Kreyòl anba Duvalier, 1957–1986

A Circuitous Solution to the Creole Problem?

Matthew Robertshaw

York University

mattjrobertshaw@gmail.com

Abstract

The Duvalier presidencies were a devastating chapter in the history of Haiti. There is, however, one aspect of Haitian society that went through unexpected progress in the midst of these despotic regimes. Haitian Creole has long been excluded from formal and written contexts, despite being the only language common to all Haitians. The debate over whether Creole should be used in formal contexts for the sake of the country's development and democratization began in earnest at the start of the twentieth century but was far from being resolved when François Duvalier came to power in 1957. Surprisingly, perceptions of Creole changed drastically during the Duvalier era, so that by the time Jean-Claude Duvalier fell from power in 1986 the status of Creole had improved markedly, so much that it had become typical for Haitians to use the language, along with French, in virtually all contexts.

Keywords

Haiti – language rights – Duvalier – literature – diaspora – Creole – Kreyòl – education

...

Nou di ke kréol pa doué ékri gnou lot jan ke fransé. Tou sa, se blag ... Nou pase toua zan lékol pou nou aprann ke ["an, en, ant, ent"] fè an. Tou sa se pèdu tan ... Si sé tout bagay sa-a yo ké nou vlé pou gnou adult ki pa gin tan pou li pèdu, ale chita lékol aprann, nou se gnou bann ransè ... Si dépi dizuitsankat nou té ékri pou pèp-la nan gnou jan pi fasil, pèp la ta konnin li. Bay moun la pè, mété literatu fransé sou kote jouk nou kapab fè gingnin souasant kenz pou san moun nan pei-a konnin li ... Pèp la bezouin li e li

bezouin konprann sa li li e sa li tandé ... Moun pa doué fè edukasyon gnou
pèp nan gnou lang ki pa lang li.¹

ANONYMOUS, *Haiti Sun*, 1957

• • •

The use of Kreyòl, as the common spoken language of 90 percent of the
population, is permitted in schools as a tool and object of instruction.²

Bernard Reform of 1979, Article 1

• •
•

By any measure, the Duvalier era was an exceptionally devastating chapter in Haiti's tumultuous history. After his election on a noiriste and populist platform on September 22, 1957, François Duvalier proceeded to expand the power of the Executive, gradually eroding the strength and independence of all other institutions in the republic (Trouillot 1990:170–73). He crippled the legislature and judiciary along with the military and the Catholic Church. He decimated the press and set up a state-run media. He exercised an unprecedented degree of state-sanctioned violence through his paramilitary Tonton Macoutes. Purges were severe and seemingly arbitrary, resulting in an intense climate of terror (Trouillot 1990:169). Thousands of intellectuals and professionals went into exile and were soon followed by hundreds of thousands of working-class Haitians. Duvalier named himself President for Life in 1964, and even his death in 1971 did not end his stranglehold on the nation. Nineteen-year-old Jean-Claude Duvalier succeeded his father and, despite the exhausted population's initial hopes for change, the totalitarian system remained intact until the younger Duvalier was finally ousted in 1986. Altogether, the Duvalier dynasty executed tens of thousands of Haitians, triggered the exodus of

1 Translation: You say Kreyòl must be written like French. What a joke ... You spend three years in school to learn that “*an, en, ant, ent*” are pronounced *an*. What a waste of time ... If that's the kind of thing you want an adult with no time to waste to go to school and learn, you are a bunch of fools ... If we had written for the people in a simpler method since 1804, the people would know how to read ... Give them a break, put French literature aside until we are able to achieve 75 percent literacy ... The people must not be educated in a language that is not their own.

2 This and all translations from French and Kreyòl are my own.

as much as 15 percent of the population, and amounted to nearly 30 years of unrelenting devastation (Dubois 2012:354; Trouillot 1990:163–84).

All of this is well documented. Less well understood is the process by which one aspect of Haitian society experienced unanticipated and (for the Duvaliers) unintended progress during this unhappy chapter in the country's history. It is clear that attitudes toward and usage of the Haitian Creole language (known as "Kreyòl" in Haiti) went through a rapid period of change during the Duvalier era. This article tracks the changing roles and perceptions of Kreyòl in Haiti and in the diaspora over the course of the two Duvalier presidencies (1957–86), and argues that in spite of their efforts to maintain the country's linguistic hierarchy, which had long been a reliable mechanism for the prevention of social progress, the Duvaliers failed to thwart the many changes taking place in Haiti and abroad that were establishing a widespread view of Kreyòl as a sophisticated language that is capable of complex expression and suitable for formal and written contexts.

A sustained movement to legitimize Kreyòl dates back to the start of the twentieth century.³ The language is the mother tongue of the entire population of Haiti and is as different from French as Italian is from Latin. Yet linguists, educators, and policymakers in Haiti and elsewhere have historically treated Kreyòl and other "creole" or "patois" languages as vulgar dialects of European tongues.⁴ In Haiti, French competence has traditionally acted as a prerequisite for political participation and for success in education and has thus served to exclude the masses from national discourses. After a fitful start in the first decades of the twentieth century, and setbacks under the U.S. occupation (1915–34), the Kreyòl legitimization project accelerated apace in the postoccupation period in the form of exhaustive linguistic analyses, the first attempts at a standard orthography, experiments in mother-tongue instruction, and the flourishing of Kreyòl-language literature. Yet obstinate arguments against the wider use of Kreyòl and divisions within the pro-Kreyòl camp meant that all these advances failed to produce a linguistic revolution. By 1957 all efforts were temporarily curtailed after the election of François Duvalier. Curiously, however, in spite of the regressive and dislocating nature of the back-to-back Duvalier regimes, the perceptions and status of Kreyòl experienced unprecedented and unexpected progress.

3 See Robertshaw 2019. There had, moreover, been occasional voices calling for the use of Kreyòl in education dating all the way back to the earliest years of independence. A sustained pro-Kreyòl movement, however, began with the twentieth century.

4 See DeGraff 2003 for a critique.

In the following section, it will be shown how despite François Duvalier's neglect for education and lack of concern for the country's impoverished masses, the characteristics of his regime translated into an extension of the use of Kreyòl in Haitian society out of sheer necessity. Furthermore, I will demonstrate how the unintentional, partial legitimization of Kreyòl ultimately served to undermine the Duvaliers' power by way of a revitalized Catholic Church and subversive media. The subsequent section examines the progress made by the Kreyòl language movement in the context of the Haitian diaspora. The mass exodus under the Duvaliers resulted in large Haitian communities taking root in cities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Africa. These exiled communities continued to articulate their cultural identities and grapple with the Kreyòl question. Furthermore, as the Haitian immigrant population in the United States grew, the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 opened up opportunities for Kreyòl to be used in education in schools in Boston, Miami, and New York City. The achievements of exiled Haitians served as a useful model for developments in Haitian education during the so-called "liberal phase" of Jean-Claude Duvalier's presidency and again after his fall from power.

