TWO

BLACK IN A WHITE WORLD

Although they vary greatly in their ages, appearances, family histories, cultural and national backgrounds, and lives in France, the interviewees who trace their origins to sub-Saharan Africa or the Caribbean report that they are seen as part of a distinct category. French-born people whose *faciès* suggest a European origin are called "French," while people with a *faciès* suggesting sub-Saharan African origin are called "Black." The interviewees' own way of speaking reflects this: even though many consider themselves French, they refer to people with a European *faciès* as "French" or "White," but to people like themselves as "Black."[1]

BACKGROUND

France has long been involved with sub-Saharan Africa and people who trace their origin to sub-Saharan Africa. From the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, France and other European countries were active in the transatlantic slave trade, with (White) Europeans buying Black African people, primarily from other Africans who had seized and brought them to ports on coastal Africa. Europeans then transported these people under brutal conditions across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. The enslaved Africans were then sold again to people of European origins, who put them to work farming land in areas that European countries had seized and turned into colonies. These included the French colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and, until 1803, Haiti, where the treatment of plantation slaves was particularly harsh. The vast majority of slaveholders were White; the vast majority of slaves were Black. The exploitation of enslaved Black people generated enormous wealth for White people, both in these colonies and in metropolitan France. France prohibited

involvement in the international slave trade in the early nineteenth century, but slavery in the French colonies was not definitively banned until 1848.

Sub-Saharan Africa was largely free of European domination until after the transatlantic slave trade had ended and slavery had been prohibited in the Americas. It was not until the "Scramble for Africa" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that most of sub-Saharan Africa was conquered by European powers, and only then did France establish its massive and farflung colonies there. The people who lived in these colonies were controlled by French administrators, soldiers, and traders, and were proselytized by European missionaries. France used its supposed "civilizing mission" to justify the subjugation of the "natives" in its colonies throughout the world. As former French Prime Minister Jules Ferry argued in 1884, when the Scramble for Africa was getting underway, "the higher races have a right over the lower races" because "they have the duty to civilize the inferior races" (Ferry 1897: 156).

France's centuries-long involvement with slavery and colonialism deeply affected French thinking in the metropole. There developed a "racialization of French identity," Pap Ndiaye argues, that "aimed to clearly distinguish the civilized from the uncivilized, the 'us' from the 'them'" (Ndiaye 2006: 55). "Whiteness," the mark of the civilized, became "constitutive of the French national identity" (56), and blackness was its antithesis: "The furthest, strangest, closest to the order of nature [were] the Blacks of Africa" (55). Human zoos and other displays intensified this imagery, sending "Blacks back to an infrahuman state [through a] system of racialization that made the Black the Other par excellence, the absolute opposite of the White" (Ndiaye 2008: 205).

Colonialism did not end until the middle of the twentieth century. France's two main colonies in the Caribbean, Martinique and Guadeloupe, were absorbed into France as "overseas" *départements* in 1946. Most of France's sub-Saharan African colonies became independent in 1960. Large numbers of Black people from sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean began coming to mainland France in the 1970s, and the influx has increased in the decades since then (Blanchard, Dubucs and Gastaut 2016: 30–31, 36–37). Because French law prohibits the collection of data ac-

cording to race, there are no reliable statistics for the number of Black people in mainland France today. Estimates reviewed in one source ranged from three to seven million (Gourévitch 2009: 56–57).[2]

Ndiaye has written extensively on "the Black condition" in France (see Ndiaye 2008). "Being black is neither an essence nor a culture, but the outcome of a social relationship: there are Blacks because they are considered Black" (Ndiaye 2008: 69; 2009: 45; see 2008: 38, 48–49). Being seen as Black—and seeing yourself as Black—nevertheless affects one's way of thinking. Ndiaye reports that "interviews conducted with black people [in France] bring to light a specific social experience of the black minority: to be Black is a preoccupation, a worry, in contrast to the fact of being White" (Ndiaye 2006: 61).[3] Of course, individual Black people can limit this preoccupation and take control of their own identities, and various interviewees have done so.

Much like Ndiaye (2008: 205) and other scholars, the interviewees reported a raft of stereotypes of Blacks in France. At least six interviewees said that Blacks are likened to monkeys, and two spoke about Blacks being "treated like monkeys."[4] Even when not caricatured as subhuman, interviewees report that Blacks are routinely dismissed as "unintelligent" or "stupid." They are thought to "smell bad" and be "dirty," as well as "uncivilized," "impolite," "lazy," and "chronically late." The men are considered generally "docile," while the women are "vulgar" and sexually lax.

Interviewees reported similar stereotypes of people living in sub-Saharan Africa. Black Africans are seen as "savages," "uncouth," "ignorant," and "uncivilized." They are dismissed by some as "banana-eaters" who live "like animals" in "primitive conditions," even "in trees." Interviewees also complained that the French media denigrates modern-day sub-Saharan Africa. One said that "when the media speaks of Africa, it's always about war, it's always about barbarism." On television, Black Africans are always "dirty, sick, and poor."

The image of Black Africans among Whites came up when I stayed with Selma, an Airbnb host from a longstanding "French" family whom I had mistakenly assumed was of non-European origin because of her name. On the wall of Selma's kitchen was a vintage advertisement for Banania, a children's cocoa-based

drink, depicting a Black colonial soldier with cartoonish features saying, in comically broken French, how good the drink tastes.[5] Next to this was another vintage advertisement, depicting a White man whom Selma described as "very well-dressed, in a suit and hat." This man is culturally "advanced," she said, "not at all in the same category" as the Black man in the other advertisement. Ironically, Selma works as a guidance counselor at a vocational school with a high percentage of Maghrebi and Black students, and she spoke feelingly about the problems they encounter in navigating French society.

One's skin does not need to be black for one to be categorized as Black in France. According to the interviewees, the term Black (the interviewees used the word *noir*) is not only applied to people whose *faciès* is typical of sub-Saharan Africa, but also to those with a mixture of European and African *faciès*, who are called "*métis*" (of mixed parentage). François, whose French-born children have White mothers, is categorical about how his children are seen: "They are *métis*," and "the *métis* are Blacks." The same is true for *métis* people in mainland France who originate from the overseas *départements*. When Lucas's grandparents from Guadeloupe (whom he described as having "*café au lait*" skin) bought a house in a French village, he said, "it was the first time" people there "had ever seen a Black." Similarly, Emmanuelle, a *métisse* woman from Guadeloupe, spoke of herself as "a Black."[6]

THOMAS

As I walked from a commuter railway stop outside town to Thomas's Airbnb address, I was struck—as I had been with many interviewees in the *banlieues*—by how much his community differed from the stereotype of how people of non-European origin live. Rather than the large, broken-down government housing projects (the *cités* or *HLMs*) so often talked about, I passed well-maintained walk-up apartment buildings, small houses, and neighborhood shops. It was the same when I went out for pizza that evening and when I walked around town the next morning.

Unlike most of my hosts, who let out an extra bedroom in their own homes, Thomas rented out an apartment near his

home. He had asked me to arrive by mid-afternoon. As soon as he had shown me into the apartment (which was small, but newly renovated and immaculate), he wanted to begin the interview. When I turned on the recorder, he said:

> Thank you, Larry, for having proposed this interview. When you first contacted me, I found the concept very interesting and open-minded. Then, when I read what the other Airbnb hosts had written on Airbnb about their experiences, I decided I'd participate, too. I decided to take the time to do this interview.

Our interview began, as they all did, with an autobiographical sketch. But while some people summarized their lives in ten or fifteen minutes, Thomas—though only twenty-nine—spoke uninterrupted for an hour and a half. He began with his parents' early adulthood. They came to France from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a former Belgian colony, when his father was twenty and his mother seventeen. "Life wasn't easy," and his parents "worked very, very hard" at whatever jobs they could find. His father worked as a garbage man, and both parents handed out flyers on the metro. "They also took care of old people who were often sick, so they got sick, too." Unable to pay rent, "they lived in abandoned apartments. It was very difficult."

As the years passed, his parents made their way; they got better jobs, rented a real apartment, and had four children. Thomas and his siblings didn't know about their parents' financial difficulties while they were growing up. "They protected us from all that. We never wore torn clothes or went to school hungry." But his parents were clear in their expectations:

> My parents told us every day—every single day—"You must push ahead in your studies." My father always told us that he didn't have the chance to get much education, so we had to work hard at school. "You must go as far as you can. If you don't, it will be very hard for you."

Although the family lived at first in poor *banlieue* neighborhoods, his parents "protected us," Thomas said. "It was a good childhood, and we were a united family." But the outside world could be challenging. Thomas still remembers when, as a young child, he told his father how he had been treated unfairly. "That,

my son, is just the beginning" was all he said in response. His parents went as far as they could in their jobs; his father left menial labor to drive a taxi, and his mother became a chambermaid at a five-star hotel. Along the way, Thomas said, they "experienced a lot of racism, personally, racism that was strong. They were called 'dirty Blacks' for no reason, things like that."

As the children got older, Thomas's father became more pointed in his advice:

> We are not White. Even though you were born in France, you won't be considered a true French person. You must work harder than the others because of racism. If working twice as hard isn't enough, work four times as hard. If that's not enough, work eight times as hard. And if you fall, get back up.

Thomas's father had a succinct way of describing working life in France: "Whites in the office, Blacks collect the trash." But while he and their mother had to live by this rule, their children could escape. "We, his children, must be in the offices too." But it wouldn't be easy; Thomas and his siblings would have to "study to the limit." Their father said that "Whites in the office" was not just a description of who works where, but of "social categories," of where the "power" is. His children would have to work hard to get in.

Along the way, Thomas's father warned that they would meet stiff resistance: "You were born in France, you are citizens, but the more you advance, the more you'll come upon people who want you to fail." Thomas was shocked. "It's not possible!" Their father would explain: "All French people aren't racists, but racism exists. You'll go places because you've worked hard. But some people won't be happy. They'll think, 'Why is he here? Blacks are just store guards and the like. He shouldn't be here.'"

