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The Other Earthquake: Janil Lwijis, Student Social Movements, and the Politics of Memory in Haiti

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Janil Lwijis, Student Social Movements, and the Politics of Memory in Haiti

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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**Dedication**

To all those who find beauty in that struggle toward a just world, and toward liberty and well-being, who have not despaired to persevere through the miseries and horrors exploitation has brought them…

To my dear family…

To my comrades who I have met along the way, and to those who I may never meet…

This work is dedicated to you.
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Pou tout zanmi ak kanmarad ann Ayiti ki banm sipò, solidarite, ak jenerosite yo, mwen pa menm gen mò pou remesye nou. Nou tout, ak istwa w yo, sou kè’m toujou, epi nou se tout bagay pou mwen. M’espere rezilta pwòje sa a merite tout nou banm. Nan kè politik li, pwòje sa a se pou nou tout. Mèsi anpil. Nou kontinye ankouraje mwen nan travay entelèkyel la, nan kè’m, epi nan lit-la pou yon sosyete de byennèt ak libète vre.

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From the City University of New York, the encouragement of Mary Taylor and David Hodges led me to pursue this project and my love of anthropology from its nascence. Closer to home, my deep thanks goes to those I worked with at CUNY; the students and faculty comrades there have all touched my research. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the collectives who first made possible my entry to the vibrant activist world of Pòtoprens, including Janil Lwijis, whose active work in building transnational solidarity at the end of his life brought our first CUNY contingent to Haiti, and to all of the collectives on both sides of the ocean who have sustained that solidarity through various, at times heart-wrenchingly difficult, iterations and through serious dedication. At its political core, this project is for them, and I hope this writing is worthy of their comradery and their excitement about radical scholarship.

I am grateful for another kind of collaboration, with scholar-activists who are making vital connections between scholarly work and the politics of its production, and here I must thank again the many brilliant minds and brave souls in Haiti with whom I have had the great fortune
to work with these last several years. I also thank my student colleagues at USF for their invaluable affirmations.

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Abstract

Among increased calls for "new narratives" of Haiti, this thesis seeks to honor Haitian traditions of intellectualism and resistance, centering on the life and legacy of martyred professor Janil Lwijis in post-earthquake student social movements. Based on oral histories with student activists at the State University of Haiti (UEH), this work explores student protest in Haiti through the voices, often at odds, of those en lutte; it explores how Janil is invoked and remembered, and argues that oral history can contribute to activist research and pose a challenge to dominant narratives. A legacy that is contested, differential claims to Janil's memory are infused with politics and history. This work seeks to understand contested claims to his memory through Marxist political economy, arguing that an interpretation of Haiti’s political economy is crucial to understanding the emergence of critical consciousness and social movements, political demands, and the symbols and meanings that characterize them.
Figure 1. Map of Haiti. Source: CIA World Factbook
Chapter One: Introduction

In January, 2016, days after the six-year anniversary of Haiti’s earthquake, the streets of Port-au-Prince erupted in protest over what was widely interpreted as fraud in Haiti’s elections. Students at the state university joined in, protesting because the campuses were hosting candidates and arguing that the university was complicit in the fraud being perpetrated. A mural on the wall of the State University of Haiti’s (UEH) Human Sciences campus was vandalized. A month before, a group of Marxist students and artists had erected this mural of their assassinated professor and comrade, Janil Lwijis, also known by his French name Jean Anil Louis-Juste,¹ bearded with dreadlocks and a hard stare through slim glasses. Underneath, the phrase in Haitian Kreyòl “Yon revolisyonè se yon moun” (“A revolutionary is a human”), one of Janil’s oft-quoted sayings, was written in stylized graffiti. Red paint had now been thrown in splotches onto his face and these splotches appeared like blood dripping down, the result of gunshot wounds. Students were outraged at the vandalism, and accusations started to fly: “Kochon de gè, bandi, y’ap touye’l toujou!” (“These warpigs, these scoundrels, they’re still killing him!”); “It could not have been a student throwing paint on his portrait. This act resembles the acts of those professors who are state agents at UEH. We, fighting for our lives, must always remember him. Janil lives because he chose to fight for the masses, to transform this disheveled society. They killed him—but Janil

¹ I use Kreyòl spellings for places and names, as that is the language of this project’s participants and of 90 percent of the population. Janil Lwijis was his preferred Kreyòl spelling, the spelling on his gravestone, and Janil is how I refer to him, though participants often switch between Anil and Janil. He published work under his Kreyòl and French name and they are cited accordingly. Though some participants would have gladly and proudly permitted the use of their names in this work, all names, excepting Janil’s, have been altered, and some persons are combined or diffused into multiple other entities to protect the identities of the participants. The murder of Janil itself is enough reason for prudence.
is only just beginning to be born”; “I’m so upset at what happened. I’m sure it was a student who
did it”; “We have to suspect professors too. It was them who demonized him so during his life”;
“We will paint an even more beautiful one.”

