

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:00:23]:

Patrick Giovatis here. I'm going to keep this intro short because I don't want to delay your enjoyment of an extraordinary book about an extraordinary Haitian intellectual by an extraordinary historian. So ladies and gentlemen, without further ado, I hope you enjoyed this conversation as much as I did with doctor Marlene Daut as we discuss her book, and the origin of black Atlantic humanism.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:01:00]:

Thank you. Thank you for, for joining us. You're quite fine. I have bragging rights now within certain communities that I finally got you on the show.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:01:11]:

That's funny.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:01:12]:

I have some street creds in the ancient community, you know. So, let me first ask you, like, were you were you born in Haiti? Or

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:01:25]:

No. No. My mother is from Port au Prince, But I was born in California. Yeah.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:01:29]:

Okay. I gotcha. Okay. So, I I usually ask some general questions before we start diving deeply into, the Baron. Yes. What, what what do you think is is is this the current state of Haitian studies? Like, you know, I got on Twitter recently, with the account, and I'm seeing a lot of activities, a lot of books, you know, coming out, you know, in the Caribbean studies, Haitian studies, what what do you think, Michel Walthour would say About the state of Asian studies today, would he have to kinda revise his, you know, silencing of the past, you know, given the Are we in the golden age of Asian studies from Europe? The Columbia? I guess that's the question I'm gonna ask.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:02:14]:

Yeah. I mean, that's a really interesting question, actually. I do think that there there's more being written about, Haiti in multiple realms because it spans you know, there's Haitian revolutionary studies, but then there are also works on the occupation, and the contemporary, course, situation in Haiti or, like, Haitian music and culture and dance and Haitian Vodou. And I I feel like it's not

necessarily the golden age though just because When I go back into the writings by, for example, the founders of the Haitian Studies Association like Claude Michel, and. Then I see that, actually, there were these kind of flourishings all, you know, all along, but they weren't getting as much attention. So it's to me, that's what I think is actually different now. Mhmm. And, I mean, I you can even take it back to David Gheges and Caroline Fick and that generation of scholars and Jean Fouchart and Michel Le Toureux himself, that there were actually always a lot of People, relatively speaking, studying Haiti and working on Haiti, but they weren't getting Their voices weren't really being heard, and so I think that's the dynamic.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:03:29]:

So I don't think Tulio would have to revise his thesis because that's the same exact dynamic that he pointed out, Which was that in the 18th 19th century, a lot of people wrote about it. The Haitian revolution knew about it, were talking about it. It was just the way that they were talking about it. And so even though now we're talking about things so deeply and in such a nuanced way, that also has been going along. It has been going on for a while. It's just that now I think broader segments of the public are paying attention to it and able to access those writings.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:04:00]:

Okay. Can you define for us, black Atlantic humanism, and what are sort of its broader parameters? Also, is Pan Africanism dead?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:04:14]:

All the easy questions. Is Pan Africanism dead? Well, I so the first Wanted. I mean, I think that the easiest way to define black Atlantic humanism is just a a way of being in the world that is anticolonial, Antiracist and antislavery. And I think it's just really easy to forget because those seem pretty much like simple things, Even though in our world, I mean, we're still talking about what it means to be a person who, you know, operates with an anti racist mentality. Mhmm. But I think, you know, being against slavery seems common sense to people. Being against colonialism seems common sense to a lot of people, not everybody. But in the 18th 19th centuries, of course, it wasn't.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:04:59]:

And so that what what the black Atlantic humanist like Baron Duarte, who's the principal example, you know, from my book is that his way of being in the world, whatever other flaws he had, of course, only Kristoff was a king, And there's this question of monarchy as a form of governance, and, of course, there's a republic in the south. But

all of that question of of The actual politics of making it independent Haiti aside, what underlies it, even though it's a monarchy, even though he argues on behalf of a king, Is an attitude that racism is they call it color prejudice in the early 19th century, is unequivocally wrong. Slavery is wrong and that colonialism is evil. And that was really, I think, Wathey's major contribution to, Not just black Atlantic humanism, but to western thought, quote, unquote. Because when he wrote the colonial system unveiled, People didn't really think that colonialism itself was the problem. They there are lots of abolitionists, but hardly anybody talking about the evils of colonialism. And we can also glimpse that when we look into the 19th century US African American historical and literary tradition where the way that they use the word colonization, they're Talking about, we'll set up a free black state in Liberia. We'll set up a free black state in Sierra Leone.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:06:21]:

