



The Henri Peyre French Institute
The Graduate Center

365 Fifth Avenue, Room 4202 New York, NY 10016-4309

Impunity, Responsibility and Citizenship – HAITI

The Graduate Center, CUNY

17 & 18 March 2016

CALL FOR PAPERS

Keynote Speakers:

Etienne Tassin (Université Paris-Diderot)

William O'Neil (Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF), SSRC/ UN)

With the end of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986, Haiti witnessed the emergence of public demands and discourses addressing justice, democracy, individual rights, reconstruction, and later on, reconciliation. It was, however, 25 years later, after the return of Jean-Claude Duvalier to Haiti in January 2011, that the formal process of filing lawsuits against the person of the fallen dictator, and through him, against the dictatorship itself began, first on the basis of individual complaints, and later with the founding of the Collectif contre l'Impunité.

The character of such recourse to justice against a former head of state, completely new to Haiti, is already the matter of much debate. Further, the impossibility of reaching a consensus within civil society and of overcoming obstacles from the authorities on the appropriateness and the feasibility of such a recourse, and the very fact that Duvalier's death could elicit questions regarding the statute of limitations or the practical modalities of any judicial action against his regime, call for public attention and underscore the crucial importance of this debate.

The premise of the conference « Impunity, Responsibility et Citizenship- Haiti » is that there is a constant recurrence of an expected impunity in Haiti, and, in fact, of its institutionalization. Even before the historically specific case of the Duvalier dictatorship, Haïti has been marked by a long list of violent acts by the state and of crimes that have remained unpunished. Among the most notable, the assassination in 1806 of Dessalines, the first Haitian head of state, hero of the Revolution and of Haitian independence, which was never, even pro forma, the object of any judicial inquiry, the absence of any serious investigation into the disappearance of emblematic figures such as the writer Jacques-Stephen Alexis, and the assassination of the journalist Jean Dominique. To these one might add the urgent state of legal actions undertaken by Haitian citizens without government support in response to the ongoing cholera epidemic that began in October 2010.

The conference calls on its participants to begin a conversation on the historical components of this impunity, on its implications for the concepts of state responsibility and of civil and citizen responsibility in the Haitian context, on its impact on lived experience and common experience, and on the literary and artistic production of Haiti. We thus propose to explore the correlation between seemingly historically isolated moments, the constitution of the Haitian social fabric and the normalization and reproduction of impunity.

Presentations will address the following questions, whether in their theoretical dimension or in their application, but are not limited to them:

- Impunity in Haiti. Definitions and contours. Historical and philosophical perspectives.
- Impunity, human rights and the law: applications in Haiti.
- Impunity and interpersonal relations. Towards an economy of impunity.
- Citizens and responsibility: do the quest and demand for justice implicate victims only? Why does impunity not only concern the political class?
- Revenge as dead end.
- Impunity on a daily basis. Relations with institutions. Relations with others and self-projection.
- Giving/Settling accounts? Voices and paths towards justice and catharsis through Haitian arts and letters.

Individual presentations, in French or English, must not exceed 20 minutes.

If you would like to present a paper at the conference, please send the title of your paper and an abstract of 250 words maximum. Submission must include the name of the presenter, academic or institutional affiliation, email address and telephone number.

Deadline for submitting a paper topic: January 21, 2016. Acceptance notification: January 31, 2016

For further information and to submit a paper, please contact:

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