ponty legitimized some of the protestors’ demands. Antonetti, however, did not. “When they provoked a fight with the troops” he wrote on the letter’s margins, “they did not invoke the question of money any more than when they were hiding their sick or throwing cadavers into the street.”⁶⁰

He did not link protests to any state obligations. Like home burials, these actions reflected Senegalese intransigence. These men, the leaders of colonial Senegal, disagreed about what these protests meant and just how much the state needed to respect Senegalese domestic demands.

As infections lowered after 1914, officials turned their focus to building the Medina. Widespread opposition forced authorities to forego forced removal. Instead, they promised large plots to anyone who moved to the Medina while trying to enforce new building codes in Dakar’s “European” quarter. However, many Lebu residents remained in the multi-family compounds that dotted the Plateau.⁶¹ One report saw this as temporary, predicting that the completion of several public works projects would entice more residents. With these modifications, “this quarter, where the natives will feel at home, will quickly and necessarily become a site of attraction for blacks who, more and more numerous, come to Dakar from all over.”⁶² This

⁵⁸ Ibid. “mouvement séditioneux...La lenteur des opérations administratives fixant le taux de l’allocation à payer et les retards apportés dans le règlement de ces indemnités.”

⁵⁹ Gouverneur General of French West Africa to Monsieur the Lieutenant Governor of Senegal, November 21, 1914. H69, ANS. “la première règle de politique indigène...de tenir ses promesses.”

⁶⁰ Ibid. “...quand ils provoquaient la troupe au combat ils n’ont pas invoqué de question d’argent pas plus que quand ils nous cachaient leurs maladies ou jetaient les cadavres à la rue.”

⁶¹ Liora Bigon and Thonas Hart, “Beneath the city’s grid: vernacular and (post-)colonial planning interactions in Dakar, Senegal” *Jornal of Historical Geography* 59 (2018): 52-67.

⁶² “Envoi de deux projets de décret relatifs à Médina September 1916,” 3G2-160, ANS. “ce quartier, où les indigènes se sentiront chez eux, deviendra forcément et rapidement un lieu d’attrance pour les noirs, de plus en plus nombreux, qui viennent un peu de partout à Dakar.”

prediction pinned the Medina's success on material improvements instead of managing residents' desire to remain in older homes. This may have informed the focus on migrants, rather than long-term inhabitants whose protests had made their attachments known.

The Medina's progress belied this optimistic prediction. One report from November 1916 noted that of over 20,000 African residents in Dakar, only 5,000 had moved to the Medina. The report bemoaned the low-quality wood cabins covered in sheet metal provided to the quarter's early residents. These spaces often overheated or flooded. While new designs could solve these problems, other issues seemed more daunting. The Medina's uneven terrain meant that "a number of depressions transform into ponds during the rainy season."⁶³ In his own assessment, the soon-to-be Governor General Gabriel Angoulvant said that "the principal advantages promised to the inhabitants of the Medina still only exist as promises." Completing necessary public works projects would, "give satisfaction to the legitimate desires of a population towards whom we have contracted obligations."⁶⁴ Emphasizing "obligations" and "promises" framed domestic support in the Medina as an official duty. Segregating Dakar depended on following the terms colonial leaders had struck to combat the twin forces of plague and protests.

Despite these shortcomings, many of Dakar's African residents did move to the Medina. Some families saw the promise of a large plot of land with a state-backed deed as a wise investment. When I spoke with Anne N'Diang about her great-grandmother's home in the Medina, she said that these "relatively large concessions" could house a family for decades. Her mother and grandmother both grew up in a house built in the 1920s on a plot they received after

⁶³ "Conditions Dans Lesquelles Fut Créé Le Village Indigène De Medina," 11D1-1284, ANS. "un certain nombre de dépressions qui se transforment en mares pendant la saison des pluies."

⁶⁴ "A.S. de la ville indigène de Médina (près Dakar)" July 18, 1916, 3G2-160, ANS. "les principaux avantages promis aux habitants de Médina, n'existent encore qu'à l'état de promesse...donnant satisfaction aux désirs légitimes d'une population envers laquelle nous avons contracté des obligations."

moving to the Medina, land her family still owns almost a century later.⁶⁵ Moving to the Medina gave families like N'Diang's a unique chance to get large plot of land that the state swore to respect in perpetuity.⁶⁶ However, this did not alleviate the frustration of traversing flooded floors and sandy streets in the Medina's early years. "The Governor-General was wrong to have moved you here under the open sun" Blaise Diagne told Medina residents in June 1915, "and not to have concerned himself with your housing."⁶⁷ Diagne made it clear that expectations of comfort or stability were more than just personal desires. They were political demands.

At least one group of residents voiced this kind of demand to the Governor General. A petition signed by over sixty male Lebu residents in May 1916 described the emotional and financial pain of moving to the Medina. "We would need to quit the site where we were born" they declared, "where our fathers lived and died, where we hoped to stay ourselves" They then said that "in addition to this question of sentiment was added that of interests" describing their struggles to get the money "to build a little house or cabin to house them and their families."⁶⁸ These men connected their domestic distress to patriarchal expectations. In the Cap Vert peninsula, many Wolof patriarchs, known as a *boorom pénc*, managed inherited plots that housed multiple families, called *pénc*.⁶⁹ Eviction broke these men off from the intergenerational authority ingrained in the *pénc* space. Financially, relocation destroyed the investments these men undertook to house their dependents. To make matters worse, "the indemnities given to us

⁶⁵ Interview Anne N'Diang, Dakar, Senegal, February, 23, 2018. "des concessions relativement grandes"

⁶⁶ Aly Kheury Ndaw, *Histoire de la Création de la Médina à Dakar* (Dakar: L'Harmattan-Sénégal: 2017).

⁶⁷ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*, 131.

⁶⁸ Letter to Monsieur Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar, May 4 1916, 3G2/160, ANS. "il nous fallait en effet quitter l'endroit où nous étions nés ; où nos pères avaient vécu et étaient morts ; et où nous espérons rester nous-mêmes ; de plus à cette question tante de sentiment s'ajoutait celles d'intérêts... construite une petite maison ou une baraque les habitant eux et leurs familles."

⁶⁹ Bigon and Hart, "Beneath the City's Grid."

are far from compensating for the damage caused to us.”⁷⁰ However, they accepted these sacrifices because they “understand that the administration was only acting to assure a greater security for the natives who were periodically victims of epidemics.”⁷¹ These men presented themselves as responsible citizens following public health orders. Yet doing so had cost them the financial, emotional, and physical comforts of home.

Now they wanted something in return. Petitioners focused on “promises by two Governors” to build a mosque, schools, sewers, markets, and other public services. “Our strongest desire” they wrote, “is to see built, before all the other planned works, a Mosque that will finally allow us to regularly fulfill our religious practices.”⁷² Senegalese Muslims frequently lived in villages or compounds oriented around sacred spaces that connected them to the broader *dar-al-Islam*.⁷³ The closest mosque for these petitioners was kilometers away in Dakar. Displacement undermined these men’s ancestral links and their spiritual connections. These self-styled “good citizens” demanded that officials fulfill their promises. This claim tried to make the state responsible for building not only homes, but personally meaningful communal space.

Governor Antonetti did not comply. In his response, he said that the Medina’s provisional mosque met residents’ religious needs. Furthermore, petitioners’ religious claims “were just a pretext.”⁷⁴ Antonetti did not see these men as citizens deprived of spiritual or familial moorings.

⁷⁰ Letter to Monsieur Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar, May 4 1916, 3G2/160, ANS. “les indemnités qui nous ont été accordés sont loin de compenser le dommage que nous a été causé.”

⁷¹ Ibid. “...comprennent que l’administration n’agissait que dans le but d’assurer une plus grande sécurité aux indigènes qui étaient périodiquement victimes d’épidémies...promesses par deux Gouverneurs.”

⁷² Ibid. “Notre plus vif désir est de voir édifiée avant tous autres travaux prévus, une Mosquée afin de permettre d’accomplir régulièrement nos exercices religieux.”

⁷³ Cheikh Anta Babou, “Contesting Space, Shaping Places: Making Room for the Muridiyya in Colonial Senegal, 1912-45,” *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 3 (2005): 405–26; Eric S. Ross, “From *Marabout Republics* to *Autonomous Rural Communities*: Autonomous Muslim Towns in Senegal” in *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, eds. Toylin Falola and Steven J Salm, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 243-265.

⁷⁴ Le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Sénégal to Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l’Afrique Occidentale Française A.S. de la mosquée de Médina, May 18, 1916, 3G2/160, ANS. “n’étaient qu’une prétexte.”

Instead, he saw Lebu men trying to gain an upper hand against rivals by getting concessions from the French. Even though these men were citizens citing state pledges, Antonetti delegitimized their demands. This petition was part of Lebu politics, not French imperial rule.

In a way, Antonetti was right: these requests were political. However, they were not simply local disputes alien to French administration. Lebu demands informed an emerging imperial politics of dwelling. Like protesters years earlier, these petitioners pushed the colonial state to help them inhabit personally meaningful dwellings. This expectation reappeared repeatedly over the years. So too did officials' ambivalent responses. Plague, home burnings and indemnity debates spread across coastal Senegal, adapting to local circumstances. This led new actors to debate the colonial state's role in meeting Senegalese dwellers' domestic demands.

Indemnity Struggles in Saint-Louis

While plague-related deaths and dislocations slowed down by the end of 1914, they soon returned across Senegal. Labor migration and niches in the colony's peanut basin helped the bubonic plague become endemic in parts of the coast for decades.⁷⁵ Home destructions remained central to public health measures as the disease traversed the colony, making houses sites of recurring conflicts. Disputes often followed the terms laid out to appease protestors in Dakar, namely indemnification. Senegalese residents used these indemnities to make officials take responsibility for domestic spaces and lifestyles they often pathologized or disregarded

One such conflict arose in late 1917 when the disease struck Saint-Louis, Senegal's capital and second largest city. At the time of the outbreak, Saint-Louis had nearly 22,000 residents, with a small European population, a sizable *métis* minority, and a mostly Wolof-speaking African majority.⁷⁶ Many of Saint-Louis' indigenous residents were *originaires*, like

⁷⁵ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*, 137-142.

⁷⁶ Ngalamulume, *Colonial Pathologies*, 20-21.

their Dakar counterparts. However, by 1917 political developments had lessened *originaires*' anxieties about threatened legal rights present in Dakar during the 1914 outbreak. As Chapter One explains, the Diagne Laws of 1915 and 1916 codified *originaires*' status as citizens with guarantees preventing future disenfranchisement. These laws fulfilled one of Diagne's key electoral promises and fostered new ideas about the mutual obligations tying the French state and its West African citizens and subjects during the war. While Chapter One examined how notions of mutual obligation influenced domestic assistance programs for soldiers, indemnity files demonstrate how this idea also informed civilians' expectations. While still being demonized during the 1917 plague outbreak, Saint-Louis' *originaires* had greater assurances of their rights than their predecessors in Dakar. Rather than quell conflicts, this new political context emboldened claimants to invoke ideas about state obligations to rebuild their homes and lives.

When plague cases began to rise in the autumn of 1917, Saint-Louis authorities focused on a distinct location: the island communities of Guet N'Dar and N'Dar Toute. The two neighborhoods rested on the island known as the *Langue de Barbarie*. While part of Saint-Louis, this island was separated from the city's central island by the banks of the Senegal River. Like their peers in Dakar, most of the several thousand residents of these neighborhoods were Lebu. Since at least the dawn of the 19th century, French planners had perceived and organized the *Langue de Barbarie* as distinctly more "African" than the city's European and *métis* core.⁷⁷ The famed colonial writer Pierre Loti voiced this distinction in his 1882 memoir about life in Senegal, dubbing Guet N'Dar "the negro city built in gray straw on yellow sand."⁷⁸ Loti's focus on the material composition of this "negro city" reflected the relationship between domestic

⁷⁷ Hinchman, *Portrait of an Island*, 67-69.

⁷⁸ Pierre Loti, *Roman d'un Spahi* (Paris, Calmann Lévy, 1882), 155. "la ville nègre, bâtie en paille grise sur le sable jaune"

spaces and local racial and class divisions. The straw homes of Guet N’Dar and N’Dar Toute were regularly distinguished from the stone villages in Saint-Louis’ more affluent center. This split stemmed in part from the “war on shacks” Governor Louis Faidherbe launched in the 1850s, which forced hundreds of poor residents out of the city center.⁷⁹ One turn of the century postcard evoked huts role in Guet-N’Dar’s distinction (Fig. 5). Taken from a rooftop in central Saint-Louis, the card’s title “the Huts of Guet N’Dar,” drew attention to the contrast between these distant huts and the stone buildings in the foreground. Diverse representations of this island combined architecture and geography to dramatize its alterity.



Figure 2. 5: Postcard contrasting the stone houses and tile roofs of central Saint-Louis to the “huts” of Guet-Ndar in the distance. P. Tacher, “Panorama III : le petit bras du fleuve Sénégal, les cases du Guet Ndar, les Halles et dans le fond, la mer.,” *Cartes postales de l’Afrique Occidentale Française (1900-1960)*, accessed September 22, 2020, <http://www.vincenthiribarren.com/dh/aof/items/show/2260>.

Much to the chagrin of certain French colonists, these distinctions did not place the island’s inhabitants outside local politics. Writing in 1901, the reporter Pierre Mille critiqued elections where “natives from the surrounding neighborhoods generally came to the polls under the guidance of their Chiefs.”⁸⁰ Implicitly referring to residents of Guet N’Dar and N’Dar Toute,

⁷⁹ Ngalamulume, *Colonial Pathologies*, 26; Camille Camara, *Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal: Évolution D'une Ville En Milieu Africain* (Dakar: Institut Fondamentale de l’Afrique Noire, 1968), 56-57.

⁸⁰ Pierre Mille, trans. E. D. M. "The "Black-Vote" in Senegal." *Journal of the Royal African Society* 1, no. 1 (1901): 66.

Mille presented these men as beholden to chiefs rather than acting like properly autonomous voters. Similarly, the writer Louis Sonolet asked why “fishers of Guet-N’Dar, poor men living off the meager product of their catch, are the arbiters of elections in Saint-Louis.”⁸¹ He framed the fishing trade practiced on the island as part of an unproductive culture. Both men presented these residents’ lifestyles as inconsistent with enfranchisement. Even though the Diagne Laws codified the political rights of these “fishers”, long-standing aspersions influenced French attitudes about the houses lining Guet N’Dar.

When the plague broke out, officials struggled to balance *originaires*’ rights and medical condemnations of the home and residents on this urban island. Unlike in Dakar, it took several months for plague diagnoses to cause widespread home destructions. While an emergency declaration went out on December 7, 1917 permitting home incinerations, quarantine was the main prevention strategy at first. Non-Europeans leaving the island needed a card indicating they had been vaccinated. This relatively restrained response reflected divisions amongst French authorities.⁸² Medical officials advocated burning the island’s straw dwellings and moving inhabitants to segregated enclaves. By contrast, Senegal’s Governor Fernand Levecque and Governor General Angoulvant worried about the kind of backlash to these measures seen in Dakar years earlier. They hoped that local Muslim clerics and Lebu politicians could convince followers to modify their funerary and domestic practices. However, periodic interventions still provoked protests and confrontations. By the summer of 1918, tensions reached a breaking point.

August ushered in a much more violent phase of this anti-plague campaign. Governor Angoulvant hinted at his shifting attitude in a letter to the Commissioner of the Republic to West

⁸¹ Louis Sonolet, *L’Afrique Occidentale Française*, (Paris: Hachette.1912): 12. “Les pêcheurs de Guet-n’dar, pauvres gens qui vivent maigrement du produit de leur pêche, sont à Saint-Louis les arbitres des élections.”

⁸² Ngalalume, *Colonial Pathologies*: 185-207.

Africa. He rejected the Commissioner's claim that unrest in Guet N'Dar stemmed from locals' concerns about whether they would receive fair indemnities for destroyed homes. "The inhabitants of Guet N'Dar" Angoulvant wrote, "have always made a profession of living on the margins of the law without taking the slightest account of the authorities' decisions." Rather than reflecting material concerns, he pinned resistance on a general culture of criminality. Tolerating this behavior would turn the island into a plague breeding ground, threatening the "progressive contamination of the entire Colony."⁸³ Eventually, this frustration led to the end of what the medical officer Dr. Thoulon called the "political phase." In its place, as Thoulon put it in his official report, came the "medico-military phase."⁸⁴ On August 14, authorities declared a siege on Guet N'Dar and N'Dar Toute. At that moment, as Thoulon explained, "arms must speak." Troops commandeered local fishers' boats to "prove to the rebels that we had taken possession of the village." Once occupied, soldiers pursued phased removals of residents. A three-person commission then evaluated condemned homes' contents to produce lists that would be used in future indemnity proceedings. After these assessments and the "total liberation of Guet N'Dar," soldiers proceeded with the "incineration of a major part" of the community.⁸⁵ Like authorities in other colonial public health campaigns, military tactics and discourses placed colonial subjects outside the boundaries of liberal equality.⁸⁶ Healing became conquest. Residents became rebels.

Ironically, Thoulon wrote this while France remained in a war that had led to *originaires'* full enfranchisement. To protect their homes, some residents invoked this alternative military

⁸³ Governor Angoulvant to the Commissioner of the Republic in West Africa, August 1, 1918, H 77, ANS. "les habitants de Guet N'Dar ont toujours fait profession de vivre en marge de la loi et sans tenir le moindre compte des décisions de l'autorité...la contamination progressive de toute la Colonie."

⁸⁴ Rapport sur l'évacuation de Guet N'Dar (du 14 août au 14 7bre 1920) May 25, 1920, H 49, ANS. "phase politique"... "phase medico militaire."

⁸⁵ Ibid. "la libération totale de Guet N'Dar et incinérer en majeure partie"

⁸⁶ Aidan Forth, *Barbed-wire Imperialism: Britain's Empire of Camps, 1876-1903* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 78-80.

script. On August 17, days after the siege declaration, a group identifying themselves as “inhabitants of Guet N’Dar” described the cost of their forced removal to Senegal’s Governor. They pinned resistance to quarantine measures on intermediaries who “poorly translated your orders.” To demonstrate their loyalty, these “inhabitants” said they happily sent off their children “when we were called together to mobilize under the flag and aid the mother country.” These inhabitants “today only want to send them [their children] to the battlefield to come and aid the mother country.” These writers then repeated their willingness to send their children to fight for France before declaring “Long live France, Long live the Republic, Long live Senegal.”⁸⁷ These petitioners recycled the link between political rights and military service that the Diagne Laws enshrined. Service produced rights, in this case, the right to live where and how one pleased.

These writers combined patriotic references with their personal and economic ties to the land they had been forced to leave. They could not abandon Guet N’Dar because they were “poor fishers” with “nothing in the world except our *pirogues* to fish in the sea or the river, we have never known another land than Guet N’Dar.” These petitioners never had “another profession than fishing in the sea or the river, if you displace us with our families to go live elsewhere that will cause us great anxiety and grief.”⁸⁸ By evoking Guet N’Dar’s geography and the fishing trade it supported, these petitioners detailed how displacement threatened their personal and economic survival. Like their predecessors writing from the Medina, these petitioners grounded their demands in specific geographic moorings. They could only live and work by the “sea or the river.” However, their claim fell on deaf ears. The letter’s anonymous

⁸⁷ Les Habitants de Guet N’Dar to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Sénégal, Guet N’Dar, August 12, 1918, H 49, ANS. “Lorsqu’on nous avons convoqués pour le mobilisation sous le drapeau pour aider la patrie nous n’avons pas aucun refuse tous nos enfants... ils ne voulaient pas rien aujourd’hui que vous leur amenez dans les champs de bataille pour qui vient aides la patrie... Vive la France, Vive la République, Vive le Senegal.”

⁸⁸ Ibid. “Nous sommes des pauvres pêcheurs nous n’avons pas rien du monde que nos pirogues pour pêcher dans la mer et de fleuve nous n’avons pas connus aussi aucun pays que cel (sic.) de Guet N’Dar.”

nature led officials to deem it unworthy of a response.⁸⁹ Like thousands of others, these “inhabitants of Guet N’Dar” likely found themselves far from home, not knowing when or if they could return to the riverbanks evoked in their ill-fated plea.

Forced removal did not end the struggles over Guet N’Dar’s residents and their dwellings. Expelled inhabitants had to spend ten days in quarantine lazarettos. From there 2,000 of at least 7,000 expellees went to official segregation camps, while the rest had to find shelter for themselves, often pitching tents on Saint-Louis’ beaches.⁹⁰ Many local journalists and politicians denounced the administration for abandoning these citizens.⁹¹ Some displaced residents took matters into their own hands. Cinma Gueye demanded that colonial administrators pay rent for medical service soldiers staying in her home. She demanded 300 francs per month “from the day of the occupation to this date.”⁹² Officials disagreed. Questioning the amount requested, or perhaps the very idea that the state owed her anything, one reader underlined the 300 francs sum and scrawled on the margins, “blackmail!”⁹³ When Gueye died, her heir Kantome Gueye inherited this dispute. “Having no support, profession, or resource,” the younger Gueye found herself “at the head of a large family composed of women and young children.”⁹⁴ For these women, household heads in a largely patriarchal society, properties in Guet N’Dar provided financial autonomy. The skepticism Gueye faced raises questions about what officials saw as a reasonable claim. When *Guet N’Dariens* began returning in September 1919, they too had to convince officials to dole out payments for the homes the state itself had destroyed.

⁸⁹ Ngalamulume, *Colonial Pathologies*, 202.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 203

⁹¹ Ibid.; Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*: 189.

⁹² Cinma Guèye to Monsieur le Gouverneur du Sénégal, Saint-Louis, 29 August, 1919, H 78, ANS. “du jour de l’occupation à cette date.”

⁹³ Ibid. “chantage.”

⁹⁴ Madame Kantome Gueye Inheritor of Cinma Gueye to Monsieur le Gouverneur du Sénégal, Saint-Louis, November 4, 1919, H 78, ANS. “n’ayant pas de soutien ni profession ni ressources et me trouvant en tête d’une grande famille composant que des femmes et enfants en bas âge.”

Many residents justified their demands by accusing state agents of mismanaging their removal. “Correct the error that you have committed” H el ene Gueye insisted in her request.⁹⁵ Despite assurances that her cabin would survive, Gueye found nothing but ash when she returned. Dieugue Sesas described a similar shock, despite having had no one buried in his house and even following orders to carefully close his doors and windows before leaving. “You told me that no one would burn my home” he declared to the sanitation board. Without an indemnity, he could not rebuild because “my advanced age keeps me from working anymore.”⁹⁶ Sesas claimed that sanitation agents’ failures had upended the life and the future he tried to make for himself.

Other claimants, particularly elderly women, cited relatives’ service in their claims. One request by Fatou Samba Fall explained that her incinerated cabin and goods in N’Dar Toute cost around 2,000 francs. “All my children died in France” she told Senegal’s Governor, “I am practically alone now and without support.”⁹⁷ Like war widows and military mothers in both France and Senegal, Fall tried to leverage her status as a mother left “practically alone” by the war to get state support.⁹⁸ The widow Comsar Dieye similarly cited a male relatives’ service. She had lived in Guet N’Dar for years, raising children in the home she now had to leave. Her late husband had worked for Senegal’s Postal and Telegraph service, but she had received no official assistance, “despite the investment my poor husband made to the local retirement fund!”⁹⁹ Dieye

⁹⁵ Madame H el ene Gueye to Monsieur le Gouverneur du S en egal, September 27, 1919, H 78, ANS. “...faire rectifier l’erreur de vous qui aurait  et e commise.”

⁹⁶ Dieugue Sesas to Monsieur le Directeur de la Sant e, April 17, 1919, H 78, ANS. ”vous avez bien voulu me dire qu’ on ne brule pas mon logement” “mon grand  age ne me permettant plus de travailler”

⁹⁷ Fatou Samba Fall to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du S en egal  a Saint-Louis, August 15, 1919, H 78, ANS. “Tous mes enfants sont morts en France. Je suis presque seule maintenant et sans soutien.”

⁹⁸ Peggy Bette, *Veuves fran aises de la Grande Guerre: itin eraires et combats* (Berne: Peter Lang, 2017); Sarah Zimmerman, “Mesdames Tirailleurs and Indirect Clients: West African Women and the French Colonial Army, 1908—1918.” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 299-322.

⁹⁹ Comsar Dieye to Monsieur le Maire de Saint-Louis, Saint-Louis August 12, 1920, H 78, ANS. “malgr e les versements que mon pauvre mari faisait  a la Caisse locale de Retraite!”

hoped, ultimately in vain, that these connections would help her hold onto her home. Searching for ways to rebuild their lives, these women tried to use familial service to justify state support.

While some claimants described family links in their claims, others evoked their neighbors. Mallé Kamara complained that the administration “paid all my neighbors without paying me.”¹⁰⁰ Neighbors served as both witnesses and precedents to justify expectations of official payments. “All my neighbors know that I have not been indemnified for this cabin” Nadiam Thiam asserted, “I want you *Monsieur le Gouverneur* to help me obtain that which should come to me.”¹⁰¹ Kamara and Thiam tried to use public knowledge as leverage, revealing that indemnities were far from private affairs. Some letters evoked this information flow in more subtle ways. After saying that state sanctioned flames had left him “homeless and practically without resources,” Clidor Sow wrote “chez Mme Salnave” beneath his signature.¹⁰² Similar indications appeared in many indemnity letters. Whether or not claimants lived in these buildings, these addresses provided locations where officials could send payments or follow up requests. This information also evoked links between inhabitants of Guet N’Dar and the residents of Saint-Louis’s city-center. While unclear from the letters, some of these listed residents likely helped illiterate petitioners write their claims. Neighbors could help ground expectations of indemnification or provide the means to have those expectations met.

If neighbors could be allies in this process, other connections appeared more fraught. Like many other colonial bureaucratic processes, indemnities were embedded in the complex interactions that tied colonial officials, intermediaries, and claimants. Inspection commissions

¹⁰⁰ Mallé Kamara to Monsieur Tesaar, May, 2 1920, H 61, ANS. “on a payé tous mes voisins sans me payer.”

¹⁰¹ Nadiam Thiam to Monsieur le Gouverneur, 31 Juillet 1920, H 78, ANS. “Tous mes voisins savent que je n’ai pas été indemnisé de cette baraque. Et je vous prie Monsieur le Gouverneur de vouloir m’aider à obtenir ce qui doit m’en revenir.”

¹⁰² Clidor Sow to Monsieur le Gouverneur, Saint Louis, 24 May 1919, H 78, ANS. “sans abri et presque sans ressources.”

typically combined colonial health officials, local Wolof “notables,” and accompanying soldiers. Together they produced home inventories called “*procès verbaux*” which were sent to boards lead by local health officials to determine final payments. Suspicions plagued both sides of this process. For example, assessors cast a skeptical glance at Diengue Sene’s claim for five beds and three chairs. Since sending this request, one inspector claimed, Sene had found two of his supposedly lost beds. “If he looked well” the agent wrote, “maybe he will find the other three beds and three chairs.”¹⁰³ Implying that Sene was trying to get paid for objects that were not destroyed reflected a broader suspicion that Guet N’Dar claimants were trying to swindle the state.¹⁰⁴ Accusations of crooked dealings cut both ways. Galandou Diouf, a rising star in Diagne’s political machine, intervened on behalf of Mayemouna Khouna to get her paid for several items not on the official *procès verbaux*. Diouf said three-days passed between the home’s evacuation and its incineration, when official lists were made. “Outsiders, not to say thieves” Diouf claimed, “could pass through and lay a hand on certain goods.” Furthermore, hygiene agents accidentally burned Khouna’s fishing supplies. As a result, “the most elementary justice condemns the Administration to reimbursement.”¹⁰⁵ Indemnifications often boiled down to these debates about the credibility of claimants and the bureaucrats they confronted.

Even if all parties agreed on what had been destroyed, actually ascribing value to these objects complicated proceedings further. First off, objects had diverse fates. As Dr. Thoulon explained to Senegal’s Governor, “furniture with a modest value” would be stored and disinfected in one of Guet N’Dar’s five mosques. However, this did not extend to “objects of an

¹⁰³ , Principal Inspector of Police Charged to the Hygiene Service to Monsieur the Chief of the Health Service of Senegal, Saint-Louis, April 16, 1920, H 78, ANS. “S’il cherchait bien, peut-être qu’il trouverait les 3 autres lits ainsi que les 3 chaises.”

¹⁰⁴ Ngalamulume, *Colonial Pathologies*, 204.

¹⁰⁵ Galandou Diouf to Monsieur le Governor of Senegal, Saint-Louis, August 31, 1919, H 78, ANS. “Des personnes étrangères pour ne pas dire des voleurs peuvent passer et faire main basse sur certaines choses...La justice la plus élémentaire condamne l’Administration au remboursement.”

absolutely insignificant value.”¹⁰⁶ Thoulon did not clarify how inspectors determined which objects had “modest” or “insignificant” values. To add further complication, colonial currencies were far from universally agreed upon measurements of value. Instability and changing attitudes about the utility of colonial money affected Europeans and Africans across West Africa.¹⁰⁷ These factors all likely further complicated indemnities. Birahima Thiam valued his two iron beds, two mattresses, a mirror, and a table at 150, 40, 20, and 30 francs respectively.¹⁰⁸ In response, officials said the evaluation commission indicated his two iron beds cost 20 francs and the mattresses 6 francs.¹⁰⁹ The mirror, table, and oven did not appear at all. The commission did note additional mattresses and containers that came out to an extra 12.5 francs. For Thiam, like many others, inspectors’ views on an object’s value ultimately determined how much he received.

Examining assessments for objects related to fishing further demonstrates how indemnities entangled personally, socially, and historically specific evaluations. Guet N’Dar’s economy depended on fishing. Products related to this trade appeared frequently in indemnity claims. Mayemouna Kouna requested payment for a mat, an oar, and one fish.¹¹⁰ Officials determined Kouna’s payment, less than half of what she requested, based on “information provided by fishers (pre-war price)”¹¹¹ By excluding wartime price changes from their estimation and basing the amount on interactions with other fishers, officials implicitly acknowledged that values fluctuated over time and according to who you asked. M’Barick Feuve alluded to these

¹⁰⁶ Le Médecin Principal de 1ère Dr Thoulon to M. the Governor, Saint-Louis February 7, 1919, H 78, ANS. “les meubles ayant une valeur quelconque même modique...des objets de valeur absolument insignifiante.”

¹⁰⁷ Jane I. Guyer, “Introduction: The Currency Interface and Its Dynamics” in *Money Matters: Instability, Values, and Social Payments in the Modern History of West African Communities*, eds. Jane Guyer et. al, (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995), 1-33.

¹⁰⁸ Birahima Thiam to Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur du Sénégal, Saint-Louis June 3, 1920, H 78, ANS.

¹⁰⁹ Letter to Monsieur Birahima Thiam, Saint-Louis July 1920, H 78, ANS.

¹¹⁰ Mayemoune Khouna to Monsieur le Conseiller General, Saint-Louis August 31, 1919, H 78, ANS.

¹¹¹ Réclamation d’habitants de Guet N’Dar, N’Dar Toute à Saint-Louis (Épidémie de Peste) (Suite) April 8, 1920, H 78, ANS. “renseignements fournies par les pêcheurs (prix d’avant-guerre).”

recent economic changes in his own indemnity request. “You can’t be unaware Monsieur le Gouverneur” he declared, “of the elevated prices of all these new objects like the wood and twine for our nets, which are essentially our only work.”¹¹² Ignoring price fluctuations imperiled Feuve’s sole profession and ability to rebuild his life.

Feuve’s request pointed to the centrality of fishing to household economies in Guet N’Dar. Adult men typically spent their days amassing their catch, while women dried and sold fish.¹¹³ This gendered division of labor became a ubiquitous part of Guet N’Dar for French observers, like those making or viewing these early twentieth century postcards of fishermen at sea and women at the market. (Fig. 6 & 7). Losing fishing-related goods threatened the material bases of these communal and familial relationships. Individuals tried to use indemnities to get the state to help rebuild lifestyles and social relations these tools once organized.

When Feuve said that fishing constituted “our only work” he echoed other claimants who said they were incapable, or unwilling, to take up other jobs. Claimants rarely elaborated on why they were so attached to this maritime trade. However, a different source provides useful hints. In 1935 Ousmane Sarr, a student at the elite William Ponty High School in Dakar, described the fishing trade of his native Guet-N’Dar in one of the short ethnographies the elite school required its students to write about their home communities.¹¹⁴ Sarr invoked his childhood memories from the community just years after the 1917 plague outbreak. At one point he said that many older residents did not understand why so many “urbanites” in Saint-Louis worked for wages. “I do not know how a man could want to be the slave of another,” he recalled these men saying, “to

¹¹² M’Barick Feuve to Monsieur the Governor of Senegal, Saint-Louis March 6, 1920, H 78, ANS. “Vous ne devez pas ignorer Monsieur le Gouverneur les prix à laquelle sont élevés tous ces neuves objets telles que le bois et la ficelle pour nos filets, qui sont essentiellement notre unique besogne”

¹¹³ Camara. *Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal*: 164.

¹¹⁴ Tobias Warner, “Para-Literary Ethnography and Colonial Self-Writing: The Student Notebooks of the William Ponty School,” *Research in African Literature* 47, no 1 (Spring 2016): 1-20; Charles Bado, “Une lecture des Cahiers Ponty” *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies* 10, no 2. (2006): 161-171.

only be able to get money each thirty days.” By contrast, “the fisher is paid by their work and quits when he wants: *voilà* what is necessary for a *Guet-N’Darien*.”¹¹⁵ While recycling the binary of a static Guet N’Dar and a dynamic Saint-Louis, Sarr grounded this contrast in *Guet N’Dariens’* desire to control their economic lives.



Figure 2. 6: Early 20th-century postcard showing men from Guet-N’dar engaging in the fishing trade that sustained their lifestyles, the text reads “The beach at Guet Ndar.” P. Tacher. “La plage à Guet Ndar; départs pour la pêche, les retardataires, les brisants sont mauvais.” *Cartes postales de l’Afrique Occidentale Française (1900-1960)*, accessed September 22, 2020. <http://www.vincenthiribarren.com/dh/aof/items/show/2270>.



Figure 2. 7: Early 20th-century postcards showing fishers’ wives in Guet-Ndar. The writing on the side says men fish and their wives take the catch into the city to sell, text reads “Wives of fishers at Guet Ndar,” Anonymous, “Femmes de pêcheurs à Guet Ndar.,” *Cartes postales de l’Afrique Occidentale Française (1900-1960)*, accessed September 22, 2020. <http://www.vincenthiribarren.com/dh/aof/items/show/2314>.

¹¹⁵ SARR, Ousmane “Monographie d’un village: N’Guet-N’Dar” E.N.W.P., 1935 24p C16, 523, Bibliothèque d’IFAN. “citadins Saint-Louisiens ne veulent être que fonctionnaires, ‘Je ne sais pas comment un homme puisse désirer être esclave d’un autre, ne pouvoir avoir de l’argent que de trente en trente jours... Le pêcheur est payé pour son travail et il quitte quand il veut : voilà ce qu’il faut au Guet-N’Darien.”

Comparing wage-labor to slavery echoed struggles for autonomy across colonial Senegal. Since the late nineteenth century, many people hoping work in the growing peanut trade would provide paths to autonomy found themselves in new bonds of debt or wage dependency.¹¹⁶ Fishing provided a way to avoid this fate. Efforts to industrialize fishing in Saint-Louis largely failed, which many French observers blamed on fishers' intransigence. As a result, small-scale fishers largely ran their trade throughout the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ Like many workers across colonial Africa, domestic relations, spaces, and objects became tools to resist proletarianization.¹¹⁸ By demanding repayment for fishing tools, Feuve and Kouna sought to use state resources to defend the autonomy provided by their homes and the objects they sheltered.

Claims regarding kitchen supplies similarly show how women in particular used indemnities to hold onto the tools they used to carve out their specific socioeconomic positions. In these petitions, kitchens and cooking objects were typically associated with female claimants. For example, when reevaluating the amount given to Saïdou Sow, officials indicated that the inspection commissioners failed to mark down "one kitchen belonging to his (Sow's) wife Fatou Badiane."¹¹⁹ Similarly, Hélène Gueye told the Governor that officers had burned her "house and kitchen."¹²⁰ Alongside bedroom furniture, Gueye listed, "1 case of provisions, 3 *canaris*, 2 empty

¹¹⁶ James F. Searing, *"God Alone Is King": Islam and Emancipation in Senegal : The Wolof Kingdoms of Kajour and Bawol, 1859-1914*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002); Bernard Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22, no. 1 (1989): 27-50.

¹¹⁷ Marc Pavé and Emmanuel Charles-Dominique, "La pêche d'Afrique de l'Ouest, elle aussi, a une histoire: chronique d'un 'développement' imprévue (1895-1980)" in *AOF, Réalité Et Héritages : Sociétés Ouest-africaines Et Ordre Colonial, 1895-1960*, eds. Charles Becker, Saliou M'baye, and Ibrahima Thioub (Dakar: Direction Des Archives Du Sénégal, 1997), 604-606; Camille. *Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal*: 161-178.

¹¹⁸ T. Dunbar Moodie and Vivienne Ndatshe, *Going for Gold: Men, Mines, and Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

¹¹⁹ Réclamations d'Habitants de Guet N'Dar Épidémie de Peste, 4 Mars 1920, H 78, ANS. "une baraque et une cuisine appartenant à sa femme Fatou Badiane"

¹²⁰ Madame Hélène Gueye to Monsieur le Gouverneur du Sénégal, 27, September 1919, H 78, ANS. "maison et cuisine [sic]."

casks, 2 large pots, 1 casserole, 1 pan, 4 pestles, and 2 mortars.”¹²¹ Fatim Diop, the military mother cited earlier, had a smaller list. She initially received 300 francs for one cabin, 3 francs for a mortar, and 5 francs for a “kitchen in ruins.” After her appeal she received an extra 50 francs for an incinerated mirrored armoire.¹²² Claimants like Diop and Gueye did not only focus on kitchen supplies. However, the fact that these objects almost exclusively appeared in reference to women demonstrated their feminized role in local households.

Women in Saint-Louis used these cooking tools to build familial and communal relations. Despite economic and political marginalization, middle and upper-class women in the city often used domestic interiors to manage their economic and political positions.¹²³ Inscribing kitchen tools in indemnity claims points to similar strategies among the city’s workers. On top of providing sustenance, women in Guet N’Dar often prepared and sold fish caught by male relatives. While contributing to household coffers, the right of many women in Wolof marriages to hold on to personal wealth meant merchant activities could also benefit women themselves.¹²⁴ Beyond this economic role, the fact that cooking typically took place outdoors made it a markedly public affair. Recalling his trip to Saint-Louis at the turn of the century, François Sorel evoked women’s interactions while cooking. “Beneath a curious eye, they exchange some light words,” he recalled, “all while pounding their grain in their large wooden mortars, women laugh as they look at what’s cooking in their pots.”¹²⁵ While steeped in male colonial voyeurism, Sorel

¹²¹ Ibid. “une baraque et une cuisine appartenant à sa femme Fatou Badiane” Note: a “canari” is a type of ceramic vessel.

¹²² Réclamations d’habitants de Guet N’Dar, N’Dar Toute à Saint-Louis (Épidémie de peste) Suite, April 8, 1920, H 78, ANS. “cuisines en ruines.”

¹²³ Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 73-95; for more the gendering of West African domestic space see Jean-Paul Bourdier and Minh-ha, *Vernacular Architecture of West Africa*, 2011 (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2011), 68-73.

¹²⁴ Abdoulaye Bara Diop, *La Famille Wolof: Tradition Et Changement* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2012), 160-177.

¹²⁵ François Sorel, *Journal d’un Vagabond Africain, 1901-1903* (Paris: Peyronnet, 1952), 23. “sous l’œil du curieux, échangeant avec lui des propos lestes tout en pilant leur mil dans de hauts mortiers de bois, les femmes laissent en riant regarder ce qui cuit dans leurs marmites.”

evoked the socializing embedded in cooking. Often taking place in outdoor courtyards, cooking connected women with neighbors. Like fishing poles, kitchen supplies conditioned how women experienced their homes and the city at large. By listing these objects in indemnity forms, women demanded the state reimburse them for the objects they used to shape their social worlds.

At least one claimant used a dispute in part over kitchen supplies to launch a broader critique of the state's treatment of Senegalese homeowners. In April 1920, Moustaphe Malie Gaye complained to Senegal's Governor about the indemnity given to his mother, Aïssatou Lô. She received 24 francs, which Gaye deemed a "startling injustice."¹²⁶ In his own list, he indicated a calabash, mortar, and pestle, whose value at twenty francs was covered by the initial payment. However, he also listed "two chests containing women's goods" valued at 185 francs and "two mirrors framed in gold" at 39 francs. It is unclear if these objects appeared in Lô's initial claim, or if she focused on the kitchen supplies whose cost was covered by the initial payment. Regardless, Gaye sought more than a just restitution. After listing his mother's goods, he launched into a broader critique of the indemnification process itself by accusing the government of breaking French expropriation law. According to Gaye, when the government took private land its owners were entitled to regulated judicial proceedings, just repayment, the ability to challenge their expropriation, and the restitution of unused property. "I believe that... [you] will take my complaint into consideration," he told the Governor, "so that I do not have to submit this issue to the courts."¹²⁷ Gaye demanded that Senegalese residents be treated like liberal subjects entitled to private property. Not everyone followed Gaye and invoked *originaires'* recently solidified legal rights in their claims. Some claimants pointed to mistakes

¹²⁶ Moustaphe Malie Gaye to Monsieur le Gouverneur, April 9, 1920, H 78, ANS.

¹²⁷ Ibid. "Je crois Monsieur le Gouverneur que vous prendrez ma plainte en considération pour ne pas me mettre dans l'obligation de soumettre l'affaire à la justice."

made by health officers or information circulating throughout communities. The men and women of Guet N’Dar and N’Dar Toute used various strategies to get French authorities to help them feel at home again. Depending on who spoke that feeling depended on getting an autonomous life by the sea, a new kitchen, or fair legal treatment.

Evaluating “Huts,” Fences, and Crop Bags in Cayor

Neither the plague nor home destructions stayed in the Four Communes. The disease quickly reached Senegal’s protectorates, embedding itself in coastal areas public health officials dubbed “the plague zone.”¹²⁸ The protectorates’ inhabitants were “subjects” with far fewer legal rights than *originaires*. Among other areas, the plague hit the largely rural Cayor region between Dakar and Saint-Louis, which French observers had long presented as a uniquely backwards and isolated area. Writing in 1897, the merchant Joseph de la Tourrasse said Cayor’s Wolof-speaking residents, when compared to the *originaires*, “constituted an excessively curious social type.”¹²⁹ Straw huts, like those depicted in this turn of the century postcard (Fig. 8), became key to this distinction. Leon D’Anfreville, the medical official quoted earlier, likened Cayor’s huts to the “first shelters of still barbaric man.”¹³⁰ Like other rural areas in Senegal, these postcards and testimonies framed Cayor as an isolated landscape frozen in time.¹³¹ This ahistorical framing supported the boundary between the protectorate’s subjects and the communes’ citizens. Despite this distinction, responses to the plague in rural areas like Cayor followed the precedents set in the communes. Dwellings were targeted and summarily destroyed, facilitating unprecedented level of state interventions in rural communities.¹³² While inflicting widespread

¹²⁸ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*, 139-142.

¹²⁹ Joseph du Sorbiers de la Tourrasse, *Au Pays Des Woloffs, souvenirs d’un traitant du Sénégal, par Joseph Du Sorbiers de La Tourrasse* (Tours, A. Mame et fils, 1897), 68. “un type social excessivement curieux.”

¹³⁰ Anfreville de la Salle, *Conférences sur l’hygiène coloniale*, 61 “premiers abris de l’homme encore barbare.”

¹³¹ François G. Richard, *Reluctant Landscapes: Historical Anthropologies of Political Experience in Siin, Senegal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹³² Echenberg, *Black Death White Medicine*, 166-171.

destruction, these methods also connected rural subjects to promises made to appease *originaires* residents. Indemnification's logic of state obligations was thus not solely tied to citizenship.

Subjects also demanded that the government help them rebuild the lives it destroyed.



Figure 2. 8: Early 20th-century postcard of Cayor residents in a compound of huts, spaces came to symbolize their “traditional” lifestyles for many French viewers. Text reads: “Native huts of Cayor, (Senegal)” (Hostalier, “Cases indigènes au Cayor, une famille dans la cour de sa concession.” *Cartes postales de l’Afrique Occidentale Française (1900-1960)*, accessed September 24, 2020, <http://www.vincenthiribarren.com/dh/aof/items/show/1835>).

While indemnities gave subjects the chance to present their losses to the state, records revealed the hurdles rural homeowners faced in these bureaucratic navigations. Notes from a July 1919 meeting of an indemnification commission held in the town of Tivouane indicated that most applicants requested their indemnification by letter. Only two of the 33 claims examined that day were made verbally.¹³³ The absence of these letters in Senegal’s National Archives makes it difficult to know how people composed these requests and evaluations. However, one rural claimants’ statement from another part of Cayor hints at the obstacles this document-heavy process entailed. After waiting a year for a response on a claim made orally, Ganne Doye from the village of Kounoune tried a new approach. “Not knowing how to read or write” Doye turned

¹³³ “Procès-Verbal des séances de la commission chargée de procéder à l’évaluation des constructions, objets mobiliers, et effets d’habillement dont la destruction a été ordonné par mesure sanitaire” July 15, 1919, H 49, ANS.

to “M. Oguer, merchant in Rufisque to whom he entrusted his interests.”¹³⁴ Oguer provided this explanation before listing the huts and goods for which Doye had long awaited payment. Like many illiterate individuals trying to enter colonial bureaucracies, Doye depended on a letter writer.¹³⁵ Oguer’s assistance provoked the administrator of the Thiès region to reexamine Doye’s case. For many people, figures like Oguer were crucial to making indemnities a reality.

Once filed, rural indemnity requests elicited similar conflicts to those found in the communes. Echoing urban disputes, the chief of the village of Pout Malli Kamara complained that he had received nothing while the administration had “paid all my neighbors.”¹³⁶ Officials ultimately backed Kamara’s claim and paid him 135 francs.¹³⁷ Mademba Gueye, whose story began this chapter, had a harder time. In July 1919, Gueye described the destruction of his hut and small house in the village of N’Dialène Gandiolais. Despite assurances that only his neighbor’s home would be destroyed, “my cabin caught on fire, destroying everything contained inside.”¹³⁸ One official balked at Gueye’s request. He wrote directly on Gueye’s letter that only one person in N’Dialène Gandiolais heeded the request for local property owners to work with officials during their inspections. If Gueye did not join that day, the official wondered, why was he so worried about his property now? “This is a bad and shocking policy which disgusts me,” he wrote, “I do not want to become the captive of the blacks of N’Dialène.”¹³⁹ Gueye’s demands

¹³⁴ Monsieur L’Administrateur Commandant Le Cercle de Thiès 23 Octobre 1920, H 73, ANS. “...ne sachant ni lire ni écrire vient par la présente établie par les soins de M. Oguer Commerçant à Rufisque à qui il a confié ses intérêts.”

¹³⁵ Benjamin Lawrence, “Petitioners, ‘Bush Lawyers,’ and Letter Writers: Court Access in British-Occupied Lomé, 1914-1920” *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: 94-114. Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*. Eds. Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn and Richard L. Roberts (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 94-114.

¹³⁶ Malli Kamara to Monique Sisaar, Pout May 2, 1920, H 61, ANS. “...a payé tous mes voisins.”

¹³⁷ L’Administrateur Maire de Thiès à Gouverneur du Senegal, Thiès 12 June 1920, H 61, ANS.

¹³⁸ Mademba Gueye to Monsieur, Saint-Louis July 23, 1919, H 78, ANS. “ma baraque prend le feu et il est brulé tout avec ce qu’il avait contenait dedans” N’Dialène Gandiolais likely refers to an area immediately to the south of Saint-Louis.

¹³⁹ Ibid. “C’est la une mauvaise politique éœurante dont je suis dégoûté. Je ne veux pas devenir un captif des noirs de N’Dialen.”

seemed like an assault on this bureaucrat's authority. He became "a captive" rather than a ruler. The different responses to Gueye and Kamara's requests may have stemmed from officials' temperaments, diverging legal interpretations, or Kamara's status as a village chief. Whatever the reason, these cases demonstrate that rural claims, like their urban counterparts, inspired divergent reactions to the promises and expectations of indemnification.

This French officer was not the only one who tied these proceedings to an imperiled status. "As I am responsible for my two wives' food as well as their clothing," Daouda N'Diaye from the village of Bargny Guedj wrote, "I have found it impossible to get the necessary sum to rebuild my home."¹⁴⁰ The expectations N'Diaye cited, providing food, housing, and clothing for dependents, constituted key responsibilities for Wolof patriarchs, or *boorom-kers*.¹⁴¹ Since losing his home, N'Diaye said this charge became too much to handle. As many patriarchs across the Western Sahel had done for decades, N'Diaye tried to use this colonial institution to bolster his authority.¹⁴² Officials did not comply, citing "the ease of cheaply rebuilding some simple straw huts."¹⁴³ Straw huts were threats in cities. In the countryside, they were cheap solutions.

Despite these administrators' aspersions, huts had significant value to rural men. In many Wolof communities, extended families lived together in multiple houses gathered in one compound under the authority of a single *boroom-ker* with a fence delimiting the boundaries of the patriarch's domain.¹⁴⁴ In addition to these homes, fences frequently appeared in indemnity claims from the Cayor region. In one case, Oumar Niang did not ask to be reimbursed for the

¹⁴⁰ Daouda N'Diaye to Monsieur le Maire de la Commune Rufisque, May 3, 1921, H 73, ANS. "comme je suis chargé de la nourriture de mes deux femmes ainsi que leur habillement, je me trouve dans l'impossibilité d'avoir la somme nécessaire pour renouveler ma demeure."

¹⁴¹ Diop, *La Famille Wolof*: 143-159.

¹⁴² Searing, "God Alone is King"; Richard L. Roberts. *Litigants and Households: African Disputes and Colonial Courts in the French Soudan, 1895-1912* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005).

¹⁴³ L'Administrateur Commandant le Cercle à Monsieur le Gouverneur du Sénégal, Thiès 24, Mai 1921, H73, ANS. "la facilité à reconstruire sans grands frais de simples cases en paille."

¹⁴⁴ Diop, *La Famille Wolof*: 150-157.

fence itself, but the “labor of the fence.”¹⁴⁵ Niang hinted at the way that fences’ value stemmed in part from their ability to concretize the labor that patriarchs expended by delimiting the scope of their authority. In addition to fences, male claimants typically listed the individual dwellings in these borders. Samba Sarr, for example, said he lost thirty huts.¹⁴⁶ Guitte Sambe and Dana M’Boup each claimed eighteen huts, while most other claimants had between three and ten huts and many more beds.¹⁴⁷ These numbers far exceeded hut numbers in Guet N’Dar’s claims, where residents typically listed less than three huts. Homes and fences facilitated and displayed rural patriarchs’ ability to organize their households. Getting money from the state to replace these structures could men reassert their ability to advocate for and lead their families.

Like fishing rods in Guet N’Dar, the impact of losing these huts and the objects they contained depended in part on local economic contexts. In rural communities, these losses undermined the ways that people had adapted to the demands of colonial taxation and cash crop cultivation. A letter on behalf of six farmers from the village of Niaga to the mayor of Rufisque in June 1921 evoked this burden explicitly when describing homes destroyed by the government two years earlier. “All of our goods and objects were destroyed by the prophylactic measures,” the note explained. These petitioners lost their homes and their fields. “It hurts, *Monsieur le Maire*, to give you these sad details,” they explained, “but being deprived of all that we have makes it impossible to pay our personal tax.”¹⁴⁸ These men’s homes were not only shelters or containers for tools. They were sites of production. The promise of financial autonomy attracted

¹⁴⁵ “Procès-Verbal des séances de la commission chargée de procéder à l’évaluation des constructions, objets mobiliers et effets d’habillement dont la destruction a été ordonnée par mesure sanitaire” July 15, 1919, H49, ANS. “main-d’œuvre de la clôture”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Note, I use the term “hut” here as a translation of “case” the term used in the indemnity files

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Letter to Monsieur le Maire de la Commune de Rufisque, Rufisque June 13, 1921, ANS H73. “Tous nos biens et objet ont été brulées par mesure de prophylactique... Nous sommes donc peine Monsieur la Maire de vous donner de si triste détails, mais dépouille de tous nos avoir et bien nous reste dans l’impossibilité de pouvoir nous acquitter de la taxe d’impôt personnelle.”

thousands to Senegal's peanut basin. However, the need to pay taxes forced many farmers to buy and sell their yields on terms dictated by French merchants.¹⁴⁹ If fishing rods protected *Guet N'Dariens* from wage dependency, rural farmers already depended on capitalist markets. These men now turned to the very state that burned their homes and imposed these taxes.

The indemnity requests attached to this letter demonstrated these households' embeddedness in the colonial cash crop economy. This letter provided indemnity lists for two households, one owned by Mademaba Dieue and his older brother Malick Dieng and another owned by Bissane Diop. In both lists, the most valuable line-item was the total price of the destroyed huts. Dieue and Dieng requested 1215 francs for 27 huts while Diouf requested 675 francs for 15 destroyed dwellings. While residences as a whole took up the greatest total share of the indemnity, these huts' individual 45-franc price tags were matched by one other item: crop bags. Dieue and Dieng said they lost three 100-kilogram bags of millet, each valued at 45 francs. Diop claimed to have lost two 60-kilogram bags of peanuts also valued at 45 francs each.¹⁵⁰ Claims for bags of lost crops appeared frequently. While Dieue, Dieng, and Diop listed crops and huts at the same price, some other claimants evaluated cultivated goods higher than shelters. Malick Diop received 382 francs for his six lost bags of peanuts, or 63.70 francs for each kilo, compared to the 200 francs he received for his nine huts, or 22.20 francs for each.¹⁵¹ Abdoulaye Lô received 80 francs for an unstated number of huts and 125 francs for 500 kilograms of peanuts.¹⁵² Notably, these prices came from evaluation commissions rather than the farmers themselves. Officials may have seen these colonial cash crops as more valuable than straw huts.

¹⁴⁹ Searing, *Only God is King*; Moitt, "Slavery and Emancipation in Senegal's Peanut Basin."

¹⁵⁰ "État des objets brules et détruits lors de l'Épidémie de Peste en 1919 par mesure de Prophylactique – (à Niaga)." H73, ANS.

¹⁵¹ "Procès-Verbal des Séances de la commission charge de procéder à l'évaluation des-constructions, objets mobiliers et effets d'habillement dont la destruction a été ordonnée par mesure sanitaire, 15 Juillet 1919." H49, ANS.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

However, the fact that Dieue, Deng, and Diop's claims had a similar prices in their own letter implies that their value was not just an official projection.

This letter ultimately called on state agents to support men trying to live according to the colonial regime's own financial rules. France's African empire depended on the infamous "head tax" levied on African households.¹⁵³ In Senegal, subjugation to this tax system and the brutal *indigénat* legal code that supported it was a key distinction between citizens and subjects.¹⁵⁴ Beyond helping officials get resources or assert dominance, many French officials hoped that these taxes would transform rural societies. Tax burdens coerced rural residents to enter or intensify their participation in commercial peanut cultivation. Aware of their limited ability to control rural communities, many French colonists hoped that the pressures of peanut cultivation and taxation would force farmers to engage in capitalist production.¹⁵⁵ However, the men behind this letter tried to use the ties taxation and commercial cultivation fostered to pull the state into their upended lives. They framed themselves as clients suffering from their patrons' decision to destroy their homes and delay indemnification. Officials may have used peanuts and taxes to coerce peasants into meeting their demands, but these farmers tried to use these same tools to make the state support their needs.

One *Dakarois* advocate explicitly linked rural displacement to demands for a supportive state. "The unhappy population of the Protectorate Countries are in a lamentable situation" Boubakar Diallo, director of the Diagne-aligned newspaper *l'Indépendant Sénégalais*, wrote to Senegal's Governor in April 1920. "When they are not dying of hunger" he declared, "they are

¹⁵³ Elise Huillery, "The Black Man's Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa." *The Journal of Economic History* 74, no. 1 (2014): 1-38; Jane Guyer, "Head Tax, Social Structure and Rural Incomes in Cameroun, 1922-1937" *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 79 (1980): 305-329.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory Mann, "What Was the "Indigénat"? The 'Empire of Law' in French West Africa." *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 3 (2009): 331-53.

¹⁵⁵ François Richard, "The Politics of Absence: Peasant Lifeworlds and Colonial Government," *Reluctant Landscapes*: 263-296.

dying of the plague.”¹⁵⁶ Officers corralled peasants into quarantine camps without food, forcing many to flee to their fields just to get something to eat. If the Governor claimed to be “a friend of Deputy Blaise Diagne and the blacks,” he had to “come to the aid of the unfortunate inhabitants of the Protectorate countries.” “Monsieur le Gouverneur” Diallo concluded, “those who are dying of hunger and the plague cry out to you for help.”¹⁵⁷ Even though men in the protectorates could not vote for Diagne, he came to symbolize French obligations towards its African subjects writ large. Like the petitions from the Medina’s “good citizens” or the fishers of Guet N’Dar, Diallo used the language of obligation to demand support. He called on the colonial government to take care of its subjects and provide the material necessities once held in incinerated houses.