After graduating from high school, Thomas entered a two-year IT program. His first year went well until the third trimester, when the official teacher returned from maternity leave. "I'd never seen her before, but she gave me looks like she was shooting me. Oh!" He had the same teacher in his second year. It was "truly bizarre"—"she did everything to slow me down"—and he was not the only one; the three other Black students were treated the same way. When, toward the end of the year, she pre-

dicted to Thomas's face that he'd fail the program's final exams, saying "you won't get your diploma," he was stunned. "Teachers are supposed to encourage students!" But rather than "closing in upon myself," he said, "I worked twice as hard, three times harder than the other students." At the end of year, he passed his exams and graduated.

Looking back, Thomas was struck by his teacher's cruelty. "Consciously," he thinks, she was trying to foster within him a low estimation of his abilities. Her message was, "You can't do it, it's impossible, it's not for you." He says, "Even now when I talk of this, it's incredible."[7]

Having gotten his diploma, Thomas had a decision to make. The company where he had worked part-time during the IT program offered him a full-time job at a good salary. It was tempting, especially since his friends already had jobs and some owned cars. But he decided to continue his education, first getting an advanced IT diploma and then a master's degree in IT engineering. This yielded a management position at a major company. All went well there until, after three years, his supervisor said that the promotion he'd been promised was "impossible."

Thomas was crushed; he had "zero morale, less than zero." Thomas switched companies, but decided to start his own business and threw himself into learning about small-scale real estate investing and identifying apartments that were good investment opportunities. He prepared a proposal showing how a specific apartment would be profitable, but when he went to the bank to seek a loan—"wearing a tie, et cetera, et cetera"—he was turned down. He was also rejected by the second bank, and the third. "They didn't say they weren't lending me the money because I'm Black, but I thought that if I'd been White maybe they would have." He persisted, finally getting a loan from the sixth bank, and then launched his real estate business. It has been hard work, but he's been successful. By the time of our interview, Thomas owned a number of apartments, including the one in which I stayed. He had also married his high school girlfriend and started a family.

As the interview neared its fourth hour, Thomas shared his feelings through these years. Sitting just a couple of feet from me, he spoke with unrestrained intensity, but also laughed often. The experience with his IT teacher "was something new

to me. It was the first time my parents couldn't protect me." And though he'd been able to turn his teacher's behavior to his benefit (it "motivated me times ten, times a thousand"), by the time he had gotten his diploma, he realized that his father had been right. In Thomas's words: "I understood that a Black can be French, but only up to a certain level. The higher you go, the more you'll face racism." Later in the interview, Thomas returned to this issue:

> I know that there are French people who consider me a foreigner. They make clear that "even if you were born here, you're a foreigner. You remain a Black. You've succeeded, you've done advanced studies, et cetera, but pay attention: though you were born in France, as you advance, you are less French."

For Thomas, the challenge is to keep racism from undermining his drive to succeed. "What's dangerous for me today is to think that everyone's racist, that when there's a problem it's because they don't like Blacks. That's what's dangerous." When he encounters someone who's racist, he follows his family's approach. "Other families get frightened or hunker down. They say, 'Don't go there because they don't like Blacks.' Our family is not like that. One person might be a racist, but another isn't. There are imbeciles in France, so let them be." Thomas feels that you must always be "positive," believing that "human beings are good even if some people aren't." Don't "cry" about being a "victim" and "don't lose yourself in anger. You need to keep advancing in life."

Thomas turned to the general issue of being Black in France. There are "the true French, the French who are White" and then—he laughed, pointing to his skin—there are "the French who are Black." Although it has been hard to make his way up in the work world—in his father's words, "in the office"—Thomas has never wanted to be White. "No, not once, because of the education my parents gave me. They'd say, 'Never deny your origins.'" And so "I've never envied a White person." While many Blacks feel inferior to Whites, he says, that's not for him: "If you feel inferior, you can't go on living. The goal is to live. There's enough room for everyone." I asked whether he's ever felt ashamed about being Black. "No, never, never. Never!"

We finally ended at 9 PM. Thomas was emphatic about his personal philosophy: "You must have objectives that you'll attain. You must fight and fight again to make your dreams come true."

BLACK IN A WHITE WORLD—INTERVIEWEE PROFILES

The interviewees who are seen as Black vary in many ways. They originate from almost a dozen countries or overseas *départements* of France: in Africa, from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, and Senegal; and, in the Caribbean, from Guadeloupe, Haiti, and Martinique. Some have spent their entire lives in France, while others came as children or young adults. They range in age from seventeen to their fifties. But, despite this variety, they have certain things in common. All originate from places that were once European colonies. Indeed, except for Thomas, whose parents came from a former Belgian colony, all originate from former French colonies.[8] And all must live with being seen as Black, with all that this entails in other people's minds.

Perhaps because of their similar family histories and their shared reality of being seen as Black—intertwined facts of life in France—these interviewees focused on two related themes. Some focused on issues of identity, both how they see themselves and how they feel others see them. Others focused on achieving professional success, in part to disprove the stereotypes of Blacks they encountered in their own lives. Some spoke about both concerns.

The Problem of Identity

Jean, Clément, Anna, Caroline, Lucas, and François spoke about their lives with raw emotion. All are in their thirties or early forties and all share the norms of language, values, and behavior of the "French" people around them. Although almost all of them grew up in France and see themselves as French, this self-image is undercut by their *faciès*, by being Black in a country where the people who are unquestionably French—those who are referred to as "French"—are White. Certain issues came up again

and again. Do they feel inferior? Do they feel that "French" people see them as inferior? That "French" people do not accept them as really French? That they are seen as outsiders in their own country?

Jean. Now thirty, Jean has spent his entire life in France. His parents came from Haiti, where his mother had been deeply impressed by the wealth and appearance of American tourists. In France, his family settled in a public housing project in a poor neighborhood, where Jean "saw everything: violence, prostitution, drug addiction," even as a young child. Today, he is a dedicated artist, living with his parents for financial reasons. I met him through a mutual friend.

In person, Jean is far from the stereotype of people in the housing projects. He says, "I'm very well integrated, thanks to my parental education." He makes a point of dressing "in a completely Western way" and having the right haircut. In sum, "I fit into the mold."

From an early age, Jean says, "my parents wanted me to succeed at any price." His mother kept telling him and his siblings that they had to "succeed like the Whites succeed. We always had that comparison: Look at how the Whites succeed, look at how they are. You must do the same. There was this omnipotence of the Whites in our life. This never ended."

Growing up, Jean didn't only want to be like Whites, he says, "I wanted to be White." But as he fell behind academically, he wondered, "What will I do, since I can't succeed in school? How will I be White if I can't succeed at school? If I can't be intelligent?" Hoping to look like a White person, "I would pinch my nostrils and pull my nose forward."

By middle school, Jean saw his mother's logic play out. While most Whites continued on the academic track, he was funneled into the slower school program, the "dark side," with mostly Blacks and Maghrebis. Jean had "a great feeling of desire, of impotence and injustice. It angered me a lot."

His color also put him at a disadvantage in the larger society. In France, he says, there's an enormous difference between a second-generation Black person like him and a second-generation person whose parents came from a European country. "The difference is very simple: they're White. Automatically, that gives them an incredible superiority."

Adolescence was difficult. Other kids would make jokes, he said, "about the color of my skin," calling out, "You're a gorilla" or "You're a monkey." These images come from "the colonial past of France," Jean thinks, and they haven't disappeared. He pointed to the way that "museum exhibits depict Blacks. Look at how they are! Sadly, it's a heritage that comes back over and over and over again."

Jean was also troubled by what he learned in school about sub-Saharan Africa:

> Even if I'm not African, I was ashamed of Africa with its shantytowns and broken-down houses. I couldn't understand it. Why do Africans stay that way? In my head, I criticized them. Why do they live in caves, why do they remain in those primitive conditions? And then there are the wars they fight among themselves. I couldn't understand that.

The contrast with Europe was humiliating. "Then you turned the page and saw the great powers with all their incredible things. Even though I wasn't African, I was a bit like one. I was a little ashamed."

The problem went beyond Africa. At school, he says, "I was also ashamed when they talked about slavery. It was very sad. I felt like I was screwed into my chair and could do nothing. Ow! It really weighed me down. I couldn't understand why the slaves stayed that way." In recounting this scene, Jean spoke about being "ashamed" of the slaves rather than, say, about being furious with Europeans for having transported Black Africans across the Atlantic or for having brutalized them as slaves in places like Haiti, where Jean's parents came from, and other parts of the Americas.

By high school, Jean began to focus on his own art, which he feels has saved him. His twenties were a time of

> enormous evolution, of an opening up and knowledge of myself as an artist. Starting then, I sought out who I am: the Black, the Haitian, my origins. All of this came back in a flash. Because to work as an artist, you have to have these keys, this code.

He also discovered Jean-Michel Basquiat, an American artist whose father was Haitian. Basquiat "totally overthrew" Jean's goal

to "be like the Whites, to feel like the Whites." Becoming "a mirror" for him, Basquiat "put me on a road that's mine." Jean began to take "great pride" in himself. "I left the shadows for the sunlight."

Today, Jean sees himself as "a Black artist." Through his art, he is involved in the "struggle against prejudice, against racism, many such struggles, to enter into a world that's more welcoming." But it's an "internal struggle," too. As Blacks, "we can say that we're proud of ourselves, but there's still what's left from the past. We have to struggle against those voices."

During a break in the interview, Jean showed me a portfolio of his pen-and-ink drawings. He spoke about them when we turned the recorder back on. "My characters are primarily Whites," he said, but "starting last year, I've tried to draw Black people. It's very difficult. I'm in a disequilibrium about what I should do." One of the drawings in the portfolio depicts an artist at his easel who is "blond" with "Western features." Another drawing features "two Black men, one who is holding a brush and trying to lift up his friend," while nearby there are "people with pitchforks and torches who want to block their way." The final drawing, which he was still working on, portrays "a young Black man who's lost, who's looking for a destiny, a place to live, because he has no roots, he doesn't know who he is."

