

**"Nul n'affirme  
son humanité  
au mépris  
des autres"**

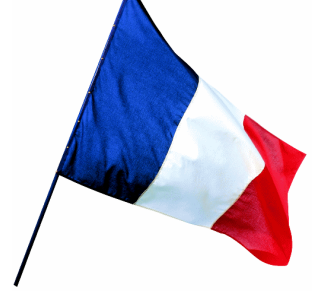
**Universalism versus  
particularism : a look into  
Christiane Taubira's discourse**

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## ***2/ The most brilliant politician of French Guyana and perhaps one of the most brilliant of France***

- the most brilliant politician of FG and perhaps one of the most brilliant of France if only because as a black female West-Indian she managed to have her voice heard loud and clear in a male white chauvinistic environment.



## **3/Taubira Guyanese activist**

# **Taubira Justice Minister of France**

- Born in French Guyana.
- Began her political life as an activist for the independence of Guyana.
- MP for Guyana and a member of the French National Assembly from 1993 to 2012 .
- She is the author of two important laws in France .
- a law that makes slavery and the transatlantic slave trade crimes against humanity.
- A law opening marriage to same-sex couples
- Candidate in the French presidential election, 2002
- Justice Minister from May 2012 to January 2016

## 4/ Guyana's multicultural reality

- Due to history and a geopolitical context that makes creolisation more difficult or more elastic, Guyana's multicultural reality is very different from that of the West Indies. The image of a multicultural braid better reflects Guyanité which cannot be confused with Creolité



## 5/ Taubira créole



**" AUSSI LOIN ET DIFFÉRENT  
QUE SOIT L'AUTRE, L'AUTRE  
EST UN AUTRE MOI-MÊME."**

*Christiane Taubira*

- She combines universalism and particularism, arguing that the trajectory of the Creole community is the best one for the emergence of a gyanité that respects cultural differences.



## 6/ Rejecting tribalism

- Tribalism: *result of the implementation of a public policy of recognition of collective rights to ethnic groups, along with the intervention of social scientists suspected of supplying an ethnicization of Guyanese society (ch. Taubira)*

## 7/ My assumption

- French Guiana illustrates to some extent the revenge of culture and ethnicity on politics. In this society, the most multicultural of the five French territories in the Caribbean, the politics of creolization has failed to assimilate the different communities.
- In that context, Christianne Taubira's (CT) universalist creole discourse appears as yet another socio ethnic vision.



## 8/ I / cross identities and shared land

- CT presents FG as a kaleidoscope of cross identities
- For her , land is a claim which also concerns the Creole descendants of slaves



## 9/ “A kaleidoscope of cross identities”?

***“ The Guyanese identity can be analyzed as a kaleidoscope of clashing signs, that can be read as tokens of cross identities in constant negotiation of balance”*** says Christiane Taubira.

The French Guianese reality is, therefore, a rich cultural kaleidoscope that hides the exclusions affecting Amerindian and Maroons communities



## 10/ Amerindians, an example and a target



- Amerindians have a special place in the Guyanese society. Their diversity has not prevented them from regrouping to stand up for their rights, making them both an example and a target.

***“Depending on the different definitions existing in international documents seven Amerindian peoples of Guyana meet the definition of indigenous peoples: Kali'na, Wayana, Apalai, Teko, Wayampi, Lokono, Pahikweneh ... Each Amerindian nation of Guyana defines itself as a distinct group from other communities in the country and from other Amerindian groups themselves”***  
Alexis Tiouka

# 11/ « The continent is amerindian »

- In this regard Christiane Taubira blames the Amerindians' quasi-imperialist ambitions.  
*“The Amerindians of Guyana call themselves Kali'na people .. They participate more often in continental gatherings. And “They deem legitimate to stick to the pre-Colombian borders considering that the continent is Amerindian”. Ch. Taubira*  
*“It is sometimes necessary to recall that this approach denies the existence of new nations emerged from the darkest period of the triangular trade“ Ch.Taubira*

This comment implies that the Amerindian project ignores the peoples born from the colonial trade, namely the Creoles. The argument is based primarily on the land claims and the collective dimension of property of the First nations.

## 12/ Taubira's narrative

- Taubira's narrative of the construction of the Creole society is interesting in that respect.
- The presentation she makes of the Amerindians aims to show the similarities with the Creoles.
- Her presentation of their origins results in the qualification of the notions of anteriority and specificity.

*"They came from Africa ... placed on the equal footing of the devastating plantation system. They came from China and India for agriculture. They came with technical knowledge, beliefs and social organizational references. From this tower of Babel they made the Creole society".*

*"And since we have to start from a point in time, at the commencement was uninhabited America. The anteriority of the Amerindians has also **a date** ...It is much more important to observe how diverse they are and to see how sometimes they can be like us....They loved change and complications and had the habit of picking women in neighboring tribes, preferably without asking. Anthropologists call this exogamy".*

# 13/ “the land, a place of all marks “

- Guyana identities seem to crystallize mainly around the land
- This statement of three Kali'na's chiefs summarizes the claim, the approach and the purpose of the Amerindian community.
- It is probably the attitude of the state and the concomitant exclusion of the Creole group that leads CT to advocate land compensation for the descendants of slaves



***"The management of our land has been taken from us and we claim it today. It must be facilitated by appropriate laws and measures for fair compensation of the past***