Conclusion

Diallo’s call for state support echoed complaints about ruined fields, burned houses, and lost family burial grounds made since the plague first arrived on Senegal’s shores. As this chapter has shown, many of these demands struggled to materialize. While some French officials felt they had to honor promises made towards Senegalese residents, others labelled claims “blackmail” and protestors fanatics. Tensions over violent public health measures persisted for years. The plague returned with terrifying regularity in many rural areas, alongside periodic appearances in coastal cities.¹⁵⁸ However, negotiations between colonial authorities and Senegalese leaders as well as a growing focus on vaccinations diminished housing destruction’s centrality to public health policies by the 1930s.¹⁵⁹ The plague remained, but French authorities left fewer burned houses in its wake.

¹⁵⁶ Boubakar Diallo to M. le Gouverneur du Senegal à Saint-Louis, Dakar, April 23, 1920, H 49, ANS. “la malheureuse population des Pays de Protectorat sont dans une situation lamentable, lorsqu’elles ne meurent pas de faim elles meurent de peste.”

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. “ami du Député Blaise Diagne et des Noirs... Monsieur le Gouverneur, ceux qui meurent de la faim et de la peste vous crient au secours.”

¹⁵⁸ Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine*: 137-203.

¹⁵⁹ Velmet, *Pasteur’s Empire*: 170-188.

Making home destructions key to fighting the plague crisis during and after World War I turned beds, huts, or fences into the material basis for growing debates about the French colonial government's relationship with Senegalese peoples' everyday lives. The plague forced actors across colonial society to articulate their views on the intimate boundaries of state power in an era filled with official calls for a return to "tradition." Petitions, protests, and letters reveal how colonial efforts to defend "tradition" confronted Senegalese demands that the French government provide for their well-being. These disputes fit into a broader interwar reexamination of the French regime's obligations towards those it governed in the colonies and the metropole. As the next chapter shows, people across interwar France engaged with emerging welfare structures to imagine surrogate homes for different kinds of displaced West Africans from those demanding indemnities during the plague. Like these claimants, metropolitan-based actors did not always succeed in redirecting state resources. However, they joined Mademba Gueye and others who recalled their lost homes to build a political framework grounded in West Africans' ability, or inability, to feel at home.

Chapter Three - “In a Milieu Where Everything is Foreign”: *Foyers*, West African Migrants, and the Search for Home in Interwar France

“In Paris, I needed to find housing” the Senegalese veteran Bakary Diallo recalled in his 1926 memoir, “it was the crisis, and unfortunately, I did not have enough money to feed myself or pay my rent.”¹ Luckily, the wife of Diallo’s former commander “wanted to replace my mother” and welcomed this wandering warrior into her luxurious abode. On the other side of the hexagon, another writer evoked a very different quest for home in interwar France. Claude McKay, the Jamaican writer, drew on his experiences in 1920s Marseille for his modernist novel *Banjo*. McKay described the city as a “great vagabond host” of black men “trying to scrape a temporary existence from the macadamized surface of this great Provençal port.”² *Banjo* recounted the adventures of the Senegalese sailor Dengel as he drifted through Marseille with African American, Jamaican and Nigerian companions. While Diallo turned to a French military widow in Paris, Dengel embraced a life among the African diaspora in France’s second city. Despite their differences, McKay and Diallo’s stories both asked a question increasingly posed during the interwar years: how could West Africans feel at home in France? Answering this question demonstrate the politics of dwelling’s contested evolution after World War I.

This chapter examines efforts to help West African migrants feel at home in interwar France by examining a specific kind of space: *foyers*. Since the mid-nineteenth century, *foyers* across France provided shelter and social services or rural-to-urban migrants. Typically run by charity groups, *foyer* organizers tried to provide material and affective support to people whose intimate lives had been upended by industrialization and urbanization.³ These older hopes that

¹ Bakary Diallo, *Force Bonté* (Paris: Rieder, 1926), 191. “A Paris, il me fallait trouver un logement. C’était la crise, malheureusement, et je n’avais pas assez d’argent pour me nourrir, payer mon loyer.”

² Claude McKay, *Banjo: A Story Without a Plot* (New York & London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1929), 68.

³ Roldan Lovatt, Christine Whitehead, and Claire Levy-Vroelant, “Foyers in the UK and France – Comparisons and Contrasts” *European Journal of Housing Policy* 6, no. 2 (August 2006): 151-166.

foyers could provide surrogate homes led disparate actors, from French missionaries to Senegalese anti-colonial activists, to try to make *foyers* for France's West African residents. After 1918, several regiments of West African soldiers remained in southern France. Outside these barracks, hundreds of West African sailors, workers, and students lived in cities like Paris, Marseille and Bordeaux. Together, the number of West Africans in interwar France likely hovered between four to five thousand.⁴ The overwhelming majority of these migrants were men, often in their teens and twenties. Ideas about these migrants' gender, age, and race informed the problems and solutions *foyer* planners projected onto these men's domestic lives.

Foyers organizers wanted these surrogate homes in France to turn deracinated young male migrants into adult men connected to a variety of political, religious, or military projects. Many *foyers* backers worried about male West Africans living outside the bounds of family life seen as key to physical and social health. Without the guiding hands of relatives or wives, many observers feared that these young men would undermine familial, urban, or even imperial stability. Similar concerns about single men's unchecked energies pervaded intellectual, medical and political programs throughout the Third Republic.⁵ When it came to West Africans in interwar France though, this gendered anxiety merged with racialized worries about the impact of France's "foreign milieu" on these African men. As the previous chapters explained, many French authorities responded to wartime disruptions to the racial divisions undergirding French imperialism by trying to reinforce African "traditions." Some *foyers* planners echoed this hope

⁴ Due to the often-undocumented nature of African migration to France, these numbers are often particularly difficult to attain. Scholarly estimates placing the number of African workers between 1,600 and 2,100 and total numbers of Africans in interwar France between 3,000 and 5,000, see Jean-Philippe Dedieu, "Normaliser l'Assujettissement: La Réglementation Française de l'Emploi du Personnel de Maison Subsaharien au XXe Siècle" *Genèses*, 20061, no. 62: 129-150; Philippe Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres En France, 1919-1939* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985), 24-27.

⁵ Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870-1920* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

that their spaces could recreate “familiar” environments and save soldiers or workers from degeneration. However, some French activists working with West African soldiers embraced this transformation, hoping to use *foyers* to promote their own ideas of how race, religion, or the military should structure the empire. Alternatively, many radical black *foyer* planners wanted these spaces to embed young West African workers in pan-African and anti-colonial networks that transcended France’s imperial borders. Whether they hoped to harness or diminish the migration’s impact, *foyers* organizers wanted these dwellings to dictate which groups could best manage these men’s minds and bodies.

The disparate visions these *foyers* promoted, and the difficulty many organizers had in making these visions a reality, demonstrate the flexibility and the limits of the politics of dwelling between the World Wars. As the previous chapters demonstrated, during and immediately after World War I people in France and Senegal began linking the legitimacy of the French imperial state to West Africans’ domestic well-being. *Foyers* planners shared this belief, and their efforts to act on this idea from Paris to Marseille shows how the core principles of the politics of dwelling found support across interwar France. This percolation in part reflected the massive growth in government investment in welfare after 1918. During the war, France’s national government developed new forms of planning and investments. When the guns went silent, many activists and politicians sought to use these mechanisms to support a struggling economy and populace. As a result, debates raged during the interwar years about how much Paris should supplant local, religious or private charities that had long served as the primary providers of social assistance.⁶ West African *foyers* echoed this ambiguous position on whether

⁶ Timothy B Smith, “The Two World Wars and Social Policy in France” in *Warfare and Welfare: Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries*, eds. Herbert Obinger, Klaus Petersen, and Peter Starke, (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2018), 127-138; Laura Levine Frader. *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Susan Pedersen. *Family, Dependence,*

governmental or private initiative should manage welfare programs. While *foyers* organizers often worked with private groups or on their own, they regularly turned to government officials ranging from Communist mayors to imperial governors to create these replacement homes.

Alongside debates about who should manage welfare programs came questions about who this assistance should serve. The increasing scope of national government assistance made welfare access a growing distinction between foreigner and citizen in the interwar years.⁷ This association between welfare and citizenship did not stop colonial authorities from forging assistance programs targeting colonial subjects in French cities. However, colonial aid programs focused more on combatting anti-colonial movements than promoting reproductive, personal or financial stability.⁸ Even amidst this growing yet unequal support for state welfare, many West African *foyers* ' struggled. Examining who succeeded and who failed to make their *foyer* a reality reveals the politics of dwelling's constraints in interwar France.

Situating *foyers* within these welfare-inspired debates about national belonging pushes scholars of the African diaspora in interwar France to consider the material bases undergirding conflicts over belonging and inclusion in this dynamic era. Over the past three decades, historians and literary scholars have pointed to the interwar years as key to the evolution of black political, intellectual and artistic movements in France. Many of these studies focus on dislocation, like the confusion Diallo felt wandering Paris or McKay's diasporic vagabondage in Marseille. Scholars have examined poetry, dance, political movements, and intellectual treatises

and the Origins of the Welfare State: Britain and France, 1914-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁷ Nimisha Barton, *Reproductive Citizens: Gender, Immigration, and the State in Modern France, 1880-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); Mary Dewhurst Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

⁸ Naomi Davidson, *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Clifford D. Rosenberg, *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control Between the Wars*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

to demonstrate how women and men of African descent proposed new ideas about inclusion within and beyond France's republican empire.⁹ However, these studies often frame political inclusion as an abstract political, intellectual or artistic process. This approach severs senses of belonging from everyday efforts to find affective, social, and material comforts. As Sylvain Pattieu argues, factors like geographic origin or occupation likely played a larger role than race in structuring many black residents' everyday lives in interwar France.¹⁰ This chapter does not take a position on the relative importance of material conditions or race to Afro-descended peoples' social positions at this moment. Rather, I examine people promoting, building, or occupying these *foyers* to argue that disparate actors believed that domestic spaces and services could dictate West Africans' relationship to France in the aftermath of the war to end all wars.

This chapter contrasts *foyers* for West African soldiers and workers, examining who supported these spaces and why. *Foyers* for soldiers typically received more official support than those aimed at workers, reflecting a pre-existing concern with soldiers' domestic well-being and the relatively low number of West African workers in interwar France. Regardless of whether these *foyers* actually got built, they showed how people with often conflicting ideas about the empire grounded discussions of West Africans' inclusion or exclusion from interwar French society in their access to the material resources and social connections associated with home.

“Staying a Bit Colonial” in Soldiers’ Foyers

⁹ Babacar M'Baye, *Black Cosmopolitanism and Anticolonialism: Pivotal Moments*. (New York: Routledge, 2017); Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-state: Negritude & Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting et al., *Negritude Women*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Tyler Edward Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Dewitte. *Les Mouvements Nègres En France*.

¹⁰ Sylvain Pattieu, “Souteneurs noirs à Marseille, 1918-1921: Contribution à l’histoire de la minorité noire en France.” *Annales. Histoire, Science Sociales* 64e Année, no. 6 (novembre-décembre 2009): 1361-1386.

“Colonial subjects are being targeted more and more by a propaganda very skillfully directed at them, be it Bolshevik or anti-French” the director of the *Union-Franco Americaine* (UFA) warned in a 1924 report. Luckily, a savior had arrived. “When I think of what the Director of the *Foyer* has accomplished, the way she gains and keeps her guests’ confidence” the director declared, “I just regret that the entire French army, or at least the entire colonial army, cannot benefit from our work.”¹¹ The UFA, a branch of the YMCA that arrived in France in 1919, ran dozens of *foyers* for colonial soldiers across France in the 1920s. The perils the director evoked, as well as the feminine work combatting them, reappeared in various discussions about *foyers* for France’s West African recruits.

These military *foyers* emerged out of the administrative and political aftermath of the massive mobilization of colonial soldiers during World War I. As Chapter One explained, *tirailleurs*’ service in the war led many French officials to believe that the government had to provide for these men’s well-being to guarantee their effectiveness and loyalty. The decision to maintain a standing *tirailleurs* army after 1919 meant that these ideas survived the Great War. Recruiters tried to conscript twelve to fourteen thousand men a year across French West Africa. Once enlisted, active soldiers had to serve at least one year abroad, often in France. By 1921, at least 3,200 West African soldiers lived on French soil.¹² To support these soldiers, French officials expanded administrative programs managing soldiers’ intercontinental households and

¹¹ “Le Foyer du Soldat de Paris, Exercice 1924, 1 AFFPOL 1492, CAOM. “...les coloniaux sont de plus en plus travaillés par une propagande qui s’exerce fort habilement auprès d’eux, soit bolcheviste, soit anti-française... quand je constate ce qu’accomplit la Directrice du Foyer, la façon qu’elle a de gagner et de justifier la confiance de ses hôtes... je me prends à regretter que toute l’armée française, ou tout au moins toute l’armée coloniale ne puisse passer par notre œuvre.”

¹² Sarah Zimmerman, *Militarizing Marriage: West African Soldiers’ Conjugal Traditions in Modern French Empire* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2020), 139-170; Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 72-85.

built spaces in France that served soldiers' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.¹³ *Foyers* planners hoped to merge these objectives by giving West African troops a surrogate physical home to ground them as they faced the novel dangers of peace.

One of the largest backers of these efforts, the *Comité d'Assistance Aux Troupes Noires* (CATN), used *foyers* to adapt their wartime assistance aid initiatives to postwar conditions. As described in Chapter One, the CATN was formed during World War I to support France's African troops through a "dual moral and material rapport."¹⁴ After the war, the leaders of the CATN hoped to use *foyers* to continue their work. Committee notes described plans to make *foyers* for *tirailleurs* battalions stationed across the country, from Strasbourg in the east to Toulon in the South.¹⁵ CATN planners wanted *foyers* to provide, "these men with a location where they can get together among themselves during their free time and prevent them from hanging about in the worst part of the garrison's city where they have much more to lose than to gain."¹⁶ Specifically, the CATN wanted to "protect our black soldiers from the dangers of alcoholism and bad company."¹⁷ While these threats existed during the war, in peacetime, "far from their families, in a milieu where everything is foreign, it is feared that our Senegalese men will quickly let themselves be won over by boredom when they are not mixed in with the action of the front lines."¹⁸ This "bad company" likely referred to French women as well as the radicals

¹³ Ibid. 139-169; Christiane Gruber, "The Missiri of Fréjus as Healing Memorial: Mosque Metaphors and the French Colonial Army (1928-1964)" *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 1, no. 1 (2012): 25-60; Mann, *Native Sons*: 162-171.

¹⁴ "Comité d'assistance aux Troupes Noires," 4-DEP-001-615, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, "sous le double rapport matériel et moral."

¹⁵ "Procès-verbal de la Séance du 26 Octobre 1921," 813/70/1, AP.

¹⁶ Ibid. "Nous croyons que cette œuvre des foyers aurait des effets excellents, notamment parce qu'elle procurerait aux hommes un local où ils pourraient se retrouver entre eux pendant leurs heures de liberté et éviter ainsi de traîner dans les quartiers mal famés (?) des villes de garnison où ils ont évidemment beaucoup plus à perdre qu'à gagner."

¹⁷ "Comité d'Assistance aux Troupes Noires – Organisation – Décret reconnaissant le Comité comme Établissement d'Utilité Publique STATUTS," 813/70/1, AP. "éviter à nos soldats noirs les dangers de l'alcoolisme et des mauvaises fréquentations"

¹⁸ Ibid. "Loin de leurs familles, dans un milieu où tout leur est étranger, il était à craindre que nos Sénégalais se laissent rapidement gagner par l'ennui lorsqu'ils ne sont point mêlés à l'action dans les premières lignes du front. »

the UFA director evoked. French authorities had long worried about the sexuality and ideology of unmoored single men.¹⁹ These fears took on new meanings for *tirailleurs*. Embracing white women or radical politics threatened the imperial order these soldiers were supposed to defend. CATN officials wanted *foyers* to give men safer ways to pass their time.

Fears about dangerous interactions with French locals and locales echoed the growing emphasis on “milieu” among colonial authorities. In the interwar years, concerns about the degenerative impact of European material, economic and social practices on African societies and bodies found growing scientific support. Human geographers increasingly argued that racial differences emerged out of specific social, geographic, and economic factors that together formed a holistic “milieu.” According to this theory, leaving or changing ones’ milieu threatened individuals’ physical and mental health.²⁰ These ideas gave credence to the growing emphasis on association over assimilation the previous chapter discussed. However, many colonial officials also tried to manage African milieus to govern and selectively transform their subjects.²¹ Military *foyers* brought these simultaneously static and flexible ideas about milieus to the metropole, linking *tirailleurs sénégalais* in France to essentialized landscapes in Africa.

To recreate these milieus, the CATN tried to provide for what they saw as distinctly African tastes. One committee report describing a *foyer* located in a villa outside Marseille said that “every Sunday, our blacks came in droves to the Villa where they find, in a milieu that reminds them of Africa, the distractions that they particularly enjoy: phonographs, movies, various games, etc.”²² Similarly, in the committee’s annual report from March 1928, President

¹⁹ Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*.

²⁰ Paul Rabinow. “Milieux: Pathos and Pacification” *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 126-167.

²¹ François Richard, *Reluctant Landscapes: Historical Anthropologies of Political Experience in Siin, Senegal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 236-237.

²² “Comité d’Assistance aux Troupes Noires – Organisation – Décret reconnaissant le Comité comme Établissement d’Utilité Public - Statuts” Paris, Comité d’Assistance Aux Troupes Noires, 1922, 8, 813/70/1, AP. “Tous les

M.J. Le Cesne described how the commander of the 14th Senegalese Battalion had come up with, “a way to construct cheap and very practical tam-tams.”²³ These tam-tams, a term for a variety of West African wooden drums, then went to soldiers’ foyers across France. Committee members believed this innovation gave their West African wards familiar musical comforts.

To provide these “familiar” amenities, certain military *foyers* also tried to recreate domestic gendered divisions of labor by having women manage these surrogate homes. The UFA put these efforts at the forefront when describing the *foyers* they made for French soldiers. Like the CATN, the UFA ran *foyers* near or in military bases, at times in old barrack cabins, like the *foyer* this contemporary postcard captured in Fréjus’ Caïs camp (Fig. 1). The UFA’s 1924 newsletter described *foyers* they had made for French soldiers, both colonial and metropolitan, as particularly helpful in battling nostalgia because their interiors came from “feminine hands principally, which have the delicate attention to decorate and make bloom like their mothers and sisters did.”²⁴ Home décor’s growing feminization in bourgeois French culture since the Second Empire meant *foyers*’ ability to evoke “distant homelands” demanded female labor within largely masculine military spaces.²⁵ “Colonial soldiers from all of our Colonies and Protectorates love to feel at home in their activities” the newsletter explained “[and] they have the greatest confidence in our Directors” using both the female and male form of the word “director.”²⁶ When writing

dimanches, nos noirs se rendaient nombreux à la Villa où ils trouvaient, dans un milieu qui leur rappelait l’Afrique, les distractions qu’ils affectionnent particulièrement: phonographes, cinématographes, jeux divers, etc., etc.”

²³ “Rapport présenté par M.J. Le Cesne, Président du Comité à l’Assemblée Générale du 20 Mars 1928,” IAFFPOL/1492, CAOM. “...avait imaginé un mode de construction de tams-tams peu coûteux et fort pratique.”

²⁴ “Société des Foyers de l’Union Franco-Américaine, Compte Rendu 1 Septembre 1923 – 31 Aout 1924,” 17.

IAFFPOL 1492, CAOM. “que des mains féminines principalement, ont la délicate attention de décorer et de fleurir comme l’auraient fait leurs mères ou leurs sœurs.”

²⁵ Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Philip Nord, “Republican Politics and the Bourgeois Interior in Mid-Nineteenth Century France,” in *Home and Its Dislocations in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Suzanne Nash (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 193-214.

²⁶ “Société des Foyers de l’Union Franco-Américaine Compte Rendu 1 Septembre 1923 – 31 Aout 1924,” 17, IAFFPOL 1492, CAOM. “Les militaire indigènes de toutes nos Colonies et de nos Pays de Protectorat ou sous

about a *foyer* for colonial soldiers in Paris, the UFA President praised “the precious work that can be accomplished by devoted and gifted women.”²⁷ As Chapter One explained, the lack of female labor in military camps led West African troops to engage in improvised and at times unsanctioned efforts to find the comfort of home during World War I. In peacetime, the tireless work of these “devoted and gifted women” provided an acceptable alternative.



Figure 3. 1: *Foyer* for soldiers in the Caïs camp run by the U.F.A, the text reads “The U.F.A. Soldier Foyer – Camp des Cais – Fréjus.” 10 Fi 023, AMF.

The UFA combined this focus on female labor with the production of familiar “African” sensations to recreate the milieu they believed would sustain West African men, and their bodies. “For the pleasures of the mouth, we get kola nuts for the Senegalese” the UFA’s 1924 bulletin explained, “and for the pleasure of the eyes, we apply an appropriate decorative mural that reminds them of their distant country.”²⁸ This description focused on the embodied nature of West African soldiers’ needs. Kola nuts were a staple of *tirailleurs*’ rations during the war and a popular stimulant across West Africa. By pairing these delicacies with a mural of “their distant

mandat aiment à se sentir chez eux dans leurs heures de loisirs, ils ont la plus grande confiance dans nos Directeurs et Directrices.”

²⁷ “Exercice 1924, Rapport Moral,” 1AFF-POL 1492, CAOM. “la tâche précieuse qu’accompliraient quelques femmes dévouées et douées”

²⁸ Ibid. “Bulletin d’Informations de la Société des Foyers de l’Union Franco-Américaine” “Pour le plaisir de la bouche, nous procurons des noix de Kola aux Sénégalais et pour le plaisir des yeux, nous nous appliquons, par une décoration murale appropriée, à leur rappeler leur pays lointain.”

country,” organizers hoped officially approved French women could provide men with the “authentic” African sensory comforts they might otherwise lack in French military spaces.

For at least one Gabonese officer, however, the *foyers* worked precisely because they did not recreate Africa. Writing in 1927 for the *Revue des Troupes Coloniales*, Lieutenant Charles N’Tchoréré said *tirailleurs* in Gabon longed for a *foyer* like the ones in France. N’Tchoréré wrote that “the soldier’s *Foyer* is, for the *tirailleurs*, a little family home where everyone comes, be it to recover and relax their minds, or to satisfy the caprices of their palate or stomachs.” He praised how soldiers in *foyers* emulated white men they saw on local café terraces, reading newspapers and drank tea as gramophones played “old colonial airs.”²⁹ Rather than focusing on how *foyers* recreated African sensations, N’Tchoréré lauded their ability to let soldiers adopt French tastes. This praise for military assimilation reflected N’Tchoréré’s own career path. Born in Libreville in 1896, N’Tchoréré joined the French army in 1914. By the time he wrote this article, he was a French citizen and one of France’s first commissioned African officers.³⁰ N’Tchoréré’s praise for *foyers* and the French mannerisms they inspired mirrored militarized assimilation’s central role in his own efforts to create a place for himself in the French Empire.

Despite this praise, N’Tchoréré did feel that these new habits came with some risks. The comforts and products soldiers found in these *foyers* created a “new conception of life” that troops struggled to find back in Africa. Having gotten used to drinking a glass of tea or lemonade, a returning *tirailleur* would, “lacking a soldiers’ *foyer*, sink himself into the first

²⁹ Charles N’Tchoréré, “Le tirailleurs revenue de l’extérieur, tel que je l’ai vu” *Revue des troupes coloniales*, No. 186, 1927, 157-158. “Le foyer du soldat c’est, pour les tirailleurs, la petite maison de famille où chacun vient, tant pour se recréer et délasser son esprit, que pour satisfaire un caprice du palais ou de l’estomac...un de ces vieux airs coloniaux que ne cessent de jouer les gramophones des casernes, sans risque d’ailleurs de fatiguer leur auditoire. »

³⁰ Jean-Patrick Machoussaud, *Charles N’Tchoréré: un héros gabonais mort pour la France* (Paris: Yvelin éditions, 2010).

bistro he finds” where wine replaced tea, leading to “scandal and indiscipline.”³¹ Rather than call for an end to the *foyers* where Africans adopted these potentially disruptive French manners, N’Tchoréré called for their expansion to the colonies. Like the European clubs and spas dotting French colonial cities, *foyers* would be islands of French comfort, but this time for Africans.³² While others wanted *foyers* to keep soldiers in France attached to Africa, N’Tchoréré hoped for the reverse. He believed *foyers*’ distinctly unfamiliar milieu would make *tirailleurs* “the greatest auxiliaries in France’s great mission.”³³ While N’Tchoréré’s assimilationist hopes contrasted with the emphasis on difference in discussion about the UFA’s *foyers*, they shared a desire to use daily socializing and material comforts to structure colonial soldier’ relationship to the empire.

Hopes for a different kind of transformation inspired Marie-Thérèse Munet to create a group of Catholic *foyers* after the war. Munet and her sister Alice worked as nurses during the war in the southeastern town of Menton, tending to wounded *tirailleurs*. Inspired by this work, they founded the *Sœurs missionnaires catéchistes du Sacré-Coeur* which, through support from various clerics across France, received official recognition by the Catholic Church in 1922.³⁴ The Munets initially focused on converting West African soldiers in France. However, after Alice died in 1924 Marie-Thérèse left Europe to establish branches of their order in the Gold Coast, Togo, Cote d’Ivoire, and Dahomey. By 1934, she returned to France and her initial military orientation. Working with a priest in Fréjus, Marie-Thérèse created *foyers* for West African soldiers that provided bases for their order’s proselytization. Between 1934 and 1938, Munet

³¹ Ibid. “à défaut de foyer du soldat, s’enfoncer le soir notamment – dans le premier ‘bistrot’ venu...le scandale et l’indiscipline »

³² Eric T. Jennings, *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology, and French Colonial Spas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 173-197.

³³ Ibid. 162 “les meilleurs auxiliaires de la grande tâche civilisatrice de la France.”

³⁴ Chantel de Labareye, et al, *Histoire des sœurs Munet et de leur famille missionnaires: Des tirailleurs sénégalais de la Grande Guerre à l’évangélisation en Afrique* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2017), 67-80.

made *foyers* near *tirailleurs*' camps or battalions in Toulon, Fréjus, Marseille, and La Rochelle.³⁵ She relied on local churches or enthusiastic Catholic citizens to find spaces for these *foyers*. She then made agreements with military commanders to permit African soldiers to periodically leave their barracks for celebrations, catechisms, or other events. Private initiatives and military connections helped Munet sustain her spiritual ambitions.

Munet wanted her *foyers* to instill a particular Catholic sensibility, a “Christian conscience” soldiers could bring back to West Africa. “After their military service” Munet wrote, “they will find themselves in a pagan milieu. It is thus indispensable to guard them against the ills of this milieu; they must know how to discern this and be ready in advance to reject it.”³⁶ Unlike colonial neo-traditionalists, Munet presented West African milieus as something to overcome rather than preserve. This did not mean she rejected all the “familiar” objects adorning other *foyers*. She wanted her *foyers* to give soldiers an “impression of being at home. Various things that remind them of their country and convince them that here the black race is loved and that we understand their habits, can be gathered in this site.”³⁷ Munet wanted to cater to *tirailleurs*' particular habits to demonstrate that they were understood and cared for in France. Yet this familiarity ultimately served her goal of transforming soldiers' spirits.

African languages, at least for Munet, were one of the most important things to keep out of these *foyers*. She discouraged women in the *foyers*, who had often served as missionaries in West Africa, from using languages they may have learned overseas. She conceded that

³⁵ Ibid: 157-163.

³⁶ “Étude sur la formation et le fonctionnement des ‘Foyers’ pour les Noirs” Marie-Thérèse de Jésus, Décembre 1935, APSCSC. “une conscience chrétienne [sic.] ... Or, leur vie va se retrouver, après le service militaire, en milieu païen. Il est donc indispensable de les prémunir contre tout ce qui est blâmable dans ce milieu ; qu’ils sachent le discerner et être, d’avance, bien décidés à le rejeter.”

³⁷ Ibid. “Dans ce local ils doivent se trouver contents et avoir une impression de « chez eux ». Diverses choses qui peuvent leur rappeler leur pays et les convaincre qu’ici on aime la race noire et qu’on en comprend les habitudes, peuvent être réunies dans ce local.”

catechisms sometimes needed to be done in African languages and that soldiers might enjoy meeting someone who knew their native tongue. However, if a sister “developed a particular interest in natives whose language they speak, those of other nationalities will resent this and distance themselves from the *Foyer*.”³⁸ Sharing a language other than French might alienate non-speakers in a space designed to combat isolation. Furthermore, private chats were the first steps towards overly-familiar relations between French sisters and male West African pupils. Non-European languages, vital to overseas missionary service, could not return to these French *foyers*.

When it came to material objects, Munet similarly opted for materials that she believed evoked French practices instead of the supposedly “African” comforts found in other military *foyers*. When listing goods for a *foyer* in Fréjus, Munet indicated that the space needed a harmonium or piano, religious or military pictures, books on religious and moral subjects, and games like checkers. As an extra treat, movies could be screened, “on the Old and New Testament, Martyrs, Lourdes, etc. sometimes comedies, but rarely and in good taste.”³⁹ For soldiers deemed more “primitive,” Munet recommended unnamed patience building or construction games, as well as instruments like flutes, ocarinas, and harmonicas.⁴⁰ In the eyes of these *foyers* promoters though, the most important activity was catechism. One booklet the order made about sisters’ experience in these *foyers* made this preference for catechism clear. Anticipating readers’ worries that a soldiers needed relaxation more than conversion, the pamphlet described an anecdote involving one visitor’s response to seeing a group of *tirailleurs* playing checkers in a *foyer*. “Isn’t this better than catechism all the time?” the visitor asked.

³⁸ Ibid. “S’il manifestait un intérêt plus spécial aux indigènes dont il parle la langue, ceux des autres nationalités le ressentiraient et s’éloigneraient du Foyer.”

³⁹ Ibid. “Parfois des projections sur l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testament, les Martyrs, Lourdes, etc. quelques comiques, mais peu et de bon goût.”

⁴⁰ “Suite de l’étude sur ‘les Foyers,’ APSCSC.

“Surprised, the players stopped and staring at their interlocutor, one of the black men responded, ‘*Catessis*, it’s more good than anything!’”⁴¹ The visitor had their own assumptions about how *tirailleurs* would want to spend their time, and a leisurely checkers game seemed more appropriate than Catholic pedagogy. By claiming to directly quote a soldier, using the grammatically incorrect French often derisively associated with *tirailleurs*, the pamphlet tried to prove soldiers’ affection for catechism above all other activities.

Amidst these emphases on transformation, Munet believed that *foyers*’ ability to convert *tirailleurs* rested in part on preserving what she believed was an essential element of West African societies: hierarchy. The pamphlet’s preface stated clearly that, “the *Foyer* is ‘their home.’” The women running these *foyers* made these men feel at home by striving “to recreate their native milieu, they [soldiers] feel understood, loved maternally and guided towards eternal perspectives.”⁴² Like other *foyers*, female labor was central to making soldiers feel at home. However, the milieu they tried to recreate depended on a specific set of social hierarchies. According to Munet, African “social organizations keep them in a form of submission, in a humble dependence on a highly organized hierarchy, even within the family.”⁴³ Echoing contemporary anthropologists, Munet grounded West African social reproduction in hierarchical social units.⁴⁴ Munet’s emphasis on “submission” also reflected the central role deference to authority played in certain strains of early twentieth-century French Catholic femininity and the

⁴¹ *Les Ames de Nos Tirailleur: Souvenirs recueillis par leurs Sœurs Missionnaires-Catéchistes* (Lyon, Emmanuel Vite, 1940), 96. “ça c’est mieux, n’est-ce pas, que toujours le catéchisme ?” – Surpris, les joueurs s’arrêtent et, dévisageant l’interlocuteur, l’un des Noirs répond froidement : ‘*Catessis*, c’est bon plus que tout !’

⁴² Ibid: 11. “Leur Foyer est leur ‘chez eux’. Là, où l’on s’efforce de leur rappeler leur milieu indigène, ils se sentent compris, aimés maternellement et guidés vers ces perspectives éternelles que leur révèle l’instruction catéchistique de chaque soir. »

⁴³ “Suite de l’étude sur ‘les Foyers,’ APSCSC. “...leurs organisations sociales les maintiennent dans la soumission, dans une humble dépendance d’une hiérarchie très organisée même dans la famille.”

⁴⁴ Stephen R Wooten, “Colonial Administration and the Ethnography of the Family in the French Soudan,” *Cahiers d’Études africaines* 131, no. XXXIII-3 (1993): 419-446.

military these men served.⁴⁵ Munet tried to convert these men by merging Catholic hierarchies with the “submission” that she believed anchored “native milieus.”

Emphasizing these power divisions also alleviated the perils of interracial relations in the *foyers*. Munet discouraged casual conversations that could, “establish a certain equality between the soldier and sister, who must only be his guide and mother towards the good, that is to say, someone above ordinary and natural creatures.”⁴⁶ Facilitating spiritual transformation depended on sisters’ untouchable maternal authority. Emphasizing maternity also desexualized these women, combatting anxiety about inter-racial sex and assuring white women’s superiority. Munet’s ability to make these *foyers* in the first place depended on her capacity to navigate hierarchical military and religious institutions. She brought similar structures into these surrogate homes, hoping this would turn *tirailleurs* into Catholic soldiers fighting for France and Christ.

Around the same time that Munet was making her Franco-African Catholic spaces, another female activist promoted a very different vision of the places and futures to which African soldiers belonged. In the early 1930s, Henriette Simon created a center in Marseille to welcome and educate France’s colonial soldiers: *La Zaouia-Medersa*. As Simon’s granddaughter Élisabeth Silberfeld explained to me during an interview, Simon was born to a bourgeois family in 1872 and married Lieutenant Emile Simon in 1900. Soon after their marriage, the couple moved to Morocco, where they worked with the famous commander and colonial administrator Hubert Lyautey. Silberfeld said that her grandmother, or “Colonelle Simon” as she came to be known, enthusiastically participated in camp life and philanthropic endeavors across colonial

⁴⁵ Francine Muel Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine: A Contribution to a Political Sociology of Gender*, trans. Kathleen A. Johnson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 125-170.

⁴⁶ “Suite de l’étude sur ‘les Foyers,’” APSCSC. “Non, rien de personnel qui permette que s’établisse une certaine égalité entre le Tirailleur et la Sœur, laquelle doit être uniquement, pour lui, sa mère et son guide vers le bien, c’est-à-dire quelqu’un au-dessus des créatures ordinaires et naturelles.”

Morocco for nineteen years.⁴⁷ While her husband’s death in 1920 forced Simon to return to France, this did not end her colonial trajectory. Within a few years of her return, Simon began promoting a self-made “Simon Method” to teach colonial soldiers to write French. To describe her grandmother’s enthusiasm for working with colonial soldiers, Silberfeld showed me several of her grandmother’s letters and pictures, including a 1930 photograph of Simon with several *tirailleurs* pupils (Fig. 2). Like Munet, Simon’s access to these soldiers depended on connections to local and national institutions. However, Simon’s access stemmed from familial links to the military itself. Like other widows of colonial officials, Simon used her status and freedom from marital expectations to forge a new role in France’s colonial mission.⁴⁸ By 1934, this path led Simon to create the *Zaouia-Medersa* and promote her own vision of imperial unity.



Figure 3. 2: Photograph of Simon (center-left) with several *tirailleur* soldiers at a camp in Toulon running what Simon called a “Nomad School.” Private collection of Élisabeth Silberfeld, Toulon 1930.

Simon sought to use the *Zaouia-Medersa* to forge a permanent Franco-Islamic space in Marseille. While Simon did not invoke the term *foyer*, the label she chose and the way this space was described in promotional literature made it clear she wanted the *Zaouia* to furnish the kind

⁴⁷ Interview with Élisabeth Silberfeld, June 17, 2019, Paris, France.

⁴⁸ Julia Clancy-Smith, “L’École Rue du Pacha, Tunis: l’enseignement de la femme arabe et ‘la Plus Grande France’ (1900-1914)” *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 12 (2000): 33-55.

of material, emotional, and social anchoring other military *foyers* hoped to provide. The term *zaouia* referred to Moroccan urban charitable institutions Simon likely encountered or heard about during her time in Morocco. “The *Zaouia*, in the Muslim world, is a refuge, a site of hospitality open to all, especially travelers and the poor” the organization’s founding statutes explained, “this will be, in Marseille, a gathering site for all the natives of Africa and other French colonies.”⁴⁹ The kind of *zaouias* this declaration described first emerged in fifteenth and sixteenth century Moroccan cities as locations in neighborhoods anchored by Sufi saints’ tombs where poor or infirm urbanites could receive alms and shelter.⁵⁰ Promotional literature for the *Zaouia-Medersa* directly compared “the moral and social protection that we want to organize in Marseille for colonial natives” to the services provided by Moroccan elites at pre-colonial *Zaouias* in cities like Marrakesh.⁵¹ The *medersa* part of the title referred to Islamic schools that French authorities often tried to fold into their own colonial infrastructures.⁵² Simon’s institution echoed a broader effort to promote French power by adapting Islamic norms to their own ends.

Simon’s effort stood out in this broader trend by creating a Franco-Islamic space that accommodated all of France’s Muslim subjects, regardless of race. This flew in the face of long-standing distinctions made by many colonial officials between “black” and “Arab” Islam.⁵³

Simon bucked this trend and invited West and North African soldiers into her *Zaouia*. In a letter

⁴⁹ “La Zaouïa-Medersa Refuge école fondée à Marseille par le Colonel Simon,” 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM. “La Zaouïa, dans le monde musulman, est le refuge, le lieu de l’hospitalité ouvert à tous, surtout aux voyageurs et aux pauvres. Ce sera, à Marseille, le centre de réunion de tous les indigènes d’Afrique et autres colonies françaises. »

⁵⁰ Ouidad Tebbaa, “Donner pour exister : voyage au cœur de la zaouïa de Sidi Bel Abbès,” *La pensée de midi* 14, no. 1 (2005): 58-61.

⁵¹ Promotional sheet for Zaouïa-Medersa, 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM “cette protection morale et sociale que nous voulons organiser à Marseille pour les indigènes coloniaux”

⁵² Samuel DeJohn Anderson, *Domesticating the Médersa: Franco-Muslim Education and Colonial Rule in Northwest Africa, 1850-1960* (PhD diss. University of California- Los Angeles, 2018); Rudolph T. Ware. *The Walking Qur’an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

⁵³ Ware, *The Walking Qur’an*, 2014: 196-202; David Robinson. “France as a ‘Muslim Power,’ *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 75-96.

sent from Marseille, Simon explained that “the Senegalese come here once [a week] and I also have as students some very good Arabs, foremen in the factories.”⁵⁴ In addition to demonstrating her attention to North and West African recruits, this comment revealed that Simon expanded her work beyond the military’s ranks by bringing in some of Marseille’s Maghrebi workers. While it is unclear if West and North African students came in at the same time, Simon wanted to work with both North and West African Muslims living in this port city.

Beyond unifying Marseille’s colonial Muslim subjects, promoters presented Simon’s *Zaouia* as a guarantee of colonial unity in a time of financial hardship. Like workers across the world during the 1930s, the city’s colonial workers faced massive unemployment and material precarity. One promotional pamphlet evoked these unemployed colonial laborers as a key target of the *Zaouia*’s work. “They love Marseille and France and, despite the difficulties they experience here, they want to stay” the pamphlet explained. This love deserved to be rewarded “because they were the BROTHERS IN ARMS of our husbands, sons, and brothers during the war.” Colonial subjects’ commitment and wartime sacrifices meant that France, “their MOTHER-COUNTRY,” owed these men “the protection, kindness, and instruction indispensable for living happily in an advanced civilized country.”⁵⁵ This invocation of military fraternity contrasted with increasing xenophobic attacks on foreign workers in cities like

⁵⁴ Private Collection Élisabeth Siberfeld, Letter from Henriette Simon, Marseille, May 11, no year indicated. “mais les sénégalais viennent ici une autre fois et j’ai aussi comme élèves, quelques arabes très bien, contremaitres dans les usines”

⁵⁵ “La Zaouïa’ Refuge-École Pour les Indigènes Coloniaux de passage ou résidant à Marseille,” 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM. “Ici, comme dans leur pays, ces hommes travaillent, et malgré le chômage de la crise actuelle, ils subsistent, ne mendient jamais, partageant charitablement entre trois ou quatre d’entre eux le travail que l’un d’eux a pu trouver, afin qu’aucun ne manque de nourriture. Ils aiment Marseille et la France et, malgré tant de difficulté à y vivre, ils veulent y rester. Ce que nous leur devons alors – car ils ont été pendant la guerre les FRERE D’ARMES de nos maris, de nos fils, de nos frères – ce que la France leur doit, puisque qu’elle est leur MERE-PATRIE, c’est la protection, la bonté, l’instruction indispensable pour vivre heureux dans un pays avancé en civilisation.”

Marseille during the Great Depression.⁵⁶ If this pamphlet's fraternal call did not convince people to support the *Zaouia*, the writer appealed to readers economic self-interest. These veterans were "not only France's children, but also her clients."⁵⁷ The pamphlet described France's distant colonial markets filled with soap, candles, and sugar made in Marseille. Giving these men negative memories of France would discourage them from buying these wares upon their return. This argument resonated with French authorities who hoped that colonial markets could protect France from the worst damages of the Depression, claims that carried a particular weight in part as embedded in the imperial economy as Marseille.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the reference to the danger of negative memories echoed a reason many French officials embraced the politics of dwelling during World War I: colonial migrants domestic suffering in the metropole threatened France's prestige in the colonies. Patriotism and economic survival justified the *Zaouia*'s attempts to help North and West Africans feel at home in Marseille, and by extension, the empire as a whole.

Simon's work took on a new physical and political hue when she shifted her operations to Paris. By 1939, she had received funding and permission to open up a center in the capital, called simply "*La Zaouïa*." Her new site stood, or rather floated, on the Seine river in the city-center. This new *Zaouïa*, operated out of a houseboat, served as a school for colonial soldiers and a dwelling for Simon. However, she herself did not divide these two roles. "I miraculously received authorization to have classes for these men on my houseboat," Simone wrote in a letter, "and consequently, to approach whenever possible the Military School (Arabs) and the Invalides (Senegalese). I find all these brave men charming because they love me [and] are at home in my

⁵⁶ Mary Dewhurst Lewis, "The Strangeness of Foreigners: Policing Migration and Nation in Interwar Marseille" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 20, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 65-96.

⁵⁷ "La Zaouïa' Refuge-École Pour les Indigènes Coloniaux de passage ou résidant à Marseille," 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM. "Mais, non seulement ils sont les enfants de la France, mais ils sont aussi SES CLIENTS. »

⁵⁸ Martin Thomas, *The French Empire Between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005).

home.”⁵⁹ This shared home rested within walking distance from the Invalides, the heart of France’s Military, and the Quai d’Orsay, the headquarters of France’s Minister of Colonies. As a journalist put it in July 1939, the *Zaouia* sat at “the heart of Paris.” The article said that “Mme. Simon lives there, but the most beautiful room is reserved for the classroom, lined with maps of ‘our Mother’ France: of the colonies, small banners, slogans and photographs, adorned with flowers, of which the most beautiful surround the portrait of Marshal Lyautey.”⁶⁰ These images celebrated the empire and the colonial leader Lyautey that Simone worked with in Morocco. In this school, Simone literally anchored her vision of imperial unity in the heart of the empire.

The *Zaouia*’s novel location and its status as a shared space for West and North Africans created a unique Franco-Islamic military milieu. Rather than prioritize recreating spaces or habits marked as “West African” like some *foyers*, or the transformed West African subject that Munet hoped to create, Simone’s *Zaouia* promoted the imperial connections military service created. A fund-raising pamphlet for the Paris school included pictures of the center’s classes. (Fig. 3) Above a picture of the houseboat, two photographs depicted “Classes to Arabs” and “Classes to Senegalese.” (Fig. 4) Other than taxidermized tigers popping out of the corners, the image of the Senegalese classes conformed to the journalistic description of maps and pictures adorning the wall. One picture depicted an unidentified man donning the kind of face-veil seen in many Saharan and Sahelian communities. Another corner carried a flag adorned with the Star and Crescent often associated with Islam. The exact connotations of these images remain unclear. However, they reflected Simone’s persistent effort to visual and cultural forms from the Islamic

⁵⁹ Private Collection of Élisabeth Siberfeld, Letter from Henriette Simon, August 11, no year indicated, “j’ai obtenu par miracle l’autorisation de faire les classes aux hommes sur ma péniche et par conséquent [sic.] de l’approcher tant que possible de l’École Militaire (arabes) et des Invalides (sénégalais). Tous ces braves types que je trouve charmants parce qu’ils m’adorent sont chez moi comme chez eux.”

⁶⁰ “La Péniche Éducatrice,” 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM. “amarrée en plein Paris... Mme Simon y habite, mais la plus belle pièce est réservée à la salle d’école, tapissée de cartes de la France ‘notre mère’ : des colonies, d’oriflammes, de devises et de photographies, ornée de fleurs, dont les plus belles sont auprès du portrait du maréchal Lyautey.”

world to create a space she believed would welcome France’s diverse Muslim soldiers. More so than other military *foyers*, Simone prioritized the Islamic faith to create a space where colonial soldiers from both West and North Africa could feel at home.



Figure 3. 3: Pamphlet advertising work of Zaouia in Paris. “La Zaouia-Medersa Refuge école fondée à Marseille par la Colonelle Simon,” 3SLOTFOM/34, CAOM.



Figure 3. 4: Photograph of African soldiers in *La Zaouia*. Private collection of Élisabeth Siberfeld, undated.

If Islam unified Simon's students, she believed that the military and the broader colonial project the military supported connected her to these men. Simon lived in both the Parisian and Marseille *Zaouias*, a choice she defended passionately in private letters. "The ZAOUIA is MY HOME" she declared "and in everyone's opinion, it is PERFECT"⁶¹ While she publicly presented the *Zaouia-Medersa* as a shelter for African soldiers, Simon proclaimed it as her own kind of refuge in her personal correspondences. "To stay a bit colonial between the sky and the water," she wrote "I have moved into a houseboat. To not stay outside of the military life where I was born, where I have lived, which I could not leave behind, I am still teaching classes to soldiers and to African soldiers which means I am constantly speaking or hearing Arabic."⁶² Colonial military migration had transformed what Simon needed to feel at home. Recreating the sounds and crowds she experienced in Morocco helped her life in France feel "a bit colonial" and thus more like the social and material world she had inhabited for almost two decades. Other *foyers* used "African" objects or female authority to recreate a milieu *tirailleurs*' supposedly needed in a foreign country. By contrast, Simon brought military images and young men from across Africa into her own dwelling to feel at home in the land of her birth.

These military *foyers* carried different ideas of what it took to make West Africans feel at home, and why that goal was worthy in the first place. However, planners and observers all believed that domestic environments could help create military men who could cement imperial connections and stability. Organizers' ability to turn these aspirations into actual *foyers* depended

⁶¹ Private Collection of Élisabeth Silberfeld, Letter from Henriette Simon, Marseille, May 1, year not provided. "Ici c'est un vrai plaisir, et avec le beau soleil qui entre à plein par mes 5 fenêtres dont trois au levant et 2 au couchant, je t'assure que ma zaouïa est gaie et parfaite. ...La ZAOUIA est MA MAISON, et de l'avis de tous, elle est PARFAITE."

⁶² Ibid. "Pour rester un peu colonial entre le ciel et l'eau, je me suis installée sur une péniche. Pour ne pas rester en dehors de la vie militaire où je suis née, où j'ai vécu, dont je ne peux pas me passer, je continue toujours à faire la classe aux soldats et aux soldats d'Afrique ce qui fait que je vis constamment en parlant ou en entendant parler arabe."

on different connections. The CATN and the UFA were large well-funded charity organizations with extensive links to the French military. By contrast, Munet and Simon relied on ties to various French institutions to turn personal visions into physical realities. These networks helped military *foyers*' organizers enact their ideas about how to manage and mold West African soldiers. Like Diallo's surrogate mother, these organizers hoped to use the comforts of home to solidify the ties binding *tirailleurs* to the French military and the empire it defended.

Sheltering West African "Bad Boys"

If *foyers* for soldiers sought to complement life in barracks, those for workers operated in very different social landscapes. A brief advertisement in the July 1930 edition of the pan-African newspaper *La Race Nègre* evoked the worlds West African workers navigated in interwar France. Seeking to help "if our compatriots want less nostalgia for their homelands" the announcement listed bars, clubs, and restaurants in Bordeaux and Marseille where black readers could "raise your morale through close contact with other comrades."⁶³ These establishments gave African workers male comradeship and connections to distant "homelands." Many activists had mixed opinions of these alcohol-infused refuges. Some leaders saw them as threats to their own programs. Other figures used bars as launching pads for their own organizing campaigns. Across these differences, activists wanted to make *foyers* that would supplant these bars as the main sites where African workers could fight nostalgia or find comrades. In doing so, they wanted to forge social networks that could adapt or reject imperial institutions. However, the fact that no *foyer* appeared on this list reflected the difficulty organizers had realizing their ambitions.

Interwar France had a small and scattered population of African workers. While exact figures are difficult to ascertain, official censuses of France's African worker and student

⁶³ "Pour plus de liaison" *La Race Nègre*, July 1930, 14Miom/3034, 23 G 44 2, CAOM. "si nos compatriotes veulent avoir moins de nostalgie du pays. Atal...relèverez votre moral par le contact plus étroit avec d'autres camarades."

population taken between 1924 and 1926 identified 2,580 individuals spread across the country.⁶⁴ While these figures likely reflect only a half or even a third of France's actual African civilian population at the time, they provide valuable insights into African urbanites' origins and locations.⁶⁵ Of these officially-counted migrants, 1,685 came from French West Africa, while the rest hailed from Madagascar and French Equatorial Africa. Spread out across the hexagon, 793 of these individuals lived in Paris. Among these Afro-Parisians, 500 worked as manual laborers, while the remainder were students, domestic servants, or employees at hotels, restaurants, or entertainment venues. Outside Paris, the report listed 800 African sailors in various port cities and 560 provincial manual laborers. These limited figures reveal a divide between provincial workers employed largely in maritime trades and Africans in Paris or other locales doing industrial or domestic labor. Different occupations influenced the networks available to workers as well as how various activists tried to give these migrants a home.

These census records' broad yet limited view of France's African population reflect state agents' limited capacity to keep track of African migrants. Agent Désiré, a police informant, regularly turned up empty handed when tracking down African workers in the capital. At the official home of one Marie Sagou on January 16, 1926, the doorman told Désiré that they "have never known a black inhabitant in this building."⁶⁶ A few days earlier, Désiré tried to find Séga Kamara at 17 *passage Moulin*, only to discover that no building on that street even had that number. However, he did find out that Kamara frequently visited building number seven on the

⁶⁴ Minister of Colonies to Minister of the Ministry of the Interior, February 5, 1924, 6SLOTFOM/9, CAOM; "Nombre approximatif d'indigènes des colonies Françaises Résidant en France, Classées par Profession et par Locations," November 29, 1926, 6SLOTFOM/9, CAOM.

⁶⁵ Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, 24-27.

⁶⁶ Letter from Désiré, January 16, 1926, 6SLOTFOM/9, CAOM. "la concierge déclare n'avoir jamais connu de nègre habitant l'immeuble."

same street. In that residence, Désiré found six Senegalese working class men and learned that two other Senegalese men had recently been evicted. Yet Kamara was nowhere to be found.

Désiré's frustrated search hints at the way that literal residences did not always provide African workers with the social and geographic moorings associated with home. In another futile search, Désiré said that the official address for Olzo Jean Marie, a dancer at the *Folie Bergère*, was actually a night club called the *bal Tabarin*. Désiré did discover that a black man named Jean-Marie frequently patronized this club.⁶⁷ Similarly, the address for Abdar N'Diaye turned out to be the former location of a "boxing establishment frequented by many negroes." Désiré concluded that "it is possible that this black man was one of this establishment's clients, but he is unknown in the building."⁶⁸ These changed addresses likely reflect how economic precarity made it difficult for some migrants to stay in one residence for long. Bars or boxing clubs may have been the only permanent addresses these men could use on official documents. Yet by becoming physical reference points, these sites may have also given these migrants a sense of orientation that briefly occupied rooms could not provide. Bars had long served more than just drinks to working-class men in Paris. Meager salaries and cramped dwellings deprived many working men of the promised comforts of bourgeois domesticity. Atop barstools they forged semi-private spheres grounded in male comradery.⁶⁹ By the interwar years, these gathering spaces also became contact points between black and white Parisians. Bars, boxing rings, and night clubs staged tense and intimate connections amongst Paris' interracial population.⁷⁰ These

⁶⁷ Letter from Désiré January 13, 1925, 6 SLOTFOM/9, CAOM.

⁶⁸ Letter from Désiré January 13, 1925, 6SLOTFOM/9, CAOM. "il y avait à cette adresse une établissement de boxe qui était fréquenté par beaucoup des Nègres...il est possible que ce noir fût une client de cet établissement mais on ne les connait pas dans l'immeuble"

⁶⁹ W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among the French Working Class, 1789-1914*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁷⁰ Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 2015; Timothée Jobert. *Champions Noirs, Racisme Blanc? La Métropole Et Les Sportifs Noirs En Contexte Colonial (1901-1944)* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2006).

venues gave West Africans denied the privileges of bourgeois domesticity due to their class or race alternative sites to forge personal connections or simply relax.

Many radical black activists in Paris wanted *foyers* to take on the social roles that bars and other public venues played to promote black political unity within this colonial metropolis. By the mid-1920s, many black activists began to establish race-based groups to foster “racial consciousness” among African and Antillean Parisians.⁷¹ One of the first such organizations, the *Comité de Défense de la Race Nègre* (CDRN), formed in February 1926 under the leadership of the Guadeloupean Communist Julius Gothon-Lunion and the Senegalese veteran Lamine Senghor.⁷² The CDRN fit a *foyer* into their pursuit of a new pan-African sensibility. “The Committee puts at its members’ use a museum consecrated to *l’art nègre*,” the CDRN decided in a 1926 General Assembly “a *foyer* designated to give refuge to its active members who need it, a library composed with books on colonial studies, novels, periodicals, political journals, literary reviews, and diverse collections made available to everyone”.⁷³ By pairing this “refuge” with artistic and literary works related to the *art nègre* movement and colonial studies, the CDRN sought to help black Parisians participate in contemporary artistic and intellectual currents as observers rather than the observed. While “traditional” objects in military foyers sought to return men to a familiar past, the CDRN wanted their domestic objects to usher in a more egalitarian future. They sought to provide their comrades with the daily materials needed to find “refuge” as well as the cultural resources that would enfold them within a broader pan-African movement.

⁷¹ Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, 125-126.

⁷² Ibid. 130

⁷³ Ibid. “Le Comité met à la disposition de ses membres actifs un musée consacré à l’art nègre, un foyer destiné à offrir un refuge à ses membres actifs nécessiteux, une bibliothèque composé de livres d’études coloniales, de romans, de publications périodiques, journaux politiques, revues littéraires et collections diverses mis à la disposition de chacun.”

By specifically framing their *foyer* as a shelter, the CDRN combined efforts to create a racially grounded community in Paris with attempts to battle literal homelessness. In one 1926 tract, the CDRN declared that their *foyer* would, “on the one hand welcome all the negroes passing through Paris and, on the other hand, offer a refuge for our needy sisters and brothers.”⁷⁴ Unlike their military counterparts, these *foyers* served people whose shelter was not guaranteed in the form of military camps or barracks. Even before any *foyer* came up, the CDRN supported black Parisians struggling to keep a roof over their heads in the capital. In late 1926, the Soudanese CDRN member Tiemoko Kouyauté wrote a letter to Parisian judicial authorities on behalf of the Bamako-born domestic servant Mamadou Touré. After a pay dispute, Touré’s employer forced him to leave Paris for Le Havre. From there the still unpaid Touré was told to catch a ship back to Dakar. However, as Touré explained in a letter that Kouyauté transcribed, at the Le Havre train station he found members of the CDRN who “let me return to Paris at their expense and took care of me for two days.”⁷⁵ While waiting to resolve his pay dispute, Touré lived in Kouyauté’s apartment. In a way, these interventions echoed the work done by foreign embassies in interwar France. Embassies and consulates representing Southern and Eastern Europe countries provided services to their nationals working in France to assert sovereignty over these mobile citizens. The lack of such support for colonial subjects constituted a major distinction between European and colonial labor migrants.⁷⁶ The CDRN tried to fill this void and demonstrate that they could defend black Parisians’ interests. Even without the *foyer*, Kouyauté’s own home and his work for Touré provided the “refuge” the Committee envisioned.

⁷⁴ Ibid. “Appel A Tous Nos Sœurs et Frères Nègres! Aux peuples des colonies! A Tous les Humanitaires du Monde!” “pour accueillir tous les Nègres de passage à Paris d’une part, pour offrir un refuge à nos sœurs et frères nécessiteux.”

⁷⁵ “Lettre du Nègre TOURÉ MAMADOU, originaire de Bamako au Président du Conseil des Prud’hommes” December 23, 1926, 3SLOTFOM/37, CAOM. “Cette organisation me fit revenir à Paris à ses frais et m’entretient 2 jours Durant”

⁷⁶ Rosenberg, *Policing Paris*; Lewis, *The Boundaries of the Republic*.