Though on that day it had been six years since Janil’s assassination, the debates over how
he should be remembered sparked fierce debate and emotion. Janil Lwijis has become a martyr
for many on the Haitian left. His name flows frequently from the lips of today’s student activists
in Port-au-Prince, now alongside the names of other cherished leaders of the past, such as the
Haitian Revolution leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Charlemagne Peralte, the martyred leader of
the Cacos, the peasant guerilla army who fought the US military occupation of Haiti of 1915-
1934, and the communist writer and intellectual Jacques Roumain. Many political activists I
have come to know identify his work as important for their organizing and have asked for his
story to be told as part of their political mobilization.

This thesis centers on Janil, and how leftist students deploy his memory in different
ways. It revolves around contestation over his memory, and it is the stories that emerge from
remembering him, often, the processes of how these individuals have come into political
consciousness, or conscientization. An ethnographic and oral history project that was born out of
activist relationships, this research sits within activist anthropology and contributes to literature
on Third World social movements from the perspective of anthropological political economy.

While there is compelling Haitian Studies scholarship being conducted on rural social

2 “Leftist” and “revolutionary” are terms that has been made vague in popular usage, particularly
in the United States. Even among the “left,” it is often unclear. When I refer to the left in Haiti, I
am referring to those who intend or who have intended to contribute toward a revolutionary
project. This sometimes includes grassroots-based NGOs, particular peasant organizations, and
women’s rights organizations, along with the more militant, less reformist groups who actively
seek to build a movement that could launch an assault on imperialism and capitalism. These
particular students are politically conscious and take up socialist, communist, and anarchist
positions.
movements, performative resistance, and Haitian cosmology (McAlister 2002; Largey 2000; Smith 2004; Gordon 2013; Fleurant 1996; Averill 2007), this study departs from much of the Haitian Studies literature because of its focus on urban activism and political economy. My work is engaged research, meaning that I have explicit political goals sympathetic with the

![Figure 2. Mural of Janil Lwijis, erected December 2015, at FASCH. Photo by author.](image)
participants of the project (discussed in Chapter 3), that I have participated with leftist students in lit la (the struggle)\(^3\) for a better education and for survival, and that a number of them have collaborated in the design and carrying out of this project, including the production of short reading material on Janil’s ideas that can be used as educational tools in their organizing. This thesis is conceived in part as a contribution to continuing those educational and organizational efforts.

The thesis tells the stories of Janil through those who remember him, and the stories of those remembering him. It asks: Why and in what ways are activists invested in his legacy, and how are they invoking and framing him? What does remembering Janil within this particular political economic context tell us about what animates students toward political activism? What can this ethnographic research do to inform anthropological theoretical approaches to social movements and urban politics? And how can an engaged, applied anthropology intervene on the side of the student activists to further their interests?

**Background**

Narratives have profound implications for those living and dying within them. Haiti has been plagued historically not only with colonial and imperialist interests and associated regimes of dictatorship, but with the dominant storylines that have justified their existence and actions in academic and popular imagination. Haiti has been narrated either through singular events (its 1791-1804 revolution, its 2010 earthquake, its 2016 hurricane), or through simple, miserable depictions with an underlying element of dehumanization: a malnourished, dark-skinned and

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\(^3\) *Lit la*, literally translated as “the struggle” refers in this context to the political process toward conscientization and revolution, including study, informal conversations, informal and formal protest, and the expressive culture contained within and alongside those activities.
dust-covered child, disease, slums, bloodied and homeless post-earthquake bodies, occasional outpourings of rage in protest. Haitians become imagined as impoverished savages, restless natives without custom, “culture,” or wisdom, and this imagination is not only the exertion of elite power over history, but also a colonial fact (Ulysse 2013; Beauvoir Dominique 2013; Plummer 1992).

Haiti is located in the Greater Antilles archipelago of the Caribbean on the western side of the island of Hispaniola, sharing the island with the Dominican Republic. With 10.5 million people, it is one of the most populated countries in the Caribbean. It is perhaps most known for its revolution of 1791-1804 when slaves organized a widespread revolt, overthrew their French colonial masters, and established Haiti which became the first independent black republic in the world. The Haitian revolution is a subject of great controversy, at its time and through the present. The many interpretations of what happened are infused with a complex politics of race and nationalism. They stay relevant as the names of revolutionary leaders like Louverture, Dessalines, and Akawo have continued to be subjects of lively debate. After Haiti gained its independence, a bitter racial dynamic and social cleavage between the two groups that emerged with different interests: one was a black, landowning and rural-based elite, with strongholds in the north near Jeremie and around Les Cayes in the south, while the other elite was composed of lighter-skinned, commercial and landowning gens de couleur (free people of mixed race), and milat (literally “mulatto,” but referencing both class and color to mean someone who is light-skinned and of a particular social class). Black and milat leaders were both “oriented towards Europe in cultural matters and were publicly hostile towards African customs” (Nicholls 1985:25), particularly in the case of Vodou religious traditions. As Smith (2009) shows, black ideologists in the present day have tended to portray leaders like Dessalines and Soulouque as
looking more toward Africa, using the notion that “Africanness” is somehow more radical or resistant while the state has continued to try to distance itself from Africa as a savage or primitive land, a legacy that has haunted the Haitian state since the immediate post-revolutionary period. There is continued debate over who the “real” heroes of the revolution are. Dessalines is often characterized as the true hero of the nèg (black person, or person), while for the blan (white or foreigner) and milat, Louverture has the honor and Dessalines is the traitor who ushered in Louverture’s capture, though there is continued disagreement and lack of clarity of whether or not Dessalines was a Creole (born in the colony) who was ideologically “African” (Jenson 2012).

