

# Linguistic Barriers, Exploitation and Resistance in Haiti

**A one-day conference at MIT on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

The conference, supported by the MIT Policy Lab, will consist of a sequence of panels, followed by a Starr Forum. Each will be video recorded and published on YouTube. In general terms, the conference aims to explore the role of language and education on the political and economic difficulties faced by Haiti. We have invited participants from diverse areas of study *and* action, and we hope that this conference will help bridge certain gaps in our knowledge and practice in and about Haiti. The panel discussions will be designed to inform participants and the general public about the variety of obstacles hindering Haiti's wellbeing and sovereignty as a nation — political, economic and educational obstacles — with special reference to the role and consequences of linguistic choices. This conference will double as a call to courageous action, inspired by Haiti's history and by current efforts on the ground — thus, the “resistance” in the title.

All the panels, and the Starr Forum, will take place in MIT Room 2-190, 182 Memorial Drive. Refreshments will be available in Room 2-290, starting at 8:30.

## ***Welcome and opening remarks***

**Haynes Miller**

**9:00**

## ***Panel 1: Elite domination / capture / closure and linguistic occupation (Culture)***

**Panelists: Jean Casimir, Nedgine Paul Deroly, Philippe Marius**

**Moderator: Dominique Dupuy**

**9:15 – 10:30**

The lives of most Haitians are indistinguishable from lives in a state under occupation. They are excluded from power, government and medical services, and quality education, through a form of linguistic exclusion: they do not speak the language of the former colonial power — French, which is enlisted for elite closure, as “*butin de guerre*,” by a small percentage of Haitians — while the vast numerical majority speaks a minoritized national language — Kreyòl, which is the one single language spoken by all Haitians though it is excluded from the formal spheres where state power and academic knowledge are created and transmitted. This state of affairs — where most Haitians are, in effect, made second-class citizens or strangers in their own land — has a corrosive effect on the nation's self-efficacy, a result that in turn serves the purposes of the elite, the state and the international trading community.

## ***Panel 2: Educational challenges and opportunities: the long game (Education)***

**Panelists:** Bertrhude Albert, Renauld Govain, Chris Low

**Moderator:** Marc Prou

**11:00 – 12:15**

Universal education of children is a recognized human right and is guaranteed by the Haitian Constitution of 1987. Realizing this right faces great obstacles. The impoverishment of the government of Haiti results in a preponderance of private schools, often subject to exorbitant fees and exogenous demands. The perceived need to quickly train students in French has allied parents with conservative actors perpetuating the use of French as a language of instruction (“LOI”) despite strong scientific evidence demonstrating the educational advantages of the mother tongue as LOI. Eurocentric curricula and related material in French further undermine the student’s ownership of the educational process. A progressive reform movement initiated forty years ago by Minister Joseph C. Bernard is today showing encouraging signs of renewal.

## ***Lunch available in Room 2-290***

**12:15 – 1:30**

## ***Panel 3: The “Outer peripheral trap” (Economics)***

**Panelists:** Robert Fatton, Scott Freeman, Malick Ghachem

**Moderator:** Nathalie Frédéric Pierre

**1:30 – 2:45**

Haiti is “trapped in the outer periphery,” in Robert Fatton’s phrase. As explained by Erik Reinert, the Washington consensus closes off avenues for national advancement and it demands of Haiti that it find its “niche of competitive advantage,” which today is principally that of offering labor at very low wages. Haiti is locked into this situation through a series of decisions over which it has little control. These involve issues of food security, currency, tariffs, tax-free zones, and more.

## ***Panel 4: Control by the Core (Politics)***

**Panelists:** Brian Concannon, Alex Dupuy, Jake Johnston

**Moderator:** Marlene Daut

**3:15 – 4:30**

Haiti has been called “The Republic of NGOs,” but this understates the case. More broadly, many social functions normally carried out by an elected government are controlled and executed by forces other than the Government of Haiti. This domination by external institutions, resulting from, but more fundamentally causing, the weak and impoverished state of the GoH, come in great variety: Variety of origin (religious, aid, financial, and political organizations) and of sector (medical, educational, entrepreneurial, advisory).

