

Philip Janzen**Report on IRIS Studies Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award**

I used my IRIS Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award to fund a trip to Fort-de-France, Martinique, where I conducted research at the Archives Départementales de la Martinique (ADM). More specifically, I was reading through the papers of Henri Jean-Louis/Jean-Louis Baghio'o/Jean-Louis Jeune. My dissertation focuses on the lives and ideas of people from the French- and English-speaking Caribbean who worked for the French and British colonial administrations in Africa in the early twentieth-century and then became involved in black internationalist movements in the 1920s and 1930s. Jean-Louis was a perfect fit for my research, and thus consulting his papers was crucial to my dissertation.

Jean-Louis was born in Guadeloupe in 1874. He studied law in Paris and then returned to Guadeloupe to work as a lawyer. In 1923, the French colonial administration sent him to Brazzaville to work as a judge. He resigned in 1926, but remained in Central Africa for another seven years and worked as a lawyer and defended Africans in colonial courts. He also helped Africans draft petitions to the League of Nations. During trips to Paris, he became involved with black internationalist groups such as the Comité de défense de la race noire—he even became the group's honorary president. He later returned to the Caribbean, but he continued writing and remained committed to black internationalist movements. Indeed, until his death in 1958, he continued to dream about establishing (and leading) a Pan-Caribbean Federation as well as a “Republic of the United States of Africa.”

The Jean-Louis papers were donated to the ADM in 2013 after Professor Charles Scheel of the Université des Antilles in Fort-de-France found them in a suitcase in the basement storage area of Jean-Louis' granddaughter's Paris apartment. Professor Scheel, a literature scholar who has done extensive research on Jean-Louis' son, Victor Jean-Louis, did the difficult work of

organizing the papers and helped me greatly with my research.

The collection itself contained approximately 2,500 pages of unpublished material, including letters, journals, and poems spanning Jean-Louis' time in Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. Between 1913 and 1958, he wrote hundreds of short poems, and I slowly combed through each page in the collection. Much of it was handwritten and so some documents were difficult to read, particularly the later poems, when Jean-Louis was essentially blind because of cataracts. Nevertheless, most of it was decipherable, and the material revealed much about his views of Africans, colonialism, and black internationalism. These documents, unavailable elsewhere, also relate directly to the main questions of my dissertation: why did West Indians join colonial administrations in Africa? How did their experiences in Africa change their attitudes about Africans and colonialism? And how did their ideas influence black internationalist thought?

My aim with the story of Jean-Louis and the stories of other "Caribbean colonizers" is not just to advance scholarship on the tensions and contradictions of colonialism, but also to examine the intellectual impact of factors such as assimilation, migration, and racism. These factors have affected and continue to affect millions of people around the world, yet they are frequently glossed over with the language of multiculturalism. My research will illuminate how Caribbean colonizers reckoned with these factors and found ways to imagine and work toward alternative futures.

My Graduate Student Summer Fieldwork Award was thus extremely beneficial—it allowed me to carry out research that is critical to my dissertation. My trip to Martinique was also important in a more general sense. In order to understand and contextualize the ideas and interactions of itinerant intellectuals, it is essential that I follow the transatlantic circuits that

these intellectuals themselves followed, rather than adhering to the conventional fieldwork parameters of African diaspora scholarship. My trip to Martinique to consult the Jean-Louis papers was a vital part of this process. I am very grateful to the Institute for Regional and International Studies for financial support.