The heroics of a slave-led rebellion defeating the Napoleonic army and abolishing slavery still brings shivers to the West, who, in Frederick Douglass’s words, has “never forgiven Haiti for being Black” (1992) for its victory. It continues to pay; the colonial era’s legacy is the neoliberal politics and economics that have produced a racialized geography of poverty. July 28th of 2015 marked 100 years since, and arguably of, the U.S. occupation of Haiti (Schmidt 1971; Renda 2001). Popular movements mobilized this centennial with a week of actions, the purpose being to remember those who resisted the occupation, but further to recognize the lingering consequences of the occupation under the slogan: “1915-2015: With or without boots, the Occupation is still here.” To Haitians, MINUSTAH, or MINISTA (the United Nations [UN] Stabilization Mission in Haiti), a militarized “peacekeeping” force, is the current force of occupation in Haiti, entering after the 2004 deposition of Jean Bertrand Aristide. At the heart of the 1915 invasion was the collection of debt, where the United States took seized Haitian banks, and warships intervened just before the invasion to move gold from Haiti’s national reserve to the United States. This legacy of “gold digging” has lasted until today, where mining contracts
with a speculated $20 billion were secured in 2012, contracts that are now managed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Schuller 2015).

To understand Haiti’s present situation, it is essential to understand its political economy, state, and questions of development and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The country is distanced from the center of productive forces yet deeply connected to the global dynamics of capital flow. Simultaneously, the grasp of the Haitian state is diminished (Trouillot 1990a) alongside foreign imperial interest and with the flood of NGOs in Haiti. Haiti’s political economy can be best understood through capitalism’s generation of severe dislocations of production and inequality and its relation to local and transnational state power through social relations. Those nations on the capitalist periphery are often characterized as having a weak state, and Haiti’s state is no exception, with all of the contradictions present between the “centripetal forces of the state and the centrifugal forces inherent in [economic] dependency” (Trouillot 1990a, 18, 23). For Haiti, the weakness of the state can be understood in terms of the relative instability of its governing structure, the site of numerous foreign-backed coups, and its inability to act without the support of foreign economic and political interests or manage to carry out effective elections of state officials. Its weakness is also understood as its lack of ability or interest to provide basic public services like water treatment and waste management or education, an opening and sometimes a justification for NGOs to enter, unchecked and unregulated (Schuller 2015).

NGOs in Haiti are not a simple phenomenon. They are practically, as Janil Lwijis himself argued, the principal institutions imperialists have used to dominate Haiti in recent decades, since the second half of the 20th century; they are a form of governance (Lwijis 2009). Janil

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4 Marcus (2008) has called for anthropology to theorize the state in its own right, as a way to develop insights into the conditions for social change.
expanded upon this idea of governance in his dissertation (Louis-Juste 2007) in what he conceived to be *l’Internationale Communautaire*. The “International Community” is an imperfect English translation of Janil’s theory; his word play, the reversal of the noun and adjective in what would have been *La Communauté Internationale*, emphasizes the cooperation between nation-states rather than the masking of violence that accompanies the emphasis on the word “community.” Following this perspective, the International Community is composed of such entities as the UN, the IMF, and the World Bank, and NGOs, and functions to ensure a free market for the capitalist class, leading to dictatorial politics while imposing globalized (read: imperialist) capital profiteering, at the same time hiding itself under empty rhetoric of cooperation for the supposed benefit of peripheral nations. Since 1986, the International Community has made its presence felt more and more in Haiti through both structural adjustment programs and military intervention (Louis-Juste 2005, 2008). Janil’s International Community might then be understood as a sort of combination of the united ruling class of multiple nations, in varying degrees of cahoots to exploit Haiti, and international civil society. In the post-earthquake landscape, there was an unprecedented deluge of NGOs into Haiti, but neoliberal politics weakened its government’s capacity prior to the earthquake; after U.S. Vice President Al Gore’s National Partnership for Reinventing Government initiative, donors began funding NGOs instead of governments, and in 1995, United States Congress prohibited the funds of USAID from being directed to elected governments (Schuller and Morales 2013, 57).

Through all of these processes, Haiti has become the poorest country of the Western hemisphere. In addition to neoliberal politics and structural adjustment programs that have weakened the state’s capacity to govern and provide, there is prevalent political corruption. As a friend and professor in sociology at l’École Normale once explained to me, each politician has
their own NGO. Its economy is largely dependent on remittances from Haitians who have migrated to the *dyaspora* (diaspora), many who have migrated as economic refugees, and some who have migrated as political refugees.

