Introduction

Between the summers of 1932 and 1934, two residents in St. Louis (the capital city of the colony of Senegal in French West Africa during the period of French colonial rule) wrote letters to the colony's governor imploring the colonial state to assume the care and education of a child named Charles Jondot because he was "*métis*" – that is, multiracial. Their letters elaborated that Jondot was the child of an African woman from the region and a deceased European man who had worked in the town as a teacher. According to French law, the relationship was not legally a marriage and therefore Jondot was a natural or illegitimate child; his presumed father had not publicly acknowledged filiation, which rendered Jondot's paternity as "legally unknown." French colonial law demarcated people residing in French Africa into two racialized legal categories, *indigène* (native) and *citoyen* (citizen). In French West and Equatorial Africa, which are the focus of this book, the colonial subject or native – the indigène – was racialized as black and African; by contrast, the citoyen was racialized as white and European. Jondot was indigène, since his mother was indigène and his father "unknown." Given that he was indigène, the French colonial state bore no obligation to intervene or pay for his education or care, although it may have taken on the responsibility for a child who was a citoyen. However, both letter-writers claimed there was a third category – métis or multiracial – that tied children born of interracial unions to French society and made them rights-bearing individuals vis-à-vis French colonial society and the state.

The first supplicant was a Mrs. de la Torre, a French colonial settler and the president of the Charity for Abandoned Métis Children.[1] For de la Torre, multiracial children such as Jondot held a liminal status due to their European filiation, even though their fathers played no roles in their lives. Further, they had been "morally abandoned" by French society and the state because they were being raised in their African maternal milieus. However,

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[1] Archive Nationales du Senegal (hereafter ANS), 10 D 1 (24): Letter from the president of the Executive Board of the Charity for Abandoned Métis Children to the governor-general of Senegal, July 20, 1932, letter 14009.

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they were entitled to a French lifestyle and educational environments. The charity sought to remove these children from their maternal milieus and raise them in Catholic mission stations in the colony.

The second supplicant, Dugay Clédor, was a black African who was an *originaire* – a person who resided in the towns of St. Louis, Ruffisque, Gorée, or Dakar in Senegal (known as the Four Communes). Originaires held rights of French citizenship rather than the colonial legal status of indigène.[2] Clédor argued that the Senegalese colonial state should open, fund, and manage residential schools for métis children such as Jondot who were "visible in the streets of St. Louis."[3] Unlike de la Torre, who viewed multiracial children as special compared to other children born in Africa, Clédor was in favor of state welfare for Jondot as but one part of an educational ecosystem that the colonial state should provide for all indigènes children. If the French colonial state did not even provide for children with French blood in their veins, he argued, he saw little hope that the French could fulfill the colonial promise of bettering the standards of living in Africa or upholding republican principles of liberty, equality, and brotherhood in Africa.

In 1934, in the town of Libreville (the capital city of the colony of Gabon in French Equatorial Africa during the period of French colonial rule), a self-identified métis man named Joseph-Gaston Walker-Deemin, who was born from a métis woman and a European man, also wrote a letter to colonial officials. Deemin had founded and was the president of an association called the Amicale of Métis.[4] The Amicale decried that the vast majority of the European fathers did not provide for their children, with most having repatriated to Europe after short stays in the colony. Deemin demanded the recognition of and certain rights for people born of interracial relationships between African women and European men. Yet he articulated a broader definition of rights-bearing métis for whom he was advocating than did Clédor or de la Torre in Senegal. The Amicale defined métis who were rights-bearers vis-à-vis the colonial state and society based on their multiraciality as those who were

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[2] This status came about through the efforts of Blaise Diagne, a black Senegalese man born in 1872 who studied in France and was elected as the representative of the Four Communes in the Chamber of Deputies in France. Diagne's advocacy led to the French parliament's passage of a 1916 law named after him, which conferred the legal status of French citizen to these cities' African residents, regardless of race or religion. The French perpetually sought to limit the numbers of people who could claim *originaires* status and limit the exercise of full citizenship rights, limitations against which *originaires* consistently protested and mobilized. G. Wesley Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal: The Struggle for Power in the Four Communes, 1900–1920* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971).