***Conference Conclusion: 4:30 – 4:45***

## Starr Forum of the MIT Center for International Studies

*Pwomosyon lang kreyòl la nan òganizasyon entènasyonal tankou UNESCO*  
*Promoting Haitian Creole in international organizations such as UNESCO*

Speaker: Haiti's Ambassador to UNESCO Mrs. Dominique Dupuy

Moderator: Michel DeGraff

5:00 – 6:30

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### Panelists and Moderators



**Berthude Albert** is a proud Haitian-American. At the age of 8 she immigrated to the United States from Haiti with her family. In 2012, Dr. Albert received her BA in English, in 2014 her MA in Latin American Studies, and in 2016 she completed her PhD in Agricultural Education and Communication, all at the University of Florida. Throughout her academic journey, Berthude received several awards such as UF's Hall of Fame, UF's Teaching Assistant of the Year, the International Outreach Award, and more. Her greatest honor however, was co-founding [P4H Global](#).

Dr. Albert currently serves as the CEO of P4H Global. She is committed to seeing Haiti rise to her full potential and destiny through sustainable development and human capacity.



**Jean Casimir** is a leading scholar of Haitian history and culture. He was the Visiting Mellon Fellow, at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Duke University, in Spring 2010, and has collaborated with Duke's [Haiti Lab](#) in various capacities. He is a Professor at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the University of Haiti, where he teaches courses on culture and society of Haiti and the Caribbean. He received his formal doctoral training in Sociology and Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), with a particular focus on studies of social change and development. He has held research and teaching positions in the US, Congo, Brazil, Mexico, the Netherlands, and elsewhere. He has also held various posts with the United Nations, including United Nations Social Affairs Officer and a position with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, all the while continuing his academic studies on Haiti. From 1991 to 1996, he served as Haiti's Ambassador to the United States. His publications include *La Cultura Oprimida* (1980), *The Caribbean: One and Divisible* (1992), *Ayiti Toma, Haiti Chérie* (2000), *Pa Bliye 1804, Souviens-toi de 1804* (2004), *Libète, Egalite — sou wout fratènite / Liberté, ...égalité — en route vers la fraternité* (2005), and *The Haitians: A Decolonial History* (2020) as well as countless book chapters and articles on Haitian culture, history and development.



**Brian Concannon, Jr.** is an American human rights [lawyer](#) and foreign policy advocate. He is the Executive Director of the [Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti](#) (IJDH), which he co-founded in 2004. Concannon also serves as a member of the Editorial Board of *Health and Human Rights: An International Journal* at the Harvard School of Public Health, and is a contributor to the [Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft](#) blog. He is an alumnus of [Boston College High School](#) '81, as well as an Ignatius Award<sup>[1]</sup> winner. He holds an undergraduate degree from [Middlebury College](#) and JD from [Georgetown Law](#). He is the recipient of the Wasserstein Public Interest Fellowship<sup>[2]</sup> from [Harvard Law School](#), the Brandeis International Fellowship in Human Rights, Intervention, and International Law<sup>[3]</sup> and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from [Canisius College](#). Brian has qualified as an [expert witness](#) on country conditions Haiti in over 40 cases in the U.S. and Canada, appearing on behalf of both applicants and the U.S. government.

After working for the [United Nations](#) as a Human Rights Officer in 1995–1996, Concannon co-managed the [Bureau des Avocats Internationaux](#) (BAI), Haiti's only public interest law office with [Mario Joseph](#) between 1996 and 2004. During his time at BAI, Concannon played an essential role in preparing the prosecution of the landmark [Raboteau Massacre trial](#) in 2000. As many as 50 people were killed in [Raboteau](#) in 1994.<sup>[4]</sup> Six years after the slaughter, Concannon and BAI were able to convict 16 defendants guilty for their role in the massacre. The Court also issued a civil damages judgment against the defendants for 1 billion gourdes (roughly \$43 million).<sup>[5]</sup> A documentary was made about the trial which features extensive interviews with Concannon.<sup>[6]</sup> BAI was tasked with various other cases during this time period, geared primarily toward seeking justice for the victims of ex-military and paramilitary violence in Haiti (which has been documented in depth),<sup>[7]</sup> and BAI was also involved in the investigation into the murder of famed Haitian radio journalist [Jean Dominique](#).<sup>[8]</sup>

In 2004, Concannon left Haiti and returned to the United States to found the [Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti](#) (IJDH) after the February 2004 coup d'état that overthrew Haiti's president [Jean-Bertrand Aristide](#). IJDH was founded specifically as the sister group of BAI. IJDH and BAI work collaboratively on all their projects. IJDH is based in [Boston, Massachusetts](#).