***"(Amerindians)***

***"Amerindian communities worship it as foster mother and assert collective ownership. The grand children of the Maroons have based their lineage relationship on the distribution of land. The Creoles have developed complex relationships with it, mixing rancor inherited from the time of plantation with a tender gratitude for its generosity at the time of gold rushes" (Taubira)***



## II/"The particularistic universalism" of the Creole community

- The proximity of the Creole model with the French political culture promotes the domination of the Creoles
- This dominant universalism is illustrated by the monopoly of the adjective Guyanese by the most powerful community whose trajectory could serve as an example according to Ch Taubira



***"The singular trajectory of the Creole community in Guyana is instructive on the possible ways of an identity both plural and syncretic, and stubbornly surviving-she says. The Amerindians of Guyana call themselves Kalina people ... The Boni are Bushinaman ... and the Creoles call themselves Guyanese"*** -

## 15/ Creole domination is not ethnically materialized

- A glance at the list of Presidents of the General Council from 1913 to 2013 is an illustration. If Anquetil (president of the council in 1928), Polycarp (1945), Heder (1970) sound definitely French, therefore creole, Chuck-A-Ho (1973), Ten-Ho-You (2001), Tien Liong (2008) of Asian origin are names sometimes worn by people who do not always have the “right” phenotype.
- All these names, to name a few good examples are a good illustration of what the “masked” and often unexpected content of creolization can conceal.

Alain TIEN-LIONG





# 16/ The principle of the indivisibility of the Republic

- In France, the state has long been deaf to the claim of recognition of collective rights, based on the principle of the indivisibility of the Republic
- This is what a representative of the Amerindian community condemns considering that this deafness is still relevant



***"For the administration, the school and justice, the Indians are not Indians but French citizens, Surinamians, Brazilians, or stateless persons if they have not selected any of the above nationalities. Thus, under the present circumstances in order to exist in the eyes of the state and defend their rights, the Amerindians must put aside their own identity, otherwise they are considered "foreigners" in an area that has been theirs for more than six thousand years, long before the arrival of the Europeans"*** . A. Tiouka

## 17/ A multicultural society

- the Amerindians are not a homogeneous group, and consist of different 'nations'. With the Bushinengues, they are probably the most marginalized populations within the kaleidoscope
- The whites, for their part, have different social statuses
- The Creoles are also a diverse group both in terms of their origins as well as socially :
- Afro-Guianese from the plantation period, Indian Creoles from the Caribbean, Chinese traders, Hmong farmers, Haitians, Surinamese, Brazilians;



## 18/ Ethnic policies challenged par CT

- Christiane Taubira seems to oppose government policies. But her position is more subtle than a radical rejection of collective rights. She wants all communities to have equal access to these rights, including the Creoles that are excluded by the state. The following statement speaks for itself.



***"In February 1992, a Land Law provides that communities traditionally deriving their livelihood from the forest have access to the property by assignment. It gives powers to the Amerindians, the first inhabitants of the territory, the Maroons, introduced with the slave trade and slavery and the Hmongs arrived in Guyana in 1977. It does not recognize the rights of the Creoles, despite four centuries of rooting and despite old traditions of hunting, fishing and gold panning. The reason is they do not live in communities."***



# 19/ “A legal arsenal, which freezes the differences

- The comment was sparked off by the following statement of the former MP, in the precincts of the National Assembly



...

***"This legal arsenal, which freezes the differences between human groups - differences that do not enrich but create distrust and resentment because they are based on inequality and injustice - is reinforced by the existence of ethnic municipalities and ethnic estates both in slums and in public programs of elimination of slums, as well as by the existence of ethnic associations. ... Our history is made of exchanges and syncretism..."***Ch Taubira

## 20/An incentive to tribalism and "ethnological tyranny" ?

- Regarding public policy of recognition of collective rights, Taubira sees an incentive to tribalism and "ethnological tyranny", encouraged by social science scholars ..



***“Do you intend to resist the ethnological tyranny which needs exclusive grounds for scholarly studies using powers that feed the division between men? she asks the representative of the French government”.***

## 21/ The creation of ethnic communes

- *"In 1989, the first stage of localized claims which gives rise to the creation of ethnic communes is completed. The Galibi commune, Awala Yalimapo is created".*



## 22/ The overlapping of *commune* and *community*.

- The commune, the first rung of the Republican ladder, focuses on non particularistic values of representation. As a rule, the French administration model rules out the overlapping of *commune* and *community*.
- In Awala-Yalimapo a culture council serves as a link between commune and community.



Jean-Paul FERREIRA  
*Maire*



**Awala-Yalimapo**



## 23/ Tensions with Amerindians representatives

- Christiane Taubira is perceived by the representatives of the Amerindian community as virulent « ***against some advances of the indigenous peoples of Guyana*** » while the very same person “***defends human rights and fought to have the crimes the West committed against African slaves recognized***” A. Tiouka



## ***24/ For a true recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples "***

- "Some battles have been won, such as the creation of the commune of Awala-Yalimapo populated overwhelmingly by Kali'na, and the official recognition of certain territories and the creation of associations***
- However, this type of action is a far cry from a true recognition by the French State of the rights of indigenous peoples " says Alex Tiouka***



## 25/ conclusion

- ***“One may wonder whether this motley and seemingly flexible mixture is not in reality a subtle system of exclusion” ...***

This comment by a judge questions the granting of rights to cultural minorities in a multicultural society which ignores itself as such. In ‘one and indivisible’ France officially dominated by a community of individuals, is there not a risk for the rights of minorities to be minor rights? ”

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