As their pamphlet stated, the CDRN welcomed not only “brothers,” but also “sisters.” In at least one case, this more gender inclusive orientation led the group’s president Gothom-Lunion to defend a recently homeless black Parisian maid named Florina. Lunion accused one Mme. Baratte of throwing Florina out of her home “like a dog.” Baratte “ripped this child from their native land to leave them on Paris’ cobblestones,” which Lunion likened to modern slavery. If Baratte did not return Florina’s property, provide her overdue wages, end her contract, and pay for her repatriation, the CDRN would notify the city’s press and courts of this “incredible affair [in] the heart of Paris.”⁷⁷ CDRN activists linked Touré and Florina’s homelessness to employers’ abuses. These black Parisians’ inability to feel at home did not stem from life in a new milieu, but racialized economic exploitation. By defending Florina or Touré, the CDRN claimed that inclusion in a supportive black community could help these individuals feel at home.

Despite their hopes, the CDRN’s internal struggles dealt a fatal blow to the organization before it could build their *foyer*. By 1927, the CDRN fell apart over personal conflicts, growing pressure to align with the French Communist Party, and debates about reformist or revolutionary agendas.⁷⁸ Similar power struggles and mutual suspicions plagued many interwar anti-colonial organizations, a problem constantly made harder by pressure from Parisian authorities and their informants.⁷⁹ Furthermore, these organizations’ radical or openly anti-colonial positions, as well as activists suspicion of many French institutions, made it difficult to procure the kind of financial support given to military *foyers*. In the wake of the CDRN’s collapse, Senghor and Kouyauté formed more explicitly anti-colonial mutual-aid societies that combined material

⁷⁷ Letter from Gothom-Lunion to Mme. Baratte, July 22, 1926, 3/SLOTFOM 37, CAOM. “...comme un chien...vous avez arraché cette enfant du sol natal pour la laisser sur le pavé de Paris...cette affaire incroyable et (sic.) plein cœur de Paris.”

⁷⁸ Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*, 150-153.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 21-24, 210-216.

assistance and political organizing. This eventually led Kouyauté to join several West African and Antillean peers to form the *Union des Travailleurs Nègres* (UTN) in 1932, three years after Senghor's death.⁸⁰ After Kouyauté's departure for suspected financial and political misdeeds, the UTN officially joined the French Communist Party.⁸¹ This winding path to the Communist Party ultimately gave black anti-colonial activists the financial and logistical support needed to establish the gathering space their predecessors envisioned.

Communist Party resources gave the UTN the means to inscribe themselves onto Paris' landscape. In 1936, the group shared its headquarters with the Comintern-funded League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression in Paris' 3rd *arrondissement*.⁸² Although Soviet commitment to anti-colonial politics had significantly lessened by 1936, its continued support for the League helped create anti-colonial networks across Europe and the colonized world.⁸³ These connections and a new permanent location helped the UTN's center become a unifying space for radical black Parisians and those interested in their cause. One police report said that the UTN "hosted parties, balls, artistic soirées to raise money and hosted propaganda meetings. They also organize 'cultural Saturdays.'"⁸⁴ These events helped the UTN reappropriate the *vague noire* night-life culture sweeping through 1930s Paris.⁸⁵ Like the CDRN's planned museum, this center helped black Parisians become actors, rather than objects, in the city's cultural scene.

When Comintern support disappeared, the UTN had to adapt and find a new center for its anti-colonial campaign. The dissolution of the League Against Imperialism in 1937 and the

⁸⁰ "a/s de l'Union des Travailleurs Nègres," Paris, May 15 1936, 200010216/37, ANF.

⁸¹ Dewitte, *Les Mouvements Nègres en France*: 304-308.

⁸² "a/s de l'Union des Travailleurs Nègres," Paris, May 15 1936, 200010216/37, ANF.

⁸³ Fredrik Petersson, "La Ligue anti-impérialiste : un espace transnational restreint, 1927-1937," *Monde(s)* 10, no. 2, 2016: 129-150.

⁸⁴ "a/s de l'Union des Travailleurs Nègres," Paris, May 15 1936, 200010216/37, ANF. "Elle donne des fêtes, bals, soirées artistiques pour se procurer de l'argent et elle tient des réunions de propagande."

⁸⁵ Boittin, "Reverse Exoticism & Masculinity," *Colonial Metropolis*, 111-119.

Comintern's retreat from anti-colonial struggles after 1936 forced the UTN to find a new headquarters. With support of the Communist mayor of suburb Epinay-sur-Seine, the group found a new base in Paris' 2nd *arrondissement*. The headquarters' opening ceremony in January 1938 welcomed the wife of Epinay's mayor, the former head of the Communist Party in France's Indian Ocean colonies, a leader of a local Indochinese mutual aid society, and the Surinamese Communist activist Otto Huiswoud.⁸⁶ This diverse group reflected the coalition of local, imperial, and international supporters the UTN turned to in order to keep their mission alive.

The UTN went on to inscribe this radical and diasporic vision onto the very walls of their new center. Police reports indicated that the UTN gave unique names to their new space's rooms, including Ethiopia, Schoelcher, Scottsboro, and Toussaint-Louverture.⁸⁷ Invoking Schoelcher, the nineteenth century face of French abolition, and Toussaint-Louverture, the famous Haitian leader, harkened to a liberatory past within and beyond the French empire. Ethiopia, long a symbol of black sovereignty, gained new resonance amidst the international campaign against the Second Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-1936.⁸⁸ Similarly, citing Scottsboro evoked the global campaign against the execution of the Scottsboro Boys of Alabama that Communist parties across Europe promoted between 1931 and 1934.⁸⁹ Mixing these Francophone, Anglophone, and African labels reflected the internationalism seen at the headquarters' opening ceremonies. The UTN's center concretized an anti-colonial ethos that stretched beyond France's imperial borders.

While these transnational titles reflected leaders' political goals and orientations, certain members had their own ideas about what it meant to have a space where they could exert some

⁸⁶ "Information - Relative à l'Union des Travailleurs Nègres," Paris, January 31, 1938, 200010216/37, ANF.

⁸⁷ "Ouverture de permanences au siège sociale le Galerie Vivienne," Paris, April 6, 1938, 20010216/37, ANF.

⁸⁸ William Randolph Scott, *The Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

⁸⁹ James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker, and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free the Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934" *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (Apr., 2001): 387-430.

control. While police reports lacked extensive details of the UTN's internal proceedings, one notice hints at members' own use of this facility. Initially the UTN's leadership blocked off time and rooms in the center for conferences and meetings each Monday and Thursday from 6:00 to 8:00 PM and Saturday from 3:00 to 9:00 PM. However, "at the request of adherents" a new time slot was reserved on Sundays, "from 3:00 PM to 8:00 PM where they will be allowed to, 'make music'"⁹⁰ While conferences and meetings may have fit the schedules of the UTN's professional or students members, this likely posed problems for working class peers. Class-based tensions over how to use shared spaces arose among other colonial migrant activist groups in interwar Paris.⁹¹ By demanding a Sunday session for leisure and music, members who had work schedules or interests that differed from the UTN's leaders asserted their right to dictate how to use this space. For some leaders, this site provided a sense of belonging grounded in global racial solidarity. At the same time, it gave workers often at the beck and call of employers the chance to decide how to spend their leisure hours. Rather than conflicting, these two uses reflected the diverse ways that this gathering point gave UTN members comforts and connections.

This gulf between movement leaders and working-class peers became more apparent when Parisian organizations tried to spread their vision of black solidarity to French port cities. Kouyauté and Senghor both worked extensively to open branches of their Parisian organizations in Le Havre, Bordeaux, and Marseille. As part of this work, they specifically tried to create local *foyers* that would promote their welfarist and pan-African visions of solidarity.⁹² However, they struggled to create organizations based on the black racial unity the *foyers* were supposed to

⁹⁰ "Ouverture de permanences au siège sociale le Galerie Vivienne," Paris, April 6, 1938, Paris, 20010216/37, ANF. "A la demande d'adhérents, une permanence pourra aussi être éventuellement ouverte le dimanche, de 15 à 20 heures et il serait alors permis 'd'y faire de la musique.'"

⁹¹ Erica J. Peters, "Resistance, Rivalries, and Restaurants: Vietnamese Workers in Interwar France" *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, No. 1 (February 2007): 109-143.

⁹² Wilder, *The French The Imperial Nation State*, 182.

represent.⁹³ In large part, these divisions stemmed from the unique ways that maritime employment structured the social organization of African sailors' daily lives, producing forms of inclusion and exclusion that ran counter to Parisian radicals' notions of black unity.

Ethnicity often informed how French official and African sailors alike constructed social worlds along the docks. Far from being unified, Africans in France's port cities came from diverse locales and spoke a variety of languages. Claude McKay praised this cultural variety, lauding Marseille's "picturesque variety of Negroes" and imagining that "every country of the world where Negroes lived had sent representatives drifting into Marseilles."⁹⁴ While this mixture fueled McKay's vision of diasporic unity, colonial officials focused more on diversity as a source of division. One spy following Kouyauté's 1931 trip to Bordeaux explained that, "the negroes living in our city are very divided, be it by their origin or their syndical education."⁹⁵ To prove their point, the agent said that ethnic divisions determined the clientele at the bars Kouyauté gave speeches at in the city. One bar served mostly Senegambian and Guinean men, while another bar's stools mostly supported men from Cameroon and the Congo. Within these already segregated spaces, Baole and Fanti sailors stuck amongst themselves since they did not speak "the same language as the Senegalese, Soudanese, and Krumen" while Mossi and Bambara sailors understood, "each other through a dialect."⁹⁶ Only the bar that served black sailors of all backgrounds apparently gave Kouyauté a warm welcome. Colonial agents' emphases on rigid ethnic divisions should be taken skeptically. Colonists regularly exacerbated

⁹³ Jennifer Boittin, "The Militant Black Men of Marseille and Paris, 1927-1937," in *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness*, eds. Tricia Danielle Keaton et. al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 221-246.

⁹⁴ McKay, *Banjo*, 68.

⁹⁵ "a/s des navigateurs nègres du port de Bordeaux," 1 M 599, ADG. "les nègres habitant notre ville sont très divisés, tant par leur origine que par leur éducation syndicale"

⁹⁶ Ibid. "Ces derniers ne causent pas la même langue que les sénégalais, soudanais ou KROUMANS, Les MOSSIS et BAMBARAS se comprennent à l'aide d'un dialecte qui n'est qu'un patois."

or invented ethnic divisions to defend their interests. However, this did not mean that these categories had no relationship to how African actors organized their lives.⁹⁷ Linguistic affinity and shared cultural references, as well as the aforementioned social benefits bars provided to working class men, has led generations of migrant workers to forge powerful and at times exclusive connections around pint glasses.⁹⁸ Some West African sailors may have found ethnic linkages a more useful way to feel at home than the black solidarity called for by Kouyauté.

Beyond structuring social networks, ethnic or regional ties often got reinforced through the personalistic nature of maritime employment. Sailors and stevedores faced transient and precarious work schedules, as well as largely clientelist job markets in port-cities like Marseille or Bordeaux.⁹⁹ This led many African maritime workers to rely on familial, linguistic, or village-based connections to find work and shelter.¹⁰⁰ One 1938 governmental report on Africans in Marseille said sailors from the Casamance region of southern Senegal “live like the Soninke, together with their compatriots from their same village. They make cuisine together for the entire room.”¹⁰¹ The Soninke migrants the report described largely came from the Senegal River Valley and have historically constituted the majority of France’s sub-Saharan African population. Since at least the mid-nineteenth century, Soninke migrants relied on village-based support networks

⁹⁷ For highlights of the vast literature on colonial ethnic constructions see Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jonathon Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa,” in *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*, eds. Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 5-50.

⁹⁸ Mark Jayne, Gill Valentine, and Sarah L Holloway, “Emotional, embodied, and affective geographies of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, no. 4 (October 210): 540-554; Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 1996; Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power, and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, C. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996).

⁹⁹ Mary Lewis, “Working the ‘Marseille System’: The Politics of Survival in the Port City” *The Boundaries of the Republic*, 84-117.

¹⁰⁰ Brigitte Bertoncello, “Les marins africains de Marseille: histoire d’un ancrage” *Hommes et Migration*, No. 1224, (Mars-avril 2000): 22-28.

¹⁰¹ “La Vie en France des Originaires de la Casamance,” August 3, 1938, 3SLOTFOM/109, CAOM. “la mandiago vit comme la Sarakolés en commun avec ses compatriotes du même village. Ils font la cuisine pour toute la chambre.”

for food, shelter, and jobs.¹⁰² By contrast, the report said Wolof sailors, often from Senegal's Four Communes and thus French citizens, as well as Sousou sailors from Guinea, did not rely as heavily on village solidarities.¹⁰³ This report acknowledged diversity within Marseille's African residents' use of social networks, while still organizing those differences along ethnic lines. Ethnic or linguistic groups gave officials, and many African sailors themselves, ways to organize and divide Marseille's multicultural labor market.

This ethnically and geographically bounded notion of what communities African migrants belonged to, and what communities could best make them feel at home, influenced the *foyer* proposed by Marseille's *Association Amicale des Originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*. Formed in 1924, this mutual aid society's explicit focus on individuals from French West Africa rejected the kind of diasporic unity evoked by McKay or called for by visiting Parisian radicals.¹⁰⁴ One 1926 report by the colonial officer M. Harlée revealed that the group was not only specifically West African, but dominated by Senegalese men who made up eighty of the group's ninety-two members, almost all of whom were *originaires* from the Four Communes.¹⁰⁵ Harlée learned this fact during a meeting with *Amicale*'s members that eventually came around to the topic of a *foyer*. Rather than reject the French state like their Parisian counterparts, the *Amicale*'s leaders tried to pull in government agents and resources to procure a building in Marseille for their *foyer*. When Harlée told members that finding a building for their *foyer* would be difficult, the vice-president Thierno M'Baye said that "the Government found the means to build schools and barracks to put natives in and it can very well find, if it wants, the

¹⁰² François Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 197-202.

¹⁰³ "Situation des Ouolofs dans la Navigation Métropolitaine," 3SLOTFOM/109, CAOM. "Vie des Soussous et de Quelques-uns Des Originaires de l'A.O.F. dans la Navigation Métropolitaine."

¹⁰⁴ "Originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française (Sté Amicale des) Marseille," 4 M 820, ADBR.

¹⁰⁵ "Rapport de M. Harlée, Administrateur-adjoint des Colonies sur la Société Amicale des originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française à Marseille," 3SLOTFOM/27, CAOM.

necessary money to acquire the site the Association wanted to have.”¹⁰⁶ M’Baye used official efforts to put Africans in spaces that served France’s civilizing mission as leverage to get support for the social space his association sought to create. Just like schools and barracks supported France’s official projects, so too would this *foyer* bolster the *Amicale*’s ambitions.

M’Baye and his peers hoped to use this *foyer* to broadcast their control over the material and spiritual well-being of their compatriots in France’s second city. At one point in his report Harlée listed *Amicale* members’ request for a “site big enough to bring together: 1) the seat of the *Amicale*, 2) a refuge for unemployed compatriots, 3) a cooperative restaurant, 4) an isolated courtyard for brothers, 5) place there to receive Marabouts passing through.”¹⁰⁷ The first three points echoed the goals of Parisian *foyers* that sought to make their organization a known location within an urban landscape where West African migrants could find support. However, the last two points infused Sahelian Muslim approaches to communal space into this imagined *foyer*. The “isolated courtyard” and its explicit designation for men echoed the gender-segregated and exclusive prayer spaces found across the Muslim world. Point five makes the religious use of this *foyer* explicit, describing a space for visiting marabouts, Islamic scholars and leader found across Senegal.¹⁰⁸ Far from being unrelated, many Senegambian clerics used courtyards to create spaces under their spiritual control and outside the reach of non-Islamic political rulers.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ “Rapport de M. Harlée” 3SLOTFOM/27, CAOM. “...le Gouvernement trouvait le moyen de faire bâtir des écoles et des casernes pour mettre les indigènes et qu’il pourrait bien trouver, s’il le voulait, l’argent nécessaire pour acquérir le local que l’Association voudrait avoir.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. “Il avait en effet manifesté le désir d’obtenir de l’Administration pas une subvention, mais un local assez grand pour pouvoir y réunir: 1) le siège de l’Amicale 2) établir un refuge pour leurs compatriotes sans travail 3) y créer un restaurant coopératif 4) y avoir une cour isolée pour leurs frères, 5) pour pouvoir y recevoir les Marabouts de passage.”

¹⁰⁸ Eric S. Ross, “From *Marabout Republics* to *Autonomous Rural Communities*: Autonomous Muslim Towns in Senegal” *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, eds. Toylin Falola and Steven J Salm (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 243-265

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.; Cheikh Anta Babou, “Contesting Space, Shaping Places: Making Room for the Muridiyya in Colonial Senegal, 1912-45,” *The Journal of African History* 46, no. 3 (2005): 405-26.

Instead of forging a black international ethos, this *foyer's* form and the practices it facilitated emphasized occupants' connection to Muslim and Senegalese social networks.

By transferring certain Senegalese practices to Marseille, the *Amicale's* leaders hoped their *foyer* would bolster age and gendered hierarchies labor migration challenged. Not relying on Harlée to get the support the *foyer* needed, M'Baye sent a request directly to the Governor General of the AOF Jules Carde. "There exists already in Marseille around three thousand Senegalese of different races who travel to varying amounts." M'Baye explained to Governor Carde. "Many are bad boys. When we have our foyer and our little Mosque, we will be able to get together and have a real family where it will be possible to get to know one another. At that moment, our *Amicale* would be able to exercise a real moral aid for our compatriots."¹¹⁰ While exact statistics are unavailable, M'Baye most likely overstated the number of Senegalese men in Marseille to bolster this *foyer's* importance. Regardless of the number, M'Baye's letter reveals his anxiety about "bad boys" living outside a "real family." This echoed the anxiety about migration's impact on young men's morality, sexual health, and familial connections that motivated military *foyers*. Earlier cited reports of village-based migration raise doubts about these men's isolation. However, even these links happened within small family units, outside a central leading body infused with the religious authority provided by M'Baye's "little Mosque." Anxiety about these "bad boys" reflects how many young Western Sahelian men had long used migration to assert independence from village age-based hierarchies.¹¹¹ This new *foyer* would allow men like M'Baye to assert the kind of state-sponsored gerontocratic authority that sat at

¹¹⁰ Thierno M'Baye to Governor-General of Afrique Occidentale Française, March 15 1927, 14 Miom/3034, CAOM. "Il existe déjà à Marseille environ trois mille Sénégalais de différentes races qui travaillent plus ou moins. Beaucoup sont de mauvais garçons. Quand nous aurons un foyer avec une petite Mosquée nous pourrons tous nous grouper et avoir ainsi une véritable famille où il sera possible de tous se connaître. A ce moment notre Amicale pourra exercer une aide morale et réelle sur tous les compatriotes."

¹¹¹ Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants*.

the heart of many interwar colonial efforts to reestablish “traditional” social structures across Africa.¹¹² M’Baye tried to justify this *foyer* by claiming it would help him and his peers combat the “detrribalization” worrying French officials across the empire.

Despite his initial reluctance, Harlée eventually came around to this *foyer* idea. In a follow up to his initial report, Harlée described the project’s merits to his superiors. “The *foyer* would be a refuge” he explained, “a shelter where one is at home, where one could find a reasonably priced meal with healthy distractions; it would be an emanation of a distant family through a protective France.”¹¹³ Harlée echoed M’Baye’s own language by saying that the *foyer*’s “family” could protect young Senegalese men from the perils of an unregulated urban life. Creating a space for these sailors in Marseille would provide a “refuge for colonials who only have bars where they find alcohol and all the various temptations that come with it.”¹¹⁴ Like M’Baye, Harlée presented this *foyer* as a way to save young Senegalese men from the moral and social perils of city life. Yet he emphasized how this *foyer* would create a meeting point between a “distant family” and a “protective France,” not a distant village or Islamic world. Harlée’s motivation for supporting the *foyer* echoed the idea that domestic assistance could forge affective links to France invoked by military *foyers* planners. While these workers did not have *tirailleurs*’ official uniforms or symbolic power, Harlée believed that giving them a home away from home would similarly bolster support for France’s imperial project.

¹¹² Dorothy Louise Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy (eds), *“Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2001).

¹¹³ “Rapport de M. Harlée, Administrateur-adjoint des Colonies sur la Société Amicale des originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française à Marseille,” 3SLOTFOM/27, CAOM. “Le foyer serait en outre le refuge, l’abri où l’on est chez soi, où l’on trouve une table à des prix abordable et de saines distractions ; ce serait l’émanation de la famille éloignée au sein de la France protectrice.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid. “Ce serait le refuge pour les coloniaux qui n’ont actuellement que les bars où ils trouvent l’alcool et les tentations d’ordres très divers entraînant avec elles les conséquences qui aigrissent les victimes.”

When another officer, L. Josselme, met the *Amicale's* directors to discuss the *foyer*, he evoked different administrative interests in this project. He envisioned the *foyer* as a “prophylactic center” protecting West African men from venereal diseases. While Senegalese sailors in Dakar could get treatment against these diseases through the city’s newly established syphilis treatment center or through their families, sailors lacked protection, “in France because they are not controlled, and they are little or not at all used to the contingencies of metropolitan life.”¹¹⁵ Isolated in a foreign world full of “contingencies” Josselme felt these young men needed a guiding hand to protect their bodies and minds. Ultimately, he said that this protection would “facilitate our control and assistance actions.”¹¹⁶ Concerns about venereal disease inspired anxieties about young men in French cities for decades.¹¹⁷ Josselme hoped this *foyer* would combat this sexual threat and help French authorities access a population who often eluded official monitors and informants. Assisting and controlling these men was one in the same.

M’Baye, Josselme, and Harlée all saw West African men’s youth and isolation as a problem, and the *foyer* as a solution. They had their own reasons for evoking the link between domestic well-being and governmental authority that formed the politics of dwelling’s core. Whether by adapting Senegalese religious and spatial forms or deploying French colonial modes of surveillance, these men applied their own understandings of how imperial power should operate to justify making this *foyer* a surrogate home for Marseille’s West African “bad boys.”

Despite this enthusiasm, the *Amicale's foyer* never came into existence. Governor General Carde’s office responded to M’Baye’s request by commending the association’s work,

¹¹⁵ “Locale des originaires de l’A.O.F.,” February 21, 1926 Association Amicale des originaires de l’A.O.F., SLOTFOM/27, CAOM. “en France parce qu’il n’est pas dirigé, parce qu’il est peu ou pas habitué aux contingences de la vie métropolitaine.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid. “notre action de contrôle et d’assistance.”

¹¹⁷ Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen*.

but said that a *foyer* would be “a too large expense for the Federation’s budget.”¹¹⁸ In a separate note to a colleague in Paris, Carde said that while managing Marseille’s West African sailors’ “mentality” was a worthwhile goal, “the realization of this project seems to me to demand a considerable amount of money out of proportion to the importance of the native colony concerned.”¹¹⁹ M’Baye and his peers’ effort to create a space where they could define the contours of their community failed to attract the support of the apathetic wielders of institutional power. While M’Baye’s political project was dramatically different from his radical counterparts, his *foyer* ultimately shared a similar fate to many of those promoted by anti-colonial activists. Unlike soldiers, West African workers did not have the numbers or symbolic importance needed to justify large government expenses. The link between political authority and West Africans’ domestic well-being at the heart of the politics of dwelling made its way into official debates and documents, but not also onto Marseille’s streets.

Like his peers at the CDRN or UTN, M’Baye hoped that a *foyer* would ground his vision of what communities and spaces West Africans should call their own in France. Unlike their military counterparts, these *foyer* organizers did not always insist that inclusion and belonging depended on creating familiarity. Some planners framed homelessness as the consequence of social and political marginalization or a rejection of pre-existing social hierarchies. *Foyers* strove to help these metropolitan wanders while supporting distinct political projects, from the overthrow of imperialism to the reestablishment of gerontocratic authority. Despite their

¹¹⁸ Letter to Thierno M’Baye, April 1927, 14Miom/3034, CAOM. “de trop Lourdes dépenses pour les budgets de la Fédération”

¹¹⁹ “A.S. établissement d’un Foyer à Marseille pour les originaires de l’A.O.F.” April 1927, 14Miom/3034, CAOM. “La réalisation de ce projet me paraissant devoir entraîner des dépenses considérables et peu en rapport avec l’importance de la colonie indigène intéressée.”

considerable political differences, these *foyers* sought to include West Africans migrants in communities or political projects by giving them the social and material comforts of home.

Conclusion

Foyers did not present a single answer to the question Diallo and McKay implicitly posed about West Africans' ability to feel at home in France. Organizers' backgrounds and the positions of the West Africans they hoped to serve dictated how they related race, place, and imperial governance. Whether by reproducing "authentic" African milieus or linking men to a radical black diaspora, organizers wanted to transform the men they welcomed into these spaces. Military *foyers*, focusing on men living with many other West Africans in state-sponsored shelters, centered their attention on creating particular milieus. They grounded home in a search for a space whose material conditions corresponded to planners' own notion of how racial difference structured imperial governance. By contrast, West African workers' advocates focused on combatting the precarity or social isolation found in specific cities. *Foyers* responded to planners' own understandings about what West African men needed to thrive. Gender as well as class, occupation, and location intersected to inform diverse ideas about the kind of homes West Africans should or could make for themselves.

These differences reveal the personal, communal, and political visions projected onto and enacted by interwar France's West African residents. *Foyers* reflected diverse ideas about how social categories like race, class, gender, or ethnicity determined what imperial inclusion meant between the World Wars. Furthermore, the varied success these organizers had in creating these spaces demonstrated the limits on making the politics of dwelling a reality, especially for West African activists. Even if they failed to materialize, these *foyers* revealed how the politics of dwelling's link between imperial governance and domestic well-being was beginning to structure

how people related the French state to its West African subjects' lives. Sometimes this led men like Diallo to turn to old patrons and reinforce military ties, while others followed McKay's diasporic path. These ideas of imperial attachment or detachment came to the forefront as a new war made the politics of dwelling central to the future of France West African empire.

Chapter Four - “I Thought That I Was Forgotten”: Homes, West African Prisoners of War, and a New Imperial Social Contract

Jules Gouékééé appreciated his package. “I am very happy,” he wrote “I thank you. I thought that I was forgotten.”¹ Gouékééé, a West African soldier in the French army, sent these words from a prisoner of war camp in France sometime after 1940. This message likely pleased its recipient: the president of the Committee for Assistance to Black Troops (CATN). Alongside parcels with clothes, books, and food, the CATN sent West African POWs cards asking them how they were fairing and what they would like in future deliveries. Gouékééé asked for rice, “my principal food in Africa or in France” and said he was in relatively good spirits, though he wanted to “see my family who have been living in uncertainty for four years.” He then wrote, “I have given you my news, now it’s your turn to give me yours. Then you will choose a *marraine* for me. When she has been chosen, she will write to me immediately. I also need a *marraine* in Paris.”² The *marraines*, or godmothers, Gouékééé requested were French women who volunteered to support prisoners of war. This chapter examines similar requests from West African POWs, the institutions that facilitated them, and the responses they received to reveal how the politics of dwelling structured new approaches to French imperial governance during World War II.

When the German war machine defeated France in June 1940, Gouékééé and millions of other French soldiers fell into captivity. Alongside the estimated 1.8 million metropolitan French prisoners of war, German forces captured between 90,000 and 120,000 colonial soldiers.³ As

¹ Jules Gouékééé to Monsieur le Président du Comité d’Assistance aux troupes noire, “Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, Internes dans les Camps ou Arbeitz-Kommandos de la Zone Occupée,” F/9/2965, ANF. “J’ai reçu le colis. Je suis très content. Je vous en remercie. J’avais cru que j’étais oublié.”

² Ibid. “C’est lui qui est ma principale nourriture en Afrique ou en France...Voyez-vous que je vous ai donné mes nouvelles, à votre tour de me donner vos Nouvelles. Puis vous choisirez une marraine à moi. / Quand elle sera reçue, elle m’écrira aussitôt. J’ai besoin moi aussi d’une marraine à Paris.”

³ Raffael Scheck, “French Colonial Soldiers in German Prisoner-of-War Camps (1940-1945)” *French History* 24, no. 3 (2010): 420.

many as 36,000 of these prisoners were West African.⁴ Unlike their white peers, colonial prisoners were confined in France rather than Germany. These prisoners' presence in France as well as reports of German violence and propaganda directed at African soldiers worried many French observers. As the previous chapters demonstrate, West African soldiers had been powerful agents of colonial state power and emblems of mutual obligations since World War I, inspiring calls for greater domestic assistance. However, official reluctance to take responsibility for West Africans' domestic well-being often stymied efforts to enact policies inspired by the politics of dwelling. German occupation and imprisonment upended this resistance. Nazi control of camps limited French officials' access to these prisoners and cut soldiers off from the military institutions that had structured their lives. Many West African POWs turned to male comrades, French civilians, or charity groups to forge what Iris Rachamimov calls "camp domesticities."⁵ These practices helped prisoners reproduce the temporal, emotional, and material moorings previously provided by relatives or dwellings. Official and semi-official care groups tried to get state resources involved in these domestic efforts to assure prisoners that that they had not, in Gouékéé's terms, been forgotten. As a result, Vichy officials facilitated an unprecedented official acceptance of the domestic obligations imbued into the politics of dwelling.

Programs for West African POWs arose out of the Vichy regime's effort to transform an empire that it struggled to control. Since the 1980s, historians have examined how the Vichy government made control over prisoners of war key to its contested legitimacy.⁶ Recent

⁴ Ibid: 426.

⁵ Iris Rachamimov, "Camp Domesticity: Shifting Gender Boundaries in WWI Internment Camps," in *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, eds. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 291-305.

⁶ Sarah Fishman, *We Will Wait: Wives of French Prisoners of War, 1940-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Christophe Lewin, "Le Retour des Prisonniers de Guerre Français (1945) *Guerres Mondiales Et Conflits Contemporains*, no. 147 (1987): 49-79; Yves Durand, *La captivité: Histoire des prisonniers de guerre français, 1939-1945* (Paris: Fédération nationale des combattants prisonniers de guerre, 1980).

scholarship has expanded this field by studying Vichy policies towards colonial soldiers and POWs.⁷ These works examine whether the Vichy regime treated colonial soldiers differently than their white counterparts. As important as these assessments are to understanding prisoners' conditions, they overlook the political transformations the war caused. Following Eric Jennings's lead, this chapter examines how Vichy transformed the relationships between French colonial institutions and their non-European subjects.⁸ The ideas behind these POW programs reflected specific Vichy ideologies about racial and gender hierarchy. Female care workers were to act as state-sponsored mothers integrating West African men into the hierarchical families seen as the basic social cell of Vichy's authoritarian National Revolution.⁹ However, wartime crises limited the power of the Vichy regime to control how these programs operated, giving soldiers and civilians space to adapt the politics of dwelling as it entered the halls of power.

Examining how these care work programs informed broader changes to imperial governance demonstrates the role colonial populations played in the growth of the welfare state during and after World War II. While industrialization and new forms of governance had institutionalized care work meant to manage physical, social or mental vulnerabilities in Europe since the 19th century, World War II marked a watershed moment in this shift. The wartime collapse of governments across Europe raised profound questions about who belonged to these fallen polities and what that belonging entailed. In response, European regimes made state

⁷ Sarah Ann Frank, *Hostages of Empire: Colonial Prisoners of War in Vichy France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021); Armelle Mabon, *Prisonniers De Guerre « indigènes »: Visages Oubliés De La France Occupée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2019); Raffael Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Julien Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs Sénégalais: Les Soldats Noirs Entre Légendes Et Réalités 1939-1945* (Paris: Tallandier, 2012).

⁸ Eric T. Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁹ Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine: A Contribution to a Political Sociology of Gender*, trans. Kathleen A. Johnson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Miranda Pollard (*Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

sponsored care work and the right to domestic comfort integral to postwar social contracts.¹⁰ Many scholars argue that refugee camps across Europe served as key sites in the evolution of these new welfare systems and ideas.¹¹ Caring for people in these camps inspired new linkages between state assistance, domestic life, and national or imperial inclusion. This chapter argues that these new welfare systems did not only emerge in refugee camps, nor did they only target those labelled European. While the war upended social contracts across Europe, conscription and wartime sacrifices in West Africa inspired demands for greater economic and political rights.¹² West Africans POWs sat at the intersection of these European and African histories. Domestic assistance programs encountered in France inspired new demands that resonated across the empire. Efforts to make men like Gouékééé feel cared for helped tie the empire's future to prisoners' ability to find the comforts of home.

These demands arose as institutions meant to exert control became channels to voice discontent. This chapter traces this process by first examining the lives of West African prisoners and the reasons why Vichy officials worried about these men. State agents wanted care-packages and female run *foyers* to foster loyalty. However, these programs provided avenues to forge new demands or interactions. When liberation finally came, the expectations and institutions these

¹⁰ Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000).

¹¹ Jordanna Bailkin, *Unsettled: Refugee Camps and the Making of Multicultural Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹² Chima J. Korieh, *Nigeria and World War II: Colonialism, Empire, and Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Catherine Akpo-Vaché, *L'AOF et la seconde guerre mondiale: La vie politique (septembre 1939-octobre 1945)* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1996); Nancy Ellen Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune: Ivoirien Tirailleurs of World War II* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992).

assistance programs created informed how freed prisoners and those worried about their well-being carved the politics of dwelling into the imperial system emerging out of the ruins of war.

Confined Lives

It was a “regime of rutabagas and bats.” With this pithy phrase, Senegal’s future president Leopold Sédar Senghor described his first few months as a POW near the city of Rennes.¹³ Released in early 1942 for medical reasons, Senghor gave Vichy authorities an account of his imprisonment that evoked cold nights, paltry meals, and violent surveillance.¹⁴ In a poem about his confinement, Senghor called the camp, “a large village under the tyranny of four machine guns / Always ready to fire. / And the noble warriors beg for cigarette butts, / Fight with dogs over bones, and argue among themselves / Like imaginary cats and dogs.”¹⁵ Camps seemed to strip France’s African soldiers of their humanity. However, at least in the first camp Senghor inhabited, this changed when the French commander Lieutenant Bayle took over in February 1941. Declaring the camp, a “pigsty unfit for the French Army,” Bayle brought in showers, sports fields, and channels prisoners used to file complaints.¹⁶ While suffering in camps persisted throughout the war, Senghor’s account highlights how conditions changed over time. Whether because of German attitudes, French interventions, or military developments, West African prisoners had to navigate everchanging landscapes of confinement.

In certain ways, men who reached these prison camps were lucky. German soldiers massacred hundreds of *tirailleurs* and often picked them out for particularly brutal abuses.

Edouard Ouedraogo said German guards often killed soldiers who, like him, had ritual

¹³ “Note pour le Cabinet” June 27, 1942, F/9/2345, ANF. “Par ailleurs, c’est le régime du rutabaga et du bâton”

¹⁴ Raffael Scheck, “Léopold Sédar Senghor Prisonnier De Guerre Allemand: Une Nouvelle Approche Fondée Sur Un Texte Inédit.” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 32, no. 2 (2014): 76-98.

¹⁵ Léopold Sédar Senghor, *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Melvin Dixon (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 57.

¹⁶ “Note pour le Cabinet” June 27, 1942, F/9/2345, ANF. “le camp se transformera...cette porcherie n’est pas digne de l’Armée Française.”

scarifications because “they considered them cannibals.”¹⁷ This account echoed other West African soldiers’ descriptions of summary executions during long marches to Germany as well as violent experimentations upon their arrival.¹⁸ Many of these acts stemmed from a racist imaginary among German soldiers fueled in part by interwar propaganda attacking the French use of African soldiers during World War I and the interwar Rhineland occupation. These depictions often evoked “barbaric” African soldiers raping German women, turning West African soldiers into symbols of German humiliation and emasculation.¹⁹ German soldiers came to see West Africans as racialized symbols of defeat who deserved particularly brutal treatment.

Worries about German abuses came alongside concerns about German assistance. Throughout their imprisonment, Nazi authorities tried to convince colonial prisoners to abandon the French cause. German guards highlighted French colonial atrocities and claimed that the French government had abandoned its colonial soldiers after its defeat.²⁰ While most of these propaganda efforts focused on North African soldiers, they also directed attention to West Africans in ways that concerned Vichy authorities across the empire. Many metropolitan officials responded by gathering and disseminating accounts of Nazi abuses by released prisoners like Ouedraogo or Senghor. In French West Africa, colonial agents went as far as to track ex-POWs to make sure they did not express anti-French or pro-German sentiments.²¹ In April 1941, for example, colonial officials went to Senegal’s Linguere region to find two freed prisoners accused of telling their rural compatriots about the excellent treatment they received from the

¹⁷ “Composition Française,” Dossier VIII AOF 1944-45 mentalité des tirailleurs sénégalais et fiche sur le Mouvement en faveur de l’indépendance de l’Afrique Noire, 5 H 16, SHD. “ils considèrent comme des anthropophages” Descriptions of these attacks can be found in Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune*: 101.

¹⁸ Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 95-99; Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*, 209-210.

¹⁹ Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jean-Yves Naour, *La Honte Noire: L'Allemagne Et Les Troupes Coloniales Françaises, 1914-1945*. (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2003).

²⁰ Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*: 132-166; Frank, *Hostages of Empire*: 203-230.

²¹ Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*: 129-132.

Germans. Officials feared these accounts would lead locals to wonder “what side they have to rally to.”²² As they tried to run an occupied nation and a fragile empire, Vichy agents worried that uncontrolled tales about either German atrocities or support could undermine France in the eyes of West African soldiers and civilians alike.

While Nazi propaganda threatened to cleave these soldiers away from France, their administrative policies placed them squarely in the empire’s metropolitan center. Prisoners of war typically stayed in their captors’ territory. This fate befell the 1.8 million metropolitan French soldiers who spent the war in Germany. Colonial prisoners initially followed their metropolitan comrades across the Rhine, but their paths soon diverged. Weeks after their arrival, Nazi officials grew anxious about having so many non-Europeans in the *Reich*. As a result, they transferred colonial POWs to German-run camps in occupied France, known as *frontstalags*.²³ Unlike almost every other POW, these men spent their imprisonment in the country they served.

Prisoners’ return to France coincided with a greater formalization of Vichy policies towards prisoners of war. Vichy officials made their ability to care for POWs central to the regime’s legitimacy. Official propaganda turned support for captive French sons, husbands and fathers in Germany into a central pillar of the regime’s patriarchal National Revolution.²⁴ To oversee these programs, the head of state Philippe Pétain appointed Georges Scapini to run the *Service Diplomatique des Prisonniers de Guerre* in August 1940. Scapini worked to get French aid, inspectors, and authority into camps holding metropolitan soldiers in Germany and colonial soldiers in France. By 1941, Scapini’s agency helped get greater supplies into *frontstalags*

²² “Renseignements” April 29, 1941, 2 D 23 (28), ANS. “à quelle cause ils doivent se rallier.”

²³ By early 1941 there were 22 *frontstalags* in occupied France, although the exact number changed throughout the war as new prisons arose while others were destroyed, Mabon, *Les Prisonniers du guerre ‘indigène’*: 37-39; for more on German motivations to move colonial POWs to France see Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*: 53-59.

²⁴ Sarah Fishman, “Grand Delusion: The Unintended Consequences of Vichy France’s Prisoner of War Propaganda” *Journal of Contemporary History* 26, No. 2 (April 1991): 244-247.

throughout France and provided channels colonial prisoners could use to complain about their conditions.²⁵ Furthermore, accords between France and Germany helped get French personnel like the commander Senghor praised into positions of authority in some *frontstalags*. Yet reports of racially motivated abuse by white French guards often undermined the sense of patriotic benevolence Vichy sought to instill.²⁶ Colonial prisoners may have received care packages or inspections like their metropolitan counterparts, but their presence in France and the racist attitudes of German and French authorities alike highlighted their unequal status.

Prisoners' experiences were also greatly influenced by camps' ever-changing demographics. The Souge camp in southeastern France, for example, had 3,000 "North African" 3,000 "Senegalese" and 3,600 "Annamite" prisoners in 1941 while a *kommando*, a sub-camp within *frontstalags*, near the northeastern town of Baudricourt housed 21 "Senegalese" prisoners.²⁷ Even single camps morphed throughout the war. Inspectors at *frontstalag* 133 outside Rennes indicated 3,336 "native" and 64 "French" prisoners in April 1941. Three years later, the camp had 694 "Senegalese" and 12 "Martinican" prisoners.²⁸ These changes reflected two essential characteristics of camp demographics. First, while individual prisoners and even certain camps were categorized according to generic ethnic terms like "Senegalese" or "Annamite," larger *frontstalags* often mixed prisoners from across the empire. Secondly, camp populations varied dramatically over time. The total number of prisoners dropped over 50% by 1944, due largely to illness or negotiated releases.²⁹ Furthermore, prisoners regularly changed camps. In less than two years, Senghor lived in at least four different camps.³⁰ German

²⁵ Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*: 60-90.

²⁶ Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre 'indigène'*, 137-152; Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*, 115-131.

²⁷ "Croix Rouge Française Campe de Prisonniers Relevant de Périgueux," 1AFFPOL/870, CAOM; "Frontstalag No. 121 – Épinal," F/9/2352, ANF.

²⁸ "Synthèse des Résumés des Rapports sur l'Inspection de Camps de Prisonniers," 2 P 78, SHD.

²⁹ For more on these terms and numbers see Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*, 24-31.

³⁰ Scheck, "Léopold Sédar Senghor Prisonnier De Guerre Allemand."

authorities justified these movements as punishments, labor management practices, or ways to decongest overcrowded camps. Prisoners could not count on remaining in one place for long.

Alongside changing social worlds, prisoners inhabited widely disparate spaces. In the first few months after their capture, many West African soldiers lived in tents, like those in this photograph taken by a German guard outside the city of Troyes in 1940. (Fig. 1) However, this changed under growing pressure from the Red Cross and the Vichy government. By the start of 1941, using both prisoners' labor and commandeered military sites, German authorities placed most POWs in wooden cabins or metal huts, such as those captured by a Red Cross photographer at *frontstalag* 232 in May 1941. (Fig. 2) These layouts, like the photographs depicting them, cut prisoners' off from local landscapes. However, many prisoners lived within nearby communities. Forty-four West African POWs near the southeastern village of Arces lived in homes taken from local residents.³¹ In the nearby town of Cussac, six prisoners in the "Lanesau" camp had more extravagant accommodations, staying in a small house on the grounds of a local castle.³² These material disparities not only dictated how warm or sheltered prisoners felt. They also influenced how cut off or connected they were to worlds beyond their prisons' boundaries.

Work provided prisoners with unique opportunities to forge relationships to the places they slept in and the communities they inhabited. Like almost all other prisoners of war, West African POWs frequently left their camps to work in nearby factories, farms, and forests.³³ Typically working for eight francs a day, prisoners regularly labored from sun rise to sun set. While many guards closely monitored what prisoners did with their wages and commutes, others

³¹ "Frontstalag 124 – Joigny" Arbeit Kommando Arces Inspection September 8, 1941, F/9/2352, ANF.

³² "A.C.P.G. Section Bordeaux Nord," February 19, 1944, F/9/2966, ANF.

³³ For an overview of P.O.W. labor see Gerald H. Davis "Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 4 (1977): 623-34; for more on labor for French colonial POW see Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*: 167-191; Mabon, *Les prisonnier de guerre 'indigène'*: 63-67.



Figure 4. 1: Prisoner of war camp in Troyes, summer 1940. Collection Dietrich Klose, *historicmedia.de*, cited in Raffael Scheck, "Léopold Sédar Senghor Prisonnier De Guerre Allemand: Une Nouvelle Approche Fondée Sur Un Texte Inédit." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 32, no. 2 (2014): 83.

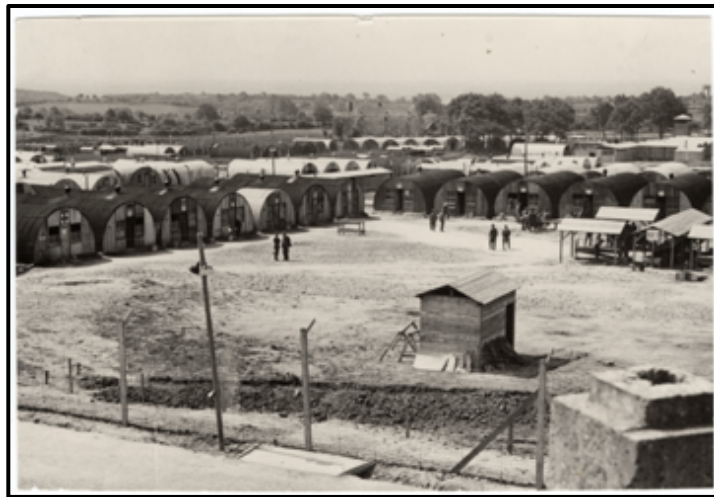


Figure 4. 2: Courtyard and barbed wire fence around French colonial POW camp in Savenay, France. Camp de prisonniers de guerre. Vue d'une partie du camp, May 29, 1941, Savenay. Frontstalag 232, Guerre 1939-1945, V-P-HIST-03435-20A, ICRC Audiovisual Archives,.

gave prisoners more discretion. Two French inspectors near Bordeaux contrasted the “very severe” surveillance some prisoners faced, only able to leave camp-grounds to go directly to and from work, with those whose guards let them go into town on Sundays to spend money or even visit comrades in other camps.³⁴ One inspector noted how the *tirailleurs sénégalais* imprisoned in Chateaubriant lived in a school behind the local church “in the center of town. Sometimes they

³⁴ “A.C.P.G. Section Bordeaux Nord,” February 19, 1944, F/9/2966, ANF. “très sévère.”

leave alone or accompanied after work. The inhabitants are good to them.”³⁵ Surveillance, labor, and residences conditioned soldiers’ links with people outside prison walls. Prisoners could end up exotic strangers across barbed wire or familiar coworkers behind the local church.

Many French inspectors came to see these civilian contacts as key to men’s ability to feel comfortable and cared for during their imprisonment. In June 1942, inspectors in Rion said locals became the sole protectors of four French West African soldiers interred with hundreds of black South Africans. German guards placed these West African soldiers in a cabin beyond the camp’s barbed wire, leading the Red Cross to regularly forget them during deliveries. “Happily,” these French inspectors said, “a family in Rion takes care of them a lot and will serve as a liaison agent for us.”³⁶ Living beyond the wire led Red Cross inspectors to overlook these men. However, it brought them closer to French locals. Furthermore, unlike their South African peers and almost all other POWs, these soldiers could be considered their neighbors’ compatriots in a way. Colonial prisoners often remarked on the kindness and support of French civilians, ranging from small gifts or food to help with escape efforts.³⁷ As the war progressed, French officials took note of these interactions or their absence. “The village offers them no distraction” an inspector in Raulecourt bemoaned. The West African prisoners had such a low morale because “they find no sympathy amongst the locals.”³⁸ Whether describing hostility or kindness, inspectors linked civilians’ “sympathy” to prisoners’ morale. Encouraging connections contrasted with efforts to

³⁵“A.C.P.G. Section de Rennes,” February 19, 1944, F/9/2966, ANF. “...dans le centre de la ville. Ils sortent quelquefois seuls ou accompagnés après leur travail. Les habitants sont bons pour eux. Dans l’ensemble, ils sont privilégiés.”

³⁶ “A.C.P.G. Section des Landes, Frontstalag 222 – Camp de Rion (Landes) Rapport de l’Activité du 15 au 31 Janvier 44.” F/9/2966, ANF. “heureusement il y a une famille à Rion qui s’occupent beaucoup d’eux et qui nous servira d’agent de liaison”

³⁷ Frank, “Aid and Escape” *Hostages of Empire*, 151-180; Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre ‘indigène’*: 84-99; Scheck, *French Colonial Prisoners of War*: 228-240.

³⁸ “A.C.P.G. Section de Verdun (Meuse) Rapport sur l’activité de la section pendant la quinzaine du 15 au 29 Février 1944, Kommando de Raulecourt,” F/9/2966, ANF. “Le village ne leur offre aucune distraction et ils ne rencontrent aucune sympathie chez les habitants.”

separate colonial troops from French civilians during World War I. This new attitude may have stemmed from West African soldiers' continual presence in France since World War I, as well as their positive presentation in colonial propaganda.³⁹ Alternatively, relying on civilians fostered loyalty without draining the Vichy state's meager resources. Whatever the motivation, efforts to manage these prisoner-civilian relations came to greatly inform Vichy's care-work programs.

As the war entered its final months, men's hopes for the future became tied less to local residents than nearby battles. Throughout the spring of 1944, Allied forces conducted a widespread bombing campaign of occupied France. One March 1944 report from the northern city of Le Mans stated that an Allied bomb had recently destroyed the "Maroc" camp, killing at least one prisoner. Speaking with several survivors of this bombing a few days later, an inspector said they were "not very cheerful" and worried about further attacks.⁴⁰ However, some prisoners saw brighter days ahead. One inspector said Madagascan and West African prisoners in the town of Chappelle-St-Ursin in March 1944 hoped to "return to their homes soon." They "believe the war is ending, which will liberate them."⁴¹ The textures of prisoners' daily lives, as well as their hopes for survival, depended on where they ended up. Their strategies to feel at home within camps, and official or civilian roles in these efforts, changed throughout the war. Depending on time, location, and temperament, West African prisoners could feel like "cats and dogs" fighting for food, men on the cusp of freedom, or attentive observers of the skies hoping to survive.

Imprisoned Homemakers

³⁹ Ruth Ginio, "French Officers, African Officers, and the Violent Image of African Colonial Soldiers." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 36, no. 2 (2010): 59-75.

⁴⁰ "Amitiés Africaines Activité des Sections – Section du Mans. – (Sarthe) – Quinzaine du 1er au 15 Mars 1944," F/9/2966, ANF. "ne sont pas très gais."

⁴¹ "La Chapelle Saint-Orsin (Rapport du 1er au 15 Juin 1944)," F/9/2966, ANF. "un nouvel Espoir semblait les animer, celui de retourner bientôt chez eux car ils croient tous à la fin de la guerre, qui les libérera."

On top of these immediate concerns over survival, many West African POWs felt that imprisonment had robbed them of the military's patriarchal promises. This came across clearly in complaints about the French government's failure to provide relatives in West Africa with military payments. In December 1941, Niang Saïdou told Scapini's office that despite serving since 1933, his wife in Senegal's eastern Podor region "to this day has received no military payments."⁴² Corporal M'Basse told Pétain himself in October 1942 that his mother had never received any military payments during his two years of imprisonment. "My mother" he feared "is currently living in the greatest state of misery."⁴³ These complaints, and the dozens of other similar claims that filled the files of Scapini's ministry, revealed how imprisonment undermined the role military service had played in these men's households. As Chapter One explains, many West African men used military service to ascend the social ladder, hoping combat and state pensions would confer masculine honor as well as the material means to become patriarchs. Imprisonment imperiled these dreams. Metropolitan POWs also worried about supporting distant families.⁴⁴ Yet the poorer quality of administrative services in French West Africa as well as confusion about indigenous familial arrangements made paying West African prisoner's relatives even harder.⁴⁵ As they waited for updates, men worried about the dependents they left behind.

Undergirding many prisoners' frustrations was a sense that their capture had deprived them of their familial roles. When Kaba Bakayoko complained to Scapini's office that his wife had not receiving her military payments, he attached a letter his father Souleymane Bakayoko sent from the Mandiata province of Guinea, giving officials a sense of what he had lost during

⁴² Letter from Niang Saïdou to M. le Commandant Bonnaud, Bayonne, December 5, 1941, Allocations militaires accordées aux familles de militaires sous les drapeaux, 1AFFPOL/2558, CAOM. "...jusqu'à ce jour n'a bénéficié de nulle subvention militaire."

⁴³ Letter from Corporal Basse to the Marshall of France, October 4, 1942, Affaires relatives à des prisonniers de guerre indigènes, 1AFFPOL/639/15, CAOM. "ma mère vit actuellement dans le plus grand état de malheur."

⁴⁴ Fishman, *We Will Wait*.

⁴⁵ Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*, 133-134.

his captivity. Two of his nephews had died as well as one of his father's wives. Meanwhile, Souleymane had paid the bride-wealth payment for Kaba's daughter's engagement. On a more positive note, the father of Kaba's prospective second wife sent assurances that even if he remained away, "for ten years, his daughter is still yours." Souleymane closed his message by assuring his son that his entire family, "gives you benedictions, day and night."⁴⁶ Letters like these helped many POWs overcome their sense of geographic or familial dislocation by evoking daily prayers and major life events.⁴⁷ These words could help Kaba envision a return to a second wife and a married daughter. However, it also brought his temporal and familial displacement into relief. His father had taken on the patriarchal duties of overseeing household affairs as Kaba disappeared from his relatives' life cycles. This estrangement reflected the "temporal purgatory" many prisoners of war faced.⁴⁸ In addition to being unaware of when they would leave, they struggled to replace the temporal referents of domestic life and family rituals.⁴⁹ The links between the past, present, and future seemed broken. "Our thoughts wander" the prisoner Celly told French authorities, "trying to give us the beloved images of the past that time is erasing."⁵⁰

While these men tried to protect, or even remember, their households in West Africa, they worked to turn their temporary quarters into new kinds of home. Gouékéé's request for rice and other soldiers' appeal for educational materials, instruments, and clothes constituted efforts

⁴⁶ Souleymane Bakayoko to Chers fils Bakayoko, Mandiana April 22, 1941., Allocations militaires accordées aux familles de militaires sous les drapeaux, 1AFFPOL/2558, CAOM. "même si tu fais dix ans, la fille est toujours à toi... la famille vous donne des bénédictionnait et jours"

⁴⁷ Clare Makepeace, "Living Beyond the Barbed Wire: The Familial Ties of British Prisoners of War held in Europe during the Second World War," *Historical Research* 86, no. 231 (2013): 158-177.

⁴⁸ Rachamimov, "Camp Domesticity."

⁴⁹ For more on the relationship between home and senses of time see Andreas Eckert --, et al. *To Be At Home: House, Work, and Self in the Modern World* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

⁵⁰ Letter from Celly to Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies Vichy, Rapatriement de P.G. Coloniaux, 2 P 85, SHD. "Chaque jour notre pensée vagabonde en essayant de nous représenter nos chères images du passé que le temps efface, nous vole."

to use objects to turn anonymous spaces of confinement into meaningful places of survival.⁵¹

After an inspection of the Coetquidam camp, Mlle. Carle Le Rocher told French authorities that the West African troops there, “are working right now to whiten up the barracks’ interiors. The rooms (about 25) are well kept. Each *tirailleur* makes their own personal corner.”⁵² Despite not knowing how long they would be in these rooms, these men tried to improve their collective space and demarcate their own “personal corner.” One Red Cross photographer captured this kind of “corner” in a camp at Laval in May 1941 (Fig. 3). The photograph showed a canteen above the bed, a side table, and various kitchen supplies and blankets on the shelves. All the while, the two prisoners in the frame linked these beds to specific, yet unnamed, men. Perhaps these dwellers had made these beds places to call their own.



Figure 4. 3: Photograph of two African POWs in front of beds and shelves in barrack at POW camp in Laval France, May 29, 1941. Camp de prisonniers de guerre. Dortoir, Laval (Mayenne), Frontstalag 132, Guerre 1939-1945, V-P-HIST-03437-01, ICRC Audiovisual Archives.

⁵¹ For more on place-making in World War II prison camps see Jane Dusselier, “The Arts of Survival: Remaking the Inside Spaces of Japanese American Concentration Camps” *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, ed. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 81-97.

⁵² “Section de Coetquidam (Morbihan),” F/9/2966, ANF. “L’installation est très convenable. On travaille actuellement à reblanchir l’intérieur des baraques. Les chambres (25 environ) sont très bien tenues. Chaque tirailleur se fait un petit coin personnel.”

If these material practices gave men a physical sense of home, male comradeship could provide the social moorings formerly provided by household members. Decades after their imprisonment, the Ivorian veterans Torna Sekongo and Emile Dagba recalled regularly sharing food they stole or received as gifts with captive comrades.⁵³ Beyond sustaining their bodies, the fact that Sekongo and Dagba recalled these meals decades later reflects how eating together helped men understand this rupture in their lives. After his release, Senghor fondly recalled these kinds of shared meals. In a poem written from Paris in 1942, Senghor contrasted “this solitude in my monitored residence” with his imprisoned life. He asked his now distant comrades to “make me a place around the stove, so I can retake my still warm seat / So our hands can touch while stirring the steaming rice of friendship / So the old Serer words can pass from mouth to mouth like a friendly pipe.”⁵⁴ Distance prevented these men from performing the paternal tasks that once structured their domestic lives. Yet “around the stove” homosocial bonds created new domesticities. Shared language, meals, and physical contact helped these men make a world within the camp whose boundaries they defined. This new hearth became so appealing that Senghor pined for its warmth during his solitary freedom.

As failing military bureaucracies or comforting new homosocial bonds changed prisoners’ masculine self-conceptions, the *marraine* program Gouékééé mentioned in his letter fostered new interracial intimacies. The category of *marraine de guerre* or “war godmother” arose during World War I when the French government called on female volunteers to send letters and care packages to soldiers in the trenches. This program sought to use “feminine”

⁵³ Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune*: 106-108.

