

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 3: Resistance

- [Music & Title...]** BOOGIE-WOOGIE IN MUSEUMS. MUSEUM BOOGIE-WOOGIE.
- Hosts – ALL:** Have you ever been racist?
The way they behave, it's not right.
Boogie-woogie in museums.
A sound and transatlantic journey.
Against racism. Against racism. Against racism.
- Host:** We don't say it often enough: slaves have never stopped fighting for resistance.

What is resistance?
- Hosts:** It's telling one's suffering through song. It's also just singing. It's escape. It's choosing death. It's telling stories, creating narratives. It's establishing strategies. It's sharing a bed with someone you don't love. It's making the oppressor laugh and smile. It's praying, dancing, and fighting violently in every possible way. It means swallowing one's tears, organizing revolts, inspiring dreams, giving hope.

Giving hope and little by little, these strategies pay off.

You're listening to Boogie Woogie in Museums.

I'm Sofienne. I'm Marine, I'm Jade. I'm Havrunnisa.

Do you know 'marronnage'?
- Host:** Marronnage are those slaves who run away, who hide. If they are found, the punishment is mutilation, chains, and death.

Resistance has also changed. Appropriating and hijacking the oppressors' cultures to build new ones. Listening to white people's music, playing it for themselves and then creating new music. Like biguine music, for example.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, adopted in 1789, proclaims freedom as one of the natural and inalienable rights of man.

At the time, the question arose: How could we proclaim equal human and civil rights without abolishing slavery?
- Florian Siffer:** Does this costume remind you of anything?
- Student:** Is he dressed like a white man?
- Florian Siffer:** Absolutely, but like, which white people?
- Student:** Like Napoleon.
- FS:** Indeed. You can see that he's wearing a gilded suit, epaulets, a bicorne and a feather on his hat. So, he's treated with the same elegance and exacting standards as any Empire general. So, portraits like these were important. They circulated widely. They were copied and printed as engravings allowing the image of this character, Toussaint Louverture, to spread very widely.

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 3: Resistance

- Host: In Saint-Domingue in 1791, the people rose up. It was a revolt. Toussaint Louverture became a symbol of this struggle. A former slave revolutionary, he declared Haiti's independence and became the island's first governor, before being betrayed and arrested. After a long series of events and battles, the Haitian revolution took place, led by black people. In 1804, the Republic of Haiti was born, and its constitution abolished the very state of servitude. On February 4, 1794, France abolished slavery. But Napoleon Bonaparte came to power and re-established slavery and the slave trade in 1802.
- Martine Debaene: We're going to give you five minutes to look at the sculpture. As it's a sculpture, you can turn around and see if you can find any small elements that give you information about the sculptor, the date, or anything else you might notice about this sculpture.... OK?
- Host: It wasn't until 1848, more than 50 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that slavery was definitively abolished in France. Thanks to the work of both white and black abolitionists.
- Odile Lassère: David d'Angers' monument to Gutenberg was commissioned in 1836. At a time when Strasbourg was a progressive city. And so, this monument to Gutenberg also has a value for freedom. And David d'Angers turned it into a political manifesto for all freedoms. And in 1839, he added *bas-reliefs* representing the benefits of printing on four continents: Asia, Europe, America, and Africa. And in fact, these *bas-reliefs* are intended to express what books bring to the freedom of peoples. And so, on the bas-relief of the benefits of printing in Africa, David d'Angers depicted the abolitionists. He is an abolitionist himself. And so, represented are two English abolitionists, William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, and two French abolitionists, Condorcet and Abbé Grégoire.
- Students: There are slaves. Africans. Slaves.
- MD: What makes you say there are slaves?
- Student: Because they're naked and there's a lot of them around. Chains. Irons.
- MD: In fact, you can see that the white men are handing out books, because the idea of books is also the idea of freedom of thought. And so, we have... Yes, and babies. No, but go on, be more precise, because what you're saying about babies is spot on. Why are they shown, the babies, with the moms?
- Student: They're taking them away. They're afraid they'll get killed.
- MD: Yes, they're discovering the possibility that she can have their baby free. Because the status of being a slave passed through the mother. When you had a baby, your child could be taken away from you, because ultimately, slaves were considered to be like objects.