[3] ANS, 13 G 93 (280): Letter from the president of the Colonial Council, Dugay-Clédor, to Lieutenant Governor Beurnier, June 23, 1934, letter 444.

[4] Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer (ANOM), FEA/GGFEA/5D44: Letter from the president of the Amicale des Métis to the mayor of Libreville, June 11, 1936, document 4.

generationally métis – that is, those who were the children of métis parents, in addition to those who were the children of a European and an African. In Gabon, métis tended to intermarry and viewed themselves as distinct from and superior to other Africans, even though they too held the legal status of indigène. The Amicale demanded that the colonial state provide métis children with free education in state-run residential institutions, segregated from black indigènes children. Their justification was that these children's European lineage rendered them vulnerable to diseases in African milieus. Additionally, the Amicale argued that métis were French and should be granted legal status as "citoyen" and "European" and be privy to all associated rights and resources.

In 1954 in Dakar, Senegal, Nicolas Rigonaux – who referred to himself as "Eurafrican" (*Eurafricain*) – founded the Union of Eurafricans of French West Africa.[5] His mother was from Dahomey and his father was from France; Rigonaux's father had repatriated there after his birth without recognizing him. Rigonaux accused the French colonial government and black Senegalese alike of racism for not recognizing "Eurafrican" as a distinct identity for people such as he, who were born of a European and an African parent. He demanded that the colonial state pay stipends to mothers so that women like his mother – who were left bereft in raising their children – could afford to send their children to school and provide adequate living conditions. Additionally, he argued that Eurafricans should be granted French legal status. Rigonaux aimed for the organization to bring together Eurafricans (a term he used interchangeably with métis) from both French West Africa and Equatorial Africa. He argued that Eurafricans simultaneously maintained multiple identities – métis, black, African, white, and French, and European – and would contribute to the betterment of all of these societies at local and international levels.

From their different locations and positionality in French Africa, Rigonaux, Deemin, Clédor, and de la Torre launched different articulations of multiracial identity and assertions that these identities generated rights related to children and childhood as well as citizens and citizenship in twentieth-century colonial French West Africa and Equatorial Africa. They accused African and French societies of inequities against multiracial peoples, and they envisioned individual and collective actions by and on behalf of multiracial people as the means and ends to create just presents. These claims, which I refer to as multiracial projects, mattered. First, they belied the French assertion that colonial rule was "colorblind": they challenged the asymmetrical racialized hierarchies of indigène and citoyen that were proxies for race and the

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[5] ANOM, FM 1 AFF-POL 3406: Letter from President Rigonaux of the Union of Eurafricans of French West Africa to the minister of Overseas France, February 9, 1949, letter 31/U.E.

4   Introduction

foundations of French colonial rule.[6] Second, these claims complicated the meanings of emerging but seemingly fixed identities – such as "indigène," "citoyen," "African," "French," and "European." They demonstrated the capaciousness of how processes of identity formation in Africa called into question the geographically, culturally, and racially bound concepts of identity.

Third, these articulations of multiracial identities demonstrated the complexities of racial identity, thought, and practice in African history. Each used the French terms "métis" or "Eurafricain" to convey varied conceptions of what it meant to be multiracial, with shifting factors related to descent, biology, and culture. On the surface, they agreed on who constituted this population, namely, children fathered by European men and born to African women. Yet Deemin, in Gabon, defined métis who could claim rights from the French state based on their multiraciality not only as children fathered by European men and born to African women but also those who were multigenerational métis. I too use this term to delineate people born of two métis parents and their descendants. This distinction is critical, as historical actors throughout the twentieth century argued over what degree of closeness to, or distance from, European parentage would delineate a multiracial identity and the rights that such identities engendered. These four individuals will reappear throughout this book with fuller portraits of their historical trajectories.