Together with the histories of misery wrought upon Haiti, there are different, resistant stories that are vital to tell. Writing resistant Haiti, or documenting it through other means, has the potential to be immediately useful to movements themselves in terms of historical and social self-location. There are long, deep-rooted traditions of intellectualism, especially among youth, and leftist social movements in Haiti. A student strike in 1929 in the town of Damyen (Damien) sparked a general strike that precipitated the withdrawal of the 19-year U.S. occupation. Historian Henri Malfan notes that from that moment, Haitian students would “periodically return to play a specific role in all major political crises that have shaken the country” (1981:9). In 1946, radical students organized protest that sparked *dechoukaj* (uprooting) toward a broader revolt that took down President Elie Lescot’s government. Demonstrations by university students in multiple cities was the first open challenge to General Paul Magloire’s military rule in 1956 (Losier 2012), and decades later, students, including Janil, played a critical role in the *dechoukaj* that toppled the government of “Baby Doc” Duvalier. Massive social upheaval after the first and second ouster of Jean Bertrand Aristide, movements against neoliberalism and the IMF, and more recently against MINISTA for causing cholera epidemic amid other human rights abuses, and protests against new mining contracts.

New life was breathed into popular movements and student movements in Haiti after the earthquake. In the afternoon on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, the ground near Haiti’s capital shook for 35 seconds. The earthquake left as many as 316,000 dead and a similar number unhoused. Reverberations of the nation’s legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism, slavery, and
dictatorship compounded the disaster. Amidst the dead and devastation, new tendencies toward collective organization formed around supporting the needs of communities (often temporarily placed together in tent camps). Scholars have written about post-disaster activism, community engagement, temporary collectives and utopias (Solnit 2010; Raphael 1996); in what some Haitians described as a political euphoria united against the physical and political devastation, many were thinking, at times in new ways or for the first time, about rebuilding, and what kind of society should be rebuilt. Was there an opportunity to put in place social or political structures that could actually take care of those most marginalized? Much of this political momentum dissipated, but some was mobilized into more consistent organizing efforts. Recent urban social movements have spanned issues from criticizing foreign intervention in Haiti, including the large numbers of NGOs (of which there was a post-seismic influx), the UN’s militaristic presence and the cholera epidemic it transported to the nation, popular demand for President Michel Martelley to step down. In addition, there has been a great demand for fair elections, criticism of the growing mining investments, and calls for access to food and for land reform. Across UEH’s Port-au-Prince campuses there are over 12,000 students, many thousands of whom participate in various activist organizations. In the post-earthquake period, student organizing at UEH became focused on anti-tuition hike campaigns and demands for basic functioning of the university, such as viable libraries, qualified faculty, and cafeterias. The staff at UEH also engaged in ongoing strikes to unionize and for fair wages and benefits with considerable student support from faculty who fought their own share of labor struggles over the previous few decades.
Janil Lwijis and the Earthquake

Janil Lwijis was an activist sociology professor at the Faculté de Sciences Humaines (FASCH) and the Faculté d’Ethnologie (FE) at UEH. Janil was born in Gantye (Ganthier), a small town just west of the Dominican border, in 1957. He had led and participated in strikes going back to his days studying agronomy at university in the early 1980s when he organized for peasant land rights. His engagement with various activist groups are almost countless; he contributed to publications and worked with a plethora of groups in varying degrees, but some of his commitments are more notable. He was part of an anti-IMF organization, Kolektif Mobilizasyon Kont FMI, building a faculty union, Sendika Travayè Anseyan Inivèsite Ayiti (STAIA), and, during his time studying and teaching at UEH, he participated in various study-action groups, notably Mouvman Etidyan Granmoun Ayisyen (MEGA) and GRAEP (Gwoup Refleksyon ak Animasyon Edikasyon Popilè). Under much political scrutiny as an agronomist, in 1995 he began to teach at UEH. He taught at several campuses, his main teaching position eventually at FASCH. After his training in agronomy, he later studied journalism, social work and social theory, completing his Master’s Degree in Social Service at the Federal University of Pernambuco in 1999, and then and his doctoral thesis in Social Service 2007.

In 2005, he, alongside other faculty and students, formed Sèk Gramsci (The Gramscian Literature Study Group), a group combining popular theater and campus organizing. In 2007, Janil was part of launching the progressive organization ASID (University Association of Dessalinians), a group which joined a Marxist analysis to a nationalist tradition that venerated the revolutionary leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines for establishing key public institutions, nationalizing farm land, and providing an “anti-liberalism” that could serve as a guide for

5 The group initially focused on reading the works of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist activist and intellectual.
contemporary political practice. In his large body of scholarly work, some of which is discussed in Chapter 2, Janil focused on analyzing how imperialism in Haiti functioned, critiquing the *NGOization* of Haiti as a neo-colonial endeavor and development projects unconcerned with local politics and needs (2003a, 2007). He wrote extensively from a Marxist perspective on the problems of education in Haiti (2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2007, 2008), and worked on understanding the strengths and weaknesses of historical and contemporary social movements in Haiti (1993, 1997, 2004), including a history of the Haitian left (2007). He came to be seen as a prominent figure in the 2008-2009 campaign for a 200 gourdes (~$5US) per day minimum wage, at the height of which 300,000 workers and students joined together in the streets.