Since Jean had referred to some people as "French" during the interview, I asked what he meant by this. He replied, "Implicitly, I'd be saying that he's White." But what about him, I asked. He's lived his whole life in France. Doesn't he consider himself French too? "Yes, I'm French, but internally I'd have a little smile, thinking 'I'm French, but I'm no fool.' I fully understand that in the eyes of many people I'm something else." Then, evoking the history of France's roundups and its shipping of Jews to their deaths during World War II, he said "if the Nazis came back today and rounded people up, despite my French passport, I'd be taken away."

Clément. I met Clément at his modest apartment on the outskirts of town. He was alone that evening—his wife and daughter were away—and eager to talk about his life. Conducted in his dimly lit and quiet living room, his interview continued until midnight and resumed early the next morning. Clément stared into a middle distance as he recounted the many painful times of his life.

Originally from the Cape Verde Islands, Clément's family was living in Senegal when he was born. His father, a veteran of the French Foreign Legion who had gained French citizenship, moved the family to France when Clément was six. After a short time living in a housing project in the city's poor *banlieue*, the family settled in a pleasant house with a garden in a largely White, middle-class community outside the city. Clément's first and last names are European, he is a French citizen, and his family has always been Catholic. He is now thirty-six.

When Clément was about twelve, he and a "blond and blue-eyed" friend went into the town's central cafe to buy candies. Clément was called over to be photographed with a group of men, who then "burst into laughter." This baffled him. After leaving the café, Clément's friend explained what had happened: the men "were ridiculing you. They're with the National Front and you represent the people they want to force out of the country." Clément says he "froze for five minutes. This was the first time I'd been hit full force with the image of my skin color. It really affected me."

While this experience was extreme, Clément often felt "different in the eyes of others." He explained:

> Here's a simple example. I'd go to a store with a friend, blond with blue eyes. The tone toward each of us wouldn't be the same, the welcome wouldn't be the same. Or when we were going someplace or getting on a bus—the simple things of life. Even though I was young, I felt it.

After a while, "I'd play naive to avoid confronting this lack of belonging. I'd hang back or stand at the end of the line."

At school, Clément was "virtually the only Black in class," he said, and "eighty percent of our school was White, they were French." When the subject of slavery came up, "I identified with the Blacks in chains," and thought "people of my origin were the ones who'd been enslaved" by the White students' ancestors. He also felt that the other students had a glamorous history to study—"Napoleon and his many conquests"—while he had "a lack of history." Clément kept wondering, "Why can't I be White like the others? It's unfair."

Geography class provided another painful lesson. There were two types of countries: the "developed ones," like France, and

"the poor ones, like Senegal and Mali." From Senegal himself, Clément says he "immediately identified with the poor countries." Such experiences created a "discouragement with what we were being taught." He fell into an "educational malaise."

Clément also began to feel socially rejected. "A friend would go to another friend's house to play a video game, but I could never go. Their parents wouldn't allow it. And when a friend's family would go away for a weekend, others could go, but for me it wasn't possible." The "pity of my friends," he said, made him "ashamed" and "angry."

Feeling "different from my classmates and the kids in my neighborhood," Clément started hanging out "little by little with the kids of the housing projects" outside town. "I needed to belong," he said, and so "I made a change in the palette of my friends. I sought out Maghrebis, Comorians, Senegalese kids because they looked more like me. They wouldn't ridicule me; they wouldn't exclude me."

When he graduated from high school, Clément's father arranged for him to join the French Foreign Legion. This required a ploy. Because the Foreign Legion is limited to people who are not French citizens, it issued Clément an ID card with a new name and new nationality, identifying him as Canadian. This had an astonishing effect:

> When I went out with that Canadian identity, I was immediately more appealing; I was exotic. If I entered a department store or nice restaurant, for example, or a discotheque, the simple fact that my ID card had "Canadian" on it, all of a sudden, made people think, "Ah, this is an exotic Black from Canada." All of a sudden I had more value. And that was super appealing. That Canadian ID eliminated a lot of complexes and opened a lot of doors. It really changed how I was seen. A whole lot.

Just being a soldier helped too: "The military uniform put me in another status." Clément felt like "a citizen who serves my country, not a foreigner they don't want."

Today, those days are long over. The return to civilian life, he says, was "a bit brutal because I lost my Canadian identity and left the army at the same time." Wondering about his "origins" and wanting to learn what he "hadn't learned in school," Clément

went to Senegal for four months. Senegal was poor. “That touched me a lot” and “culturally it was a great shock,” he reported, but “with time I came to see some things that were more profound.” The experience was “very enriching.” Clément also fell in love with a Senegalese woman, whom he ultimately married. He returned to France feeling proud. “I had regained my history.”[9]

During the years since his army service and trip to Senegal, Clément has held a variety of jobs. For five years, he served as the leader of a small social services team and faced resistance from its White members, as detailed later in this chapter. More recently, he has gone into business for himself, teaching teenagers how to drive. This allows him more autonomy. But even now, despite five years of military service, ten more years as a responsible member of society, and his fully European name, Clément is not seen as truly French. “A French person,” he says. doesn’t “look Arab or Black.” To be “seen as totally French,” a person must be “White, without color, not *typé*.” And so “I’m French, but not very French.”

Clément explained what this means in practice:

> Okay, you’re a citizen, you follow the same rules, et cetera, but you don’t have the same access, the same rights, the same opportunities. Yes, I grew up in this country, I was educated in this country, I absorbed the culture, but I can’t eat at certain restaurants, I can’t go into certain stores, into certain discotheques or nightclubs, et cetera. And so I’m French, but not very French.

This last sentence came with a sardonic laugh, much like the laughs that punctuated other moments of his life story.

Clément’s situation has been further complicated by religion. As will be discussed in chapter 6, he converted from Catholicism to Islam before marrying his Senegalese fiancée. While this aspect of life is “hyper-enriching,” he feels he must hide it to avoid “aggravating” other people.

Anna. A friend of one of my Airbnb hosts, Anna met me for dinner at a downtown restaurant. I explained the project, and she readily volunteered to be interviewed. We met later that week at her apartment in an attractive neighborhood in town.

Anna was born in Burkina Faso, a poor former French colony in West Africa, shortly after her parents, both from Burkina

Faso, were divorced. When Anna was two, her father married a French woman who was working as a volunteer nurse in the country; when she was four, her father and stepmother brought her to France. Now thirty-one, Anna has lived in France ever since.

The family first settled in a town called Le Blanc ("The White")—Anna chuckled at the name—where there were "only two families of color." Her stepmother, she says, became "my mother, the person who raised me, the person I love, the mother of my heart." And so "I had a White mother." Meanwhile, her father had felt estranged from life in Burkina Faso when he was there ("He said he'd always been apart from the others"), and so, she recalls, "didn't give me an African education." There was no African food, music, clothing, or language in the household. "I always had the model of my dad, who wasn't born in France, but who'd totally adapted to France, in his habits and his culture." In sum, "I was very White, I was very French."

During her childhood, Anna remembers being a "mascot" among the other kids, with "everyone wanting to be my friend." She later realized that Le Blanc had not been totally free of bias. Shortly after the family arrived, her parents were forced to switch Anna's preschool because of other parents' objections. In her early teens, she was occasionally called such things "*bamboula*" (a degrading term for Black people; see Ruscio 2020: 31–34) or told "Your mother descends from the monkeys," but only because, she says, "everyone becomes stupid" at that age.

When Anna was sixteen, the family moved to a small French city where there were some Africans. One day an African girl called her a "Bounty" (a French candy that is coconut on the inside and chocolate on the outside). Although intended as an insult, Anna thought that the image was apt. After all, she had grown up in an entirely French environment at home, in school, and in her community. She says, "I was raised as a European in a black envelope. It's the person I am."

After a year and a half of college, Anna entered the work world. As reported later in this chapter, she has faced employment discrimination in at least two jobs. Anna has also lived in different cities. While in Paris, she encountered its large African community, which, she admits, "frightened me a little. I felt like a foreigner among people who look like me." The people were "hardly

assimilated at all"; many were "vulgar" in their way of speaking and acting. This conflicted sharply with her own behavior: "I like being reserved." One African custom she did adopt, however, is having her hair braided. Anna has dated only White men.

When I asked Anna whether she is French, she answered, "I feel French." Later in the interview, she explained this equivocal statement: "From my point of view, yes, I'm French. For others I will never be. For certain people I can have a French passport, have lived virtually my entire life in France, live with a French man, and pay French taxes, but I'll never be French." Nevertheless, Anna won't dwell on bias against Blacks. "One can't live in a country thinking that everyone sees us in a bad light."

Caroline. Much like Anna, Caroline is Black but has spent most of her life with White people. Born in Guadeloupe, she came to mainland France with her mother and European stepfather when she was only three. She is now thirty-five. Caroline grew up in a well-off White neighborhood and was often in all-White classes in school. Her mother, she says, disdained the Africans who later moved into town: "Oh, yes, she was racist." Her mother would tell Caroline to stay away: "Don't hang out with the Africans; you'll ruin your life."

Teachers and other kids could be hurtful. In elementary school, White children refused to hold Caroline's hand and didn't want her to join them in the swimming pool. "It was mean." Later, when recent African immigrants were enrolled in her school and put in a separate class to learn French—known to Whites as the "idiots' class"—her teacher suggested that she switch to that class "because I was Black." It didn't matter that she was a native French speaker or that she had been a student at the school for years. Still later, Caroline attended a private school specializing in *haute cuisine*, where she was either the only Black student or one of just two. "The director of the high school was racist; it was intolerable." When a student was to be chosen to represent the school at a nationwide competition, she wouldn't even consider Caroline: "You're Black. We can't be represented by a Black."