Multiracial Identities narrates the history of métis or multiracial people of African and European parentage and descent in French Africa – specifically in French Equatorial Africa (FEA) where they numbered about 3,000 people and French West Africa (FWA) that included between 3,500 and 4,000 people – in the period of the expansion, consolidation, and decline of colonial rule. The years covered are from ca. 1895 to 1960.[7] This book surveys all of FEA and FWA but focuses on four towns that became consistent centers of métis activism and debate about *méti*s. In FWA, these towns were St. Louis and

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[6] I refer to these varied claims as multiracial projects through borrowing from Michael Omi and Howard Winant's analysis of race in the United States as a "socially constructed and historically fluid" category of "inequality, of difference/identity and of agency, both individual and collective" manifested in changing "racial projects." Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2015), x and 3.

[7] Variations exist in enumerating the number of métis in FWA, not only because there were contestations in how people articulated and claimed these identities but also because French colonial census taking, record-keeping, and categorizations were disorganized and inconsistent. I obtained the number of 3,500 from Owen White, who cites a 1938 French colonial census – but estimates the number was closer to 4,000. Later chapters of this book return to the question of statistics regarding the number of métis. Owen White, *Children of the French Empire: Miscegenation and Colonial Society in French West Africa, 1985–1960* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press), 2–3.

Dakar in the colony of Senegal; in FEA, the respective towns and colonies were in Libreville, Gabon and Brazzaville, French Congo. *Multiracial Identities* traces the roots and routes of multiple articulations of multiracial identities and the contestations that resulted over how such identities made people rights-bearing subjects as children and as citizens, based on the changing dynamics of parentage, life stage, culture, biology, and the law. In analyzing the expressions of multiracial thought and multiracial praxis in French Africa, this book deepens our understanding of how historical actors deployed changing ideas about race to shape the conceptions about and lived experiences of personhood (the demarcation of individual selfhood, rights, and obligations) and peoplehood (the cohering of particular individuals to a shared sense of belonging, rights, and obligations). Analyzing the processes by which historical actors articulated, contested, denied, or invested in the articulation and acknowledgment of multiracial identities also offers a window into conceptions of legitimacy, illegitimacy, inclusion, and exclusion.

Emphasizing the language and meaning of how multiracial men and women talked about themselves, this book uses the terms "métis," "Eurafrican," and "multiracial" interchangeably. In the communities in which multiracial peoples examined in this book lived, people who identified as métis and locals in these communities generally used the French word "métis" to refer to multiracial people, rather than terms in African languages. As discussed in later chapters, some métis communities in the 1950s began to use the term "Eurafrican." I use the term "multiracial" rather than "mixed race" or "biracial" – also used by other scholars – because it more aptly captures the multivalent ways in which individuals and collectives chronicled in this book crafted and contested individual and collective identities. Following recent scholarship on multiraciality and the field of global mixed-race studies, I do not use the term "mulato" (*mulâtre*), which was sometimes used by the French and other Europeans in twentieth- and nineteenth-century archival documents. The reason is the derivation of the term in scientific racism that compared interracial sex to the breeding of animals.[8] This book traces the changes over time in terminology and meaning, and the contestations over terms and meanings, in how various constituencies referred to multiracial people.

Along the Atlantic coast of West and West-Central Africa, sexual unions between African women and European men had been occurring as early as the

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[8] A small sampling of studies in mixed-race scholarship includes Alyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Sarah Iverson, Ann Morning, Aliya Saperstein, and Janet Xu, "Regimes beyond the One-Drop Rule: New Models of Multiracial Identity," *Genealogy 6, 2* (June 2020), 57–80; Erica Chito Childs, *The Boundaries of Mixedness: A Global Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Jasmine Mitchel, "Back to Race, Not beyond Race: Multiraciality and Racial Identity in the United States and Brazil," *Comparative Migration Studies* Volume 10, Article 22 (2022).