In the late morning on January 12, 2010, in Port-au-Prince, Janil Lwijis was shot and killed in a political assassination two blocks away from the university where he taught. He came out of teaching a course, and just next to the restaurant he frequented for lunch on Avenue Capois, two men drove up to him on a motorcycle. They shot him in the eye and chest before driving away. He died from his wounds hours later at the hospital. As the news of his shooting spread over radio and phone networks, most campuses of UEH shut down, students came together in courtyards in shock and in protest, contemplating how to organize against his shooting, and hundreds of his comrades and students congregated at the hospital to donate blood for him and to see how his condition progressed. When his death was announced, the streets of downtown Port-au-Prince erupted in protest. And then, the earth started to shake. The lives of the ones who were in the streets were spared, safe from concrete structures crashing down upon them. Some credit Janil doubly with saving their lives, first, because of how he contributed as a professor and comrade to their politicization; second, because they were outside, demanding justice for him, as the earthquake hit.
For Claude, a close friend of Janil, studying in Brazil at the time of the earthquake, Janil’s death was the earthquake he experienced. It has been described by many as “the other earthquake of January 12th, 2010” (Seguy 2010). Fractures surfaced in the student movement: some were discouraged into inaction or liberalism; others became more committed to working toward radical social change. Political disagreements appeared more pointedly: sharp critiques about machismo among activists emerged, and debates have continued to rage about if and how the grassroots can ally itself with NGOs. Many spoke of Janil, but did so in different ways. A great polemist, he had many enemies, within the university and in the state, and it was not surprising that there was contestation over his memory. Even among those who adored him, there were tensions around his legacy. Conversely, many activists united around the need to continue to do popular education as an essential aspect of their project for social change. They conducted many of such classes using the work of scholars like Janil as part of their political mobilization. We can understand these multiple perspectives and relate them to ongoing political processes such that we can better form our own interpretations.

One of Janil’s qualities that garnered him so much respect at FASCH and FE was the large number of students he advised. Students at UEH often struggled with a lack of qualified faculty to supervise their research, making it a common phenomenon to get stuck in post-coursework phases without the ability to complete a mémoire (senior thesis). He took on many students and guided them through the writing of their theses. He also stood out as an influential educator by teaching in the Kreyòl language rather than French. It was only in 1961 that Kreyòl became an official language in the nation and was permitted legal and educational status. All Haitians speak Kreyòl while not all speak French; Kreyòl is associated with the masses which French is associated with the elite. There has been a growing movement toward Kreyòl in the
last couple decades, both in the grassroots and with the construction of the Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (the Haitian Kreyòl Academy), which concerns itself with the politics of education, literacy, and national identity in relation to the Kreyòl language (see Govain 2013). The argument for the institutionalization of Kreyòl and against (or in addition to) French is strong, and calls to mind familiar language ideology debates (Haviland 2003) and the relationship of institutionalized language to colonialism. Those who are forbidden to learn in their own tongue will always be disadvantaged, and in Haiti, where so few are able to receive an education at all, the use of French has been disastrous to an already malfunctioning public school system (Degraff 2009, 2010). There is a fundamental pride in Kreyòl in Haitian lore, where Kreyòl is actually a defining feature of national identity for Haitians, as made plain in the 1991 hit song “Se Kreyòl Nou Ye” (We are Kreyòl) by Boukman Eksperyans, and in 2016 with the hashtag #SeKreyòlNouYe representing the growing movement to demand Kreyòl as the primary national language. Teaching his university courses in Kreyòl was seen by his students as a radical and progressive act.

There was dispute over his attitude toward Vodou, the Haitian creole religion that combines and transforms the cosmologies brought by enslaved Africans and their Catholic European overlords (see, of many, Bellegarde-Smith 2006), and whether he embraced the religion for both political and spiritual reasons (Losier 2013) or simply understood the power of Vodou’s meaning for the Haitian popular classes. This deserves special mention because of Vodou’s embeddedness into much of Haitian protest. A religion of healing, some on the left in Haiti have claimed the religion as part of a long history of anti-colonial, revolutionary politics
that goes back to the story of Bwa Kayiman\(^6\) and the origins of the Haitian Revolution and it has become a tradition in which many students and have begun to take part with political purpose.

A quality of Janil’s that those who knew him all agree upon was that he was a polemist. He engaged in heated debates in person and in newspapers with scholars, activists, and politicians. He had enemies within and outside the university system. His memory became deeply contested almost immediately upon his death. Mystification started to surround him, as is the case with many martyrs. He became a fought-over symbol. This research explores what investment people have in depicting what sort of symbol, what sort of revolutionary\(^7\) he was.