The final section considers the paradoxical language policy developments that took place during Jean-Claude Duvalier's presidency. While progress relating to the Kreyòl movement was mainly circumstantial under the elder Duvalier, the son's regime went further by officially endorsing the language in two groundbreaking ways. First, the government commissioned a project to settle the endless disputes over the orthography. In 1978, the orthography was standardized after four decades of heated debate (Schieffelin & Doucet 1994). Second, the Bernard Reform of 1979 mandated the use of Kreyòl in the Haitian education system. In theory, this was an unprecedented move to democratize the nation's schools. The practical results and underlying enthusiasms were less impressive, but the strange fact remains that one of the most antidemocratic regimes in Haitian history did more to modernize the country's schools than, for instance, the Dumarsais Estimé administration. The radical coalition that made up the Estimé government had come to power in the wake of a popular protest and a democratic election (the celebrated "Revolution of 1946") and was unprecedented for its earnest attempts to bring lasting change to the nation (Smith 2009:72). Yet Estimé made virtually no impact on what some have called Haiti's "linguistic apartheid" (DeGraff 2019; Devonish 1986:57–58). The Duvaliers, conversely, made every effort to decimate civil rights in Haiti, but nonetheless provoked shifts in the status of Kreyòl that would later be critical for the seeds of meaningful democracy and effective education to be sown in the country.

1 Papa Doc: Le médecin malgré lui

At the time of François Duvalier's election interested observers were hopeful that he would make good on his campaign pledges and fulfill the promise of the Revolution of 1946—the promise of financial liberation, of meaningful democracy and responsible government, and of improved conditions for the popular classes (Smith 2009:89, 93, 112–13). Those calling for the wider use of Kreyòl must have been particularly encouraged by the constitution that the new administration ratified three months after the election. As a self-proclaimed spokesman for Haiti's black masses, François Duvalier used the arguments of the Kreyòl movement to build support among disenfranchised Haitians, effectively co-opting the Kreyòl legitimization discourse. The Constitution of 1957 was the first in Haitian history to explicitly refer to the majority language. Article 35 reaffirms that French is the official language, but goes on to decree that: "The Law will determine the cases and the conditions in which the use of Kreyòl will be permitted and even recommended in order to safeguard the material and moral interests of citizens who are not adequately competent in French."⁵ This significant, albeit minor, concession to Kreyòl was an indisputably critical step for the legitimization of the language. Now that Kreyòl had constitutional protection it would be impossible for subsequent administrations to scale back language rights without appearing antidemocratic.⁶

Furthermore, within the first year of his term Duvalier announced an ambitious five-year campaign to eliminate illiteracy in the republic. Duvalier presented a bill which stated in unambiguous terms that "Democracy in Haiti will remain purely formal as long as the urban and rural masses continue to be afflicted by the plague of ignorance resulting from their illiteracy."⁷ The bill specified that the literacy campaign would initially make use of Kreyòl, saying that "The reduction of illiteracy among the population by way of the vernacular language, Kreyòl, is an obligatory social function and a sacred duty."⁸ In conjunction with presenting the bill, Duvalier addressed the public and defended the use of Kreyòl in the literacy campaign. He acknowledged that this measure might provoke some backlash, but explained that

Our objective is to move toward the understanding of the unknown by way of the known and must first and foremost make use of the processes

⁵ Haitian Constitution of 1957, Art. 35.

⁶ Indeed, after the end of the Duvalier dynasty constitutional provisions for Kreyòl expanded considerably.

⁷ "La Loi sur la campagne d'alphabétisation," *Le Nouvelliste*, July 12, 1958, p. 1.

⁸ "La Loi sur la campagne d'alphabétisation," *Le Nouvelliste*, July 12, 1958, p. 2.

and means that correspond to the realities of our country. The experience of rural education has clearly shown the futility of merely transposing urban education methods onto the countryside without accounting for the radically different conditions in which our rural masses are developing.⁹

He was not saying anything new, but his words reveal how coherent and powerful the Kreyòl argument had become. Before his absolute disregard for democracy had become apparent, at a time when his grip on the nation's highest office was far from secure, Duvalier managed to appropriate the Kreyòl movement to add legitimacy to his regime. He was presenting himself as the spokesman for the country's monolingual masses, as the man who would finally incorporate the popular classes into the political process.

Despite such hopeful signs, Papa Doc soon began to show his true colors. The president grew bolder in his use of repressive force, first executing his political rivals or forcing them into exile, then turning to the opposition press, the army, and the Catholic Church and finally settling into a pattern of scapegoating and downright terror (Nicholls 1979:215; Trouillot 1990:155–62, 169). As he moved to curb the power of all other institutions in Haitian society, Duvalier transformed the very structure of the state apparatus, resulting in what Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes as a “centrifugal structure” (Trouillot 1990:171). All power at every level of society was derived directly from the Executive. This system was crippling inefficiency. Duvalier's refusal to delegate responsibilities meant that even if he had been interested in meaningful reforms, they would have been impossible to carry out. Previously, even the most self-serving governments had at least kept up the pretense of working to improve the country. With Duvalier, the facade of productive government activity was abandoned altogether, and bald-faced profiteering became the norm (Trouillot 1990:176).

In this political climate the Kreyòl movement, which stood for equality in stark contrast to Duvalier's ambitions for the nation, was decimated. The literacy campaign never materialized, and the education system limped on as ever before (Devonish 1986:59; Nicholls 1979:227). Attempts to address education came at the hands of foreign organizations and religious institutions. Yet not even foreigners were immune to Duvalier's repressive tendencies, and many left the country. Ormonde McConnell, the Northern Irish Methodist missionary who had championed Kreyòl literacy in the 1940s and 1950s, and had led the first systematic attempt to create a standardized orthography, remained

9 “Le Président lance une Campagne d'Alphabétisation,” *Le Nouvelliste*, July 14, 1958, p. 4.

in the country until 1970, and managed to set up an “ultra-modern” school in Port-au-Prince in 1960.¹⁰ Nouveau Collège Bird was for the children of affluent urban families—among its pupils, none other than Jean-Claude Duvalier—but McConnell hoped that revenue from the private collège would help fund rural education programs (McConnell 1977:114). McConnell hired numerous idealistic Swiss pedagogues, many of whom found the local turbulence unbearable and soon fled the country (McConnell 1977:144). The success of the collège (which still stands in Port-au-Prince today) allowed McConnell and some of his Swiss colleagues to establish a normal school in Pétionville to train rural teachers. It seems, however, that many newly minted young literacy experts used their credentials as their ticket out of Duvalier’s reach and went to teach in Africa (Diederich & Burt 1972:141).

They were by no means alone in their search for a better life abroad. Faced with the real possibility of persecution, imprisonment, torture, and even assassination, innumerable Haitians fled the country over the course of the Duvalier presidencies. Among the first Haitians to go into exile were a number of intellectuals and activists who had been key figures in the Kreyòl project. Félix Morisseau-Leroy, whose pioneering Kreyòl-language poetry and plays had triggered the explosion of literary production in the language in the mid-1950s, left the country in 1959 to stage his play *Antigòn* in Paris. He did not return until after Jean-Claude Duvalier’s fall from power in 1986. Other Kreyòl-language authors with a progressive bent followed Morisseau’s lead: Paul Laraque left in 1961 and Franck Fouché in 1966. Daniel Fignolé, the pugnacious labor leader and champion of education reform, left for New York in 1957 and stayed until 1986.

Meanwhile, new pro-Kreyòl voices emerged to fill the void, and quite often fell afoul of the regime. In 1958, one of the first Kreyòl language newspapers, *Le Patriote*, saw its office bombed and its editor, Antoine G. Petit, arrested and sent into exile in Cuba (Diederich 2008:153). In the mid-1960s, two Haitian Catholic priests named Yves and Paul Dejean began translating the Bible into Kreyòl as part of a larger push to invigorate the Catholic Church in rural areas. The Duvalier administration portrayed the independent activities of enthusiastic Catholic clergymen as communistic, and in 1969 the Dejean brothers were forced into exile along with seven other priests (Smarth 2015:438). In 1965, a 24-year-old teacher named Jean-Marie Denis, better known as Jan Mapou, founded an artistic collective called Mouvman Kreyòl Ayisyen (Haitian Creole Movement) in the hopes of exploring and promoting Haiti’s culture and

10 “Ultra Modern Methodist College Bird,” *Haiti Sun*, June 26, 1960, p. 4.

language (Mapou 2011). Several members of the collective including Mapou were imprisoned, and some lost their lives.¹¹ By 1969, Mapou, too, was in exile. It would be erroneous to say that Duvalier targeted the Kreyòl legitimization project directly as it was not a formal program, but those working toward democratic language reforms were clearly at odds with the Duvalierist system.

