“Une Nègre de drame:”

Jane Vialle and the politics of representation in colonial reform, 1945-1953.

Abstract

The French-Congolese Senator, Jane Vialle, was appointed as a French delegate to the United Nations in 1949. During her term she served on the Ad-Hoc Anti-Slavery committee as an expert on African colonial conditions and the status of African Women. Vialle's work on the international stage was an extension of her efforts towards reforming the political, social and economic rights of women at national and local levels, within the French Fourth Republic and the Oubangui-Chari region she represented in French West Africa. Despite her efforts, Vialle was frustrated with the glacial pace of reform in all three arenas, declaring to her friend and colleague, the African American historian and Pan-Africanist Rayford W. Logan that she often felt she was being used as ‘une nègre de drame.’ Logan believed the expression was the French equivalent of the American phrase ‘a showpiece or token negro’. Through the framework of Jane Vialle’s political career, this articles explores how the notion of representation and what it meant to be ‘une nègre de drame’ or, indeed, to be an authentic representative of one’s nation, race or gender intersected with Vialle’s reformist efforts in Oubangui-Chari, the French Fourth Republic and on the international stage.

Keywords

Jane Vialle, Race, Citizenship, Gender, French Union, United Nations.

Article

Over dinner in 1951 with the African American historian and Pan-African activist, Rayford W. Logan, the French-Congolese senator and recipient of the Medal of the Resistance for her wartime heroism, Jane Vialle, complained that she had only been appointed as a delegate to the United Nations (UN) in 1949 because the General Assembly was due to meet outside France. She felt that she had been used by the French government as ‘une nègre de drame,’ an expression Logan believed was the French equivalent of the American phrase ‘a showpiece or token negro.’[1] The phrase is arresting. It points simultaneously to French governmental efforts to perform a national identity of colour-blind republicanism on the world stage and to Vialle’s experience as the first woman of colour to be appointed to the French UN delegation. This issue of ‘tokenism’ and the related question of what it meant to be an authentic representative of national, race or gender interests was one that refracted through the constituent components of Vialle’s political career: on the international stage through her work at the UN; at the level of that national-imperial in her activism and her role as a Senator in the French National Assembly; and in the regional context as she worked in the interests of the Oubangui-Chari peoples in Central Africa. In this essay, I argue that by examining how the particular questions

of representation played out in these contexts throughout Vialle's political career we can gain a greater understanding of the gendered and racialised tensions of the French Fourth Republic as well as post-war discussions occurring at the UN.

Very little work has been done on Vialle in either the context of the French Fourth Republic or the United Nations, or, for that matter in relation to Congolese history.[2] She is part of a cohort of women internationalists whose intellectual and political contributions have repeatedly been overlooked. Where these women have been studied, the focus tends to be on an elite cohort of more prominent white women such as Vialle's French colleague at the UN, Marie-Hélène Lefaucheux, or the American political figure, Eleanor Roosevelt.[3] With the article, I take a step towards filling this gap by studying the career of a politician twice marginalised on the international, national and regional stage by virtue of her race and gender. It is, as Mia E. Bay, Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones and Barbara Savage have argued, long past "time for the … labors of women of Africa and diaspora to claim a more distinct place" in such histories.[4] The lives of such women are harder to trace because their personal papers were often discarded or scattered through the collections of their male acquaintances. This is the case with Vialle, who left behind no personal papers, and whose political activities and motivations must be parsed from parliamentary debates, committee meetings, published articles and contextual materials such as newspapers.

My article is also an effort towards fleshing out our historical understanding of the political reality of this period, which historian Gary Wilder has called 'a world historical moment.' [5] In this moment older understandings of world order and the relationship between the individual and the state were in flux. The spectre of inauthenticity that Vialle raised in her comment to Logan is an important indication of the way that constructions of national, racial and gendered belonging and the relationship of these categories to the political institutions of the French Fourth Republic and the United Nations were highly contested in this period. Vialle's sense of herself as a woman who was simultaneously French and African shaped not only her own thinking and engagement but demarcated the boundaries and possibilities of her political impact.

To map out these issues, I will first explore the relationship between decolonization and gender at the United Nations at this moment through the frame of Vialle's role as a French delegate

and expert in bride-wealth slavery in the Congo. Vialle's contributions provide a useful way into charting prevalent attitudes towards the status of women in the colonial territories. They are also revealing of the UN commitment to state sovereignty in this period. Secondly, I will map out Vialle's approach to female suffrage in the French Fourth Republic and the role of women of colour in international politics more broadly. This will lead into a discussion of how Vialle was perceived by those in the African American community fighting their own battles for greater political representation and rights. Finally, I will focus on the Oubangui-Chari region that Vialle represented in the Senate to demonstrate how her gender and her identity as *une métisse* operated to shape her political trajectory at that level. Too often, histories of the French Fourth Republic elide the regional realities that elected representatives such as Vialle sought to represent and focus instead on discussions occurring in Paris.[6] Here, I argue that doing so misses a key facet of this post-war moment.

Representation and Expertise at the United Nations

Vialle's service at the UN had required her to work not just as a representative of the French Fourth Republic but as an expert on African colonial conditions and the status of women. In 1949, two years before the dinner with Logan when Vialle had complained of being used as 'un nègre de drame,' the UN Secretary General had appointed an Ad Hoc Committee to consider the scope of the 1926 League of Nations definition of slavery, questioning whether it was 'satisfactory' and whether 'institutions and customs resembling slavery' should be incorporated into a new definition.[7] The Committee comprised Vialle, Bruno Lasker, an American expert on customs of slavery in Asia and the Pacific, W.W. Greenidge, the British chairman of the anti-slavery league and Moises Poblete Troncoso, a Chilean expert on slave customs in Latin America.[8] Vialle was particularly concerned that the committee attend properly to 'the situations or conditions approximating,' slavery, particularly where they concerned 'the spheres of labour and of the status of women or children.'[9]

These issues were what had attracted her to politics in the first place. After the war, as a journalist for *Agence France Presse* as well as several West African publications and for Albert Camus' celebrated journal *Combat,* Vialle had travelled through the Ivory Coast, Oubangui-Chari and Chad reporting on the educational, cultural and economic needs of Africans. She had reported on

brutal labour practices and witnessed first-hand the exploitation of women and children. In an effort to reform these conditions, Vialle co-founded the *Association des Femmes de l'Union Français/*Association of Women of the French Union (AFUF) in 1945 'to obtain for all women of the French Union the possibility of living with the dignity required of the human condition, on an equal level, as conferred by the rights of citizenship.'[10] Through AFUF she set up a programme that offered bursaries to young girls from French holdings in Indo-China, Madagascar, the Antilles and Africa to train in metropolitan France as teachers and social workers, thus removing them from the threat of bride chattel practices and providing them with a measure of economic security. As a Senator and, now, as a delegate to the UN, Vialle had her sights on securing political rights for these women.