**Conclusion**

It is important to set the record straight about Janil’s life and death, but of particular interest here is a focus on what meanings became attributed to him, how they were attributed to him and by whom, and what can be unveiled through looking at the symbols as well as the power relations that allow them to come into being. The divisions in how Janil acts as a symbol reflected larger divisions in Haitian political ideology, as well as the economic and material bases for them. Through a political economic lens, this thesis attempts shed light on onto the complexities of the contestation over his memory. When he was seen as a hero, it is not only because of the personal impact he had on his colleagues and students in the university as a

\(^6\) **Bwa Kayiman** is the Vodou ceremony led by the Jamaica-born slave Boukman Dutty that is said to have sparked the Haitian revolution. There is controversy over whether or not this ceremony in fact took place (see Geggus 2002), but in Haitian folklore, cosmology, and popular movements it serves as an important symbol for Haitian resistance and the nation; many famous folk songs reference it, as Boukman has been canonized into a *lwa*, often referred to as “Papa Boukman.”

\(^7\) I use the term revolutionary to describe individuals insofar as they identify politically with the need to dismantle capitalism in favor of a system of equity, not who subscribe to one particular belief, such as socialism, communism, or anarchism in all of their shapes and forms—each I subsume into the term.
professor and comrade, but because of material and historical conditions that gave Janil and what he stood for discursive power. Thus, the complexities of how he was remembered, and the complexities of conducting such a project as this, are best analyzed with attention to the larger political economic and geopolitical processes at work in Haiti.

A word about the thesis: documenting political mobilization against imperialism and state oppression in Haiti has guided this project from the beginning. I first came to Port-au-Prince as a solidarity activist following the 2010 earthquake, and I was privileged to hear stories of anti-imperialist resistance from unionists, students, and peasants energetically engaged in organizing for quality education, healthcare, and food. The purpose of this applied project is to document previously excluded counter-narratives in a way that is helpful to student activists in Port-au-Prince, as part of a broader effort to legitimize their demands and promote social action. In the attempt to enter a meaningful dialogue with Third World intellectual traditions (Harrison 1991), my intent is also to, earnestly and critically, pay homage to the activist-scholar Janil Lwijis, and to pay attention to the intellectual production of this particular social movement. The thesis attempts to situate those in Janil’s milieu in the context of social movement and geopolitical processes. Chapter 2 places this research within the literature on social movements in anthropology, within Haitian studies, and within activist methods. It argues for anthropological approach to a Marxist political economy of social movements and addresses how the acts of these students can be understood as a social movement. Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion of the project’s methodology of oral history, its challenges and its limitations as it relates to an activist endeavor, and how it works as applied anthropology. It discusses this project’s concrete and nonconcrete activist collaboration. Chapter 4 explores the nature of the sometimes very personal, sometimes distanced, differential claims to Janil’s memory and legacy as various
leftists deploy them in the university setting, and how, derived from political and economic conditions, that legacy has come to be meaningful. It looks at how Janil as a symbol has become part of students’ process of mobilizing. The Conclusion chapter discusses more fully the implications of this research for applied anthropology as part of a call for activist-driven research.
Chapter Two: Towards an Anthropology of Social Movements in Haiti

Social Movements and Anthropology

Social movements (see definition below) are multidimensional and complex processes that have entered the purview of anthropology only in recent decades. This chapter examines how scholars have approached social movements, the specific anthropological treatment of the subject, and how this is relevant, or not, regarding scholarship of social movements in Haiti in particular. Further, it will locate the proposed project within relevant scholarship on political and cultural resistance in Haiti. An anthropological approach can enrich social movements research and in the case of contemporary Haitian social movements, largely overlooked by social movements and anthropological literature alike, a perspective that interprets both political economy and cultural contestation has explanatory power for their emergence and meaning. This chapter argues for a Marxist political economy approach to their study within anthropology by focusing on the daily experiences, meanings, and symbols that characterize people’s grievances and demands while at the same time revealing the underlying relations of production and class conflict.

The anthropology of an urban social movement confronts certain dilemmas as it attempts to draw from past anthropological literature, and thus much of the relevant literature on social movements comes from sociology. Anthropology has, until recently, been only marginally involved in the study of collective action because of an academic division of labor wherein political science and sociology have been assigned collective action among urban movements, while the anthropological object of study has been more restricted to “Others,” such as rural
peasants (Edelman 2001:286). Thus, even anthropological attention to social movements has focused largely on rural, peasant movements.