late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Those unions ranged from sexual violence inflicted upon enslaved women to long-term cohabitation arrangements that lasted for months or years and were legalized as marriage according to local customs (*marriage à la mode du pays*). They had birthed Eurafrican communities in coastal trade towns.[9] As cultural and trade brokers between Africans and Europeans, some black and multiracial women in marriage à la mode du pays in trans-Atlantic trading hubs, such as St. Louis and Gorée in Senegal, referred to as *signares*, and Libreville in Gabon, amassed influence or wealth.[10]

Multiracial communities that formed in the precolonial sixteenth through nineteenth centuries along Africa's coast of the Atlantic Ocean constituted socioeconomic elites.[11] Multiracial women and men acted as cultural brokers, spoke European and African languages, and adopted European clothing and material culture. Multiracial people acted as middlemen in the trans-Atlantic and trans-continental exchanges of people and goods, as well as employees and interpreters for European firms. The most well researched of these precolonial multiracial communities has been the métis in Senegal, most of whom resided in the town of St. Louis. There, in the mid-nineteenth century, "métis of the first generation," in the words of historian Hilary Jones, went on to form "a distinct group identity based on their ability to trace their descent to a signare and a European merchant who lived in the coastal towns of St. Louis or

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[9] Karl Davis Patterson, *The Northern Coast of Gabon to 1975* (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1975); George Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003); David Northrup, "Commerce and Culture" in *Africa's Discovery of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54–75; Mariana Candido, "Strategies for Social Mobility: Liaisons between Foreign Men and Slave Women in Benguela, c. 1770–1850" in Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne, eds, *Sex, Power and Slavery: The Dynamics of Carnal Relations under Enslavement* (Athens: Ohio University, 2014), 272–88.

[10] For information on increased wealth and status for women in interracial relationships in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in French Africa, see: Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, xvii; Rachel Jean-Baptiste, "A Black Girl Should Not Be with a White Man: Sex, Race, and African Women's Social and Legal Status in Colonial Gabon, c. 1900–1946," *Journal of Women's History* 22, 2 (2010), 56–82; Hilary Jones, *The Métis of Senegal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Mariana Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and Its Hinterland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 93–4 and 128–9.

[11] Patterson, *The Northern Coast of Gabon to 1975;* Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*; Henry Hale Bucher, *The Mpongwe of the Gabon Estuary: A History to 1860,* PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1977. George Brooks comments that in Senegambia, Eurafricans in stratified and patrilineal societies were marginalized and excluded from rights held by others in their age sets, whereas Eurafricans in acephalous and matrilineal societies could reside in and own land and marry without constraints. Brooks, *Eurafricans in Western Africa*, xxi–xxii. See also Chapter 2: "The Rise of an Atlantic Port, 1710–1850" in Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World*, 89–143.

Gorée in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century."[12] They maintained this distinction through endogamy, holding the surname of European ascendents, adhering to the Catholic faith, speaking French, and residing in French bourgeois living conditions. However, they also spoke African languages and maintained ties with African societies in the interior.

Beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, when France, Britain, and Portugal consolidated colonial rule in West and Central Africa based on racialized hierarchies of black and white and segregated built environments, colonial discourses came to represent interracial sexuality as illicit.[13] Nevertheless, interracial sexual unions between European men and black and multiracial African women continued. Relationships between European women and African men in colonial-era Africa remained rare. Heterosexual interracial relationships resulted in the births of thousands of children; however, most fathers did not acknowledge paternity, provide financial resources, or maintain contact. In what became French West and Equatorial Africa, the children born of these interracial unions differed from earlier generations of multiracial peoples as they struggled to assert their social and legal status in the rigidifying colonial racial boundaries.[14] Excluded from legal, cultural, educational, and affective connections to French and European societies, métis born after the consolidation of colonial rule claimed distinct identities based on their multiracial parentage and marginalization and struggled to legitimize their group identities and status as rights holders.

[12] Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 9–11 and 82–3. These métis communities numbered about 1,200 people in 1830; 1,600 in 1860; and 1,620 in 1920. H. O. Idowu, "Café au Lait: Senegal's Mulatto Community in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6 (December 1972), 274.