It was a hard task. The political rights of African women within these territories were muddily defined on the international stage. At the San Francisco conference of International Organization in 1945, the European colonies like those in the French empire had been divided into the categories of 'dependent' and 'trust' territories. Chapter XI of the UN Charter outlined the procedures for the 'dependent territories' whilst Chapters XII and XIII defined the trust system and the rights of the peoples living under the aegis of those Chapters. Either the colonial power assigned to the territory or the UN Trusteeship Council were to stand as guarantor that the principles of the UN Charter were applied in these areas. This included the implementation of democratic government by the people of the territories, the flourishing of local cultures and the guarantee of human rights. In theory, this meant that the UN could be used as a legal instrument through which to mediate human rights claims by colonised peoples.[11] In reality, few women in the former European colonies had the political literacy to take advantage of such pathways. Conditions that constituted a violation of European rights norms, or, once it was written, the spirit of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, were difficult to demarcate from proclaimed rights to continue indigenous practices. Bridewealthpractice and polygamy, for example, were considered 'uncivilized' by many of the (previously) colonial powers but efforts against these phenomena tended to take the form of social and cultural rather than legislative action.[12]

Part of the problem was the explicit assumption that proximity to European culture was an automatic improvement on the status of African women.[13] Rather than pushing for international

legislative mechanisms to support the rights of women, or to protect them from such traditional practices as bride wealth, the administrative authority of the Trusteeship council relied instead upon educational initiatives such as AFUF and particularly upon the 'enlightening' potential of Church-affiliated educational initiatives.[14] Vialle herself advocated a primarily education-based remedy in her contributions to the Ad-Hoc Committee discussions. She emphasized that slavery was not a problem in mainland France but was in the colonial territories of French Equatorial and West Africa. As far as she was concerned, it was a relic of a patriarchal, tribal past and often a feature of Islamic communities. She noted that '[i]t was difficult to apply direct or concrete measures' because these social structures were 'based on century-old institutions and systems.'[15] Offering children basic education in principles of equality and the idea that 'the strongest' in a society should aid, rather than exploit, 'the weakest' would, she argued, bring about change. In the case of adults, she recommended passing national governmental legislation that regulated marriage contracts and offered political rights such as suffrage to women as well as men. She did not believe, however, that such a remedy was the domain of an international institution such as the UN. To the contrary, she saw it as a matter for the relevant national governments to rectify.

Vialle's attitude was common at the UN in this moment. The Commission on the Status of Women shared a similar attitude to the women of these trusteeship territories, simultaneously denouncing the practice of imperialism and deploying a rhetoric of salvation that had strong links to an imperial past.[16] The Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women from 1948-1952, and Vialle's colleague in AFUF, Marie-Hélène Lefaucheux, is a case in point. Like Vialle, she was a staunch supporter of the Republican state to guarantee 'the right to citizenship to all subjects of the French Republic.' She believed in the value of AFUF precisely because French women, by virtue of their privilege, had a responsibility 'to see that other women in other parts of the world are helped and encouraged.'[17] It was only a matter of acting out this encouragement for the status and conditions of African women to be revolutionised. Political representation and rights in democracies like the French Fourth Republic would ensue naturally from this process.[18]

The faultiness of this particular logic was evident in the absence from the UN of African diaspora women who were themselves theoretically citizens of Western nations. Mary McLeod

Bethune, an African American civil rights activist, had been the sole African American woman – and one of the few African Americans – to act as a consultant to the US State Department at the UN Conference on International Organizations in 1945. Paulette Nardal, the Martinican intellectual who worked as a specialist on the French West Indies for the Trusteeship Council and a delegate to the Commission on Women from 1946 through 1948, was another exception.[19] In part this reflected the male-dominated nature of the UN. [20] However, it was also a very real indication of the lack of representation available at the international level to black women. Even Vialle's appointment to the Ad-Hoc Committee on Slavery had been begrudging, the result of protracted efforts from the International Women's Council. The Council felt – not unjustifiably – that given the disproportionately high number of women sold into slavery, a female representative and expert on Africa would not go astray on the committee.

Aside from prevailing expectations about the relationship between exposure to Western norms and the disappearance of slavery, binding legislative solutions to the problem at an international level were unlikely precisely because they threatened the sovereignty of the existing state polities that controlled the UN.[21] When Belgium had first urged the UN General Assembly in 1948 to take action on slavery it had unleashed a hornet's nest. As a *New York Times* columnist noted: the 'entire issue of the basic rights for individuals has, from the first, provoked heated battles, with charges and counter-charges that the subject of slavery cannot exclude American Negroes, the colonial subjects of great powers, or the millions of alleged slaves under Soviet bondage in Siberia and other remote areas of Russia.'[22] One reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* called for congress to reject French requests 'so long as the French, recently rescued from slavery by American arms, still seek to impose it on others.'[23] The International Labor Organization was concurrently investigating forced labour, so the Ad-Hoc committee left that to them. The *Washington Post* reported that key concerns for the committee included 'how children are exploited by adoption, and how wives and the inheritance of widows are purchased by the heir of a deceased husband, thus making a woman subject to a man not of her choice.'[24]

Ultimately the Ad-Hoc committee concluded that 'certain modifications of the International Slavery Convention of 1926 appeared to be necessary and that it might prove desirable to draft a new

convention broader in scope, or alternatively, to draw up an instrument supplementary to the existing Convention.'[25] Reluctant to craft a new statement which would require agreement, the committee's second report recommended a supplement to the initial agreement of 1926 which had been signed by 42 states. The idea was to 'affirm the Slavery Convention of 1926 as a whole,' but to be more precise about the 'exact forms of servitude it dealt with.' Key to this new supplement would be the provision of annual reports to the Secretary General and the 'cooperation of signatory States with the United Nations for the purpose of bringing about the abolition of slavery and other forms of servitude.'[26] The committee urged that signatory States should 'undertake to abolish, at the earliest possible date, the following institutions and practices analogous to slavery or resembling slavery in some of their effects, in so far as they are not already covered by the Article 1 of the International Slavery Convention of 1926.' These included serfdom, debt bondage, forced marriage, and child exploitation.[27]

'Mother-Love', Female Suffrage and the realities of African citizenship in the Fourth Republic

By the time Vialle spoke with Logan in Paris in 1951, negotiations about the potential of a more binding new slavery convention were still ongoing. Although she remained wedded to primarily educational and cultural programmes of reform, she felt that even these initiatives had fallen prey to concerns around the contravention of state sovereignty. She increasingly believed that the Ad-Hoc Committee had only been established as a tokenistic gesture to placate calls for action against slavery.[28] Whilst she felt this was true at the level of the UN more broadly, she was particularly concerned with this tokenism in the case of France. To Logan she pointed out that now that the UN General Assembly was meeting in France rather than New York, her appointment had not been renewed. The performance of a colour blind republicanism was only necessary, it seemed, when France's delegation had to operate on foreign soil. This was particularly galling, she felt, in the context of the recent failure of efforts to extend voting rights to African mothers at the French National Assembly.