Despite these incidents, Caroline thought of herself as White, like her fellow students. "For me, I was like them. I didn't even see that my color was different from theirs." It was only the comments by students and faculty that, she says, "brought me back to reality."

After high school, Caroline worked as a dessert chef at a hotel kitchen and then for the local commuter railway system where she still works. "I've pretty much always lived with French people," she says. "I've always been integrated into my country." Caroline married "a White, a French man" and had two children with him, though the couple is now divorced. Caroline's children do not look like her—she says "they're both White"—and so people assume that she is their babysitter. For them, "I'm never the mother." Having kept her married name, Caroline has the same last name as her children. This has proved useful, since "even after four years," she must show her ID card to pick her children up at school. She also has "a lot of racist neighbors."

Caroline says, "For me, a French person is White," and her best friends are White. "It's true that I'm Black, but I don't see my color. I'm like my friends." And they see her the same way: "My friends often tell me, 'It's true, we forget you're Black. You're White like us.'"

Lucas. I arrived at Lucas's apartment in a middle-class suburb in the late afternoon. He immediately identified himself as Guadeloupean, even though we had just said hello. Lucas invited me to join him for dinner, and we got to know each other while he chopped and cooked. The interview began right after dinner and continued until nearly midnight. Now thirty-eight, he is the owner of a small electrical maintenance and repair business. He has never been married and has no children.

Lucas started his life story not with himself, but with his grandparents. His paternal grandparents came to mainland France from Guadeloupe. They were "*métis*." His maternal grandparents were entirely White, with deep roots in mainland France; in Lucas's words, they were "French French." Turning to his parents, he said that his father had "*café au lait*" skin and his mother was White. Because both of his parents were born and raised in mainland France, Lucas is at least the second generation on both sides of his family to be born and to live in mainland France.

Still, the issue of belonging has been complicated. Just a few minutes into the interview, Lucas spoke of a childhood incident that, he said, "has marked me ever since."

> I was seven years old. I was going out to play with my friends. My mother stopped me, saying that I needed to take my na-

> tional identity card with me. I had been born here, and yet I had to carry my papers when I was outside. I have always found that troubling. It was a shock. I was just a young child who had no idea of skin color; this made me understand that in the world I was different, even though I hadn't felt different.

His White friends didn't need to carry their national identity cards. It was "at this moment" that Lucas discovered that there are people like his friends, who, he says, are "French French," and there are people like him who look different, who are "not totally French." "I was not in the same category of person. I was not what I thought I was."[10]

As Lucas entered adolescence, the issue of identity continued to trouble him. Although he has the same "*café au lait*" skin as his father, Lucas's father "never wanted to talk about my roots." Meanwhile, his "French French" mother taught him "to speak a better French and to respect people," which helped him to "mix in" with Whites. "The fact that I was polite reassured them." Throughout his life, Lucas has been a "chameleon," he says, always ready to "adjust to the type of person that's in front of me."

Police on the street did not see him this way. "During my adolescence I had a big problem" with the police, he said, "because of my *faciès*." They saw a young man with hair "like the Jackson Five" and "swarthy" skin. "Over and over," the police stopped him and demanded that he show them his national identity card.

The awkwardness of being a "chameleon" was brought home some years later, when a White friend came banging on Lucas's door. His friend was furious with his daughter because she had started dating a Senegalese man. "Vomiting" his disgust with this liaison, the friend evidently had forgotten Lucas's own skin color. At that moment, Lucas said, "it was as if he'd put on the table the core of his personality."

Even today, more than thirty years after the childhood incident that "marked" him, Lucas wrestles with the issue of identity. Not wanting others to decide his place in French society, he suddenly said to me, "If I must be put in a caste" —neither of us had said anything about "caste" or a "caste" system—"I'll be the one to put myself into a caste." He is "Guadeloupean." Lucas said this even though he and both of his parents have spent their entire lives in mainland France and even though his mother,

who came from a longtime "French" family, has no connection whatever to Guadeloupe.

François. Unlike all the interviewees profiled to this point, François grew up outside of France. Now forty-eight, François is from a prosperous Catholic family in the capital of Gabon, a former French colony in Central Africa. He remembers thinking of France as "a great country, an intelligent country. It's the White man." France "brought television, it brought the Industrial Revolution, the automobile, et cetera. You thought of France as powerful, as superior."

François attended a French government middle and high school with French teachers and mostly European students. There were "very few Africans." The teachers talked about "fabulous things. There was all this fantasy." He described his emotions at the time:

> You want to be like the Whites, you want to act like the Whites. You want to speak like the Whites, you want to erase any accent. You wanted to have White friends. Even at that age, there's a feeling of belonging, of belonging to the culture that comes from colonization, from White people in France, from your French friends. You want to have a White identity, consciously or unconsciously.

These feelings were complicated by his experience at school. Though he had a "deep-set complex" about Whites being "more intelligent" than Africans, he "had the same grades" as his White classmates.

While still a child, François made a striking discovery. He had not known his father because his parents had divorced very early in his life and his father lived in a different part of the country. When he was about nine, François took an inter-city car to visit his father. There he discovered that his father was *métis*, since his paternal grandfather had been Portuguese. This made François "proud" and explained his own "cappuccino" skin color. It also, he says, "reinforced my desire to identify" with Whites and "to do things like a White."

At twenty-one, François went to France to attend business school, where everything went well. His finances put him on a par with the French students, and he fit in socially. "We went to the same school, and we went out together in the evening. I

felt equal to the other students." He spoke "good French," better than many native-born French people, who "speak badly." When a French person asked whether his parents back in Africa spoke French, he responded, "Monsieur, my parents speak a better French than you." He graduated and entered the work world.

It has been twenty-five years since those early years in France. During this time, François has had a variety of jobs, was married once (to a White woman), and has had two other close relationships (also with White women). He has three children. Now separated from the mothers of his children, he lives on his own. He is a French citizen, fully "assimilated," he says, and a Catholic. But while "I live like French people," he says, "I grew up in Gabon. I have an African, a Gabonese identity."

But what about his children? "Take the case of my children," he said, "it's complicated for them." Even though they've been raised by their "purely French" mothers and have spent their entire lives in France, "they're *métis.*" And the "*métis* are Blacks."

François became increasingly emotional as he discussed these issues. Even a Black person who "grows up in France and accepts all French codes of behavior and succeeds" is not really French. In France, there are "two morphologies, two typologies," he explained, and "to be French is in the skin." Slapping his forearm more and more sharply—the sound jumps out on the recording of our interview—he added, "It's the skin, it's the skin, the skin. With the skin, they always see our origins."

I asked François whether Blacks can be accepted in France. He laughed, but not happily. "This skin is with us. This skin, when one is here, is terrible. It doesn't matter what you do, it doesn't matter if you grow up in a bourgeois environment in the middle of Paris, you must always justify yourself." He continued, "There are those who feel French" and marry into a French family, but "one day a cousin might get annoyed and say, 'little black one.'" When all is said and done, he says, "French people won't accept us. Consciously or unconsciously, they don't accept us."

"I'm not what you think I am": Pushing Forward in the Face of Prejudice

Thomas's profile at the beginning of this chapter reveals a person who spends less mental energy on his identity, about which

he has no doubt, than on making a successful life in France. Thomas is not alone. Charles, Isabel, Amina, Marie, Markus, Daniel, and Philippe do much the same. Unlike all but one of the interviewees discussed in the section above, most of these people grew up outside of France. Fully conscious of the prejudices they face, each is intent on proving, in the words of one, that "I'm not what you think I am."

Like the first group of interviewees, many of whom also push forward even while they think about their identities, each interviewee in this section is unique. Common themes nevertheless emerged in their interviews. What obstacles have they faced? Have they succeeded in their careers? Are they calm in the face of prejudice or are they consumed with fury?

Charles. Charles's wife Ariel picked me up at the airport late in the evening and brought me to the house where the couple lives with their three-year-old son. We talked late into the night and continued through two days of their home-cooked meals, with such succulent dishes as seared duck breast. Charles is profiled here, Ariel in chapter 4.

Now fifty-six, Charles grew up in the former French colony of Martinique in the Antilles section of the Caribbean. Martinique became an overseas *département* of France more than a decade before his birth, and he has always felt French. Like other interviewees who came from overseas *départements*, Charles has been a French citizen since birth. As far as he was concerned, "France was the best country." Looking back today, he says, "I was born French, I am French."

Since early adolescence, Charles has had two passions: judo and mathematics. Judo "forged my personality," he says, and Charles excelled in it, becoming the Martinican judo champion for each age group from fifteen through twenty-one. He also excelled in math, even in the demanding science track of his high school. Realizing that he would have to go to mainland France to become more than a high school math teacher, he decided to make the jump. He knew that computers were the key to the future, and he wanted to pursue this future.

At twenty-one, Charles left for mainland France to study information technology. Although he had always considered himself French while growing up in Martinique, he had had little experience with Whites. In mainland France, Charles quickly

discovered that many did not consider him French: "There are many, many, many people who are prejudiced against Africans, Antilleans, and Arabs. Against everyone who isn't French. I say openly and clearly that French society is very racist." Charles persisted in his professional plans. He finished his IT training and has worked at consulting firms ever since. He is now the head of a project team.

This has been a good match for him. In tech, "intellectual competence, not skin color, is what's valued" and the people are more open-minded than elsewhere. They "are at least as educated" as him and have been "exposed to other cultures." Tech people also have professional freedom: with recognized skills, they can change companies when they feel unappreciated. Charles has done this three times.

Judo continued to be a major part of his life in France. "In competition you're there to win" and you're not alone.

> Bizarrely, after all we've said about French society, sport is universal in France. You are a member of a club, not judged at all about appearance, by your exterior color, but only by your abilities. I was never, I say never, judged by my origins or the color of my skin in judo.

Psychologically, "sports give a person the strength to do battle and to resist." For Charles, this strength has been helpful "with regard to *intégration*, racism, et cetera, since it's easier to attack someone who's weak than someone who has force of character." Coming to my room after one of our interview sessions, Charles added that his physical presence has helped, too: he is "one meter ninety" (six feet, two inches) and "muscular."