[13] For more on late nineteenth and twentieth century European discourses about interracial sexuality, in Africa and other colonial settings, see Ronal Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social Worlds of Batavia: A History of Dutch Asia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Ann Laura Stoler: *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule,* with a new preface (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Carina Ray, "Interracial Sex and the Making of Empire" in Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani, eds., *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism* (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2013). For German and British attitudes towards interracial marriages in Namibia, see Ulrike Lindner, "Contested Concepts of 'White'/'Native' and Mixed Marriages in German South-West Africa and the Cape Colony 1900–1914: A Histoire Croisée," *Journal of Namibian Studies* 6 (2009), 57–79.

[14] Métis descended from precolonial interracial relationships concentrated their residence within the Four Communes of Senegal, in St. Louis in particular. They saw themselves as a distinct group and were a "self-conscious" and "inward-looking" group. In theory holding French legal status, they intermarried and sometimes were in alignment with *originaires* of varied racial and ethnic identities in their struggles to exercise full French citizenship rights. Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*.

Not all people of multiracial descent in FWA and FEA claimed a multiracial identity, nor was there a singular articulation of what multiracial identity meant; rather, there were numerous articulations of multiracial identities. This book does not encompass the self-identified métis descended from pre-colonial interracial relationships in Senegal, who continued to be concentrated in towns that became the Four Communes, especially St. Louis, after the consolidation of French colonial rule – which accelerated in the late nineteenth century. Métis descended from signares continued to maintain a distinct group identity and did not identify with or join in the struggles of métis born of European fathers and black or multiracial African mothers not descended from a signare.[15] Métis in St. Louis descended from precolonial interracial relationships held French colonial legal status as *originaires,* holding the rights of French citizenship by virtue of being born in these towns. As the French attempted to exert more centralized political control after 1919, métis originaires often expressly aligned with and protested with other originaires – the vast majority of whom were black and Muslim – against French colonial attempts to deny originaires full expression of French citizenship rights.[16] However, the multiracial people in Libreville and Brazzaville who articulated multiracial identities, and who are the focus of this book, include those who were fathered by a European man and born to African women (black and métis) as well as multigenerational métis, people descended from métis parents. In FEA, multigenerational métis and children born of interracial relationships alike held the legal status of indigène and joined together to assert collective identities and struggles for rights.

The French created the administrative units of FWA and FEA in 1895 and 1910, respectively, to consolidate and streamline colonial rule. These geographic units differentiated African societies across a vast space according to French ideations of ethnolinguistic, cultural, and religious categories. Such mapping tactics were intended to facilitate governance. However, individuals

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[15] Senegalese historian Ousseynou Faye refers to métis descended from *signares* as "métis of the first generation" and those descended from colonial-era interracial relationships as "métis of the second generation." In *The Métis of Senegal*, Hilary Jones argues:

> The ability to trace one's ancestry to a *signare* and a European merchant or soldier who arrived in the colony in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century distinguishes the métis of Saint Louis and Gorée from people of mixed race who were the products of twentieth-century French West Africa. (182)

See also Ousseynou Faye, "Les métis de la seconde génération, les enfants mal-aimés de la colonisation française en Afrique occidentale, 1895–1960," in Charles Becker, Saliou Mbaye and Ibrahima Thioub (eds.), *AOF Réalités et héritages: Sociétés ouest-africaines et ordre colonial, 1895–1960, tome II* (Dakar: Direction des Archives Nationales, 1997), 773–94.

[16] Johnson, *The Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal*, 196–215; Idowu, "Café au lait," 284–9; Jones, *The Métis of Senegal*, 139–55.

and collectives in FEA and FWA perpetually confounded these colonial concepts through practices and thought, redrawing identities in their local communities and across the colonial geographies.