Concannon successfully represented former Prime Minister and political prisoner [Yvon Neptune](#) in the first Haiti case ever decided by the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#). In January 2016, Concannon taught a class on human rights at Whitman College. He was also an integral part of the IJDH team that sued the United Nations for their responsibility in bringing cholera to Haiti.<sup>[9]</sup> The case was dismissed both by the UN and in the NY Federal Court on the basis of UN immunity.<sup>[10][11]</sup> In December 2016, the then UN Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#) finally apologized for the cholera outbreak in Haiti, saying he was "profoundly sorry" for the outbreak.<sup>[12]</sup>



**Marlene Daut** is Professor of French and African Diaspora Studies at Yale University. She teaches courses in anglophone and francophone Caribbean, African American, and French colonial literary and historical studies. Primarily a literary and intellectual historian of the Caribbean, she writes about the history of the Haitian Revolution, literary cultures of the greater Caribbean, and racial politics in global media, especially as appears in film and television.

Her books include *Baron de Vastey and the Origins of Black Atlantic Humanism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789–1865* (Liverpool University Press, 2015); and *Awakening the Ashes: An Intellectual History of the Haitian Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2023). She is also co-editor (with Grégory Pierrot and Marion Rohrleitner) of the volume, *Haitian Revolutionary Fictions: An Anthology* (UVA Press 2022). Her next book is a narrative history of the kingdom of Haiti and biography of King Henry Christophe under contract with Knopf/Pantheon.

As a public scholar, Professor Daut's articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Essence Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Avidly: A Channel of the LA Review of Books*, *The Conversation* and *Public Books*, among others. Her peer-reviewed articles can be found in journals such as *New Literary History*, *Archipelagos*, *Small Axe*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, *Comparative Literature*, *Studies in Romanticism*, and more.

Daut is also the co-creator and co-editor of H-Net Commons' digital platform [H-Haiti](#) with Julia Gaffield and curates a website on early Haitian print culture at <http://lagazetteroyale.com>. She has also developed an online bibliography of fictions of the Haitian Revolution from 1787 to 1900 at the website <http://haitianrevolutionaryfictions.com> and she co-edits the [Global Black History and Theory](#) section at Public Books with Tao Leigh Goffe. She is also series editor of [New World Studies](#) at UVA Press.



Originally from Haiti and Co-Founder/CEO of Anseye Pou Ayiti, **Nedgine Paul Deroly** has experience in the non-profit sector with a particular focus on instructional excellence, curriculum implementation, and leadership development. Her past roles at Achievement First, the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, WorldTeach, and Partners In Health has allowed her to develop and implement various leadership programs as well as the creation of a residency program for school principals. She has conducted extensive research about the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors contributing to Haiti's education system. Nedgine earned a B.A. in History from Yale College and an Ed.M. in International Education Policy from the



Harvard Graduate School of Education. She was named among the top global social innovators by Echoing Green, among the Forbes Magazine “30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneurs,” and among the inaugural Obama Foundation Fellowship for her work leading Anseye Pou Ayiti — a movement to equip a new generation of Haitian civic leaders for educational justice in Haiti.



**Alex Dupuy**, Professor of Sociology at Wesleyan University, has published broadly on social, economic and political developments in Haiti and the Caribbean. He is the author of *Haiti in the World Economy: Class, Race, and Underdevelopment Since 1700* (1989); *Haiti in the New World Order: The Limits of the Democratic Revolution* (1997); *The Prophet and Power: Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti* (2007); *Haiti: From Revolutionary Slaves to Powerless Citizens. Essays on the Politics and Economics of Underdevelopment* (2014), and more than three dozen articles in professional journals and anthologies. He

appeared several times on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer and on other television programs such as Anderson Cooper 360 on CNN and The Agenda with Steve Parkin on Toronto Public TV. He has also commentated on Haitian affairs on National Public Radio and other local NPR stations in Boston, Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Wisconsin Public Radio; and on the BBC's Caribbean Service, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Late Talk Program, and Radio Jamaica RJR 94 FM. He is particularly interested in issues of Caribbean political economy and social change.