Under these circumstances the conscious endeavor to valorize Kreyòl was stifled. Yet the character of the Duvalier regime had some unexpected effects on uses and perceptions of the language. The noiriste rhetoric that brought François Duvalier to power hinged on the idea that the emergent dark-skinned petit bourgeoisie were the rightful holders of political power in the country. The relationship between the Duvalier regime and the traditional (generally more Westernized and light-skinned) elites was characterized by mutual distrust at best and open hostility at worst (Nicholls 1979:217–18). Duvalier and his colleagues depicted the nation's traditional light-skinned elites as out of touch with the interests of the masses, and thus used blackness as a tool to legitimize their leadership (Trouillot 1990:192–93). As a result, the administration drew from a lower social stratum than had previous governments. Whereas one's command of French had once been the key credential in the allotment of government posts, the color of one's skin now held greater importance; as a result, the collective level of French-language competence in the government decreased (Fontaine 1981:34; Nicholls 1979:236). Duvalier himself was often mocked for his stilted French (Fontaine 1981:36). Kreyòl was consequently adopted in formal government settings out of sheer necessity. Thenceforth, Kreyòl has remained an accepted medium for political discourse, despite being generally absent from government publications (Dejean 1993:74; Devonish 1986:59).

Duvalier's clash with the Catholic Church also had implications for the status of Kreyòl. Haitian nationalists had long resented the quasi-imperial influence that came at the hands of the resident French Catholic clergy (Nicholls 1979:196–99). Duvalier acted on this resentment to further his own purposes of consolidating power and removing centers of opposition. Between 1959 and 1964 Duvalier engaged in a heated struggle with the Catholic Church (Nicholls 1979:221–28). In 1960, he expelled the Breton archbishop François-Marie-Joseph Poirier. He and his administration were subsequently excommunicated. The president continued to persecute the Church until 1965 when the Haitian government began working toward rapprochement with the Holy See. Coinciden-

11 Illéus Papillon, "Mouvman Kreyòl Ayisyen/Sosyete Koukouy: Ant angajman, batay, rech-èch, pèsekisyon, prizon, egzil ak lanmò," *Haïti en marche*, April 24, 2019, p. 19.

tally, that same year the Second Vatican Council passed the *Ad Gentes* decree which stated that the Catholic Church must work to replace missionary clergy with native clergy.¹² The two parties came to an agreement and the first Haitian-born archbishop of Port-au-Prince, François Wolff Ligondé, was appointed in October 1966. A local Church hierarchy populated by Haitians would also enable the fulfillment of another ordinance from the Vatican Council, that of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encouraging the use of vernacular languages in the Mass.¹³ Kreyòl had previously been used in Catholic services, but Duvalier's hasty implementation of the *Ad Gentes* resolution meant that the clergy drew from lower social strata. Kreyòl language use necessarily became further entrenched in the Haitian Church and further legitimized in Haitian society.¹⁴

Ironically, it was the revitalized Church with its massive popular support that ultimately spearheaded the movement to topple the Duvaliers. When the social gospel-oriented Ti Legliz movement mobilized against Baby Doc in the early 1980s, it did so by maximizing the capacities of Kreyòl-language radio, most notably the Catholic station Radio Soleil (Dubois 2012:356–57; Nicholls 1986:1245; Trouillot 1990:219). It was during the Duvalier years that Kreyòl radio became a firmly established medium for social critique and political subversion. Radio had grown into a popular form of entertainment through the 1940s and 1950s, but broadcasts were strictly in French and there was little of substance on the airwaves (*The Agronomist* 2004; Mapou 2011). When Duvalier came to power, however, clandestine stations began to emerge and broadcast anti-Duvalier messages in Kreyòl (Diederich & Burt 1972:107). In 1962, the communist poet René Depestre started a daily Kreyòl radio program which infiltrated the Haitian airwaves from the safety of Havana (Diederich & Burt 1972:336, 338). In the mid-1960s, formal Haitian broadcasters such as Jan Mapou and Jean Dominique began turning from entertainment programming in French to news and opinions in Kreyòl (*The Agronomist* 2004; Mapou 2011). This was a dangerous move. Both Mapou and Dominique were arrested and forced into exile, their equipment destroyed by Duvalier's thugs.¹⁵ But the shift

12 Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission of the Church, Chapter 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

13 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 4, 1963, Chapter 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

14 Bellegarde-Smith 1990:134–35; Dejean 1993; Nicholls 1979; Trouillot 1990.

15 Mapou settled in Miami where he carried on his community development work among the Haitian diaspora for decades. Dominique eventually returned to Haiti and resumed his work as a fearless news reporter, a stance for which he was eventually assassinated, his

was already in motion. Kreyòl quickly became the primary language of Haitian radio and later television, no doubt spurred on by advertisers hoping to reach a mass of monolingual consumers (Berry 1975:112).

Perhaps more importantly for the legitimization of Kreyòl, the growing association between the popular language and resistance had a significant effect on Haitian perceptions of the language. Of course, the language had been the vehicle for the Haitian Revolution itself, but in a century and a half Kreyòl had lost much of its association with revolutionary activity. The Haitian government had often been accused of using Kreyòl to keep the Haitian masses in their place (Bentolila & Gani 1981:122; Trouillot-Lévy 2010:219–20). Now, however, the language was being used to challenge the status quo. Setting the language in opposition to the Duvalier regime helped break the stigma that linked Kreyòl to ignorance and submission. Radio was the most effective medium for spreading anti-Duvalier messages to a largely illiterate population, but periodicals such as the communist newsletter *Demokrasi* and formal literature such as Frankétienne's works of theater and his Kreyòl novel *Dezafi* (1975) also cast aspersions the regime.¹⁶ The Duvaliers censored such voices ruthlessly, which inevitably only served to validate the message and the medium. Through popular protest slogans, graffiti, hip-hop, the Kreyòl-language radio broadcasts of radical priests such as Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and Pope John Paul II's famous injunction "Fòk sa chanje," the association has remained firm since the Duvalier era. Today, Haitian writers tend to write in both French and Kreyòl, but the latter language is generally preferred for explicitly political works (Lang 2004:137; Nzengou-Tayo 2010:158). The recasting of Kreyòl as a language of resistance—and by extension a language of democracy—was perhaps François Duvalier's most important unintentional contribution to the Kreyòl movement.

2 Lèt bò dlo: The Kreyòl Movement Abroad

The Kreyòl legitimization project also went through a series of critical developments outside of Haiti among the Haitian diaspora during the Duvalier period. It is estimated that as much as 15 percent of Haiti's population left the country during the Duvalier years (Dubois 2012:353–54). As a result, Haitian commu-

family going back into exile in 2003. See <http://radiohaitilives.com> for much more information on Dominique and his legacy.