So this is how we know that even though we don't trace The definition of colonialism as something terrible, a scourge on the world to Watte, he really is one of the originators, If not the originator of this very idea.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:06:36]:

Can you flesh out Glissant's theory of opacity and how it's An essential tool for us to use when we are studying the history of the colonized.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:06:46]:

Yeah. I mean, I really like this question because I I feel like a lot of people Kind of throw around Glissantian opacity as in the idea that being inscrutable in our scholarship is a part of, you know, the opacity that Glisan was talking about. But what he was actually describing was something very, very simple. We make Choices in our lives, and we don't even always know what completely animates us. And he essentially proposes if you Have strong feelings about something and you don't necessarily understand why or about someone or some other idea that it's okay to accept that there will just There will simply be things we won't know about the world, we won't be able to know about the world, and that we won't be able to know or figure out about other people. Because I think when I, you know, delve into the lives of not just Vatte, but also, Christophe himself, unlikely member of 3 Haitian administrations, Dessalines, Christophe, and Benoit, That they're that accepting that some of the information that I would like to have about their motivations and even just their lives, who they were as people, That might be irrecoverable, but that doesn't mean that we can't sort of, sit with what those things that we do know. And I would say the the other part of it is that if we can't figure out

someone's character, which is someone like Watte who People either seem to love or hate. Christophe was similar.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:08:23]:

There were people who loved him and sang his praises, and then there are people who He's the, you know, the and the, you know, this big, you know, enemy. You probably and and, and I think just Being able to see the difference between us saying we there are a lot of things we don't know and understand stand because a lot of it has been lost, wasn't recorded the way that we have records from Jefferson and Washington. And so people pose this a lot. Like, oh, okay. Well, how is, you know, studying Christophe or any different than studying Jefferson? Well well, the first thing is is Christophe never enslaves or owns anybody. He never owns anyone in his life. Mhmm. So already we're already we're, you know, a notch up.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:09:10]:

The other thing is that the idea of the sexual assault, first of all, that's rampant on plantations and then, of course, that we know is a part of Jefferson's lives. But All of these things that it's not to say that Christophe was a perfect ruler, but we have to be able to see the difference, and I think that is opacity as well. We have to actually be able to recognize degrees of harm. And that all of these early Haitian leaders who are extremely imperfect People who, you know, do do harm. But the harms that they occasion, the scale and magnitude It's simply not there because Mhmm. They don't have control over an entire system of slavery and a slave trade and And, you know, causing wars constantly. If we think about Napoleon, that there is just a scale that is completely Unrecognized a lot of times when we're dealing with black leaders and black figures that we hold them to a standard that Napoleon is celebrated All throughout France despite the millions of deaths he's responsible for.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:10:10]:

When we look at African Meghan slave writings versus the early writings of Haitian intellectuals like Rigo and Vate. What I noticed with the Haitian writers is a kind of unmediated Agency. They seem to write with a confident voice from a people who took their freedom by Force, not a freedom that was granted to them by the grace of their former masters. Can you flesh out for us the contrast differences between African American slave narratives and Haiti's early memoirs from the perspective of collective Agency.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:10:48]:

Yeah. No. I mean, I definitely think that, I do think there is a a pretty significant difference in The way that early Haitian authors

write from independent Haiti, versus the way that African American writers from the antebellum period in the United States. Right? Mhmm. And a lot of it does have to do with The differently threatened positions that they occupy, but also I think one of the things I really wanted to bring out with, Watte, in this much earlier period of Haiti's history, you know, we're talking about the 1st 20 or so years of Haitian independence And, really, 15 years because he dies right after Christophe in 18/20, and that They didn't feel themselves to be powerless people on the world stage, and I think it really affects the way that they write. And the way that they are talking to the rest of the world is as if they understand themselves to be The equals of the rest of the world. Like, we know that you don't think that. It's a strain that runs through, but we it is actually true.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:11:59]:

And look at us. We're the proof that it's true. I mean so they could simply say the fact that we have a state, the fact that we have institutions and schools. And so it kind of, I think hits a little bit differently because when Frederick Douglass, for example, in his 18/45 narrative says, You know, then I I basically learned to read, and this is how I became kind of a man, essentially. I had a way an awakening that woke me up to my own humanity. Well, you know, for many of the earliest Haitian authors, and in fact, I can't think of one of the early Haitian writers who would who writes in that vein about themselves.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:12:39]:

Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:12:40]:

Now that's not to say that when the world gets their story, that that's not the narrative because that is Kind of the narrative with Toussaint. Right? Oh, he read enlightened philosophy, and then he kind of woke up and saw himself to be that Raynalian, black Spartacus figure. So we see that that idea seems to emanate from outside of Haiti because Rigaud, who'd never been enslaved, Julien Raymond, who'd never been enslaved, belonged to that day, never been enslaved. They don't write about themselves like this. And then even the formerly enslaved people, Dessaline is not like, oh, yeah. I read some books and then I woke up. It's like, no. This condition, I have these scars on my back.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:13:21]:

That's what woke me up. And so I think there's just a different way of there and and for example, there's just a different way of of being in the world, and I think that's why it's so important to actually study,

these different movements side by side and to resist the desire to collapse them into one another. But at the same time, I also suggest we can learn personal things about the the writers if we read deeply And between the lines, but we also see that from that not as much with, Julien Raymond who Quite who liked to write about himself quite a lot, but, Rigaud and Toussaint Louverture and Berwinde Dovate and Juss Schonlotte, they really did not They did not view their personal stories as the emblem of antislavery or antiracism. The the emblems of that were the treatment of enslaved people. So they put themselves in the background instead of the foreground of the story, and that also does come partially from, You know, even in the case of Thyssen du Vercier living long lives as, quote, unquote, free people, not being enslaved. So it's so it's just a different hermeneutic and way of being, and I think it's really an interesting dynamic to study.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:14:35]:

Who was Colombeil, and what do you mean that He's responsible, what you said, quote, contemporary status readings of Watte's works. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:14:46]:

Yes. So Noel Colombo is was an was also a a free person of color from the colonial days, but he lives in France, for a long time and even after Haitian independence. But when he comes back, He gets together with Jules Milsand, who is running a will run a magazine, La Bay, And, you know, they become, and Colombeau to a large extent, the kind of, Advocates for Petion and then for after Petion's death. And, they, therefore, are very opposed To all the writings coming out of the north because the thing that the north has that the south, doesn't have in as great of numbers is all the writers. I mean, when you read, you think, gee, I never want that pen to come for me. Right? Right. Sort of and the same thing with. Like, I'm I never want a pen like this to come for me for me.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:15:47]:

And even when you read Colombe and Milicent's writings about the northern writers because, You know, Chelsea Stieber calls this in her book Hades Paper War, so all of their personal insults and war of words, as they called it. Yeah. Colombe is out of his league. His argument about Watte, which Watte points out when he responds to him, His argument about Vahte is, oh, all you do is just write on behalf of Christophe to enrich yourself. And Vahte essentially says, Actually engage with my argument because is what I'm saying wrong? And the interesting thing about that is that Later, when Gerard Dimel publishes his Voyage d'on le noir d'aiti in 18/24, even though he doesn't like Vartee because he was an ardent, you know, advocate of, He's a little more lukewarm on, but, but because he wants to defend

Petion in this work as well, that naturally makes him the opponent of Christophe, who we can't stand. But when it comes to Wathey, he has to recognize in all these footnotes, Wathey said, and, oh, you know, Mazaire, who Wathey wrote against a lot of former French colonist was out of his league according to Jumelle in the face of of Watte. So Watte's point to me does actually stand when it's, Okay. You say that I write on behalf of a king, and so therefore, I have no originality.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:17:06]:

But he says, but what about all the stuff that I'm writing? What about my argument that I am making? What about what I'm saying about Petion, who is the person responsible for even proposing This preposterous indemnity. So Mhmm. When we think about it from the northern standpoint, you know, they have every reason to want to be against, against Petion and then later, Boire. And, of course, they don't even know how right they are because many of them, like Vatte, for example, are actually, killed, executed after Christophe's suicide, and so they don't live to see The 18/25, you know, disastrous indemnity agreement.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:18:02]:

Can you talk about Thomas Stafford and what happened to him when he landed in Enslaved Jamaica, coming from independent Haiti. Can you please talk about that, sedition or sedition as charges that were brought up against him?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:18:26]:

He was from Kingston, but a white British person, and he goes and does live. There are Actually, even more documents that I've uncovered since, the time of publishing the book. So he does live in the kingdom of Haiti. And so He goes, but he does go back to, Kingston and he has with him either 1 copy or several copies. The indictment, you know, Plays a little fast and loose with exactly how many he had of, which will later be translated in English, so it's not translated yet. And so this is January 18, 17, and, he he has this book on him That is really Watte's most antiracist work because he goes through and describes all these theories of inequality, Especially as, ex as, expounded upon by the by the white French colonists like Mazzeres and dismantles them 1 by 1. I mean, he just destroys them because, you know, in one of the passages that is the most moving of the work, Batya says, Also, if you could prove that we were inferior to you, would that be a reason to enslave, kill, torture, and rape us? The idea that any difference that if you thought someone was really actually not your equal, that it would be then justified to do these things, He says, where is the animal that would do this to another animal? And there's all kinds of inequalities among, you know, the animals of the earth. So after destroying the principle of inferiority itself, he says, and, you know, it actually doesn't logically make

sense that People would be put on this earth in order to destroy one another.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:20:16]:

Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:20:16]:

And when they when Thomas Strafford gets to Kingston and he has this book And the authorities read it. They know how dangerous the these words are because the entire basis of their system It's built on the idea that if you really could prove someone was inferior, then you would have the right to do whatever you want to them. Mhmm. And so they Start translating in the indictment after they arrest him. They start translating this book. So the 1st translation of Watte's 18/16 is in this indictment, which is many, many pages long, much longer than any of the other indictments in the same register. And the formal English translation is going to come out later that year by a British botanist named William Hamilton who also lived, in the kingdom of Haiti for a time, was funded by he'd applied for funding from the British government to go and study botany Mhmm. In on the island.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:21:14]:

And the interesting thing about Thomas Strafford's defense is if you read the Jamaican newspapers, he says, oh, I didn't know, you know, that I had those things in there. It must have been my Haitian housekeeper must have stuck them in there. Mhmm. And the authorities believe his defense that he had no ill intent, But they still found him they he was innocent of having any guilty intent, but he was still convicted, if that makes sense. But just to time served and to paying this fine that he could get out as soon as he he paid this fine because they said the effect was the same. Okay. We recognize you didn't intend to spread sedition, But the intent was the same. But the indictment itself also reveals what they think about Christophe and because there are several passages where they they say purported to be written by one who, you know, says he is an African.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:22:04]:

It's like They can't believe that this work would be published by a person of color, and then their ideas about Christophe are the Cursed, usurped, wicked, malicious character called Christophe, and it's just repeated over and over again with no There's nothing that they say that he's done. What he's done is establish the kingdom of Haiti, and that's bad enough in their eyes.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:22:29]:

So as they're translating it Within the document, they're throwing shade and putting their little comments in there.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:22:37]:

Yes. And one of the passages that they use to show That this is the wicked, malicious, seditious intent to bring, you know, slave rebellion to the island of Jamaica is the passage where Vahteh says, I am a man. I believe it to be so in all of my being, and yet I find myself obliged to refute plural sophisms Just to prove to other men that I am a man like them. That's what they can't stand.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:23:06]:

You touched the the British botanist William Hamilton. Mhmm. What's the connection between, writings, what he did with it in terms of connecting it The science, Haitian sovereignty, and, I guess, humanism, if you will. What can you, talk about, The the natural historians like him, who sort of became an unlike the allies of of 19th century Haiti.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:23:30]:

Yeah. It's so interesting that, that there were because There was Joseph Banks, also, again, another natural historian who becomes this ally of Haiti, but in an armchair way because I I haven't seen any documents of him Actually, being there in the kingdom of Haiti, but, certainly, he was writing about the laws and found them Really, he he read the code, Joseph Banks did, and he just found that it could Set up the basis for agricultural societies that were cultivated this the euphemism they love to use in the 19th century was by free hands, cultivated by 3 hands. And so, that's what they saw. And this is how I know as a historian and as a reader that What we describe as, or has been described in more recent works as, oh, well, Christophe reinstated slavery. If you see the way that people who knew what chattel slavery looked like write about the kingdom of Haiti, then we can't draw that conclusion Because they literally say, okay. This is the most free and moral association of men in existence. So, no, it's not it's not the kind of labor that we would champion today. It absolutely is not, but they knew they weren't buying and selling people.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:24:48]:

They knew that the forms of labor, they were very, very hard. It's There it's backbreaking labor as much cutting sugarcane. All of this is backbreaking labor to this day that people continue to do backbreaking labor, And this is what's going on, and yet at the same time, they say they're they're free people, you know, so they're doing it for themselves. And so I think that when the botanists and the

natural historians come, they are fascinated By the the idea of what could else could be grown on the island because William Hamilton shares Vate's sense That Haiti cannot become an import economy. That he so his big work Milton says on the cultivation of wheat in the tropics. And he actually uses Watte's writings who he calls his talented and regretted friend because Of course, this died by the time Hamilton publishes this book. And he says, you know, he talked about all of the other goods, potatoes, things that we could grow on this island so that The people who live here would not be dependent on these empires, slavery, and and colonialism that threaten them. Because If you are independent Haiti, you don't want slave ships docking in your port because we know that the same ships that brought goods had Enslaved people in the hold during the heyday of the slave trade, which is still, of course, going on in Portugal and Spain and in in a more clandestine way, in in the French and British empires as well and to a certain extent in the United States as well, this sort of clandestine slave trade after it's outlawed.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:26:28]:

And so, you don't you don't want that. And what the kingdom would do and, actually, the Republic of Haiti did this as well. They would capture those ships, and they would free the people to live in Haiti. And they would get into fights with foreign governments like Spain and Portugal in the case of the kingdom of Haiti. They would get into Lawsuits. They would, this also happened under. The government in Cuba brings a lawsuit. Later, another one in Puerto Rico brings a lawsuit saying you Stole our goods by which they met people.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:26:58]:

And so so we see that they have they have an uphill battle, But it doesn't also one of the things I wanted to bring out in the book is it doesn't mean that they didn't have allies and that there weren't people who did see. Because So much of what we read about Haiti in the 19th century is everyone was scared of Haiti, but, actually, it's not really true. And I do think we bring a fullness and richness to the story when we recognize How many different ideas there were about what independent Haiti could be and the kind of people who would make it up? Because a lot of people like, Hamilton and and Thomas Strafford, you know, they liked living there. They wrote about it afterwards Mhmm. That that they enjoyed living in Haiti.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:27:55]:

What is this sig you talk about the significance of the word regeneration in late 18th or early 19th century. Can you expand on that a little bit and what it means within a larger context of, post enlightenment of the post enlightenment project About, you know, this is how you rehabilitate the human condition, so on and so forth. Can

you talk about that word regeneration? And I think even Batya used it in some of his writings. Correct?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:28:20]:

Yes. I mean, so the, of course, the pseudo scientific, debates about race that were happening in the 17th, but really in the 18th century in the French Atlantic Text that there was this idea that the new world, the quote, unquote new world, the Americas, the 2 American hemispheres, that some type of degeneration had happened Fair. And that Europeans were gonna help the regeneration. But then there's also slavery. And slavery is causing a degeneration, quote, unquote, to these pseudo scientific, you know, kinda, thinkers that this is causing a degeneration of the African race. So what we need to do is we have to rehabilitate the, quote, unquote, new world and, you know, people of African descent as well. But then there is also the related concept of Feudalism in Europe and the despotism of kings, royalty, all of that in Europe had also caused a degeneration. So after the French revolution, we see a lot of writers Talking about the regeneration of the French people that's supposed to cause a regeneration of all of Europe as particularly Western Europe.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:29:23]:

And so, these ideas are kinda floating around in the air. And one of the things that Haitian writers, early Haitian writers from the really early period Talk about is regeneration because they do recognize that you can't subjugate people for 200 years, A 100 years in the case of French claims Saint Domingue and then expect miraculously all of the effects of that to go away. So they kind of imbibe this language, and they talk about how fast it's going. They're saying we're gonna rehabilitate humankind because the other word they like to use is rehabilitation. We're gonna rehabilitate humankind. And, actually, when Vahteh's writing in 18/14 and 18/15 and 18 16, he actually points out, Do you see all that we have built just from the time of 18/04 to now? Just imagine, like, how long it took Europeans to do this When they come out of you know, he likes to cite the dark ages and Mhmm. You know? And he's he says when they come out of all of like, look how long it takes them. And he says we are on this kind of accelerated path and this accelerated course.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:30:25]:

And then this language of regeneration actually sticks around for a while because after the overthrow of, The Haitian newspaper start a kind of new calendar. They'll say, you know, year 1 of our regeneration that after they got rid of Bouille, Year 2 of our regeneration. And then as a few more, you know, sort of upheavals in the government happen, we start to we see the language start to fall away a little bit more. But certainly, it it has different moments of

resurgence in independent Haiti and very tied to particular context, but mostly just Really meaning that it's a chance to start over. So not as linked in the later period to ideas of degeneration, but just it's a time to start over and to create something new.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:31:09]:

You cite recent research that shows the Supposed 100 year isolation of, post independent Haiti wasn't as as pervasive or or or to put it another way, that the, you know, recent research Complicates this whole notion that Haiti suffered a 100 year isolation from the rest of the world After its independence, can you elaborate on that for us, please?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:31:47]:

Yes. So, here, I'd like to cite the work Of Julia Garfield, her book Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World, which I believe was published in 2015.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:31:55]:

Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:31:56]:

And, You know, she she, it's, part, you know, social history, part diplomatic history, and is really going through a lot of these court records and, And legal writings and letters back and forth from different Haitian officials to, you know, officials elsewhere in the world. And the sub title of that book is Recognition After Revolution. And it's so all it's all about all of the ways that Haiti negotiated, Not formally having recognition, but having a de facto recognition that existed in particular from the United States and from Great Britain that allowed trade to subsist, between the nations and among the nations of various states of Haiti concentrated a lot in the period of Dessalines and Christophe in her book, And, and and how this really complicates our understanding of Haiti Haiti's isolated position. That doesn't mean that the other World powers, so to speak, didn't actually try to isolate Haiti. But it also speaks to the difficulties of actually doing that, which goes back to something I said sort of beginning of our conversation, which is that Haitians didn't an they didn't believe themselves to be inferior, so they didn't behave in a way that would suggest that they were. So they wrote to the president of the United States, Dessalines did. They addressed themselves to the governments of the world. They didn't cower in fear.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:33:21]:

Mhmm. And they knew that they had the moral high ground. And I think one of the things that comes through so strongly from reading in this time period is they know that they are right, and so it's almost like They know they don't what do they have to lose? Because they say, if you come Bathe says in one issue of the Gazette Royale, on newspaper. If they wanna come, the French, let them come. The more who come, the more we will kill. If you have you always ask, come. Go ahead. We aren't afraid of war.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:33:53]:

What could a people who've already been subjected to slavery Yeah. To all manner what could they fear A get from another French army other than death, and Watte says there are things worse than death. In many Passages of Lucy Stemko, he talks about all these tortures. And so, because I I think there is a world in which Haiti Could have been isolated or could have tried to isolate itself. But even writers from the south in the republic We're saying no. Trade is the motor and the engine of the world. We want to be connected to our good neighbors. We want to be connected to the ones who don't wanna threaten us.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:34:32]:

They do want to be disconnected from France, especially in the kingdom of Haiti because they say no treaties, no conversations until you de facto recognize our independence, And the favorite thing of French diplomats and the French government was to address Christophe as general Christophe, and he was like, absolutely not. Mhmm. And and if Sometime you know, Aime Cesaire sort of poked fun of at this a little bit in La Traje Di Duocry stuff, his famous play.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:34:59]:

Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:34:59]:

But If it's but I all have always wondered why what was funny to him was Kristoff insisting on being addressed As a king, when if you think about it from the other standpoint, if it's so inconsequential, then why couldn't the French government just do it? Because they knew that if they did that, they would be de recognizing Haitian independence. So a lot of that isolation is semantic, but it that doesn't mean that it didn't have real effects. And so one of the the examples that I use in the book of, a dynamic where Haiti's independence is de facto recognized, but not Officially recognized where Haiti is not really isolated, but the rest of the worlds are trying are trying to say that they are or at least, trying to project to the idea that they're not connected to them is when Vatay writes privately to Thomas Clarkson. Like, in public, he says, we don't care if you recognize us or not.

And we already know that Great Britain has, technically, because they trade with us. But then in private, he's writing to Clarkson saying, can you really, you know, help us To get recognition, can you make this argument?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:02]:

Can you

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:02]:

make that argument? So they do want it.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:05]:

So so Because we we arrive in the world, right, from a position of power. Right?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:16]:

Yes.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:17]:

Now I get it. So, you you you mentioned that, you find some of the Earliest formulation of, what is today known as critical race theory. Can I can I, you know, I guess, torment my, African American friends by telling them that Asians invented CRT or should I hold off on that?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:41]:

You know, it's so it's really actually funny that you should say that because, you know, I read all the time about the origins of critical race theory. And, of course, you know, Haitians didn't use that

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:51]:

Right. Yeah.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:36:51]:

Critical race theory. But even going back to Julien Raimond, in the 18th century, he was like, okay, here's how you set up a prejudiced Society in the law. Like, I'm gonna walk you through it. And that's what he does. He says, okay, we're gonna go to the code and we're gonna see how is it that you set up a Society where legally, 1 group of people is gonna have power over another peep group of people using this really discredited in his eyes fury of the inferiority of the human races. Right? And so that's what he does. And so then there's Watte as well and also Andre Rigaud, and they do it in You know, one

of the things I say is, you know, they become these race theorists without even necessarily kind of trying to because they're Right. They're explaining their world.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:37:33]:

This is what it's like in Saint Domingue. This is what a group of people when they want to stay in power, what what will they do Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:37:41]:

And they

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:37:41]:

wanna stay in power On well, there's no there's no basis for this power because all of these Haitian writers, even the free people of color like Raymond, Say it is inadmissible that 1 group of people would claim that their color automatically has rights over another group of people. Mhmm. That that you could talk about enslaved and free status, but you couldn't talk about it to a free person of color like Guillermo. You couldn't talk about it on the basis of color. So Even though he is still one of the the bad people because he's enslaved people. Mhmm. Yes. He does.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:38:13]:

He Is still dismantling these theories of race and only later, it will take him a while too long. Only later will he come to realize, no. You can't. They were folded into one another. The racism and the slavery, they were actually coupled together and dismantling It took dismantling both of them, to to get rid of slavery, and yet what remained and what we see even in the United States is what Haitian authors Point out constantly, Demoiselles Des Aesvoir Delongue later in the 19th century says, the United States, their problem is they got rid of slavery, but They didn't make any laws about racism. They didn't make any laws about citizenship immediately. Right. They let it fester.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:38:57]:

And so critical race theory is In names, that's what they're studying. They're studying the legalized basis of racial prejudice in the United States.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:05]:

Wow. You I I remember you mentioned, the 18/04 constitution and the use of the word neg.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:15]:

Mhmm.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:15]:

And how it's it's not racialized and yet It is. And the word contrast with the word that basically it sounds like you're saying it means foreigner.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:29]:

Uh-huh.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:29]:

Right? Like anybody else. Can you kinda go into that? I thought there was, like, a fascinating thing with the word, nag and the word and what it meant, to to Haitians, intellectuals, and officials at that time, and and and it's it's embedded in the constitution. Right? It's embedded in the constitution, 18/05.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:39:48]:

Yes. So, I mean, the basis that all Haitians are gonna, from from now on, be black. Right? This is this is a Dessalinesian concept, And I can distinctly tie it to Dessalines because it doesn't appear ever again after the 18/05 constitution. The the idea that all Haitians sorry. From now on, generically known under the title of black people. And, and and I think the legacy of The legacy of this in contemporary Haitian style with Neg being man and being foreigner, I think the legacy of this, remains Especially when we consider that there were lots of white people who lived in the empire of Haiti under Dessalines, in fact, they would renounce their citizenship of other places. There are lots of documents Showing that there were Swedes, and they would renounce their citizens over people from Denmark, and they would renounce their, foreign citizenship and become Haitians. And so then they are folded into the Haitian populace, and we know, of course, the Polish legion people who remained, and stayed in Haiti to this day.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:40:52]:

They can trace their ancestry to these Polish officers and, and individuals who lived in Haiti. And so it became a kind of, It became the reverse metaphor of whiteness just to say, actually, blackness can be normative. Because, know, we talk in the United States about how and I think this still exists to a certain extent, although I think people are trying to to do better with it, That they will describe the, quote, unquote, race or skin color of a person, but only if

they're not white. Everybody else is unmarked for the most part. You wouldn't say A white man, you know, was walking down the street and was attacked by a dog, it would say, a man was walking down the street attacked by and if it didn't say Later in the article or somewhere that he was a black man or African American or Asian American, then we are left to assume that it must be a white man. Well, this Aileen is saying, Actually, the the default assumption is that you're black and that if we write that you're French or Spanish or whatever, Then and that's when we look at documents from the empire, we see we do see that. Like, They're from the other side of the island. We do see that there's a way to figure out who is who,

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:42:03]:

but

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:42:04]:

it's not gonna be on the basis of just the name because then The default assumption is that everyone is black. And I think that actually, kind of jives with something that George Lamming, the, author from Barbados wrote in his book, The Pleasures of Exile. He said, you know, no West Indian, and he was talking about the Anglophone context, could have this highly oppressive sense of being black that people in United States have. He says because you're surrounded by black faces. You don't you know, it's, black skin, white masks. You know, only in going to France Do you feel oh, the gaze. And I do think, you know, that, that Dessalines was not just allowing it to happen accidentally, He actually theorized it. Like, yes.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:42:44]:

We're going to say legally that this is the basis of our society, and then we'll just wreck it. And we're not gonna also have And it said about the old colonial terms, and I think it was also about that. It's about ridding the world of those kinds of hierarchical Cool. Divisions that came from pseudoscientific debates about race.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:43:02]:

Mhmm. That's, that's amazing. What's next for you, Doctor. Dauch, what's what what, what are you what are you plunging into?

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:43:10]:

I have 2 projects, actually. I have, An intellectual history of Haiti called awakening the ashes, which you may remember the phrase. It's inspired by Bathe's phrase that he's gonna Interrogate, awaken the ashes of his, compatriots and ask them questions, because that's what I feel like I'm doing when I I love Haitian intellectual history of

all kinds. I love the poetry. I love the plays. I love the novels. I love the historical writings, the personal letters. And it that's what it feels like a lot.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:43:39]:

It's like, okay. They're, you know, they're talking, and I wanna be able to hear them and listen to them. And, then the second is A, narrative history of the kingdom of Haiti with, of course, Henri Christophe at the center and just kind of describing what life was like in the kingdom of Haiti and Figuring out what life was like and learning so much about, this kind of state that Christophe tried to build. And so those are the 2 things I'm working on now.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:07]:

I, I really, really appreciate this, doctor Doud. Thank you for for joining me On this journey

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:13]:

so much for inviting me.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:15]:

I keep reading your stuff. I, I just bought your tropics book, and, it's massive. So that's gonna be

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:22]:

nice. I know.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:24]:

So, but you're doing great work and and I've I've adopted the term. I tell everybody I'm a a black Atlantic humanist.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:32]:

I love it.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:33]:

So thank you again. I appreciate

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:36]:

Oh, thank you for inviting me. Okay.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:38]:

Then take care.

Dr. Marlene Daut [00:44:39]:

You too. Bye bye.

Patrick Jean-Baptiste [00:44:41]:

I hope you enjoyed this episode as much as I did. Please follow us On
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