⁵⁴ Serer, a language widely spoken in Senegal’s Siin-Saloum region, was Senghor’s native language. Leopold Senghor, “Lettre à un Prisonnier” *Chants D’ombre, Suivis De Hosties Noires: Poèmes / Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1948), 84. “Faites-moi place autour du poêle, que je reprenne ma place encore tiède. Que nos mains se touchent en puissant dans le riz fumant de l’amitié. / Que le vieux mots sérères de bouche en bouche passent comme une pipe amicale.”

affection to boost soldiers' morale while giving women a role in the war that did not challenge gendered divisions of labor.⁵⁵ The call for similar support went out again during World War II.⁵⁶ While metropolitan POWs after 1940 also had *marraines*, colonial prisoners' presence in the same country as these women facilitated unique connections. In particular, having an officially registered *marraine* allowed POWs to leave camps under these women's supervision.⁵⁷ Beyond a brief escape, these sojourns helped prisoners create new kinds of families. Decades later, the Senegalese former POW Doudou Diallo said that he and his comrades "needed to make a new family in France, a French family."⁵⁸ Araba Diara echoed this feeling in a letter sent to the French Soudan in December 1943. "Now I am less miserable because I have found a *marraine* and a family" Diara declared, "I go to see them every Monday and everyone loves me and spoils me a bit."⁵⁹ Cut off from relatives, and likely seeking feminine company unavailable in camps, prisoners came to value these women and the new families they created.

The French women who took on these roles had their own understandings of these relationships. Some women became *marraines* to stay in touch with men they had met as prisoners. In September 1943, Jeannine Geoffroy asked Ambassador Scapini for information on the Dahomean prisoner Julien Pheliss. She had lost touch with Pheliss since his transfer out of a

⁵⁵ Jean-Yves Le Naour, "Épouses, marraines et prostituées : le repos du guerrier, entre service social et condamnation morale," ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau, *Combats de femmes 1914-1918. Les femmes, pilier de l'effort de guerre* (Paris: Autrement, 2004), 64-81; Susan R. Grayzel, "Mothers, Marraines, and Prostitutes: Morale and Morality in First World War France." *The International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 66-82.

⁵⁶ Luc Capdevila, "Identité masculines et féminines pendant et après la guerre" in *1939-1945 : combats de femmes. Françaises et Allemandes, les oubliées de l'histoire*, ed. Évelyne Morin-Rotureau (Paris: Autrement, 2001), 199-220.

⁵⁷ Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerres 'indigènes'*: 91.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerres 'indigènes'*: 92.

⁵⁹ Intercepted Letter from Araba Diara to Mme Tandji Diara Koula, Fronstalag No. 194 (Nancy) December 8, 1943, Conditions Matérielles et Morales des Prisonniers Nord-Africains, F/9/3115, ANF. "Maintenant je suis moins malheureux car j'ai trouvé une marraine et une famille. Je vais les voir tous les lundis et tout le monde m'aime bien et on me gâte un peu. Je suis moins seul."

camp near her home at the end of 1942.⁶⁰ In a more extravagant example, Princess Antoinette of Monaco adopted an entire group of *tirailleurs* and received permission to have the Senegalese prisoner Kimba Mayaki join her royal court after his release.⁶¹ The Monegasque monarch and Geoffroy did not tell officials why they cared so much for these men. Perhaps, like some Catholic volunteers, they wanted to convert West Africans.⁶² Or maybe they had an affection they dared not describe. Familial love was not the only kind of bond between prisoners and their *marraines*. Many women developed romantic feelings for their godsons.⁶³ “Good night” the teenage *marraine* Simone le N. wrote in a letter to Yéli Touré, “and don’t dream too much about your numerous *marraines* like Dija, but about one.”⁶⁴ This fellow prisoner Dija seemed to pursue multiple *marraines*. This may not have been so strange to West African men from communities where polygyny was acceptable. Furthermore, *marraines* were not always romantic partners and more *marraines* meant more letters, packages, and time outside camps. However, Simone le N. did not want to be one of Touré’s many confidantes. She wanted his exclusive affection.

Romantic love could spell trouble for the Vichy authorities promoting these pairings. The very title of “godmother” implied a non-sexual caretaker bond. For *marraines* of metropolitan POWs, this helped the state present these pairing as a support to war-torn French families rather than the introduction of potential mistresses.⁶⁵ However, this label took on additional importance for colonial *marraines*. By desexualizing these intimacies, the *marraine* title implicitly allayed fears of miscegenation. While not made for colonial soldiers, the term *marraine* fit into pre-

⁶⁰ Letter from Mlle. Jeannine Geoffrey to Monsieur Scapini, Toul September 4, 1943, Frontstalag 194 F/9/2571, ANF.

⁶¹ “Libération en France du Caporal sénégalais Kimba Mayaki,” June 25, 1941, Troupes des colonies. Engagements et rengagements, mobilisation et démobilisation, alimentation, rapatriements, relève des sénégalais aux Antilles, 1940-1945, DAM//92, CAOM.

⁶² Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity During World War II*, 234.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 235-239.

⁶⁴ Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre ‘indigène’*, 94.

⁶⁵ Fishman, “Grand Delusion.”

existing discourses presenting West African soldiers as large pacified children. Since World War I, infantilized depictions of West African soldiers alleviated popular anxieties about these men's threat to white masculine authority.⁶⁶ In this new context, framing prisoners as children made them dependents of benevolent French women. Sex and romantic affection could do the reverse.

In the face of these risks, one may wonder why Vichy supported these pairings at all. The answer likely lies partly in the way that West African soldiers and French inspectors alike tied civilian affection to imperial loyalty. In his official report on his captivity, Senghor told officials that "French women, by their disinterested generosity and courage were France's greatest propagandists."⁶⁷ He presented French women's generosity as the best way to secure soldiers' hearts and minds. Similarly, Sergeant Bonko Hambiré told Pétain that he and his comrades "did not feel imprisoned at all where we are because the good French people with us and the civilians in the city do not stop treating us with tenderness."⁶⁸ While not speaking about women specifically, Hambiré's emphasis on "tenderness" echoed the emotional dimensions of care work often framed as feminine. However, Hambiré said "small incidents" had undermined prisoners' morale. "Certain Europeans have told the camp's occupying authorities that they do not know the Blacks" Hambiré wrote, "and that we came voluntarily from our own country to wage war." Hambiré and his men volunteered to fight and were "truly disappointed to learn that Frenchmen worthy of this name could say they did not know us."⁶⁹ If "tenderness" brought Hambiré into France's imperial family, rejection pushed him away. Claiming Pétain's "paternal heart" would

⁶⁶ Ginio, "French Officers, African Officers, and the Violent Image of African Colonial Soldiers."

⁶⁷ "Note pour le Cabinet" June 27, 1942, F/9/2345, ANF. "Les Françaises, par leur générosité désintéressée et leur courage ont été les meilleures propagandistes de la Tous."

⁶⁸ Chief-Seargant Bonko Hambiré, prisoner of war in the Guines Camp of Rennes, to Monsieur Marshall Pétain French Head of State, F/9/2351, ANF. "ne sentons pas du tout la prison là où nous sommes parce que les bons Français qui sont avec nous et les civils de la ville ne cessent de nous faire des câlineries."

⁶⁹ Ibid. "petits incidents...Certains Européens sont allés dire aux autorités occupants du Camps, qu'ils ne connaissaient pas les Noirs et que nous étions venues de notre propre volonté pour faire la guerre...vraiment déçu de constater que des Français dignes de ce noms puissent dire qu'ils ne nous connaissaient pas."

worry about this incident, Hambiré assured the Marshal that “your children will demonstrate that they are yours.”⁷⁰ Hambiré and Senghor pointed to a political motivation for giving West African soldiers a family in France. Imprisonment had alienated these men from the patriarchal status military service promised. All the while, POWs were creating new kinds of home, whether officials got involved or not. Leaving these homemaking processes to unreliable civilians or amorous *marraines* could threaten Vichy’s imperial order.

Care Package Conflicts

Early efforts to make the French state a meaningful part of camp domesticities often relied on one tool: care packages. The organization to which Gouékéeé wrote, the Committee of Assistance to Black Troops (CATN) had worked to get food and other goods to West African soldiers in France since World War 1. After France’s defeat in June 1940, the CATN pivoted to providing monthly deliveries of food and other products to West African POWs. Packages typically had sugar, chocolate, cigarettes, biscuits, and rice or chickpeas and occasionally carried sports equipment, books, and instruments.⁷¹ Whenever possible, they tried to procure goods from West Africa. “From a morale and material point of view” the CATN’s president declared, “the Committee’s work is the most tangible proof of the recognition that the Mother Country can give to her natives, who came loyally from overseas countries to help their protective nation.”⁷² Care packages manifested the imperial benevolence Hambiré and Senghor called for. Packages had to demonstrate and produce the ties binding the French army to its captive troops.

⁷⁰ Ibid. “cœur paternel...vos enfants s’auront montrer qu’ils sont les vôtres.”

⁷¹ “Troupes Noires 41 rue de la Bienfaisance Paris,” Notice sur l’Action du Comité D’Assistance aux Troupes Noires, F/9/2965, ANF.

⁷² “Assemblée Général du 11 Mai 1943 Rapport sur l’Activité du Combat Pendant l’Année 1942, 1032 W 25, AP. “Tant au point de vue moral qu’au point de vue matériel, l’œuvre du Comité est la plus tangible preuve de reconnaissance que peut donner la Mère Patrie à ses indigènes, venus loyalement des pays d’outre-mer au secours de la nation protectrice.”

Prisoners regularly evoked this link between their loyalty and these packages. Like Gouékééé, several soldiers filled out and sent the cards packed in the Committee's parcels.⁷³ Men often began their messages by declaring their gratitude. Boure N'Doure thanked the Committee's president with, "all my Mauritanian heart."⁷⁴ Saliou N'Daye wrote to "express to you my joy in knowing that our mother country still thinks of us."⁷⁵ Men likely hoped these statements would keep goods coming into their camps. However, their words also hinted at the specific role that the French military played in their lives. Sergeant Tiecoura Samaké, for example, said he and his comrades "would never know how to thank you for the services you have given us for so long, up until this day" declaring that they "will remember all that you have done for us, this will be unforgettable."⁷⁶ By projecting package-produced loyalty into the future, Samaké echoed the ideals of long-term mutual obligation undergirding colonial military service. As seen in previous chapters and aforementioned payment disputes, the military's ability to provide material resources in exchange for service informed how West African recruits forged positions in households and the empire as a whole. Captivity under German control abruptly interrupted that process by cutting these men off from French military institutions. Samaké and others used these cards to keep this tie alive. The exchanges built into official care programs became tools to repair the military relationships that imprisonment seemed to break.

⁷³ There are 27 letters in the French National Archives from 18 different camps across occupied France.

⁷⁴ Tirailleur Boure N'Dour to Monsieur le Président to Monsieur le Président du Comité d'Assistance aux troupes noire, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Internes dans les Camps ou Arbeitz-Kommandos de la Zone Occupée, August 6, 1941, F/9/2965, ANF. "tout mon cœur mauritanien"

⁷⁵ Saliou N'Daye to Monsieur le Président du Comité d'Assistance aux troupes noire, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Internes dans les Camps ou Arbeitz-Kommandos de la Zone Occupée, F/9/2965 ANF. "pour vous exprimer ma joie de savoir que notre mère patrie pense toujours à nous."

⁷⁶ Sergent Tiecoura Samaké to Monsieur le Président du Comité d'Assistance aux troupes noire, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Internes dans les Camps ou Arbeitz-Kommandos de la Zone Occupée, F/9/2965, ANF. "nous ne saurions jamais comment vous remercier des services que vous nous rendez depuis si longtemps jusqu'à ce jour, nous nous rappellerons tout ce que vous faites pour nous, ce qui sera inoubliable."

Perhaps more than using these packages to preserve military connections, detainees used certain objects within these boxes to stave off nostalgia. Sitaffa Cissé described how “sad I am because of my estrangement from my native land, but your aid has comforted and significantly raised my failing morale.”⁷⁷ Soldiers cited specific goods as particularly adept at staving off homesickness. Sulaimana Sidibé asked the Committee to “send me a bit of kola.”⁷⁸ As Chapter One explains, the French military had provided *tirailleurs* with this West African caffeine-rich nut since World War I to combat both fatigue and yearnings for home. Sergeant Mamadou Doubia similarly evoked sensory reminders of West Africa when he thanked the Committee for a shipment of “tam-tams from our country.”⁷⁹ Sergeant Samaké also appreciated a separate “shipments of West African tam-tams” which he said, “have given us great pleasure. Because they remind us of the country.”⁸⁰ Tam-tams, a name often used for a variety of West African drums, appeared in the *foyers* the previous chapter described as French charities tried to recreate “African” comforts. Just as soldiers invoked ideas of package-induced loyalty, they also seemed to affirm colonial ideas about the material markers of difference. To be sure, West African POWs also asked for the goods sent to French prisoners ranging from socks and shoes to shirt and soccer balls. Yet requests for objects from West Africa demonstrates how invocations of difference did not only come from the top. POWs’ efforts to combat homesickness and officials

⁷⁷ Sitafa Cissé to Monsieur le Président du Comité d’Assistance aux troupes noire, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, F/9/2965, ANF. “Suis très désolé de mon éloignement du pays natal, mais vos secours me réconfortent et remontant sensiblement mon moral défaillant.”

⁷⁸ Sulaimana Sidibé to Monsieur le Président, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, F/9/2965, ANF. “de mes envoyé un peu de cola.”

⁷⁹ Mamadou Doumbia to Monsieur le Président, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, F/9/2965, ANF. “des tams-tams de notre pays.”

⁸⁰ Sergent Tiecoura Samaké to Monsieur le President, Recueil de Lettres Provenant de Prisonniers Noirs Originaires de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, F/9/2965, ANF. “Vos envois de tams-tams de l’Afrique Occidentale, nous ont fait beaucoup plaisir. Par ce qu’ils nous ont rappelé le pays et c’est beaucoup.”

ideas about African alterity could conflict or align as soldiers tried to use care packages to make bearable lives behind barbed wire.

Even if soldiers' request for distinct goods seemed to affirm ideas of difference, tracking how these instruments got to prisoners reveals how making care packages led officials to reframe objects that otherwise signified colonial exoticism. In February 1942, six boxes of musical instruments from the government of Niger arrived in Paris. Tax officials quickly learned that these objects belonged to the *Agence économique de la France d'Outre-Mer* (AGEFOM) and were intended for "black prisoners."⁸¹ Established by the Vichy government in 1941, this Agency organized colonial exhibitions across occupied France and became one of the country's main repositories for colonial goods.⁸² Exhibition objects typically signified colonial peoples' alterity to French audiences. However, now these same goods had to make colonial subjects feel a sense of belonging in France. An inventory of AGEFOM's "native instruments for prisoners of war" listed forty-three drums of various sizes, sixty-five tambourines, ninety-three tam-tams, seven balafons, twenty-seven mandolins, sixty-five violins, and one hundred and thirty-five flutes for African POWs.⁸³ This mix of "African" and "European" instruments echoed the ambiguous hybridity that defined interwar exhibitions.⁸⁴ Now officials from Niamey to Paris tried to turn markers of alterity into signs of unity. Soldiers' requests revealed that packages did not just reflect official ideas about cultural difference. By sending or requesting certain items, prisoners and bureaucrats negotiated the substantial meaning of inclusion and distinction.

⁸¹ Message Téléphoné de Vichy le 3 Février 1942, Arrivée de colis: instruments de musique en provenance du Niger, destinés aux prisonniers de guerre (1942), AGEFOM//598, CAOM. "prisonniers noirs"

⁸² Jacques Cantier and Eric Jennings, *L'Empire colonial sous Vichy* (Paris: O. Jacob, 2004), 121.

⁸³ Inventaire des Instruments de Musique Indigène Destinés aux Prisonniers de Guerre, Arrivée de colis: instruments de musique en provenance du Niger, destinés aux prisonniers de guerre (1942), AGEFOM//598, CAOM. Balafons are gourd based xylophones particularly popular in Guinea but found across the Sahel.

⁸⁴ P.A. Morton, *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation At the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

Sometimes who delivered the packages seemed to matter just as much as their contents. These boxes usually arrived at *frontstalags* in female hands. An employer of several West African prisoners praised the “kind comprehension” of one Mme. Boucher for helping give out aid parcels to his workers.⁸⁵ André Moreau, a French officer imprisoned alongside the *tirailleurs* under his command, praised “Madame Deschellerins, whose devotion for us is large.” His men appreciated these packages and the fact that “Madame Deschellerins promised me others.”⁸⁶ Through monthly visits, these women became reliable parts of prisoners’ lives. References to “devotion” or “kind comprehension” echoed the association of female labor, particularly under Vichy, with sentimentality and maternal affection.⁸⁷ These connotations supported efforts to enmesh soldiers in a French imperial family. Women’s symbolic maternal presence could normalize homosocial or interracial intimacies. However, these women were not just symbols. They ran the campaigns to fill these boxes, drove the cars containing packages, and distributed the boxes to soldiers. If packages materialized notions of racial difference, their distribution reflected the division of labor produced by Vichy ideologies and wartime necessities.

However, the ways some women delivered these packages undermined their symbolic service to the Vichy regime. German authorities, fearing escape or sabotage, often hesitated letting agents tied too closely to the Vichy government into campgrounds. They typically preferred to work with another care package provider: the Red Cross.⁸⁸ While the French Red Cross (CRF) employed mostly French women and maintained cordial relations with the Vichy

⁸⁵ Letter to Monsieur le Président du Comité d’Assistance aux Troupes Noires, October 19, 1941, F/9/2965, ANF. “compréhension bienveillante”

⁸⁶ Aspirant Moreau to Monsieur le President, Montargis July 8, 1941, F/9/2965, ANF. “Madame Deschellerins, dont le dévouement pour nous est grand...Madame Deschelerins m’en a promis d’autre”

⁸⁷ Pollard, *Reign of Virtue*, 145-173.

⁸⁸ Delphine Leluc, “*Ma chère Genève*”: *le CICR et les prisonniers de guerre coloniaux français, 1940-1946* (Mémoire de License d’histoire générale, Université de Genève, 2007).

government, it ultimately responded to its headquarters in Geneva.⁸⁹ Aligning with this neutral agency gave the CRF greater access to camps than other French charities. In trucks bearing the agency's eponymous Red Cross, women brought monthly packages bearing canned food, cigarettes, athletic equipment, and books (Fig. 4).⁹⁰ In the spring of 1942, hoping to co-opt the



Figure 4. 4: African soldier receiving a French Red Cross (CRF) care package at Frontstalag 222 in Bayonne, in front of a truck with the CRF's insignia. Armelle Mabon, "Les prisonniers de guerre coloniaux Durant l'Occupation en France" *Hommes et Migration*, No. 1228, November-décembre 2000. "L'héritage colonial, un trou de mémoire: 19".

CRF's privileged access, a few women working for the charity group *Amitiés Africaines* (AA) placed the Red Cross insignia on their cars and uniforms when delivering care packages to colonial POWs. The head of the CRF promptly complained that by using this label, these women

⁸⁹ Jean-Pierre Le Crom, "La Croix-Rouge française pendant la seconde guerre mondiale: La neutralité en question" *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 1, no. 101 (Jan.-Mar., 2009): 149-162.

⁹⁰ "France F (D) 29.05.41-28.07.44 Frontstalags" "F (-D) 121 24.06.41, Archives du CICR. For more on Red Cross packages to POWs see Peter Doyle, "Necessity, the Mother of Invention: Ingenuity in German Prisoner of War Camps" in *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind Barbed Wire*, ed. Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum. (New York: Routledge, 2012): 275-290; Vasilis Vourkoutiotis. "What the Angels Saw: Red Cross and Protecting Power Visits to Anglo-American POWs, 1939-45." *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 4 (2005): 689-706.

were inviting “belligerents to no longer respect this emblem.”⁹¹ This “emblem” was the CRF’s key to these camps, a key whose power rested on its separation from the French government. Co-opting this marker helped some French volunteers get packages to prisoners, but only by hiding the official support their superiors wanted these packages to represent.

While Red Cross officials looked on warily at their competitors, many of the women working for the Red Cross received similar scrutiny. Vichy administrators generally preferred care workers they could directly control to those employed by the CRF.⁹² These inclinations likely informed how officials perceived one anonymous prisoner’s letter to the CATN. This soldier said one Mlle. Le Barase of the CRF “always eats with Germans” and “sleeps with Germans,” and was now giving away POWs’ packages.⁹³ Connecting Le Barase’s betrayal to her sexuality echoed images of both the female collaborator sleeping with Germans attacked by the French Resistance and the libertine woman withholding her womb from the nation vilified by Vichy.⁹⁴ Regardless of who La Barase slept with, this claim demonstrated how prisoners could echo suspicions about the Red Cross and its female employees. By downplaying their national affiliation or sleeping with the occupier, the women of the French Red Cross seemed to undermine the bonds of patriotic affection Vichy officials sought to create.

Mlle. Le Barase was not the only person accused of pilfering packages. Similar complaints appeared throughout the war. In July 1942, one soldier told Pétain that whenever Red Cross packages arrived, the German guard “opens [them] and takes out everything that is nice

⁹¹ “Note au sujet du port des insignes de la C.R.F. par les Amitiés Africaines” June 26, 1942, Madame Meifredy, F/9/2958, ANF. “belligérants pour ne plus respecter cet emblème.”

⁹² Le Crom, “La Croix-Rouge française pendant la seconde guerre mondiale” : 156-159.

⁹³ Letter Paris August 5 1943 Ref 622 D., Troupes Noires, F/9/2965, ANF. “mange avec alemade [sic.]...elle couche avec alemade [sic].”

⁹⁴ Fabrice Virgili, *La France Virile: Des Femmes Tondues À La Libération* (Paris: Payot, 2001); Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*.

and then gives the rest for the prisoners to share.”⁹⁵ Making these complaints did not come easy. Inspectors of a camp in a camp in Chauvency-le-Chateau claimed two prisoners had been severely wounded by a German corporal, including a contusion on one prisoner’s right arm, after they expressed “the desire to have package verification done in their presence.”⁹⁶ Similarly, Edouard Ouedraogo said German guards transferred him to a harsh disciplinary camp because he had the “imprudence to write to my sponsor in Paris that my package had been stolen from me.”⁹⁷ The risks men took to protect these packages reflected the importance of their contents as well as prisoners’ sense of entitlement to the official assistance they represented.

In the eyes of many, package theft undermined faith in the regime’s ability to help prisoners during their captivity. In a letter to Pétain, Abdoulaye Dia asked the Marshal to stop guards from robbing the only objects that helped, “remove the inertia and isolation and above all these gloomy pessimists.” To convince authorities to help overcome this ennui, Dia said that, “we have shown ourselves equal to our white brothers in our responsibilities, we were with them in the good happy days. We will stay with them in the dark days, waiting for a new and united France.”⁹⁸ Dia combined these packages’ role in managing everyday life in camps with their ability to facilitate long-term military loyalty. Pascal Anago invoked this same connection when speaking of his German guards, telling Pétain that he had “to forbid them from opening our packages.” He reminded the head of state that, “it is us that you fed, it is not for them that you

⁹⁵ Anonymous letter from Rennes, July 11, 1942, F/9/2351, ANF. “le sous-officier ouvrez tou les chose qu’es beaux et sortie dedans et portance dendre eux le motier que reste portace le prisonnier [sic.]”

⁹⁶ “Frontstalag 194 (Chalou S/Marne) AK de Chauvency le Château February 18 1943,” F/9/2354, ANF. “exprimé le désir que la vérification des colis fut faite en leur présence. »

⁹⁷ “Composition Français,” mentalité des tirailleurs sénégalais et fiche sur le Mouvement en faveur de l’indépendance de l’Afrique Noire, VIII AOF 1944-45, 5 H 16, SHD. “l’imprudence d’écrire à mon Parrain à Paris que mon colis m’a été pillé.”

⁹⁸ Les Prisonniers du Camp de Souge à leur Marechal Chef de l’État Français, , Frontstalag 221 St. Médard-de-Jalles, June 7, 1942, F/9/2356, ANF. “Évitons l’inertie et l’isolement et surtout ces en cafardeurs pessimistes...Nous nous sommes montré les égaux de nos frères blancs dans le devoir, nous étions avec eux dans les beaux jours heureux. Nous resterons avec eux dans les jours sombres, en attendant une France nouvelle et unie. »

sent us these packages, no?”⁹⁹ Theft undermined the sense of being cared for that these packages sought to foster. Responding to Anago’s letter, CATN representatives proposed placing names on packages and delivery forms to help track future complaints.¹⁰⁰ This muted response reflected French officials’ limited authority over German run camps. Objects meant to demonstrate the Vichy state’s support came to highlight its weakness. As prisoners fought to protect their right to packages, French officials struggled to support them in these daily clashes.

Conflicts over packages and the assistance they represented led some prisoners to predict a dismal future for France’s empire. Angry that French prisoners seemed to get better treatment than their colonial counterparts, the prisoner Celly told the Vichy Minister of Colonies that he and his peers gave France everything, “abandoning those who are dear to us.” Now he felt, “the rancor, the bitterness of interned colonials in France against the mother country. France must, at any price, do something for its sons of different races before it is too late.”¹⁰¹ Far from the unified future Dia evoked, Celly envisioned a postwar France bereft of its colonial subjects. In another complaint, Rene Camara decried the unequal assistance given by the *Amitiés Africaines*, which at this time focused on sending packages to North African prisoners.¹⁰² Camara saw a cruel hypocrisy in the fact that this group, which had Africa in its name, only aided men from the Maghreb. “Africa also includes Senegal, Dahomey” Camara noted, “You knew your geography much better in September thirty-nine. I am here defending the interests of France... Tomorrow these men will return to their homes and nothing will have softened their existence as

⁹⁹ Pascal Anago to Maréchal Pétain, A signaler aux inspecteurs, F/9/2351, ANF “Il faut leur défendu d’ouvrir notre colis puisque c’est nous que vous avez nourrit, c’est n’est pas leur que vous avez nous donnent colis n’est-ce pas?”

¹⁰⁰ G. Berthier to Commandant Bouret, November 23, 1942, A signaler aux inspecteurs, F/9/2351, ANF.

¹⁰¹ Celly to Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies, Rapatriement de P.G. Coloniaux, 2 P 85, SHD. “...en abandonnant les êtres qui nous sont chers...la rancœur, l’amertume des coloniaux internes en France contre la Mère-Patrie. Il faut absolument que la France fasse à tout prix quelque chose pour ses fils de races différentes avant qu’il ne soit trop tard.”

¹⁰² For more on the *Amitiés Africaines* see Donal Hassett. *Mobilizing Memory: The Great War and the Language of Politics in Colonial Algeria, 1918-39* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 162-165.

prisoners.”¹⁰³ Camara rejected the colonial borders drawn across the Sahara. France had recruited soldiers from both sides of the desert when the war began. Camara felt officials forgot this fact at their peril, invoking the fear of travelling bad news that had motivated domestic assistance for soldiers since the Great War. Someday he would return to the colonies with word of France’s disregard for his suffering. If care work typically focuses on individual frailties, Camara and Celly tied assistance programs to the French state’s own weakness. If officials did not get West African soldiers the help they needed, the empire’s future could not be guaranteed.

Soldiers were not the only ones who complained about care package conflicts. Prisoners regularly told their *marraines* about these thefts. Robert Diba, for example, wrote a letter to Mme. Huluhex in May 1941 about an Alsatian officer who “mistreats us like beasts” and stole the package she recently sent.¹⁰⁴ Huluhex forwarded this complaint to Scapini’s administration.¹⁰⁵ Two years later, Mme. R. Semser of Réhon relayed similar concerns. She assumed the agent reading her letter would be “surprised to receive a word from a mama who helps a bit our black prisoners.” She bemoaned the theft of goods her fellow *marraines* sent, wondering if there were “no serious or honest people in France to deliver packages intact to these poor unfortunates.” Finally, “as a French mother,” she asked officials to send these men sweaters.¹⁰⁶ Like prisoners writing to their “father” Pétain, Semser invoked her position in Vichy’s imagined family to

¹⁰³ Letter from René Camara, November 25 1941, Correspondance Comité et œuvres d’assistance, F/9/2355, ANF. “L’Afrique c’est aussi le Sénégal, le Dahomey...etc. vous connaissiez beaucoup mieux votre géographie en Septembre trene neuf [sic.]...Demain ces gens-là rentreront chez eux rien n’aura adouci leur existence de prisonniers.”

¹⁰⁴ Robert Diba to Mme Huleux, May 1 1942, A signaler aux inspecteurs, F/9/2351, ANF. “...il nous maltraite comme un bête”

¹⁰⁵ Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II*, 225.

¹⁰⁶ Mme. Semser to Monsieur le Directeur, Réhon, October 10, 1943, Troupes Noires 41 rue de la Bienfaisance Paris, F/9/2965, ANF. “...surprise de recevoir un mot d’une maman qui aide un peu nos prisonniers noirs...si en France il n’y a plus personne de sérieux et d’honnête pour remettre intact les colis à c’est [sic.] pauvre malheureux...en tant que Maman française.”

ground her complaint. Prisoners and *marraines* bemoaned authorities' inability to distribute packages. Without a better way to care for their soldiers, the ties binding the empire might snap.

Assistance and Assistants

Semser's letter reflected the critiques increasingly undermining Vichy's authority. By the time letter was sent in late 1943, material deprivations and the violence of occupation fostered growing disillusionment with the regime.¹⁰⁷ On the geopolitical level, the Allied takeover of French North Africa in late 1942 led Nazi authorities to occupy all of France, severely undermining Vichy's power and legitimacy.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, blockades and overthrows of several Vichy-aligned colonial regimes left metropolitan France cut off from most of its colonies. As an internal note from Vichy's prisoner of war services explained, "the suppression of relations between France and its Empire has deprived us of supplies, funding, and correspondences that assure our prisoners' material and morale link with their countries of origin."¹⁰⁹ The government could no longer get soldiers their tam-tams or kola nuts. Care package thefts had already fueled critiques of Vichy's limited capacities. Now wartime setbacks threatened to provoke greater claims that the Vichy state was losing control over its empire.

In these circumstances, Vichy authorities sought new ways to become part of West African prisoners' domestic lives. In the fall of 1943, the Ministry tasked with managing prisoners of war took control of all groups working with colonial POWs and placed them under the auspices of the newly-formed *Assistance Coloniale aux Prisonniers de Guerres* (ACPG).¹¹⁰ These reforms gave Vichy greater control over aid organizations working with prisoners and

¹⁰⁷ Richard Vinen, *The Unfree French: Life Under the Occupation* (London; New York: Allen Lane, 2006), 56-57.

¹⁰⁸ Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 221-230.

¹⁰⁹ "Note a/s Assistance Coloniale aux Prisonniers de Guerre," March 18, 1943, Correspondance concernant les relations des Amitiés africaines et des assistantes coloniales avec le Service des prisonniers de guerre, F/9/2966, ANF. "La suppression des relations entre la France et son Empire nous a privé des denrées, des subventions et même des correspondances qui assuraient le bien matériel et moral de nos prisonniers avec leurs pays origines."

¹¹⁰ Mabon. *Prisonniers De Guerre "indigènes,"* 73-77.

allowed the resource-strapped regime to lean on pre-existing groups. As part of this reform, the Secretary of State of the Navy and Colonies Henri Bléhaut called on the *Amitiés Africaines* to expand its focus from North Africans to include all colonial prisoners. “To combat this sensation of isolation and abandonment” Bléhaut wrote, the AA should establish “as close and affective contact as possible between natives and the Secretary of State and Colonies.” He characterized the AA’s members as “the only one in their eyes who can, in a certain measure, replace their distant families.”¹¹¹ The ACPG dubbed the women working for the new AA “colonial assistants,” recycling the “assistant” title given to welfare officers tasked with regulating French women’s sexual and domestic lives under Vichy and the Third Republic.¹¹² Framing the government as a surrogate family and recycling natalist terminology linked state familialism with assistance for colonial POWs. Through this approach, Bléhaut believed female assistants could forge “a morale climate whose political significance certainly does not escape you.”¹¹³ Familial order and female labor became tools to assert French colonial authority.

Bléhaut fit this new program into Vichy’s flailing National Revolution by invoking the story of the volunteer Andrée Jolly. By late 1943, Jolly had spent several months working for the AA around Verdun. She had helped local middle schoolers “adopt” nearby colonial prisoners and collect food, clothes, and other good for their new wards.¹¹⁴ Alongside unifying France’s European and African children, Jolly asserted French sovereignty over colonial prisoners.

¹¹¹ L’Amiral Secrétaire d’État à la Marine et aux Colonies to Monsieur le Général Directeur du Services des Prisonniers de Guerre, Vichy, August 7, 1943, F/9/2966, ANF. “...lutter contre cette sensation d’isolement et d’abandonne établissant un contact aussi étroit et aussi affectueux que possible entre les indigènes et le Secrétariat d’État aux Colonies...qui seul à leurs yeux peut remplacer, dans une certaine mesure, la famille lointaine.”

¹¹² Laura Levine Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*: 171-206.

¹¹³ L’Amiral Secrétaire d’État à la Marine et aux Colonies to Monsieur le Général Directeur du Services des Prisonniers de Guerre, Vichy August 7, 1943, F/9/2966, ANF. “...d’un climat moral favorable dont la portée politique ne vous a certainement pas échappé.”

¹¹⁴ , Secrétariat d’État à la Guerre: Comité des Amitiés Africains, No. 1 Letter to Madame Meifredy President of Amitiés Africaines, Verdun, February 12, 1943, , Dossier 2, 2 P 85, SHD.

Reports described how Jolly intervened after “a Senegalese prisoner was wounded by two revolver bullets by a German chief.” Jolly rushed “to the bedside of the wounded individual and effectively intervened to the prefectural authorities.”¹¹⁵ In her own letter, Jolly said this officer had long “mistreated and insulted” prisoners.¹¹⁶ By denouncing German guards, visiting wounded soldiers, and rallying local support Jolly provided the direct connection and control often lacking in care package programs.

By late 1943, Jolly’s peers spread out across France. One report from March 1944 counted 24 assistants in 21 regions. Except for one area, all employees were women. This report also said that twelve of these assistants were married and the remaining eleven were unwed.¹¹⁷ Official records provided little other information on these women. In the reports these assistants sent every two weeks, however, they provided glimpses into their past lives. Some women evoked experiences in the colonies. While visiting an Algerian prisoner, Mme. Fournier said she talked, “for a long time about his country, which I know well.”¹¹⁸ “Having made numerous visits to the colonies” another assistant wrote after visiting hospitalized soldiers, “I could speak to them about our great leaders, their families, their countries and their customs. We even evoked some names and memories.”¹¹⁹ Female teachers and nurses in the colonies often presented

¹¹⁵ Note a/s Assistance Coloniale aux Prisonniers de Guerre, March 18, 1943, , Correspondance concernant les relations des Amitiés africaines et des assistantes coloniales avec le Service des prisonniers de guerre, F/9/2966, ANF. “...un prisonnier sénégalais avait été blessé de deux balles de revolver par un chef de culture allemande...au chevet du blessé et intervenir efficacement auprès des autorités préfectorales.”

¹¹⁶ A. Jolly to Madame Meifredy, Verdun, April 3, 1943, 2 P 85, SHD. “maltraité et insultés.”

¹¹⁷ “État de l’activité des Sections de l’Assistance Coloniale aux Prisonniers de Guerre en captivité” Lyon, March 27, 1944, F/9/2966, ANF. The one area with a male assistant was the Aisne department to the north of Paris.

¹¹⁸ “Rapport sur l’Activité des Sections Quinzaine du 1er au 15 Mars 1944, Activité du Foyer de Rennes,” F/9/2966, ANF. “Nous avons parlé longtemps de son pays que je connais bien.”

¹¹⁹ “Section de Rennes, Rapport Semaine du 16 au 23 Juin 1943,” Comité des Amitiés Africains, 2 P 85, SHD. “Ayant fait de nombreux séjours aux Colonies, j’ai pu leur parler de nos grands Chefs, de leurs familles, de leur Pays et de leurs coutumes. Nous avons évoqué bien des noms et des souvenirs.”

themselves as uniquely effective liaisons between indigenous and European populations.¹²⁰

Assistants similarly used colonial care-work to carve out distinct positions of authority.

In their interactions with prisoners, assistants were told to embody state maternal authority. They had to send bi-monthly reports on POWs' conditions, help soldiers' write and send letters, connect them with the Secretary of State of the Navy and Colonies, and generally "give them the thousand little services that would foster a favorable morale."¹²¹ To make the link between these care takers and the state visible, planners even outlined these women's uniforms. Assistants had to wear a "straight skirt, a vest with four pockets, a jacket, a beret" all made of khaki. These women's sleeves also had to bear the "insignia of the colonial administration" with the letters ACPG.¹²² Since at least World War I, women in military khaki had fed broader fears about an unstable "civilization without sexes."¹²³ These skirts and official armbands sought to allay these anxieties, marking assistants' bodies as feminine and state sanctioned. Assistants became clearly demarcated female fighters in the struggle for West African soldiers' loyalty.

Beyond representing gender divisions, these uniforms visibly linked these women's service to the Vichy government. In May 1944, the German Captain Rhode tried to limit assistants' access to camps around Bordeaux. Like other German commanders, he worried about having French state-employees in his camps. He proposed that the women working for the

¹²⁰ Julia Clancy-Smith, "L'école Rue Du Pacha à Tunis: L'éducation De La Femme Arabe Et "La plus Grande France (1900-1914)," trans. Anne-Marie Engels-Brooks, *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 12 (2000): 33-55; Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel. *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

¹²¹ "Note a/s Assistance Coloniale aux Prisonniers de Guerre," March 18, 1943, Correspondance concernant les relations des Amitiés africaines et des assistantes coloniales avec le Service des prisonniers de guerre, F/9/2966, ANF. "...les milles petits services qui entretiendront un climat moral favorable."

¹²² Ibid. "d'une jupe droite, d'une veste à 4 poches à l'ouvert, d'un manteau, d'une béret...l'insigne des administrateurs des colonies."

¹²³ Laura L. Doan, "Outraging the Decencies of Nature? Uniformed Female Bodies," *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 64-94; Mary Louise Roberts. *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

ACPG give their packages to the Red Cross. However, the local AA director balked at this idea. “It is necessary that the prisoners see these young women wearing the Ministry’s badge” she declared, “it is also necessary that we can directly learn prisoners’ needs.”¹²⁴ Sending packages through someone else would prevent direct interactions. These women wanted to see these prisoners and to be seen by them. They would no longer co-opt the Red Cross emblem. Now they sought to highlight their status as French government employees and, by extension, their care work’ state associations. When reporting on her visit to thirty two “Senegalese” prisoners in Auxerre several months earlier, Mme. J. Durand told her superiors that the men, “very much want to have an insignia of the A.A.”¹²⁵ Durand likely did not know what soldiers hoped to do with this patch. However, relaying their request validated hopes that these women, and their badges, would become valued symbols of a caring colonial state.

If making direct personal contact was essential, this could not always occur in camps. In November 1943, the German Commander Captain Ripple threatened to cut off the AA’s access to the camps he controlled if their agents’ exact responsibilities were not clarified.¹²⁶ In response to this conflict and similar critiques from other German officials, ACPG officials said that colonial assistants should only enter camps when they had German authorities’ permission.¹²⁷ These limitations likely explained Mlles. Challet and Beauchine’s excitement when a show put on by a touring theater troupe in a nearby camp led the German guards to give these women, “the

¹²⁴ “Service s’occupant de P.G. Coloniaux, Conférence dans le Bureau du Capitaine Rhode, Samedi 6 Mai 1944, 11h15,” Organisation et activité des services s’occupant des P.G. coloniaux (septembre 1941-juin 1944, 2 P 68, SHD. “...il est nécessaire que les prisonniers voient les jeunes filles portant l’écusson (badge) du Ministre. Et puis, il est nécessaire aussi que nous puissions nous renseigner directement sur les besoins des prisonniers.”

¹²⁵ “A.C.P.G. Section d’Auxerre,” January 28, 1944, F/9/2966, ANF. “Ils désirent beaucoup avoir un insigne des A.A.”

¹²⁶ Réunion du 12 Novembre 1943 à la Sous-Direction du Service des Prisonniers de Guerre, F/9/2966, ANF.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

exceptional permission to enter the interior of the camp.”¹²⁸ These remarks implied that assistants’ access to camps was severely limited. However, the extensive bimonthly reports on camp conditions demonstrated that these limitations did not prevent frequent contacts. Regardless, assistants’ access still came at German officials’ discretion. In these camps, women and the state they represented were visitors, not masters.

This inability to control camp interiors, which so often hampered care package projects, likely motivated the ACPG to deploy another tool: *foyers*. As the previous chapter explained, *foyers* for West Africans in interwar France promoted competing notions of the cultural or political milieus to which African migrants belonged. This mission seemed all the more important amidst official concerns about West African POWs’ loyalty. ACPG authorities said that assistants’ main goal was, “simply to create colonial *foyers* which would have for their clientele all natives.”¹²⁹ Some *foyers* for colonial POWs already existed at this time, often at small cabins near military barracks or hospitals. When trying to make one such *foyer* in 1941, the Medical Colonel Marchel Sieur turned to the same agency that funneled tam-tams from Niamey to Paris: AGEFOM. Sieur wanted to decorate his *foyer* with colonial exhibition pieces to give these men, “the joy of finding a milieu that reminds them a bit of their country and gives them the comforting impression of not being abandoned.”¹³⁰ Objects that dramatized colonial otherness in exhibits once again got retooled to inspire comfort and political belonging. When the AA was absorbed into the ACPG, they already ran nine such *foyers* with plans for 35

¹²⁸ “Activité des Sections – Section de Vesoul Quinzaine du 1er au 15 Mars 1944,” F/9/2966, ANF. “Le permission exceptionnelle pour pénétrer l’intérieur du Camp.”

¹²⁹ “Réunion du 12 Novembre 1943 à la Sous-Direction du Service des Prisonniers de Guerre,” November 18, 1943, F/9/2966, ANF. “...créer simplement des foyers coloniaux qui auraient pour clientèle tous les indigènes”

¹³⁰ “Note pour Monsieur le Directeur: Décoration pour salles rapatriés coloniaux Hôpital Villemin” 1943, Inventaire des objets fêtés à dites organisations à l’occasion de divers manifestations,” AGEFOM//598, CAOM. “...la joie de trouver un milieu qui leur rappelle un peu leur pays et leur donne l’impression reconfortante de ne pas être abandonnés.”

more.¹³¹ Eventually most assistants found barns or schools within walking distance of camps to use as *foyers*. However, by 1943 assistants could not get the goods Sieur sought. With metropolitan France severed from most of its colonies, no new shipments of tam-tams were coming. These women had to find other ways to create substitute homes.

Rather than trying to materially recreate an indigenous milieu like their interwar predecessors, assistants tried to make *foyers* feel like homes by integrating them into prisoners' daily lives. Assistants happily noted how frequently prisoners went to their *foyers* on walks to and from work, as well as on their Sundays off. German authorities could, and did, punish prisoners' by revoking their visitation rights.¹³² Yet when accessible, prisoners found their ways to the *foyers*. The assistant stationed near a camp in Maucourt with 86 West African prisoners reported that the "men come here demanding a thousand little particular services: mending, postage, etc."¹³³ Labor typically marked as feminine, like mending, came alongside letter-writing. Rather than delineating predetermined services in the *foyer*, prisoners seemed to dictate what they needed. "They come to the *foyer* while going to work" Mme. Fournier wrote, "and when coming back they take a coffee or some hot milk, eat some tartines and warm themselves up because it is still cold." Fournier also tended to the wounds and aches men accrued during long days at work.¹³⁴ Assistants in Nancy reported that in April 1944 they distributed 621 meals and 567 beverages at their *foyer*. As an added treat, men with long train journeys to work

¹³¹"Compte Rendu de l'activité déployée par les 'Amitiés Africaines' pour l'Assistance morale aux indigènes Nord-Africains et Coloniaux Durant le mois d'Août 1943," September 1, 1943, Rapports sur les Activités du Comité des Amitiés Africaines (en particulier: Rapport du contrôles de 1er class de l'armée Tugnet) 1942-1943, 2 P 85, SHD.

¹³² "Activité des Foyers Pendant le Mois d'Avril 1944," F/9/2966, ANF.

¹³³ "Section de Verdun, Frontstalag 194 – Kommando de Maucourt, quinzaine du 1er au 15 janvier 1944," F/9/2966, ANF. "Les hommes viennent y demander mille petits services en particulier: raccommodage, courrier, etc."

¹³⁴ "Rapport sur l'Activité des Sections Quinzaine du 1er Au 15 Mars 1944 Activité du Foyer de Rennes." ANF F/9/2966. "...ils viennent au foyer en allant à leur travail et en rentrant prendre un café au lait chaud, mange que des tartines et se chauffe car il fait toujours froid."

received snacks for their commutes.¹³⁵ Prisoners inscribed *foyers* into their daily lives by integrating these spaces and their services into their efforts to find domestic routines to structure their time. These visits led assistants to feel they had done what care packages often failed to do: provide reliable state-managed tools to help prisoners feel at home.

Assistants claimed that these daily interactions fostered genuine familial attachments. “One truly feels how attached they are to the *Foyer*” an assistant in Rennes wrote of West African prisoners, “we are at our home here they tell their *marraines*.”¹³⁶ Mme. Fournier similarly said that the thirty-five West African soldiers in Guines had high spirits “because of the *foyer* where they find family life and morale and material comforts.”¹³⁷ These emphases on “family life” and a sense of being “attached” reflected assistants’ desire to make soldiers feel emotionally connected to the *foyer*. Of course, these claims of familial unity came from the women employed by a deeply natalist state, and not the men themselves. But these comments do reveal how these women imbued emotional links into military notions of mutual obligation.

Celebrations around letters demonstrate how men integrated the *foyers* into their own efforts to connect with distant friends and relatives. Mme. Bourdin in Le Mans described the “great joy in the room” that arose when four prisoners received letters from West Africa.¹³⁸ This effervescence was likely fed by the fact that the growing separation between France and its West African colonies had made letters even rarer than before. Furthermore, the fact that assistants often helped soldiers write letters imbricated the *foyer* in their production. These factors likely

¹³⁵ “Foyers Amitiés Africaines Activité du Mois d’Avril 1944,” F/9/2966, ANF.

¹³⁶ “Section de Rennes (Ille & Vilaine) Rapport sur l’activité de la section pendant la quinzaine du 1^{er} au 15 janvier 1944,” ANF F/9/2966, ANF. “On sont vraiment combien ils sont attachés au Foyer, nous sommes ici chez nous disent-ils à leurs *marraines*.”

¹³⁷ “Rapport sur l’Activité des Sections, Section de Rennes 20 au 25 Décembre 1943, Cantonnement de Guines.” F/9/2966, ANF. “grâce au foyer où ils trouvent la vie de famille et un réconfort moral et matériel.”

¹³⁸ “Section de le Mans, Rapport de l’Activité de la Section du 15 au 31 Janvier 1944,” F/9/2966, ANF. “...grande joie dans la salle.”

motivated Moussa Gaye to rush to the Rennes *foyer* on March 3, 1944 to “happily announce to us that he had received news from his parents and wife in Saint-Louis-du-Sénégal.”¹³⁹ As discussed earlier, letters gave prisoners rare links to distant lives. Displaying these letters and having assistants write or read them connected biological families in West Africa to the *foyer* families that assistants hoped to create. One can only imagine what onlookers thought, wondering when they would rush to the *foyer* with a letter in hand.

While letters helped men envision future reunions, meals in *foyers* provided more immediate gatherings. Trips to get food or coffee made *foyers* sites for daily rituals that structured time and facilitated socializing outside camps. On Sundays, these rituals could be drawn out. Writing from Verdun, Mlle. Jolly said that at the *foyers*’ Sunday meals “many comrades and even some brothers or cousins who had long been separated had the surprise of seeing one another.”¹⁴⁰ This feast reunited military and biological kin while helping men find social and material support outside of where they worked or lived. At the center of this domestic tableau stood Jolly, hoping to embody maternal French authority.

The specific relationship between assistant’s maternal role and Vichy ideologies came across most clearly in accounts of Catholic rituals organized for West African prisoners. Catholicism constituted a central pillar of Vichy’s National Revolution. In particular, the ideas of sacrifice, subservience, and selflessness associated with certain strands of early twentieth century French Catholic femininity informed many Vichy ideas about social hierarchies.¹⁴¹ In December 1943, one assistant described the joy of being “united around the divine master” during a

¹³⁹ “Rapport sur l’Activité des Section quinzaine du 1er au 15 Mars 1944, Activité du Foyer de Rennes,” F/9/2966, ANF. “...tout heureux nous annoncer qu’il avait reçu des nouvelles de ses parents et de sa femme de Saint-Louis du Sénégal.”

¹⁴⁰ “ACPG Section de Verdun Rapport de l’Activité de la Section et du Foyer de Verdun Semaine du 16 au 22 Janvier 1944,” F/9/2966, ANF.

¹⁴¹ Muel-Dreyfus, “Heritage and Incarnations of Catholic Feminine Culture” *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine*, 125-170.

Christmas mass she attended with several colonial prisoners.¹⁴² That same month, Mme. Fournier reported that she helped organize a mass for the baptism and first communion of six prisoners. Afterwards, they went to the *foyer* to celebrate over “a breakfast we prepared for our baptized men and their *marraines*.”¹⁴³ Four months later, Fournier told her superiors that she joined the Archbishop of Rennes in a “moving ceremony” for eighty West African prisoners’ confirmation.¹⁴⁴ These ceremonies integrated these men into Catholic hierarchies, either with a “divine master” or their *marraines*. Furthermore, by helping men fulfill the sacraments that marked the Catholic lifecycle, Fournier replaced the relatives missing from the pews. Like daily breakfasts, weekly meals, or infrequent letters, these rites provided an officially sanctioned way to organize men’s lives. In the process, certain assistants became surrogate mothers reaffirming France’s title as the eldest daughter of the Church.

Yet assistants could also find themselves amidst spiritual practices soldiers themselves used to unify *foyer* families, particularly in the face of death. As camp conditions worsened during the 1944 Allied bombing campaigns, assistants increasingly buried their West African wards.¹⁴⁵ In early March, Ali Diallo perished during an air raid near the city of Le Mans. The colonial assistant Mme. Bourdin helped organize Diallo’s burial in a local cemetery’s Muslim section. The creation of Muslim sections in French cemeteries before the war reflected broader

¹⁴² L’Homme de confiance du Camp de Prisonnier du Front-stalag 194 to Madame le Président du Comité Local d’Assistance, Section de Vesoul Frontstalag 194 Camp de Prisonniers de Vesoul, F/9/2966, ANF. “réunis devant la divin Maître.”

¹⁴³ “Activité du Foyer de Rennes 20 au 25 Décembre 1943, F/9/2966, ANF. “un petit déjeuner pour nos baptisés et leurs marraines.”

¹⁴⁴ “Rapport sur l’Activité des Section Quinzaine du 1er ay 15 Mars 1944, Section de Rennes,” F/9/2966, ANF. “cérémonie émouvante.”

¹⁴⁵ Exact numbers of those who died in captivity are difficult to ascertain, for more details see Myron Echenberg. “Morts Pour La France”; The African Soldier in France During the Second World War." *The Journal of African History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 365; Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity*, 201-210.

efforts to demarcate distinctly Muslim spaces in France.¹⁴⁶ Yet in this site meant to separate, Bourdin joined Diallo's comrades as they "recited prayers in front of this coffin covered in flowers."¹⁴⁷ West African soldiers had diverse spiritual backgrounds with distinct funerary rites, yet communal prayers like these provided facsimiles that men hoped would help their friends' spirits move on.¹⁴⁸ Mme. Fournier described a similar gathering at the funeral for Saliou Diallo a "poor young man who will dream no more of his native land." She noted the presence of the "foyer's regulars and it was infinitely sad to see each other around this newly opened grave."¹⁴⁹ She grieved Diallo's denied homecoming as well as the somber setting of this reunion. Having a distinct Muslim cemetery section carved out a separate place for West African Muslims in France's imagined imperial family. However, women like Bourdin and Fournier joined soldiers to take on the role of relatives denied the chance to bury their fallen kin. Like baptisms or coffee breaks, funerals integrated *foyers* into soldiers' lives. Doing so did not just mimic Vichy-style familial authority. *Foyers* bonds and sentiments also inspired new sympathies and demands.

Liberated Men's Domestic Demands

By the summer of 1944, these demands came to the fore as a new world seemed at hand for France and its empire. Allied victories had led to the Vichy regime's collapse. On August 25, 1944 De Gaulle and the Free French Forces marched into Paris, declaring the end of the capital's occupation. Notably absent were the thousands of West African troops in De Gaulle's army.

¹⁴⁶ Naomi Davidson, "Muslim Bodies in the Metropole: Social Assistance and 'Religious' Practice in Interwar Paris," in *Muslims in Interwar Europe: A Transcultural Historical Perspective*, eds. Agai Bekim, Ryad Umar, and Sajid Mehdi, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 105-24; Juliette Nunez, "La gestion publique des espaces confessionnels des cimetières de la Ville de Paris : l'exemple du culte musulman (1857-1957)" *Le Mouvement Social* 4, no. 237 (2011) 13-32.

¹⁴⁷ "Activité des Sections, Section du Mans (Sarthe) Arbeitzkommando du Maroc-le-Mans Quinzaine du 1er au 15 Mars 1944," F/9/2966, ANF. "ses camarades réciteront les prières devant la tombe couverte de fleurs."

¹⁴⁸ Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune*, 97-98; Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, 132-135.

¹⁴⁹ "Activité des Sections Quinzaine du 15 au 31 Mars 1944 Section du Mans," F/9/2966, ANF. "ce pauvre petit qui ne révèrera plus de sa terre natale. L'Escorte était composée d'habitues du Foyer et c'était infiniment triste de se retrouver au borde de cette tombe fraichement ouverte."

Believing the sight of Africans as liberators would demoralize long-suffering Parisians, De Gaulle removed these men from the units entering the city.¹⁵⁰ The order to “whiten” Paris’ liberators reflected a broader struggle over West Africans’ positions in France’s postwar empire. By the war’s end, people across France and its colonies feverishly debated the basis of the revived French Republic. In France’s African colonies, the 1944 Brazzaville Conference inspired widespread hopes and conflicts over imperial reforms.¹⁵¹ Freed West African prisoners and those concerned about their loyalty joined these debates by inscribing the expectations of domestic assistance fostered during captivity into the foundations of France’s new imperial order.

Having achieved their long-desired freedom, many French observers feared West African POWs faced a new kind of abandonment. By the fall of 1944, most of the roughly 30,000 remaining colonial POWs were released.¹⁵² Many freed French prisoners struggled to navigate liberated lives, feeling captivity had upended their role in the nation and in their families.¹⁵³ Colonial ex-prisoners had these concerns amplified by a particularly chaotic demobilization. The impoverished French government often made former West Africans wait months or even years to return to West Africa or begin new lives in France.¹⁵⁴ Many soldiers languished in military transit centers or army camps with poor food, few beds, and little to no clean clothes. Some French officers reported overhearing *tirailleurs* say they preferred their accommodations in

¹⁵⁰ Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, 257-262, note that while some of these soldiers were former POWs, most were recruited from West Africa after France’s defeat and thus spent no time in prison camps.

¹⁵¹ James I. Lewis, “The French Colonial Service and the Issues of Reform, 1944-1948” *Contemporary European History* 4, no. 2 (July 1995): 153-188.

¹⁵² Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II*, 241-249; several thousand prisoners were transferred to Germany during the Normandy invasion and were not freed until the spring of 1945.

¹⁵³ Mary Louise Roberts, “Masters in Their House” *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 85-110; Fishman, “Grand Delusion”; Lewin, “Le Retour des Prisonniers de Guerre Français.”

¹⁵⁴ Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II*, 249-275.

German prisons.¹⁵⁵ One delegate to France's Provisional Assembly feared that these conditions gave West African ex-prisoners "the conviction that they are being treated with indifference."¹⁵⁶ Like his Vichy predecessors, this delegate feared the consequences of domestic discontent. One West African activist, M. Sene, fed these fears in a letter to the Minister of Colonies about formerly imprisoned *tirailleurs* who were denied rooms in Parisian hotels housing white soldiers. What would be the "opinion of these soldiers' parents and friends" Sene asked "when they learn about the treatment they received."¹⁵⁷ Relatives in West Africa had waited for years to see their mobilized kin. Now they may learn that these men' tribulations did not end with liberation, potentially threatening their willingness to help revive and reconstruct France's empire. Anxieties about West Africans' domestic suffering clearly did not end with Vichy's downfall.

Freed prisoners did not passively bear these inequities. From Syria to Senegal, *tirailleurs* protested delayed repatriations, meager supplies, and overdue payments.¹⁵⁸ This came to its most infamous climax in the Dakar suburb of Thiaroye on November 30, 1944. Living in poorly supplied barracks, 1,280 West African soldiers, including many freed POWs, demanded material improvements and overdue payments. In response to these protests, the camp's French commander brought in military units. Amidst increasingly violent skirmishes, these units opened fire on the protesting soldiers, killing between thirty-five and seventy men. News of the massacre

¹⁵⁵ Ruth Ginio. "The Aftermath of World War II: Frustration, Protest, and Rebellion," *The French Army and Its African Soldiers: The Years of Decolonization* (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 19.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Monsieur Darnal, May 29, 1945, Fréjus, F/9/3815, ANF. "la conviction qu'ils sont traités avec indifférence."