Charles refuses to be put off by racism, he says, "so long as I'm not attacked intellectually or physically." No one has ever tried to attack Charles physically, but he recalled two times when his intellect was questioned on racial grounds. In high school in Martinique, a White math teacher considered the Martinican students a bunch of "little *nègres*" (an insulting term for Blacks; see Ruscio 2020: 95–102), saying, "You'll never succeed in life; you're all welfare cases." Charles's only recourse was to do well on his exams, and "since it was math, rather than French or philosophy, the teacher couldn't cheat on the grades." Charles easily beat out the teacher's pet, a White boy.

The second incident occurred during an IT assignment in Guadeloupe. A White colleague from mainland France rejected Charles's solution to a technical problem, saying, "An Antillean does not teach me my work." During a larger meeting the next day, the same man said, "You Antilleans don't know how to do things; you don't know how things work." Charles spoke up, telling the man, "I simply explained something you didn't know. I didn't question your competence. Don't question ours."

Despite Charles's strength of character, living with racism has been difficult. Whenever he discussed the subject, Charles's booming voice grew softer, his face sagged, and his shoulders pulled in. But he refuses to live thinking with the notion that racism is behind every slight or setback, and he won't be thrown off track: "There are obstacles, but the obstacles, you go around them or you jump over them. Every morning that you wake up is a chance to make your life."

Isabel. From the beginning of her interview to the end, Isabel was emphatic about everything: her family, her values, her pride, her hurt, and her resoluteness.

Now forty-one, Isabel grew up in extraordinary circumstances. Her father was an army general and then the Minister of Defense of the Republic of the Congo, a former French colony in Central Africa. Her family lived in an enormous house in a military complex, and the children were not allowed to go into the outer world. French was the language of the household—"since the cradle, we spoke only French"—and she never learned an African language. The family was deeply Catholic.

Isabel's father expected that his children would meet the same exacting standards as his officer training program in Europe. He was emphatic about life in Europe. While a person can make much of himself there, Blacks had to fight every step of the way. Having "suffered from racism," he told Isabel:

> In Europe, there'll always be people to let you know you are Black, that you will remain Black. People will think you're inferior. So, a Black must always be the best. A Black must prove, "I'm intelligent. I'm not what you think I am." If you don't, you'll be crushed.

At sixteen, Isabel came to France to attend a Catholic high school. Gifted in clothing design, she then studied *haute cou-*

ture at an elite private school. Her father paid the tuition there, he told her, "on the sole condition that you are the best." She became a French citizen at twenty. After getting her diploma, Isabel worked at an international fashion house and then returned to her former school as a faculty member. She married a "French" man and had two children, but the couple then divorced. Despite the hard times followed—Isabel cleaned hospital rooms and worked as a security guard at an airport and a housing project—she pushed forward. There could be no help from her father: back in the Congo, he had been assassinated, and his assets had been seized by political rivals.

Ultimately, Isabel was able to open a store in a stylish neighborhood downtown, where she sells clothes made from African cloth that she designs and sews herself. (Most of our interview was conducted in the store during breaks between customers.) Although her business has been relatively successful, the experience has not been easy. One morning, when she arrived at her store, she was greeted by the words (in French) "Dirty *Nègre* Go Home" written with fecal matter on the plate-glass window.

Siblings of Isabel who have settled in France have also experienced rejection. She recounted an incident involving one of her brothers, who is a lawyer in Paris. He and his White girlfriend had wanted to get married, but he needed to get the approval of her father, who is a judge. Meeting privately with Isabel's brother, her father told him that, though he seemed to be a fine young man and promising lawyer, the marriage would never happen. The reason was clear to both of them.

Meanwhile, Isabel feels no affinity for African people in France who have not adopted French ways. When we were having lunch at a restaurant near her shop, an African woman launched into a boisterous conversation at the table next to ours. Isabel was visibly put off. She explained why afterwards: the woman's behavior revealed a "lack of education"; it was as if she were still a "savage" in Africa.

Isabel has raised her children to be French. Both are *métis* with fully French names and have never been to Africa. Once, when one of them said something foolish, she reproved him, saying, "Now you're thinking like an old African villager." As with her father and herself, Isabel's children must excel, and so

far they've met this standard. "In all they do," she said, "they're best in their category—in sports, in school, they're the best."

Isabel is sure of her identity. Her voice swelling, she declared, "I'm proud of being myself, of being Black, because God made me that way. I'm Congolese by origin, but I'm French by adoption. I've lived here for years, and my children were born here. Above all, I'm French." In the face of the rejection she sometimes experiences in France, Isabel made her point with characteristic bluntness: "I'm French whether people like it or not."

Amina. Amina picked me up downtown at the end of her workday. She was wearing a black business dress and had the stylish haircut and makeup of an urban professional. We had dinner at a restaurant near the Airbnb apartment she rents out and then, back at the apartment, began her interview at 10 PM. We didn't stop until 1:30 AM. Since there was still more to discuss, Amina kindly met me two days later at my next Airbnb apartment.

Now thirty-eight, Amina is from Cameroon, in west-central Africa. The daughter of a former ambassador, she grew up in "comfortable" circumstances in a small city. Though everyone in her family spoke French fluently and admired France, she had no "complexes," she said, relating to the country or the people. And since she didn't know Europeans in Cameroon, she wasn't exposed to their attitudes toward Africans. "I was very protected by my mother until I left for France."

After completing high school and two years of business school in Cameroon, Amina went to France to finish her education. Until the day her plane landed in France, Amina says, "the only contact I had with racism was the television program about Kunta Kinte" (the enslaved hero of the American television series *Roots*) "and films about slavery in Brazil." She discovered racism firsthand on that first day in France. Needing to transfer at a metro station, she approached a young couple on the platform to ask for directions. She greeted the couple, but they didn't respond. When she greeted them again, they looked at her, she says, "as if I were transparent and said nothing." By chance, a French woman then approached the same couple to ask for directions. They responded readily.

Since Amina arrived in France after the school trimester had begun, her professor suggested that she borrow the class notes of another student in the class. None of her classmates were

willing to help. Later that year, an African student in another class offered Amina a theory of why French students were dismissive toward Africans. French children, she said, grew up learning that "Africans live like animals in trees, that they're monkeys, and so for them it's unthinkable to see a Black at a university." It was outright absurd for a Black person to be at an expensive business school like the one they attended. After getting poor grades in her first trimester, Amina decided that "the only way to take my revenge against these fools was to get very high grades. If they thought I'd come down from a tree, that I couldn't be as intelligent as them, the only way to prove that we're equal was to beat them in school." Beginning with the next trimester, she did just that.

After getting her business diploma, Amina got a master's degree in IT and did advanced studies in business intelligence. This last step was crucial. In business intelligence, she says, competence is the only thing that matters: "You either know it or you don't." In her first job in this field, she worked extremely hard and "learned a lot," even at the cost of a "burnout." After this, no one could doubt her abilities. "Clients pay a lot" for business intelligence services, she says, so it doesn't matter "if you're Black, White, et cetera."

Amina ultimately switched from corporate employee to self-employed consultant. She explained why, using the bank where she currently works as an example. There, she works on a project with about a dozen other technical consultants—mostly Maghrebis and Blacks—who are stationed in a single, large room. The bank officials to whom they report are different; the "great majority are French." Working apart from them, Amina and the other non-French consultants are largely protected from their biases.

Although her career is going well enough, being a woman, she says, "is an extra handicap. It's a problem for all women in France." There are incidents "etched in my memory" that Amina says she originally thought occurred "because I'm Black," but that she later realized were "because I'm a woman." Being a woman and a Black are not the only challenges Amina faces. As discussed in chapter 6, she is also Muslim. With a deep laugh, she said, "To be a woman, Black, and a Muslim is not a promising route to a great career."

Almost twenty years have passed since her first days in business school, and Amina remains angry. The senseless rejection she faced from French students that first trimester, she says, “fed my rage. I must absolutely succeed. And the rage I had then is the same rage I have today because I’m in the same battle. My sole revenge is to succeed.” Amina is determined to make her way in France. “I won’t accept being a victim. I detest people who play the victim.”

Marie and Markus. Marie invited me to her house in an attractive suburb for a family Sunday dinner. Dressed in a bright dress of African cloth, she welcomed me warmly, and we sat down to a large Cameroonian meal of chicken, plantains, and rice. The conversation was spirited, with everyone at the table taking part. When I described my project, Marie said she’d be happy to participate and her son Markus, although only seventeen, asked to participate, too.

Now fifty, Marie comes from an extremely well-off family in the commercial capital of Cameroon. Her family was devoutly Catholic. She and her siblings “grew up with White neighbors,” she says. “We went to church together, we played together. I never saw a difference between myself and a White.” Their father “insisted that we speak a good French to be seen well in the community.” They attended a Jesuit high school with a mixed European and Cameroonian student body, where “everyone was equal.” At their church, on the cross, “Jesus was a Black.” Meanwhile, the family was proud to be descended from those who had resisted colonial conquest, “from the king who had said ‘no’ to the Whites and died.” Marie laughed while talking about those happy years.

After high school, Marie’s father paid for her to be trained in France as a midwife. Although she had intended to return to Cameroon to practice midwifery after her training, the situation in Cameroon had changed by the time she got her diploma. Her father told her that the political and economic crisis that Cameroon had just experienced left the country “without a future,” and that she should make her future elsewhere. But she was also “blocked” in France because non-citizens were prohibited from practicing midwifery.

Marie decided to stay in France, resolving to “build something” there. She took whatever jobs she could find, at one point working as a cleaning woman. In the meantime, she had two

children with men from Africa, Markus and his older sister, and adopted two children, one a Cameroonian nephew with disabilities. Life "was a struggle." Finally, thirteen years after she had gotten her midwifery diploma, she gained French citizenship and began her career as a midwife. She worked at a hospital, then opened a practice of her own, where her patients are both White and Black. She is the only Black midwife in her city.