**Dominique Dupuy**, born and raised in Haiti, is [Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Haiti to UNESCO](#) and Vice-president of the Executive Board of UNESCO. She studied at McGill University in Montreal. Working at the University of Notre Dame's for Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child, she led nationwide research on education in Haiti where she designed and managed an innovative psycho-emotional support program for marginalized women. Through civil-society engagement and within the Board of

Directors of [Historic Haiti](#), Dupuy is also dedicated to the preservation of Haitian heritage and the promotion of Haitian culture, particularly in her native Cap-Haitien. She was born and raised in Haiti. In 2020 she became Haiti's Ambassador to UNESCO. One key part of her mission at UNESCO is the the promotion of mother tongues and indigenous languages.



**Robert Fatton, Jr.** is the Julia A. Cooper Professor of Government and Foreign Affairs in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia. He also served as Chair of the Department of Politics from 1997 to 2004; and Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Virginia from 2010 to 2012. He is the author of several books and a large number of scholarly articles. His publications include: *Black Consciousness in South Africa* (1986), *The Making of a Liberal Democracy: Senegal's Passive*

*Revolution, 1975-1985* (1987), *Predatory Rule: State and Civil Society in Africa* (1992), *Haiti's Predatory Republic: The Unending Transition to Democracy* (2002), *The Roots of Haitian Despotism* (2007), and *Haiti: Trapped in the Outer Periphery* (2014). He is also co-editor with R. K. Ramazani of *The Future of Liberal Democracy: Thomas Jefferson and the Contemporary World* (2004); and *Religion, State, and Society* (2009). He is the recipient of the 2011 Award for Excellence of the Haitian Studies Association for his "commitment and contribution to the emerging field of Haitian Studies for close to a quarter of a century."



**Scott Freeman** is Senior Professorial Lecturer at the School of International Service, American University.

"Through a lens of critical political ecology, I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork on soil conservation, essential oil production, agricultural labor, and coffee cooperatives in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

"My earlier work examined the political economy and imaginary of the vetiver essential oil industry in Haiti, arguing for a critical understanding of the production of ignorance as a facet of extractive global industries.

"Recently, I have established a line of inquiry around aid projects and the regimes of labor that support aid projects. This research examines the aid industry as a market for projects and theorizes the ways in which recipients of aid contribute valuable and uncompensated labor to the production successful projects.

"I'm currently thinking through what a social analysis of soil reveals about conservation (and development) writ large. My book manuscript, *The Tyranny of Projects: Aid and The Politics of Soil in Haiti*, is an analysis of the way that aid projects have come to organize and orient aid practice. Through an examination of the historical genealogy of soil conservation interventions and the rise of the aid "project" as an administrative unit, the book theorizes the ways in which the failures of aid in Haiti exist alongside the production of successful project reports."



**Malick W. Ghachem**, Professor and Head of History at MIT, is a historian and lawyer. His primary areas of concentration are slavery and abolition, criminal law, and constitutional history. He is the author of [\*The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution\*](#) (Cambridge University Press, 2012), a history of the law of slavery in Saint-Domingue (Haiti) between 1685 and 1804, [now out in French translation also](#). The book received the American Historical Association's J. Russell Major Prize for the best work in English on French history and was co-winner of the Caribbean Studies

Association's Gordon K. and Sybil Lewis Prize for the best book published in the field of Caribbean studies over the past three years. He teaches courses on the Age of Revolution, Slavery and Abolition, American criminal justice, and other topics.

Professor Ghachem earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Harvard University and his doctorate in history from Stanford. He clerked for the Honorable Rosemary Barkett of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit in Miami FL in 2004. A member of the Massachusetts bar, Professor Ghachem practiced law in Boston from 2005 to 2010 for two law firms: Zalkind, Rodriguez, Lunt & Duncan LLP and Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP. For part of that period (2006-2007) he served as a lecturer in MIT's Political Science Department. Between 2010 and 2013, he taught at the University of Maine School of Law in Portland, ME, where he is now a Senior Scholar.

He writes occasionally on topics in American and comparative constitutional law, and has published a wide range of articles in the fields of French colonial and American legal history, among them "The Antislavery Script: Haiti's Place in the Narrative of Atlantic Revolution," in *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); "The Colonial Vendée," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 156-176; and "From Emergency Law to Legal Process: Herbert Wechsler and the Second World War," co-authored with Daniel Gordon, *Suffolk University Law Review* 333 (2007). Ghachem is the editor of *Slavery and Citizenship in the Age of the Atlantic Revolutions, Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 29, no. 1 (2003). He is at work on two new books. The first is a study of the revolt against the French Indies Company in the 1720s and the rise of the plantation complex in colonial Haiti. The second is a book under contract with Yale University Press entitled *The Conversion of the Jesuits: Slavery, Totalitarianism, and the Catholic Church in Haiti*.