16 Michel DeGraff has drawn attention to U.S. State Department cables (partially available on WikiLeaks) which express concern over the radical political capacities of Creole languages; see DeGraff 2019:xvi.

nities were firmly established in places such as Miami, New York City, Boston, Montreal, Paris, and Dakar. These communities turned out to be important centers for the revaluation of Kreyòl. According to Haitian-American linguist Flore Zéphir,

Haitians in the United States develop strategies that allow them to cope more efficiently with the harshness of life in America. One such strategy is to promote among themselves a sense of being a distinct ethnic group ... in order to become a more potent force in social and political affairs. To some extent, they are realizing that a fragmented Haitian immigrant community does not serve Haitians' quest for equal opportunity and social mobility. In this context, Haitian Creole has emerged as an ethnic marker, and has taken on more prestige than it has, and perhaps will ever have, in Haiti.

ZÉPHIR 2010:66

In other words, since Kreyòl is the only language common to entire Haitian immigrant communities, it has become a valued aspect of Haitian cultural identity abroad. While at home the promotion of Kreyòl is divisive, uprooted Haitian communities have found the language to be indispensable for building unity.

Haitian poets and playwrights continued to produce works in Kreyòl as a means of unifying their communities, promoting their culture, and further demonstrating the expressive capacity of the language. Félix Morisseau-Leroy spent much of his exile in newly independent Ghana and Senegal where he worked with indigenous theater companies to promote the local languages, but also found time to compose numerous Kreyòl plays and poems. Georges Castera worked with a Haitian theater troupe in New York City and published several Kreyòl poetry collections. Jan Mapou and others associated with Mouman Kreyòl Ayisyen established artistic cooperatives in New York and Miami, producing countless works inspired by Haiti's peasant culture. Justin Lhérisson's groundbreaking novel *La Famille des Pitite-Caille* (1906), the first to make extensive use of Kreyòl, was even published in serial in New York City's Haitian newspaper, *Unité*.¹⁷

Undoubtedly the forced exile of so many writers forestalled the growth of a grassroots reading culture in Haiti. One critic noted in 2004 that "dispersion and diaspora have been especially debilitating for the development of Kreyòl

17 "Littérature Haïtienne Hier et Aujourd'hui," *Unité*, August 30, 1976, p. 11.

literature, since the vast majority of its speakers and hence those who might best appreciate it are themselves trapped within Haiti and cut off from these writers" (Lang 2004:136). Yet the freedom to write without fear of censorship or repression enabled many exiled Haitian authors to redouble their productivity. Being away from home in communities where Kreyòl took on a new positive and unifying role, it became natural to use the language as a way of clinging to their national identity. The corpus of Kreyòl literature grew dramatically. In Emmanuel Védérine's *Annotated Bibliography on Haitian Creole*, for instance, the compiler lists only seven Kreyòl poetry collections published between 1804 and 1957. During the 29 years of the Duvalier dynasty, he lists 44 collections, nearly half of which were published outside of Haiti (Védérine 2004:358–80).

It was not just poets and playwrights who used their time in exile to carry on the work of the Kreyòl project. Academics in the diaspora also sought new opportunities to study and promote the language. Many Haitians made the most of their forced emigration by pursuing higher education. Countless others, conversely, used their pursuit of higher education as an excuse to leave the country. An estimated 80 percent of the country's educated professionals left the country in the 1960s, so that by the 1970s there were surely more Haitian academics in the diaspora than in Haiti (Heinl & Heinl 2005:587; Mills 2016:90). Among these were linguists and education specialists who took up the scientific study of Kreyòl under the auspices of respected North American and French universities. Two noteworthy examples are Pierre Vernet and Yves Dejean.

In 1966, a 23-year-old language teacher named Pierre Vernet fled the country and made his way to the United States where he taught literacy to disadvantaged youths in New York City. He soon relocated to Paris to study at the Sorbonne where he earned degrees in psychology, education theory, and linguistics. He returned to Haiti in the late 1970s and was closely involved with new developments in education (to be discussed later in the article) and was one of the founders of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics at the Université d'État d'Haïti (Tortorat 2012:4–9). As for Yves Dejean, after his expulsion in 1969 he spent the 1970s working toward a Ph.D. in French linguistics at Indiana University under the celebrated creolist Albert Valdman. Dejean held several teaching posts in New York City's public schools and colleges while he completed his dissertation "Comment écrire le créole" (Dejean 1977). He finally returned to Haiti in 1986 to teach some of the first courses offered in Kreyòl at the State University (Spears 2010:xv–xix).¹⁸ Along with Vernet, Dejean was among the

18 It should be noted that the use of Kreyòl in higher education, in particular in technical

most committed advocates of linguistic rights in Haiti. He published widely in French and Kreyòl and worked with government agencies to shape education and language policy. Of course, he may just as well have undertaken such work if it had not been for the Duvaliers. Indeed, he and his brother Paul had begun pushing the boundaries of Kreyòl usage before going into exile. But exile gave both Dejean and Vernet the opportunity as well as a palpable new incentive to commit themselves to linguistic revolution. Both understood that the best way to defy the Duvaliers was to cultivate meaningful democracy in Haiti by bringing literacy and effective education to the masses. In Dejean's words: "Lang kreyòl tout Ayisyen, se nan chemen sa a pou yo pase pou yo rive devlope tout konesans ak tout teknik ki kapab louvri barye pwogrè pou tout pèp nou a."¹⁹

The mass migration of Haitians to the United States also resulted in an unexpected opportunity for experiments in Kreyòl-language education in U.S. schools. In 1968, the Johnson administration passed the Bilingual Education Act which recognized the right of students with limited English proficiency to learn in their mother tongue alongside English as they transitioned to life in the United States. Initially the act only had practical implications for Spanish-speaking students, but as Haitian families arrived in greater and greater numbers in the 1970s and 1980s, there were some attempts by Haitians and Americans to adapt the model to the needs of this growing community.²⁰ Unfortunately, the results left much to be desired; by 1997 one critic noted that "although the American education system is attempting to respond, it has not yet succeeded in effectively addressing the specific needs of monolingual Creole-speaking Haitian students" (Zéphir 1997:228). But the failure to educate monolingual Haitian students in the United States, as well as certain consequent attempts to address related issues, ultimately served to inform developments in Haiti's own education system.

To be sure, the failure of some Haitian students to thrive in American schools was partly due to discrimination. Besides being affected by poverty and the feelings of isolation and vulnerability that often come with immigration, Haitian students were sometimes misclassified simply as "black" and treated like English-speaking African Americans. At the same time, however, many spe-

fields such as math, science and engineering, constitutes a critical step in the legitimization of the language; see DeGraff & Stump 2018:e127–57.

19 Dejean 2006. Translation: The Kreyòl language of all Haitians is the road for them to take to develop all understanding and all techniques capable of removing barriers to progress for the whole population.

20 For an evaluation of the Kreyòl-English programs in New York City, see Cerat 2011.

cific issues that plagued education in Haiti were replicated in the United States (Joseph 1984 and 2010; Zéphir 1997). The first schools to set up bilingual education programs for their Haitian students did so on a French-English model. Predictably, these programs were ineffective. Subsequent attempts to establish a Kreyòl-English program were hampered by the lack of qualified teachers and Kreyòl-language resources. Having come from a system that emphasizes memorization and rote repetition, Haitian students felt alienated in bilingual education programs that were based on a participatory model. Limited parental involvement also impeded the development of effective programs; while parents in Haiti attach great importance to school, they are often discouraged from participating in their children's education (Pichard 2006:142; Philippi 2016:261). All of these factors complicated the integration of Haitian children into the American education system.