Moreover, anthropologists have tended to resist mention and study of “social movements,” preferring instead terms like “democracy” or “resistance” (Osterweil 2013). This is partially due to anthropology’s attraction to acts of quotidian resistance, rather than organized resistance. Foucault has an undeniable influence on the attention to everyday acts of resistance. And how might we really understand resistance? Foucault’s undeniable influence created an emphasis on everyday acts resistance as scholars sought to understand how power is constituted, that resistance exists wherever power does (1978, 56-57). This exercised influence onto many scholars throughout the 1980s. The blind celebrations, however, of “creativity” and “agency” on the part of the oppressed can be troubling (Khan 2007; Abu-Lughod 1990). This is not to diminish the very real resistance that takes place when people are able to creatively mold the world around them while under conditions of severe repression. Creative and brilliant as they are, we risk losing theoretical power and practical solutions, if we accept that resistance stops when we arrive at James Scott’s “hidden transcripts.” What is troubling is that resistance and creativity become easily admired as a satisfactory conclusion, or what Aisha Khan (2007) discusses as “teleological optimism” in the romanticized notions of agency. The danger, as Abu-Lughod puts it, is in attributing to communities or individuals “forms of consciousness and politics that are not part of their experience” (1990, 47). What Abu-Lughod argues for instead is to view resistance as a “diagnostic of power,” a way to trace the workings of structures of power through the details of resistance (1990, 42). Marcus critiques anthropology’s fondness for “agency” as part of a pluralist model that means any group can triumph through imagination, even if there is not a challenge posed directly to the state (2008b, 108), but goes further to say that academic and
activist engagement with questions of the state becomes crucial to producing useful scholarship to participants in terms of “what they are up against” within struggles for social change (2008b, 111). An anthropology of social movements has the opportunity to examine where and how power is operating, across, and outside a movement.

There were two dominant theoretical strands in the studies of social movements as they took form in the 1970s within sociology: one focused primarily on questions oriented around identity, the other on resource mobilization. The Resource Mobilization (RM) approach (Cohen 1985; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Della Porta & Diani 1999; McAdam et al 1996) developed primarily in North America and has concentrated on how social movements emerge in relation to what resources are available to them. The central foci of this perspective became the organization of movements, their external resources, and their policy objectives, and looked at collective action as being commanded by social movement organizations (SMOs) and groups to which they were socially connected. SMOs would mobilize resources and then conceive of and employ strategies and tactics. Scholars influenced by this paradigm incorporated an interest in the state and on “political opportunity structure” and to the construction of “social movement industries” consisting of SMOs (Edelman 2001). This focus also created a tendency to neglect situations in which social movements emerged with few resources or without apparent organization, usually those in circumstances of extreme inequality (Piven 1979). This also discounted the “hidden” (Scott 1990) forms of resistance that might transform participants themselves and could potentially lead to eventual collective action (Edelman 2001). Critics noted that this perspective also neglected the social construction or discursive aspects of identity (Abdulhadi 1998).
In contrast, an identity-oriented approach informed European “new social movements” (NSM) theorization, which concentrated on struggles that seek to affect “a way of life, forms of behavior, and needs” (Touraine 1988, 25). NSM theorists were responding to what they perceived as a sole focus on class conflict in prevailing Marxian theory of the time. This school sought to place culture at the center of analysis; it focused on expressive actions and the assertion of particular identities, but was also interested in the structural bases of social conflict, aware that actors could be conscious of their own ability to construct identities in the context of social relations. NSM theories emerged out of struggles over symbolic and “cultural” resources, and rights to differences; participation in NSMs was itself a goal (Edelman 2001, 289). Movements were seen as “new” because they were seen as targeting “autonomous civil society” rather than the state, and because they allegedly were making new demands, including, for instance, issues around racial and gender discrimination and the environment (Pichardo 1997). While NSM theories contributed a valuable emphasis on culture, culture was assigned a role in society that existed outside of direct state control. This conception of culture was restricted to lifestyle, identity and identity politics, and self-expression, as opposed to the definitions more amenable to contemporary anthropology (see Baumgarten, Daphi, and Ullrich 2014). For me, culture is patterned, learned behavior, entailing shared imaginaries and repertoires of strategies for acting in the world, that become generated in structured social relationships themselves embedded in determined and evolving social hierarchies. However, in a positive sense the NSM and RM

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8 Edelman discusses that while RM perspectives on social movement interaction with states were relevant in Latin America, they had much less appeal outside northern democracies; in contrast, NSM theorists in Europe had ties to Latin America, and beyond that, the anti-U.S. sentiments prevalent throughout Latin America in the 1970s and 80s “predisposed” Latin American intellectuals in a “Europhile streak” to be more attracted to NSM perspectives while dismissing those generated in the U.S. (2001, 292).

9 On the contrary, identity construction has always to an extent been an important aspect of the Marxist tradition in terms of class formation and class consciousness.
approaches departed significantly from other frameworks of the day because they treated forms of collective action as worthy objects of study.

Michal Osterweil argues that the epistemic tradition of social movement studies’ arena of inquiry is dominated by sociological traditions which have emphasized the “importance of empirical and scientific approaches over interpretive, humanistic” approaches, where movements were defined through reductive structural and positivist frameworks that held the state and markets to be absolute elements of the sociopolitical landscape, not considering ideological or social factors (Osterweil 2013, 476, emphasis in original). Across the social sciences, in both NSM and RM theory, social movements have been framed within notions of Western liberal democracy; in this mode of thinking, social movements are read as predictable parts of modern and liberal societies rather than struggles related to the basic organization of quotidian life (Bayat 2013). NSM and RM theory emerging to explain Western phenomena and Western conceptualizations of how the “transparent” state and civil society operate in Western democracy. It follows that neither would be able to adequately account for or explain situations where the state did not provide such basic access to resources for a movement to emerge (RM), or in which “noble” civil society, somehow an autonomous space (Cohen 1985) between private and state spheres (NSM), namely, situations of the Global South.