**Renauld Govain** is Professor of Linguistics and Dean of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics (FLA) at the University of Haiti in Port-au-Prince, where he oversees the Laboratory of Language, Society, and Education (LangSE) and the masters program in theoretical and descriptive linguistics. His research bears notably on phonology, creolistics, linguistic variation, and Haitian dialectology. He has published *Les*



*emprunts de créole haïtien à l'anglais et à l'espagnol* (L'Harmattan, 2014), *Les rituels de contact en contexte interpersonnel en Haïti* (Jebca Editions 2016), *Le parler bolith: Histoire et description* (Jebca Editions 2017) as well as many articles and book chapters. In 2022 he founded the journal *Rechèch Etid Kreyòl*.



**Jake Johnston** is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington, D.C. He has a B.A. in Economics from Boston University and an M.A. in Writing from Johns Hopkins University. At CEPR his research has focused predominantly on economic policy in Latin America, the International Monetary Fund and U.S. foreign policy. He is the lead author for CEPR's *Haiti: Relief and Reconstruction Watch* blog and his articles and op-eds have been published in outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Intercept*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *Boston Review*, and *Al Jazeera*. His book, [\*Aid State: Elite Panic, Disaster Capitalism, and the Battle to Control Haiti\*](#), is

forthcoming from St. Martin's Press.



**Christine W. Low** is currently Executive Director of [Friends of Matènwa](#), a US-based nonprofit organization, and continues to be deeply involved in training teachers on Haiti's Lagonav island. She and Jean Abner Sauveur, a community organizer born and raised in Matènwa, Lagonav and trained in Freirian pedagogy, co-founded the [Matènwa Community Learning Center \(MCLC\)](#) in 1996. They co-directed the elementary school together for fifteen years before deciding to change their roles so that they could spread their methodologies well beyond the walls of MCLC. This center is more than just a school. It houses an Institute of Learning and Outreach, producing transformational change in education and human rights

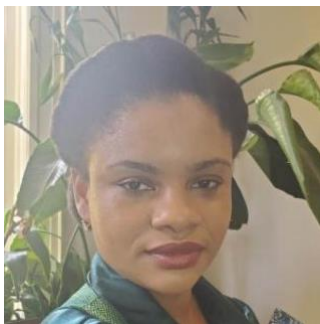
on the island of Lagonav. The transformation goes beyond Lagonav as teachers from several major cities on the mainland are sent there for training. Chris received a BA in Psychology from Vassar College and a MEd in Creative Arts and Elementary Education from Lesley College. Prior to co-founding MCLC, she was an elementary teacher in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



**Philippe-Richard Marius** is a cultural anthropologist with research interests at the intersection of race, class privilege, postcolonial identity, and bourgeois modernity. He received a bachelor of fine arts in film from New York University and holds his Ph.D. from the Anthropology Program of the CUNY Graduate Center. His anthropological research, generally through an ethnohistorical approach, is informed by his training and practice in film. His fieldwork in the privileged classes of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, was supported by a Dissertation Fieldwork Grant from the Wenner

Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. He has also conducted theoretical and empirical research in other Caribbean countries, in the United States, in Canada, and Berlin. Marius regularly presents his work at annual meetings and conferences of the American Anthropological Association and the Caribbean Studies Association. He also presented findings from his ethnography of Haiti's elites at the 54th International Congress of Americanists (ICA) in Vienna (2012), and he has organized and chaired the symposium *Identitarian Particularisms and Class Universality in the Reproduction of Privilege and Inequality in the Americas* at the 56th ICA, at the University of Salamanca, Spain, July 15–20, 2018. He is the author of the monograph *The Unexceptional Case of Haiti: Race and Class Privilege in Postcolonial Bourgeois Society* (University Press of Mississippi, 2022).