When her children were still young, Marie decided to resolve the issue of identity. Though she could live with ties to both France and Cameroon, her children could not. They were born in France, would be raised in France, and would have to make their way in France. For them to have a "stable identity," they'd need to be French. And to eliminate ambiguity, she said, "I decided to become French so I could transmit this to my children."

I asked Marie what being French means to her. "To be French," she said, "is to participate in the life of France." For her, this involves providing the best and most caring treatment for her patients. Some suffer from postpartum depression, so she works closely with them during the weeks and months following birth. Marie also remains active in her church and helps recent immigrants. She maintains good relations with her neighbors, who are mostly White retirees. "When I moved in, I went to everyone and said 'Hello.'" Marie thinks that, for her children, being French also means participation in the life around them: "They do sports, they interact with others, they go to church and school, they have friends." In a school with mostly White students, Markus excels academically and athletically. She thinks that he and his older sister (who now lives in another city) are simply French: "They are in their own country."

Marie's interview ended just in time. After a hurried telephone call, she changed into a tailored black dress and drove off to see a patient.

Markus and I then started his interview. Now a high school senior, he has sometimes had to face ridicule. He's been called, he says, "piece of shit" and "monkey." Even though he has spent his entire life in France, he's been told to "go back to where you come from." He has also been harassed by online trolls. None of this matters. He says, "I've always thought of myself as French. I grew up as a French person, I eat like a French person, and I've been educated as a French person. To be French is not a cliché."

For Markus, being French is not a "White person with a beret," but "to share French values and ideologies, to have the freedom to think," and to participate in France's democracy.

Although life is "a struggle every day," Markus feels no need to justify himself. He says, "I am what I am." He focuses on his goal of becoming an airline pilot.

Daniel. I met Daniel and his girlfriend Justine at their apartment in town. Within minutes, we had settled into their sunny living room with their cat to begin the interview.

Growing up in the Ivory Coast, a former French colony in West Africa that continues to have a strong French presence, Daniel says that he had the same attitude as those around him: Ivorians "always felt inferior" to the French. But he was freed from this attitude in his early twenties, after he had arrived in France and began working with French people. "I realized that everyone is equal." The only difference, he thinks, is that Europeans start out knowing more.

A few years later, Daniel took a factory job in the city where he now lives. He moved up three levels within a year. Then, when he was poised to become a team captain, a White employee blocked his promotion because the White employee, Daniel says, "couldn't tolerate a Black in a management position." Learning of this, a manager at the company pushed the promotion through. The manager—a man from Senegal—told Daniel, "I want you to show them that we Africans are not what they think." Daniel has thrown himself into the new position, motivating his team and "getting the job done."

Turning an anti-Black stereotype on its head, Daniel is struck by how hard many Africans work in France. He certainly does. "In all the domains in France, if there isn't an African involved, it won't work out."

All has not been easy in his personal life. Daniel can ignore being followed in stores or being called "dirty" by a young child—he laughed as he remembered that incident—but biased comments can hurt. An earlier relationship with a White woman ended after she referred to a government minister as a *nègre*. Justine, who is also White but grew up in Martinique among Black Martinicans, seems free of bias.

Now thirty, Daniel is happy with his life. "I have my job and apartment, I play soccer, and I've been with Justine for six

months." Looking at Justine with playful affection, he added, "I hope it goes on. Voilà, voilà."

Philippe. Within fifteen minutes of my arrival at his apartment, Philippe was discussing Rousseau, Voltaire, and other figures of the French Enlightenment. His intellectual passion did not flag during the six hours of conversation that followed. The next day was much the same.

Now thirty-four, Philippe grew up in a remote part of Guinea, a former French colony in West Africa. Although his parents spoke little French, he was sent to the capital, Conakry, for high school and college. There, he excelled in French literature and philosophy, which he read voraciously. He remembers the time well. "I was very literary, I very much enjoyed reading." He also began to "dress French," develop a "French mentality," and take on a "French identity." As Philippe increasingly "imitated" French ways, he became less Guinean; as he realized later, he'd become "*déraciné*" (uprooted or alienated from his original culture). At this point, he was "a French person in an African body." As "every African who's sincere" would admit, he said, he had an "inferiority complex." He added, "It's incredible—all the Guineans I know are impressed by Westerners."

After two years of college in Guinea, Philippe went to France to study law. This move had a surprising effect on his intellectual life. It was in France that he dove into the works of Frantz Fanon and started to read African literature. At first, he said, "it was hard to read African novels. It was not like reading a novel by Flaubert or Stendhal. These I understood easily." He also became an avid reader of Russian literature while he continued to "devour" French literature. In the meantime, he got his law degree and an advanced degree in transportation law.

Reading Frantz Fanon forced Philippe to acknowledge his "inferiority complex," but also made him understand that "the problem is not of inferiority, but of identity." Fanon taught him, he said, "not to be ashamed of my Africanness, of who I am. I accept it with pride." Fanon "makes each person responsible for himself." While Fanon's argument made Philippe "realize that I had over-idealized the French," it did not require him to "pass from one extreme to the other," from feeling purely French to feeling purely African. For Philippe, the task is instead to "conjugate the two" and "find an equilibrium." By doing so, he could

"have the two cultures and not be forced to seek refuge in only one."

Even after getting his advanced law degree, Philippe was unable to find a job in that field. For the last six years, he has worked instead as an activities counselor and administrator in middle schools. He refuses to attribute his inability to find a law-related job to racism because, he says, there might have been "superior candidates for each of the jobs I sought." He has the same feeling about social relations, refusing to attribute the "coldness" he has felt from some French people to racism. "If you don't like me, well, you don't like me. It's not racism." Interactions that other people might readily interpret as racist—when the parents of two French girlfriends refused to accept him, or when a real estate agent told him that no apartments were available but then told his French girlfriend that there were apartments—Philippe instead attributes to "a lack of comprehension." He says, "It's possible that I have experienced racism. I just refuse to see it that way." He refuses to see himself as a victim, and certainly not the "eternal victim."[11]

At the end of the interview, when I invited Philippe to add anything he'd like, he said:

> For someone who's been exposed to two different cultures, the best way to feel good in one's skin, to not feel lost, is to assimilate both cultures, to encompass both. It is the acceptance of the two cultures that has allowed me to feel reconnected with myself.

A few months after our interview, I received an email from Philippe: he had accepted the position of magistrate in Guinea and was planning to return there. A year later, Philippe sent an update. Although he had returned to Guinea, he wrote, "I had to come back" to France because "I was threatened" by the Guinean government.

DISCRIMINATION, "SUBTERRANEAN" BIAS, AND "INTELLIGENT RACISM"

For the interviewees, at least, just being seen as Black in France forces a person to face serious obstacles, particularly discrimination in employment, education, housing, and daily life. Collected

below are the specifics of these obstacles, as reported either by the interviewees profiled above or by other people I interviewed or spoke with during this project. The chapter concludes with the subtlest of issues: how "French" people communicate bias toward Black people in France without saying it openly.

"Racism is most evident in the work world"

The most commonly reported consequence of being Black in France involves employment discrimination. Over and over, interviewees spoke of their difficulties in getting hired for anything above menial or entry-level jobs. They found this galling since almost all of them were completely fluent in French, educated (in many cases, through a university bachelor's or master's degree), and comfortable with the social norms required for managerial or professional work. Some interviewees talked about submitting hundreds of résumés to no effect. (Because a résumé in France includes a photograph on the first page, a Black person's *faciès* is immediately evident.) Even when a résumé yielded an interview for the open position, the face-to-face interview typically resulted in a rejection.

Interviewees reported that, instead of working in managerial or professional positions commensurate with their credentials, many Black people are forced to work as office cleaners, security guards, or nightclub bouncers. According to Djibril, some Whites "think that a Black belongs" in a menial job because they "don't have the necessary intelligence" to do anything more. "There are people," he says, "who think that there's a certain kind of work for Blacks and a certain kind of work for Whites." Or, as Thomas's father put it: "Whites in the offices, Blacks collect the trash."

Even those who get an office job hit a barrier. According to Isabel, "In France, Blacks aren't accepted in offices beyond a certain level. They're merely tolerated." There's "always talk behind their backs. They're always criticized." Even working at a staff-level job can be a problem when there are Whites at the same level. According to Isabel, many Whites in the workplace have an attitude that "if you're Black, you must always be lower than me." And Amina says she has faced a "hostile work environment" from her White coworkers.

Emmanuelle's brother was the only Black member of the graduating class of a "very highly regarded" business school in France, she reported, and he was the last in the class to find a job. "It was very difficult for him," she said. "At first, he didn't understand." Finally, after seven or eight months, he was able to find a position, but only as "manager of a small grocery store."

Even more problematic is the (apparently rare) situation in which a Black person supervises White employees. After five years of military service, Clément was hired to lead a small community service team. With Whites on the team, he said, "I had to justify that I had a right to that position." He thinks that he succeeded, although, he added, "with more difficulty than if I'd been White."

Thomas recounted two contrasting experiences with teams managed by a Black person. When Thomas supervised his own team at the company where he once worked, he did not experience resentment from team members. There were no White members on his team; "there were none, none at all." It was different earlier in his career, when he was a trainee with a team that had White members. The Black leader of that team, he remembers, was "treated very badly."

A number of interviewees reported times when an expected or promised promotion at work failed to materialize, though prejudice was rarely explicit. Anna recounted two painful instances. When the airline for which she worked as a flight attendant was hiring pursers (chief flight attendants), she applied for the position. Although her job performance had been excellent, Anna was turned down, she was told, because "the quota for people of color had already been met." Later, when she worked for the national train company, Anna sought a promotion that would allow her to work on the trains, backed by a stellar personnel file and her manager's support. She was offered a promotion, but only to the position of train controller—the only position on a train that involved no customer contact.