Whilst the Lamine Guèye law of 1946, encoded into Article 80 of the Fourth Republic's Constitution, had technically extended formal citizenship to all residents of the French empire, Article

81 of that same document distinguished between 'citizenship of the French Union' and 'French nationality.' This opened up the possibility of a two-tiered citizenship that might limit rights to specific territories rather than to the French Union as a whole. As it stood in 1951, voting rights in France's overseas territories remained limited, tilted towards elite and educated men - those who might have previously been referred to as *les evolués*. Vialle had been fighting for an amendment to the franchise law of August 27, 1947 that would extend the right to vote to African mothers who had two children who had fought for the French Republic during the war. She was unsuccessful. This did not stop her from forcefully expressing her disappointment on the Senate floor in the following terms: 'Some may say that Africans are against the vote of women of their country. I want to register a formal denial of this statement. Several Africans I have had the honour of questioning told me that they would be happy to get the vote for their women.'[29] The rationale that Africans were against women giving the vote was undeniably part of a strategy to prevent extending the vote in French colonial territories.

Nevertheless, it also held a grain of truth. In general, most French Fourth Republic politicians were against making female suffrage and equality 'a point of international principle' and certainly did not automatically support it in the French African territories.[30] Female suffrage was not a priority for many African politicians and Vialle's dedication to the question was not necessarily a reflection of the wishes of the community she represented. As she herself had confided to Eslanda Robeson, an African American journalist travelling through the Congo in 1946, 'we must struggle against Indigène custom here, against Musselmen [sic] religion and custom, and against the white man, - all are against liberty for African women. The wife of an African man works very hard, and the man does not want to lose her labor.'[31] For Vialle, her experience as *une métisse* gave her unique insight into this way that both colonialism and indigenous social dynamics operated to oppress African women. Her political activity and sense of responsibility to these women was grounded in her identity as both African and heir to the political sensibilities of the French republicanism. Female suffrage was, she believed, key to their liberation. Robeson, for her part, responded to Vialle's comment with the observation that only women seemed to take interest in the rights of other women. It seemed to her

that the only way they were going to get anywhere was if they all worked together on an international scale.

Vialle was very much in agreement. Whilst in New York in 1951, she had delivered a lecture to students at Hunter College on development in Africa. To them, she made it clear that she strongly believed 'women and education are the potential sources for the development of democracy in Africa.'[32] For a piece Vialle published in the *International Women's News* that same year, she expanded this position to argue that it was 'to women rather than to men… that we must appeal to help abolish all that separates and oppresses us.'[33] In part this was because she believed that men and women fulfilled very different functions in society. Men were by nature warriors and thus not particularly well suited to the creation of world peace. In contrast, women shared something vital that transcended race, something Vialle called 'mother-love.' 'Mother-love' was the mission to 'to give life and to protect it' that all women shared, regardless of whether they had borne their own children.[34] Vialle believed that it was a common mission that had the potential to unite all women in an 'intense solidarity.'[35] In the post-war moment, it was more important than ever for 'women of the whole world of whatever origin, race or country' to 'create such a spiritual and humane force that it will prove an effective barrier against any destructive catastrophe provoked by men.'[36] For African women in particular, 'the possibility of better caring for and better protecting their children,' meant that they were dedicated towards 'a future in which the forms of Western civilization have outlined new horizons' that would allow for 'the process of evolution' whilst still maintaining their 'fine human qualities.'[37]

Such a maternalist perspective may have been overly optimistic about the potential community 'mother-love' could provide on an international stage. The position nonetheless resonated in the French imperial context. Although French female citizens had gained suffrage in 1944, the majority of female suffragists and politicians embraced the notion of a political citizenship bifurcated by gender roles. [38] The notion of motherhood as the essential characteristic of female citizenship was particularly prevalent. In part this was connected to ongoing concerns amongst French government officials and demographers about the need to 'repopulate' a population devastated by two World Wars. In 1945, Charles De Gaulle had famously urged French women to get on with the task of

bearing 'twelve million beautiful babies (*beaux bébés)* within the next ten years.'[39] Of course, French officials only wanted a certain kind of woman bearing babies, namely white metropolitan French women. Populations in the French colonial territories vastly outnumbered those in mainland France – an issue that had come up again and again in debates over the weight of colonial votes – and birth rates there were not suffering the same perceived decline.[40] To the contrary French policymakers were concerned with the high birth-rates in the Overseas Departments.[41] Nonetheless, the spectre of family planning loomed large in the political landscape of the French Fourth Republic and many agreed that white French women should play a role in working out questions relating to the family sphere.

This is not to suggest that the advent of suffrage ushered in an era of conservative gender egalitarianism in France. At the National Assembly of 1946, only thirty-three representatives – six percent - were women: twenty-three had run with the Communist Party (PCF), three with Socialists (SFIO) and nine were Christian Democrat (MRP) members. Nearly all of the women affiliated with the PCF and the MRP had been active members of the Resistance and they publically drew upon this narrative to affirm and assert their political beliefs and rights.[42] Vialle certainly emphasised the connection between her patriotic sacrifice in wartime and her service in the post-war: in the 'painful and harsh isolation' of her imprisonment 'there arose in me a wish to 'become a living link between the black women to whom I was attached by my mother and the white women to whom I was related through my father.' Ultimately she hoped that this would play a role in allowing the two races to come 'to know each other and perhaps to love each other.' [43] Thus Vialle saw her own political identity in terms of both her fidelity to French Republican principles, as embodied in her Resistance efforts, and as her identity as a woman and representative of 'mother-love.' In one campaign speech she referred to her efforts with African scholarship students studying in Paris in terms of her 'care for our children' – and she was committed to female solidarity in the face of inequality.[44] It was a path that certainly had borne fruit for her own activism. Her work on the Ad-Hoc Slavery commission had been enabled by the support of the International Women's Council and even her successes in establishing vocational educational programmes in French Equatorial Africa had been through the National Council of French Women.

Moreover, Vialle's positioning of her thinking in terms of her imprisonment was connected to the tangible way in which the Resistance offered French women an entrance onto the political stage that had previously been unavailable.[45] This was a recurrent theme in Vialle's political speeches and writing. The following excerpt from her campaign speech in 1952 was representative: 'I won my Medal of the Resistance during the war when I was imprisoned in a cell, under the menace of the Gestapo, in defence of the liberty and the justice so dear to all of us who live under the aegis of France.'[46] When she staked her claim to French political life in terms of her Resistance efforts, Vialle was deploying a rhetorical move common to French female political actors in this moment. They sought to shore up their new political rights by firmly embedding themselves in a narrative of patriotic fidelity to French Republican values of liberty and justice. [47]

African American visions of Vialle's political career

Vialle's role in the Resistance and her political successes in France also made her an attractive figure to African American activists seeking to disassociate the relationship between race and national belonging. George Schulyer's representation of Vialle in his *Pittsburgh Courier* column is a case in point. A few months before her dinner with Logan, Vialle had dined in Paris with the conservative black intellectual, whom she had met during her time in New York. Schuyler's reiteration for the press of their dinner and of her work reads like a spy novel. Vialle, he reported, had uncovered a Communist conspiracy in France. Allegedly, the Soviets were subsidizing French African students studying in Paris. Through this generosity and with the placement of 'one or two Red Africans' in the students' social circles, Schuyler claimed that vulnerable young black people were being indoctrinated into Communist circles. Vialle, he declared, had fought against this subterfuge by placing Africans with 'non-Red French families' who could act as a bulwark against Communist infiltration. This, Schuyler mused, was another victory for the 'journalist-sociologist-politician who proudly wears the decoration of the French Resistance for her services for France during the dark days of the occupation.'[48]