Marius is director of financial aid at the College of Staten Island, where he has worked since 1987. He is also an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, where he teaches and serves as thesis adviser in the interdisciplinary Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program (MALS). At the graduate level he has taught the MALS courses *Roots of Modern Society*, *Modern Society*, *Modern Culture*, and *Interaction of Western and Non-Western Societies*. At the undergraduate level, he has taught *Understanding Our World*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Urban Anthropology*, *Anthropology of Religion*, and *Social Analysis*. During his tenure at CSI, he wrote, produced, and co-directed the independent feature film *A City Called Heaven*, which was presented at the Pan African Film Festival of Los Angeles (1999), the African Diaspora International Film Festival (New York, 1999), and the Festival panafricain du cinema de Ouagadougou (FESPACO, 1999), and broadcast nationally on the cable television network BET-Starz (2001–02).



**Nathalie Frédéric Pierre** is an Assistant Professor of History. She earned her PhD in the history of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean and Latin America from New York University. In the classroom and within her research agenda, Professor Pierre highlights the plans and processes people of African descent set into motion in order to sustain sites of autonomy across the Americas. She is currently writing her first book, *'The Vessel of Independence ... Must Save Itself': Haitian State Formation, 1757 - 1815*. It articulates the political thought of Haitian

statesmen who were bound to preserve antislavery and create a government suitable for emancipated citizens of African origin in a revolutionary Atlantic world still reliant on enslaved labor. Her work has been published in [The Journal of Haitian Studies](#), [Cultural Dynamics](#), [Remembrance: Loss, Hope, Recovery after the Earthquake in Haiti](#), and other forums. Previously, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Graduate School of the City University of New York in the Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC), a Black Studies Dissertation Fellow at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Ronald E. McNair Scholar at Howard University. Public engagement is a critical part of her work; and, after surviving the 2010 Haitian earthquake, she became board chair (2011–2017) of the Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project, an immigrant education advocacy group serving migrant Haitian teens and their families. She has given lectures in Haitian Creole and English to community organizations while also participating in the Digital Library of the Caribbean's online exhibit "[Haiti: An Island Luminous](#)." She is on the board of the Haitian Studies Association.



[Michel DeGraff](#) is Professor of Linguistics at MIT, co-founder and co-director of the [MIT-Haiti Initiative](#), founding member of [Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen](#) and [fellow](#) of the Linguistic Society of America. Michel entered linguistics through the “backdoor” so to speak, in 1985, as a Summer Intern at AT&T Bell Laboratories’ Linguistics and Artificial Intelligence department in Murray Hill, New Jersey. Today, Michel’s research, which goes way beyond linguistics, contributes to an [egalitarian approach](#) to Creole, Indigenous and other non-colonial languages and their speakers, as in his native Haiti. In addition to linguistics and education, his [writings engage intellectual history and critical race theory](#),

especially the links between power-knowledge hierarchies and the hegemonic (mis)representations of non-colonial languages and their speakers in the Global South and beyond. His work is anchored in a broader agenda for human rights and social justice, with [Haiti](#) as one spectacular case of a post-colony where the national language spoken by all (Haitian Creole) is systematically disenfranchised, even in certain scholarly traditions, while the (former) colonial language (in this case, French), spoken by few in Haiti, is enlisted for socio-economic, political and geo-political domination. Such devalorization of Haitian Creole (*Kreyòl*) and other non-colonial languages worldwide, especially among Black and Brown people, is embedded in long entrenched patterns of structural racism and white supremacy whereby language and education are enlisted as tools for neo-colonialism from within and from without. Michel tackles these political challenges heads-on as he unveils age-old myths about Creole languages in linguistics and beyond, and as he engages the MIT-Haiti Initiative in a broad [campaign](#) for democratizing access to quality education and for the universal respect of human rights. Through the strategic use of Open Education Resources in Kreyòl, [Platfòm MIT-Ayiti](#) effectively sets up a model for oppressed communities to constructively enlist their native languages and cultures as tools for quality education and for inclusion in all other

spheres where knowledge and power are created and transmitted. Really, language is a powerful tool for liberation, as it is for domination! More details at: <http://mit.edu/degraff>, <https://mit-ayiti.net/>, <http://facebook.com/mithaiti>, <http://twitter.com/mithaiti>, <http://instagram.com/mithaiti>, <https://www.tiktok.com/@mithaiti>



