

**May 16, 2017
Salle du Conseil A
Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme
54 Boulevard Raspail, 75006 Paris**

Slavery, Race, Revolutionary Abolitionism Yesterday and Today

**Françoise Vergès (Collège d'études mondiales/FMSH)
and Marcus Rediker (University of Pittsburgh)**

At its heart the abolition of slavery has always been a revolutionary project. It sought to destroy slavery and the power of the slave-owning ruling class; to put an end to racism and colonialism; and to establish freedom and equality. This struggle, which was historically embodied in the Haitian Revolution, informed marooning, insurrections, the Underground Railroad, and later, the struggle against lynching and forced labor.

Rebellious slaves were of course the first abolitionists, but peoples of European descent joined the fight. The struggle against slavery influenced a variety of other movements, as, for example, workers battled capitalist exploitation and women fought for rights and universal suffrage. Movements against prisons and capital punishment now claim the mantle of abolitionism.

At the same time a more conservative element of abolitionism was actively complicit with post-slavery colonization and the politics of cultural assimilation, reparations for slave-owners, and a failure to protect the rights of freedmen and women. This side of abolitionism represented another disciplinary practice.

This workshop will evaluate the past, present, and future of revolutionary abolitionism, in France and around the world, highlighting new areas of scholarship in the continuities of slavery, race, and resistance from the origins of anti-slavery to Black Lives Matter. Our goal is to assess the legacy of revolutionary abolitionism and its relevance for current struggles.

Program

9:30: Coffee

9:45: Welcome Olivier Bouin, director of Collège d'études mondiales

10:00-12 noon:

Abolitionism in the United States

Moderator: Olivier Bouin

Marcus Rediker (University of Pittsburgh): "Benjamin Lay and the Origins of Revolutionary Abolitionism"

Manisha Sinha (University of Connecticut): "A Radical New History of Abolition"

Jesse Olsavsky (University of Pittsburgh): "Vigilance Committees, Revolutionary Abolitionism, and Their Legacies"

Jonathan Daniel Wells (University of Michigan): "Abolition, Kidnapping, and the Sectional Crisis in Antebellum America."

12 noon-1:00 pm:

Lunch

1:00-3:00 pm:

Abolitionism in France

Moderator: Françoise Vergès

Patrick Samzun (Lyon), "'The Cry of a Rebellious Slave,' Joseph Déjacque, a French anarchist abolitionist in the US (1855-1861)"

Nelly Schmidt (CNRS), "Past and Present, Abolitionism of Slavery: Forces and Weaknesses"

Silyane Larcher (CNRS), "The Dead Seize the Living: Race and Colonial Government after the Abolition of 1848 in the Old Colonies"

Florence Gauthier (Université Paris Diderot), "In 1804, the Republic of Haiti, Born of the Refusal of Colonialism, Founded its Independence on Equality of Skin Tone"

3:00- 3:30 pm:

Break

3:30 – 5:30 pm:

The Afterlife of Abolition: Race, Prisons, Police

Moderator: Marcus Rediker

Françoise Vergès (CEM- FMSH): "French Abolitionism, Imperialism and Race"

Heather Ann Thompson (University of Michigan): "From the Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 to Today's Prison Abolition Movement: Lessons Learned and Lost"

Michael West (SUNY- Binghamton): "Talking Abolition, Talking Black Power: The Legacy of Emancipation in the Long 1960s"

Christina Heatherton (Trinity College- Hartford): "Abolition and the World We Want"

6:00 pm:

Cocktail

Biographies of participants

Florence Gauthier (Université Paris 7-Diderot), MdC, HDR in Modern History has published *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en révolution, 1789-1795-1802*, (Paris: Syllepse 1992/2014); *Périssement des colonies plutôt qu'un principe ! Contributions à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage, 1789-1804*, (Paris: Colloque de Paris 1998; Paris, Société des Etudes Robespierriennes, 2002) and *L'Aristocratie de l'épiderme. Le combat des Citoyens de couleur, 1789-1791* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2007).

Christina Heatherton is Assistant Professor of American Studies at Trinity College, co-editor with Jordan T. Camp of *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter* (Verso, 2016), and author of *The Color Line and the Class Struggle: The Mexican Revolution, Internationalism, and the American Century* (University of California Press, forthcoming). Her work appears in places such as *American Quarterly*, *Interface*, *The Rising Tides of Color: Race, State Violence, and Radical Movements Across the Pacific*, edited by Moon-Ho Jung (University of Washington Press, 2014) and will appear in venues such as *Feminists Rethink the Neoliberal State: Inequality, Exclusion and Change*, edited by Leela Fernandes (New York University Press, forthcoming) and *Futures of Black Radicalism*, edited by Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (Verso Books, forthcoming).

Silyane Larcher is researcher in Political Science at CNRS (URMIS). She is the author of *L'autre citoyen. L'idéal républicain et les Antilles après l'esclavage* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014) and with Felix Germain, *Black French Women and the Struggle for Equality* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, forthcoming 2017).