Both Vialle and her organization, AFUF, had long been involved in ensuring colonial students had adequate housing facilities. Other than health and security, the primary aim of placing African

students with metropolitan French families had been to build friendships. The end goal was a united French Republic that included French Africa on equal terms.[49] As Vialle had quipped in one parliamentary planning session, 'the heart loves what it knows.'[50] Whether or not she envisaged this in terms of a fight against the Soviets is another matter altogether. When she was first elected to the Senate in 1947, she had run as an independent but by 1948 had chosen to join the SFIO. Politically, then, she lent far further to the Left than Schuyler's portrait allowed. For his purposes, however, Vialle's case allowed him to argue that black people were loyal and invaluable citizens, unlikely to be tempted by Soviet rhetoric. Her wartime pedigree and her democratic election to government made her an impeccable example to support Schuyler's claims. Such claims also appealed directly to the State Department where officials were preoccupied with winning the 'minds and loyalties of the French and of the indigenous peoples' over to the American way of life.[51]

Schuyler was hardly the first African American writer to portray Vialle in this way. When she had been named as the French Delegate to the UN Commission on Slavery in 1949, the black American press made much of the appointment as the French government knew they would. Most commonly, journalists wrote of Vialle in the same breath as wartime black hero Gaston Monnerville and other black male politicians in France. Such articles implicitly and explicitly positioned the French Republic as racially progressive in comparison to the United States, a tactic of African American activism with a history which dated to at least the First World War.[52] Citizenship of a nation, such writers emphasized, should be defined in terms of fealty to particular republican democratic traditions rather than to race. As Schuyler's article illustrates, the tactic had taken on a new impetus in the context of the Cold War and McCarthy-driven campaign against communist traitors. FBI surveillance records indicate that minority communities found themselves the subject of particular focus precisely because belonging to a minority racial group tended to correlate to curtailed or second-class status.[53]

In this context, many in the African American community saw Jane Vialle as exemplar of a kind of race activism that straddled the delicate line between fidelity to the nation state and the need to fight racism.[54] Her inclusion in the 1951 Negro History Week Kit, a resource dedicated to celebrating and emphasising 'the struggles of Negroes at home and abroad to achieve first class

citizenship,' is a case in point.[55] Other notable French figures in the kit included Felix Eboué and Gaston Monnerville. Both men, like Vialle, embodied a particular kind of black francophone identity contingent upon assimilation into the French colonial political system. They, by virtue of their education in metropolitan France, were French citizens in a way that most Africans living in French territories could never be. This distinction was also clear in the way that the African American press drew a clear line between Vialle as a French African woman and African women in general. Vialle graced the front cover of the April 1950 issue of the *Crisis*. Inside, her many achievements were listed and readers were advised that '[t]he territory she represents is about the size of our own state of Texas with a population of 1,060,000 Africans.'[56] The author of the article was quick to emphasise that Vialle was nothing like the majority of these Africans she represented, writing that: 'Most Americans are familiar with the Ubang-Shari only as the home of the "platter-lipped" or "duck-bill" women, usually members of the Sara tribe. But these women are no more representative of the people than Chick Sale is representative of our own peasantry."[57] Instead, Vialle was painted as contrastingly sophisticated and elegant, the perfect combination of French civilization and black female respectability.[58] The implication was that her immersion in the French Republican context had allowed her to transcend these African origins. In the same way that UN discussions on bride-wealth and the status of women advocated for exposure to Western civilizational norms as a solution, these representations of Jane Vialle offered evidence of the how this could work.

Representing the Oubangui-Chari as "une métisse"

Such African American attempts to distinguish Vialle from the African women of the Oubangui-Chari, speak to some of the challenges Vialle faced in her efforts to present herself as an authentic representative of that region. In order to understand why this was the case it is necessary to outline some of the regional African politics of representation that Vialle operated amongst and to position her experience as a French-educated daughter of a white man vis-à-vis those of her political contemporaries from the region. Very little work has been done on this era of Congolese history and the literature that does exist tends to focus on the personality of Barthélemy Boganda.[59] Here, I hope to add to the scholarship by positioning Boganda vis-à-vis Vialle to investigate how questions of race

and gender intersected with their respective understandings of national belonging to shape their political trajectories.

The Oubangui-Chari region, now the Central African Republic, had been a late and somewhat neglected addition to the French Third Republic, earning itself the moniker of *la colonie poubelle* in colonial administrative memoranda.[60] French administrative control had only really been established in 1903 and it operated in tandem with a number of concessionary companies who leased parts of the territory from the French government. Both colonial administrators and concessionary officials, of whom Vialle's father was one, implemented a brutal regime of forced labour in the region with impunity.[61] Small scale revolts were common.[62] The region had come to French metropolitan and international attention in 1921 and 1927 respectively with the publication of two famous books, René Maran's *Batouala* and Andre Gide's *Voyage au Congo*. In different ways, both books pointed to the widespread abuse and exploitation perpetuated by concessionary company employees in the region.[63] Alongside these conditions, outbreaks of tetse, smallpox, measles, dysentery and the Spanish flu alongside famine had decimated the indigenous population to the extent that in the 1910s and 20s, orphans were more prevalent than adults in certain regions.

One of these orphans was a boy named Barthélémy Boganda. Taken in by the Catholic Spiritan missionaries, Boganda became the first Roman Catholic Priest native to the region and the protégé of the Vicar Apostolic of Bangui in the Oubangui-Chari territory, Monseigneur Grandin. In the shifting political context of the post-war era, the missionaries wished to defend the interests of the Church and their schools as well as limit the inroads made by their Protestant rivals. Aware of anti-French feeling in the region, Grandin felt that Boganda, as both a Spiritan-tutored priest and a 'native' African, could satisfy any native claims to representation whilst acting in the best interests of the Church. With this backing Boganda, was elected 'député' to the second College in Oubangui-Chari on 10th October, 1946. The church's support allowed him to win out against the other two candidates in the region, another local J.B. Songomali, and the Antillean G. Tarquin.[64] In the December of that year, he became the College's representative to the French National Assembly on an MRP platform.

Despite Grandin's hope, Boganda was no puppet of the Church.[65] To the contrary, he had already fathered an illegitimate child and would, in the mid-1950s, be defrocked for marrying his

white secretary, Michelle Jourdain.[66] That is a story for another time, however. Boganda would perhaps have been more circumspect about his relationship with the Catholic Church had he received more support from the Spiritans when he first travelled to Paris in 1946. Grandin had asked the Spiritans in Paris to lodge him and to connect him to Catholic politicians. They carried out neither of these tasks, leaving Boganda a very small fish in a big pond. He needed an ally. Someone familiar with metropolitan France but dedicated to reform in the Oubangui-Chari region. He hoped that person would be Jane Vialle.