¹⁵⁷ Letter from M. Sene to Monsieur le Ministre, Paris, November 15, 1944, Prisonniers de guerre, déportés et réfugiés. Rapatriement des personnes libérées, ravitaillement et réquisition de locaux; relations avec le ministère des prisonniers de guerre, recherches dans l'intérêt des familles: correspondance, CAB//450, CAOM. "l'opinion des parents et amis de ces soldats quand ils apprendront le traitement auxquels ceux-ci ont été l'objet."

¹⁵⁸ Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, 268-283.

spread rapidly, infuriating West African civilians, politicians, and troops across the empire.¹⁵⁹ French officials began to fear another uprising, and not just in West Africa.

Across France, officials struggled to explain the frequent riots or fights involving West African soldiers. In one such case, when deadly violence broke out in early July at the town of Saint-Raphaël, officers quickly went to the scene. Reports described hundreds of West African soldiers fighting local residents and police officers for hours after a French paratrooper shot a *tirailleur*.¹⁶⁰ One investigator pinned these West African men's rebelliousness on German propaganda encountered during their imprisonment as well as fraternization with "women of easy morals."¹⁶¹ German indoctrination and salacious women repeatedly appeared in reports on *tirailleurs*' protests across the empire.¹⁶² This approach blamed soldiers' anger on outsiders to France's idealized imperial family. However, at least one inspector from the Interior Ministry disagreed. After examining the riots involving *tirailleurs* during 1945, this officer declared that "African soldiers' demands are mostly material" and stemmed from a lack of food, clothes, and payments.¹⁶³ Some officials in Dakar came to similar conclusions. One report written right before the Thiaroye massacre told the Governors of French West Africa's colonies that released prisoners' demands stemmed from a desire for "certain advantages of a material nature." Making sure ex-prisoners returned to their villages with material conditions that were "as good as possible" would have a "determinative effect on their attitude towards us."¹⁶⁴ By the late 1940s,

¹⁵⁹ For more on the Thiaroye massacre see Raffael Scheck, "Les Prémices De Thiaroye: L'influence De La Captivité Allemande Sur Les Soldats Noirs Français à La Fin De La Seconde Guerre Mondiale." *French Colonial History* 13 (2012): 73-90; Fargettas, *Les Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, 283-294; Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerres 'indigènes'*, 193-211.

¹⁶⁰ "Rapport mensuel sur le comportement des Indigènes coloniaux," September 21, 1945, 149 W 137, ADBR.

¹⁶¹ "Incidents à St. Raphael," 149 W 137, ADBR. "des femmes de mœurs faciles"

¹⁶² Ginio, "The Aftermath of World War II."

¹⁶³ "Rapport Mensuel sur le comportement des Indigènes coloniaux" Marseille, September 21, 1945, 149 W 137, ADBR. "Les revendications des militaires de l'Afrique sont surtout d'ordre matériel."

¹⁶⁴ "Objet: Rapatriement des tirailleurs anciens prisonniers de guerre" November 25, 1945, 2 D 29 (28), ANS. "certain avantages d'ordre matériel...aussi bons que possible...effet déterminant sur leur attitude à notre égard"

attention to African soldiers' well-being inspired greater pay and promotion opportunities for African soldiers.¹⁶⁵ However, in the short term, those concerned with soldiers' demands often responded by recycling practices used by Vichy officials to make prisoners feel at home.

A report by one Jane Vialle from the southeastern city of Fréjus provided a representative example of these initial responses. Vialle worked with freed colonial POWs in Paris for months before going south in July 1945 to investigate repatriation camps. She was shocked at what she found: *tirailleurs* sleeping on the ground, wearing torn clothes and struggling to find food. They did not even have a *foyer*, "a cabin with a few tables and benches where they can write, read, and play." She decried, "incidents that arise between the *tirailleurs* and the locals, with the blame usually being on the latter." Vialle praised these soldiers for so calmly, "bearing the life imposed on them" and declared that "they could have waited for a much better welcome from 'the Mother Country' for whom they so generously gave their life."¹⁶⁶ Like the *marraines* or assistants working for Vichy, Vialle was a female liaison trying to support confined West African soldiers. However, she did not write to an authoritarian state about German prisons. She complained to agents of the revived French Republic about the barracks they ran for their own soldiers.

This echo between Vialle's report and wartime feminine care discourses reflected the broader post-liberation recycling of Vichy era practices and personnel. In January 1945, the president of the French Red Cross told the head of the French Army's colonial division that they had to send POWs care packages even after their release from prison. At repatriation these men would even receive a special "farewell package" as a "sign of recognition from our country to

¹⁶⁵ Ginio, "The Military Reforms: A New Army in French West Africa" *The French Army and Its African Soldiers*, 35-76.

¹⁶⁶, "Situation des Tirailleurs Sénégalais Prisonniers rapatriés d'Allemagne & Regroupés au Camp Gallieni à Fréjus Juillet 1945," Fréjus, F/9/3815, ANF. "... une baraque avec des tables et des bancs où les hommes pouvaient écrire, lire, jouer... des incidents se produisent entre tirailleurs et autochtones, où la plupart du temps les torts sont à incomber à ces derniers ... Ils pouvaient attendre beaucoup mieux de l'accueil de 'la Mère Patrie' pour laquelle ils donnent eux si généreusement leur vie."

those of its overseas children who came in 1939 to serve her.”¹⁶⁷ Colonial familial rhetoric, and the gifts believed to concretize it, survived the war. So too did many people who acted as Vichy’s caring colonial mothers. Andrée Jolly, the celebrated model for colonial assistants, continued her work after the liberation. In a report about a new assistant in Fréjus, Jolly claimed several West African soldiers said that, “if she is like mama (Mme. Bourdin) fine, but otherwise we do not need her.” Jolly claimed soldiers’ experience with her peers during their imprisonment made them, “used to assistants who deeply know their mentality.”¹⁶⁸ She saw herself and her colleagues as these men’s ideal caretakers. Jolly was one of the many Vichy agents who found their jobs, as well the ideologies undergirding their work, secure in France’s Fourth Republic.¹⁶⁹ While the war ended, the imagined imperial family officials evoked throughout the conflict remained. So too did the links between comfort, care, and state legitimacy fostered by POW assistance programs. This helped imbue the politics of dwelling into postwar efforts to determine what France owed the West Africans donning its uniform.

Conclusion

West African prisoners spent the war trying to survive. They shared meals, asked *marraines* for support, and grabbed tea or coffee at nearby *foyers*. POWs tried to find social and temporal moorings as they wondered when they would be free. Hoping to protect these soldiers’ loyalty and bring them into a new French imperial family, Vichy administrators tried to insert themselves into soldiers’ efforts to feel at home. Women, as *marraines* or colonial assistants, became the primary symbols and enactors of this project. In the process, female aid-workers and

¹⁶⁷ ANF F/9/3815, “Comité d’Assistance aux PG.” “témoignage de reconnaissance de notre pays à ceux de ses enfants d’outre-mer venus en 1939 pour la server”

¹⁶⁸ ANF F/9/3815, “Rapports de visite dans les différents centres, 1945-1946” Note sur l’entrée en Fonction de Mlle Collin, Assistante du Ministère des P.G.” “Si elle est comme maman (Mme Bourdin) ça va, sinon nous n’avons pas besoin d’elle”...ils sont habitués à des Assistantes qui connaissent à fond leur mentalité.”

¹⁶⁹ Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944*. [1st ed.]. New York: Knopf; 1972.

prisoners alike linked state legitimacy to West Africans' domestic well-being in ways that the Vichy regime did not intend.

The link between feeling at home and the colonial state's authority survived the war. Like their peers across Europe trying to recover from the conflict, people in France and its colonies pushed their government to improve their everyday lives. Alongside Parisian Jews trying to get back stolen furniture or squatters in Marseille claiming housing as a human right, former West African POWs made domestic comfort part of a new social contract for post-liberation France.¹⁷⁰ The wartime connection between state authority and West Africans' ability to feel at home fostered new expectations and new critiques. From Saint-Raphaël to Thiaroye, soldiers demanded that the French government help them live with comfort and dignity. The *quid-pro-quo* Gouékééé evoked in his letter to the CATN reflected how the politics of dwelling became key to the legitimacy of the new political order being built. The next two chapters will examine the intertwined domestic and political aspirations that the politics of dwellings' newfound influence inspired. Many people in French West Africa increasingly saw state support of their domestic lives as proof of whether or not they were forgotten. If France's promises never materialized, these individuals would have to find somewhere else to call home.

¹⁷⁰ Minayo Nasiali, "Citizens, Squatters, and Asocials: The Right to Housing and the Politics of Difference in Post-Liberation France." *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (2014): 434-59; Leora Auslander, "Coming Home? Jews in Postwar Paris." *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 2 (2005): 237-59.

Chapter Five - “This *Cité* is Yours”: French Plans and Senegalese Dreams in Dakar’s Postwar Suburbs

An intriguing set of albums sit on the shelves of the *Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert* (SICAP). Founded in 1949, this Dakar-based agency is the oldest public housing organization in Senegal. Each album contains photographs of complexes SICAP built during the 1950s. Flipping through the collection for the “Fann-Hock” complex, one photograph in particular caught my eye. In it, a young woman with a baby on her back stares at a sign that reads, “This *cité* is yours, be so kind as to keep it clean.”¹ (Fig. 1) The term *cité* invoked both the label for government housing projects as well as an older notion of the *cité* as a locus of citizenship.² This sign invited readers into this privileged socio-political space. However, they had to “keep it clean.”



Figure 5. 1: Photograph showing young Senegalese woman with baby on her back in the middle of a new SICAP neighborhood looking at sign that reads “This *cité* is yours, be so kind as to keep it clean.” Album 1 – F.H.-Rte. Pts.–R.10–K.K.– B.B, SB000, SICAP-Archives.

This was not the last time I encountered this message. In 2022, my research assistant and I spoke with Mamadou N’Diaye, who has lived in SICAP’s “Liberté III” neighborhood since 1961. While discussing his childhood home and the clean streets he traversed as a young boy, he

¹ Album 1 – F.H.-Rte. Pts.–R.10–K.K.– B.B, SB000, SICAP-Archives.

² Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

recalled a message he saw on signs scattered across his suburban world, “this *cit * is yours, be so kind as to keep it clean.”³ These calls for cleanliness remained not only in photographs sitting atop official shelves, but also in the memories of those who saw these signs on daily strolls through SICAP’s *cit s*. This directive’s appearance in contemporary photographs and distant memories reflects the persistent dreams of prosperity embedded in Dakar’s postwar suburbs.

SICAP and other suburban development projects responded to demographic and political transformations in Dakar after 1945. Like other African cities after World War II, Dakar saw unprecedented growth in these decades, going from a population of around 93,000 in 1939 to well over 300,000 by 1960.⁴ New arrivals quickly overwhelmed the city’s limited housing stock. Thousands of new residents from across Senegal and French West Africa more broadly lived in the kind of “*taudis*” or “slums” that invited official scorn during the anti-plague campaigns described in Chapter Two. However, postwar French officials did not just destroy old homes like their interwar predecessors. They also tried to build new ones. The domestic assistance inscribed in the post-liberation imperial social contract the previous chapter examined fostered new approaches to governance and new demands from those being governed. As Cheikh Faty Faye and Babacar Fall demonstrate, industrial growth and rising labor and political militancy in Dakar inspired new economic and political struggles in this late-colonial capital.⁵ While SICAP was one of many housing programs that responded to these demographic and political changes, it was by far the largest.⁶ Its scope inspired leaders before and after independence to claim that SICAP

³ Interview with Mamadou N’Diaye, February 5, 2022. Dakar, Senegal. Most of these interviews were conducted with the invaluable assistance of El Hadji Youssouf Toure in French, with occasional Wolof, between January 25 and February 9 2022 primarily in or near respondents homes. All interviewees names have been changed.

⁴ Assane Seck, “Le Contenu Humain,” *Dakar, M tropole Ouest-africaine*. (Dakar: Institut Fondamentale de l’Afrique Noire, 1970), 191-215.

⁵ Babacar Fall, *Le Travail Au S n gal Au XXe Si cle* (Paris:  ditions Karthala, 2011); Cheikh Faty Faye, *Les enjeux politiques   Dakar (1945-1960)* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000).

⁶ Youssouph San , “La politique de l’habitat au S n gal: une mutation permanente,” *Les Cahiers d’Outre-Mer* 263 (Juillet-Septembre 2013): 311-334.

would bring Dakar into a new age. In 1953, The High Commissioner in French West Africa said that because of France's housing projects, "a page in the Great Book of Africa has turned."⁷ Nine years later, Senegal's first president Leopold Senghor linked SICAP to a new "negro-African" civilization.⁸ This chapter examines SICAP and its houses to understand how people imbued the politics of dwelling into postwar Senegal's physical and political landscape.

The politics of dwelling's newfound power in Senegal arose amidst a growing focus on domestic welfare across the world after 1945. Recovering from an unprecedented total war, and facing Cold War tensions and anti-colonial movements, citizens and politicians across the globe tied governments' legitimacy to their citizens ability to live a "good life" defined by domestic stability and the material comforts emerging out of the postwar economic boom.⁹ French officials made welfare expansion key to the new Fourth Republic, hoping massive state investments would "modernize" France's economy and ease the social divisions seen as key to the Third Republic's demise.¹⁰ These shifts inspired a growing belief in a "right to comfort" that materialized in massive public housing complexes across France. Many planners hoped these projects would create a new kind of citizenship defined by abstract rights as well as the

⁷ "D'une Collaboration Nécessaire entre le Secteur Privé et la Puissance Publique au Bénéfice de l'Amélioration de l'habitat en Afrique Occidentale Française" April 1953, 4, 1FIDES/33 (254), CAOM.

⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Socialisme, Unité Africaine et Construction Nationale" *L'Unité-Africaine* Tuesday, February 13, 1962: 11. "négro-africaine et moderne."

⁹ Elizabeth Lacouture, *Dwelling in the World: Family, House, and Home in Tiajin, China, 1860-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021); Shane Hamilton and Sara Phillips, eds., *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2014); Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-century Europe* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Herrick Chapman, *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Timothy B Smith, "The Two World Wars and Social Policy in France" *Warfare and Welfare: Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries*, eds. Herbert Obinger, Klaus Petersen, and Peter Starke (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2018), 127-138.

consumption of public services.¹¹ SICAP emerged out of similar yet distinct hopes. Dwellers and officials linked metropolitan, colonial, and global approaches to housing to redefine what it meant to govern and inhabit a “modern” Dakar.

Connecting SICAP to these postwar debates about domestic assistance reveals how the politics of dwelling produced new forms of state intervention as well as new expectations about what role the state could play in Senegalese peoples’ lives. As French officials used housing to help “modernize” the metropole, their counterparts in Africa had related yet distinct ambitions. Across the continent, French and British colonial regimes pursued a strategy of “modernization” after 1945, often defining modern in part on peoples’ abandonment of village networks to live in nuclear-family units dependent on wages. In addition to demonstrating imperial “benevolence” amidst rising anti-colonial critiques, European authorities hoped that investments would create salaried urbanites who would provide economic and political stability.¹² In French West Africa, leaders often used these programs to prove the benefits of the postwar expansion of citizenship in France’s African colonies.¹³ Many scholars argue that these domestic projects merely constituted new chapters in the long history of violent colonial disruptions of Africans’ social reproduction.¹⁴ In particular, Luce Beekmans argues that SICAP pushed European style homes while replacing racial segregation with a new socioeconomic variety.¹⁵ This chapter agrees that

¹¹ Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

¹² Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹³ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Emily Burrill, *States of Marriage: Gender, Justice, and Rights in Colonial Mali*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015); Abosede A. George, *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood, Labor, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014); Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Luce Beekmans, “The ‘Development Syndrome’: Building and Contesting the SICAP Housing Schemes in French Dakar (1951-1960), *Canadian Journal of African Studies/ Revue Canadienne des études africaines* 51, no. 3 (2017): 359-388.

SICAP promoted Eurocentric norms and socioeconomic divisions. However, these factors did not stop many Senegalese urbanites from wanting these homes and all they represented.

If French officials wanted SICAP to make a modern colony, Senegalese actors used SICAP structures to make new lives and a new nation. Like other literate or salaried workers in postwar Africa, Dakar's suburbanites wanted the "good life" evoked in newspapers, political speeches, and neighbors' lawns.¹⁶ By using SICAP to meet these desires, Senegalese leaders tried to prove that their new state could give its citizens the comforts touted by postwar prophets of modernization. SICAP residents' memories, administrative records, and glossy magazines reveal how people turned colonial French plans into postcolonial Senegalese dreams.

If SICAP's ability to feed colonial and postcolonial ambitions reveals the durability of the politics of dwelling's promises, these neighborhood's exclusivity demonstrates this framework's steadfast limits. While nominally seeking to solve a mass housing crisis, SICAP focused on salaried workers. These workers and their wage-based lifestyles were touted as agents of modernization. However, this group never constituted more than a quarter of Dakar's population. SICAP struggled to help people in the "slums" that the organization claimed to eliminate. French and Senegalese observers noted this flaw from the beginning. Contrasting these enduring limits with SICAP's abiding utopian visions leads this chapter to argue that the politics of dwelling in postwar Senegal fostered salaried workers' inclusion in changing imperial, national, or global communities just as it promoted non-salaried workers' exclusion.

¹⁶ Daniel Tödt, *The Lumumba Generation: African Bourgeoisie and the Colonial Distinction in the Belgian Congo* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021); Bianca Murillo, *Market Encounters: Consumer Cultures in Twentieth-century Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017); Abou B. Bamba, *African Miracle, African Mirage: Transnational Politics and the Paradox of Modernization in Ivory Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016); James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

This chapter traces Dakar's suburbs from their colonial creation to their postcolonial adaptation. To prove that they could make Dakar a prosperous colonial metropolis, French designers and bureaucrats used SICAP to answer transnational and trans-imperial questions about the compatibility of "modern" housing and African domestic habits. By 1960, Senegalese journalists, politicians, and dwellers used these houses to assert not only their ability to occupy and adapt "modern" homes, but also the new governments' ability to help its citizen access new domestic comforts. People in Senegal came to judge the promises of "modernization" by building and inhabiting new homes, all while trying to keep them clean.

Building the *Évolué's* Place in Greater Dakar

Speaking above blaring trumpets, the narrator of a documentary about French colonial investments described the city being depicted as "a beautiful example of the French genius and enterprising spirit." The city in question: Dakar. "This little fishing village in less than one century has become," the narrator declared "by the force of these pioneers and builders, Greater Dakar"¹⁷ This triumphant 1951 propaganda film highlighted Dakar's new amenities, from its recently expanded port, now France's third largest, to the city's new railroads and airport. The film then abruptly shifted to the city's "native quarter." This narrator declared the neighborhood's straw or wooden homes a "brutal contrast with the modernism of the Airport." He went on to say that "the urbanism plan of Greater Dakar plans to destroy this insalubrious neighborhood where 140,000 souls live."¹⁸ The neighborhood in question was the Medina, the city's "African quarter" whose contested creation was described in Chapter Two. By the 1950s,

¹⁷ Jean-Jacques Mehu (dir.), *Dakar: Escalé Atlantique* (Dakar: Gaumont, 1951). "Belle exemple de l'esprit entreprise et la génie français, Dakar ce petit village de pêcheurs en moins d'un siècle est devenu par le force de ces pionniers et ces bâtisseurs, le Grand Dakar."

¹⁸ Ibid. "Contraste brutale avec le modernisme de l'aéroport voici le Medina, le quartier indigène de Dakar. Le plan d'urbanisme de Grand Dakar prévoir de raser ce quartier insalubre où vit une population de 140,000 âmes."

French officials saw it as the kind of slum it was initially meant to replace. The narrator said new houses would come to shelter the Medina's soon-to-be displaced residents and join the city's expanded port and new airport in creating this model colonial city.

The "Greater Dakar" project this film dramatized sought to make Dakar a major Atlantic port as well as a showpiece of French colonial modernization. An article from the Parisian newspaper *Le Libération* in August 1945 declared that this project would make the city a "magnificent capital worthy of our largest ensemble of African colonies."¹⁹ This "magnificent" transformation responded to new pressures and ideologies circulating throughout the Empire. After World War II, French authorities faced a battered metropolitan economy, American and Soviet hegemony, and rising demands for reform or revolution in its colonies. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the 1944 Brazzaville Conference promised a greater "Africanization" of colonial structures, a vague commitment that eventually led to new state investments, African subjects' enfranchisement as imperial citizens and the placement of more official jobs into African hands.²⁰ These reforms aimed to appease the kinds of growing demands for equal treatment and material assistance the previous chapter described. These policies also bolstered French efforts to rapidly industrialize their African colonies to make them tools for France's own postwar recovery. New industries drew migrants from across Senegal and French West Africa to Dakar. At the same time, thousands of French bureaucrats came to the city. Questions quickly arose about where and how these new residents would live. Housing became, as the local newspaper *Paris-Dakar* put it, one of the city government's "most pressing and daunting" tasks.²¹

¹⁹ "Un Dakar de 500.000 habitants va être construit" *Libération*, August 23, 1945, AGEFOM//377, CAOM. "magnifique capital digne de notre plus grande ensemble de colonies africaines."

²⁰ Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*.

²¹ "Est-ce la solution à notre crise du logement" *Paris-Dakar* April 27, 1947, AGEFOM//377, CAOM. "...un des plus pressants et plus ardu."

Planners behind the “Greater Dakar” project sought to manage urban growth by socioeconomically and geographically reorganizing the entire Cap-Vert Peninsula on which Dakar stood. Urban designers sought to integrate Dakar with new industrial areas along the peninsula’s northern periphery and eastern coast. Using modernist ideas of complementary zoning, these areas would have residences for industrial workers while white-collar workers would live in or near Dakar-proper. In 1951, the engineer J. Ahu explained this modernist grid’s particular cultural connotations in Dakar. Residential sectors would be divided between Zones A through E. Zones A, near northern and coastal industrial zones, would be reserved for housing that “respects the ancestral type of life of the majority of the indigenous population.” Zones B, just above the Medina, would “go to this part of the indigenous population that is in search of a type of house adjusted to its wishes to develop.” Finally, Zone C, D, E were reserved for Europeans in the Plateau or the city’s western coast.²² This plan divided Africans between a transient majority living an “ancestral type of life” in Dakar’s hinterlands from settled families, dependent on wages for their livelihoods, forging lives in the city’s periphery. As Luce Beekmans argues, this plan imposed socioeconomic segregation that literally placed salaried African workers between African traditions and European modernity.²³ As had been the case since World War I, the politics of dwelling in postwar Senegal in part reflected French officials’ belief that they had to manage Africans’ supposed break from village spaces and lifestyles.

Architects emphasized the need to make houses that reflected each quarter’s social profiles. One 1949 government report distinguished three occupants for housing projects in French West Africa: “*autochtones*” “*évolués*” and Europeans. The term *évolué* referred to

²² J. Ahu, “Le Grand Dakar, Aménagement de la Presqu’île du Cap Vert,” *L’Équipement de la France d’Outre-Mer*, 6, 1951: 102-109; quoted in Beekmans “The ‘Development Syndrome,’” 364.

²³ Beekmans, “The Development Syndrome:” 363-366.

French-educated or “assimilated” West Africans. According to this report, the “*évolués*” needed an “intermediary model between that of the *autochtone*’s hut and the European’s villa.”²⁴ “Huts” were, “only used for sleep. House-work, millet pounding, meals, prayers and discussions are done outside.”²⁵ Europeans, by contrast, lived in “comfortable familial homes, intimate and well furnished.”²⁶ Between these poles stood the “*évolués*” living in collective compounds, working in European-style offices, and aspiring towards a domestic “individuality at the level of modern civilization.”²⁷ *Évolués* needed a compromise between individual and collective domesticity through “semi-collective familial housing endowed with simple and very healthy modern comfort.”²⁸ These homes’ kept residents’ attached to “traditional” forms of collectivity even as simple and clean comforts helped the *évolué* serve as the foot soldiers of Dakar’s modernization.

One of the first large-scale efforts to provide this kind of housing led French planners all the way to Southern California: the bubble house. Designed by the Los Angeles architect Wallace Neff, the US government commissioned thousands of these bubbles during World War II to house wartime labor migrants.²⁹ Bubble houses’ main advantage stemmed from price and pace. By pouring layers of cement onto large rubber spheres a house could be finished in less than 48 hours for under \$300. After the war, Neff’s Airform International Construction Company promoted their bubbles to governments across the world.³⁰ In 1948 Senegal’s colonial regime signed up and by 1953 around 1,200 of these domes dotted Dakar’s outskirts.³¹ The ability to

²⁴ “La Question du Logement en Afrique Occidentale Française,” 1AFFPOL/933, CAOM. “un modèle intermédiaire entre celui de la case de l’autochtone et la villa de l’euro péen.”

²⁵ Ibid. “L’autochtone n’utilise sa case que pour le repos. Les travaux ménagers, le pilage du mil, les repas, les prières et les palabres se font en dehors de la case.”

²⁶ Ibid. “foyer familial confortable, intime et bien meublé”

²⁷ Ibid. “ils aspirant à une certaine individualité au niveau de la civilisation modern”

²⁸ Ibid. “d’habitats familiaux semi-collectifs dotes d’un confort moderne simple et très salubres”

²⁹ Jeffrey Head, *No Nails, No Lumber: The Bubble Houses of Wallace Neff* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011).

³⁰ Ibid: 86-126.

³¹ Ibid: 114.

build these houses with importable rubber and locally produced cement met regulations that prioritized French or French colonial materials.³² While these bubbles were built with components from the French Empire, they connected Dakar to American efforts to redefine mass housing for the postwar era.

At least one of these bubble-house went on to display the kind of stable transition from “tradition” to “modernity” colonial suburban housing sought to facilitate. In October 1954, the popular Senegalese magazine *Bingo* detailed a day in the life of N’Diaye M’Bor, a traffic officer living in an Airform house. After returning home, M’Bor swapped his jacket and *képi*, the hat French police officers wore, for a plain white shirt he donned while tending to his garden (Fig. 2). At the end of the night, M’Bor and his wife retired to their bedroom. At this moment of



Figure 5. 2: Article depicting day in the life of the traffic officer N’Diaye M’Bor at his Airform bubble house. “Nous avons vécu pour vous une journée d’un fonctionnaire africain,” *Bingo*, No. 21 October 1954: 14-15, Copyright M. de Breteuil.

³² “La Question du Logement en Afrique Occidentale Française,” IAFFPOL/933, CAOM

repose, the writer imagined M’Bor’s thoughts and wrote “his wife is more beautiful in traditional clothes than dressed-up as a European.”³³ In this serene setting, M’Bor slept, “next to his wife the good housewife and his children, who are perhaps sleepily dreaming of later having, like their father, a beautiful *kepi*, a black *kepi* with gold marks and a beautiful white uniform striped with the leather stripes of an agent of the security forces!”³⁴ The “beautiful” traditional clothes of M’Bor’s wife contrasted with M’Bor’s uniform, evoking *évolués*’ divergent attachments. These tensions dissolved beneath the bubble house’s curved roof, where M’Bor and his wife wore “traditional clothes” and dreamt of their child’s future “*kepi*.” This article balanced an African home-life and European work-life, dramatizing suburban residents’ “intermediary” position. The bubble-house could shelter and reproduce Senegal’s new suburbanites.

By the time this article appeared, however, enthusiasm for these bubbles had burst. Early reports bemoaned the structures’ shortcomings. Inspectors said these buildings grew exceptionally hot, cracked easily, and often lacked electricity, plumbing, or fences.³⁵ “Building Air-Form huts can only be defended,” one report declared, “if you have to build quickly and agree to rapid depreciation.” The reporters said these characteristics made these houses ideal for the US during the war, but not this growing colonial capital.³⁶ Bubble-homes were fine for America’s wartime labor migrants, but not Senegalese bureaucrats seeking long-term stability.

As a result of these issues, Dakar’s officials and residents looked beyond these bubbles. In 1952, the construction overseer Hector Jean-Pierre applied to move to SICAP’s Fann-Hock

³³ “Nous avons vécu pour vous une journée d’un fonctionnaire africain” *Bingo*, October 1954: 15. “sa femme est plus jolie en costume traditionnel que sa déguisée en Européenne”

³⁴ *Ibid*, “près de sa femme bonne ménagère et de ses enfants endormis, rêvant peut-être d’avoir plus tard, comme leur père un beau képi, képi noir timbre d’argent et un bel uniforme blanc barré du cuir martial des agents de la Force Publique!”

³⁵ “État des ‘Air-Formes’ Construits à la Date du 5 Aout 1951,” 4 P 25 71, ANS.

³⁶ “Compte Rendu de Mission en A.O.F. 24 juillet – 15 Août 1951”, 7, 2TP/329,CAOM. “L’édification de cases Air-Form ne se défend que si l’on est tenu de bâtir très vite, et si l’on consent à pratiquer un amortissement rapide.”

neighborhood. Jean-Pierre's application indicated that he and his child sought to leave his "barely waterproof" Airform home.³⁷ Evoking similar issues in his request for a house in Fann-Hock, the engineer Julien sought to leave the "veritable colander" his bubble-house had become.³⁸ While both men did not appreciate their bubble homes' porous walls, they diverged in one notable way. Julien's application went in the "non-native" section while Jean-Pierre's joined other "African" applicants. The fact that these men wanted to leave the same types of homes for the same neighborhood reveals the limits of total racial segregation in Dakar. While Greater Dakar's plans explicitly racialized the city's residential divides, housing shortages and common aspirations among Dakar's diverse white-collar class blurred these lines. People of various backgrounds wanted to live in quality homes that, at the very least, could keep out the rain.

SICAP and the Senegalese Suburban Dream

As Jean-Pierre and Jacquot's applications implied, SICAP increasingly became the preferred motor of Dakar's suburbanization. Formed in December 1949, the organization began building neighborhoods on Dakar's outskirts in October 1950. While praised as a novel public-private partnership, over 96% of SICAP's budget came through loans from the French colonial government.³⁹ SICAP neighborhoods typically mixed "collective buildings" with dozens of studio apartments, one-bedroom houses, and "villas" that had anywhere from one to four bedrooms as well as shared walls with at least one other villa. By 1951, SICAP built fourteen houses and four collective buildings for a total of 538 rooms, which one report lauded as "remarkable results" deserving greater investments.⁴⁰ Residents in SICAP's new houses found

³⁷ "Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert: Notice en Vue de la Réunion du Conseil d'Administration du Samedi 20 Octobre 1952 à 9 Heures – Pavillons Trois Pièces Jumelés," 4 P 30 46, ANS. "peu étanche"

³⁸ "Propositions de L.S. (Non Originaires) A Soumettre au Conseil d'Administration (Réunion du 2.9.52) "véritable passoire," 4 P 30 46, ANS.

³⁹ Beekmans, "The Development Syndrome": 363-364.

⁴⁰ "Compte Rendu de Mission en A.O.F. 24 juillet – 15 Août 1951," 2TP/329, CAOM. "résultats remarquables"

familiar foe: slums. One 1953 pamphlet about housing in French West Africa placed the elimination of slums at the heart of SICAP's work. Photographs labelled "what must disappear" showed straw huts surrounded by puddles and fences made of sticks and chicken-wire (Fig. 4)⁴³ By contrast, images described as "the goal of our actions" depicted rows of white concrete abodes made by SICAP (Fig. 5). Dakar's disordered present turned into a planned out future.



Figure 5. 4: Government pamphlet on housing in French West Africa depicting courtyard with thatch huts in Dakar, the caption reads, "What must disappear: Slums in certain blocks of Dakar's Medina." CAOM 1FIDES/33 (254), "D'une Collaboration Nécessaire entre le Secteur Privé et la Puissance Publique au Bénéfice de l'Amélioration de l'habitat en Afrique Occidentale Française" April 1953: 4.



Figure 5. 5: Colonial government pamphlet on housing in French West Africa depicting new SICAP neighborhood, the caption reads, "The goal of our action: Other Projects from the *Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert* (S.I.C.A.P.) Médine Fann-Hock." CAOM 1FIDES/33 (254), "D'une Collaboration Nécessaire entre le Secteur Privé et la Puissance Publique au Bénéfice de l'Amélioration de l'habitat en Afrique Occidentale Française" April 1953: 10.

⁴³ "D'une Collaboration Nécessaire entre le Secteur Privé et la Puissance Publique au Bénéfice de l'Amélioration de l'habitat en Afrique Occidentale Française" April 1953, 4, 1FIDES/33 (254), CAOM.

Mass expulsion would help tile replace straw and pavement outhouses. As seen in Chapter Two, French officials had long pathologized Dakar's straw and wooden houses. After 1945, slums once again became the main enemies of colonial urbanists.

The cost of SICAP homes meant that many of those inhabiting Dakar's oft-demonized *taudis* would never move into these new suburban abodes. Initially, SICAP focused on selling villas through ten to twenty year rent-to-buy contracts. Monthly payments for homes on rent-to-buy plans went from 7,000 to 13,700 fr CFA, which occupants had to pay after providing down payments that covered twelve to twenty four monthly payments. SICAP also rented multi-room houses or studios in collective residences for anywhere from 1,000 to 9,700 fr CFA a month.⁴⁴ However, even the cheapest options proved out of reach to many. In his study of workers in Senegal, Babacar Fall estimates that manual workers in postwar Dakar earned an average of four to five thousand fr CFA a month. The largest portion of that earning went to food, with only 10% spent on housing.⁴⁵ Furthermore, most people in Dakar did not work for wages and did not have contracts to prove regular income. Only workers with monthly salaries between 8,000 to 25,000 CFA could afford or even apply to live in SICAP houses.⁴⁶ This was not lost on SICAP's Guy Hartwig, who said 52% of SICAP houses belonged to Dakar's "middle class" making between 15 and 30,000 fr CFA a month, while 25% of inhabitants came from the "lowest echelon" making between 6,000 to 15,000 fr CFA. Those from the "comfortable" class earning over 30,000 fr CFA a month took the final 23% of units.⁴⁷ Even the "lowest echelon" made more than most of Dakar's workers. The city's poorest residents did not even register as potential clients.

⁴⁴ "Note Pour le Comité Directeur du F.I.D.E.S. et le Conseil de Surveillance de la Caisse Centrale" July 21, 1958, 1FIDES/70 70 (538), CAOM; Beeckmans "The 'Development Syndrome': 267.

⁴⁵ Fall, *Le travail au Sénégal au XXe siècle*, 2011, 211-212.

⁴⁶ Beeckmans, "The 'Development Syndrome,'" 267.

⁴⁷ Guy Hartwig, "Les réalisations de la Société immobilière du Cap-Vert, à Dakar," 4 P 3049, ANS. "classe moyenne...échelon de base...classe aisée."

Supporters and detractors alike pointed out SICAP's elite structural bias. Many Senegalese leftists and nationalists vehemently critiqued colonial housing policies throughout the 1950s. Critics regularly pointed out the endemic persistence of precarious housing.⁴⁸ In October 1955, representatives of the *Mouvement Populaire Sénégalaise* (MPS) declared that new constructions across Dakar served, "the rapidly growing European population and a minority of privileged Africans within the colonial system."⁴⁹ Even those praising institutions like SICAP noted these oversights. One 1954 government report on housing in France's African colonies commended SICAP's "remarkable work." However, this praise came before a dire warning. "We simply want to call attention to the danger" the report explained, "in 'raising up' an African bourgeoisie while letting the mass of the population languish in their slums."⁵⁰ Housing discrepancies were not just unfair, but politically dangerous. Growing official attention on domestic well-being inspired concern and critique across the political spectrum.

Many official analysts blamed this elite bias on SICAP's financial constraints. The above cited 1954 report from the Central Office of Research on Overseas Development pointed out that France's African colonies lacked the kind of internal budgets supporting mass housing projects in the Belgian Congo or South Africa.⁵¹ Fiscal limitations came up again when the urbanists Jacque Joubert and Maurice Blanc reported on their tour examining housing policies across French colonial Africa. SICAP's then-director Claude Michel told Joubert and Blanc that without greater public investments, his organization could not make quality units for residents

⁴⁸ Faye, *La vie sociale à Dakar*, 20-25.

⁴⁹ *L'Action*, octobre 1955, quoted in Faye, *La vie social à Dakar*, 23.

⁵⁰ "Le Problème de l'Habitat Urbain Dans Nos T.O.M. Le Logement de Transition," 2TP/329, CAOM. "Nous voudrions simplement appeler l'attention sur le danger qu'il y a, dans un pays où le sens de la caste est profondément enraciné, à 'promouvoir' une bourgeoisie africaine en laissant croupir dans ses taudis la masse de la population."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

who could not pay the rents that kept SICAP profitable.⁵² Michel and others calling for greater investments wanted this money to come through direct assistance rather than loans. As one 1955 internal audit explained, the majority of SICAP's capital came through loans from the French government's Central Fund for Investment in Overseas France. While these loans had relatively low 2.5% interest rates, the need to pay this money back made profitability a key concern for SICAP administrators.⁵³ The audit explained that the relying on loans would lead to rents hikes, meaning SICAP houses would remain "inaccessible to the majority of those that we want to reach."⁵⁴ Market logics appeared as a key obstacle to equal development. For these observers, the pursuit of profit stood in the way of true mass housing.

As important as this fiscal basis was to SICAP's socioeconomic exclusivity, the organization's developmental ethos also fueled its focus on a certain class of residents. In its first page, the 1955 audit cited above declared that SICAP's primary goals were: "making the slums disappear, offering more hygiene and greater comfort at prices that were accessible to all" and "developing a sense of savings."⁵⁵ Framing a "sense of savings" as a key SICAP virtue made fiscal limitations a feature of the institution rather than something that loans imposed. To achieve this goal, the audit explained, SICAP would "patiently convince" residents to adopt the fiscal self-discipline associated with bourgeois domesticity.⁵⁶ SICAP thus fit into colonial ideas of guided capitalist modernization. This paradigm came across clearly in the report from the Central Office of Research on Overseas Development cited earlier. The report argued that housing for

⁵² *Compte Rendu de Mission au Cameroun et en A.O.F. 30 Novembre – 24 Décembre 1954*: 66, 4 P 25 21, ANS.

⁵³ "Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert (S.I.C.A.P.) – Buts Moyens Programme Pour Les Exercices 1951 1952 1953 1954: Annexe III – Emprunts," 4 P 30 54, ANS.

⁵⁴ "Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert (S.I.C.A.P.) – Buts Moyens Programme Pour Les Exercices 1951 1952 1953 1954: Situation en 1955" "...inaccessible à la majorité de ceux que nous voulons atteindre," 4 P 30 54, ANS.

⁵⁵ "Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert (S.I.C.A.P.) – Buts Moyens Programme Pour Les Exercices 1951 1952 1953 1954: Note Liminaire," 4 P 3054, ANS. "faire disparaître les taudis, offrir plus d'hygiène, plus de confort à des prix qui soient à la portée de chacun, développer le sens de l'épargne."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* "convaincre patiemment."

those making less than SICAP's current clientele should be conceived as transitional. This transition was not a temporal, but an economic, financial, and social one that reflected residents' "degree of evolution."⁵⁷ Transitional houses needed to be relatively simple shelters that protected individuals and allowed families to live in hygienic conditions. This transitional ethos reflected the notion of cultural gradation central to Greater Dakar plans and postwar modernization writ large. Only *évolués* could live between the poles of civilization and tradition. Giving these urbanites the comforts and financial habits that characterized "modern" domesticity would solidify their intermediary positions. Rent-to-buy schemes and down payments, as well as new bathrooms and salons, reinforced a new class structure across Dakar.

If contracts and rent bills sought to quietly structure SICAP residents' financial habits, more explicit reminders sought to guarantee these neighborhoods' social norms. Residents encountered these notifications from the moment they signed their SICAP contracts. "The renter will maintain these spaces as a good family patriarch," a clause from one rent-to-buy contract read, "and not trouble the calm of his neighbors with loud or improper work."⁵⁸ Assuming men to be the heads of these households, the contract connected patriarchal authority and communal responsibility. Explicit links between familial and communal propriety did not end after contracts were signed, nor did they solely target men. Signs dotting SICAP neighborhoods told residents to keep their communities clean. Photographs like the one that opened this chapter captured these instructions. Another official image showed a young woman with a baby on her back staring at a similarly didactic sign. "This complex is for its resident" the sign read, "in their

⁵⁷ "Le Problème de l'Habitat Urbain Dans Nos T.O.M. Le Logement de Transition": 13. "...degré d'évolution," 2TP/329, CAOM.

⁵⁸ "Clause & Conditions Générales Arrêtées Par le Conseil d'Administration Pour La Location-Vente des Habitations Économiques de La Zone "A" et de Medina," 4 P 3054, ANS. "La locataire jouira des lieux en bon père de famille et ne troublera pas le repos de ses voisins par des travaux bruyants ou malpropres."

heart they want to keep it clean and lovely to strengthen it and make it a model of its kind.” (Fig. 6) These photographs framed women with children as the signs’ intended audience, although girls’ much lower level of French education in colonial Senegal meant that many female pedestrians may not have been able to read these signs.⁵⁹ N’Diaye’s recitation of these messages decades later reveals that these signs clearly made an impression on at least one young boy wandering these streets. Whatever these words’ impact, they evoked official efforts to instill habits that would keep SICAP neighborhoods “clean and lovely.”



Figure 5. 6: Government photograph of young Senegalese girl with a baby on her back examining a sign in a new SICAP neighborhood that reads, “This complex is for its residents in their heart they want to keep it clean and lovely to strengthen it and make it a model of its kind.” Album C 3185, SB000, SICAP Archives.

If signs and contracts were not enough, SICAP administrators sought to actively reward neighborly respectability through an annual “best-kept house” competition. In 1951, SICAP’s administrative council established the contest as well as its 30,000 fr CFA prize, enough to pay for several months’ rent. Council members wanted this competition to serve as “a source of positive emulation.”⁶⁰ This program rewarded residents who adhered to particular aesthetic

⁵⁹ Faye, *La vie social à Dakar*, 108-111; on female education in colonial Senegal see Pascale Barthélémy, *Africaines Et Diplômées à L’époque Coloniale (1918-1957)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

⁶⁰ “Procès-Verbal de la 7ème Réunion du Conseil d’Administration de la Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert (10 Mai 1951),” 4 P 3054, ANS. “la source d’une heureuse émulation.”

norms and gave them the means to keep their tidy homes. While official records do not describe any contest winners, a photograph from SICAP's archives did show one lauded interior. (Fig. 7) A covered table with three chairs stood before a refrigerator and armoire. "In general, our clients are very respectful" the caption reads "A healthy emulation leads them to lovely interior designs." Much like the contract and signs, imitation became the key to good housekeeping.

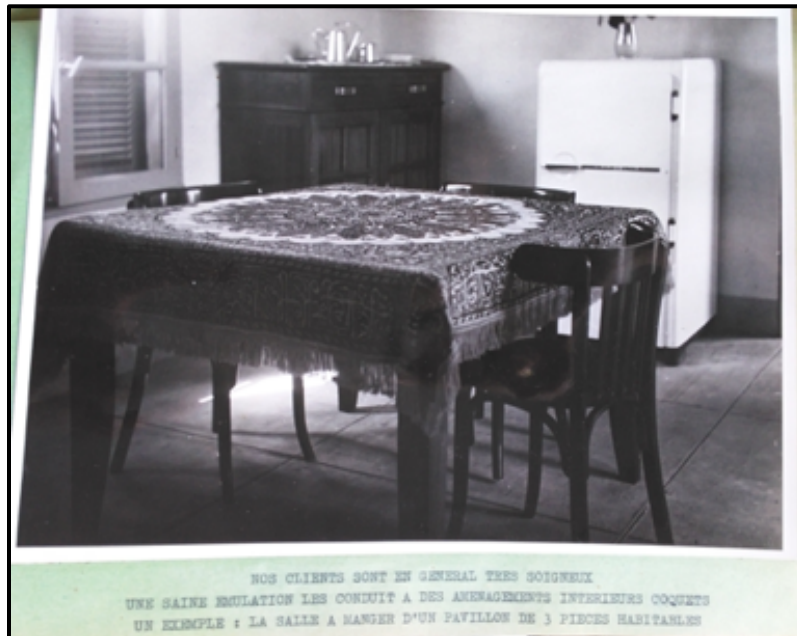


Figure 5. 7: Government photograph of the interior of a SICAP home with a caption that reads "In general, our clients are very respectful. A healthy emulation leads them to lovely interior designs. An example: the dining room of a 3 room pavilion." SB000, Album C 3185, SICAP-Archives.

Application to move into the new Fann-Hock neighborhood provides glimpses into the people who tried to get these "tidy" homes. In the fall of 1952, SICAP's administrative council reviewed 129 applications to move into this new complex.⁶¹ The Council's records did not record full applications. Instead, they noted applicants' demographic information, select quotes from their letters, and the Council's final decisions. Council members rejected six of these prospective tenants, either because of their inability to pay, their foreign nationality, or the fact

⁶¹ "Notices En Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d'Administration du Samedi 20 Octobre 1952 à 9 Heures," "Notice En Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d'Administration du Vendredi 21 Novembre 1952 à 15 Heures." "Attribution des Pavillons de Fann-Hock: Propositions Postérieure au 4 Aout 1952 Et Soumises à la Décision du Conseil d'Administration (Reunion du 2 Septembre 1952)," 4 P 3046, ANS.

that they already owned property. Notably, two individuals rejected were “Europeans.” These European applicants reflected Fann-Hock’s uniqueness in a city organized on mutually constitutive socioeconomic and racial divisions. In their 1953 report, Blanc and Joubert described Fann-Hock as a “magnificently situated grouping” whose presence along the coast attracted a more well-off and diverse clientele.⁶² These 1952 applicants reflected this distinction, with 37 of these applications (29%) coming from “Europeans.” Fann-Hock attracted a variety of residents hoping to get a piece of SICAP’s suburban dream.

While Fann-Hock’s racial diversity set it apart, applicants’ professional profile matched SICAP’s general salaried orientation. Of these 129 applicants, only four people labelled “African” lacked jobs with regular wages, all of whom received Council approval for their applications. Two seamstresses promised one year’s worth of rent upfront, while the washerwoman Stanislas Coutard had a husband that worked at the mayor’s office who would have applied if his age had not exceeded SICAP’s 45-years old age limit for applicants.⁶³ The fourth such applicant, El Hadji Daouda Ba, was a marabout, a kind of Muslim cleric, and was related to the leaders of Senegal’s powerful Tijjaniya Islamic brotherhood.⁶⁴ Other than these well connected or well-financed applicants, all other hopeful residents worked in Dakar’s wage sector. Furthermore, 80 (62%) of these 129 applicants worked for a government agency, a figure that went up to 70% for “African” applicants. Most African candidates had skilled jobs like midwives or clerks, although some worked manual jobs like drivers or stevedores. Despite these distinctions, all these applicants depended on Dakar’s growing wage-sector. Experts and officials

⁶² *Compte Rendu de Mission au Cameroun et en A.O.F. 30 Novembre – 24 Décembre 1954*, 63, 4 P 25 21, ANS. “un groupement magnifiquement situé”

⁶³ “Proposition de L.S (Originaires) A Soumettre au Conseil d’Administration (Reunion du 2.9.1952), 4 P 3046, ANS; “Notices En Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d’Administration du Samedi 20 Octobre 1952 à 9 Heures,” 4 P 3046, ANS.

⁶⁴ “Notice En Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d’Administration du Vendredi 21 Novembre 1952 à 15 Heures,” 4 P 3046, ANS.

across Africa deemed the urban wage-workers essential to “modernization.” These prospective SICAP residents all labored in the imagined vanguard of Dakar’s transformation.

Beyond their professional profile, the passages from applicants’ files that SICAP bureaucrats extracted reveal how prospective residents’ echoed the institutions’ priorities. Boubacar Seck, an administrative employee, evoked SICAP’s thrifty imperatives, saying that he wanted a rental unit so he could save enough to turn his rental lease into a rent-to-buy one.⁶⁵ The mechanic Paul Paret sought to get out of the “uncomfortable” and “noisy” building he currently inhabited.⁶⁶ Françoise De Souza, a forty-year-old nurse, similarly said she was tired of “paying so much for a badly oriented room.”⁶⁷ Complaints about uncomfortable or crowded residences appeared throughout these records, demonstrating the frustrations many people had in this rapidly growing city. The fact that officials excerpted these statements for their records also reveals which remarks caught SICAP administrators’ eyes. Personal ambitions mixed with official interests to determine who could attain the suburban dream that SICAP promised.

In one exceptional case, council members fully transcribed a letter that evoked the concerns about hygiene, overcrowding, and unstable family life that stood at the core of SICAP’s mission. Richard Albis, an accountant for a French shipping firm, lived with his three children, sister, and cousin in a small room within a sixteen-room building. The building had no shower, veranda or even a fixed kitchen. Instead, residents depended on a “moving kitchen” that was either used in the courtyard “exposed to the eyes of those passing by” or within renters’ rooms during the rainy season. This arrangement often left Albis’ family members overwhelmed with

⁶⁵ Proposition de L.S (Originaires) A Soumettre au Conseil d’Administration (Reunion du 2.9.1952), 4 P 3046, ANS.

⁶⁶ Société Immobilière du Cap Vert: Notice en Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d’Administration du Samedi 20 Octobre 1952 à 9 Heures,” 4 P 3046, ANS. “...sans confort...bruyant.”

⁶⁷ “Société Immobilière du Cap Vert: Notice en Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d’Administration du Samedi 21 Novembre 1952 à 15 Heures,” 4 P 3046, ANS. “...je paie assez cher une chambre mal orientée.”

smoke and heat, making it hard to breath, meaning his children could “easily contract all sorts of diseases.” To cause further problems, Albis’ neighbors made all sorts of noise or music throughout the night, making it hard for his “children who had to go to classes the next day” to get a good night’s sleep. Children were not the only ones with rough mornings. The building’s shared bathroom only opened at 7:30 AM, an issue for “certain renters who have to get to the office by 7:00.” These issues led Albis to ask for a three-bedroom home in Fann-Hock, so he could “bring order to my household and for the education of my children.”⁶⁸ Albis evoked the ills SICAP claimed to combat: crowded rooms, noise, and diseases that threatened professional or academic success. Albis may have told SICAP officials what they wanted to hear. The full transcription of his letter and his successful application makes it clear that Albis did catch administrators’ eyes. Regardless of his motivation though, Albis clearly wanted a new home. Like every other prospective resident on these lists, he turned to SICAP to achieve this goal. Whether intentionally or not, many applicants parroted SICAP’s own stated ambitions.

This overlap in rhetoric does not mean residents passively adopted SICAP’s Eurocentric domestic styles and norms. While Fann-Hock was lauded as the most European-friendly of SICAP’s creation, three successful applicants indicated they had two wives.⁶⁹ Polygamy had long provided the basis for the legal and social exclusion of Muslims across the French Empire.⁷⁰ While these applicants were a minority, their success reveals that SICAP households did not only shelter the nuclear families imagined as key to colonial “modernization.” SICAP administrators eventually accepted this fact. Many homes in 1950s Dakar housed migrants from residents’ natal

⁶⁸ “Société Immobilière du Cap Vert: Notice en Vue de la Reunion du Conseil d’Administration du Samedi 20 Octobre 1952 à 9 Heures,” 4 P 3046, ANS. “cuisine ambulante exposée aux yeux de passant...contracter facilement toutes sortes de maladies...enfants qui le lendemain déviant reprendre les classes...certains locataires qui doivent reprendre les classes...mettre de l’ordre dans mon foyer et pour l’éducation de mes enfants.”

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019).

communities.⁷¹ SICAP's clientele, who came from across French West Africa, were no different. While SICAP's initial contracts penalized welcoming extra occupants, administrators eventually tried a new approach: the so-called "transformable house." First made in 1955, these houses permitted interior rearrangement to accommodate what Guy Hartwig described as "the essentially variable African family." In these transformable homes, removable partitions and walls allowed each resident to adapt "his own domestic space to the evolution of his family's needs."⁷² While couched in essentialist language, this design reflected some level of acceptance that SICAP had to serve a variety of families, as long as they could pay the rent.

Designing Transimperial Suburbs

Hartwig published the article explaining this transformable design in an English-language architectural trade magazine, reflecting how SICAP did not just try to impress *Dakarois* dwellers. Colonial authorities like Hartwig strove to fit SICAP into discussions about mass housing traversing the globe. Throughout the 1950s, Dakar's colonial architects and urban planners discussed their suburban housing projects at conferences across the world. SICAP architects examined blueprints for affordable housing units made by Americans in Puerto Rico and Parisian officials told SICAP administrators about discussions on mass-housing at conferences in Lisbon.⁷³ The politics of dwellings' salience in postwar Senegal stemmed in part from a broader reconsideration of what governments across the world owed those they governed.

One conference in particular reveals how SICAP fit into a colonial adaptation of this global notion of a right to housing. In 1953, the High Commissioner for French West Africa

⁷¹ Paul Mercier, *Dakar dans les années 50s* (Aubervilliers: Comité Des Travaux Historiques Et Scientifiques, 2021): 58-69.

⁷² Guy Hartwig, "La Maison Transformable de la Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert (The Cap-Vert Building Society's Transformable House)" *Ekistics* 5, no. 32 (1958): 22.

⁷³ "Système de construction 'self-help' à PORTO-RICO," 4 P 125, ANS ; "Le Problème de l'Habitat Urbain Dans Nos T.O.M. Le Logement de Transition," 2TP/329, CAOM.

Bernard Cornut-Gentille declared that the question of housing in Africa “now presents itself with such an acuity that the administrators of these immense territories have decided it necessary to recently come together in South Africa, in Pretoria, to discuss and research solutions.”⁷⁴ Cornut-Gentille said the experts in South Africa were on “a veritable crusade” for Africa’s “prosperity.” This conference was the eleventh summit organized by the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa South of the Sahara (CTCA). The CTCA held meetings that gathered politicians, engineers, and policy experts from across colonial Africa.⁷⁵ Delegates discussed matters ranging from medical cooperation to forestry management. These meetings forged trans-imperial ideas about how colonial governments in Africa could meet the new developmental standards of postwar governance to defend their increasingly challenged authority.

These conferences forged the social channels by which new governmental ideas crossed colonial boundaries. As one French delegate put it, the “principal interest” of these conferences were “the contacts they permit between different delegates.”⁷⁶ While skewed towards Anglophone and southern African regimes, the Pretoria conference gathered representatives from colonial states across Africa. The event’s attendees included six Portuguese representatives, six French delegates, two envoys from the Belgian Congo, fourteen from South Africa, three from Southern Rhodesia, and fifteen from various British colonies. Alongside the government employees sat thirty observers from organizations like the World Health Organization and

⁷⁴ “D’une Collaboration Nécessaire entre le Secteur Privé et la Puissance Publique au Bénéfice de l’Amélioration de l’habitat en Afrique Occidentale Française” April 1953, 1FIDES/33 (254), CAOM. “...une acuité telle que les responsables de ces immenses Territoires ont jugé nécessaire de se réunir récemment en Afrique du Sud, à Pretoria, pour en discuter et rechercher des solutions...véritable croisade...prospérité.”

⁷⁵ Daniel Vigier, “La Commission de coopération technique en Afrique au Sud du Sahara.” *Politique étrangère* 19, no. 3 (1954): 335-349.

⁷⁶ “Note sur la Conférence sur l’Habitat tenue à Pretoria en Novembre 1952, sous les auspices du Comité de Coopération Technique en Afrique au sud du Sahara,” 2TP/233, CAOM. “le principal intérêt se trouve dans les contacts qu’elle permet entre les différents délégués.”

various South African research bodies.⁷⁷ In addition to translators, images played a key role in mediating delegates' interactions at this conference. In lieu of having a representative specifically from French West Africa's government, the French delegation brought extensive documentation of housing projects in Dakar, above all SICAP. Photographs ranged from ground-level pictures of SICAP's new "villas" to rooftop shots of a sea of housing units. (Fig. 8 & 9)



Figure 5. 8: Government photograph brought to Pretoria housing conference in 1952, depicts a four room SICAP villa. "Conference de Pretoria 1952 Procès-Verbaux des Seances & Documentation," 2TP/233, CAOM.



Figure 5. 9: Government photograph brought to Pretoria housing conference in 1952, depicts a newly made SICAP neighborhood. "Conference de Pretoria 1952 Procès-Verbaux des Seances & Documentation," 2TP/233, CAOM.

⁷⁷ CAOM 2TP/233, "Delegates and Observers: Regional Conference on Housing Research in Africa South of the Sahara, Pretoria: 17th – 28th November, 1952."

Many of these images went into brochures that French delegates distributed to their peers. The delegate Maurice Blanc said these brochures were so popular that, “diverse delegates insistently asked us to send copies as soon as we returned to Paris – which we have already done.”⁷⁸ These images fueled French participation in transimperial debates about housing, and Blanc’s belief that he and his peers played a key role in these discussions.

Having these conversations in Pretoria forced French delegates to differentiate their suburban projects from those in Southern Africa’s settler societies. One main distinction stemmed from South Africa’s higher level of industrialization. As one French delegate explained, the South African regime produced “all construction materials on site,” greatly lowering building costs.⁷⁹ Perhaps more significant than economic differences, at least for some, were the ways that the explicit racial segregation in settler regimes conflicted with French legal prohibition against racial markers. In response to a set of pamphlets from the South African delegation entitled, “A Guide to the Planning of Non-European Townships” and “Minimum Standards of Housing Accommodation for Non-Europeans” one delegate wrote, “the very title of these documents indicates that the policy of the Union of South Africa is different from that taken in the A.O.F.”⁸⁰ This objection likely referenced the label “non-European,” a racialized category theoretically forbidden under French law. Writing after the Pretoria conference, Maurice Blanc stated that white South Africans’ belief that they lived in a “white man’s country” defined their housing policies.⁸¹ He later compared South Africa’s model to divisions between

⁷⁸ “Conférence de Pretoria 1952 – Relations avec National Building Research Institute,” 2TP/234, CAOM. “...divers délégués qui nous ont demandé avec insistance de leur en faire parvenir des exemplaires dès notre retour à Paris – ce que nous avons faits d’ailleurs.”

