

**Are the Caribbean Europeans?**  
**Colonization, decolonization and European identity**  
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Outermost Regions are considered as a whole by the European Union, because it is better to have a global strategy for all these very far part of member states. But from an historical point of view, differences are very important.

Azores and Madeira for example, are completely different from French Caribbean outermost regions. Here it is questionable the Europeaness of inhabitants: the European part of them arrived with colonization, killed the natives, created an economy based on slavery. And the real question is: is the assimilation a form of decolonization or the worst result of colonization? I strongly support the second one.

The French Caribbean has experienced polarized paths to decolonization: Haiti with its abolishment of slavery and self-proclaimed “Black” Republic in 1804, and Martinique and Guadeloupe voting for full integration into the French administrative system of departments in 1946. Whereas the first example points to a forceful and drastic decolonization precognizant of the “natural” path to independence featuring most of the Caribbean countries in the 20th century, the second appears instead as consent to prolonged colonialism. However, the latter choice is more complicated than it might indeed appear. In fact, it is the result of a long struggle between races corresponding to social classes upholding or not the concept of civic nationhood promoted by the French Revolution, which emerged as the founding principles of French Republicanism. The push for integration called for egalitarianism and rejected the hierarchical and racist colonial legacy of plantocracy. Nevertheless, this particular political evolution in the French Caribbean was not harmless. On the contrary, it originated from a series of controversies and dilemmas, embracing not only the same proponents of departmentalization, but also those who had never considered such an option as a viable decolonization path. Concepts of race and nation in relation to colonization and decolonization are still current, and were notably present in the intellectual works of great figures such as Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon: two Martinican “rebels” fighting against colonization who embraced different conceptions of decolonization.

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