In the run up to the January 1947 senatorial elections, Grandin wrote to one of his priests that the 'voters of Bangui and its surrounds only want un noir, and un noir from this country.'[67] Although she had a white father, Vialle's mother, Tchilambou, was from the local Vili ethnic group. Vialle was also far more familiar with the workings of metropolitan France than her opponents: her father had moved her to France at age 6 and she had gone on to take her *baccalauréat* at the famous Lycée Jules Ferry in Paris' ninth arrondissement. This made her unusual amongst the small circle of Oubanguian political elite, many of whom were also *métis* but had been educated in Brazzaville like the brothers Antoine and Georges Darlan, or, like Boganda, in local Catholic seminaries. Moreover, Vialle had powerful connections in Paris. As part of her work in the Resistance, she had been the secretary of Jean Gemähling, head of information services for the Provence-Côte d'Azur regional branch of *Combat*. Such a position put her at the heart of the Resistance movement in Southern France. Moreover, in the immediate aftermath of the war, Vialle had travelled with Léopold Sédar Senghor through West Africa. The Vice-President of AFUF, Vialle's colleague and friend, was Thérèse El-Hadi Monnerville, the wife of the French politician and soon to be High Commissioner of French Equatorial Africa, Bernard Cornut-Gentille. Furthermore, as a journalist she had covered the elections for the French Constituent Assemblies, focusing on the activities of the African representatives. She was well-positioned, in short, to help build the kinds of political relationships that Boganda needed in order to effect change in the region.

Vialle had also learnt from the defeat of her first bid for election in 1945. At that moment she had lacked the local relationships necessary to garner electoral success. Since then she had taken steps to remedy this situation by founding her own party in July 1946: l'Association Pour l'Evolution

de l'Afrique Noire/ the Association for the Evolution of Black Africa (APEAN). The party comprised a veritable who's who of West African elite: amongst others, the President was Pierre Indo; the Vice President Jean-Baptiste Songomali and the Treasurer Antoine Darlan. Boganda regarded such men with some disdain, calling them *moundjou-voko* or 'white-blacks,' but he could not deny that they held positions of some power in the region.[68] APEAN itself was short-lived: by the time Vialle ran for election again at the end of 1946, the party had already disbanded. Judging Vialle's position to be a vulnerable one, Boganda surmised that Vialle would be open both to his tutelage and grateful for his support. It seems likely that his assessment of her vulnerability lay, at least in part, in her position as a woman in a patriarchal political landscape. Boganda threw his weight behind her campaign, writing to a friend that her victory 'will bring a lot to our country. She understands the deep needs and will help me achieve our dearest desires.'[69] His support helped her win the necessary majority and she was elected as Senator.

Vialle may have been grateful for Boganda's backing but she had little intention of dedicating herself to his personal political programme. Nor did she agree with him about the best possible future for the region. Boganda considered himself to be first and foremost African and was vehemently, and understandably, anti-French despite his commitment to reform rather than immediate independence. Since he had been elected in 1946, he had become increasingly outspoken in his criticisms of French colonialism through his journal *Pour Sauver un Peuple*. His opinions had attracted the suspicions of the colonial administration as well as the ire of the Church.[70] In contrast, Vialle considered herself to be both French and African. She believed that her role as Senator was to work towards reconciling these identities; towards making them mutually constitutive rather than opposing. Much like her colleague and friend, Léopold Sédar Senghor, she was dedicated to a future France that operated more like a Federation than an empire, with each component territory recognized as equal.[71] More to the point, she considered herself perfectly positioned to work towards this end because she, unlike Boganda, was *une métisse*. She saw her *métisse* status as a gift: 'When I speak to black people, I speak with my black heart and my white mind. I say… we are not half and half, we are double. We are black and we know black, and we also know white. So we are double.'[72] As she told

Eslanda Robeson, this meant that she understood both French and African perspectives and could operate as an intermediary between the two peoples.

Only a few years later, in the subsequent election, it was apparent that many voters disagreed and saw her racial identity as a handicap rather than a gift. Her opponents focused on the fact that her father, Michel Vialle, had been not only a white French man but had been the director of the *Compagnie des Sultanats de Haut Oubangui*, one of the hated concessionary companies that had a monopoly on the Oubangui-Chari region.[73] This history loomed large as Vialle campaigned for her second term: How could the daughter of a man such as Vialle authentically represent the Oubangui-Chari region? In a letter from Jean Maberna, the governor of the Territory of Oubangui-Chari to Bernard Cornut-Gentille, the Governor General of the AEF, , Maberna summed up the situation with the comment that: 'It has been said that it is not possible to vote for Mrs. Vialle [again], she is not 100% Ubangian and you know how this particularism, we can almost say this "chauvinism," is violent at the moment…She is also reproached for being too good with the "whites" and not favoring the natives enough.'[74] When Vialle managed to retain her seat that year despite these tensions, Boganda accused the Secretary General of the Territory of distributing 400 000 francs 'to electors in order to convince them to vote for the candidate backed by the administration.'[75] His words were widely repeated and accusations of complicity dogged her for the entirety of her second term in office.

Boganda's allegations of bribery seem to have been baseless. Local politics in Oubangui-Chari were hardly beyond reproach in that regard but neither was Vialle a puppet of the French Government. From the beginning of her senatorial career she had pushed hard for the full application in the territories of the Overseas Constitution of October 1946. She was particularly concerned with ending forced labor, establishing education systems and reforming the organisation of local assemblies. A key point of contention was that Oubangui-Chari had only been allotted 25 assembly seats whilst the nearby territories of Gabon and the Congo, although less populated, each had 30 seats. Although the *indigénat* system had formally ended in 1946, certain legislative loopholes allowed colonial administrators in Central Africa to force people into labour on cotton plantations.[76] Vialle reminded her people of the work she had done in both regards in her 1952 campaign speech, declaring

‘For LIBERTY and JUSTICE I gained us the 26 seats which you currently have at the Representative Assembly. For LIBERTY and JUSTICE, I defended the Code du Travail.’[77]

Nor was Vialle afraid to stand against any attempt by the colonial administration to exercise extra-judicial powers. During the debates on the bloodily suppressed Madagascar riots of March 1947, she tabled a motion inviting the Council of the Republic not to pronounce on the request for lifting of parliamentary immunity of Malagasy elected representatives before having heard their case, to avoid an error of justice for the benefit of the colonial administration. In the December of 1951, when the Senate voted for a separate voting college for West African territories, Vialle took her place alongside a number of Antillean and African colleagues to denounce the decision. In a sweeping speech she decried the decision as 'discrimination, completely antithetical to democratic principles' and accused the Senate of 'disfiguring the... fraternal spirit of the French Republic' which the overseas territories so firmly supported. On the international stage, the French Union was perfectly willing to don this spirit, these democratic principles, as a kind of ‘carnival mask’ but had done little to make them a concrete reality. Vialle’s own election as a UN delegate, as she had remarked to Logan, seemed evidence of this play-acting and could only be condoned if it was married to concrete reform.[78]

These activities were not enough, however, to get her elected for a third term in 1952. Boganda’s continued campaign against her and accusations of being ‘too white,’ and ‘too French,’ sounded the death knell for her Senatorial career. In Paris, Vialle had far more traction than Boganda: in 1950 he had been ousted from the MRP as a result of his anti-colonial critiques and his unwillingness to conform to Church expectations. Nor was he particularly popular amongst the *métis* in the political elite of Oubangui-Chari. In November 1946, for example, the Oubanguian Council had elected to give funds to two cooperative associations to promote economic development - Georges Darlan’s Cotoncoop and Jane Vialle’s L’Espoir Oubanguien - but refused to grant Boganda’s l’Union Oubanguienne any funding.[79]

Amongst the general population, however, Boganda had a deep-seated support base more than willing to listen to Boganda’s criticisms of Vialle’s ‘loyalty to France’ and ‘inauthenticity.’ Styling himself as a messianic leader, Boganda had built a movement affirming the humanity of the local African peoples vis-à-vis French colonialism through an acute knowledge of local shamanistic

customs as well as Catholic preaching.[80] In September 1949, he had founded a party called the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa (MESAN), premised on the Sango phrase 'zo kwe zo' or 'each human being is a person.'[81] By the time of Vialle's third senatorial campaign in 1952, his party dominated the Oubanguian political landscape. In contrast to Boganda's affirmation of black humanity, Vialle attempts to work for gradual reform seemed to embody the colonial attitudes of the French administration.

