

me, I would say that most of even contemporary views about Creoles are still driven by the same racism that characterized slavery.

And then they conclude, and I want to take that conclusion very seriously, that although we might use a label "Creole," but that label doesn't mean that we have a linguistic structure or class of Creole languages.

The term "Creole" is just a historical term that applies to this particular group of languages, but isn't referred to special developmental or special structural patterns.

They're just a language, that's what the Creole is.

But then, what we have to ask is where do we go from here?

What was the issue there?

And in fact, we can do one thing that-- and this is from Mufwene's work.

I like this map because what it shows is what we discussed earlier.

The fact that if you really look at Creoles without biases, and you think of the development, and you go back in time and you think of the development of Romance languages-- so this is the way Romance evolved.

So Latin conquerors going from Rome into Gaul, Iberia, et cetera, that's how the Romance languages were created, through conquest and contact of populations.

And the same way, if you look at what happened to French when French went to North America, the Caribbean, Africa, all the way to Asia, that's also how Creoles were created.

You got Haitian Creole, [INAUDIBLE] Creole, Mauritius Creole, Seychelles Creole.

And this is where you get the Kreyolofoni, alongside Francophonie, of course.

But the claim I've made so far is that you have similar patterns, not only in terms of language contact but also in terms of structural development.

So from that perspective, again, there need not be this divide, this fundamental divide that linguists often draw between language change, as in the history of French, and then Creole formation, as in the history of Haitian Creole.

Earlier we talked about these myths about the [INAUDIBLE] of Creole.

So now what we could ask is-- in case you want to read more about it.

So you can go to my website.

And you find lots and lots of arguments against this idea that you have this cycle.

Let's go up to now.

And here I'm going to be using some of the slides that I showed at the UN last week.

So because what we want to ask, connecting to the issues of identity and education that were touched on by Karen and Rachel is, why do these myths endure?

Actually, now this, I can go quickly, actually, because you've seen all of these before.

I just wanted to bring them back there quickly.

Again, you find this myth in very well read, popular newspapers, magazines, like Newsweek, The New York Times, Reuters, even The New Yorker.

And all of these share something in common that we saw earlier, that now should be too familiar, which is Creoles are French Patios, broken French, they're like primitive languages.

Or, this one is the most poetic.

And I like this one because it makes me into a special specimen of humanity.

Because really, that what it means.

As I like to say when I give this talk in public, when I switch from speaking English to speaking Creole I go from being a modern human to being a primitive human because I can all of a sudden, on my tongue, I get to pronounce these linguistic fossils, which are the equivalent of the Galapagos to Darwin.

This is spectacular.

This is a spectacular claim.

And this is Newsweek, this is The New York Times.

It's to show you how acceptable these claims are.

But then, again, to wrap up from what we discussed earlier, this is very much in sync with Michel-Rolph Trouillot.

Now this is going back to the early part of this class, where we were looking at history.

So what we see is that the same way that Creoles have been silenced, the fact that Creoles are normal languages that has been silenced, is often the same way that ancient history has been silenced for the same reason.

Because how many of you, before this class, knew about Haitian history?

You because you have a Haitian boyfriend.

[LAUGHTER] And when I ask that question, even in big classes like 24.900 with hundreds of students, I get maybe one or two people to know that the Haitian revolution was even more dramatic in terms of its claims than both the French and the American revolutions.

It was the only one in the 18th century to proclaim liberty and equality for all.

The only one.

The French one, the French still had slaves.

The American one, Jefferson, Madison, all these guys still had slaves.

And Haiti was the only revolution where there was this claim for liberty for all.

This is from Trouillot that as Haiti was entering history, it was being written about by people who did conceive of the Africans as equals to the Europeans.

So they could only read, according to Trouillot, those 18th century scholars.

They could only read the news only with the ready-made lenses.

And it meant that African liberation, the fact that an African army could win over Napoleon, they couldn't process that.

It was incompatible with the idea of [INAUDIBLE] revolution.

And the same way for language.

So the same scholars looking at Haiti's revolution, they're also looking at Creole language.

They couldn't imagine.

For them it was impossible that Creoles would be no more languages.

So you can just pass on that.

So this is very familiar.

So this is the root of all these myths.

So the root of these myths is basically, the idea that the Africans were lesser.

And whatever they could produce as language had to be lesser.

Therefore they could not be part of this same kind of theory as normal language change, as they [INAUDIBLE] So again, we can say it's the economy, stupid.

Meaning that the driving-- in fact, this is not clear.

So yesterday, Noam Chomsky was in Black Matters, and I asked him that question about what came first, the economy, empire, or racism?

Because one could say that racism is a result of empire.

If you want to make the Africans as slaves of labor in order to produce wealth, then you are going to demean the color, the culture, the language.

Or was racism there before, and therefore made it OK to make them into slaves.

That's a hard question to answer.

It's hard to know.

Maybe the two, as Chomsky puts it, the two reinforce each other.

You see that in the case of Haiti, though, we have all these documents that show that clearly, one of the driving forces behind the Black Code, which was a code to regulate the slaves in the Caribbean, the driving force behind it was economics.

Something like that.

So it's the idea that the Creole Blacks are superior because they are in the company of whites, something like that.

"For all the tasks, it is the Creole slaves that are preferred." And here, the idea is they said, the Creole slaves are those who are born in the Caribbean, they have African ancestry but they were born in the Caribbean.