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 3: Resistance

- OL: We need to place all this in the context of the time, the 1840s, when David d'Angers' world was not the same as today. This monument is made at a time when slavery was still allowed in France. It illustrates through this bas-relief on Africa the abolition of slavery and on others. We are also in a world where we know the expansion of colonies for Europeans. So, we are in a world that is not at all what we know today. Or perhaps on this monument, we can see that the artist represented a certain domination of white men towards men of color, but we need to put it in the context of the time, and then above all we must understand the message of the artist which was rather a message to free peoples.
- Hosts: This representation, which once conveyed a message of freedom, conveys to me today a very different image.
- And at the same time, I passed by it dozens of times without seeing it, without even questioning it. What about you?
- Roger Somé: The slave trade was a major economic fact. When we abolished slavery, we had to find another economic source. That's why, for me, the abolition of slavery was the condition for the emergence of colonization in Africa. It's very simple. Why? Because people were being transported to the Caribbean for the production of goods needed by Europe: cotton, coffee, cocoa, sugar, spices. And Europe needed this at a time when the European economy was struggling. New products and new market opportunities were needed. But from the moment we had this trade from Africa, from Europe to the Americas, it was an important source. Now with the different humanitarian associations that fought with the slaves, to abolish slavery we had to find another source. Even though, transporting people to produce the needed products didn't make much sense. Why? Because the products in question grow on land where the men are brought to the Caribbean for their production. So why tire yourself? Why tire yourself? Why spend a lot to produce something you can produce on site?
- Important economic elements, and then we abolish and start the colonization of Africa and we will have an occupation colonization. You have to settle and you have to produce. So, you see, coffee, cocoa, banana, pineapple, what can I add? Well, all these products, all these products, well, now they are produced in Africa. And all of these products are products called cash crops. To this, we must add rubber. Add wood. Today, you have pockets of Ivorian forests that are savannahs. And this is very serious. That is, there is no more wood. There has been overexploitation and there are holes in the forest of Côte d'Ivoire now.
- You will take products like peanuts. All the peanuts in West Africa were collected and shipped from Dakar. To get where? To get to Bordeaux essentially. And why Bordeaux? Well, because France had set up factories for oil and clothing, fabrics, to replace the economic loss of the slave trade.
- Student: So, the soldiers, they have helmets with a shotgun, green uniforms...
- Students: White people, they're surrounded by black people. And now they're just... I don't know. There are a lot of black dead on the ground and everything. There are also...white people. There is one, two....

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 3: Resistance

- FS: Actually, this image...it was done in 1904. It's more of a picture that was made in Europe for Europeans. Did it scare them or it reassure them? In fact, the Hereros are the Africans you see. They were present in South Africa and Namibia. And they were colonized by Germany at the time, in the early 20th century. And they revolted against this colonization. And the battle you are witnessing is a revolt of a people who refuse to submit to a colonizing country. It was still an image that served to convey *stereotypes* regarding the African figure, which was shown with a form of bestiality; as you see the soldiers, the Herero, they look fierce in combat.
- Aude-Marie Fritz: So, it is also a completely propagandized image that aims to denigrate the figure of the African indigenous man in front of the poor German colonizer who is the victim of this violence.
- FS: It's important to see that propaganda is obviously not new, but the mechanisms of propaganda are always the same: generalizations, creating fear, clichés, things like that, and these are terms that children have used today. Even if slavery is abolished, the structure of sugar farms remains unchanged. Inequalities persist.
- RS: Do you think colonization is over? Colonization is definitely not over, absolutely not. Because ultimately today, if I'm not mistaken, until 1976. I went to Gagnoa. Gagnoa is in the east of Ivory Coast. There was a plantation and in this plantation, the owner was a Frenchman named Monsieur Canard. 1976, okay? Good. Today, it may no longer be the Europeans who are plantation owners, but you likely have African owners in the context of the Cote d'Ivoire. But these Africans produce, right? But who sets the price of the products? It's not the Africans today. I'm not saying they're right, but certainly not the Africans. International trade sets the price of goods. The way people who make chocolate in France, Belgium, Europe, generally speaking, the way people operate coffee in Europe and live, it's not the same as the way local producers do. They do not have the same status of living in their locality.
- That is to say, the price at which products are purchased does not really allow the producers to live comfortably. And so, from that point of view to me, colonization is not over. It's changed, because, in the end, these products that I mentioned earlier, like timber exploitation, all of that continues, nothing has stopped.
- Everything continues, whether it is Côte d'Ivoire or Gabon. It goes on. Cotton production continues in Burkina. I criticize the production of cotton. Why? Because we use pesticides. We use chemical fertilizers. But chemical fertilizers deplete the soil. The people producing cotton often have to buy chemical products on credit. And when they sell the cotton at harvest, these producers can't obtain a sufficient income to pay off those products they took on credit, and make a living. Consequently, a cotton producer who sells at a loss, ends up in famine.
- When we say that there is famine, there is a co-production of famine between Africans and international firms. And this is not often said. Because ultimately, when cotton is harvested, it is sold, where does it go? It goes abroad. It does not stay on site. And this price is not set by the producers. Therefore, the one who has produced cotton and is in famine, well, I say that there is a co-production of famine by international firms with local as well. So, if you will, for

Let's Boogie Woogie in Museums! Episode 3: Resistance

me, colonization has changed form. We will probably come to that, but I will have an opportunity to talk about the continuation of colonization through museography issues.

Host/s: In 2016, the Walk Free Foundation estimates that 45 million people worldwide are being enslaved. That's today.

Forced begging, forced labor, domestic slavery, sexual slavery...

Etc., etc.

All countries of the world are affected.

I mean all.

In addition to the slavery still present on the soil of too many nations, many products that surround us, which are part of our daily lives, are partly from human trafficking.

Smartphone.

Ready to wear.

Shrimp.

Diamonds.

Cocoa.

Etc., etc.,

Etc., etc.

[Outro music plays...]

ALL: Why does racism exist? Just because I'm black, I've been hated all year.

Host/s: That was episode 3 of Museum Boogie Woogie.

In the next episode, we'll talk about segregation.

With students from Collège Solignac in Strasbourg.

With students from Collège Édouard Vaillant in Bordeaux.

Martine Debaene, Florian Siffer, Caroline Flauss, Roger Somé and Odile Lassere.

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