

PART III

Translation: France Through Race: Beyond Colorblindness

Editorial

Samuel Lamontagne

For this second edition of *France through Race: Beyond Colorblindness*, we have three selected texts, each from different authors: Amandine Gay, Joao Gabriel, and Olivier Marboeuf. While starting from widely broadcast public events—the Césars ceremony, the Miss France national competition, and the soccer World Cup—they depart from representational issues to develop unique critical perspectives. Published on the blogs of their respective authors, these texts are written in direct and personal styles, which adds to the pertinence of their analyses.

Amandine Gay’s article, “Césars, Creation, Independence, and Radicality,” begins with the Césars ceremony—the French equivalent of the Oscars—to interrogate what it means for racialized people to suddenly receive awards in French cinema. From there, she questions the political relationship between creative freedom and institutional funding in France. She particularly critiques how, in order to get funding, racialized filmmakers need to conform to dominant racial representations. Then, she focuses on the political stakes and pragmatic material consequences of the independent path chosen by racialized filmmakers in France. Her article not only critically reveals the systemic marginalization of racialized filmmaking, but also, through a grounded outlook, points out the many ambiguities, complexities, and concessions inherent to an independent position. Finally, as her analysis is based on a number of examples, Gay challenges the erasure of French racialized cinema. Gay, who is a filmmaker as well as a scholar, directed *Speak Up: Make Your Way* (2017), a documentary film foregrounding Black French women experiences. Her second documentary, *A Story of One’s Own*, an archival film that portrays five transnational adoptee’s lives, was released in French theaters in June. Her first book, *Une poupée en chocolat*, was published in September 2021 by Éditions La Découverte. More of her writings can be found on her blog, *Badassafrofem*.¹

Joao Gabriel’s article, “For an Anti-Colonial Reading on the Racist Polemic on Miss France,” critiques the racist logic of the two main reactions to the election of a Black winner from French

Guiana in 2016. While one side decried the election of Alicia Ayllies as illegitimate because “French Guiana is not France,” the other side, supposedly progressive for its inclusiveness, argued that her election was indeed legitimate because “French Guiana is France,” which is problematic because it introduces a difference between two Blacknesses, one that would be tolerated (French Guianians and French West Indians), and the other that would be illegitimate (Africans). Despite their political opposition, Gabriel shows how both reactions are in fact embedded in colonial legacies, which he focuses on deconstructing. Taking this polemic around representation—the Black presence as a national problem—as an entry point into the analysis, he then offers a third perspective, grounded in the intersection between nationalism and Pan-African solidarity. Through this perspective, he urges the removal of European domination through the necessary systemic transformation of post-colonial societies. Gabriel is a Ph.D. candidate in History at Johns Hopkins University, a Pan-African activist, and founder of *Le blog de Joao*.²

Olivier Marboeuf’s article, “The Predator in Love,” reflects on the 2018 soccer World Cup finale, in which the French team won the title of world champion. Focusing on the immediate aftermath of the victory, Marboeuf offers a subtle analysis of Emmanuel Macron’s excessive display of affection to the French players. Critically examining the French president’s show as a personified embodiment of the State, he questions the potential role of emotions in serving a particular ideological project. In this sense, by understanding Macron’s show as a capture, an appropriation, he further links it to an extractivist and colonial logic, applied to the realm of emotions. This over-the-top emotional display, this staged intimacy, has been the opportunity for Macron to appropriate this victory—an opportunity to signal it was his and therefore the State’s, and not only the one of mostly racialized French players. It was, he argues, a strategy of capture to prevent this victory from running away from the national narrative. Marboeuf, an author, performer, curator, and film producer, founded the Espace Khiasma center in the Lilas, in the periphery of Paris. At Khiasma, which he directed from 2004 to 2018, he developed a program focusing on minority representations and post-colonial situations through screenings, debates, performances, and collaborative projects in the north-east of Paris. His most recent writings are available on his blog, *Toujours Debout*.³

Notes

- ¹ <https://badassafroem.wordpress.com/>
- ² <https://joagabriell.com/>
- ³ <https://olivier-marboeuf.com/>