And they have more worth.

Why?

Because they are being assimilated into European culture.

Talking about assimilation.

So here, assimilation comes with the benefits.

As you're being assimilated you acquire-- and actually this guy, this is the same guy, actually, who came up with this [INAUDIBLE] pulse of blood.

We could compute qualities of different mixes based on the quanta of blood.

White blood, this is black blood.

He also had quanta in terms of the worth of Creole slaves versus those of African slaves, a quarter more.

So imagine.

And of course, the idea that what made them better is because they had been assimilated.

In this case, he used a poetic term, "embellished." But the mysticity, meaning slavery by whites would embellish the black species.

So this is some of the background behind all these claims about Creole languages.

But of course, the other part of the background that you know is the fact that there was this revolution that had to be silenced.

This is the book that you read, actually, part of it that you read about silencing the past.

And so what I'm driving at here is that all of this together creates the roots of these views that Creole is so special.

And again, just for good measure, I want to stress again, especially as we wrap up this course, that these notions of Creoles being lesser and to be excluded, actually, they've been fought against, even in the 19th century.

So this is Dessalines, our first president.

And now this that famous quote in French, because it's written by a French observer.

But the key point here is the fact Dessalines would get very upset when someone was back then-- well, they weren't Haitian yet because it was still under the colony.

But he would tell anyone who spoke French to him that, why do you speak French?

You have your own language.

So this is Creole actually.

[SPEAKING CREOLE],, you have your language.

And as he was looking at them with disdain, why look for another language?

Why look for someone else's language?

So the point here is that Dessalines, even as he was technically a French citizen as he was fighting for independence, he understood the power of the Creole language.

Now that's [INAUDIBLE] This is to remind you this line between your politics and identity.

So this is one of the first-- 1805-- law in Haiti creating Haiti.

So this is Article 1.

"The people inhabiting the island, formerly St. Domingo, agree to form themselves into free state sovereign and independent of any other power." So this was the most disturbing part about Haiti.

Slavery is abolished.

This was 1805, at a time when both Europe and the Americas, both North and South America, including countries like Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, who actually benefited from Haiti in terms of their own independence, they still had slaves.

So slavery is forever abolished.

But the part that, remember, is also important is that excluding whites from owning any piece of Haiti, which has now been changed.

But that point that I want to stress is the fact that Dessalines understood also the power of identity.

Now this is 1805.

And he says that, "all acception" means difference of color With [INAUDIBLE],, "The Haitians shall henceforth be known only by [INAUDIBLE] of blacks." That's 1805.

NICK: What's this written in, English?

MICHEL DEGRAFF: Well, remember, this was at a time when-- this was both in English and French because Dessalines understood that he had to let the world know that this is my position.

So this book here answers this question.

Why was Dessalines, since he was so pro Creole, why was he writing in French and English?

And the point is that when you he was speaking, like here, here was being in Creole.

But when he had people write for him, because most of the time he had people write for him, he wanted the world to understand what was his position about this issue.

So he had to write in French and English because he was speaking not to Haitians, but he was speaking to the USA.

This is opposition.

So be aware.

But then of course, this is a book by Paul Farmer.

So this part is moving from 1805 to the present.

And then to understand why up to today there's still this struggle around language and entity in the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

From the very beginning, after independence, there was all this pressure for Haiti to remain in the French dominion.

And then American dominion.

As you know, America, the US occupied Haiti for 15 years in the early part of the 20th century.

But even in 1825, the French managed to extract this indemnity from Haiti.

This was huge back then.

I think this is now worth billions of dollars.

Can anyone read this from here?

Who wants to read this?

OK, Karen.

KAREN: "President Boyer for 150 million francs and the halving of customs charges for the French trade-- all as indemnity for the losses of the plantation owners.

These conditions accepted in 1825, led to decades of French domination of Haitian finance and had a catastrophic effect on the new nation's delicate economy.

Despite its nominal independence, Haiti could not escape from the shackles of foreign domination.

The very fact of the debt to France strikes the modern observer as odd.

Why might a country of former slaves feel compelled to remunerate the plantocracy for losses incurred in a war of liberation?" MICHEL DEGRAFF: So the answer is that the elite had to make this compromise.

The elite wanted to be recognized by Europe and by America.

So that question here points to this basic struggle in Haitian history, that from the very beginning, the new elites that became the leaders of the country, they in many ways repeated what the French had done.

This is now after the earthquake.

This is from The Boston Globe.

And this is a straight continuation of what Paul Farmer discussed in that previous quote.

So who wants to read this part here?

STUDENT 2: I can.

STUDENT 3: Go ahead.

STUDENT 2: "The question now is whether the wealth elite that controls the bulk of the economy will help rebuild



Haiti and create a thriving middle class.

80% of Haitians live in poverty, while a handful of often light-skinned descendants of the French, who ruled the country's coffee and sugar slave plantations until Haiti declared independence in 1804, and other groups control most of the wealth." MICHEL DEGRAFF: So basically, you see the cleavage is still there.

This cleavage-- and I think here we can refer back to Karen and Rachel's presentation-- this cleavage between the elite and the masses also has this reflex, this linguistic reflex, where French is a language of power versus Creole being a language that's still struggling to become a tool for liberation.

So here, I think we have this tight connection, this tight nexus between language, power, and identity.