As the Haitian population of New York City, Boston, and Miami continued to swell (in 1976 there were 150,000 Haitians in New York City alone), various groups developed strategies to respond to these issues (Heinl & Heinl 2005:586). From 1981 to 1984 the New York-based Haitian Parent and Teacher Training program worked to equip both teachers and parents in the hopes of ameliorating bilingual education in the city. The training program translated school board documents into Kreyòl and held various workshops and conferences exclusively in the language (Joseph 1984:355–58; Joseph & Blot 1984). At the same time the Indiana University Creole Institute partnered with the U.S. Department of Education to run summer institutes to train teachers for work in Kreyòl-English bilingual education programs in the three main diaspora cities. In 1991, two Haitian expatriates, Maude Heurtelou and Fequière Vilsaint, founded a publishing company, Educa Vision, to address the desperate need for Kreyòl-language education materials in the Miami-Dade school district.²¹ There have been many other organizations and initiatives since the 1980s, and although Kreyòl-English bilingual programs in Boston, Miami, and New York have tapered off in recent years, the pedagogical developments made respectable contributions to the equitable education for Haitians in the United States.²²

Since many of the problems facing Haitian students in American schools were connected to issues in Haitian education, many of these initiatives ended up being adapted directly to the Haitian context. The experiences of the Hai-

21 <http://educavision.com>.

22 A new experiment in Kreyòl education was recently launched in Boston; see <https://www.dotnews.com/2017/mattapan-early-ed-center-pitches-dual-language-haitian-creole-program>.

tian Parent and Teacher Training were disseminated to other diaspora centers and to Haiti via the program's Kreyòl-language newsletter *Lyezon* (Joseph & Blot 1984:24). Educa Vision has expanded considerably and, in addition to serving students in the United States and Canada, it now provides materials for the Haitian Ministry of Education. Perhaps most significantly, the Indiana University Creole Institute went on to organize conferences on Creole instruction in St. Thomas and in Port-au-Prince, with the Haitian Minister of Education and other policymakers in attendance.²³ It is evident that many of those involved in these conferences, including Albert Valdman, the director of the Creole Institute, and members of the Haitian Ministry of Education, held ambivalent attitudes toward the value of Kreyòl in education (DeGraff 2003:403–4). Nevertheless, the events coincided with the Haitian education reform of 1979, which was an extremely significant turning point in the process of Kreyòl legitimation. The changing status of Kreyòl among Haitian communities in the United States in the context of the superior resources and relative political stability has generated critical support for the normalization of mother-tongue instruction in Haiti, and the legitimation of the Kreyòl language in general. Thus, when François Duvalier triggered the mass exodus of his countrymen, he directly but wholly unintentionally initiated a process that would play an important role in the linguistic democratization of Haiti.

3 Baby Doc, and an Unanticipated Victory

While the developments in the Kreyòl movement during the elder Duvalier's presidency had occurred in spite of the regime, the younger Duvalier's administration actually allocated a remarkable amount of attention and resources to improving the status of Kreyòl. This may seem surprising considering that most analysts see Jean-Claude Duvalier's 15-year presidency as little more than an extension of his father's despotic regime (Bellegarde-Smith 1990:136–37; Trouillot 1990:209–16). There are indeed many continuities between the two halves of the dynasty. The 19-year-old Jean-Claude was named President for Life and carried on many of his father's practices. Political repression was as bad as ever. Profiteering was worse (Trouillot 1990:213). Downtrodden Haitians continued

23 Ernst Mirville, "Le Congrès de linguistique créole à Saint-Thomas," *Le Nouvelliste*, April 17, 1979, pp. 1 and 6; Pierre Bambou, "Concentré: Le mouvement kreyòl en pleine effervescence," *Le Nouvelliste*, August 17, 1979, pp. 1 and 5.

to leave the country in droves. It is undeniable that Baby Doc was as uninterested as his father in bringing democracy to Haiti. Why then did the younger Duvalier's government enact groundbreaking reforms aimed at removing the country's centuries-old language barriers?

One of the principal differences between the two regimes was the younger Duvalier's cozy relationships with the United States and with Haiti's traditional elites. Jean-Claude accepted massive sums of foreign aid from the United States. In 1975, for instance, the U.S. government contributed US\$ 35.5 million in aid to Haiti, whereas its annual contributions averaged about one-tenth of that total under Papa Doc (Dubois 2012:351; Girard 2010:105). Much of these funds were siphoned off by administrators, but an intimate relationship with the U.S. government and other foreign organizations meant that the regime had to at least seem to be working in the interest of the Haitian people. Particularly during Jimmy Carter's presidency (1977–81) with its emphasis on human rights, Haitian society went through a period of modest liberalization. At the same time Haiti's business elites, who had lost much of their political influence during the François Duvalier years, recovered some of their sway under Baby Doc's presidency. Questions of industrialization and agricultural modernization returned to the table. Economic revitalization programs in Haiti have historically been connected to attempts to improve rural education, most famously and controversially during the U.S. occupation.²⁴ This was the context of the renewed commitment to the Kreyòl problem on the part of the Haitian government in the 1970s. However superficial their resolve may have been, the new tone of Baby Doc's presidency opened the door for two critical developments in the Kreyòl movement.

Both developments came about under the auspices of the Institut Pédagogique National (IPN). The Haitian government established the institute in 1972 with the mandate to oversee education reform. This in itself was nothing new. Previous administrations had set up countless committees, commissions, and bureaus to deal with problems in education. The institute, however, benefitted from the political climate of the 1970s and from the unprecedented quantity of academic research regarding Kreyòl and education coming out of North America and Europe. Consequently, renewed attention was given to the language question. In the 1974–75 school year, the Centre Haïtien d'Investigation en Sciences Sociales undertook a project to study bilingual education in the Haitian context. Under the direction of Hubert de Ronceray (Ph.D., Université Laval, Quebec), with funding from the Inter-American Foundation, the project

24 See Robertshaw 2018.

was intended to scientifically analyze the effectiveness of vernacular instruction, and to “secure the facts from emotional and political prejudice” (Ronceray & Petit-Frère 1975:1). The center selected 150 rural children for a nine-month experimental program. One group received instruction in Kreyòl with French taught as a foreign language while a control group was taught using traditional methods. The study concluded that “a bilingual teaching method using Kreyòl as the basic language and French as a foreign language produces ... far more convincing results than traditional and imported methods” (Ronceray & Petit-Frère 1975:25). In the light of such data, it was becoming increasingly apparent that Kreyòl would be a necessary feature of the Institut Pédagogique National’s prospective reform.

The Institut Pédagogique National felt the need to address the orthography question. Controversy had long raged over whether the Kreyòl writing system should be based primarily on phonetics in order to facilitate acquisition or on French orthographic rules in view of subsequent acquisition of French (Schieffelin & Doucet 1994).²⁵ Although the government had adopted the Faublas-Pressoir orthography in 1951, many other writing systems were still in use in Haiti and the diaspora. As late as 1974, for example, the Centre des Recherches en Sciences Humaines et Social proposed yet another more French-based orthography (Devonish 1986:61). The Institut Pédagogique National aimed to settle the question once and for all. In early 1978, under the guidance of the institute, the Minister of National Education Raoul Pierre-Louis assembled a focus group to revise the Faublas-Pressoir orthography and address the remaining ambiguities. The significantly named Gwoup Rechèch pou Etidye Kreyòl Ayisyen (Research Group for the Study of Haitian Creole), or GREKA, was made up of Haitians who were intimately connected to the Kreyòl question: Pierre Vernet, Ernst Mirville (a psychiatrist and linguist who had cofounded the Mouvmman Kreyòl with Jan Mapou), Pauris Jean-Baptiste (a protestant minister and the director of Ormonde McConnell’s training school for rural teachers, and future head of the Haitian Creole Academy), as well as Emile Celestin Mègie and Jean Robert-Limontas (both affiliated with the Office National d’Alphabetisation et d’Action Communautaire).²⁶ Three of the members (Mirville, Jean-Baptiste, and Mègie) were also published Kreyòl poets. The group met weekly for three months in early 1978 and worked out the details of the new writing system.