Career progress is difficult. One problem the interviewees face is a lack of mentors. Discrimination against Blacks means that, as Amina explained, "there are few who have really succeeded who can take us by the hand." Thomas's father warned him, "The higher you go, the more you'll face racism." Similarly, Isabel said,

"When one is the best, that's when the struggle begins." And Djibril feels that many Whites "don't want Blacks to have access to certain positions" or to "reach a certain level of wealth."

Many interviewees have adopted strategies to sidestep workplace discrimination. One is to get training in a rigorous discipline where, as Amina phrased it, "only capability matters," and then pursue it vigorously. Examples of this approach include Charles's and Ariel's careers in information technology, Amina's in business intelligence, and Alejandro's in biochemistry. But a job grounded in objective expertise does not make bias disappear. At one point, Charles's White superior made it clear that a Black person could never know something that he didn't. Only at the highest levels might there be no prejudice. Alejandro earned a doctorate in biochemistry and now works as a research scientist at an international laboratory where equally highly educated professional colleagues from various countries evince no bias toward him.

Working for yourself is another strategy for escaping workplace bias. Many interviewees have taken that route, especially after frustrating experiences with organizational employers. These include Clément (driving school), Thomas (property management), Amina (business consulting), Marie (midwifery), Lucas (electrical installation and repair), Isabel (clothing store), and Emmanuelle (muscular therapy). While working for oneself "makes things easier," Emmanuelle said, it does not totally prevent discrimination. Thomas's experience with five banks refusing to provide a loan (for what proved to be a good investment) has already been reported in this chapter. He is not alone. According to Thomas, African banks have been started in France because Blacks have trouble getting loans from French banks.

Amina combined the two strategies by developing objectively verifiable skills and then operating her own one-person business. After working for companies, she became an independent contractor, working with teams of specialists that operate independently of their clients' corporate structures to execute technical tasks. These teams are staffed by people of different backgrounds and have little interaction with the companies' French management. Amina explained why she became an independent contractor:

> It would be different if I worked at a company. At a company, your advancement ends at the point of gaining responsibility. With Maghrebis and people from sub-Saharan Africa, there's always a moment when you realize this, when you need to find another way. You can't dream of a high-level career at a company when you have these handicaps.

The case of Nawab is revealing. The only Black person I spoke with who is largely uneducated and unskilled, Nawab works a menial job at the back of a local restaurant. He lives in a neighborhood with people like him (working-class Blacks, mostly from the Comorian Islands off the southeast coast of Africa), and he accepts his low status and salary. He pays more attention to his family and religious faith. Though Nawab said he knows that millions of French people are "racists," he does not have contact with many French people, and anyway, few would insult him in public. He recalls this happening only once, when an elderly person was abusive on a bus.

If one considers all the Black people I spoke with, a distinct pattern emerges. Only two did not report workplace bias: the one who holds a PhD and works at an international laboratory (Alejandro), and the one with little education who is content with a menial job (Nawab). Virtually all others described career obstacles and workday woes grounded in their *faciès*. Some mitigate their problems by specializing in technical fields (Charles, Amina, Ariel) or by turning to self-employment (Clément, Isabel, Emmanuelle, Lucas, Thomas, Amina, and Marie). Others are mired in positions below their level of training and work history (Philippe, Anna, Abbas, François) or underemployment (Djibril, Jean, Jacques).

Other Types of Discrimination

Black interviewees also spoke of problems involving education, housing, and daily life. Emmanuelle recounted a "major event" in her third year of professional studies. "I had two operations. I was in the hospital for two and a half months and missed three and a half months of classes," she said. Upon her return, Emmanuelle asked her professor for an accommodation for the end-of-year examination. He turned her down, even though he

had made such arrangements for two of her classmates, both White, who "hadn't even been hospitalized." Facing the exam as scheduled, Emmanuelle worked furiously to learn the months of material she had missed and passed it.

As already reported, Amina, Caroline, and Charles also experienced bias in schooling. Amina was shunned by her private business school classmates because she came from Africa, where people are thought to be like "monkeys." A native French speaker, Caroline was advised to move from her class with Whites to the "idiots' class," where newly arrived Africans were learning French. Although Caroline was a successful student, the director of her high school told her that a Black person could not represent the school in a national competition. A White math teacher from mainland France told Charles and the other Martinican students, "You'll never succeed; you're a bunch of welfare cases."

Interviewees also reported incidents of housing discrimination. When Clément calls about renting an apartment, everything goes well over the phone, since he speaks French without an accent and his first and last names are European. But when he comes to see the apartment, "there's always a pulling back" by the landlord. And though Clément has a completely middle-class way of dressing and acting, he says, "I have to convince potential landlords that I have a good job, lead a quiet family life, won't break the walls, won't attack the neighbors, will pay the rent on time, et cetera, et cetera." He has had much the same experience when seeking a mortgage. "I always have the sense when I walk in the door to meet with a bank officer that there's a label on my forehead saying 'welfare case.'"

Marie, Philippe, and Thomas also reported problems with housing. Marie has been told over the telephone that an apartment was available and then, when she arrived on site, that it was taken. Philippe was once told that no apartments were available a few minutes before his White girlfriend was told there were. And Thomas spoke about parts of the city that are not for people like him: "These neighborhoods are for the French, the 'true French,' the French with White skin, and not for the French with Black skin."

If a Black person is able to rent an apartment in a majority-White neighborhood, problems often arise with White neighbors.

Many of Caroline's neighbors, she says, are racist and refuse to greet her. Although Amina is a well-dressed and well-spoken professional, one neighbor reminded her that "this building is not a housing project" when she moved into her current apartment, and another told her that the building "must remain clean."

There is also bias in everyday life. Incidents of bias from the childhoods of Clément, Anna, Caroline, Markus, and Jean have already been reported. And while adults are more discreet, some make their feelings known. Isabel once politely asked a woman who lives above her store to stop feeding pigeons from her window, because they dirtied the sidewalk in front of the store. One morning, Isabel recounted, "when I was cleaning the sidewalk outside my store, Bam!," a stone hit her on the top of her forehead. When she spoke up, the woman feigned amazement: "So you speak French?"

Many interviewees recounted problems in public places such as stores and restaurants, and nightclubs are particularly notorious for turning away Blacks. Emmanuelle and her friends were once barred from a club. "The White couple behind us were admitted," she remembered, even though "they were completely sloshed. They were having trouble even walking."

Black people can face apparently biased behavior at any moment. Emmanuelle spoke about the time when two of her brothers, "dressed in suits and ties," ran for a bus. Police officers ran after them, got on the bus, and asked "Why were you running?" Another time, she remembered, "after my little brother left a party, he tossed a pebble in the canal. A police car stopped, they got out and asked what he was up to." A simple pleasure spoiled, her brother felt "diminished."

Finally, one may wonder whether the interviewees' experiences with discrimination are statistically common among people like them. Although such questions fall outside the scope of this ethnography, findings of the monumental Trajectories and Origins study may be summarized.[12] As the study's lead investigators report, "[a]round 10 percent of individuals comprising the mainstream population . . . report experience of discrimination, compared with 24 percent of second generation and 26 percent of immigrants" (Beauchemin, Hamel, Lesné, and Simon 2010: 2). But the latter figures of 24 percent and 26 percent are not distributed equally: "The most visible groups are targeted most fre-

quently. Almost half of immigrants and second generations from sub-Saharan Africa report experience of discrimination" (ibid.). Those originating from the overseas *départements*—overwhelmingly Black—report only slightly lower numbers: 31 percent among immigrants, 40 percent among the second generation (1).

The problem may be more severe among people who, like almost all the interviewees, have higher levels of education. Taking all "visible minorities" together, the investigators found that reported discrimination is "39 percent higher for persons with a degree in higher education" than those who "left school with a lower vocational certificate" (3). This may be due, in part, to a particular obstacle facing this cohort: "a degree in higher education enables members of ethnic minorities to occupy jobs where . . . they are treated with a certain wariness. When seeking promotion, . . . their qualifications are not sufficient to curb the expression of racial prejudice towards minorities" (ibid.).

"Subterranean" Bias and "Intelligent Racism"

Given all the accounts of stereotyping and discrimination recounted in the interviews, surprisingly few interviewees reported overt, confrontational insults from French adults. While it is true that Thomas's parents once had to deal with "direct racism" in the form of slurs like "dirty black" said to their faces, such behavior is "finished today," according to Thomas, because it "will be condemned." The French "code" of behavior that many interviewees described, especially of what is "not done" in public, prohibits such behavior. When an elderly woman insulted Nawab on a bus, other passengers tried to shush her.

This is not to say that Whites do not communicate their biases. Isabel's neighbors let her know their attitudes either anonymously (as with the message in feces on her store window) or with deniability built into their actions (as with her upstairs neighbor). The cruelty of the National Front adherents who invited twelve-year-old Clément to join them for a photo and then laughed at him was done without a harsh word uttered. As an adolescent, Lucas was repeatedly stopped by the police, apparently for being young, male, and dark-skinned.

A recurring problem for the interviewees involves joking, a beloved French pastime that allows a person to say something,

as Jean put it, "between humor and racial insult." Jean has been teased about his purported resemblance to a gorilla or monkey. Earlier in life, when he was deeply ashamed of being Black, he did not "show that this was not at all funny." Today, he is unsure how to react.

Emmanuelle is in a similar predicament when she is the object of racially tinged jokes. She said that she either goes along with it by responding with an insincere laugh or "takes it badly" and is made out to be the spoilsport. But Thomas, who is proud of being Black and successful in his career, responds to such jokes with jokes of his own. When a White friend joked about the heightened sexuality of Blacks, he replied, "Well, you can't do anything with your wife because you have a small penis."

The fact that bias no longer takes the form of insults, at least from polite adults, masks its significance. Abbas said that bias is now "a subterranean reality" and that keeping it unexpressed, at least in the form of explicit insults directed at Black people, serves to normalize it. French people, he continued, "don't express their prejudices out loud, but that's the way they live and how they turn the prejudices into something natural." Of course, none of the interviewees could report what Whites say among themselves when Blacks are not around.