⁷⁹ Ibid. “sur place exactement tous les matériaux de construction”

⁸⁰ “Note sur la Conférence sur l’Habitat tenue à Pretoria en Novembre 1952, sous les auspices du Comité de Coopération Technique en Afrique au sud du Sahara,” 189. 2TP/233, CAOM. “...le titre même de ces documents indique que la politique suivie dans l’union sud-africaine est différente de celle suivie en AOF.”

⁸¹ Maurice Blanc, “Le problème du logement des ‘natives’ en Union Sud-africaine” *Marchés Coloniaux du Monde*, January 17, 1953. “un pays d’hommes blancs.”

Africans and Europeans in Portuguese Luanda, concluding that Portuguese and South African projects should be “appreciated and criticized.”⁸² Blanc favorably distinguished French colonial policies with explicitly racialized systems. However, this differentiation overlooked the structural similarities Dakar’s suburban projects had with their southern counterparts.

While Blanc publicly differentiated French and South African urbanism, private notes evoked affinities between apartheid South African and colonial French plans for African suburbs. After saying SICAP homes adhered to a “a superior standard to those made in South Africa,” the French delegate M. Luccioni encouraged his French colleagues to consider imitating South Africa’s “rigorous control of entrance into cities.”⁸³ Luccioni here praised South Africa’s notorious pass laws that controlled African workers’ movements, barred them from living in cities, and grouped them in suburban townships.⁸⁴ These pass laws combined with modernist ideas of complementary zoning to forge the spatial and labor basis for urban apartheid.⁸⁵ These same zoning principles underpinned the Greater Dakar plan, which placed West African workers in suburbs connected to nearby industrial zones, but distinct from the European Plateau. Like in Johannesburg, Dakar’s African suburbs became labor pools to fuel an urban colonial economy.

Alongside this shared approach to the macro-organization of suburbs, French observers shared their peers’ concerns about the micro-organization of African homes themselves. French delegates said studies provided by several South African researchers echoed their own findings in the AOF about residents of high quality homes wanting expensive “European style” décor.

⁸² Maurice Blanc, “Les normes adoptées dans les territoires portugais en matière d’habitat africain urbain” *Marchés Coloniaux du Monde*, August 13, 1953. “...appréciés et critiqués.”

⁸³ “Rapport de Mission de M. Luccioni Membre de la Délégation Française et Délégué Pour les Questions Sociales,” 2TP/234, CAOM. “Contrôle rigoureux de l’entrée dans les villes”

⁸⁴ Doug Hindson, *Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987.

⁸⁵ Fassil Demissie, “Controlling and ‘Civilising Natives’ through Architecture and Town Planning in South Africa,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 10, no. 4 (2004): 483–507.

“Since this temptation is permanent” the delegate explained, “the result is that those who are better housed – who have to pay a relatively higher rent, eat worse than those who do not have decent housing.”⁸⁶ Much like in the captions below the picture of a tidy SICAP home, these speakers argued that Africans in single-family houses inevitably emulated European bourgeois style. However, in this context emulation became dangerous rather than laudatory. Objects and furniture used to decorate and primp European bourgeois homes and bodies became dangerous temptations for Africans. Tellingly, a footnote on this observation said that, “an analogous phenomenon exists in France where certain working classes want to imitate the ‘bourgeois’ class and have this complex for the dining room and bedroom.”⁸⁷ Ideas about the perils of France’s postwar experiments with mass housing transcended the metropole-colony binary. Concern about social mobility informed housing projects across and beyond France’s empire.

Delegates in Pretoria used fears about dangerous emulation to justify the social exclusion built into institutions like SICAP. The French delegation reported that all the conference participants agreed on the dangers of giving luxurious homes to all African workers. “It is with those who do not really have the means to maintain this higher level” the report declared “that one finds danger.” Delegates agreed that “in their desire to imitate Europeans, they [African residents] place their pride above their material needs. To rival the elevated level of their house, they spend, without counting, their money on better furniture, decorations, and other accessories, leaving little to spend on foodstuff so as to diminish their resistance to diseases.”⁸⁸ This analysis

⁸⁶ “Note sur la Conférence sur l’Habitat tenue à Pretoria en Novembre 1952, sous les auspices du Comité de Coopération Technique en Afrique au sud du Sahara,” 2TP/233, CAOM. “Comme la tentation est permanente, le résultat est que celui qui est mieux logé – qui doit en plus payer un loyer relativement élevé se nourrit moins bien que celui qui n’a pas de logement décent.”

⁸⁷ Ibid. “Un phénomène analogue existe en France où certaines classes sociales veulent imiter les classes ‘bourgeoises’ et ont le complexe de la salle à manger et de la chambre à coucher.”

⁸⁸ “C.C.T.A. Conférence pour la Recherche sur le Logement, Sommaire de Ces Parties des Études Qui Ont Rapport à la Section III – Considérations d’Hygiène dans les Logements par A.J.A. Roux et S.J. Richards,” 2TP/233, CAOM. “Cependant c’est avec ceux qui n’ont pas vraiment le moyen de maintenir ce niveau plus élevé que se

assumed African residents would “imitate Europeans” and, except for a certain moneyed elite, this mimicry would lead to ruin. This flipped the older belief that Africans’ attachment to insalubrious domestic habits threatened European bodies described in Chapter Two. Now European-style homes posed a danger to Africans by inspiring a sort of compulsive consumption. The “consumer citizen” that symbolized democratic empowerment and autonomy during the Cold War became a threat to Africans’ bodies and futures.⁸⁹ Claiming that most Africans could not handle the financial burden and choices that went into homeownership placed them outside the egalitarian visions that informed many mass housing programs in Europe or North America. Whether in Johannesburg or Dakar, presenting African suburbanites as unprepared consumers kept them outside of the postwar era’s egalitarian promises.

Colonial experts used suburban homes to fit postwar demands for reform within a colonial power structure. Suburban kitchens and bedrooms became literal versions of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “waiting rooms of history,” the illusory horizon of independence colonial ideology held out for colonized peoples.⁹⁰ As domestic comforts became markers of political and economic equality across the world after 1945, colonial experts presented Africans as ill-prepared for this historic shift. By controlling how American bubble houses were built or how SICAP homes were presented to colleagues across the continent, French officials hoped to demonstrate that only they could manage Senegal’s future. By the late 1950s, however, many people in Senegal sought to leave this waiting room and write a new chapter in their history.

trouve le danger ; car dans leur ardeur d’imiter l’Européen, ils placent leur fierté au-dessus de leurs besoins matériels. Pour rivaliser avec le niveau élevé de leur logement, ils dépensent, sans compter, leur argent pour de meilleurs meubles, garnitures et autres accessoires, et il en reste bien peu pour acheter des aliments nutritifs de sorte que leurs résistance à l’infection est diminué.”

⁸⁹ De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995).

⁹⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8.

Life Amidst the Bougainvillea

Malick Sabali fondly recalled how it felt to live in this new historical chapter. “There was a scent of SICAP” he told me and my research assistant, “you sensed it.”⁹¹ Bougainvillea bushes flowed over fences, filling the streets with an unforgettable aroma. Sitting next to his friend Samba Sy, the two men recalled the sights and sounds of SICAP’s Liberté II complex during their childhoods in the 1960s. Streets got cleaned every morning. Beautiful parks dotted the neighborhood. Children enjoyed new swing sets. “In its time,” Sabali said wistfully, “SICAP was really an El Dorado.”⁹² Many long-term residents we spoke with evoked similarly rosy memories about SICAP neighborhoods in the 1960s and 70s, when most of them were young children. People consistently contrasted an ideal past with what one respondent called a “degraded” present.⁹³ Alongside these contemporary concerns, interviewees’ recollections of serene suburban lives echoed the prosperous visions Senegalese officials and journalists imbued into these neighborhoods during the 1960s. After French colonists used SICAP to broadcast their right to rule, Senegalese residents and officials turned these same buildings into proof that their nation and its citizens were at home in the postcolonial world.

These continuities reflected SICAP’s durable structural basis amidst rapid political changes. In 1956 the “*Loi-Cadre*” devolved political and administrative power in France’s colonies, expanding regional electorates and accelerating the Africanization of colonial bureaucracies.⁹⁴ It also forged a largely unexpected path that led most of France’s African colonies to independence by 1960. However, French experts and finances remained even as new

⁹¹ Interview with Malick Sabali and Samba Sy, Dakar, Senegal February 5, 2022. “Il y avait ce parfum du SICAP, tu l’as senti”

⁹² Ibid. “Dans les temps, la SICAP était vraiment une El Dorade”

⁹³ Interview with Mamadou Demé, Dakar, Senegal, February 2, 2022. “dégradé”

⁹⁴ Cooper, “Reframing France: The Loi-Cadre and African Federalism, 1956-1957,” *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*, 212-271.

flags took the tricolor's place across West Africa. Colonization became "cooperation." Leaders in France during the 1960s used this phrase to describe a wide array of links between France and its former African colonies. "Cooperation" framed French aid as a mutually beneficial development system agreed upon by two equally sovereign entities, masking these policies' explicit goal of keeping West Africa in France's sphere of influence.⁹⁵ Senegal was central to cooperation programs and French funds and personnel filled Senegalese institutions in the 1960s.⁹⁶ SICAP was no different. Until 1974, SICAP's operating budget depended on low interest loans from France's Central Bank of Economic Cooperation, the successor to the French Overseas Bank that bankrolled SICAP in the 1950s.⁹⁷ For many residents, people rather than funds marked the era of cooperation. Mamadou N'Diaye said SICAP's Maintenance Director "a white man" regularly inspected local houses.⁹⁸ Julien Lalot, who has lived in SICAP neighborhoods since 1959, recalled living near many French teachers in SICAP's Amitié neighborhood "during the time of technical cooperation."⁹⁹ In this age of cooperation, French personnel and funds played a prominent role in independent Senegal's politics of dwelling.

Continuities in who SICAP employed matched persistent concerns about who SICAP served. Critiques of SICAP's structural elitism arose repeatedly during a conference on "African Housing" at Dakar's *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire* (IFAN) in the summer of 1958. French and Senegalese presenters critiqued SICAP's biases and proposed cheaper alternatives to expand Dakar's limited housing stock. In his own speech, Alain des Mazery went further. He first asked his fellow attendees how they could sleep next to babies dying of tuberculosis in fetid

⁹⁵ Abdoulaye Diara, *La Gauche Française et l'Afrique Subsaharienne: Colonisation, décolonisations, coopération (XIXe-XXe siècles)* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2014); Albert Bourgi. *La Politique Française de Coopération en Afrique: Le Cas du Sénégal* (Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1979).

⁹⁶ Rita Crusie O'Brien. *White Society in Black Africa: The French of Senegal* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1972).

⁹⁷ Sané, "La politique de l'habitat au Sénégal": 323.

⁹⁸ Interview with Mamadou N'Diaye, Dakar, Senegal, February 5, 2022. "Un blanc."

⁹⁹ Interview with Julien Lalot, Dakar, Senegal, February 9, 2022. "...pendant les temps de coopération technique."

cribs or young girls from rural villages suddenly thrown into tiny crowded rooms. SICAP's focus on rent-to-buy schemes meant that only those with regular and relatively high incomes could find new homes, leaving "the majority of the population currently condemned to a slow death in slums."¹⁰⁰ He felt that a state-sponsored agency should not focus exclusively on creating a new class of property owners. He wanted SICAP to build as many cheap rental units as possible to get people out of the slums. Far from remaining in the realm of ideas, making rental housing became the *raison d'être* for Dakar's *Office des Habitations à Loyers Modéré* (OHLM), established in 1959. While focused more on cheaper rental units than SICAP, the OHLM required proof of regular income, repeating SICAP's bias towards salaried workers.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, OHLM's late start and the status SICAP had gained in the 1950s meant it continued to materially and symbolically dominate discussions about housing in Dakar.

Amidst conference attendees' critiques, the Vice President of Senegal's Social Secretariat Danial Akakpo took to the podium to defend SICAP. He acknowledged the Society's limits. He indicated that only 15% of SICAP's 2,255 units was owned or rented by "small wage earners," to say nothing of those outside the wage economy entirely.¹⁰² However, Akakpo felt this should not distract from SICAP's success. "After several years of research and numerous tries," he argued, "[SICAP] has discovered a type of house that is economical, and that seems to respond to the aspirations of many Africans."¹⁰³ The house in question was the transformable house mentioned earlier. The ability to adapt these buildings gave residents' flexibility, while the presence of a high fence and courtyard let African families' enact their "traditional habits in the courtyard of a

¹⁰⁰ Alain de Mazery, "Quelque suggestions" *Afrique Documents*, 41-42 (June-July 1958): 133, "la plus grande part de la population est condamnée actuellement à la mort lente des taudis."

¹⁰¹ Sané, "La politique de l'habitat au Sénégal": 316.

¹⁰² Daniel Akakpo, "Une amorce de solution: La Société immobilière du Cap-Vert" *Afrique Documents* 41-42, (June-July 1958): 125.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*: 123. "...après des années de recherches et de nombreux essais, est arrivée à découvrir une formule de maison du type économique, et qui semble répondre aux aspirations de bon nombre d'Africains."

fenced in house.” In response to critiques about SICAP’s socioeconomic inequality, Akakpo invoked the organization’s ability to give their clients’ “traditional habits” a place in Dakar.

To reveal what these tenants wanted, Akakpo presented several quotes from surveys sent to SICAP residents, providing glimpses into these new suburbanites’ expectations and demands. One frustrated inhabitant of the Karak complex said they regularly paid their rent and thus had “the right to complain.” Houses were not walled in, the resident asserted, a problem since “Africans love to live intimately. The security of our children against cars is absolutely indispensable.”¹⁰⁴ Like Akakpo, this respondent evoked an essential African love of privacy. However, they paired this instinctive desire with the anxieties elicited by the cars speeding along this growing city’s streets. Walls came up again when a resident of the Baobab neighborhood said he “considered his house’s walls too low because according to him, he couldn’t do anything discretely in the house without his neighbors seeing.”¹⁰⁵ Respondents pinned their desire for privacy on essential tastes as well as problems caused by certain housing or urban designs. They wanted SICAP to respond to their innate desires and their immediate needs.

Residents used this survey to claim a right to comfort and detail the specific services that right demanded. “I am not satisfied with my housing because of the bad smells around my house” one resident asserted. “Removing the garbage every day, which is behind my house, is indispensable for human health.” Another tenant claimed that for “repairs, despite numerous calls, SICAP waits months, or years, to send over workers.”¹⁰⁶ If Akakpo emphasized SICAP’s ability to meet private “traditional habits,” these responses bemoaned the institutions’ failure to

¹⁰⁴ Ibid: 126-127. “Je paie régulièrement mon loyer. J’ai donc le droit de me plaindre... Vous savez bien que l’Africain aime vivre dans l’intimité. La sécurité de nos enfants contre les autos est absolument indispensable.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid: 127. “c’est la clôture de sa maison qu’il considère trop basse, car, d’après lui, il ne peut rien faire discrètement dans la cour de sa maison sans que les voisins ne s’en aperçoivent. Il souhaite que le mur soit rehaussé.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid : 127. “Car pour les réparations, malgré de nombreux rappels, la SICAP attend des mois, des ans, pour envoyer des ouvriers.”

provide public order. These complaints about slow or absent services contrast with many interviewees' fond recollections. Idris N'Diaye remembered a SICAP employee coming through his neighborhood each week to manage everything from bougainvillea bushes to trash cans.¹⁰⁷ Similar memories of clean streets, weekly inspections and regular services peppered all our interlocutors' recollections. "It was clean" Awa Fate recalled, explicitly contrasting the spotless sidewalks of yesterday with the sand covered walkways of today.¹⁰⁸ These respondents, almost all children during the 1960s, may not have dealt with the issues that arose when public services failed. Alternatively, a filthy past may not have fit with the contrast that interviewees like Fate consistently drew with the present. Finally, the local maintenance services that emerged out of agreements between SICAP and Dakar's municipal government may have arisen after Akakpo's surveys went out.¹⁰⁹ Whatever caused this dissonance, these survey respondents and our interviewees' shared a belief that SICAP had to provide for its residents. Determining if SICAP fulfilled these duties depended on who you asked and when.

Rather than confine his speech to IFAN, Akakpo placed it in a medium that likely informed some of the aspirations his respondents evoked. Akakpo published his speech in *Bingo*, the Dakar-based magazine that ran the story of a contended bubble-house dweller discussed earlier.¹¹⁰ *Bingo* started in 1954 and gave readers across French West Africa short stories, reports on liberation movements, and steps for new dance moves. While inherently limited to a literate minority, *Bingo* gave West African readers a platform to reflect on the postwar promises of

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Idris N'Diaye, February 3, 2022. Dakar, Senegal.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Alain and Awa Fate, February 25, 2022. Dakar, Senegal. "C'était propre."

¹⁰⁹ Seck, *Dakar, Metropole Ouest-Africaine*, 105 ; these comments also reflect the central role conflicts over waste management have come to play to governance and political movements in contemporary Dakar, Rosalind Fredericks, *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2018).

¹¹⁰ Daniel Akakpo, "La Société Immobilière du Cap-Vert Réalisations: 2540 logements en 6 ans pour une population de 10.000 habitants," *Bingo* No. 70 (November 1958): 14-16, 28.

prosperity marketed in magazines across the world.¹¹¹ *Bingo* pages help reveal how media sources circulated the domestic desires that people poured into their SICAP homes.

Right before Akakpo's speech, *Bingo*'s editors placed an article evoking a prudent pathway to suburban bliss. Entitled "M. et Mme Doye Mansour: A Young Couple in the Big City," the article presented readers with visual and descriptive cues about how one couple adapted to life in Dakar's suburbs.¹¹² Like the "ideal couple" celebrated in many French postwar magazines, this article presented the N'Doyes as emblems of the egalitarian marriages and prudent consumption that many people wanted to make a new national way of life.¹¹³ When asked how they afforded their suburban home, M. N'Doye pinned it on thrift. They avoided going out to eat, only went to the movies once a week, and despite Mme. N'Doye's supposed protestations, did not buy a car on credit. This last comment led the article's author to launch into a critique of credit among Dakar's wage-workers. Men and women seemed powerless as "paltry purchasing-power faced with the temptations that material progress constantly multiplies. Most employees of the public and private sector drink, eat, dress, and buy superfluous things on credit."¹¹⁴ Credit incentivized the compulsive consumption evoked in Pretoria. The spirit of saving SICAP and this article's writer promoted promised a stable pathway to domestic bliss.

While articles like this often advised thrift, advertisements encouraged readers to open up their wallets and buy new domestic appliance that promised both status and ease. In the postwar years, kitchen appliances like refrigerators or washing machines became points of pride for

¹¹¹ Tsisti Jaji, "Bingo: Francophone African Women and the Rise of the Glossy Magazine," in *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday*, ed. Stephanie Newell et. al. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 111-130; Jennifer Bajorek, "'Ça bousculait ! Democratization & Photography in Senegal'" in *Photography in Africa: Ethnographic Perspectives*, eds. Richard Vokes, (Woodbridge; New York: James Currey, 2012), 140-185.

¹¹² "M. et Mme Doye Mansour: A Young Couple in the Big City." *Bingo*, No. 70 (November 1958): 12-13.

¹¹³ Kristin Ross, "Couples" in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 123-156.

¹¹⁴ "M. et Mme Doye Mansour: Un Jeune Couple dans la Grande Ville" *Bingo*, No. 70 (November 1958): 13. "un pouvoir d'achat dérisoire face à des tentations que le progrès matériel sans cesse multiplie. La plupart des employés du secteur privé et du secteur public boivent, mangent, s'habillent, achètent même le superflu à crédit."

nations and consumers across the world.¹¹⁵ Mamadou N’Diaye said this delight led many of his neighbors to put new refrigerators in their salons rather than their kitchens so they could show off their new purchases.¹¹⁶ This emphasis on displaying new home devices to neighbors appeared in many *Bingo* advertisements. One such promotion had a Senegalese woman telling two friends about the Westinghouse washing machine her husband just bought her. One caption proclaimed that this new domestic wonder promised an “end to women’s enslavement.”¹¹⁷ (Fig. 10) This reference to slavery recycled the liberatory discourses around consumer technologies found throughout postwar Europe and North America, although it may have sounded very different to readers in Senegal.¹¹⁸ To get this Westinghouse liberator, readers were told to go to the “Tecnoa”



Figure 5. 10: Advertisement for Westinghouse washing machine promising an “end to female slavery,” *Bingo*, No. 80, September 1959, Copyright M. de Breteuil.

¹¹⁵ Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France*; Hamilton and Phillips, eds. *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics*.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Mamadou N’Diaye, February 5, 2022. Dakar, Senegal.

¹¹⁷ *Bingo*, No. 80, September 1959.

¹¹⁸ Rudolph. *At Home in Postwar France*; Ruth Oldenziel and Karin Zachmann (eds.). *Cold War Kitchen: Americanization, Technology, and European Users* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).

store in Dakar and buy this novelty on credit. Sometimes seen as dangerous, credit here became a path to progress.¹¹⁹ Prosperity required thrift and risk. Advertisements sold a comfortable future that contradicted the spirit of saving prized by SICAP administrator and *Bingo*'s own writers.

Bingo's combination of domestic and political transformations took center stage in a May 1960 special issue. Editors dubbed this issue, "the indispensable guide to modern homemaking."¹²⁰ This guide explicitly linked homemaking to the wave of independence that swept across Africa in 1960. As the editors explained, independence put Africans "into relations with men from other countries, who are accustomed to more comfort, whose ways of life are different from ours." This did not mean that Africans should imitate their international peers. "We should know how to adapt our habits, our comportment to a different rhythm" they declared, "our political evolution must accompany a parallel evolution in our everyday lives."¹²¹ This call for an everyday "evolution" amongst this magazine's literate readers echoed the ideas of an elite-led national resocialization of the masses held by many in Senegal's 1960s ruling class.¹²² Much like these doyens of development, *Bingo*'s editors pinned their domestic revolution on West Africans' ability to harmoniously blend progress and tradition. "We must, without denying our traditions, our art, our customs" the editors announced, "learn to decorate our homes, our interiors, adapt their comfort, discover the facilities procured by the incessant

¹¹⁹ While these postwar commentators presented credit as a new phenomenon in Senegal, pulling peasants into cycles of debt and credit had long been the basis of Senegal's colonial economy, for more see Mohamed Mbodj, "Sénégal et dépendance: le Sine-Saloum et l'arachide, 1887-1940" in *Sociétés paysannes du Tiers Monde*, ed. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1990), 139-154.

¹²⁰ *Bingo*, Numéro Spécial: Votre Foyer May 16 1960. "Le guide indispensable d'un ménage modern."

¹²¹ "Chers lecteurs de 'Bingo' "Numéro Spécial: Votre Foyer," *Bingo*, May 15, 1960. "...en relation avec des hommes d'autres pays, qui sont habitués à plus de confort, dont les manières de vivre sont différentes des nôtres...nous sachions adapter nos façons, notre comportement à un rythme différente. Notre évolution politique doit s'accompagner d'une évolution parallèle dans notre vie de tous les jours."

¹²² Mamadou Diouf, "Senegalese Development: From Mass Mobilization to Technocratic Elitism" trans. Molly Roth and Frederick Cooper, in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 291-319.

progress of ‘domestic’ science: refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioning, radios”¹²³ If readers followed this guide’s advice, their homes would become cosmopolitan spaces where worldly African citizens could rest at ease.

Bingo’s editors turned to SICAP, the same institution French authorities used years before to represent the future they imagined for Senegal, to describe this postcolonial evolution. After lauding the number of houses SICAP had built, one article took readers into two specific dwellings. The first home belonged to Mamadou Assane M’Bengué and his wife. In the M’Bengué’s salon “color photos of M. M’Bengué’s favorite film stars go around the room and allows us to admire the famous traits and smiles” of French, English, and American actresses.¹²⁴ Turning away from foreign stars’ headshots, the article focused on decorations announcing the homes’ African attachments. The caption below an image of a living room wall lined with a map of West Africa said, “a large map and a green plant symbolize Africa in this Parisian bourgeois décor.”¹²⁵ Distributing images of this diverse décor broadcast the cosmopolitan sensibility *Bingo*’s editors believed Senegal needed. In the other home, which belonged to M. M’Body Gagny and his wife, different rooms took on distinct aesthetic forms. Buffalo horns and rural scenes dotted the living room walls behind a couch with a velvet mat depicting gazelles. In contrast with animalistic scenes evoking essentialized visions of rural Africa stood the kitchen with an “indispensable refrigerator” topped by a “beautiful vase from Limoges.”¹²⁶ Like the M’Bengués, Gagny and his family filled their home with objects evoking stereotypical French and African imagery. The M’Bengués combined these elements into one room, while Gagny

¹²³ “Chers lecteurs de ‘Bingo’” “Il faut, sans rien renier de nos traditions, de notre art propre, de nos coutumes, apprendre à décorer notre maison, notre intérieur, aménager son confort, découvrir les facilités que procurèrent les incessant progrès de la science ‘domestique’: réfrigérateurs, machines à laver, climatiseurs, postes de radio.”

¹²⁴ “À cites africaines modernes installations modernes” *Bingo*, May 15, 1960. “photos en couleur de vedettes préférées de M. M’Bengué tourne autour de la pièce et nous permet d’apprécier les traits célèbres et les sourires”

¹²⁵ Ibid. “Une grande carte et une plante verte symbolisent l’Afrique dans ce décor de bourgeois parisiens.”

¹²⁶ Ibid. “l’indispensable réfrigérateur” “un beau vase de Limoges.”

created an “African” salon and a kitchen with a refrigerator carrying containers made by France’s prestigious Limoges manufacturers. Readers were not told which style to choose. They could decide how to decorate their homes, assuming they could afford a new vase.

If these articles focused on the men who officially owned these houses, *Bingo* also spoke directly to the women imagined running these new homes. *Bingo*’s editors dedicated this special edition to “our wives, our mothers, that is to say those responsible for the home.” The article explained that “in modern society, women are more and more seeing their place expand” leading women to realize their role, “in the prodigious evolution of our beautiful African country.”¹²⁷ To help women take on this expanded role, *Bingo* gave advice explicitly for women about how to host parties, care for children, and manage new careers. These articles echoed official rhetoric across 1960s Francophone West Africa that made women’s ability to balance industrialized work and domestic labor key to modernization.¹²⁸ The women of West African’s new states had to manage both homes and offices to help their new nations balance traditions and modernity.

Women’s dual role making dwellings and nations took center stage in one of Senegal’s earliest women’s magazines, *AWA*. The magazine’s editors wanted to create a meeting space for “African women and women of the entire world.”¹²⁹ *AWA* carried reports from international conferences, short stories, homemaking tips, and profiles of female Senegalese politicians. The magazine also periodically published pictures that readers or writers sent in of their homes. In June 1964, the magazine presented photographs sent by one Pauline Zobel. Zobel turned a *wari*

¹²⁷ “Chers lecteurs de ‘Bingo’ “à nos épouses, nos mères, c’est-à-dire à celles qui ont la responsabilité du foyer. Dans la société moderne, la femme, de plus en plus, voit sa place grandir...la prodigieuse évolution de notre beau pays d’Afrique.”

¹²⁸ Louise Barré, “Des Femmes ‘Évoluées’ Pour Une Nouvelle Nation (Côte d’Ivoire, 1964)” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 2, no. 230 (2018): 373-398; Elizabeth Ann Fretwell, “‘My Most Beautiful Ornament Is My House’: National Womanhood and Urban Modernity in Late Colonial and Postcolonial Senegal, 1958-1968” *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 5 (2016): 881-899.

¹²⁹ *AWA: Revue de la Femme Noire*, Number 1 January 1964.

gameboard into a center-piece and adorned her walls with wooden bowls and masks to produce a “completely African harmony.”¹³⁰ (Fig. 12) In this dwelling, “the sober lines of modern furniture and the traditional forms of African art objects melded together happily.”¹³¹ This room epitomized the mixture of Western rationalism and African aesthetics promoted by Senegal’s first president Léopold Sédar Senghor.¹³² Yet this “harmony” did not come from politicians or architects. It came from Zobel’s effort to manage, arrange, and display her home.



Figure 5. 11: Pictures Pauline Zobel sent of her home to the women’s magazine *AWA*. “La Maison: Artisanat africain et Foyer moderne” *AWA*, No. 6 June 1964, https://www.awamagazine.org/acr_posts/june-1964-page-09/.

Two years before this article came out, Senghor made this connection between tasteful interiors and his *négritude* nation-building project explicit. In 1962, Senghor outlined his vision of Senegal’s future at congress of the ruling Socialist Party. While discussing infrastructure, Senghor proclaimed that “water and electricity speak to health, while the amelioration of housing

¹³⁰ Wari is a popular game with variations across sub-Saharan Africa for more information see Assia Popova, “Les mankala africains,” *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 16, no. 63/64 (1976): 433-458.

¹³¹ “La Maison: Artisanat africain et Foyer moderne,” *AWA* (June 1964): 9. “Harmonie tout africaine...Et que dans le décor se mêlent avec bonheur les lignes sobres des meubles modernes et les formes traditionnelles des objets d’art africain.”

¹³² Wilder, “Situating Senghor: African Hospitality and Human Solidarity,” *Freedom Time*, 2015: 49-73.

recalls an effort of civilization. This fact is manifested in SICAP in Dakar.” In SICAP homes, “one buys fewer frivolities; one buys more pieces of art; one takes in the taste and culture of trees and flowers. One creates there a new civilization: negro-African and modern.”¹³³ This statement echoed his party’s early promotion of urban, middle-class, nuclear families.¹³⁴ Senghor embedded this colonial-era institutions into his own effort to make Dakar a center of pan-African politics and art.¹³⁵ SICAP appeared as an engine for the country’s promising future.

Beyond endorsing SICAP’s work, Senghor appeared in many long-term residents’ memories. Samba Sy recalled sitting in the front row when Senghor opened a new SICAP complex.¹³⁶ Lamine Barro, who has lived in SICAP Liberté I since 1958, fondly recalled Senghor’s strolls through nearby streets. “President Senghor loved to take his visitors into SICAP” Barro explained. Senghor guided guests from the Avenue Bourgiba, only a few blocks away from where we conducted our interview, to these suburban complexes’ gardens.¹³⁷ Other people we spoke with went further, crediting Senghor with SICAP’s very creation. Idris N’Diaye, who has lived in SICAP Liberté II since 1966, placed the poet-president at the heart of SICAP’s mission. “SICAP was a project of President Senghor,” N’Diaye explained, “President Senghor initiated it at the time so each worker [had] a roof.”¹³⁸ As mentioned earlier, interviewees regularly recalled the role French agents played in SICAP. However, these

¹³³ Senghor, “Socialisme, Unité Africaine et Construction Nationale” *L’Unité-Africaine* Mardi 13 Février 1962: 11. This quote also appeared in brochures put out by SICAP. “Le programme d’équipement sanitaire se double d’un programme d’équipement urbain, qui vise l’édilité et l’habitat. L’eau et l’électricité appellent la santé, l’amélioration de l’habitat appelle un effort de civilisation. Le fait est manifeste à la SICAP de Dakar. On y achète moins de frivolités ; on y achète plus de meubles et d’objets d’art ; on y prend goût à la culture des arbres et des fleurs. On y crée une nouvelle civilisation : négro-africaine et moderne.”

¹³⁴ Fretwell, “My Most Beautiful Ornament Is My House.”

¹³⁵ Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-garde in Senegal, 1960-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

¹³⁶ Interview with Malick Sabali and Samba Sy, Dakar, Senegal. February 5, 2022.

¹³⁷ Interview with Lamine Barro, Dakar, Senegal, February 2, 2022. “Président Leopold Senghor avait plaisir d’amener ses visiteurs dans les SICAP”

¹³⁸ Interview with Idris N’Diaye, Dakar, Senegal February 3, 2022. “Le SICAP était un projet du Président Senghor, le Président Senghor l’avait initié à l’époque pour que chaque travailleur [avait] un toit.”

memories did not stop many residents from erasing the institution's colonial origins and aligning their homes with Senghor's political project. This erasure evoked Senghor's own effort to ground SICAP in a narrative of postcolonial progress. By framing SICAP as a Senegalese creation, dwellers integrated their homes into their nation's independent trajectory.

Not everyone jumped at the opportunity to move into these engines of national development. Lamine Barro said people who wanted to remain in communal arrangements avoided moving to SICAP, designed as these structures were for single people or nuclear families.¹³⁹ Others worried about life in Dakar's suburban periphery. Idris N'Diaye recalled his mother's anxiety about moving to SICAP Liberté III in 1966. Besides newly empty homes there was nothing "but monkeys and baobabs."¹⁴⁰ His mother needed to get used to the distance and isolation of suburban life, especially since she did not work outside the house like her husband. As more families arrived, N'Diaye said his mother happily settled in. Rare among interviewees, almost all of whom have stayed in their families' SICAP homes, N'Diaye and Barro acknowledged hesitations about moving to the new world being built on Dakar's edges.

More often than not interviewees emphasized people's enthusiasm to move into SICAP's respectable communities. Papa N'Diaye, our only interviewee who moved into SICAP as an adult, recalled enthusiastically leaving his wooden cabin in the Medina in 1967 to take up a studio in SICAP Liberté I. He described the area as a "European neighborhood" that had "everything for people, not just Europeans."¹⁴¹ N'Diaye emphasized the clean streets and public services that made this "European neighborhood" so comfortable. Lamine Barro said that anyone who lived in his childhood neighborhood effectively wore a badge that told others that they were

¹³⁹ Interview with Lamine Barro, Dakar, Senegal February 2, 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Idris N'Diaye, Dakar, Senegal, February 3, 2022. "des singes et des baobabs"

¹⁴¹ Interview with Papa N'Diaye, Dakar, Senegal, January 25, 2022. "quartier chic" "Toute les biens pour l'être humaine, pas que les européen."

“civilized like the people of SICAP.”¹⁴² Barro laughed as he used the term “civilized,” likely aware of the term’s colonial or condescending character. Like other people we spoke with, he pinned this “civilized” character less on fixed traits than on education. Awa Fate evoked this kind of distinction when she recalled the schools she and her neighbors attended while growing up in SICAP’s Liberté II neighborhood. Her descriptions of this superior education led us to ask if SICAP was marked by a certain “high-class” profile. “Perhaps” she responded, explaining that her father worked at the National Assembly and her neighbors’ parents worked as bankers or accountants. She ultimately said she and her neighbors were “simple” people who took care of their homes and families.¹⁴³ Interviewees recognized SICAP’s professional distinctions but pinned their neighborhood’s relatively higher status on residents’ education or comportment. This may have reflected a discomfort thinking about themselves as beneficiaries of structural privileges. However, their words also evoked the lasting power of SICAP’s association between salaried-workers’ families and a certain kinds of stable “European” or “civilized” life.

This overlap with SICAP’s founding ideologies does not mean residents passively repeated the norms that inspired SICAP’s creation. Awa Fate affectionately described how she joined her neighbors to turn empty fields at the neighborhood’s periphery into collective gardens.¹⁴⁴ While *Bingo* journalists and Senghor presented SICAP residents as savvy modern consumers, Fate’s memories of gathering vegetables in these shared fields demonstrated how SICAP tenants did not rely solely on the market for all their needs. Sometimes residents cultivated food closer to home. Like other interviewees, Julien Lalot said SICAP limited house modifications in the 1960s, even showing me an official letter from 1965 giving his mother

¹⁴² Interview with Lamine Barro, Dakar, Senegal, February 2, 2022. “civilisé comme les gens du SICAP.”

¹⁴³ Interview with Alain and Awa Fate, Dakar, Senegal, February 3, 2022. “peut-être...simples.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Marie-Claire Costa permission to raise their home's fence.¹⁴⁵ Residents could however change interior courtyards. Costa filled her backyard with mango and lemon trees, as well as the occasional chicken. At one point Lalot showed me photographs of this lush garden. One image captured Costa draped by her trees, while another showed Lalot and his sister Mathilde with leaves towering above their heads. (Fig. 12-13) Guarded in a folder for decades, these photographs captured some of the transformations SICAP residents' brought to their homes.

To adapt SICAP houses to their needs, some residents pushed against the monogamous couple imagined as key to Senegal's modernization. Much like in the 1950s, many polygynous families lived in SICAP houses. Ibrahima Fall moved with his mother into SICAP's Dieuppel neighborhood in 1970. His mother got the house through her job at Senegal's Social Security Office. Fall's father had several wives and although he spent regular time in this home in Dieuppel, he did not live fully in that house. Until her death, this home belonged to Fall's



Figure 5. 12: Photograph of Marie-Claire Costa standing amidst the trees in the backyard of their home in SICAP's Amitié neighborhood. Private collection of Julien Lalot, s/d.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Julien Lalot, Dakar, Senegal, February 9, 2022.



Figure 5. 13: Photograph of Julien Lalot and his sister Mathilde in the backyard of their home in SICAP's Amitié neighborhood. Private collection of Julien Lalot, 1970.

mother.¹⁴⁶ While *Bingo* described happy monogamous couples forging new lives in Dakar's suburbs, Fall grew up in a female-owned home with a father that split his time amongst different wives. Alternatively, Mamadou Demé's father accommodated his second and third wives by adding two rooms to the villa in SICAP Liberté II he moved into in 1962.¹⁴⁷ Polygynous families made a series of adaptations as they forged new lives in these "European" neighborhoods.

Being adaptable, however, did not make these buildings economically accessible. SICAP neighborhoods remained bastions of Dakar's salaried workers after independence. One 1962 report on housing in Dakar written by one of the many French experts working with Senegal's government documented this issue for the country's Service of Territorial Development. The lead researcher, Bernard Odinet, praised the Senegalese government for providing housing to about 12,000 people in Dakar during 1961. However, if the current pace of rural-urban migration

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Ibrahima Fall, Dakar, Senegal, February 14, 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Mamadou Demé, Dakar, Senegal, February 2, 2022.

kept up, Dakar would need to house 300,000 new residents by 1971.¹⁴⁸ The current scale of housing construction could not meet that need. Furthermore, even people the government could house came from the wage-earning class that Senegal's housing programs had always served. "Exclusion is practically inscribed" Odinet declared to critique policies requiring down-payments or proof of stable income.¹⁴⁹ He warned about the political dangers of "leaving a part of the population out of the nation's efforts."¹⁵⁰ Turning towards SICAP specifically, Odinet critiqued the organization's focus on rent-to-buy plans. He recommended that SICAP make more rental units that did not require large down payments. "It is in projects like SICAP that one would want to be able house Dakar's population" he wrote, "but for the moment, the numbers that we have cited do not really reflect the truly social nature of the policy outlined by the Government."¹⁵¹ Odinet did not critique these homes' form. Rather, he worried about SICAP's inability to give these dwellings to those who needed them most.

At least one Senegalese doctoral student believed these inequalities could be overcome. In his monumental study of Dakar, submitted to the University of Dakar's History department as a dissertation in 1968, Assane Seck richly analyzed this "West African metropolis." When discussing housing, he praised SICAP for providing homes "adorned with modern commodities that respond as much as possible to the tastes of African demand."¹⁵² Like Akakpo ten years earlier, Seck praised SICAP's balance of "modern" comforts with "African" tastes. "SICAP's success is absolutely undeniable" he declared, "however, one must note that these realizations

¹⁴⁸ Bernard Odinet, *Aspects de la Politique du Logement à Dakar* (Dakar: Ministre du Plan, Aménagement du Territoire, 1962): 60

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 61-62. "cette exclusion est pratiquement inscrite dans les mesures d'application de la politique choisie."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. "...laisser une partie de la population à l'écart des efforts de la nation."

¹⁵¹ Ibid: 66. "C'est dans des cités comme la SICAP qu'il est souhaitable de pouvoir loger la population de Dakar. Mais, pour l'instant, les chiffres que nous avons cités ne révèlent pas le caractère social véritable de la politique définie par le Gouvernement."

¹⁵² Seck, *Dakar, Métropole Ouest-africaine*, 105. "...munis des commodités modernes et répondant le plus possible au goût de la demande africaine."

have not had, up to this point, the popular character one would be tempted to attribute to them.”¹⁵³ He noted the privileged ownership Odinet and countless others decried since SICAP’s creation. However, Seck held out hope as he faced these inequities. One hundred million francs had just been allocated for affordable housing. If this money went to true mass housing, “the government will be unassailable.”¹⁵⁴ Seck voiced the link between domestic well-being and governmental legitimacy at the heart of the politics of dwelling. It seemed in Senegal’s best interest to give its people the homes they deserved.

The changes Seck hoped for did not arrive. Public housing programs in Dakar continued to exclude those who lacked savings or a steady income throughout the 1960s. At the same time, difficult conditions in Senegal’s rural regions pushed ever more migrants towards the capital.¹⁵⁵ Despite these challenges, Senegalese leaders continued to use SICAP to demonstrate their participation in global debates about mass housing. In a 1964 issue of the Socialist Party’s magazine, SICAP’s Director General M. Galli said representatives from Madagascar and several Central African countries had asked for details about the Society’s operations. Furthermore, he said that an American delegation had recently visited and, “the head of the American experts enthusiastically declared that far from being able to give lessons, they took away several in Dakar.”¹⁵⁶ Dakar, not Paris or Pretoria, became the metropole attracting foreign experts. American planners who might have once designed bubble-homes for an imperial capital now praised single-family homes at the heart of an independent nation. Like their French predecessors, Galli tied Senegal’s prestige to its ability to build impressive suburban homes.

¹⁵³ Ibid: 106 “Le succès de la SICAP est absolument indéniable. Cependant il faut souligner que ses réalisations n’ont pas, jusqu’ici, le caractère Populaire qu’on pourrait être tenté de leur attribuer de prime abord.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid: 104. “le gouvernement sera inattaquable.”

¹⁵⁵ Sané, “La politique de l’habitat au Sénégal.”

¹⁵⁶ “Dans Cinq Ans La Sicap Logera 100,000 Dakarois,” *L’Unité Africaine* Number 111 August 20, 1964: 26 “Le chef des experts américains déclara sportivement, que loin de pouvoir donner des leçons, il en avait pris plusieurs à Dakar.”

Conclusion

Before and after 1960, people projected their dreams of Senegal's future onto SICAP houses. Independence shifted these aspirations from bolstering colonial authority to creating "modern" Senegalese citizens who had the same comforts as their peers across the world. These houses sought to usher in a prosperous Senegalese future, yet thousands remained excluded from these "chic" interiors. The contrast between SICAP's verdant streets and Dakar's growing slums reflected the ambitions and limitations of the politics of dwelling in postwar Senegal.

SICAP houses demonstrate how decolonization and global ideas about consumerism structured the politics of dwelling's rise in postwar Senegal. Transnational circuits of objects and ideas fed governmental and personal hopes about how to use suburban homes to forge or depict Senegal's future, whether that future was French or "negro-African." The ideas and policies behind these buildings also structured who could achieve this prosperous dream. The next chapter shows how another kind of circulation, this time of West African labor migrants, embedded the politics of dwelling in similar yet distinct ways into postcolonial France's political terrain. However, as the conclusion will explain, this postwar flowering of the politics of dwelling in both France and Senegal faced a series of crises in the 1970s. Even amidst these changes though, SICAP's suburban worlds remained symbols of postwar promises of prosperity, if only when people recalled the fragrance of once bountiful bougainvillea bushes.

Chapter Six - “The Most African Atmosphere Possible”: *Foyers Africains* and the Politics of Dwelling in Postimperial Paris, 1960-1974

The room Monique Hervo photographed seemed pretty crowded (Fig. 1). Hervo’s photo captured a corner of the *Foyer rue de Charonne* in Paris’ 11th *arrondissement*, one of the several dozen so-called *foyers africains* across Paris and its suburbs. First built during the 1960s, these *foyers* housed thousands of labor migrants from Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania. By 1969, these *foyers*’ residents began a wave of rent-strikes to protest crowded conditions, poor sanitation, and abusive managers. This image was one of hundreds of photographs that Hervo, a leftist French activist and researcher, took between 1973 and 1976 to document the living condition of the capital’s migrant workers. While this photo dramatized domestic suffering, it also showed how African workers made worlds for themselves and one another. In the far right, residents plastered advertisements cut out of magazines on the wall. These clippings may have covered peeling paint, provided cheap decorations, or reminded residents what they hoped to buy with their next paycheck. Similarly, the packed beds reveal more than just cramped conditions. Having so many beds together helped migrants share domestic spaces with friends, relatives, and compatriots. I do not make these observations to downplay the dire conditions protestors fought against. Rather, these points evoke the multiple ways that people presented, discussed, and experienced the *foyers africains*. Examining these *foyers* from their creation in the mid-1960s to the dramatic wave of rent strikes they inspired a few years later demonstrates how the politics of dwelling informed how people governed and inhabited this postimperial metropolis.

This chapter examines Paris’ *foyers africains* to understand how the politics of dwelling in France transformed after decolonization. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the politics of dwelling arose as a political framework that grounded West Africans’ inclusion in the French empire on the state’s ability to manage or support their domestic well-being. However,

the men in the *foyers* Hervo photographed were not French imperial subjects, but citizens of new African nations. Despite being “foreign,” these men’s demands gained widespread support, from future president François Mitterrand and intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre to activists like Hervo. They aroused sympathy or suspicion from police agents and newspaper readers across the capital. Why did *foyers africains* get so much attention when their residents were no longer French subjects? The answer reveals how many people believed that decolonization could not sever the connections between the French state and West Africans’ domestic lives.



Figure 6. 1: Photograph of bedroom in *Foyer rue de Charonne* taken by Monique Hervo. LC_HER_15N_B13, Collection La contemporaine.

These *foyers* emerged out of social and ideological continuities bridging the colonial and “post”-colonial era. As part of the various decolonization treaties France signed in 1960, former imperial citizens had the right to French nationality and the ability to move to France with relative ease.¹ These agreements protected French interests in its former colonies and gave

¹ For more on free circulation treaties see Frederick Cooper, “From Imperial Inclusion to Republican Exclusion? France’s Ambiguous Postwar Trajectory,” *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in*

French industries access to cheap labor during the postwar boom years. By 1969, these agreements helped bring over 40,000 West African mostly male labor migrants' to the hexagon, primarily from the Senegal River Valley in Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali. Nearly 30,000 of these men lived in the Paris region.² Scandals broke out about how these men were living, leading journalists and politicians to invoke a word we have seen before: “*taudis*” or “slum.” Concerns about these fetid dwellings mixed with the longstanding anxieties around solitary West African men in France discussed in previous chapters. To solve these domestic problems, West African and French actors alike turned to a familiar solution: *foyers*.

For different reasons, many French and West African leaders wanted *foyers* to combine “modern” and “African” forms of domestic living. By 1970, over forty *foyers africains* across the Paris-region housed thousands of West African workers.³ Like their colonial-era predecessors, organizers wanted *foyers* to serve particular political projects, from the building of sovereign nations to the promotion of postcolonial “cooperation.” By the end of the 1960s, residents challenged these aspirations. West African dwellers fought for their right to adapt *foyers*, promoting a form of governance that let people determine how and where they lived.

Since their emergence in the 1960s, scholars have treated these *foyer africains* as privileged sites to examine contemporary relations between France and West Africa. Anthropologists and sociologists have examined these *foyers*, which continue to dot Paris, to understand forms of surveillance and segregation used to manage the city’s increasingly

Contemporary France, eds. Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 108-113

² Félix F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015), 24.

³ Exact figures are difficult to ascertain, as will be discussed later. For a list of *foyers* see Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le Livre des travailleurs africains en France* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1970), 80-81.

multicultural working-class.⁴ Scholars focused on West African migration argue that *foyers*' residents use these spaces and communities to reinforce or reinvent kinship relations, rural economies, and political practices.⁵ Historians have added their voices to these debates to explain what *foyers* say about the possibilities and constraints of West African political action after independence. Many studies frame the *foyer* protests as the first successful efforts by West Africans to make their political demands heard in post-imperial France.⁶ Focusing more on West African governance, Gregory Mann links the *foyers* protests to struggles over the boundaries of state authority in the postimperial Western Sahel.⁷ These studies all demonstrate how *foyers* have structured West Africans' relationships with France after 1960. However, they present *foyers africains* as the beginning of a postcolonial age. I see them as the end of a colonial one.

While *foyers africains* arose after the end of the empire, I argue that they constituted the apex of the colonial politics of dwelling's power in France. The *foyers* brought colonial-era expectations, practices, and institutions regarding French domestic assistance for West Africans into a supposedly postcolonial era. *Foyers* housed men who were no longer French subjects, but

⁴ Hélène Béguin, "*Héberger des migrants ou gérer des logements? L'AFRAM et ses 'foyers d'Africains noirs'* (1962-2012), (These d'Architecture, aménagement de l'espace, Université Paris-Est, 2015); Abdoulaye Gueye, "The Colony Strikes Back: African Protest Movements in Postcolonial France" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26, no. 2 (2006): 225-242; Vincent Viet, "La politique du logement des immigrés (1945-1990) *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 64, (1999): 91-103; Michel Samuel. *Le prolétariat africain noir en France: témoignages*, (Paris: Maspero, 1978).

⁵ Julie Kleinman, *Adventure Capital: Migration and the Making of an African Hub in Paris* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, "Fixed Abodes: Urban Emplacement, Bureaucratic Requirements, and the Politics of Belonging among West African Migrants in Paris" *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 2 (2016): 295-310; Christophe Daum, *Les associations de Maliens en France. Migrations, développement et citoyenneté* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1998); Catherine Quiminal, *Gens d'ici, gens d'ailleurs: migrations Soninké et transformation villageoises* (Paris: Éditions Christian Bourgois, 1991); Soulymane Diarr, "Les travailleurs africains noirs en France" *Bulletin de l'Institut fondamental d'Afrique Noire* XXX, no. 3, (juillet 1968): 884-1004.

⁶ Gillian Glaes, *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France: State Surveillance and Social Welfare* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group: 2019); Jean-Philippe Dedieu and Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, "The first collective protest of black African migrants in postcolonial France (1960-1975): a struggle for housing and rights, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39:6 (2016): 958-975; Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*.

⁷ Gregory Mann, "Well-Known Strangers: How West Africans Became Foreigners in Postimperial France" *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2015), 120-161.

who many Parisians did not see as total foreigners. Examining *foyers africains* brings everyday spaces into intellectual and political histories challenging narratives about the inevitable creation of sovereign nation-states out of France's empire.⁸ This chapter argues that *foyers africains* reveal how people across Paris believed that the French empire, or at least the expectations it fueled through the politics of dwelling, had not disappeared entirely when imperial rule ended.

These colonial expectations' survived because of how decolonization, welfare, and labor migration came together to restructure postwar Europe's political and economic landscape. Across Western Europe, these demographic and political shifts transformed the criteria for political belonging and its material substance. Many officials responded to labor migration and decolonization by using growing welfare institutions to recycle or transform older racial and political categories.⁹ This led workers from Southern Europe and former colonies to ask what support they could expect from their host countries, and how they could turn those expectations into demands.¹⁰ Housing played an essential role in these debates in France due to the centrality of the "right to comfort" to France's postwar social contract.¹¹ As the last chapter showed, enacting this right made suburban homes key to "modern" policies and aspirations in postwar Senegal. This chapter reveals how this pursuit of comfort also structured the relationship

⁸ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca.: Cornell University Press, 2006).

⁹ Minayo Nasiali, *Native to the Republic: Empire, Social Citizenship, and Everyday Life in Marseille since 1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 2016); Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State During Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2013); Jordana Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2012).

¹⁰ Lauren Stokes, *Fear of the Family: Guest Workers and Family Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Muriel Cohen, *Des familles invisibles: Les Algériens de France entre intégrations et discriminations (1945-1985)* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, Paris: 2020); Philippe Dedieu, *La Parole Immigrée: Les migrants africains dans l'espace public en France (1960-1995)* (Paris: Klincksieck: 2012); Rita C-K Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹¹ Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (Brooklyn: Berghan Books, 2015); Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

between the French government and more mobile West African workers after independence. Inhabiting *taudis* or building *foyers* informed how “foreign” West African seemed in Paris, and what kind of support if any that status conferred.

This chapter tracks how different notions of the postcolonial politics of dwelling turned *taudis* into problems and *foyers* into solutions. *Taudis* scandals in the early 1960s made West African housing a political problem as activists, politicians, and journalists presented slums as threats to French postcolonial prestige and Paris’ urban stability. In response, state resources funded communal and hierarchical *foyers* to solve migrants’ domestic plights. However, *foyer* protests adapted these spaces and their state-sponsored communal ethos to articulate a more democratic vision of the promises and potential of the postcolonial politics of dwelling.

“Discovering” West African Slums of Paris

Foyers arose out of efforts to answer a deceptively simple question: where were West African living in Paris? While West African men had worked in port-cities like Marseille or Bordeaux for decades, changes to maritime labor structures and new jobs in the factories or construction sites fueling Paris’ postwar boom led more migrants to the capital. While much smaller in number than North African or Southern European populations, many Parisians saw these men’s domestic lives as uniquely problematic, in part because they were so hard to find.

Parisian officials struggled to quantify or classify West Africans’ seemingly sudden arrival. One 1963 report from the Ministry of the Interior on African migration dated this “recent phenomenon” to 1957, estimating that 20,000 to 40,000 West Africans lived in France by 1963 with over three quarters in Paris.¹² This wide ranging estimate reflected the lack of regulations over migration between France and its former West African colonies. “Not being considered

¹² “Travailleurs d’Afrique Noire Situation Générale,” Les Travailleurs Originaires d’Afrique Noire en France, F/1a/5136, ANF. “un phénomène récent.”

foreigners,” a 1963 prefectural report explained, “the Africans that arrive in France move around with no control.”¹³ The laws permitting free circulation and dual nationality for former imperial subjects placed West Africans between “foreigner” and “citizen.” This legal ambiguity and illicit migratory networks frustrated official monitoring efforts.¹⁴ French official deliberations on West African migrants focused precisely on the difficulty of finding the men they sought to control.

This regulatory weakness melded with longer term migratory trends to build Paris’ postwar West African working class. The Algerian War interrupted longstanding labor migration between Algeria and France, leading some Parisian companies to recruit workers from rural areas along the Senegal River Valley in Senegal, Mali, and Mauritania.¹⁵ Migration had been central to social reproduction and male social mobility in many Soninke communities in this region for decades. As a result, Soninke migrants represented a large majority of France’s West African population throughout the twentieth century.¹⁶ Independence did not interrupt this flow. It merely shifted the destination from the coast to the capital. The aforementioned 1963 prefectural report tried to map out Paris’ West Africans enclaves. Although based on consciously limited data, their map revealed high concentrations of West African workers in Paris’ outer *arrondissements* and industrial suburbs like Saint-Denis.¹⁷ These areas were not new to colonial migration. Maghrebi workers had inhabited these same neighborhoods for decades, some of

¹³ “Rapport Préfecture de Police, Objet: Nombre et implantation dans le département de la Seine des travailleurs originaires des États d’Afrique noire,” September 5, 1963, Noirs dans la Seine, Préfecture de Police, F/1a/5136, ANF. “N’étant pas considérés comme étrangers sur le plan administrative, les Africains qui arrivent en France s’y déplacent sans aucun contrôle.”

¹⁴ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 130-135.

¹⁵ François Mancheulle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997), 213-214.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ “Objet: Nombre et implantation dans le département de la Seine des travailleurs originaires des États d’Afrique noire,” September 5, 1963, F/1a/5136, ANF.

whom became landlords renting rooms to West African workers by the 1950s.¹⁸ West African migrants' followed pre-existing pathways altered by decolonization and postwar growth.

While following older routes, West Africans' unique living conditions distinguished them from French citizens and other migrants in the age of mass housing. The war left France's landscape devastated, with millions of people living in *bidonvilles* or "shantytowns." In response, French urbanists launched mass housing projects that sought to "modernize" cities by building high-rise modernist apartment complexes.¹⁹ As more French workers moved into these apartments, *bidonvilles* increasingly housed migrants. Popular coverage and government efforts to destroy *bidonvilles* made them vast and visible markers dividing citizens and foreigners.²⁰ However, West Africans rarely stayed in *bidonvilles*, instead living in hostels, basements, or industrial hangars. As one investigator put it, West Africans did not go to large areas inhabited by diverse migrant workers, but a specific "address of a 'big brother' who had suggested the voyage."²¹ New arrivals usually lived with more than just a "big brother." In an interview decades later the Senegalese labor activist Djiby Sy, who arrived in France in 1961, recalled men living "in a hangar with five hundred people."²² Sy's crowded memories echoed contemporary accounts. One report for the Ministry of the Interior said that "crowding, sites' disrepair, maladjustment of hygienic equipment" in West African dwellings, "creates deplorable living

¹⁸ Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*, 59-60.

¹⁹ Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France*; Cupers, *The Social Project*.

²⁰ Minayo Nasiali, "Citizens, Squatters, and Asociats: The Right to Housing and the Politics of Difference in Post-Liberation France." *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (2014): 434-59; Melissa K. Byrnes, "Liberating the Land or Absorbing a Community: Managing North African Migration and the *Bidonvilles* in Paris's *Banlieues*" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 31, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 1-20; Yvan Gastaut, "Les bidonvilles, lieux d'exclusion et de marginalité en France durant les trente glorieuses," *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, 69 (2004): 233-250.