25 See also Robertshaw forthcoming.

26 “BILAP No 8 et le Rapport Greka sur la Graphie du Créole Haïtien,” *Le Nouvelliste*, January 19, 1979, pp. 1 and 7; Pierre Bambou, “Concentré: Le Mouvement créole en plein effervescence,” *Le Nouvelliste*, August 17, 1979, p. 2.

The so-called IPN orthography was essentially a compromise between the phonetic McConnell-Laubach system and the Faublas-Pressoir system, which allowed some concessions to French orthographic customs in the hopes of facilitating subsequent acquisition of that language. The new system was more or less phonetic, using McConnell's *ks*, *ws* and *ys*, but made a few concessions to French including *ou* instead of *u* and digraphs (*an*, *en*, *oun*) for nasalization. Since 1979 it has become the standard in Haiti and in the diaspora. It is used in government publications, educational materials, in Catholic and Protestant churches, and by most academics and Kreyòl-language authors. One still hears the odd critic of the system, but most parties have accepted the orthography, if only, like Yves Dejean, "to put an end to 'useless' discussions" (Schieffelin & Doucet 1994:187).

For its part, the Haitian government officially recognized the IPN orthography in 1979 in conjunction with the other major development in Kreyòl movement: the Bernard Reform. Joseph C. Bernard was appointed Minister of National Education in April of 1979 and within a month he announced the reform that would bear his name. The reform comprised several ambitious resolutions for of the restructuring of the education system, but its most striking aspect had to do with Kreyòl. Calls for first-language instruction date back to independence, and early-twentieth-century Haitian authors had articulated a compelling and durable plea for the linguistic democratization of the country's schools (Robertshaw 2019). Several abortive attempts were made to introduce Kreyòl to the classrooms over the course of the twentieth century, including the controversial program implemented during the U.S. occupation (1915–34), and the UNESCO Pilot Project in the Marbial Valley (1947–53) (Robertshaw 2018; Robertshaw forthcoming). But by 1979 Haitian students were still receiving their education almost entirely in French.

The Bernard Reform was translated into a formal decree which stated that Kreyòl would be the language of instruction and a subject of study throughout primary education, while French would be taught as a subject and introduced as a language of instruction in year six, after which each language was to be used for a minimum of 25 percent of weekly instruction (Haitian Government 1982:12). The underlying logic was evident; the reform was intended to transform the Haitian masses into productive members of a modern economy, while at the same time cultivating a population of balanced bilinguals. This would be an ambitious undertaking in any country. Needless to say, it did not work out as planned. On the one hand, the government's commitment to sweeping change was never sincere, and there is evidence that the Bernard Reform was sabotaged from within the regime (Alexandre 2013). Limited resources, as well as resentment and lack of enthusiasm on the part of teachers and school admin-

istrators, were major obstacles (Prou 2011:54). There was much opposition from all levels of society. One of the most vocal opponents of the reform was the celebrated historian Hénock Trouillot who said:

How can a monolingual Kreyòl speaker inform himself about his own country when all the valid sources of information are written in French? The Kreyòl-language papers are quite pathetic. It is true that on the radio the announcers provide information in Kreyòl. But to listen to the radio one does not need to learn to read and write a vernacular language without a fixed orthography, without an elaborated syntax and whose literature is in its infancy.

TROUILLOT 1980:34

Such arguments against the Kreyòl movement had been in vogue for generations. Trouillot does not seem to have taken into account the growing number of publications in Kreyòl, the proliferation of Kreyòl-language literature at home and in the diaspora, the recently adopted standard orthography, or the fact that the traditional French-language instruction was failing the vast majority of the country's young people.

Longstanding anti-American sentiment also fueled opposition. The involvement of American institutions in the planning and implementation of the Bernard Reform struck some observers as suspect, and they believed it was part of a scheme to gradually dislodge French from the island and ultimately replace it with English (Bentolila & Gani 1981:122; Devonish 1986:63). This fear has its roots in the U.S. occupation, when the Americans set up a parallel, agriculture- and industry-oriented education system and—for the first time in Haitian history—permitted the use of Kreyòl in classrooms. Haitians at all levels of society perceived the Service Technique de l'Agriculture et de l'Enseignement Professionnel as an attempt to replace the treasured French aspects of Haiti's cultural heritage with a materialistic American substitute. In conjunction with a generalized racism on the part of the occupiers, the education scheme was seen as nefarious indication of the Americans' belief that people of African descent were not suited to anything more than a watered-down, practical education. This suspicion reemerged with the Bernard Reform. In any case, fears that the reform would dislodge French in Haiti overlooked the fact that universal French competence was one of its chief goals. Regardless, private schools provided a convenient way for those with the means to oppose the reform. The countless ecclesiastical and NGO-run schools were unaffected by the new policy, and enrolment in these schools increased from 50 to 80 percent of the primary school population after the reform (Locher 2010:179, 195, note 5; Prou 2009:47–48).

Resistance also came from those who would have benefitted most, namely the rural and working-class monolingual Haitian families. Received wisdom that French was their children's only avenue for social advancement was (and remains) entrenched in the popular psyche (Trouillot-Lévy 2010:219–20). Furthermore, as Haitian children from more affluent families enrolled in the French-language private schools in greater numbers, the legacy of the infamous two-tiered Service Technique must have been palpable. As Marc Prou notes, “the Haitian masses’ resistance toward a government-sponsored education reform project can be understood as a way of conveying their discontent with the *modus operandi* of the state” (Prou 2009:51). For generations the popular classes had conceived of the government as an intrusive and extractive force and were instinctively and understandably reluctant to cooperate.

But it was old-fashioned politics that ended the reform before it began. It took three years of administrative heel dragging for Joseph Bernard's proposal to be translated into concrete legislation and by that time the so-called “liberal phase” of the Duvalier era had come to an end. With Ronald Reagan's election in the United States, the Duvalier government fell back into old patterns. The crackdown on students, opposition groups, and the Kreyòl-language media in the month following Ronald Reagan's election is well documented (Bellegarde-Smith 1990:134; Fontaine 1981:41; Nicholls 1986:1242). In the words of broadcaster Jean Dominique, “it was the end of the Haitian spring” (*The Agronomist* 2004). In this context the Bernard Reform lost steam. In 1982, all reform activities were suspended without explanation (Prou 2011:43). The government promulgated yet another Constitution in 1983, which reaffirmed the right to education and gave a further concession to Kreyòl, saying “The national languages are French and Kreyòl,” but that “French serves as the official language of the Republic of Haiti.”²⁷ Yet as with the elder Duvalier's Constitution of 1957 this was mere lip service. The Bernard Reform remained suspended until the year after Jean-Claude Duvalier's fall from power.

When the reform was relaunched in 1987, it still faced many of the obstacles it had encountered at its inception. Political instability, corruption, civil unrest, and limited resources continued to pose challenges. Clearly the goals of universal enrolment and universal literacy have yet to be reached four decades after the reform was first announced. In light of this, some have qualified the Bernard Reform as a failure. Recent studies, however, have taken a more sympathetic view. Uli Locher points out that the reform “started pedagogical innovation in the public sector, has channeled no less than \$200 million into public educa-

27 Haitian Constitution of 1983, Art. 62.

tion, and has helped to push demand for education to unprecedented levels” (Locher 2010:179). Marc Prou, likewise, states that the Bernard Reform “helped to create an environment for open dialogue on the true meaning and the roles of language, national public education, and global development in an emergent democracy” (Prou 2011:54). Attitudes toward the language have gradually changed over the past four decades, and today nearly every school in the nation uses Kreyòl in the early grades (Locher 2010:193). All things considered, it is undeniable that the Bernard Reform and the other developments in the 1970s and early 1980s had a major long-term impact on the status of Kreyòl.