Jesse Olsavsky is a PhD. student at the University of Pittsburgh. He is currently working on a dissertation titled, "'Fire and Sword Will Do More Good': Fugitive Slaves, Vigilance Committees, and the Rise of Revolutionary Abolitionism, 1835-1860."

Marcus Rediker is Distinguished Professor of Atlantic History at the University of Pittsburgh and Senior Research Fellow at the Collège d'études mondiales. His ten books have won numerous prizes and appeared in fourteen languages. His collection of essays *Les Hors-la-loi de l'Atlantique: Pirates, mutins et filibustiers* will be published by Éditions du Seuil in May 2017. His next book, *The Fearless Benjamin Lay: The Quaker Dwarf who became the First Revolutionary Abolitionist*, which will be published by Beacon Press in September 2017 and in French by Éditions du Seuil in 2018. He is also the producer of an award-winning documentary film, *Ghosts of Amistad*, directed by Tony Buba, about the popular memory of the Amistad rebellion of 1839 in Sierra Leone.

Patrick Samzun, PhD, is currently teaching philosophy in a French suburban high school (Lycée Marcel Sembat, Vénissieux, Rhône). He is also an associate researcher at the University of Grenoble (UMR LITT&ARTS, CNRS 5316). After working on socialist utopian thinking ("12 + 1 recettes pour innover en amour," *Critique*, n° spécial "Fourier revient," January-February 2015, 27-38), he is now dedicating his research to the anarchist poet Joseph Déjacque, "Between Wrath and Harmony: a biolitical journey through L'Humanisphère, Joseph Déjacque's 'anarchic utopia' (1857)," *Utopian Studies*, 27(2016).

Nelly Schmidt is a historian, director of research at CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) at Paris-Sorbonne University IV and president of the International Scientific Committee of the UNESCO Slave Route Project: Resistance, Freedom and Heritage. She has worked on the history of slavery, abolition and abolitionists and European colonial policy between the 18th and 20th centuries. Notable publications include *Victor Schœlcher* (Paris, Fayard, 1994), *Abolitionnistes de l'esclavage et réformateurs des colonies* (Paris, Karthala, 2000), *Les abolitions de l'esclavage. Cinq siècles de combats, XVIe-XXe siècles* (Paris, Fayard 2005), *La France a-t-elle aboli l'esclavage? Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane,*

1830-1935 (Paris, Perrin, 2009) and the virtual exposition *Les abolitions de l'esclavage*, French National Archives, 2014. To be published in 2017 : *Esclavage et liberté aux Caraïbes ; L'abolitionnisme de l'esclavage. Forces et faiblesses*.

Manisha Sinha is the Draper Chair in American History at the University of Connecticut. She is the author most recently of *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, long listed for the National Book Award and winner of the Avery Craven prize from the Organization of American Historians. Her research interests lie in the transnational histories of slavery and abolition and the history of the US Civil War and Reconstruction and she is currently working on a book on Reconstruction.

Heather Ann Thompson is a Professor of History at the University of Michigan. She writes on the history of prisons and policing for both scholarly and popular publications, and is the author of the *Blood in the Water: the Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy* as well as *Whose Detroit: Politics, Labor and Race in a Modern American City*. *Blood in the Water* has recently been awarded the Ridenhour Book Prize, the J. Willard Hurst Prize, a book prize from the New York City Bar Association, the Bancroft Prize in American History, and the Pulitzer Prize in History.

Françoise Vergès is Chair Global South(s), Collège d'études mondiales, FMSH, Paris. She obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Berkeley in Political Theory (1995). She has written extensively on memories of colonial slavery and colonialism, postcolonial psychiatry, museography, decolonial feminism and antiracism. Vergès is also a curator and works with filmmakers and artists (Isaac Julien, Yinka Shonibare, Arnaud Ngatcha, Jean-François Boclé, Kader Attia...). She was project advisor for Documenta 1, organized for the 2012 Paris Triennial, the program "The Slave in Le Louvre," and is the author of films on Aimé Césaire and Maryse Condé. Her last book *Le ventre des femmes. Capitalisme, racialisation, féminisme* (Albin Michel, 2017) explores the history of the racialized regime of women's womb by capitalism.

Jonathan Daniel Wells, Ph.D., is Professor of History in the Departments of Afroamerican and African Studies and History, and Director of the Residential College, at the University of Michigan. He is the author or editor of ten books, including *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class: 1820-1861* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004); *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); *The Southern Middle Class in the Long Nineteenth Century* (LSU Press, 2011); *The Routledge History of Nineteenth-Century America* (2017) and *A House Divided: The Civil War and Nineteenth-Century America* (second ed., Routledge, 2016) in addition to articles in academic journals and chapters in books. He is currently working on two book projects related to the Fugitive Slave Crisis in the antebellum North.

Michael O. West is Professor of Sociology, Africana Studies and History (PhD in history) at Binghamton University as well as Chair of Sociology. He has published broadly in the fields of southern African history, pan-Africanism, African studies, African diaspora studies, and African American studies. His works include the following authored and co-edited books: *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1965*; *Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa*; *From Toussaint to Tupac: The Black International Since the Age of Revolution*. His current research centers on the Black Power movement in global perspectives.