Nonetheless, it is worth thinking about this characterisation of Vialle in relation to the man who did have Boganda's support and who was elected in her place to represent Oubangi-Chari, Hector Rivierez. Rivierez was a Guyanese lawyer who had trained in Paris. In November 1948 Rivierez had unsuccessfully run as the Guyanese delegate for the *Conseil de la République*. To the best of my knowledge, he had never once stepped foot in Central Africa until Boganda nominated him as a Senatorial candidate. Not only did Boganda's support of Rivierez belie his apparent public dedication to authentic central-African representation but it harked back the older French policy of placing Antillean *evolués* in colonial administrative positions. The two men did not even have a longstanding relationship: they met for the first time in 1951 in Paris at a conference of the *Ligue internationale contre le racisme and l'antisémitisme*. It is undeniable, however, that Rivierez, like Vialle before him, had the potential to bring Boganda the kind of political capital in Paris that he had hitherto been unable to muster himself. I would speculate, given Vialle's earlier comments about the gendered division of labour in the Congo, that her position as a woman in a patriarchal and male-dominated political landscape also put her at a disadvantage in a political race tethered to formulations of personal identity. Moreover, her efforts towards greater political freedom for African women were, as she herself had admitted, not popular amongst many of the men in her electorate.[82]

Electoral defeat did not spell the end of Vialle's efforts towards colonial reform and rights for women through her work with the AFUF. She intended to run against Rivieriez in the subsequent elections but her career was cut short by a fatal plane crash in February 1953.[83] That same year, on May 23, she was awarded the Order of the Nation, an honour bestowed for 'services or acts of exceptional devotion, accomplished for France at the risk of one's life.' The French Fourth Republic was posthumously claiming her for its own. In her obituary, the *Bulletin of the International Women's*

Council described Vialle as 'the daughter of two civilizations.' Vialle herself had embraced this position through her repeated identification as "une métisse." For her, however, this meant that she had the potential to act as a bridge uniting both identities and sought a programme of unifying political reform at the level of the regional, national-imperial and international. Whilst she did not understand the categories of "African" and "French" to be antithetical, she operated in a socio-political context that tended to portray her as either an example of the virtues of exposure to the French Republican system or as a traitor whose values did not map onto those of the people she sought to represent. Moreover, as a woman, she was part of an international community largely elided from discussions of political reform at all levels. In mapping out how she understood her identity and political career in relation to this context, I have shown how her experience reflects the fiercely contested nature of categories of race, nation and gender in this post-war moment. In so doing, I have also fleshed out a new section of the history of women's engagement with political and international thought in the mid-twentieth century.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] In the mid-1980s, Jean-Dominique Pénel collected some of her speeches and writings in an anthology on three political figures from the Oubangui-Chari region. *Barthélémy Boganda, Antoine Darlan, Jane Vialle: Trois représentants Oubanquiens du deuxième collège 1946–1952* (Bangui: 1985). He also wrote an unpublished study of Oubanguian representatives at the Ligue contre le Racisme: 'Les représentants Oubanguiens à la Ligue contre le Racisme (LICA), 1947–1959 (R. Maran, B. Boganda, J. Vialle, H. Rivierez): textes présentés le 21 janvier 1987 à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Bangui.' (unpublished study, accessible at Archives Générales Spiritaines, Chevilly-Larue, SF-258/113491). More recently, historian Lorelle Semley has written on Vialle, reading her within the framework of the citizenship debates of the French Fourth Union. Here, I build upon Semley's work to explore the way that Vialle's political career played out at the interstices of national, racial and gender belonging: Lorelle Semley, 'Women Citizens of the French Union Unite! Jane Vialle's Post-War Crusade,' in (eds) Rachel G. Fuchs, Anne Epstein, *Gender and Citizenship: in Historical and Transnational Perspective*, (London, 2017), 186-210. C. Kinata has also written a piece recovering Vialle's place in Congolese history. The article argues that Vialle carved out success in a masculine space but does not attend to the way that Vialle envisaged female politicians occupying a different role to men: C. Kinata, 'Une Femme en politique: Jane Vialle (1945-1953),' *Annales de l'Université Marien NGOUABI*, 11, 1 (2010) : 91-104.

[3] See: Glenda Sluga, '"Add Women and Stir": Gender and the History of International Politics', *Humanities Australia* 5 (2014): 65–72; Amril Sunith and Glenda Sluga, 'New Histories of the United Nations,' *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 251-74.

[4] *Towards an Intellectual History of Black Women* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 3. See also Imaobong D. Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* (Oakland, 2018), 1-10.

[5] Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time: Négritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, 2015), 1-2.

[6] Here I am responding to Dipesh Chakrabarty's critique of Eurocentric historicism 'first in the West, then elsewhere.': Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (Princeton, 2000): 6.