4 Conclusion

Thus, in the midst of one of the darkest chapters in Haitian history, the process of Kreyòl legitimization made some of its greatest strides. Two of Haiti’s most antidemocratic presidents failed in their attempts to prevent Kreyòl advocates from effecting sweeping changes to the status of Kreyòl. It is worth pondering whether these changes would have taken place without the Duvaliers—if, in Bernard Diederich’s words, François Duvalier had been “just another of the in-and-out Presidents Haiti has known through its history” (Diederich & Burt 1972:99). To be sure, the Kreyòl movement’s progress had been sluggish for decades. Elie Lescot’s education reforms and adult literacy projects had failed to win over the masses in the early 1940s. Dumarsais Estimé had used the same *noiriste* rhetoric as Duvalier during and after his election in 1946, and had apparently been committed to democratic reforms, but he scarcely left a mark on the Kreyòl question. The standardized orthography produced by Paul Magloire’s administration in the early 1950s never achieved universal acceptance. It is no doubt conceivable that if Haitian politics had carried on as usual from 1957 the Kreyòl movement would have continued to limp along frustratingly slowly. Something had to change.

When François Duvalier drastically transformed Haitian politics, he unintentionally opened new avenues for the advancement of Kreyòl. His official recognition of the language, shallow and self-serving as it was, meant that subsequent administrations would not have the option to fully disregard the popular tongue. When he curbed the power of the traditional elite, Kreyòl necessarily made headway in the public arena. The creative outbursts of clandestine opposition helped recast Kreyòl as a modern language of democracy. The mass exodus provided a new locus and a new impetus for experimentation with Kreyòl in literature and education. By the time of the “liberal phase” of the Baby Doc regime, the Kreyòl movement had regained considerable momen-

tum, and official programs to make greater use of the language began to take shape. All in all, attitudes toward and uses of Kreyòl advanced much more during the 30 years of the Duvalier dynasty than they had in the preceding half century. Of course, the Duvaliers negatively affected Haitian development in countless other ways. They left the country's economy, its institutions, and its international reputation in shambles. But it is difficult to imagine such a significant advancement for the status of Kreyòl taking place without the fissures caused by the Duvalierist tragedy.

Jean-Claude Duvalier's fall from power in February 1986 was a moment of intense optimism, which, however, soon proved disappointing. Spontaneous demonstrations quickly turned violent as crowds let loose 29 years of pent-up frustration. The interim military government responded to the disorder by adopting repressive tactics and proceeded to fix the first multicandidate election in 30 years. Electoral fraud, coups d'état, and foreign interference have continued to plague the nation for the last three decades. Yet the promise of 1986 was not entirely unfulfilled. The 29-year Duvalier dictatorship served as an acute point of reference for those selected to draft the Constitution of 1987. The document severely limited the power of the Executive, set up a Permanent Electoral Council to oversee elections, and enshrined sweeping protections for human rights. The "liberal" constitution won support from virtually all factions of the national community (Bellegarde-Smith 1990:117). Although the government has often failed to live up to the constitution's high ideals, the latter differs from its predecessors in that it has not been replaced in over 30 years.²⁸ Today it has achieved something of a sacrosanct character. When opposition politicians or journalists wish to criticize the government, they habitually cite the Constitution of 1987.

As noted, the constitutions produced under the Duvaliers had given lip service to the popular language. The framers of the 1987 Constitution went a step further and—after almost 80 years of official French—granted official language status to Kreyòl. French was maintained as one of two official languages, but Kreyòl was singled out as “sèl lang ki simante tout Ayisyen nèt ansanm.”²⁹ The document gives further support to the language by ordering that all information pertaining to national life be disseminated in Kreyòl.³⁰ It also calls for the creation of a Haitian Creole Academy that will “bay lang kreyòl la jarèt pou

28 The current constitution is sometimes referred to as the Constitution of 2012, but it is essentially the 1987 document with minor amendments.

29 Haitian Constitution of 1987, Art. 5. Translation: the only language that unites all Haitians.

30 Haitian Constitution of 1987, Arts. 24–3 and 40.

li fikse epi pou li ba li tout mwayen lasyans pou li devlope nòm al.”³¹ In other words, the legal status of Kreyòl improved drastically in 1987. Here again, the Haitian government has never quite lived up to the high standards of the Constitution. Today, most government documents are still published only in French (DeGraff 2019:xxiii). The Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (Haitian Creole Academy) did not come into existence until 2014—nearly 30 years after the 1987 Constitution ordered its creation.³² Instability and lack of resources are undoubtedly part of the problem, but these shortcomings are also connected to the as yet incomplete struggle for Kreyòl legitimacy.

In spite of ongoing setbacks, encouraging developments have taken place in recent years. The Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen has been active since 2014. The academy is a government institution mandated to help protect the linguistic rights of all Haitians. It serves as the governing body for the language and encourages and assists in the publication of all types of documents in Kreyòl. The academy runs conferences, workshops, and other events across Haiti and in diaspora cities and also aims to be a leading voice in the wider Creolophone world.³³ One of the most promising and widely publicized activities for the promotion of Kreyòl education is the Lekòl Kominotè Matènwa (Matènwa Community School).³⁴ Matènwa is a tiny community on the island of La Gonâve off the coast of Haiti. The school was founded in 1996 by Matènwa-born rural literacy expert Abner Sauveur and Boston-based Chinese-American teacher Christine W. Low and was developed in cooperation with the community itself. It operates entirely in Kreyòl. Breaking from tradition, the curriculum incorporates games and technology, and lessons follow a participatory model—students are encouraged to think critically and ask questions. The school benefits from an association with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen member Michel DeGraff, who is a pioneer of science, technology, engineering, and math education in Kreyòl. The rate of success of the Matènwa model is remarkable and has resulted in its being replicated across La Gonâve and elsewhere in the country (DeGraff & Stump 2018:e134).

Finally, it must be emphasized that attitudes toward both Kreyòl and French are qualitatively different today than they were half a century ago. Not only is Kreyòl widely accepted throughout Haitian society, it is increasingly considered inappropriate to speak French in many contexts (Dejean 1993:80; Dejean

31 Haitian Constitution of 1987, Art. 213. Translation: strengthen and standardize the Kreyòl language and enable its development through scientific means.

32 <http://akademikreyol.net>.

33 <http://akademikreyol.net>.

34 <http://matenwa.org>.

2010:207). The centuries-old “linguistic apartheid” is by no means eradicated; despite protections afforded by the Haitian Constitution and the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19), mother-tongue rights are still violated as a matter of course in Haitian schools and society.³⁵ Nevertheless, there is more than a grain of truth to the celebrated Haitian poet Lyonel Trouillot’s comment that he “was born [in 1956] into a context where, as a child, if you spoke Kreyòl in public ... you would be chastised by your parents or their friends,” and yet that “today, Haitians can speak their language freely at all levels of society—in private and in public, and that is a positive thing” (Trouillot 2011). This statement is a testament to the tremendous, if incomplete, progress of Kreyòl in Haitian society.