²¹ "Objet: La situation des travailleurs originaires d'Afrique Noire dans le département de la Seine" August 25, 1964, "Noirs dans la Seine," F/1a/5136, ANF. "l'adresse d'un 'grand frère' qui leur a suggéré le voyage."

²² Génériques, "Histoire et mémoires de l'immigration: mobilisation et lutes pour l'égalité, 1968-1988" Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier, August 26, 2014.

conditions.”²³ Like the *bidonvilles*, these spaces contrasted with the cleanliness and order associated with modernist apartments. However, observers differentiated these West Africans’ homes from other migrants’ dwelling outside France’s “modern” cities.

Growing official investigations into these spaces responded to journalists’ increasing attention on these men’s daily lives. In 1962 and 1963, brutal winter conditions led many West African migrants to start indoor fires to stay warm, leading to several fires and deaths by asphyxiation.²⁴ To understand what caused these tragedies, newspapers probed Paris’ seemingly hidden African landscape. “If you like trips – trips without passports in the middle of the night, leave your car in the garage,” Jean Sénard told readers of *Le Figaro Littéraire* in his report on African workers’ homes in November 1963.²⁵ Writing for *La Croix* in December 1962, Noël Copin compared entering several Malian migrants’ room to the feeling readers had, “at the theater when the curtain rises on a décor and a stage that you thought you already saw but you had actually never seen before.”²⁶ These spaces made Paris seem foreign, providing adventures that transcended the city for those trying to understand these men and their mysterious dwellings.

Michel Legris avoided these exoticist tropes. Writing for *Le Monde*, Legris situated these *taudis* within Paris’ broader postwar housing struggles. He asked why these slums had not received the denunciation associated with the “scandal of the ‘*bidonvilles*.’” *Taudis* had similar safety problems, but Legris believed they had not received attention because of their relative

²³ “Main d’Œuvre Africaine dans le Département de la Seine” February 19, 1963, F/1a/5136, ANF. “...partout l’entassement, la vétusté des lieux, l’inadaptation des installations hygiéniques...créent des conditions de vie déplorables”

²⁴ “Objet: Incendie dans un immeuble habité par des travailleurs noirs” November 23, 1962, Généralité Contrôle Travailleurs Paris RG et PP 1960-1968, 19850087/156, ANF; “Le Feu Impasse des Crins (Paris 20eme) 74 travailleurs noirs logés dans deux petites pièces ont tout perdu” *L’Humanité*, November 22, 1962.

²⁵ Jean Sénard, “Les Travailleurs noirs en France Une enquête de Jean Sénard” *Figaro littéraire*, November 2 - 7 1963. “Si vous aimez les voyages – voyages sans passeport ou au bout de la nuit – laissez la voiture au garage.”

²⁶ Noël Copin, “L’Afrique Noire au Cœur de Paris” *La Croix*, December 12, 1962. “... au théâtre lorsque le rideau se lève sur un décor et une mise en scène que l’on avait cru prévoir et qu’en fait on n’avait pas prévu du tout.”

invisibility. “These are not shacks spread out on a vacant lot” he wrote, “but basements, warehouses, attics, and hotel rooms, ‘converted’ into dorms and hidden from view by the facades of their buildings.”²⁷ While Copin and Sénard presented *taudis* as curiously unique, Légris, tried to challenge their invisibility to connect them to the outrage the *bidonvilles* elicited.

Regardless of the mystery journalists associated with these homes, they regularly focused on these spaces seemingly dehumanizing conditions. “One hesitates, to be honest, to give a name to these rooms, only a few square meters in size,” Légris wrote, “without windows, where metal beds are stacked one on top of the other.”²⁸ Sénard similarly described the room he saw as a “sort of warehouse that day and night they crowd together, thirty on a ten stacked beds.”²⁹ The photographer Élie Kagan tried to capture this dark crowded world. Kagan took a picture in the neighborhood of Saint-Mandé-Tourelle that showed a dark underground dwelling carved into a brick wall (Fig. 2). These cramped conditions stood in stark contrast to the clean and spacious apartments modernist designers and modernizing politicians presented as the new worlds for workers in a prosperous postwar France. Descriptions of these *taudis*’ fit into broader struggles to determine migrants’ relationship to the promises of France’s postwar housing projects.

West Africans in Paris often tried to challenge these derogatory media narratives about their living conditions. As Jean-Philippe Dedieu argues, West Africans’ often resisted dealing with journalists in 1960s Paris so as to control narratives about their migration.³⁰ For men who

²⁷ Michel Légris, “Quarante Mille ‘Esclaves Volontaires’ Les Travailleurs Noirs en France” *Le Monde*, February 21, 1963 “Le scandale des ‘bidonvilles’...Ce ne sont pas des baraques qui s’étalent sur un terrain vague, mais des caves, des hangars, des souppentes, des chambres d’hôtel, ‘aménagés’ en dortoir et dissimulés aux regards par la façade d’un immeuble.”

²⁸ Ibid. “On hésite, à vrai dire, à donner un tel nom à ces pièces de quelques mètres carrés, sans fenêtres, où s’étagent les uns sur les autres des lits métalliques.”

²⁹ Sénard, “Les Travailleurs noirs en France” “une sorte de hangar où le jour, la nuit ils s’entassent à trente sur une dizaine de châlits à étages, rangés.” *Figaro Littéraire*.

³⁰ Jean-Philippe Dedieu, “S’engager Dans L’image. Migrants Ouest-africains Et Journalistes Français Dans Les Années 1960.” *Ethnologie Française* 42, no. 4 (2012): 811-22.

may have had little ability to read or write French, avoidance was a useful tactic to manage their image. Other West Africans directly entered this growing discussion of the *taudis*. Mathieu



Figure 6. 2: Photograph of entrance to African “*taudis*” (slum) in Paris’ Saint-Mandé-Tourelle neighborhood, October 29, 1963. © Elie Kagan/ LC_KAG_02278N_A06, Collection La contemporaine.

Ekani-Onambele, writing for the pan-African magazine *La Vie Africaine*, accused *taudis* coverage of “contributing to the public’s incomprehension.” He attacked an article in the paper *Candide* that claimed some African workers had stolen and eaten a Parisian family’s dog. “We must note, in regard to this article,” he explained, “how much the problem escapes certain people, and how much these ‘qualified workers’ who are the reporters risk being less intelligent than the ‘illiterate’ manual workers that they interview.”³¹ A few months earlier, a group of Senegalese workers made a similar complaint to *Le Monde*. They critiqued the editors for placing Michel Legri’s praiseworthy report above a piece repeating the dog-eating story

³¹ Mathieu Ekani-Onambele, “Immigration Notre et Union Générale des Travailleurs Senegalais en France” *La Vie Africaine*, no. 41, Novembre 1963: 21. “Cependant nous ferons remarquer, à travers cet article, combien le problème échappe à certaines personnes, et combien les ‘travailleurs qualifiés’ que sont les reporters risquent d’être moins intelligents que les manœuvres ‘analphabètes’ qu’ils interviewent.”

Onambele cited.³² This rumor “harmed the dignity of all our African brothers living in France.”³³ Like Onambele, they decried shifting attention from the causes and dangers of West Africans’ living conditions to inflammatory rumors. Like residents resisting reporters, these men tried to control West Africans’ image as their domestic lives drew growing media attention.

Journalists, activists, and public officials had different perspectives on how to discuss these West African *taudis*. However, they did all agree that the sudden “discovery” of these spaces revealed or even created problems that needed to be solved. French and West African actors brought different perspectives to bear as the conversation shifted from exposing the *taudis* to determining who should fix these scandalous spaces and how.

Inhabiting France’s “Durable Empire”

To solve this new problem, many people turned to old stories. “The African presence is now complete in France” a journalist for the magazine *Afrique Actuelle* wrote in 1966, “started fifty years ago with the ‘*tirailleur sénégalais*,’ it asserted itself with students and apprentices, the workers give it a new face.”³⁴ Contrasting migrant workers’ “new face” with the soldiers and students of yesterday bridged the colonial past and the post-colonial present. Activists, politicians, and migrants regularly invoked these kinds of historic connections to justify state intervention in Paris’ African *taudis*. Describing and discussing these dwellings was not just about understanding Paris, but also about managing the fate of Franco-African relations.

Scandals about these slums put pressure on officials trying to control postcolonial links between France and its former West African colonies. Outcries about African *taudis* led many

³² Amicale des Travailleurs Sénégalais de la Région Parisienne to Hubert Beuve-Mery, Director of *Le Monde*, Paris February 25, 1963, letter republished in J.-P. N’Diaye, J. Bassene, D. Germain. *Les Travailleurs Noirs en France: Pourquoi Les Migrations, Réalités Africaines Revue Mensuelle* No. 5 (Mai-Juin 1963): 109.

³³ Ibid: 110

³⁴ “L’Émigration Africain” *Afrique Actuelle*, February 1966, Immigration Africaine, 19850087/156, ANF. “La présence africaine’ est maintenant complète en France : commencée voici cinquante ans avec les ‘*tirailleurs sénégalais*’, elle s’est affirmée avec les étudiants et les stagiaires; les travailleurs lui donnent un nouveau visage.”

authorities to question former imperial citizens' migratory rights. Writing to the Prefect of the Seine in 1962, J.P. Dannaud of the Ministry of Cooperation argued that housing problems for African migrants could not be solved "as long as a control system for the actual migratory flux has not been put in place."³⁵ This kind of frustration inspired negotiations with Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania that, by 1964, imposed new regulations including health exams and employment requirements.³⁶ However, former imperial citizens could still travel to France without a work visa while elaborate networks of forgers helped produce fake health exams and contracts. As a result, Paris' African population grew from nearly 15,000 in 1962 to over 40,000 by 1968.³⁷ Omar N. captured many Senegalese men's confidence that they could get to France with ease. He arrived in 1971 and described his journey for a leftist publication a few years later. "France and Senegal are the same," he explained "that's what is said in my home."³⁸ Policies and expectations forged over decades of imperial rule made stopping migration an uphill battle.

These Franco-African connections' durability stemmed in part from efforts to use West African migrants to bolster France's geopolitical influence. While West Africans were a relatively small group compared to Maghrebi or Southern European migrant populations, they received widespread official attention. This in part reflected these men's connection to postcolonial "cooperation." As the previous chapter explained, "cooperation" policies adapted colonial institutions to keep former colonies in France's sphere of influence, most notably through the Franc CFA and the power it gave France over African states' monetary policies.³⁹ Some officials

³⁵ J.P. Dannaud to Monsieur le Préfet de la Seine, February 15, 1962, "Notes et Correspondance Action social en faveur des immigrant noirs – 1963-1964" F/1a/5136, ANF. "aussi longtemps qu'un système de contrôle de l'actuel flux migratoires n'aura pas été mise en place"

³⁶ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 131-132.

³⁷ Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*, 64.

³⁸ Sally N'Dongo, *Voyage forcé : Itinéraire d'un militant* (Paris : F. Maspero, 1975), 56. "France et Sénégal c'est pareil. C'est ce qu'on dit chez moi."

³⁹ Fann Pigeaud and Ndongo Samba Sylla, *L'arme invisible de la Françafrique. Une histoire du Franc CFA* (Paris: La Découverte, 2018).

saw labor migrants as embodiments of these economic and political connections. “One must insist on the necessity for humane reasons of solidarity as well as the renown and influence of our country” Gérard Esperet explained in a 1964 parliamentary hearing, “of considering the immigration of African workers as a form of veritable cooperation, with reciprocal contributions for Africa and France”⁴⁰ Leaders like Espéret claimed working in France gave migrants skills that they could bring back to develop their new nations. Most migrants from the Senegal River Valley similarly saw their time in France as temporary, hoping to enough money to return home as respected patriarchs.⁴¹ French politicians tried to harness this trend for their own ends. However, *taudis* undermined cooperation’s mutually-beneficial narratives. “Appalling housing conditions for these black Africans risks causing political repercussions” the deputy M. Backouche declared, “when they return home, they will foment revolt there.”⁴² As previous chapters explained, the politics of dwelling evolved in part out of official concerns that migrants’ domestic suffering in France would inspire discontent in West Africa. Similar anxieties arose in the 1960s as French leaders tried to defend their influence over former colonies. Fear about the end of French-aligned regimes linked slum conditions in Paris to France’s postcolonial power.

Politicians were not the only ones who saw France’s postimperial future in warehouses and hostels. One journalist made this clear as they struggled to evoke the term “foreigner” in their plea for investment in Africans’ housing. “It pains us to write this word,” they explained. “Are these ‘foreigners’ not impregnated with that which is unique to France, by our long

⁴⁰ Conseil Économique et Social, “Problèmes Posés Par l’Immigration des travailleurs Africains en France,” *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, July 24 1964, Session de 1964 – Séance du 23 juin 1964, F/1a/5136, ANF. “il faut insister sur la nécessité, pour des raisons humaines de solidarité, mais également pour le renom et l’influence de notre pays, de considérer l’immigration des travailleurs africains comme une forme véritable de coopération, comportant apport réciproque de l’Afrique et de la France.”

⁴¹ Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants*.

⁴², Conseil Économique et Social, *Annexe au Procès-Verbal de la Séance du Jeudi 6 Février, 1964 à 10 H. 30*, F/1a/5136, ANF. “Les conditions effroyables de logement de ces Africains noirs risquent d’entraîner des répercussions politiques qu’on connaît ; de retour chez eux, ils y apporteront des ferments de révolte.”

presence in their home?” the writer asked, “Isn’t it humane – and also practical – to do everything so that the Africans making their homes in France are privileged workers, unconscious and effective agents of the deepening of this symbiosis, our most certain and durable empire?”⁴³ Framing colonialism as a movement between French and African “homes” challenged the very idea that these migrants were foreign. Though they had shed their imperial citizenship, West Africans still belonged to a “durable empire.” Activists in the suburb of Beauvais made a similar appeal in 1963 to get the city to help house several hundred Malians working in a local Lockheed factory. They felt “angered that citizens of a friendly country whose past is intimately tied to our history would be left without work and without the possibility of housing on French territory.”⁴⁴ Ideas of mutual obligations had justified French support for the politics of dwelling since its wartime emergence almost fifty years earlier. Evoking similar ideas in the 1960s presented decolonization as a mere shift in a longer historical tie that should endure. This rhetorical framework justified domestic assistance for these familiar “foreigners.”

As French observers tried to preserve colonial bonds, West African authorities wanted assistance programs to forge new national loyalties. In the early 1960s, the Senegalese labor organizer Sally N’Dongo and several other Paris-based Senegalese leaders formed the *Union Générale des Travailleurs Sénégalais en France (UGTSF)*.⁴⁵ N’Dongo regularly tried to get Senegal’s consul in Paris to support the UGTSF’s assistance programs. In one instance, he asked

⁴³ “Africains en Taudis” *Documents Nord-Africains*, No. 535 –September 24, 1963, 14ème année, Presse Actualités, F/DELTA/2149/2255, La Contemporaine. “Nous avons peine à écrire ce mot... Ne sont-ils pas imprégnés de ce qui est le propre de la France, par notre longue présence chez eux ? Et n’est-il pas humain – et cependant réaliste, -de tout faire pour que les Africains soient chez nous des travailleurs privilégiés, agents inconscient et efficaces de l’approfondissement de cette imprégnation, notre plus sûr et plus durable empire?”

⁴⁴ “Les Travailleurs Africains en France” April, 29 1963, G A 10 – 1963-1964, APP. “s’indignant que des citoyens d’un pays ami dont le passé a été intimement lié à notre histoire soient laissés sans travail et sans possibilités de logement sur le territoire français.”

⁴⁵ For more on N’Dongo and the formation of the UGTSF see N’Dongo’s autobiography *Voyagé forcé*, as well as Dedieu, *Parole immigrée*: 33-36; Glaes, *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*: 25-34.

the consul to help several Senegalese workers living in a dilapidated building in the suburb of Clichy that “made me afraid for them.” N’Dongo then asked the consul to join him on his next visit to this frightful abode.⁴⁶ It is unclear how the consul responded. However, consular officials did often follow up on requests to meet with their compatriots. When several Malian workers resisted a local tuberculosis screening program, Malian consular authorities visited their residences to promote these tests.⁴⁷ Many officials tried to go further by starting social assistance programs in Paris. After meeting with Senegalese workers in 1964, Simon Senghor, nephew of Senegal’s president Leopold Senghor, returned to Dakar and pushed his uncle’s regime to do more for these migrants. Around the same time, the Malian consulate began investing in a residence for Paris’ Malian workers.⁴⁸ As Gregory Mann argues, West African governments tried to assert their newfound sovereignty by claiming responsibility for their overseas citizens.⁴⁹ Activists and officials tried to place domestic support for migrants in these new state’s purview.

Many French authorities chafed at these interventions. One official in France’s Interior Ministry criticized N’Dongo’s effort to build a *foyer* for Senegalese workers. This official felt that African officials had, “a less clear notion than traditional countries of immigration about the limits placed on direct initiatives outside their territory.”⁵⁰ This official accused West Africans of failing to act like “traditional” states and undermining France’s own sovereignty. However, West

⁴⁶ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le Livre des travailleurs africains en France*, 42. “Je serais satisfait si vous vouliez bien m’y accompagner prochainement.”

⁴⁷ “Objet : Visite des foyers de travailleurs d’Afrique Noire par une personnalité Malienne” May 22, 1963, A, Généralité Contrôle Travailleurs Paris RG et PP 1960-1968, 19850087/156, ANF.

⁴⁸ Le Ministre de L’Intérieur to Monsieur le Premier Ministre, “Objet: Action sociale en faveur des immigrations,” March 23, 1964, Correspondance avec le Premier Ministre 1963-1964, F/1a/5136, ANF.

⁴⁹ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 135-145.

⁵⁰ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, “Note pour Monsieur le Directeur General des Affaires Politiques et de l’Administration du Territoire Service de Liaison et de Promotion des Migrants,” September 18, 1965, Objet: Création éventuelle à Levallois d’un foyer pour travailleurs noirs, F/1a/5136, ANF “...une notion moins nette que les pays d’immigration traditionnels des limites qui s’imposent pour des initiatives directes hors de leur territoire.”

African migrants were not “traditional” migrants. Both French and West African leaders connected their well-being to their respective state’s postcolonial legitimacy. Migrants’ link to cooperation policies likely led Paris’ police chief Maurice Papon to worry that Senegalese consular efforts to house their citizens “could be interpreted by the interested parties as proof of French authorities’ disdain towards them.”⁵¹ This “disdain” threatened French hopes for the future of Franco-African relations. Managing migrants’ dwellings raised fundamental questions about what governance looked like after decolonization, and who should do the governing.

If some French observers promoted assistance to preserve of old imperial bonds, others used housing policies to wrestle with colonialism’s violent racial legacies. The anti-colonial wars of the postwar years led a growing number of French citizens and intellectuals to question France’s long-held claims of republican colorblindness.⁵² In 1962, this new analysis led Bernard Briand to study France’s “African proletariat” by comparing the obstacles African workers faced with those faced by North Africans in France as well as Jewish and black workers in the United Kingdom. “Black workers are arriving at a moment where we just had a hard lesson,” Briand wrote, “that of the Algerian war, which led each Frenchman to psychoanalyze, if one can say, the racism that was impregnated within them like an endemic disease.”⁵³ Briand wanted the *taudis* crisis to inspire French citizens to probe their biases and reckon with decolonization’s “hard lesson.” This analysis did not appeal to everyone. One report for the Ministry of the Interior said Frenchmen admired their African “former brothers in arms” and “unlike what has already been

⁵¹ M. Papon to Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur, Paris, September 7, 1963, , “Correspondance avec le Premier Ministre,” F/1a/5136, ANF. “puisse être interprétées par les intéressés comme la preuve de la désaffection des autorités françaises à leur égard.”

⁵² Todd Shepard, “Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: A Transnational History of Anti-Racism and Decolonization” *Journal of Global History* 6, no. 2 (2011): 273-297.

⁵³ Bertrand Briand, “Un prolétariat africain en France” *Communauté – France- Eurafrique* (November 1962): 20. “les travailleurs noirs arrivent à un moment où nous venons de subir une dure leçon, celle de la guerre d’Algérie qui a permis à chaque Français de psychanalyser, si l’on peut dire, le racisme dont il était imprégné comme d’une maladie endémique.”

produced in Great Britain, there has not been for the moment anti-black reactions in our country.”⁵⁴ As Briand sought to use housing to compare racial conflicts in France and Great Britain, others held onto a belief in French egalitarian exceptionalism.

While people disagreed on what *taudis* said about racism in the past, most recognized that racism played a role in the *taudis*’ present. Some observers focused on the growing visibility of the slums themselves. One report for the Seine Prefecture said journalists’ depictions of squalid quarters fueled racial animosity. “Their exploitation,” the report said of African workers, “displayed in broad daylight in the domain of housing, is an assault on the most elementary principles of honesty. We are seeing the dawning of another danger: the evolution of a mentality in the French of a sort of racism.”⁵⁵ The “spectacle” of misery, the writer claimed, fueled racist thinking. The report contrasted a colorblind past with a racist present, fearing that derogatory presentations and economic competition could lead white French citizens to exclude their African neighbors. Sally N’Dongo evoked a similar concern about these media portrayals in his memoir. “These slum-ghettoes where our compatriots are warehoused” he wrote “serve as instruments of propaganda for fascist groups to provoke racism against immigrants.”⁵⁶ From very different perspectives, these writers linked media images of slums to rising racial conflicts.

Claiming media presentations fueled racism did not stop many Africans in Paris from grounding Africans’ housing problems on racial biases. At one point during a 1961 televised

⁵⁴ “Travailleur d’Afrique Noire Situation Générale: Notes et rapports des Renseignements généraux” *Les Travailleurs d’Afrique Noire en France*, May 1963, 24, F/1a/5136, ANF “ses ‘anciens frères de combat ; A l’inverse de ce qui s’est déjà produit en Grande-Bretagne, il n’y a pas eu pour l’instant de réactions anti-noires dans notre pays.”

⁵⁵ “Préfecture Seine : Étude Problème noire Région Parisienne.” Main d’œuvre originaire d’Afrique Noire, F/1a/5136, ANF. “Leur exploitation, étalée au grand jour dans le domaine du logement, est une atteinte aux principes d’honnêteté les plus élémentaires. Nous voyons poindre un autre danger : l’évolution de la mentalité des Français dans les sens du racisme.”

⁵⁶ N’Dongo, *Voyage force*, 12. “Ces taudis-ghettos où sont parqués nos compatriotes servent d’instrument de propagande aux groupes fascistes pour provoquer le racisme contre les immigrés.”

investigation entitled “Racism,” an unnamed African worker told reporters he would have to “hide my skin” to get a room.⁵⁷ This frank discussion of racism on a nationally broadcast program spoke to the racial reckoning Briand called for amidst the Algerian War. Discussions of discrimination also took more private forms. In 1965 Abdoulaye N’Dao, a Senegalese student, decried racism and its impact on housing in a note he gave President Leopold Senghor during a visit to Paris. “African workers do not prefer ‘ghettos,’” he wrote, “the truth is that the African and French governments are not as attentive to the problem as they should be.” This governmental failure came amidst a “new wind” that was “blowing in France, situated between hate and racism.” N’Dao felt something changed after 1960. “Today, with independence” he bemoaned, “the French feel so far from us that the shared past has fallen into the shadows of thoughtless oblivion.”⁵⁸ N’Dao connected African workers presence in “ghettos” to racism’s “new wind” in France. Referencing France and Africa’s “shared past” resonated with Senghor’s own vision of decolonization as a form of interracial cooperation.⁵⁹ Yet N’Dao repurposed this frame to condemn multiple regimes for letting racism grow alongside Paris’ African “ghettos.”

Fears that racial tensions would undermine France’s “durable empire” led officials to seek examples near and far to understand and control Paris’ new African “ghettos.” As early as 1960, officials worried about what one observer called the “flagrant” similarities between Senegambian postwar migration and the Arab and Kabyle arrivals in the interwar years.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Le Racisme*, ORTF, September 11, 1961, Inathèque, “garder ma peau.”

⁵⁸ “Un document de caractère tendancieux, destiné à M. Senghor, président de la République du Sénégal, a été rédigé par un étudiant sous le couvert de l’Amicale des Travailleurs Sénégalais de la Région Parisienne,” October 13, 1965. Généralité Contrôle Travailleurs Paris RG et PP 1960-1968, 19850087/156, ANF. “...depuis l’indépendance de nos pays un vent nouveau souffle en France, qui se situe entre la haine et le racisme. Aujourd’hui, avec l’indépendance, le Français se sent si loin de nous que le passé commun est tombé dans les ténèbres de l’oubli ingrat.”

⁵⁹ Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Négritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2015).

⁶⁰ “Note: pour Monsieur le Directeur de la Réglementation.” September 8, 1960. Immigration Africaine, 19850087/156, ANF. “flagrante.”

Bertrand Briand argued that unless West African migrants found affordable residences alongside French workers, “*de facto* segregation will quickly be accepted as normal, then desirable... a well-known process for North African workers.”⁶¹ Others looked across the Atlantic instead of the Mediterranean to find examples to follow or avoid. In September 1963, after visiting New York City and meeting with the city’s police chief, Paris’ police chief Maurice Papon relayed his thoughts on the city’s growing West African community to the Minister of the Interior.⁶² He noted the militancy of black residents in Harlem but said Paris’ African workers had not reached this point. However, he placed black Parisians and New Yorkers on similar trajectories of radicalization. After echoing concerns about newspaper reports about *taudis*, he said a Black Power movement like the one in Harlem could arise in Paris. “Any political movement that would permit the Blacks to improve their conditions or that are limited to exploiting their resentment” he warned “will find amongst them the greatest success.”⁶³ “Ghettos” for Algerians in Paris or African-Americans in New York haunted French visions of urban life after empire.

Whether knowingly or not, Papon’s racialized anxiety echoed explicit efforts by leftist activists to make African housing in Paris a point of transnational solidarity. Parisian police agents noted that foreign activists, including many African American communists, occasionally tried to enter West African residences in Paris.⁶⁴ After one such trip in 1964, the Cuban writer Carlos Moore made his own Harlem-Paris link, but with far different intentions than Papon. “I relived the rats, the cockroaches, the dirty rooms that the blacks of Harlem are crowded into together in the same way” Moore wrote, “I was not in Harlem, but I asked myself if this vision

⁶¹ Briand, “Un prolétariat africain en France”: 19.

⁶² “Le Préfet de Police à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Intérieur Objet : Problèmes posés par la population africaine de la capitale” September 7, 1963. “Correspondance avec le Premier Ministre 1964-1964,” F/1a/5136, ANF.

⁶³ Ibid. “tout mouvement politique qui permette à ces Noirs d’améliorer leur condition ou qui même se bornera à exploiter leur rencoeurs (sic) , trouvera parmi eux le plus grans (sic.) succès.”

⁶⁴ “Objet: Propagande extrémiste de gauche parmi les Africains résidant dans la region parisienne,” 77 W 6708, APP.

did not represent the exact reflection of what I had seen in Harlem.⁶⁵ Papon and Moore's very different Harlem references reflected the neighborhood's symbolic power in global discourses on race in the twentieth century. Harlem served as both an imagined global black capital and the emblematic underserved black ghetto.⁶⁶ At the heart of these connections stood squalid homes. Whatever the motivation that led to this comparison, it justified improving African men's housing if only to help Paris avoid New York City's segregated fate.

Little consensus existed about the relationship between African worker's housing and France's "durable empire." However diverse actors believed that domestic assistance would help determine decolonization's unknown impact. The colonial politics of dwelling forged links between West Africans' political inclusion and domestic well-being that led militants, consuls, and neighbors to see Parisian *taudis* as crucible for a new Franco-African future.

Managing Young African Workers' Minds and Bodies

As concerns about postcolonial racial or geopolitical relations led people to argue that state resources should be used to manage *taudis*, another set of worries informed the kinds of homes people wanted investments to create. One 1964 ministerial report evoked these fears, saying slums would cause "the deterioration of the health of such a young population."⁶⁷

Geopolitical anxieties mixed with concerns that *taudis* threatened the stability of migrants themselves and Paris as a whole. For very different reasons, officials and migrants sought to

⁶⁵ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le livre des travailleurs africains en France*, 36. "Je revivais les rats, les cafards, les pièces insalubres où se présentent de la même façon les noirs de Harlem. Je n'étais pas à Harlem, mais je me demandais si cette vision ne représentait pas la réflexion exacte de ce que j'avais vu à Harlem."

⁶⁶ Daniel Matlin, "Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto Discourse" in *Race Capital?: Harlem as Setting and Symbol*, eds. Andrew M. Fearnley and Daniel Martlin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 71-90.

⁶⁷ "Main d'œuvre Africaine dans le départ de la Seine" February 19, 1964, F/1a/5136, 36 IV, ANF. "Le problème se pose plus gravement encore dans l'immédiat, du point de vue africain, par la détérioration de la santé de toute une population jeune"

solve this problem through collective living. People believed communal life could help young West African men adapt to the social, sexual, and biological perils of life overseas.

Medical experts in particular saw *taudis* as hotbeds for diseases. As fires and asphyxiations in the winter of 1962-63 drew journalistic scrutiny, rising infectious disease rates among West African workers caught many doctors' attention. Medical officials described a family of diseases that at least one documentary dubbed "transplants' diseases."⁶⁸ Afflictions ranged from lice and bedbugs to pneumonia and leprosy. One malady became particularly associated with African migrants: tuberculosis. By the end of the 1960s, officials claimed that as many as one in ten Africans in the Paris region had tuberculosis.⁶⁹ "Accidents of socioeconomic disruptions can lead to the reappearance of pathology well known in another time," an early study on tuberculosis among African migrants wrote, "but which we thought had disappeared, in Europe at least"⁷⁰ Tuberculosis had long been associated with Europe's urban poor, but growing access to treatment led many experts to associate the diseases with the "Third World."⁷¹ Like the *taudis*, tuberculosis accented migrant workers' outsider status in a hygienic postwar Europe.

Associating tuberculosis with West African migration constituted another holdover from the politics of dwelling's early days. When dealing with West African tuberculosis victims, medical experts often reached into what V.Y. Mudimbe calls the "colonial library" to resuscitate colonial-era ideas about how to manage West African bodies in France.⁷² The study mentioned

⁶⁸ Inathèque, *Les Transplantés (les travailleurs étrangers)*, ORTF, September 13, 1965.

⁶⁹ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*, 146; Glaes, *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*: 145-148.

⁷⁰ "La Tuberculose des Noirs (Originaires de l'Afrique Francophone) Travaillant dans la Région Parisienne" par H. Brocard, R. Vannier, Ch. Gallouedec, and A. Burn, 1962, "AFTAM" 19780262/10, ANF. "Le hasard des bouleversements socio-économiques peut faire réapparaître une pathologie bien connue autrefois mais qu'on croyait disparue, en Europe du moins."

⁷¹ Linda Bryder, Flurin Condrau and Michael Worboys, "Tuberculosis and Its Histories: Then and Now," in *Tuberculosis Then and Now: Perspectives On the History of an Infectious Disease*, ed. Linda Bryder and Flurin Condrau (Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010): 3-23.

⁷² V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

above, led by doctor H. Brocard, began by citing work by one Dr. Borrel on tuberculosis among *tirailleurs sénégalais* during World War I.⁷³ As Chapter One explained, doctors like Borrel argued that the French military should give *tirailleurs* a year to adapt to France's climate to avoid diseases like tuberculosis. Brocard's findings, inspired by these earlier ideas, appeared in newspaper articles and policy communiqués about African migrants, imbuing older visions of geographic determinism into analyses of Paris' postimperial landscape.⁷⁴ By the end of 1963, these concerns led France to make Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal conduct tuberculosis screenings on all prospective migrants.⁷⁵ The same year, a medical center for West Africans in Paris, the "Centre Bousset," was built to prevent further tuberculosis outbreaks.⁷⁶ However, Brocard himself called the Centre Bousset a "semi-failure" as tuberculosis continued to rise.⁷⁷ Despite their inefficacy, these measures reinforced what Felix Germain calls the "postcolonial civilizing mission," which brought colonial-era policies and racial geographies into postcolonial Paris.⁷⁸ Fear of tuberculosis mixed with colonial racial sciences to justify particular approaches to regulating how West African migrants dwelt.

Connecting tuberculosis to domestic issue was not just a French projection. Tuberculosis thrives in cold and poorly aerated spaces like the rooms many migrants inhabited. Like French authorities, leaders of several Senegalese labor organizations worried about their members' exposure to this illness. However, they pinned the disease's proliferation on the forces that led them into these dangerous conditions rather than inherent biological differences. Kalido Kénémé,

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ J.-L. Méteye, "Africains en Métropole" *Figaro*, December 25, 1963; Letter from the National Committee of Defense against Tuberculosis to the Prefect of the Seine, November 6, 1962, 19780262/10, ANF.

⁷⁵ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*: 147-148.

⁷⁶ Glaes, "Tuberculosis, Disease, Social Welfare Initiatives, and the *Centre Bousset*," *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*, 140-168.

⁷⁷ "Dépistage – travailleurs noirs" "D – Tuberculose chez les noirs originaires d'Afrique francophone travaillant en France." 19780262/10, ANF. "demi-échec"

⁷⁸ Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*, 33-40.

the secretary of the Association of Senegalese Workers in France, attacked *taudis* managers who claimed “to know Africans because they rubbed shoulders with some *tirailleur sénégalais* in the army.” He saw West Africans living in degrading dwellings as “a shameful exploitation of poverty. Inevitably, more than half of these workers develop tuberculosis.⁷⁹ As French doctors recycled colonial-era studies, Kénémé critiqued these military legacies and the “knowledge” they claimed to produce. Sally N’Dongo similarly pinned the spread of disease on abusive management in an interview for a study on Paris’ African workers. “It’s normal for Africans to get tuberculosis” N’Dongo explained “because they are forced to work in factories, in cement, in anything you want.” Between dangerous worksites and hostels without fresh water, N’Dongo said workers got “worse diseases than tuberculosis.”⁸⁰ N’Dongo and Kénémé agreed with French peers on tuberculosis’ severity, but not its cause. They pointed to exploitation, not displacement.

Alongside worries about the diseases these *taudis* carried, many people also focused on what these spaces lacked: women. Previous chapters have shown that this lack of female companionship inspired similar concerns about West African soldiers and workers in France since at least 1914. In the 1960s, French reporters similarly tried to discover how these overwhelmingly male communities fared without women. One French television reporter exemplified this fascination, asking a group of migrants what problems arose from living without women. Several of these men said they had no problems. One respondent said they simply wanted to stay in France for two years before returning to “their wives and children in the

⁷⁹ Yvette Gazeilles “La Grande Aventure des ‘Sarakollés,” February 5, 1968, “Immigration Africaine,” 19850087/156, ANF. “connaître les Africains, parce qu’ils avaient côtoyé dans l’armée quelques tirailleurs sénégalais. C’était tout simplement une exploitation honteuse de la misère. Inévitablement, plus de la moitié des travailleurs devenaient tuberculeux.”

⁸⁰ “Immigration et Condition des Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France,” February 15, 1964, Immigrés d’Afrique Noire 1964-1970, 19850087/156, ANF. “Mais ici, il est normal que les Africains attrapent la tuberculose à force de travailler dans les usines, dans le ciment, dans tout ce que vous voudrez. ... Il n’y a pas d’eau pour se laver, il n’y a aucun confort, rien quoi ! Alors, je pense qu’on risque de contracter des maladies pires que la tuberculose.”

village.” Whether skeptical or unsatisfied, the interviewer pushed. “Two or three years without women,” he asked, “that poses problems all the same, no?”⁸¹ After several moments of silence, some of the men reluctantly agreed. These journalistic efforts to uncover migrants’ sex lives appeared regularly. Jean Schmidt ended his 1967 documentary *L’Afrique des Banlieues* with a melancholy depiction of several young Senegalese men wandering Paris’ red-light district Pigalle. Eventually, they ended up in a crowded unnamed bar, dancing dejectedly with several white women.⁸² These reporters made it seem that these young men would inevitably go on some sort of sexual wandering, whether they wanted to or not.

Some experts grounded this perceived inevitable sexual yearning in the same acclimation theory used to discuss tuberculosis. One report for the Prefect of the Seine region argued that few problems “in the sexual domain” arose during men’s first year because of their unfamiliarity with Paris’ cold weather and the rhythms of industrial work. However, “when his organism has adapted itself a bit, then the problem manifests itself.” This revived sexual desire took specific forms. “There is no reason to discuss deviations of a homosexual type” the report clarified. Whether or not men were having sex with one another, these experts did not see it as part of West African sexuality. Rather, these men’s sexual awakening led them “to try their chance with white women.”⁸³ Their supposed lack of same-sex intercourse fed a belief that these men’s libidinal needs would lead to miscegenation. One 1969 study evoked a specific timeframe for migrant’s sexual resurgence. “During the first year, the communal life and change of scenery often leaves the sexual problem on the second order” the report wrote, “after that, they are going

⁸¹ *Les transplantés*, “Deux ou trois ans sans femme, ce n’est pas un problème tout de même, non ?”

⁸² Jean Schmidt. *L’Afrique des Banlieues*, ORTF, Collection le Monde en 40 Minutes, September 3, 1967.

⁸³ “Préfecture Seine : Étude Problème noire Région Parisienne, 39/40,” Main d’œuvre originaire d’Afrique Noire, F/1a/5136, ANF. “Dans le domaine sexuel, il est tellement inadapté au froid et au rythme fe (sic.) travail qu’il se trouve très affaibli. Lorsque son organisme s’est un peu adapté, le problème commence à se poser. Jusqu’alors rien ne permet de penser à des déviations du type homosexuel. Le comportement sexuel des noirs Africains, très libre aux yeux des européens, est parfaitement sain.”

to mix at parties or clubs where they could find feminine company.”⁸⁴ If acclimation combatted tuberculosis, it incentivized interracial sex. This study ultimately advocated an increasingly popular solution to control these young men and their libidos: communal life.

Many French authorities hoped that collective living would help control young West African migrants. One 1963 police report discussing the fires and asphyxiation that caught the media’s attention the previous winter said that “a discipline firmly maintained by the responsible ‘marabouts’ or ‘griots’ could have prevented a greater number of accidents.”⁸⁵ This reflected a long-standing effort to use “traditional” authorities to manage “displaced” West Africans. As previous chapters explained, many French officials believed certain West Africans’ domestic well-being depended on selective adaptations of “traditional” village lifestyles. Parisian police trying to adapt this colonial-era approach knew migrants would not automatically obey “traditional” leaders. One 1966 study described a “battle of influence” between younger migrants and supposedly traditional village authority figures.⁸⁶ A separate police report declared that young migrants’ growing familiarity with the capital “produced a sort of emancipation that has resulted in the rejection of tribal constraints.”⁸⁷ Focusing on Paris’ Barbès-Rochechouart neighborhood, the report said young Senegalese migrants had moved there to live “on the law’s margins” in local bars where they drank, hid stolen goods, and bought sex.⁸⁸ Police agents

⁸⁴ “Étude sur l’Implantation de la Main d’Œuvre Originnaire de l’Afrique Noire à Paris et dans sa couronne” ANF 19910712/37 “...pendant la première année de séjour, la vie communautaire et la dépaysement font passer souvent au second plan le problème sexuel, par la suite, ils vont se mêler aux fêtes et aux bals où ils pourront trouver une compagnie féminine.”

⁸⁵ “La colonie africaine de Paris” March 19, 1963, G A 10 – 1963-1964, APP. “Seule, une discipline fermement maintenue par les responsables ‘marabouts’ ou ‘griots’ a pu éviter un plus grand nombre d’accidents.” A marabout refers to Islamic clerics and intellectuals found across West Africa, griot refers to a caste of singers and historians.

⁸⁶ “Les Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France” March, 2 1966, APP G A 10 - 1965-1973. “une lutte d’influence.”

⁸⁷ “Un certain nombre d’immigrants d’Afrique Noire sont installés dans de nouveaux quartiers où ils causent des troubles à l’ordre et à la salubrité publics” February 16, 1966, APP G A 10, 1965-1973. “Il s’est produit une sorte d’émancipation qui a abouti au rejet des contraintes tribales.

⁸⁸ Ibid. “en marge des lois”

connected migrants' sexual and criminal exploits to the gradual collapse of gerontocratic authority. Male youth became a problem to be managed by supporting "traditional" elders.

Official discussions of elderly authority echoed and distorted the genuine support many migrants had for some supervision. When asked about "chiefs" living in West African hostels or slums, Sally N'Dongo explained that these figures were often "an elder or someone who can read and write" who managed distribution of food, metro tickets, or other shared provisions.⁸⁹ These authority figures' literacy or connections helped them mediate between residents and local bureaucrats. For example, throughout November 1964, Camara Galadio of the Association of Malian Workers asked the mayor of the Parisian suburb Saint-Denis for a new residence for his fellow workers. "I am sure of my duties and the responsibility I have taken towards my compatriots," Galadio explained, "to conclude all agreements with those would satisfy our needs."⁹⁰ While Galadio used this letter to demonstrate his authority to French officials, others used letters to control younger peers. During his first year in France, Djiby Sy recalled elder relatives across the country writing to tell him to live under their supervision. Sy followed these letters from Marseille to Le Havre and Rouen, before settling down with his uncle in Paris. Sy said this journey reflected elders' efforts to make sure, "young people who arrive don't drift" and become alcoholics or end up in "complicated situations."⁹¹ Sy fondly recalled this elderly control helping migrants find stability and shelter. Male Soninke migrants from the Senegal River Valley had relied on similar elderly run networks of shelters in port cities for generations.⁹² This history provided precedents for men trying to manage "complicated" lives in Paris.

⁸⁹ "Immigration et Condition des Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France, February 15, 1964, "Immigrés d'Afrique Noire 1964-1970." 19850087/156, ANF. "un vieux ou celui qui sait lire et écrire »

⁹⁰ Camara Galadio to M. Gillot, Mayor of Saint-Denis, November 24, 1964, *Travailleurs émigrés, Correspondance*, 18 ACW 23, AMSD. "Je suis sûr de mon devoir et de la responsabilité que je tiens envers mes compatriotes."

⁹¹ Génériques, Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier, "pour que les jeunes qui arrivent ne dérivent pas" "des situations un peu compliqué."

⁹² Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants*.

These networks led men to rely on one another, but not in a way that reified colonial ideas about timeless village solidarity. Migrants rarely referred to the long history of Soninke migrant support networks when discussing the benefits of communal life. Rather, they focused on an immediate fact: living together saved money. As Sally N'Dongo explained in an interview, a room in the Paris region could go from 100 to 200,000 francs per month and migrants often only had three to 4,000 francs to spend on rent. Not even a group of five or ten residents could pay this amount. "So, you have to find a society," N'Dongo explained, "you have to help each other."⁹³ New arrivals would be supported until they found a job, at which point they began contributing to collective coffers. If someone had to leave France for an emergency, they could get money for a ticket from this shared fund. "That is the reason," N'Dongo said, "that you cannot be against these communities."⁹⁴ Some French landlords disagreed. During a meeting of West African activists and workers, one unnamed worker discussed bedsharing, the common practice whereby a new arrival slept in a bed whose main occupant was at work. This gave newcomers a place to stay and helped split the rent.⁹⁵ Landlords often pushed each occupant to pay for the bed in full. "That isn't right," this individual explained, "we pay twice for one single bed."⁹⁶ Living on often meager wages, sharing resources became a need more than a preference.

Living collectively also provided a valuable sense of familiarity, but not by grafting Senegalese villages onto Parisian streets. Men in these *foyers* reinvented, rather than reproduced, rural social ties and practices. In his memoir, the Senegalese migrant Oumar Dia described

⁹³ *Immigration et Condition des Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France*, February 15, 1964, 37, Immigrés d'Afrique Noire 1964-1970, 19850087/156, ANF. "Alors, il faut trouver une société, il faut s'aider."

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* "C'est pour ça qu'on ne peut pas être contre ces communautés."

⁹⁵ Mbodj-Pouye, "Fixed Abodes", 300-301.

⁹⁶ J.P. N'Diaye, J. Bassenne, D. Germaine, *Les travailleurs noirs en France: pourquoi les migrations?* (Paris: Bureau d'études des réalités africaines, 1963), 15. "c'est pas juste ça ; on paye pas deux fois un seul lit."

France as “a forest that you enter where you know no one...so you need to regroup.”⁹⁷ Familial, linguistic or regional networks helped men like Dia navigate this baffling terrain. In 1963, one Malian worker described how linguistic and regional living arrangements reproduced and transcended ethnic categories. “All the guys in my room are Sarakholés from Nioro in Mali, they are brothers” he explained, “those in the neighboring room are Toucouleurs from Nouakchott (Mauritania), the others from Matam (Senegal). Great! We are all brothers.”⁹⁸ New fraternities mixed with older social relations. The Senegalese sociologist Souleymane Diarra evoked this mixture in his 1968 study on African workers in Paris. Men from lower castes prepared “collective meals and assure the cleanliness of the dorms, the cleaning of the dishes, the various shopping for the communal group.”⁹⁹ However, unemployed or new residents often assisted lower caste men in their domestic tasks. Caste and longevity in France combined to create a context-specific division of labor. Making new arrivals cook or becoming “brothers” with men from across the Senegal River Valley fostered familiarity and novelty in this wild French forest.

These different perspectives on the benefits of communalism led French and West African actors alike to see collective living as a viable solution to Paris’ West African *taudis* scandals. However, as a psychiatrist explained in the 1965 documentary *The Transplants*, this solution rested on a paradox. Crowded spaces helped spread diseases, yet living with so many other migrants prevented, “another type of destruction possibly crueller than the destruction of

⁹⁷ Oumar Dia, *Yakaré: Autobiographie d’Oumar* (Paris : F. Maspero, 198), 172, “c’est comme une forêt où tu rentres et où tu ne connais personnes...Donc il faut qu’on se regroupe et qu’on se mette d’accord pour bien être solidaires sur tout.”

⁹⁸ N’Diaye et al., *Les Travailleurs Noirs en France*, 92, “Tu vois, nous ici, nous sommes tous des frères. Tous ces gars de ma chambrée sont des Sarakolés de Nioro au Mali, ce sont des frères ; ceux de la chambrée voisine sont des Toucouleurs de Nouakchott (Mauritanie), les autres de Matam (Sénégal). Eh bien ! nous sommes tous des frères... mais nous sommes heureux parce que nous sommes tous des frères.”

⁹⁹ Diarra, “Les travailleurs Africains noirs en France”: 985. “les repas collectifs et assurent l’entretien des dortoirs, le nettoyage de la vaisselle, les diverses courses pour le groupe communautaire.”

their physical health, that of their mental equilibrium.”¹⁰⁰ This doctor felt authorities should help these men “rediscover in Paris, often in the most adverse atmospheres, the most African atmosphere possible.”¹⁰¹ Ending the *taudis* scandals meant balancing the social benefits of control and familiarity with the biological benefits of hygiene. This belief led French officials to steer West African away from the large *foyers* housing Mediterranean workers evicted from *bidonvilles*. These *foyers* had their own history serving primarily North African migrants, which made them ill-suited to produce this new “African atmosphere” in Paris.¹⁰² Making familiar, controlled, and “African” spaces became the *raison d’être* for the *foyers africains*.

State-Sponsored Solidarity in the Foyers Africains

“These men come to France to find here a better life, but also to improve themselves” Senegal’s ambassador to France, Gabriel d’Aroussier, declared. “They should not become bad Europeans, but better Africans.”¹⁰³ Pronounced at a 1964 meeting about Senegalese migrants, d’Aroussier echoed a belief that migrants should adapt to France without abandoning their “African” sensibilities. Since World War I, diverse actors used *foyers* to ground supposedly displaced West African male migrants social reproduction in particular ethnic, racial or political communities. Many actors doubled down on this approach in the 1960s. Planners, politicians and journalists said *foyers africains* would adapt West Africans to French industrial life while keeping them tied to the African nations and social worlds to which they had to return.

¹⁰⁰ *Les Transplantés*, “Contre un autre type de destruction plus cruel peut-être que la destruction de leur santé physique, c’est de leur équilibre mentale.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid. “d’avoir su recréer la vie qu’ils avait en Afrique...retribalisation...retrouver dans Paris et dans des atmosphères souvent le plus défavorables, une atmosphère la plus africaine possible.”

¹⁰² Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole*; Marc Bernadot, *Loger les immigrés: La Sonacotra, 1956-2006*, Vulaines-sur-Seine: Éditions du Croquant, 2008.

¹⁰³ “Vingt-cinq à trente mille travailleurs africains vivent en France dans des conditions souvent précaire.” *Combat*, January 6, 1964, 19850087/156, ANF. “Ces hommes viennent en France pour y trouver une vie meilleur, mais aussi pour se perfectionner. Ils ne doivent pas devenir de mauvais Européens, mais être demain de meilleurs Africains.”

The transformations these new *foyers* promoted had to work with the idea of return at the heart of labor migrants' own ambitions and the policy of cooperation. Prime Minister Georges Pompidou pointed this out at a meeting on West African housing in 1963. "In the case of a population for whom the stay on our territory does not, in general, have a definitive character," he explained, "there cannot be a question of imagining for them policies of stabilization or of integration."¹⁰⁴ Pompidou advocated subsidizing housing and social services to help West Africans navigate France's industrial labor market without promoting long-term settlement. To forge this system, the French government helped create a new housing market for West African migrants. Starting in 1963, official funds for West African housing largely came from the *Fonds d'Action Social* (FAS). Initially created to fund social services for Algerian migrants in 1958, FAS expanded its work towards all migrants in 1964. Much of the funding for the FAS came from migrants' own paychecks, presented as equivalent to social security withdrawals for French workers. The state redirected parts of this money towards the different private organizations running the growing number of *foyers africains* in Paris. Residents typically also paid rents between 70 and 80 francs a month.¹⁰⁵ Some critics saw this rent as a double payment, since part of the men's wages already went to the FAS. The Senegalese militant Jean-Pierre N'Diaye condemned this FAS arrangement for producing "veritable fortunes from the most hideous misery."¹⁰⁶ The groups running these *foyers* saw things quite differently.

State-subsidized private charity organizations dominated this new *foyers africains* network. By 1970 at least forty-two official FAS-supported *foyers africains* operated across Paris

¹⁰⁴ "Question orale sans débat no. 6.346 du 11 décembre 1963," "Notes et Correspondance Action Social en faveur des immigrants noirs 1963-1964," F/1a/5136, ANF. "S'agissant d'une population dont le séjour sur notre territoire ne présente pas, en général, un caractère définitif, il ne pouvait être question d'envisager pour elle des mesures de fixation et d'intégration."

¹⁰⁵ Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 150-153.

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Pierre N'Diaye, *Négriers Modernes: Les Travailleurs Noirs en France* (Paris: Présence Africains, 1970), 29. "...véritables fortunes sur la misère la plus hideuse."

and its suburbs.¹⁰⁷ Legally FAS funding had to go to officially recognized associations run by French citizens. This requirement excluded many West African groups from getting FAS support for their own housing projects.¹⁰⁸ This model supported associations grounded in what Jean-Pierre N'Diaye derisively called “charity” or “Franco-African friendship.”¹⁰⁹ Two of the most-prominent such organizations were Soundiata (*Association pour le Soutien, l’Union et la Dignité de l’Accueil aux Travailleurs Africains*) and AFTAM (*Association Pour la Formation Technique de Base des Africains et Malgaches résidant en France*). Members of the Catholic White Fathers order founded Soundiata and its first *foyer africain* in November 1963.¹¹⁰ Several bureaucrats and officials promoting French cooperation formed AFTAM in 1962.¹¹¹ The Secretary General of AFTAM made their ambitions clear in a 1964 newsletter. Healthy spaces where residents could learn new skills to “transform this anarchic migration into a factor of development.”¹¹² These *foyers* sought to adapt workers’ minds and bodies to new economic and political terrains.

These groups presented their *foyers* as clean and hygienic alternatives to the scandalous hostels and basements depicted in Parisian newspapers. These organizations typically made *foyers* in requisitioned apartments or warehouses, meaning they lacked architectural uniformity. However, *foyers africains* did usually have communal bedrooms, large kitchens, and common areas for group meetings or language classes. Officials and philanthropists regularly juxtaposed these *foyers* with the hostels and warehouses they replaced. One 1964 prefectural study on African migration dramatized this contrast. The study combined interviews and analysis with

¹⁰⁷ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le Livre des travailleurs africains en France*, 80-81.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*: 77-78

¹⁰⁹ N’Diaye, *Négriers modernes*: 30 “bienfaisance” “d’amitié franco-africaine.”

¹¹⁰ “Objet: Création à Paris d’une nouvelle Association s’intéressant aux travailleurs africains,” April 5, 1963, “Soundiata” 19850087/158, ANF. This acronym “Soundiata” was also the name of a legendary Malian king.

¹¹¹ Béguin, *Héberger des migrants ou gérer des logements*: 169-175.

¹¹² “Association pour la Formation Technique de Base des Africaines et Malgaches Résidant en France” “Le problème des travailleurs noirs en France: transformer des migrations anarchiques en facteur de développement” *France-Eurafrique*, No. 148, January 1964, 19850087/158, ANF.

photographs that captured cramped room and crowded kitchen used by several men in the basement of a “dilapidated ‘hotel’” in Paris’ Goutte d’Or neighborhood.¹¹³ Chipping paint, broken windows, and piles of pots evoked crowded and seemingly haphazard lives. These photographs appeared alongside those from a *foyer* run by Soundiata in the same neighborhood. Neatly lined bunk beds and open kitchen contrasted with the packed images of the *taudis* that the study’s readers had just viewed. One caption even highlighted the room’s heater, an implicit contrast with the improvised home fires that first drew popular attention to the *taudis*.¹¹⁴ These portraits framed *foyers* as the regulated counterparts to Paris’ scandalous slums.

Official observers wanted *foyers* to combine “modern” comforts, and the habits they promoted, with “traditional” communalism. “It is in the frame of using their traditional structures that one must inculcate elementary rules of hygiene, the rudiments of the French language” a report for the Seine Prefecture on African workers argued “one cannot shatter structures from the outside; one supports their evolution from the inside.”¹¹⁵ Rejecting traditions would cause “detrribalization” and make men “unfit for their own society under the pretext of modernization and education.”¹¹⁶ As previous chapters explained, the specter of “detrribalization” had inspired colonial administrators since the interwar years to present an ahistorical view that village life was key to African social reproduction, justifying persistent economic and political exclusion. Michel Massanet, a delegate to the Prime Minister working on migration, reiterated this kind of exclusion at a 1964 conference in Marseille on African migration to France. Massanet insisted

¹¹³ “No. 13 – Un ‘hôtel’ vétuste à la Goutte d’Or,” *Immigration et Condition des Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France*, 19850087/156, ANF.

¹¹⁴ “No. 27 – Le Foyer de la Soundiata, rue de la Croix-Nivert – Le chauffage d’une chambre,” *Immigration et Condition des Travailleurs Africains Noirs en France*, 19850087/156, ANF.

¹¹⁵ “Préfecture Seine : Étude Problème noir Région Parisienne,” 74, Main d’œuvre originaire d’Afrique Noire, F/1a/5136, ANF. “C’est dans le cadre de leurs structures traditionnelles et en les utilisant qu’il faut leur inculquer les règles élémentaires d’hygiène, les rudiments de la langue française... On ne fait pas éclater des structures de l’extérieur ; on favorise leur évolution de l’intérieur.” [emphasis in original].

¹¹⁶ Ibid. “détrribalisation...inadapté à leurs propre société sous prétexte de modernisation et d’éducation”

that ethnic collectivism, “by no means excludes, in the liberal framework of our society, that Africans can little by little lessen their connections with the chief of their community.” However, he argued that people working with these men “must equally think about the needs of a return to Africa and migrants’ need to not lose contact with the village disciplines that will be imposed on them at the end of their migration.”¹¹⁷ Massanet combined longstanding ideas about Africans’ rural attachments with new emphases on “cooperation” and return migration. Living outside “traditional structures” would undermine these men’s ability to adapt to France’s economy without become alienated from the new nations and old societies to which they would return.

Foyers’ promoters claimed their sites struck the perfect balance between recreating these village dynamics and giving migrants modern amenities and training. One 1966 televised broadcast of the opening ceremonies for a *foyer africain* in the suburb of Saint-Denis showed the space’s dining hall adorned with murals depicting African families, fishermen, and landscapes as well as neat row of pots and hot plates that would make the meals enjoyed in this decorated cafeteria.¹¹⁸ When the group *Accueil et Promotion* opened a *foyer* in 1967, radio reports described clean hallways, “modern sanitary installations,” and a conference room for residents to watch movies or listen to speakers that offered residents “not only housing, but also, an entire social cultural context.”¹¹⁹ Stereotypical murals and showers symbolized a blending of French sanitation and African “customs.” One 1969 article evoked this synthesis to describe the basement of a *foyer* in the suburb of Montreuil. “Tailors, shoemakers, and other African artisans

¹¹⁷ Michel Massenet, “L’Action des Pouvoirs Publics en Faveur des Travailleurs Noirs en France et Son Financement” *Colloque sur les problèmes posés par l’immigration des TRAVAILLEURS NOIRS en FRANCE et leur adaptation à la communauté française*, 38, ML 4.2.7.3.3, CCIM. “Des points d’appui indispensables au début d’une migration difficile. Il n’est nullement exclu, dans le cadre libéral de notre société, que les africains puissent assouplir peu à peu leurs rapports avec leur chef de communauté ; mais il faut songer également aux exigences du retour en Afrique et à la nécessité pour les migrants de ne pas perdre le contact avec les disciplines villageoises qui s’imposeront à eux à la fin de leur période de migration.”