[7] Economic and Social Council, Notes on the Terms of the Ad-Hoc Committee on Slavery (Memorandum submitted by the Secretary-General, UN Doc E/AC.33/4, 3 February 1950, 3-4.
[8] A.I. Goldberg, 'UN Experts Study Extent of Slavery in World Today,' *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* 14 June 1950, 10.
[9] First Session, Lake Success, Monday 13 February, 1950, E/AC.33/SR.1, Duke Rubenstein Library, Part 1, 8.
[10] AFUF, 'Statuts,' Bulletins d'informations, 1948, 12 D 1/121, Boîte 3, Fonds Margeurite Pinchon-Landry, Association des Femmes de l'Union Française et de la Metroploe, Archives de la Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
[11] As Giusi Russo has shown in her case studies of British territories in Africa, the 'directness' of this relationship was contingent upon race and gender politics. I argue that the French case was analagous: 'Contested Practices, Human Rights, and Colonial Bodies in Pain: The UN's Gender Politics in Africa, 1940s–1960s'Gender & History, 30, 1 (2018), 196–213.
[12] Giusi Russo, 'Contested Practices,' 202-203.
[13] Commission on the Status of Women, Information concerning the status of women in Trust Territories contained in Annual Reports made by the Administrating Authorities. 4th Session, 7 April 1950, document E/CN.6/138. Dag Hammarskjöld Library, New York City, NY.
[14] E/CN.6/138, 1950. Giusi Russo also makes this point in 'Contested Practices, Human Rights, and Colonial Bodies in Pain,' 196–213.
[15] Jane Vialle,' Provisional Summary Record of the Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Slavery,' Tuesday, 14 February 1950, Lake Success, E/AC.33/SR.3, 8.
[16] Giusi Russo, 'Contested Practices, Human Rights, and Colonial Bodies in Pain,' 200. See also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: 1994) and Susan Pedersen, 'National Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: The Sexual Politics of Colonial Policy-Making,' *Journal of Modern History*, 63 (1991): 647-680.
[17] 'Lefaucheux, Marie-Hélène,' *Women in World History, Vol. 9: Laa-Lyud,* (Waterford, CT, 2001), 305.
[18] Giusi Russo, 'Contested Practices,' 211.
[19] Imaobong Umoren, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles*, (Oakland, 2018), 83.
[20] For example, only 4 of the 160 signatories to the UN Charter were women.
[21] Samuel Moyn has made this argument in relation to human rights more broadly: *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass, 2010), 84-119; 'Imperialism, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Human Rights,' in ed. Akire Iriye, Petra Goedde and William I. Hitchcock, *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century: An International History*, (New York, 2012), 159-178.
[22] George Barrett, 'BELGIUM BIDS U.N. UNCOVER SLAVERY: Urges Expert Group to Report on ...' *New York Times* Oct 23, 1948; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 3.
[23] 'WHAT THE SLAVERS DIDN'T EXPECT,' *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963);* Dec 23, 1946; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune, 14.
[24] A.I. Goldberg, 'Slavery Study Carried on in Secret,' *Washington Post*, 21 May 1950, B2.
[25] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report of the First Session of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Slavery to the Economic and SOcia Council UN Doc. E/AC. 33/9, 27 March, 1950, 11.
[26] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Slavery (Second Session), UN Doc E/1998, e/ac.33/13, 4May 1951, 16-17.
[27] United Nations Economic and Social Council, Report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee on Slavery, 19.
[28] Rayford W. Logan, November 16, Folder 2, Box 9, 50, Rayford W. Logan Diary: European Trip Oct. 31/51-January 1/52, RWL, LOC.
[29] Andrée Dore-Audibert et Annie Morzelle, *Révolutionnaires silencieuses au XXe*, (Paris: 1991), 123.
[30] Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, 90.
[31] Jane Vialle to Eslanda Robeson, Africa Diary no.2, 4 July 1946, Eslanda Robeson Collection, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, 123-124.
[32] 'Hunter College Students Hear Senator Jane Vialle of Africa,' *New York Amsterdam News,* May 5, 1951, 18.
[33] Jane Vialle, 'Senator Jane Vialle,' 63.
[34] Vialle had married a French businessman, Marcel Beauvais, in 1927, but divorced him in 1940 and retained her father's name. She never remarried nor had children.
[35] Jane Vialle, 'Senator Jane Vialle,' 63.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Jane Vialle, 'Femmes Africaines/African Women,' *Civilisations* 1:4 (1951): 58.
[38] Geneviève Dermenjian, 'Introduction' and "La conception de la femme et son évolution," in *Femmes, famille et action ouvrière: Pratiques et résponsabilités féminines dans les mouvements familiaux populaire (1935–1958*), ed. Dermenjian (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Groupement pour la recherche sur les mouvements familiaux, 1991), 15–16

[39] Patrick Weil, *La France et ses étrangers: L'aventure d'une politique de l'immigration, 1938–1991* (Paris, 1991), 54–55. For more on ideas of French womanhood and their connection to political rights see Herrick Chapman, 'Family Matters: Expertise, Gender, and Voice in the Social Security State,' in *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2018), 109-163; Anne Cova, Maternité et droits des femmes en France (XIXe–XXe siècles) (Paris, 1997); Susan Foley, Women in France since 1789: The Meaning of Difference (New York, 2004).
[40] Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton, 2014), 124-164.
[41] See Félix F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946–1974* (Michigan, 2016), 78; Jill Leonard, "Martinican Women and the French State: Race and Gender in the Construction of the Colonial Relation." PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1997," 88–89.
[42] Sylvie Chaperon, "'Feminism Is Dead. Long Live Feminism!' The Women's Movement in France at the Liberation, 1944–1946," in *When the War Was Over: Women, War and Peace in Europe, 1940–1956*, ed. Claire Duchen and Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann (London, 2000), 155.
[43] Jane Vialle, 'Senator Jane Vialle,' 63.
[44] Ibid.
[45] William Guéraiche, *Les femmes et la République. Essai sur la répartition du pouvoir de 1943 à 1979*, (Paris, 1999) 70.
[46] Profession de foi de Jane Vialle, pour les élections de 1952, Bangui, 9 mai 1952, Archives d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en- Provence, 21D22.
[47] William Guéraiche, *Les femmes et la République. Essai sur la répartition du pouvoir de 1943 à 1979*, (Paris, 1999) 70.
[48] George S. Schuyler, 'Views and Reviews: How the Communists Take Over African Students,' *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 1950, 15.
[49] Jane Vialle, 'Compte Rendu de l'Activité A.F.U.F.,' *Journal de L'AFUF*, 2 (Janvier-Fevrier 1947) reprinted in J.D. Penel, *Barthélémy Boganda, Antoine Darlan, Jane Vialle*, 137.
[50] *Journal Officiel de la République Française (JORF), Débats Parliamentaires, Conseil de la République*, 31 Janvier 1950, 436-442.
[51]American Consul General, Dakar to Department of State, 'USIE Country Paper on French West Africa: Suggested Revisions,' April 26, 1950 (Original dated April 5), File 511.51T/4-2650, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.
[52] See Tyler Stovall, *Paris noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston, Mass. 1996); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Practice of Diaspora (Cambridge, Mass., 2003);* Sarah Claire Dunstan, 'A Tale of Two Republics: Race, Rights and Revolution, 1919-1963,' (PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2018).
[53] Hearings Regarding Communist Infiltration of Minority Groups, Committee on Un-American Activities, US House of Representatives, 81st Congress, 1st Session, July 13, 14, 17, 1949, (Washington : U.S. Govt. Print. Off, 1949-50); See also Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s*, (New York, 2013), 3.
[54] For more on the African American mobilization of francophone politicians see Sarah Claire Dunstan, 'A Tale of Two Republics: Race, Rights and Revolution, 1919-1963,'. On African American internationalism in the Cold War context and the community's broad movement away from human rights to civil rights discourses, see Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: the United Nations and the African American Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena*, (Cambridge, Mass.,: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[55] 'Negro History Week Kit,' *The Baltimore Afro-American*, January 13, 1951, 3.
[56] 'Senator Jane Vialle,' *Crisis* 57:4 (April 1940): 208.
[57] 'Senator Jane Vialle,' 268.
[58] This was not unusual at this time. Jane Rhodes has written on the ways that the black American press presented women as 'African American moral standard bearers… ultimately responsible for racial progress.': 'Pedagogies of Respectability: Race, Media, and Black Womanhood in the Early 20th Century,' *Souls*, 18:2-4, (2016), 203. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham and Victoria Wolcott have shown how elite or middle class black women themselves constructed their identities in terms of respectability in order to act as representatives of the race: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 186; Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6.