References

- The Agronomist*, 2004. Director Jonathan Demme. New York: THINKFilm.
- Alexandre, Guy, 2013. *Le Prix du Jean-Claudisme: Arbitraire, parodie, désocialisation*. Pétion-Ville, Haiti: C3 Editions.
- Bellegarde-Smith, Patrick, 1990. *Haiti: The Breached Citadel*. Boulder CO: Westview.
- Bentolila, Alain & Léon Gani, 1981. Langues et problèmes d’enseignement en Haïti. *Langages* 15(61):117–27.
- Berry, Paul, 1975. Literacy and the Question of Creole. In Vera Rubin and Richard P. Schaedel (eds.), *The Haitian Potential: Research and Resources of Haiti*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 83–113.
- Cerat, Marie Lily, 2011. Myths and Realities: A History of Haitian Creole Language Programs in New York City. *Journal of Haitian Studies* 17(2):73–91.
- Degraff, Michel, 2003. Against Creole Exceptionalism. *Language* 79(2):391–410.
- Degraff, Michel, 2017. Haiti’s “Linguistic Apartheid” Violates Children’s Rights and Hampers Development. OpenGlobalRights, January 31. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/haiti-s-linguistic-apartheid-violates-children-s-rights-and-hampers-/>
- Degraff, Michel, 2019. Against Apartheid in Education and in Linguistics: The Case of Haitian Creole in Neo-Colonial Haiti. In Donalddo Macedo (ed.), *Decolonizing Foreign Language Education: The Misteaching of English and Other Colonial Languages*. New York: Routledge, pp. ix–xxxii.
- Degraff, Michel & Glenda S. Stump, 2018. Kreyòl, Pedagogy, and Technology for Opening up Quality Education in Haiti: Changes in Teachers’ Metalinguistic Attitudes as First Steps in a Paradigm Shift. *Language* 94(2):e127–e157.

35 See DeGraff 2017.

- Dejean, Yves, 1977. Comment écrire le créole. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- Dejean, Yves, 1993. An Overview of the Language Situation in Haiti. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 102:73–83.
- Dejean, Yves, 2006. *Chapit 1—Yon lekòl tèt anba nan yon peyi tèt anba*. Audio recording. Miami: CT Publications. <https://soundcloud.com/ctpublications/chapit-1-yon-lek-l-t-t-anba>.
- Devonish, Hubert, 1986. *Language and Liberation: Creole Language Politics in the Caribbean*. London: Karia.
- Diederich, Bernard, 2008. *The Prize: Haiti's National Palace*. Port-au-Prince: Éditions Henri Deschamps.
- Diederich, Bernard & Al Burt, 1972. *Papa Doc: Haiti and Its Dictator*. Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin.
- Dubois, Laurent, 2012. *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Fontaine, Pierre-Michel, 1981. Language, Society, and Development: Dialectic of French and Creole Use in Haiti. *Latin American Perspectives* 8(1):28–46.
- Girard, Philippe, 2010. *Haiti: The Tumultuous History: From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haitian Government, 1982. *Décret organisant le système éducatif haïtien en vue d'offrir des chances égales à tous et de refléter la culture haïtienne*. Port-au-Prince: Presses nationales.
- Heinl, Robert Debs & Nancy Gordon Heinl, 2005. *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People 1492–1995*. Lanham MD: University Press of America.
- Joseph, Carole M. Berotte, 1984. The Child, the Family, and the School in English-Haitian Education. In Charles R. Foster & Albert Valdman (eds.), *Haiti—Today and Tomorrow: An Interdisciplinary Study*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, pp. 351–58.
- Joseph, Carole M. Berotte, 2010. Haitians in the U.S.: Language, Politics and Education. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham: Lexington Books, pp. 229–47.
- Joseph, Carole Berotte & Richard K. Blot, 1984. *Project HAPTT: Haitian Parent and Teacher Training Program. Program Evaluation, 3rd Year. Final Report*. New York: City University of New York, City College.
- Lang, George, 2004. A Primer of Haitian Literature. *Kreyòl: Research in African Literatures* 35(2):128–40.
- Locher, Uli, 2010. Education in Haiti. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. 177–97.
- Mapou, Jan, 2011. *The Life and Bookstore of Jan Mapou*. Washington DC: Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-5510>

- McConnell, H. Ormonde, 1977. *Haiti Diary 1933–1970: Mission Extraordinary*. Cincinnati OH: United Methodist Committee on Relief.
- Mills, Sean, 2016. *A Place in the Sun: Haiti, Haitians, and the Remaking of Quebec*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Nicholls, David, 1979. *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour and National Independence in Haiti*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nicholls, David, 1986. Haiti: The Rise and Fall of Duvalierism. *Third World Quarterly* 8(4):1239–52.
- Nzengou-Tayo, Marie-José, 2010. Creole and French in Haitian Literature. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. 153–74.
- Philippi, Dayana Octavien, 2016. Haitian Adult Immigrants as Learners and Parents. Ph.D. dissertation, Walden University.
- Pichard, Mercedes R.Y., 2006. A Focus Group of Adolescent Haitian Immigrants: Factors Affecting Their Perceptions of Academic Success in a Florida Public High School. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Central Florida, Orlando, USA.
- Prou, Marc, 2009. Attempts at Reforming Haiti's Education System: The Challenges of Mending the Tapestry, 1979–2004. *Journal of Haitian Studies* 15(1/2):29–69.
- Ronceray, Hubert de & Serge Petit-Frère, 1975. *Projet expérimentale sur le bilinguisme Créole-Français au niveau de l'enseignement primaire en Haïti*. Port-au-Prince: CHISS.
- Robertshaw, Matthew, 2018. Occupying Creole: The Crisis of Language under the US Occupation of Haiti, 1915–1934. *Journal of Haitian Studies* 24(1): 4–24.
- Robertshaw, Matthew, 2019. L'Ouverture, 1901–1915: Sylvain, the École Nationale and the Opening of a Haitian Creole Debate. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 44(1): 22–39.
- Robertshaw, Matthew, forthcoming. Haitian Creole Comes of Age: Philology, Orthography, Education and Literature in the “Haitian Sixties,” 1934–1957.
- Schieffelin, Bambi B. & Rachelle Charlier Doucet, 1994. The “Real” Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice. *American Ethnologist* 21(1):176–200.
- Smarth, William, 2015. *Histoire de l'Église catholique d'Haïti, 1492–2003: Des points de repère*. Port-au-Prince: Les Éditions CIFOR.
- Smith, Matthew J., 2009. *Red and Black in Haiti: Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934–1957*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Spears, Arthur K., 2010. A Tribute to Yves Dejean and Albert Valdman. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. xv–xxii.
- Torterat, Frédéric, 2012. Notice Bio-bibliographique de Pierre Vernet. *Voix Plurielles* 9(2):4–9.
- Trouillot, Hénock, 1980. *Les limites du créole dans notre enseignement*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie des Antilles.

- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, 1990. *Haiti: State Against Nation: The Origins & Legacy of Duvalierism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Trouillot-Lévy, Jocelyne, 2010. Creole in Education in Haiti: A Case Study. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. 217–28.
- Védrine, Emmanuel W., 2004. *An Annotated Bibliography on Haitian Creole: A Review of Publications from Colonial Times to 2000*. Coconut Creek FL: Educa Vision.
- Zéphir, Flore, 1997. Haitian Creole Language and Bilingual Education in the United States: Problem, Right, or Resource? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 18(3):223–37.
- Zéphir, Flore, 2010. The Languages of Haitians and the History of Creole: Haiti and Its Diaspora. In Arthur K. Spears & Carole M. Berotte Joseph (eds.), *The Haitian Creole Language: History, Structure, Use, and Education*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. 55–80.