

Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence: EU Graduate Student Research Award 2024

***“Black Martinican Girlhood across the Atlantic:  
Educational Migration from Martinique to France in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”***  
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My dissertation project is titled *Black Martinican Girlhood across the Atlantic: Educational Migration from Martinique to France in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. It will analyze young Black Martinican women’s experience of educational migration to metropolitan France in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Little has been written about the history of these young women, despite the fact that many of them were key figures in transnational networks that shaped new understandings of identity, self-determination, citizenship, rights, and activism throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I posit that it was the very experience of educational migration that rendered them a unique demographic who contributed to the fate of their homeland, its relationship to France and, later, to the European Union.

The research trip sponsored by the Monnet Center allowed me to consult sources in several different archival repositories: the Archives territoriales de la Martinique, the Bibliothèque Schœlcher, and the Archives départementales de la Guadeloupe. The sources I found there range from governmental records to periodicals published in Martinique, Guadeloupe and metropolitan France. These sources allowed me to reconstruct a picture of how complex educational access and the experience of educational migration were for young Black Martinican women throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most importantly, I was able to find sources, such as teaching staff’s personal files to students’ notebooks, produced by or shedding light on the voice of Black Martinican women involved in educational migration themselves.

The sources confirmed that girls barely had any access to secondary education until the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Opportunities for them started increasing in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

and bloomed into access to French metropolitan universities in the 1920s and 1930s. Newspapers and governmental records show that the funding granted by the French government for young women to migrate from Martinique to France continued to be an area of contention in French politics. In the late 1940s, after Martinique's status changed to that of French department rather than colony, the funding became more consistent and increased. Nevertheless, journals and newspapers produced by students in the following decades demonstrate that higher education remained just a dream for many Martinican students.

Today, Martinique is still part of France and, by extension, of the European Union (EU). While a university has been established on the island, the migratory pattern of young Martinican students to France is still significant. Said educational migration is supported, in part, by EU funding through several different programs. Further research that I will be conducting in metropolitan France in the upcoming months will shed more light on what the experiences of young Black Martinican female students have been throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how the involvement of the EU in assisting Martinican students has changed their experiences of educational migration. Most importantly, this will help me in answering my project's main question: how has educational migration, and its changes over time due to the changing relationship between Martinique, France, and the EU, influenced young Black Martinican women and how did they, in turn, influence said relationship?