The numbers of multiracial African Europeans in twentieth-century colonial sub-Saharan French Africa – which included FWA, FEA, and Madagascar – were relatively small. Nonetheless, French colonial officials, settlers, missionaries, and jurists in metropolitan France expressed heightened anxiety about their status.[17] Elsewhere in the French Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in Indochina, colonial officials and settlers also worried about the existence and status of racially ambiguous peoples. Scholars of French colonial history and Indochina such as Emmanuelle Saada and Ann Stoler have characterized representations of the racial categorization and legal, cultural, and social status of people of mixed European and indigenous parentage as "the métis question" or "the métis problem." These scholars have published important works that showcase the racialized, sexualized, and gendered asymmetries of colonial rule.[18] French anxieties about métis, this body of scholarship argues, reveal the tenuous nature of conceptions of whiteness and the interior frontiers of European identity. However, scholars of European colonial studies have rarely considered the dialectic implications of how the actions and thoughts of multiracial people shaped European thought, practice, and law. Scholars who have focused on the life experiences of métis children and their mothers in Indochina, such as Christina Firpo in her study of French colonial child removal schemes, have shown how these individuals sought to create belonging and family even in the glare of colonial power.[19]

However, there has been little scholarly investigation regarding twentieth-century colonial FWA and FEA of how multiracial Africans conceived of their own identities and how the African societies in which they lived considered the question of multiraciality.[20] Multiracial Africans and African societies themselves debated the meanings and implications of multiracial identities. In addressing these silences in African history, this book shows that such

[17] White, *Children of The French Empire;* Violaine Tisseau, *Être métis en Imerina (Madagascar) aux XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2017).

[18] Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007). See also Yves Denéchère, ed. *Enjeux postcoloniaux de l'enfance et de la jeunesse: Espace francophone (1945–1980)* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2019).

[19] Christina Elizabeth Firpo, *The Uprooted: Race, Children, and Imperialism in French Indochina* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016); Denéchère, Yves, ed. *Enjeux postcoloniaux de l'enfance et de la jeunesse.*

[20] An exception is the important book by Jones, *The Métis of Senegal.* Although more focused on French colonial thought, *Children of the French Empire* by White briefly touches on how multiracial people saw their own identities.

articulations shaped the formation not only of African identities and concepts of blackness but also the meanings of whiteness and of French and European identities, as well as the very concepts of belonging and citizenship in Europe and Africa.

This book argues that multiraciality was a critical conduit for demarcating and reordering social relations, economic resources, political power, and laws regulating nationality, family, and marriage. It also influenced practices of parenting, fostering, and education in French Africa, both within African communities and in relation to the French colonial state. Lived experiences of and ideas regarding multiraciality in French Africa shaped two important interrelated and constitutive processes of personhood in African, French, and European history, namely childhood and citizenship. Claims to and contestations about multiraciality were also proxies for defining futures, anchoring the past, and demarcating parameters of gender, sexuality, and respectability. Moreover, in analyzing how the French in Africa and metropolitan France sought to define and regulate the articulation of multiracial identities and the rights that such identities may have entailed, this book blurs the boundaries between African and European studies as analytically distinct areas.

At first glance, the commonality of the four towns that are the focus of this book – St. Louis and Dakar in Senegal, Libreville in Gabon, and Brazzaville in the French Congo – seems to stem from their status as French colonial capital cities. St. Louis was the capital city of the colony of Senegal from 1872 to 1959 and the capital of FWA from 1895 to 1902. Dakar became the capital city of FWA in 1902 and was the capital of the independent Mali Federation from 1959 to 1960 and of the Republic of Senegal in 1960. Libreville was the capital of the colony of Gabon from 1842 to 1960. Brazzaville became the capital of the colony of French Congo in 1904, of FEA in 1910, and of Free France during the World War II years of Vichy occupation (see map in Figure 1).

In the French mind, FWA and FEA were distinct units politically, socially, and culturally in the "mission to civilize" Africa and Africans (see Figure 2). They believed FWA was populated by relatively "advanced" peoples because some precolonial West African societies had centralized states and empires, whereas FEA was inhabited by "backwards" acephalous peoples.[21]

In Paris, the Ministry of Colonies aimed to oversee the management of the French Empire, with the governors-general of FWA and FEA responsible for

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[21] For more on French colonial thinking and the division between FEA and FWA, see Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa*, 1895–1930 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Christopher Gray, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon, ca. 1850–1940* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2002).