[59] Victor Bissingué, *Barthélemy Boganda : héritage et vision* (Paris, 2018) ; Jean-Dominique Pénel, *Barthélémy Boganda, Antoine Darlan, Jane Vialle ;* Jean-Dominique Pénel, *Barthélemy Boganda: Ecrits et discours 1946-1951 : la lutte décisive* (Paris, 1995) ; Frédéric Sabattier, 'Barthélemy Boganda, la République centrafricaine et les Etats-Unis de l'Afrique Latine: Une tentative d'unification de l'Afrique Centrale,' (Mémoire de maîtrise : Histoire : Paris 4 Sorbonne : 1998).

[60] J.N. Bregeon, *Une Rêve d'afrique*, 1998. See also William B. Cohen, *Rulers of Empire, the French Colonial Service in Africa* (Stanford, 1971).

[61] C. Coquery-Vidrovich, *Le Congo au temps de grandes compagnies concessionaires, 1890-1930*, (Paris: Mouton, 1972).

[62] For studies of violence and revolt in the region see: Philip Burnham and Thomas Christensen, 'Karnu's Message and the 'War of the Hoe Handle': Interpreting a Central African Resistance Movement,' Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, 53, 4 (1983), 3- 22; Thomas O'Toole, 'The 1928-1931 Gbaya Insurrection in Ubangui-Shari: Messianic Movement or Village Self-Defense?,' *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 18:2 (1984): 329-44.More generally Jean Suret-Canale, *French Colonialism in Tropical Africa* (London, 1971.)

[63] Andre Gide, *Voyage au Congo* (Paris, 1927).

[64] Jean-Dominique Penel, 'Sept tentatives, entre 1949 et 1953, pour lever « l'immunité parlementaire » de B. Boganda, député du deuxième collège de l'Oubangui-Chari,' *Civilisations : Revue internationale d'anthropologie et de sciences humaines*, 41 (1993) : 443.

[65] J.D. Penel, 'Sept Tentatives, entre 1949 et 1953, pour lever 'l'immunité parliamentaire' de B.Boganda, Députe de deuxième college de L'Ouganbui-Chari,' *Civilisations*, 41, 1/2, (1993), 444.

[66] For more on this see : Côme Kinata, 'Barthélémy Boganda et l'Eglise catholique en Oubangui-Chari,' *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 191 (2008), 549–565.

[67] Lettre de Mgr Grandin au Père Muller à Bangassou, 20 octobre 1946 as cited in Jean-Dominique Pénel, *La Lutte décisive. Barthélémy Boganda : écrits et discours, 1946-1951* (Paris, 1995), 106.

[68] Richard Bradshaw, Juan Fandos-Rius, *Historical Dictionary of the Central African Republic*, (London, 2016), 256.

[69] Barthélémy Boganda to Abel Goumba, Paris 3 mars 1947, as cited in Jean-Dominique Pénel, *La Lutte décisive*, 121.

[70] See Boganda's editorials in issues 5 and 6 of *Pour Sauver un Peuple*, extracts of which were reprinted in *L'Humanité*'s August 16th, 1949 issue. For evidence of the opposition to Boganda, see the campaign conducted against him in the colonial journal, *Climats*. Beginning with the September 2 issue in 1949 through to a defamation suit from Boganda in 1953, the journal made regular attacks on Boganda and his politics.

[71] On Senghor's hopes for a federated France see Gary Wilder, *Freedom Time*, 49-73.

[72] Jane Vialle to Eslanda Robeson, Africa Diary no.2, 4 July 1946, 127, Eslanda Robeson Collection, Moorland Spingarn Research Center.

[73] Founded in 1899, the company had a monopoly on the Oubangui-Chari region and operated to commercialised the the ivory and the rubber harvested: Catherine Coquery-Vidritch, *Le Congo au temps des compagnies concessionaires*, 407-411; 474-475.

[74] Lettre du Gouverneur p.i. Chef du Territoire de l'Oubangui-Chari au Haut Commissaire de la République, Gouverneur, Gouverner général de l'AEF du 13 septembre 1948, Archives Aix, 48 D3.

[75] In the sixth issue of *Pour Sauver un Peuple* Boganda accused the Secretary General of the Territory of having distributed 400 000 F 'to voters in order to persuade them to cast their ballot for the candidate backed by the colonial administration.' As cited in Jean-Dominique Pénel, *La Lutte decisive*, 214.

[76] Colonial administrators in the region showed a deep reluctance to alter their practices in the post-war period, despite regular reprimands from the Governor-General of the AEF. See for example: Le Gouverneur Général de la France d'Outre-Mer, Haut-Commissaire de la République en Afrique Equatoriale Française, Brazzaville, to M. le Gouverneur. Chef du Territoire de l'Oubangui-Chari, Bangui (Analyse Rapports entre Européens et Africains) (29 May 1954), Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, Aix-en-Provence, AffPol/2254. For a précis of the development of cotton in the region see: Eric De Dampierre, 'Coton noir, café blanc: Deux cultures du Haut-Oubangui à la veille de la loi-cadre,' *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* Vol. 1, Cahier 2 (May, 1960): 128-147 espec. 130-133. For more on repercussions of forced cotton labor see: Allen Isaacman, 'Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa,' *African Studies Review*, 33: 2 (Sep., 1990), pp. 1-120. Especially, 36-37.

[77] Profession de foi de Jane Vialle, pour les élections de 1952, Bangui, 9 mai 1952.

[78] JORF, *Débats Parlémentaires, Conseils de la République*, 30 January 1951, 3607.

[79] Pierre Kalck, *Historical Dictionary of the Central African Republic*, trans. Xavier-Samuel Kalck, (Lanham, 2005), 179.

[80]Robert Coughlan, 'Black Africa Surges to Independence,' *Life*, 26 January 1959, 100; 'CENTRAL AFRICA: Death of a Strongman,' *Time*, Monday, Apr. 13, 1959.

[81] This particular saying remains part of the Central African Republic's political framework as the country's 2004 Constitution includes the phrase: 'Animated by the wish of assuring to man his dignity with respect to the

principle of "ZO KWE ZO" enunciated by the Founder of the Central African Republic Barthélemy Boganda': in ed. *Christoph Heyns, Human Rights Law in Africa (The Hague 1999), 77. It also speaks to a dynamic Western philosophical and political traditions posit Africa, and by extension Africans, as possessing traditions and experiences which are not properly human: Achilles Mbembe, On the Post-Colony (Berkeley, 2001), 1-23.*

[82] Jane Vialle to Eslanda Robeson, Africa Diary no.2, 4 July 1946, Eslanda Robeson Collection, Moorland Spingarn Research Center, 123-124.

[83] Coincidentally, three of the key players in the history this article covers died in plane crashes. Other than Jane Vialle, Marie Hélène Lefaucheux died when her Eastern Airlines Flight 304 crashed en route to New York from New Orleans. Barthélémy Boganda, perhaps most famously, died when the plane he was travelling in exploded mid-air en route to Bangui just as he was poised to become the first President of an independent Central African Republic. Whilst there was no official inquiry into the explosion, there is some evidence to suggest it might have been sabotage: Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford, 2009), 103, 393.