¹¹⁸ “Centre Social à Saint Denis.” ORTF, December 13, 1966, Inatèque.

¹¹⁹ “Foyer pour africains” ORTF, October 20, 1967, Inatèque.

install themselves,” the article explained, “importing into this Parisian suburb the habits and atmosphere of Senegal or Mali.”¹²⁰ These *foyers*’ promotions presented memories, images, and crafts marked as West African as key to making *foyers* comfortable homes.

Living with and using these spaces complicated official presentations of *foyers* as effective spaces to selectively transform migrants. As one article put it, these men needed a “chance to elevate themselves in the social hierarchy and integrate themselves – even if they came from the bush – into industrial society.”¹²¹ Through French courses and instructional films, *foyers* were supposed help residents adopt “modern” habits. However, problems often arose over how to use the appliances this “industrial society” produced. New devices like refrigerators or washing machines had become cornerstones of postwar Western European domesticity.¹²² Observers felt West African men in these *foyers* needed to be trained to use these technological wonders to forge new domestic sensibilities. One article said *foyer* organizers had to “recognize that the African worker, because of their unfamiliarity with the details of European life, does not take great care of what is given to them.” The article recommended giving men “comfortable housing, simple and practical, devoid of overly elaborated or complicated amenities.”¹²³ These men needed modern comforts, but not too many. *Foyer* managers also had to preempt their tenants’ needs and capacities. One article criticized a Saint-Denis *foyer* for getting cheaper

¹²⁰, “Foyers Officiel et ‘Garnis’ Clandestin : Un travailleur africain sur cinq seulement trouve à se loger dans des conditions décentes” 25 X 69, Main d’œuvre africaine et immigrants – Généralités SCTiP 801155/4, 19940023/20, ANF. “s’installent les tailleurs, cordonniers et autres artisans africains, qui importent dans la banlieue parisienne les habitudes et l’atmosphère du Sénégal ou du Mali.”

¹²¹ “Il y a maintenant 10 foyers pour accueillir les travailleurs Africains dans la région Parisienne” 29 VII 69, 19940023/20, ANF. “d’une chance de s’élever dans la hiérarchie sociale et puissent s’intégrer – même s’ils viennent de la brousse – à la société industrielle.”

¹²² Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France*; De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*.

¹²³ R.O. Bollinger, “Un problème encore trop improvisé: Les Travailleurs Africains en France” *Afrique Nouvelle* June 28, 1967, 19850087/156, ANF. “Il faut reconnaître que le travailleur africain, en raison de son inadaptation aux détails de la vie européenne, ne prend pas grand soin de ce qui est mis à sa disposition...un habitat d’un confort simple et pratique sans perfectionnement trop poussé ni trop compliqué.”

showers with separate hot and cold faucets, instead of a mixed faucet. This system frequently led residents to slam the valves in a panic when the water became too hot, breaking several of the facility's showers. Future *foyers* should “ameliorate the quality of materials so manifestly unsuited to collective life” and train newcomers to “initiate them to European life.”¹²⁴ *Foyer* managers promoted a postcolonial civilizing mission that sought to help African men master the tools needed to start their “European life.”

As these reports indicated, question of who managed these sites became essential to their perceived success. The larger groups running these *foyers* entrusted their individual management to people perceived to be familiar with West Africans. Sometimes this meant empowering those who could claim “traditional” authority as well as former colonial politicians, like the former deputy of Senegal Guy Larcher who ran five *foyers* by 1966.¹²⁵ Some *foyers*' daily operations fell to another colonial holdover: veterans. Some managers were old *tirailleurs* while other were former colonial settlers or soldiers. Oumar Dia said that the manager of one *foyer* he lived in had fought in Algeria, Morocco, and several other African countries, and also worked in Senegal. “He knew the customs of each nationality” Dia explained, “their style of living.”¹²⁶ While this familiarity led to some shared laughs, it also encouraged the manager to “divide the men” along ethnic lines. French authorities believed that these managers' experience would give migrants the controlled and supervised transition into “European” life that *foyers* promised.

From their very inception, *foyers* had an ambiguous position towards migrants' domestic conditions. They were supposed to solve the problems of dangerous slums by placing residents

¹²⁴ J.P. Dumont “Foyers Officiel et ‘Garnis’ Clandestin : Un travailleur africain sur cinq seulement trouve à se loger dans des condition décentes” *M.O. Africaine en France* Vol. 156, “Main d’œuvre africaine et immigrants – Généralités” 19940023/20, ANF. “améliorer la qualité d’un matériel si manifestement inadapté à la vie collective...les initier à la vie européenne.”

¹²⁵ Inatheque, “Centre social à Saint-Denis” December 13, 1966.

¹²⁶ Dia: *Yakaré*, 157, “Il connaît les coutumes de chaque ressortissant, sa façon de vivre »

in monitored “modern” spaces. However, they also had to keep men in “African” communities to prepare them to return home. Managers often decided how to balance these tensions. By 1969, residents started pushing back and demanding the right to manage their own lives.

Fighting for the *Foyers*

This fight etched itself onto Paris’ landscape. “271 Workers of the Foyer are Threatened with Expulsion” read a message protestors scrawled across the entrance to the *Foyer Losserand* in Paris’ 15th *arrondissement*. Journalists described and photographed this sign on January 26 1974, as well the hundreds of police officers that violently evicted the *foyers*’ tenants.¹²⁷ Residents of this condemned ten-year old Soundiata *foyer* had been told to leave months earlier. In response, they occupied the *foyer* and refused to leave. West African unions, French leftist groups, and neighborhood organizations rallied to their cause. Days before this forced eviction, the head of France’s Socialist Party François Mitterrand visited the *foyer* and said it was worse than the POW camp he lived in during World War II.¹²⁸ Rather than leave this dilapidated dwelling, protesters demanded material improvements as well as the right to continue living together. These dual demands characterized a strike wave in dozens of *foyers africains* that turned these sites of control and “cooperation” into stages where West African and French actors struggled over the meaning of the politics of dwelling in postimperial Paris.

These protests arose as the militant spirit of 1968 transformed longstanding debates about migrant housing in postwar Paris. For many so-called French “68ers,” migrants’ position as low-wage workers and their imagined connection to anti-fascist or anti-colonial revolutions made them seem like keys to sparking a revolution in France.¹²⁹ Similarly, many West African activists

¹²⁷ Fonds Hervo Foyer Losserand, Image no. 49, ARC 3019 (12), IHTP.

¹²⁸ “Foyer de Soundiata (sic.): Pire Que Des Prisonniers” *Combat*, January 21, 1974.

¹²⁹ Daniel A. Gordon, *Immigrants & Intellectuals: May '68 & the Rise of Anti-racism in France* (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2012).

took on more radical perspectives as the military coup in Mali and the Senghorian state's violent response to protests in 1968 fed a growing disillusionment with West African regimes.¹³⁰ "We cannot wait for the governments in place" Sally N'Dongo said in 1970, "because ten years of experience has shown us that they are incapable of providing a solution."¹³¹ Housing protests gave French leftists and militant migrants the chance to promote new political agendas.

The wave of *foyer* protests began with a pair of rent strikes in the summer of 1969. The first major strike started in Saint-Denis at a *foyer* run by the organization ASSOTRAF (*Association Pour l'Aide Aux Travailleurs Africaines*). A few weeks later, another strike started in the suburb of Ivry at a chocolate factory-turned-*foyer* run by a French woman, Madeleine Morael, and a Malian veteran, Garba Traoré.¹³² Residents objected to rent hikes in both *foyers* despite, among other issues, the *foyers*' endemic overcrowding. One 1969 prefectural report said that the Ivry *foyer*, while intended for 150 residents, now had 541 occupants.¹³³ In August, the magazine *Afrique Nouvelle* published a letter by the Ivry protestors decrying these conditions. "Where in France" they wrote "is there still one WC for one hundred and ten (110) people?"¹³⁴ Residents claimed that managers were letting in new residents to get more rent while investing

¹³⁰ Jean-Philippe Dedieu and Aïssatou Mboj-Pouye, "The Fabric of Transnational Political Activism: 'Révolution Afrique' and West African Radical Militants in France in the 1970s" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 4, (2018): 1172-1208; Mann, *From Empires to NGOs*, 154-156; Françoise Blum, *Révolutions Africaines: Congo, Sénégal, Madagascar, années 1960-1970* (Rennes: Press Universitaire de Rennes, 2014).

¹³¹ N'Dongo, Sally. *Coopération Franco-Africain* (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 9.

¹³² "Un rapport d'enquête établie par la Préfecture de Police, suite aux arrivées sur notre territoire, par l'Aéroport de Lille-Lesquin, durant le 1er trimestre 1969, de ressortissants d'Afrique Noire, se présentant 'touristes' mais venant manifester chercher du travail en France" June 19, 1969, 19940023/20, ANF ; "Le délabrement du local dans lequel sont logés plus de 500 travailleurs africains dans un foyer sis 45 rue Gabriel Péri à Ivry-sur-Seine vient d'être défoncé dans un tract émanant du 'Comité de Soutien aux Travailleurs du Foyer'" June 13, 1969, 19940023/20, ANF.

¹³³ Lucien Lanier to Monsieur le Préfet, Créteil June 13, 1969, Main d'œuvre africaine et immigrants – Généralités, 19940023/20, ANF. "Semblable situation de facilité ne peut plus être admise, compte tenue de la mission que nous avons reçu d'améliorer les conditions de vie dans la banlieue Parisienne."

¹³⁴ "Tribune Libre: Au foyer clandestine d'Ivry" *Afrique Nouvelle*, Week of August 28 to September 3, 1969, 19940023/20, ANF. "où, en France, existe-t-il un WC pour cent-dix (110) personnes?"

little in the maintenance these larger numbers required. Protesters argued that this kind of overcrowding was symptomatic of managers' larger disregard for their well-being.

Foyer occupants coupled the condemnations of overcrowding with calls for improved material amenities. Residents at the Saint-Denis *foyer* demanded that management provide cheaper phone prices, better showers, and regular changing of bedsheets.¹³⁵ Protestors in Ivry made similar demands as well as calling for more trashcans, showers and sinks.¹³⁶ Inadequate supplies seemed criminally out of step with the "modern" comforts *foyers* were supposed to provide. As one reporter noted, "the '*foyers*' where they live are often veritable 'slums.'¹³⁷

Foyers advocates presented these spaces as solutions to Paris' West African *taudis*. Highlighting these material problems framed them as nothing more than state-sponsored continuations.

Alongside critiques of *foyers*' material inadequacies, protestors attacked structures that left residents victim to individual manager's whims. Protestors in Saint-Denis refused to pay increased rent to "this manager who said to us that if we were not happy, we should go back home. These are racist statements and not those of a manager of African workers."¹³⁸ The fact that the manager of the Ivry *foyer*, Garba Traoré, was West African did not lessen their anger. One month into their strike, the strike committee issued a tract criticizing Traoré for "enriching himself for five years on the back of African workers" regularly cutting off power and electricity or calling in police officers to get residents to pay 40 francs for "such a disgusting spot." These tactics did not deter protestors. "We do not want to live like dogs anymore" the tract exclaimed,

¹³⁵ "Les Incidents au foyer africain de Saint-Denis: L'ouvrier écroué demande sa mise en liberté provisoire," 19940023/20, ANF.

¹³⁶ N'Dongo, *Voyage force*, 80-81.

¹³⁷ "Grève" *Jeune Afrique* July 29-August 8, 1969, 19850087/156, ANF. "Les '*foyers*' où ils vivent été souvent de véritables '*taudis*'"

¹³⁸ "Les Africains de La Région Parisienne Protestent" 19940023/20, ANF. "...ce gérant qui a dit que si nous n'étions pas contents nous devrions rentrer chez nous. Ce sont des paroles de raciste et non de gérant de travailleurs africains, dignes de ce nom."

“we demand a new *foyer* and the workers of the *foyer* will run it.”¹³⁹ This last demand reveals a key element of these protests. Striking tenants did not want to abolish the *foyer* system, nor did they want state resources out of their domestic affairs. Instead, they challenged the hierarchical organization built into state-sponsored administrative plans. Protestors argued that feeling at home did not just mean living together. It meant being in control.

Calls for democratic governance in the *foyers* resonated with the French leftist groups rallying to these strikers’ cause. From the start of the rent strike in Ivry, radical French leftist organizations provided logistical and material support that amplified these strikes.¹⁴⁰ The lawyer Fred Hermantin of the Movement Against Racism, Antisemitism and For Peace (MRAP) argued leftists had to support this new vanguard of the workers’ movement. “Immigrant workers of our era” Hermantin argued, “have replaced the women and children formerly exploited during the nineteenth century or the unorganized workers of the beginning of the century.”¹⁴¹ French leftists and militants saw *foyers africains* as stages for a new phase in France’s historic class struggle.

The cycle of protests these strikers and their allies supported intensified after a tragic start to the new decade. On New Year’s Day 1970, Parisian newspaper readers awoke to learn that Kamara Samba, Kamara Hamady, So Bocar, and Konte Aliou from Senegal as well as Camara Amara from Mauritania had died in the suburb of Aubervilliers. After the landlord cut off their heat due to delayed rent, residents tried to warm up with an indoor fire that eventually caused

¹³⁹ “Note : Le délabrement du local dans lequel sont logés plus de 500 travailleurs africains dans un foyer sis 45 rue Gabriel Péri à Ivry-sur-Seine vient d’être dénoncé dans un tract émanant du ‘Comité de Soutien aux Travailleurs du Foyer’ Main d’œuvre africaine et immigrants – Généralités SCTiP 801155/4, Préfecture de Police, 19940023/20, ANF. “...s’est enrichi pendant cinq ans sur le dos des travailleurs africains...un endroit aussi dégoûtant...Nous ne voulons plus vivre comme des chiens: nous exigeons un nouveau foyer et ce sont tous les travailleurs du foyer qui le dirigeront”

¹⁴⁰ Dedieu and Mbodj Pouye, “The first collective protest of black African migrants in postcolonial France (1960-1975)”: 966-168.

¹⁴¹ Fred Hermantin, “Et Pourtant Ils Sont Des Hommes” July 23, 1969, 19940023/20, ANF. “Les travailleurs immigrés de notre époque ont remplacé les femmes et les enfants jadis exploités au dix-neuvième siècle ou les travailleurs inorganisés de début du siècle.”

their death by asphyxiation.¹⁴² Parisian journalists ran stories about these men's living conditions for weeks. Television crews took viewers into these men's cramped quarters and interviewed the dwelling's manager, himself a Senegalese migrant, who denied responsibility for his tenants' deaths.¹⁴³ *Le Monde* ran a front-page article entitled "The Death of 5 African Workers in Aubervilliers - Who is Responsible?"¹⁴⁴ While similar stories arose in 1962 and 1963, the rent strikes had already drawn popular attention to African efforts to improve their living conditions. Furthermore, the fact that the deaths occurred in an unregulated slum like those first exposed years earlier made it seem like the *foyers africains* had not solved the problem they set out to fix.

These men's funeral provoked dramatic protests across Paris. The ceremony itself attracted almost 1,500 mourners. Representatives from the French, Senegalese, and Mauritanian government, the chief imam of the Paris Mosque, West African workers from other cities, and hundreds of white Parisian sympathizers attended.¹⁴⁵ The popular news show *Panorama* covered this burial, at one point showing a wreath an African student organization placed on the grave reading, "To their comrades, victims of capitalist exploitation."¹⁴⁶ This anti-capitalist ethos characterized many protests that day. One *Le Monde* article said an unnamed "African worker" at the funeral denounced the "assassination of his brothers" and called for a battle against "bosses and capital."¹⁴⁷ After this anonymous speaker a more well-known voice arose, that of Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre denounced the recruitment system that led these men to their graves and told the crowd that these deaths must "awaken public opinion against a certain racism that leads

¹⁴² Glaes, "From private tragedy to *cause célèbre*: Five deaths in Aubervilliers," *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*, 79-108.

¹⁴³ "Mort de 5 Africains à Aubervilliers" ORTF, January 2, 1970, Inatheque. <https://www.ina.fr/video/CAF94002058>.

¹⁴⁴ "Le mort de cinq travailleurs africains à Aubervilliers – Qui est Responsable" *Le Monde*, January 4-5, 1970.

¹⁴⁵ Glaes, *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*, 85-88.

¹⁴⁶ Jean Mailland (dir.) *Un Malien d'Ivry*. ORTF, Série Panorama de Jean Mailland, 1970.

¹⁴⁷ "Des manifestations ont marqué les obsèques des victimes" *Le Monde*, January 13, 1970. "l'assassinat de ses frères...la lutte contre les patrons et le capital."

to indifference.”¹⁴⁸ Meanwhile, activists in central Paris occupied the *Centre National du Patronat Français*, the representative organ of French employers, and spray painted “the proletariat will avenge the 5 dead of Aubervilliers” on the building’s walls.¹⁴⁹ In Ivry, people joined the ongoing rent strike to connect their struggle to the deaths in Aubervilliers, eventually occupying the *foyer*. This led to several high-profile arrests, including the novelist Marguerite Duras and the historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet.¹⁵⁰ The Aubervilliers deaths became a call to arms to condemn the *foyers africains* and the economic system that they supported.

The Ivry strikes and the Aubervilliers funeral fueled a wave of mobilizations at dozens of *foyers africains* throughout the first half of the 1970s. The Ivry strike continued for years. By June 1972 some material conditions had been improved and the manager Garba Traroé had been sentenced to two years imprisonment and forced to pay back rent.¹⁵¹ As this strike ended, similar actions broke out at *foyers* across the Paris-region. As Jean-Philippe Dedieu and Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye show, this wave emerged out of organizational experience and political networks developed during the initial 1969 protests.¹⁵² Some strikers made these links explicit. When police officers tried to evict residents at a *foyer* on rue Quincampoix in Paris, residents demanded the right to stay. “We want to resist this expulsion,” one tract explained, “and we will organize ourselves. We will not wait for there to be a death in the *foyer* Quincampoix like in

¹⁴⁸ “Cinq africains meurent asphyxiés à Paris,” *Afrique Nouvelle*, January 15-21, 1970, Immigrés d’Afrique Noire 1964-1970, 19850087/156, ANF. “...réveiller l’opinion publique contre un certain racisme qui conduit à l’indifférence.”

¹⁴⁹ Maillard, *Un Malien d’Ivry*.

¹⁵⁰ “Des manifestations ont marqué les obsèques des victimes” *Le Monde*, January 13, 1970.

¹⁵¹ N’Dongo, *Voyage Forcé*, 81-82; Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*, 152-153.

¹⁵² Dedieu and Mbodj-Pouye, “The first collective protest of black African migrants in postcolonial France.”

Aubervilliers.”¹⁵³ Three years later, Aubervilliers remained a potent rallying cry for West African migrants demanding the right to run their homes as they saw fit.

These protests forced Parisian authorities to reconsider the collective communities that *foyers* were supposed to create. From the start of these strikes, employers and Parisian authorities threatened strike organizers. At least three leaders of the Saint-Denis rent strike were threatened with deportation, with one escaping only because he was a dual Franco-Senegalese citizen.¹⁵⁴ As these protests grew, the police worried that putting so many West African workers together had helped them form a cohesive community prone to radicalization.¹⁵⁵ In response, they tried to divide residents before strikes gained steam by sending them to new and supposedly better *foyers*. Residents at the *foyer* Quincampoix claimed these tactics explained their own eviction in 1972.¹⁵⁶ An article about another such eviction in the suburb of Pierrefitte claimed that, “the police put the *foyer* in a state of siege.”¹⁵⁷ Authorities justified these often-violent evictions by claiming to satisfy protestors’ demands for material improvements in new residences. Protestors saw these efforts as less about meeting their demands than breaking up the networks that sustained these movements. Some Parisian authorities eventually argued that West African migrants should be mixed in with migrants of different linguistic, regional, or racial backgrounds to make it harder to organize. While some *foyers* did begin combining West Africans and other migrant laborers, most migrants remained in overwhelmingly West Africans *foyers* throughout

¹⁵³ N’Dongo, *Voyage Forcé*, “Tract: situation rue Quincampoix, Paris IVE”: 92. “Nous voulons résister à cette expulsion. Et nous nous organisons. Nous n’attendrons pas qu’il y aient des morts au foyer Quincampoix comme à Aubervilliers.”

¹⁵⁴ N’Dongo, *Voyage Forcé*, “Affaire Boubacar-Bathily”, 84-85.

¹⁵⁵ Glaes, *African Political Activism in Postcolonial Paris*, 128-131.

¹⁵⁶ N’Dongo, *Voyage Forcé*: “Tract: situation rue Quincampoix, Paris IVE”, 91-92

¹⁵⁷ “Violence Policières au foyer africain de Pierrefitte,” *L’Humanité*, July 24, 1971, Foyer des Travailleurs Africains de Pierrefitte, 158 W 405, APP. “le foyer en état de siège.”

the 1970s.¹⁵⁸ Regardless, calls for dispersing West Africans reflected how these protests forced French officials to reexamine just what kind of communities these men should inhabit.

Many French leftists who joined these struggles also proposed alternative visions of what kind of community these men needed. However, French sympathizers' role in these protests should not be overstated. As Abdoulaye Gueye argues, these strikes were organized by militant residents who saw white counterparts as allies, not teachers.¹⁵⁹ While there were tensions in these coalitions, residents and French supporters worked together to amplify protestors' demands. Sometimes this came through research that challenged the official consensus on what *foyers* needed. In 1973, the leftist research group *Groupe d'Information et de Soutien des Immigrés* wrote a study declaring "the worker does not feel at home in a Foyer."¹⁶⁰ They condemned *foyers* for lacking communal spaces, adequate beds, and connection to residents' actual desires, essential to what they called "the normal function of housing."¹⁶¹ This report challenged the idea that communal life under "traditional" hierarchies would be enough to turn *foyers* into homes.

Other radical groups tried to use protest actions to create new kinds of solidarity within and beyond *foyer* walls. In 1972, hoping to rally allies to their cause, the steering committee for a strike at a *foyer* in the suburb of Drancy organized an "open door day," inviting people from across Paris to come to the *foyer* and support their struggle. Among the many visitors were members of *Révolution Afrique*, a radical organization of French and West African leftists created in 1970 who filmed this event.¹⁶² When recalling this film years later, one of the group's founders Gilles de Staal said "it was not 'for TV' but to inform and spread what was tried in

¹⁵⁸ Glaes, "Policing the Postcolonial Order" *African Political Activism in Postcolonial France*, 109-139.

¹⁵⁹ Gueye, "The Colony Strikes Back."

¹⁶⁰ "Rapports/études" *Étude du GISTI sur les Foyers Pour Travailleurs Migrants*, 14, 1973, F/DELTA/2149/2255/BIS, La Contemporaine. "Le travailleur ne se sent pas chez lui dans un Foyer" [emphasis in original]

¹⁶¹ Ibid. "..la fonction normale d'un logement" [emphasis in original]

¹⁶² Mbodj Pouye and Dedieu, "The Fabric of Transnational Political Activism."

these struggles. So, we would project sequences of clips in this or that *foyer*... Cinema was a living critical instrument.”¹⁶³ This recording did not seek to entertain, but to inspire. “To break the efforts at isolation and division tried by the PCF municipality against the repressive efforts of the colonialist police, against employer’s intransigence” the narrator explained at the film’s opening, tenants “organized an open-door day with a meeting and celebration, a sign of solidarity alongside other workers of the suburbs.”¹⁶⁴ The film showed speeches by Malian, Senegalese, Algerian, and French activists or workers about rent strikes and anti-colonial protests across the capital. The *foyer*’s residents then demanded the “right to sleep” and called for new beds and better heating. Radical networks and material demands came together in this event, hoping to improve *foyers* by opposing the isolation and hierarchy built into their administration.

Transcending isolation and divisions was not just an organizing tactic. Solitude was a key reason many residents said *foyers* did not feel like home. Many migrants chafed at restrictions on who could enter the *foyers*. The Senegalese migrant Oumar Dia called the suburban residence he lived in during 1974 a “prison foyer.” With a total ban on visitors in your room, residents could only invite relatives for a few hours in the shared television room.¹⁶⁵ When asked years later why he never lived in a *foyer*, Djiby Sy cited this administrative control. He recalled being told to remain in the building’s lobby when visiting a friend in a *foyer*. “My conscience would not let me live in conditions like that,” he explained, “a guard who is there, who says to you when you

¹⁶³ Gilles de Staal, “*Mamadou m’a dit*”: les luttes des *foyers*, “*Révolution Afrique*”, *Africa fête : entretiens avec Patricia Tang, après la disparition de Mamadou Konté, São Paulo, 13-18 juillet 2007* (Paris: Éd. Syllepsis, 2008), 131. “Ce n’était pas ‘pour la télé’, mais pour faire connaître et répandre ce qui s’expérimentait dans les luttes. Il arrivait alors qu’on projette des séquences de bouts montés, dans tel ou tel foyer...Le cinéma était un instrument critique vivant.”

¹⁶⁴ *Révolution Afrique, Porte Ouverte à Drancy, 1972, ADSSD.*

¹⁶⁵ Dia: *Yakaré* : 157, “foyer prison.”

come with a friend, ‘where are you going?’”¹⁶⁶ Sy, Dia and many others wanted to welcome friends and family. Communal life did not mean only being with your fellow residents.

These aspirations for connections reflected many residents’ broader rejection of official efforts to turn *foyers* into culturally sealed-off spaces. This was particularly true among many of the younger migrants that worried so many French and West African authorities. Many of these young men had domestic aspirations informed by goods that created new transnational youth cultures. Coca cola, glossy magazines, and *yé-yé* music informed novel types of youthful personal and political expression across Western Europe.¹⁶⁷ As the previous chapter explained, similar visions of postwar prosperity flowed throughout West Africa, making access to these objects and lifestyles a key motivator for migration in the first place. Migrants tried to bring these objects into their new abodes, if only through images. Many photographs of *foyers africains* showed cut outs of magazines that men plastered above their beds. The 1970 documentary *Un Malien d’Ivry* zoomed in on an “athletic” smiling boy in an advertisement placed on the wall.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, a picture Monique Hervo took at the *Foyer rue de Charonne* showed several magazine clippings above one residents’ bed, including an image of the world champion Muhammad Ali and an advertisement for Dakar (Fig. 3). It is unclear what men thought as they slept beneath these images. Whatever it was, these clippings personalized *foyers* by connecting bedrooms to visions of masculinity marketed at a new generation of consumers.

Many men tried to bring the lifestyles, and the new forms of consumption that promoted them, into their *foyers*. Official reports described the popularity of movies shown in common

¹⁶⁶ Génériques, Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier Djiby Sy, “Ma conscience ne me permet pas de vivre dans des conditions comme ça, un gardien qui est là qui vous dit vous venez avec un ami et qui vous dit ‘vous allez où ?’”

¹⁶⁷ Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried, “Youth, Consumption, and Politics in the Age of Radical Change” *Between Marx and Coca-Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960-1980*, (eds.) Axel Schildt and Detlef Siegfried --, et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 1-35.

¹⁶⁸ Maillard, *Un Malien d’Ivry*.



Figure 6. 3: Photograph of a bunk bed in the *Foyer rue de Charonne* taken by Monique Hervo, shows magazine clippings above top bed including cutouts of several female models, a picture of Muhammad Ali, and an article about Dakar. LC_HER_15N_B13, Collection La contemporaine.

areas, with as many as many as 100 residents coming to watch new adventure movies or creating resident-run movie clubs.¹⁶⁹ Interest in new kinds of entertainment did not just lead men to watch films in common areas or decorate their walls with advertisements. Gilles de Stall recalled the passion many of his friends living in *foyers* had for leaving their rooms to watch the newest action movies, from Bruce Lee's high-flying films to Italian spaghetti westerns.¹⁷⁰ These particular movies' popularity amongst these young men reflected the global power of postwar Western movies' depictions of masculine bravado.¹⁷¹ These men did not seem to want the

¹⁶⁹, "Étude sur l'Implantation de la Main d'Œuvre Originare de l'Afrique Noire `a Paris et dans sa couronne" Paris, Préfecture de Paris, Inspection Générale, Service d'Études et de Recherches, 1969, 62, 19910712/37, ANF.

¹⁷⁰ Staal, *Mamadou m'a dit*, 133.

¹⁷¹ Ch. Didier Gondola. *Tropical Cowboys: Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity in Kinshasa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

facsimile villages that officials said they needed. They pursued the wares and amusements transforming how young people in France and beyond related to themselves and their elders.

If trips to the movies gave *foyer* residents new male role models, then life within these *foyers* gave them new ideas about how age-grades organized domestic life. Stall noted that men between sixteen and twenty-five, “the boldest ones” as he called them, often constituted the majority in many *foyers*. He felt these individuals had “a bit less” respect “for these ‘old and ancient’ ones.”¹⁷² While Stall’s framing reflected a common faith among 68ers in the radical power of youth, many young residents did challenge established hierarchies, if not always in outright rebellious manners. As mentioned earlier, pre-existing caste divisions often combined with age to structure the division of labor within migrant residences. As with so many other parts of life in the *foyers*, these distinctions inspired conflicts. Between 1973 and 1974, the sociologist Michel Samuel interviewed three *foyer* residents, two from Mali and a third from Senegal. At one point, Samuel asked who cooked in their *foyers*. All these interviewees said that descendants of enslaved people did the cooking at first, but this changed over time. “Under the double effect of the repeated complaints of young slaves and the awakening consciousness of the young nobles,” one interviewee explained, “the system modified itself and it is all the youth, without distinction of their social origin, who did the cooking.”¹⁷³ Living in these *foyers* meant constantly altering expectations and relations. Residents adapted castes that officials believed *foyers* would stably reproduce. Feeling at home did not always mean recreating “traditional” structures.

Residents’ clear willingness to change *foyers* social structures explains why protestors did not target the *foyer* system as a whole, but rather its management. “Try to understand us” one

¹⁷² Staal, *Mamadou m’a dit*, 20.

¹⁷³ Samuel, *Le Proletariat Africain Noir En France*, 120. “Sous le double effet des plaintes répétées des jeunes esclaves et de la prise de conscience des jeunes nobles, le système se modifia, et c’est tous les jeunes, sans distinction de leur origines sociale qui firent la cuisine.”

foyer resident wrote, “nothing is better for us than life in a *foyer* where we live as a family, so if we are ready to break up this family, it is because something is truly not going well.”¹⁷⁴ Many residents appreciated the benefits of collective living but chafed at domineering and unresponsive management. After saying that Soundiata had regularly raised rent without improving conditions, the strikers at the *foyer Losserand* disseminated a public tract explaining that the best solution would not be dispersing them to “modern” *foyers* across Paris, as the city government planned. “Despite these inhuman housing conditions, despite the intense exploitation of Soundiata,” the protestors said they wanted to live together. “In place of the hazards of dispersion that the police want to impose on us by expulsion,” they declared, “we prefer the links of friendship that unites us, and the solidarity that we maintain amongst us in the *foyer*.”¹⁷⁵ These men knew better than anyone that these *foyers* left much to be desired. Yet they did not see destruction as the solution. They wanted to end the lack of accountability that produced *foyers*’ often dire conditions. They agreed with *foyer* planners that they needed to live collectively. But this need did not emerge simply from pre-existing attachment to village life. Rather, it arose as men lived and struggled together to have their right to comfort recognized.

This vision of collective management inspired many migrant groups to see these social bonds as the best way to fix *foyers*. In a 1970 interview, Sally N’Dongo described a new *foyer* in the suburb of Clichy where African residents, “feel at ease and at home,” with a council composed of members named by “the different communities” as well as a director nominated by

¹⁷⁴ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le livre des travailleurs africains*, 32. “Essayez de nous comprendre car rien n’est meilleur pour nous que la vie d’un foyer où nous vivons en famille, donc si nous sommes prêts à disloquer cette famille, c’est que vraiment ça ne va pas.”

¹⁷⁵ “La Lutte des 271 Travailleurs du Foyer Losserand,” ARC 3019 (12), IHTP. “Mais malgré ces conditions inhumaines d’hébergement, malgré cette exploitation intense de Soundiata...Aux aléas de la dispersion que la police veut nous imposer par l’expulsion, nous préférons les liens d’amitié qui nous lient à vous, et la solidarité que nous entretenons entre nous dans ce foyer.”

the UGTSF and voted upon by “the community.”¹⁷⁶ He felt that this arrangement allowed domestic issues or material problems to be discussed and handled by the people experiencing them firsthand. N’Dongo said residents should determine how they lived in France, which might even mean abandoning collective living. One UGTSF publication from 1970 said that residential autonomy meant questioning the longstanding assumption “that Africans needed a communal lodging.” While some men wanted to live together, others might want to be on their own. “The realities and desires are more complex than we think” this piece explained. “If you want to finally really help African workers, you have to work with them.”¹⁷⁷ Many West African migrants did want to live together, but this could not be assumed. Migrants demanded the right to get help making homes that responded to their own needs and desires.

These protests and rent strikes met with various reactions. The months-long protest at Drancy successfully prevented the dissolution of the *foyer* and the dispersal of its residents.¹⁷⁸ Other strikes successfully led management companies to stabilize rent prices and invest in more regular maintenance.¹⁷⁹ Some committees that organized the strikes also became official parts of *foyer* management.¹⁸⁰ At the *foyer Losserand*, however, residents did not prevent their forceful eviction. Despite this loss, protesters continued to refer to their lost shared home, signing public calls for legal and material compensation as “the evicted workers of Foyer Losserand.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ “C’est l’administration qui est clandestine” *Africasia*, No. 8, February 2-15, 1970, reprinted in Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le livre des travailleurs africains en France*, 73-81; “se sentaient très à l’aise et chez eux...par les différentes communautés ...la communauté”

¹⁷⁷ Union Générale des travailleurs sénégalais en France, *Le livre des travailleurs africains en France*, 80. “...qu’il fallait aux Africains un habitat communautaire...les réalités et les désirs sont plus complexes qu’on ne le croit. Si l’on veut enfin vraiment aider les travailleurs africains, il faut y travailler avec eux.”

¹⁷⁸ Gueye, “The Colony Strikes Back”: 228-231.

¹⁷⁹ Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic*, 72-74.

¹⁸⁰ Génériques, Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier.

¹⁸¹ Letter to the Press, Paris February, 1974, ARC 3019 (12), IHTP. “Les travailleurs expulsés du 214, rue Raymond Losserand.”

Whether they failed or succeeded, these protests made West Africans' ability to control their own domestic lives one of their most visible political demands in Paris. Migrants' belief that the French government had to respect their domestic demands survived long after the protests of the 1970s ended.¹⁸² These claims and contestations emerged out of sleeping, cooking, and resisting evictions together. These new solidarities were not articulated in the name of village authorities, citizenship, or the services to France so often used by West Africans requesting assistance in the colonial era. Rather, these men grounded their political demands in the everyday ways they dwelt. They turned assistance programs meant to bolster postcolonial "cooperation" into launching pads for their own visions of a radical domestic democracy.

Conclusion

The world these protests tried to create increasingly ran up against economic and political transformations. As the conclusion explains, a broader turn away from cooperation in the mid-1970s led French authorities to see immigrants as drains on the national economy rather than agents of France's "durable empire." Like other Western European states limiting migration, President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing ended free circulation between France and its former colonies in 1974. These reforms ended West Africans' ambiguous political status. They became foreigners. These changes did not destroy the *foyers africains*, but along with other demographic changes, these policies diminished their centrality to West African political struggles in France. However, the *foyers africains* remain parts of Paris' changing postimperial landscape.

The debates about what roommates, appliances, or management structures West African workers in Paris needed demonstrated how people tried to dictate the impacts of decolonization through everyday acts. People looked at fetid basements or *foyer* protests to reject or recycle the

¹⁸² Mbodj-Pouye, "Fixed Abodes."

political ideologies and relations that had built the politics of dwelling over decades. Rather than focusing on what decolonization was, the postwar potency of the politics of dwelling led people to ask what this rupture did. Senegalese union leaders and French sociologists assessed the impact of decolonization by determining how much West Africans could feel socially connected and physically comfortable in Paris after the empire fell. Meanwhile, migrants pursued personal or collective autonomy within the *foyers* that authorities hope would temporarily and selectively integrate these men into Paris' postwar economy. As N'Dongo put it, his compatriots strove to “feel at home and at ease” in a changing world. Whether that feeling arose out of material improvements, social arrangements, or administrative autonomy fueled heated debates. But these debates themselves revealed how the politics of dwelling informed how people built the political and social order that emerged out of France's West African Empire.

Conclusion: The Rise and Fall of the Politics of Dwelling

“All the battles we waged, all the mobilizations we did,” Djiby Sy recalled, “it was in the *foyers*.”¹ Sy evoked these conflicts in 2014 during an interview organized by the organization *Génériques* as part of a series preserving the memory of immigration in France. Like thousands of other young men from the Senegal River Valley, Sy came to France in the 1960s. Alongside Sally N’Dongo he helped start the UGTSF and later participated in the strikes that swept through the *foyers africains*. However, the “battles” that Sy described above were not the ones discussed in the previous chapter. Sy here evoked the SONACOTRA strikes waged between 1975 and 1980. SONACOTRA (*Société Nationale de Construction de logements pour les Travailleurs*) was a government agency made during the Algerian War to house single male Algerian migrant workers. By the 1970s, it had become one of the largest migrant housing agencies in France and ran massive *foyers* across the country.² While theoretically open to all migrants, most of its occupants were Maghrebi. That difference did not stop Sy from joining his North African comrades as they fought for the same kind of dignity and autonomy men demanded in the *foyers africains*. “It was black Africans and *Maghrébins* hand in hand” Sy explained, “throughout the struggle.”³ Sy linked the *foyers africains* and SONACOTRA strikes of the 1970s. The very fact that he was interviewed about these protests decades later reflects the *foyers* struggles’ iconic role in the annals of French immigration history. The postcolonial battle for the politics of dwelling seemed to live on.

¹ Génériques, “Histoire et mémoires de l’immigration: mobilisation et lutes pour l’égalité, 1968-1988” Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier, August 26, 2014 “Toutes les batailles qu’on a menées, toutes les mobilisations qui nous avons fait, c’est dans les foyers.”

² Amelia Lyons, *The Civilizing Mission in the Metropole: Algerian Families and the French Welfare State During Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press: 2013); Marc Bernadot, *Loger les immigrés. La Sonacotra 1956-2006* (Vulaines sur Seine, Éditions du Croquant, 2008).

³ Génériques, Interview with Djiby Sy by Tifenn Gasnier. “c’est les africains noirs et les Maghrébins mains dans les mains, toute la bataille.” The term *Maghrébin* refers to people of North African descent.

However, the political terrain had changed considerably in the little time that separated the *foyers africains* and SONACOTRA strikes. By the mid-1970s, the politics of dwelling's postwar power waned in both Senegal and France. As Sy joined other migrant workers to defend their right to comfort, the popular and political connection in France between migration, postcolonial cooperation, and economic growth came into doubt. In Senegal, funding for housing projects like SICAP eroded as the French and Senegalese governments changed their relationship to one another and to the everyday lives of Senegal's citizens. These simultaneous shifts reflected a larger breakup of the framework undergirding the politics of dwelling's postwar flourishing. As the last two chapters explained, people in France and Senegal used domestic assistance programs or ideologies forged during the colonial era to promote their own visions of decolonization. This persistence fits into scholarly arguments that the end of empire was an ongoing process rather than an event, a series of legal, political, economic and cultural changes to the relations between France and its former colonies.⁴ I argue that the politics of dwelling's decline in the mid-1970s marked a significant moment in that process, a new rupture between the French government and its former colonial subjects' everyday lives.

Understanding this decline demands a brief return to the spaces studied in the previous two chapters, the *foyers africains* and SICAP houses. Juxtaposing the stories of these dwellings after 1974 reveals how political, demographic, and economic transformations in the mid-1970s eroded domestic assistance's centrality to West Africans' relationship with the states that

⁴ Félix F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2015); Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Africa History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 167-196; Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

emerged out of the French empire. Over a decade after independence, the colonial programs and expectations that had fueled the politics of dwelling for decades finally began to break.

Cooperation's Collapse

By 1974, the links between France and Senegal fundamentally shifted as attitudes about the cooperation paradigm that had preserved imperial policies and expectations changed. The economic and migratory ties that had been seen as keys to preserving a privileged postcolonial relationship in the 1960s did not end. Rather, French leaders increasingly questioned the utility of facilitating migration from its former colonies at the same that they scaled back funding for domestic assistance programs in Senegal like SICAP. These shifts occurred within distinct political contexts and amongst different actors. However, their simultaneous occurrence reveals a broader transformation in France and Senegal's postcolonial relations. Changes to the circulation of both people and capital between France and its former West African colonies eroded the central role dwellings had come to play in structuring the relations between West Africans and the regimes that emerged out of France's empire.

In the fall of 1974, the French government ended the policy of free circulation between France and its former colonies, erasing the ambiguous status that had kept men like men like Sy in between familiar and foreign. While many observers attributed this major policy shift to the economic downturn caused by the 1973-74 oil crises Sylvain Laurens paints a more nuanced picture that focuses on the changing place of the empire and its afterlives in French politics.⁵ While France's economic growth did slow in the early 1970s, the major downturns came after this immigration ban, not before. Laurens argues that the abolition of free circulation largely resulted from the arrival of a new cadre of political elites after President Valéry Giscard

⁵ Sylvain Laurens, "'1974' et la fermeture des frontières: Analyse critique d'une décision érigée en *turning point*," *Politix* 21, no. 82 (2008): 69-94.

d'Estaing's election in 1973. These younger politicians were less attached to the recent colonial past, and its lingering policies, than their predecessors. Furthermore, d'Estaing's government promoted market-oriented reforms that sought to integrate France's economy more with the European Economic Community than its former colonies. In his own analysis of this legislation, Frederick Cooper builds on Laurens work to identify a categorical shift in French postimperial politics. In the 1960s, West African migrants' ambiguous status was a remnant of France's postwar experiments with layered imperial citizenship, a position that made these men ideal agents of postcolonial cooperation. Cooper argues that the end of free circulation in 1974 represented a final rejection of the Franco-African experiment with overlapping national belongings that began in 1945.⁶ Men like Sy stopped being familiar foreigners and became immigrants. The "durable empire" that one French journalist invoked to justify helping Senegalese workers find a healthy home in the 1960s seemed to have finally disappeared.

Rather than ending West African migration to France, this policy changed what this migration looked like as well as West African migrants' legal positions. The end of free circulation in 1974, as well as subsequent laws making it easier to deport migrants, did little to stop West Africans from coming to France. While about 93,000 people from sub-Saharan Africa lived in France in 1975, that number rose to over 270,000 by 1982. It continued to rise as the twentieth century came to a close.⁷ Even if these laws did not end migration, they did force migrants to navigate a much more perilous landscape. Men from France's former West African colonies had to get work visas and contracts to remain in France, a difficult task for unskilled laborers in France's increasingly tight labor market. Unable to meet these requirements but

⁶ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 441-443.

⁷ Cris Beauchemin, "Profils démographiques des personnes d'origine subsaharienne en France: Étude pour la Chaire" *Diasporas Africaines*, 2020: 5.

unwilling to return to communities with few prospects for social or economic advancement, many men who arrived before 1974 became undocumented or “clandestine” immigrants.⁸ Criminalization made it easier to deport migrants engaged in the kinds of protests seen in the *foyers africains* or the SONACOTRA strikes. These strikes’ persistence despite this pressure reveals how *foyers* remained potent sites for migrant political action. However, growing criminalization and the changing demographics of Paris’ West African population led *foyers africains* to lose their centrality to West African domestic and political life in postimperial Paris.

If policy changes undermined the legal position of West Africans that had informed the *foyer africains* protests, the increasing number of women and children diminished these spaces’ primacy to West African domestic life in France. As the previous chapter explained, the idea of return was not just a projection of French cooperation advocates, but also a real ambition for many young migrants. Before 1974, as Sy explained in his interview, men periodically returned to their families in Mali, Mauritania, or Senegal.⁹ The post-74 crackdowns made these return voyages much riskier as many men feared they would not be able to get back into France. At the same time, famine and growing economic crises across the Western Sahel in the early 1970s pushed people to migrate within and beyond the region.¹⁰ As a result, many West African men brought their wives and children to France to settle permanently. *Foyers* and the memory of the protests men like Sy carried with them continue to inform many West Africans’ relationship to local or national administrations.¹¹ However, the growing “familialization” or “feminization” of

⁸ Catherine Quiminal and Timera Mahamet, “1974-2002, les mutations de l’immigration ouest-africaine.” *Hommes et Migrations*, no. 1239, Numéro thématique: Africains, citoyens d’ici et de là-bas (Septembre-octobre 2002): 20-22

⁹ Ibid: 23

¹⁰ For more on this famine and its impact on daily life and migration in the Western Sahel see Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Vincent Bonnacase, “Retour sur la famine au Sahel du début des années 1970: la construction d’un savoir de crise,” *Politique africaine* 119, no. 3, 2010: 23-42.

¹¹ Aïssatou Mbodj-Pouye, “Fixed Abodes: Urban Emplacement, Bureaucratic Requirements, and the Politics of Belonging among West African Migrants in Paris” *American Ethnologist* 43, No. 2 (2016): 295-310.

migration lessened *foyers*' centrality to West Africans' everyday lives in France, since they continued to only house single men. West African family members found new sites to ground their political relationships, ranging mosques and schools to union offices or local social service centers.¹² West African women's growing presence also made it seem less necessary for the French government to take care of single West African men, a driving motive for the politics of dwelling since World War I. This gendered shift fit into a pattern across Western Europe whereby the burdens of care for migrants increasingly went from the state to migrants themselves, or their female relatives.¹³ Changes from above and below diminished domestic well-being's centrality to West Africans' relationship with France's postimperial government.

As new migratory dynamics undermined the institutions and expectations behind the *foyers africains* and the protests they inspired, similar erosions occurred in Senegal as public housing programs entered a new age of austerity. As Chapter Five explains, France continued to provide the majority of funding for public housing programs like SICAP after 1960. However, funds from France's Overseas Development Bank dried up by the early 1970s. In 1973, disputes over French preferences for rental units and Senegalese officials' desires to keep making rent-to-buy houses led France to stop funding housing projects in Senegal, depriving SICAP of the low-interest loans it had relied upon.¹⁴ The Senegalese government struggled to get sufficient capital to finance new construction, increasingly turning to private banks and international agencies like the World Bank. This search for new financing coincided with a growing emphasis among many Senegalese political elites on making global technocratic knowledge instead of locally grounded

¹² Mahamet Timera and Julie Garnier, "Les Africains en France: Vieillesse et transformation d'une migration" *Hommes & Migration*, 1286-1297 (2010): 24-35.

¹³ Lauren Stokes, *Fear of the Family: Guest Workers and Family Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Jordanna Bailkin, *Unsettled: Refugee Camps and the Making of Multicultural Britain*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁴ Youssouph Sané, "La politique de l'habitat au Sénégal: une mutation permanente," *Les Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, 263, Juillet-Septembre 2013 : 323-324.

social programs the key to development.¹⁵ While France remained overrepresented, experts from across Europe and North America increasingly dictated what mass housing looked like in Senegal. As Youssouph Sané argues, by the 1980s these reforms greatly diminished the government's role in Dakar's increasingly liberalized housing market.¹⁶ Market-oriented reforms did little to provide housing except to well-off urbanites as property became an increasingly scarce commodity.¹⁷ The structural biases against Dakar's poorest residents that characterized SICAP thus survived. However, this continuity masked a break with the ideology that had undergirded urban housing since the end of the war. People increasingly saw the government as incapable of transforming Dakar's landscape or population through housing. Senghor's dream of using houses to create a new negro-African civilization seemed to dim.

People dwelling in SICAP homes during those years recalled these structural changes as gradual erosions to their suburban paradise. The SICAP residents my research assistant and I spoke with consistently said the areas around their homes had gone downhill since their youth. Awa Faté cited the deterioration of educational quality as key to her childhood neighborhood's decline.¹⁸ Many respondents shared Faté's focus on a decline in educational quality. Idris N'Diaye longed for the days when teachers in SICAP's Liberté II neighborhood were like "second fathers."¹⁹ Others paired these social changes with alterations to SICAP's very landscape. While SICAP strictly limited any changes to its buildings in its first decades, N'Diaye said that this ban ended after he and other residents petitioned to buy their homes outright. This

¹⁵ Mamadou Diouf, "Senegalese Development: From Mass Mobilization to Technocratic Elitism," *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, trans. Molly Roth and Frederick Cooper, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 291-319

¹⁶ Sané, "La politique de l'habitat au Sénégal": 325.

¹⁷ Ibid. 318

¹⁸ Interview with Alain and Awa Faté, February 25, 2022. Dakar, Senegal.

¹⁹ Interview with Idris N'Diaye, Dakar, Senegal, February 3, 2022. "deuxième père."

shift launched a wave of home purchases, which likely gave SICAP much needed capital while diminishing the number of buildings it had to maintain. Residents altered their homes, building multistory structures that towered over the single-family abodes that filled the streets Senghor showed off to visiting diplomats. Mamadou N’Diaye saw positives and negatives in these architectural changes. Larger houses allowed more people to live in these neighborhoods. However, he felt this growth fostered a lamentable social fracturing. “At the time, it was like a family” he said of his youth. As a child he could walk into any house in the neighborhood. “Now it’s completely different,” he said, “I no longer feel that solidarity”²⁰ N’Diaye’s comments reflect how SICAP neighborhoods’ social profile changed, as family connections rather than access to wages increasingly dictated who could live in these homes. Despite these problems, people did not frame the last few decades as one of total collapse and decline. Residents said SICAP neighborhoods remained relatively calm and had far more durable sidewalks and roads compared to Dakar’s newer neighborhoods. Babacar Dia fondly recalled the SICAP house he grew up in during the 1980s, even tracing out a blueprint of his childhood home in the sand as we strolled together along a beach.²¹ However, these praises came with feelings of loss. Residents seemed to mourn their neighborhoods’ lost charms and eroded prestige.

The most consistently mentioned deterioration was the disappearance of SICAP’s maintenance and sanitation services. Almost every interviewee we spoke with bemoaned the loss of SICAP workers who cleaned streets, took out trash, and cared for the neighborhoods’ bountiful bougainvillea bushes. Mamadou N’Diaye said that in the 1980s the city took over the maintenance of SICAP neighborhoods, which “facilitated the degradation” of his beloved

²⁰ Interview with Mamadou N’Diaye, Dakar, Senegal, February 5, 2022. “À l’époque, c’était comme une famille...maintenant c’est autre chose, je ne sens plus cette solidarité”

²¹ Interview with Babacar Dia, Dakar, Senegal, February 2, 2022.

home.²² This merger, likely motivated by SICAP's declining budgets after 1973, happened as Dakar's municipal services faced their own crises. Massive cuts to municipal services, tied to austerity measures imposed by the World Bank, fostered strikes by trash collectors in the late 1980s. Despite widespread support, these strikes could not stop the rapid defunding of municipal services. Informal or privatized sanitation services have largely replaced state programs, structuring how dwellers and officials manage Dakar's neoliberal landscape.²³ Ibrahima Fall saw first-hand how this austerity regime impacted SICAP. Fall grew up in a SICAP house and now works for SICAP, giving him an insider view of SICAP's maintenance services' decline. He connected SICAP's incapacity to keep streets or houses clean to a regime increasingly unable or unwilling to help its citizens live comfortably. While SICAP was still a public agency, he said massive reduction of state investment had "obliged [it] to work like those on the private market" without the capital needed to build on any considerable scale or maintain what they constructed.²⁴ For Fall, only a return of the state could restore SICAP's once-beloved services. "One needs the hand of the state," he told me, "without the state, we cannot do anything."²⁵ Fall called forth a recent past when, at least in his eyes, the link between governmental authority and domestic well-being helped preserve a clean suburban world on Dakar's periphery.

There are many more parts of these post-1974 histories of SICAP and the *foyers africains* that transcend the politics of dwelling that I have examined. Fully understanding the causes and impacts of the growing presence of West African families in Paris and the declining centrality of the *foyers africains* would demand investigating changes to the French welfare state,

²² Ibid. "facilité la dégradation"

²³ Rosalind Fredericks, *Garbage Citizenship : Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2018).

²⁴ Interview with Ibrahima Fall, Dakar, Senegal, February 14, 2022, "Obligé de travailleur comme des gens dans la privée"

²⁵ Ibid. "On a vraiment besoin de la main de l'état. Sans l'état on ne peut rien faire."

contractions of France's labor market after the postwar economic boom, and the growing demonization of immigrants and their families in French politics.²⁶ On the Senegalese side, comprehending growing dissatisfactions with government housing programs demands an analysis of the painful liberalization of Senegal's economy under structural adjustment programs, the gradual erosion of governmental authority across the Western Sahel since the early 1970s, and the central role public spaces have played in Senegalese politics since the 1980s.²⁷ These stories overlap and diverge, reflecting global and local changes to notions of what governments can and should do for their citizens over the past fifty years. However, placing these dwellings' post-1974 fate together reveals how these myriad shifts weakened the framework linking domestic well-being to West African political engagement that emerged over decades.

The rupture with this colonial form of domestic politics makes 1974 a useful marker for a new phase in the history of decolonization. As the capacities or centrality of SICAP and the *foyers africains* declined, so too did the colonial ideologies and connections that inspired their creation. By cutting off financial assistance to SICAP in 1973 and ending free circulation in 1974, French politicians rejected the political framework that had linked the power of France's government to certain West Africans' domestic well-being. At the same time, Senegalese authorities faced new constraints on their ability to promote the transformative social reforms

²⁶ Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Jean-Philippe Dedieu, *La Parole Immigrée: Les migrants africains dans l'espace public en France, (1960-19965)*, (Paris: Klincksiek, 2012); Charles Tshimanga, Ch. Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom (eds.), *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Timothy Smith, *France in Crisis: Welfare, Inequality, and Globalization since 1980* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism, and Citizenship in Modern France* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992); Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London; New York: Verso, 1991).

²⁷ Fredericks, *Garbage Citizenship*; Caroline Melly, *Bottleneck: Moving, Building, and Belonging in an African City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017); Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel*; Mamadou Diouf and Rosalind Fredericks (eds.), *Les Arts de la citoyenneté au Sénégal* (Paris: Éditions Karthala: 2013); Mamadou Diouf, "Fresques murales et écriture de l'histoire. Le Set-Setal à Dakar", *Politique Africaine* 46, (1992): 41-57; Momar Coumba Diop and Mamadou Diouf, *Le Sénégal sous Abdou Diouf* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1990).

that inspired them to turning colonial-era housing plans into postcolonial promises. However, people still carried expectations that their government should help them find a comfortable place to call home. One can see these demands when people like Ibrahima Fall call for the Senegalese state to invest in SICAP. Echoes of the past also arise in racist polemics in France that turn suburban *banlieues* into symbols of an immigrant “problem.” In response, *banlieue* residents turn their often vilified homes into stages and symbols for their struggles for political or economic inclusion. Even as government resources have retreated from the domestic domain, remnants of an entangled colonial and postcolonial past remain in French and Senegalese landscapes. These remnants inform new forms of political engagement and exclusion, raising questions about what it means to feel at home in the worlds that imperialism made.



Examining the politics of dwelling’s decline sheds light on its rise as a framework for political inclusion predicated on finding the means to feel at home. This structure arose as disparate West Africans in France and Senegal predicated their willingness to support the French government on its willingness to support them in return. These linkages emerged in dialogue with new ideas about what governments should do, as two massively destructive and transformative World Wars fostered growing support for welfare policies. Ideas and practices about domestic politics also emerged as West Africans and their French interlocutors rethought what it meant to build, decorate, or inhabit a home. Lucie Cousturier’s daily dinners with *tirailleurs* in Fréjus made the search for a “human home” a central metaphor about imperial race relations. At the same time in Saint-Louis, angry *Guet-N’dariens* filled petitions and protests in order to get the tools they needed to hold on to the lives they made at sea. Decades later, young Senegalese and Malian men in Paris’ *foyers africains* clamored for the right to turn common

areas into cinemas where they could watch new action movies and discover the latest moves. By tracing the historic rise of the politics of dwelling in France and Senegal during the twentieth century I have not tried to fully explain how these desires arose. Instead, I have examined the particular institutions and promises that structured how people politicized these aspirations.

I have traced an arc from the trenches of World War I to the *foyer* rent strikes of the 1970s to reveal how French official plans and West Africans ambitions came together in particular ways to make the personal political across the twentieth century. The politics of dwelling constituted both a discursive framework and a field of action that structured expectations about what French government resources could do for West Africans trying to navigate lives transformed by urbanization, war, migration, and promises from refrigerator advertisements. These expectations had no uniformity, nor did the spaces these ideas helped create. Instead, the rising power of the politics of dwelling created institutions like SICAP and buildings like the *foyers africains* that French and West African people alike adapted to pursue their personal or political ambitions. It is this very flexibility that makes the politics of dwelling such an important framework for those trying to understand the past of French imperial politics and its continuing postimperial futures. People used the ideologies and dwellings this framework inspired for various ends, often in competing ways. Yet the fact that so many people turned to homemaking to structure political projects within the empire and its successor states reveals that creating homes became central to the relationships between government officials and those they governed. The politics of dwelling made the ability to feel at home in all its social, financial, physical and psychic senses key to determining where people belonged in changing political terrains. Even more so, it turned beds, kitchens, and care packages into the everyday tools to determine what that belonging entailed.

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