**Haynes Miller** is Professor of Mathematics, emeritus, at MIT. His research is in algebraic topology, and he has published scores of articles in the subject as well as a volume of Lecture Notes on Algebraic Topology (World Scientific, 2022), and served as editor of the Handbook of Homotopy Theory (Routledge, 2019). He has directed some thirty PhD theses in the subject. Professor Miller has served as editor for eleven disciplinary journals, including as Managing Editor of the Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society. In 2005 he was named a MacVicar Faculty Fellow, the highest teaching honor at MIT, and was the 2006 recipient of the Graduate Student Council Teaching Award. He created the MIT Mathlets — a collection of computer-based mathematical manipulatives, many available in Kreyòl through the [MIT-Haiti Initiative website](#) — and the ongoing [Online Seminar on Undergraduate Mathematics Education, OLSUME](#). He is a core faculty supporter of the MIT-Haiti Initiative, a project promoting active learning and the use in schools of Haiti's national language (Kreyòl) rather than French. Miller was the principle local organizer of the Third Annual Gathering for Science in Palestine, at MIT in January 2020, and is now an organizer of the Palestinian Student Research Program.

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## The MIT-Haiti Initiative

This conference has been organized by the MIT-Haiti Initiative. Please see the following pages for a comprehensive description of our activities up to 2022. Since then, we have continued to expand the scope of the [Platfòm MIT-Ayiti](#), but also engaged in several new activities (besides organizing this conference!)

**ALEWO:** In the summer of 2022 we launched the *Alyans pou LEkòl tèt an WO pou peyi tèt an wo*, the Alliance for rightside-up schools for a rightside-up county. This alliance began with a series of Zoom meetings involving organizations in education sector whose mission includes the promotion of Kreyòl as language of instruction. The initial invitation was a call for collaboration with administrators and teachers throughout the country, with the goal of combining abstract principles of pedagogy with the concrete activities of ALEWO's partners in the field — in the classroom, in the production of didactic materials, in teacher training programs, and so on. We view this combination of theory and practice as one way to ensure the sustainable impact of ALEWO partners' interventions. We are excited about the community of educators that has coalesced



around this initiative and look forward to continuing these meetings and supporting these collaborations.

**History and analysis of policy documents regarding language in education:** Under an earlier grant from the MIT Policy Lab, we collaborated with William Scott Frager, a DPhil student in the Department of Studies Social Intervention and Policy Evaluation at University of Oxford. Our work was published as “[Language Policy in Haitian Education: A History of Conflict over the Use of Kreyòl as Language of Instruction](#)” in *The Journal of Haitian Studies* 28:2 (2022) 33—95.

*Abstract:* Language-in-education policy in Haiti has historically favored French as the language of instruction from the earliest levels of primary school. This has contributed to preventing most children from the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority from receiving a quality education, succeeding in school, and accessing the means for socioeconomic progress. Though this has been recognized as a problem since the nation’s independence from France in 1804, this language-based exclusion has yet to be properly addressed. Through an analysis of publicly available documents produced by the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders, this article provides a historical overview of Haitian language-in-education policy followed by a critical evaluation of the documents’ contents. The historical overview is split into two parts. First, we summarize policy from independence through 1979, when Kreyòl was first legalized as both language of instruction (LOI) and as object of instruction (OOI). Second, we consider major education-policy documents starting from the pro-Kreyòl reform of Minister of Education Joseph C. Bernard (1979–1982) through November 3, 2022, when we submitted this article for review toward publication. Our evaluation of these documents reveals that, while Kreyòl has made gains from a longitudinal perspective, Bernard’s famous reform has been repeatedly mischaracterized to justify policies that promote French as LOI. Moreover, the Ministry has tended to adopt early-exit transitional language policies (early transition from Kreyòl to French as LOI) that are known to fail (as opposed to more successful additive approaches, such as mother-tongue-based multilingual education), and student success is often predicated on quickly achieving the unrealistic second-language-attainment goal of balanced bilingualism. This goal favors children from elite francophone households, whereas the goal of functional bilingualism is more well-adapted and realistic in the context of a student population that is essentially monolingual in Kreyòl. This article aims to inform stakeholders of the history and challenges surrounding Kreyòl as LOI—a task given new importance in view of the efforts currently being put forth by the present minister of education, Nesmy Manigat, to implement key aspects of the Bernard Reform and valorize Haiti’s national language in the school system. Our primary objective here is to help break, at long last, Haiti’s pernicious cycle of exclusion based on language and education.