While "direct racism" is socially unacceptable, Thomas said, some Whites use "intelligent racism" to create "psychological barriers" within Black people. Thomas provided an example from his own life. When his IT teacher openly doubted his abilities—"You can't do it, it's impossible, it's not for you"—she was trying to "destabilize" him. He believes that she and others who act that way are "conscious" of what they are doing. "Psychological barriers," he thinks, also "come from politicians, from TV, from everywhere. It's incredible."

For Clément, "there's a visual, a connotation of inferiority" that Whites communicate. According to Thomas, such attitudes have been absorbed by many French-born Blacks, who "are submissive and feel inferior" to Whites. Black people may feel self-conscious when they are with Whites. This is the case with François, who felt that "you must always justify yourself."

Bias is communicated in everyday social life in subtle ways. François spoke of having a "subliminal vision" of public places where he is not welcome. Daniel is used to being followed "like

a thief" in certain stores. While Emmanuelle has "never experienced frontal racism," she said, "it's always the little remarks." Sometimes, she reported, "I can't tell if I've grasped it all, whether they're racist." Emmanuelle feels a lack of "respect," she said, when Whites "touch my hair" without asking. A White person told a Black friend of Emmanuelle's that her hair was "like a sheep's."

CONCLUSION

Despite their diverse origins, experiences, and temperaments, the interviewees discussed throughout this chapter share certain facts of life. Even those who were born and educated in France, are fully "integrated," and feel themselves to be French are seen as something different: Black. And because they are Black, they are subject to stereotypes that suggest that they are inherently inferior. How do these people deal with this? The first group of interviewees discussed in this chapter focus on fraught issues of identity: Who am I? How do Whites see me? Am I as worthy as them? The second group of interviewees push ahead with life, excelling where possible, and, in so doing, showing that "I'm not what you think I am."

Anti-Black stereotypes and the demeaning behavior of many Whites—what Thomas calls "intelligent racism," and Abbas calls "subterranean" bias—threaten to undermine the self-confidence of the Black interviewees. But despite this disparagement, the profiles in this chapter reveal a striking pattern: while a few of the interviewees who focus on issues of identity expressed self-doubt, the great majority of Black interviewees did not. Instead, they described stereotyping and prejudice as something external that must be dealt with, but not something that is true about themselves. As Emmanuelle put it, "You manage because you don't have a choice. Either you adapt or you're angry all the time about the injustices. If I can change something, I will. But even if I can't, at least I know my own value."

Even the interviewees who think that many people in sub-Saharan Africa live in backward ways do not think that Blacks are inherently inferior. To Daniel's mind, the difference between Europeans and Africans is not one of natural ability, but

of knowledge. In France, he said, he learned a lot and "realized that everyone is equal." If he were to teach people back in Africa what he now knows, he feels, they too "would be knowledgeable."

None of this makes prejudice go away, and discrimination in employment is particularly problematic. The interviewees described how this begins when a Black person first looks for a job and continues through the decades of attempting to forge a successful career. While a successful career may also be a goal for Whites, it carries a particular significance for these interviewees. As Caroline said, "in France, if you're Black and don't have a high-level job, you're not worth much."

Another striking pattern in these interviews is a matter of absence. As seen in chapter 1, some Maghrebi interviewees foresee the possibility of one day becoming "French" (as they use the word referentially); that is, as being seen as having a European *faciès*. Whether or not a Maghrebi person seeks this outcome, many recognize that there is a path that makes it possible, at least in later generations. By having children with "French" people, a Maghrebi may have children or grandchildren who are seen as "French." None of the Black interviewees spoke in these terms. Even Lucas said that he is not seen as "French French," but as a different "category" of person. This is true even though his family has been living in mainland France for more than two generations on one side and even longer on the other side, even though he lives like the "French" people around him, and even though one of his parents is *métis* and the other White.

Others described much the same experience. Like Lucas, many Black interviewees grew up in France, behave according to French norms, and consider themselves French, but are not seen that way. As Jean put it, "I'm French, but I'm no fool. I fully understand that in the eyes of many people I'm something else." Anna said, "From my point of view, yes, I'm French. For others, I will never be." Thomas's father told him, all too presciently, "Even though you were born in France, you won't be considered a true French person." And when Emmanuelle says "I'm French," she reports, some people "look at me as if to say, 'ha ha.'"

This brings to mind W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" among American Blacks. Writing in 1903, he noted:

> It's a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body. . . . He would not Africanize America. . . . He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity close roughly in his face. (1903: 7–8)

To the vast majority of "French" people, this concept would seem ludicrously foreign to France. Even mentioning it might seem like a projection onto their country of the ugly American experience of slavery and its racist aftermath. But perhaps not. After more than 350 pages of his magisterial study of "the Black condition" in France, Ndiaye begins his conclusion with a discussion of Du Bois. His comments would surprise these "French" people:

> Despite obvious differences between the United States at the beginning of the 20th century and France at the beginning of the 21st century, "double consciousness" still seems current to me. My study of Black France of yesterday and today brings to light a plea . . . It can be stated as follows: we want to be both French and Black without it being seen as suspicious, or strange, or tolerated as a temporary problem while waiting for assimilation to do its work. (Ndiaye 2008: 361–62)

Ndiaye is not alone in considering the relevance of Du Bois's thinking to present-day France. Recalling his contention that "the problem of the twentieth century [in the US] is the problem of the color line," Didier Fassin says that "one could almost wonder if the racial question is not becoming, in France, the new social question of the beginning of the twenty-first century" (D. Fassin 2010: 148).

Although this book is not the place to weigh such broad issues, one can hear echoes of Du Bois's plea to be accepted as "both a Negro and an American"—and of Ndiaye's to be seen as "both French and Black"—in the accounts of many Black interviewees.

This is most striking among the interviewees who have the greatest claim to being accepted as French: those who have always lived in France. Having met the most exacting standards of behavior, Thomas wants to be treated like other French people, and to be seen as both French and Black. Markus and Jean are much the same. So are Caroline, Charles, and Emmanuelle, all French citizens from birth, who came to mainland France from the "overseas" *départements* of France. And then there is Lucas, who has not only lived his entire life in mainland France, but whose parents have also lived their entire lives in mainland France. If Lucas were not made to feel he must put himself "in a caste," he too might assert the right to be seen as both French and Black.

NOTES

1. As Didier and Eric Fassin have noted, only recently have some people "come to realize that the people called 'French' turn out to be 'white.'" See the introduction for a brief discussion of this literature. However true this may be for Whites, it is not true for people they have categorized as Black. At least among the Black interviewees, the terms "French" and "White" are used interchangeably. See introduction, endnote 15.
2. Based on a study conducted by the market research firm TNS Sofres in 2007, Lozès and Lecherbonnier (2009: 11–17) put the number at five million. This estimate includes Blacks in both mainland France and the overseas *départements*.
3. American readers of this book will think of W.E.B. Du Bois's account of the "double consciousness" of Blacks in the US more than a century ago. The relevance of this concept to France is discussed at the end of this chapter.
4. Sub-Saharan Africans, and Blacks generally, have been likened to monkeys (*singes*) or orangutans (*orang-outans*) in France since at least 1790 (see Ruscio 2020: 136–40).
5. Sylvie Durmelat provides some background. Banania was a "breakfast mainstay . . . for generations of French children" that "used to carry the image of a smiling colonial infantry soldier with the slogan 'y' bon Banania' as if spoken in pidgin French" (Durmelat 2015: 116). This phrase, she argued, "conflates the taste of childhood with the alleged cultural inferiority of the colonised soldier, whose smiling face conveys innocent benevolence" (117). This phrase and the image of the smiling Black soldier were retired in 2005 (see Cartographie des mémoires de l'esclavage 2005).

6. Although *métis* people are categorized as Black, their lighter skin apparently affords them a higher status than Blacks with darker skin (see Ndiaye 2008: 71–109; Ndiaye 2006).
7. While Thomas was able to overcome his teacher's presumption that IT studies were "not for" him, others in his position are not so strong. Reviewing the available literature, the French statistician Romain Aeberhardt and others find the following: "Regarding educational outcomes, while some authors focus on the role of cultural mechanisms in the reproduction of poverty" among children of immigrants, there "is stronger evidence for the role of teachers' conscious and unconscious stereotypes" (Aeberhardt et al. 2015: 585).
8. Alejandro is a special case. Since he declined to have his interview recorded (and it was impractical for me to take notes during the interview), I retain few particulars. He is also an outlier by way of origin: as a Black person from Colombia, his status as originating from a former European colony is remote (i.e., from the time Colombia was a Spanish country).
9. Clément's experience brings to mind Nicholas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard's critique of the curriculum in the French national educational system. By neglecting the history of France's former colonies, they say, the curriculum denies the descendants of these colonies "the ability to understand their own history [and thereby denies] them their roots and the genealogy of what they often experience as a double culture" (Bancel and Blanchard 2017b: 161). As noted here, Clément's classes at school left him feeling "a lack of history." He became alienated from school and the students around him. It was only years later, after four months in Senegal, that he became "proud about having regained my history."
10. W.E.B. Du Bois had a similar experience a century and a half ago. As a child, Du Bois felt that he was like his White friends until the day a classmate refused his Valentine's Day card. "Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others . . . shut out from their world by a vast veil." (Du Bois 1903: 2) Faced with this discovery, he wrote, Black boys could well cry out, "Why did God make me an outcast in mine own house?" (3).
11. While Philippe refuses to attribute his inability to secure a job commensurate with his qualifications—refusing to see himself as a victim—he is not blind to general patterns in French society. "Even with years of study," he noted, most Blacks "can't get past certain barriers" in getting a job. Indeed, it's "rare to see a Black in a management position."
12. See pages 62–63 and 64n14 above concerning this study and its defined terms.