How can social movements be understood historically and culturally, rather than just being regarded as this sort of modern, “political” phenomena? NSM theorists understood that the reason to participate in a movement must not lie only in attractive framing of the group’s politics, or opportune moments for strategizing and building, but that there is some sort of attractive “promise” in its makeup (Rubin 2004), but Taylor (1989) critiques NSM theorists’ ahistorical view of an “immaculate conception” of their movements’ origins. Even individual action must be
understood socially and historically. Only through understanding the many and contradicting routes people take through history, culture and politics into their involvement in a social movement can we “account for the ways in which identities, interests, and political goals actually come into being, before and during the actual conflicts [political battles] movements engage in” (Klandermans 2007, 241). Particularly in the case of memory, culture is distinctly important. Salman and Assies remind us that

> When people face situations they cannot or will no longer bear, when they become enraged because of injustice being done, or when that are called upon to rally or organize, they… inevitably recur to cultured memories and images for support for their decisions and actions—or their decision not to act. In individuals, and in the case of organizing activities even stronger so in collective memories, people find examples, inspiration, and symbols that inform their stand (Salman and Assies 2007, 240).

Culture, in all of its complex, material and immaterial forms, is not epiphenomenal as NSM theorists imagined, rather it is a tangible and deliberate way that movements orient their struggle, and give their struggle legibility. Institutions are cultural (Poletta 2007), and culture impacts institutions; culture changes and reflects the mutable boundaries between state and civil society, and thus an exploration of the cultures of social movements permits us to read those boundaries.

Anthropologists have only recently begun regarding collective action as a viable object of study. An anthropological perspective and ethnographic methods can make multiple contributions to the more rigid conceptions of social movements that political science and sociology have presented: the ability to begin with day-to-day lives and practices of meaning-making, consciousness-building, and construction of alternative worlds and identities, rather than abstract theories. This involves recognizing that a crucial part of social and political change
happens at the level of critical subject formation. Attending to the subjective and the quotidian does not make the traditionally macro political scales irrelevant. Osterweil notes, for instance, that part of the challenge in studying contemporary social movements is their simultaneous work on a “variety of scales and political registers” (2013, 478). Anthropology’s disciplinary tradition allows for an understanding of the importance of contestation over cultural meaning within social movements; cultural anthropology classically presupposes that culture is always an indispensable aspect of politics, and also that an emic perspective\textsuperscript{10} is necessary for a study of such politics. Through this lens, culture becomes both a vital component of political encounters and a necessary logic through which to view social, economic, and political processes (Davis 2002). This approach departs from RM mobilization and NSM theory, though this is not to say that social movements theorists have entirely neglected culture. Poletta contends that the cultural aspects of protest reframe the foundation of movement theory:

Political “opportunities” should be expanded to include the contradictions and gaps in dominant ideologies which trigger opposition, they argue; movement “resources” made to encompass compelling narratives and traditions of protest. And movement “success” should be judged not only by the number of officials elected, legislation passed, and policies changed, but by the transformations wrought in culture and consciousness, in collective self-definitions, and in the meanings that shape everyday life. [Polletta 1997, 431]

She points out further that other disciplines have used troublesome notions of culture, wherein sociological approaches have largely employed a dichotomous view between culture and

\textsuperscript{10} The emic is what anthropologists define as the informant or insider’s point of view, rendered by the ethnographer’s analysis. See Harris 1976.
structure, operating under the logic that culture is somehow apart from the dynamics of social movements, rather than an aspect of them. Assies and Salman (2000) describe the failure of cultural studies to address the contestation over meaning and representation, relying too heavily on textual methods.

Two definitions of social movements have become useful for this research, the first of which is Nilsen and Cox’s definition of “social movements from below.” They define this movement as “collective projects developed and pursued by subaltern groups, organizing a wide range of locally-generated skilled activities around a rationality that seeks to… challenge the constraints that a dominant structure of needs and capacities imposes upon the development of new needs and capacities” (Nilsen and Cox 2013, 73). From this perspective, marginalized groups experience processes of oppression within the material framework of political economy; that is, experience can only be understood in relation to larger structures and power relationships. The other definition that has utility for this project comes from Alain Touraine, who defined social movements as “normatively oriented interactions between adversaries with conflicting interpretations and opposed societal models of a shared cultural field” (1981, 31-32), which is critical here because it can potentially account for struggles over meaning and interpretation of reality at the level of a social movement, though this is to utilize an anthropological lens of culture, not Touraine’s. I would add to Touraine’s definition an analysis of the exertion of political and economic power upon those interpretations, and it is essential to recognize that within a social movement, there are complex struggles over interpretation as well. This framing allows an understanding of quotidian experience and cultural production as reflecting and contributing to such larger political economic structures and processes. In other words, daily
experience characterizes people’s grievances and demands, and at the same time clues us into the underlying relations of production and class conflict.

Nilsen and Cox advance their proposed definition to say that when movement participants combine their knowledge in a manner that enables them to better understand larger sociopolitical processes at work, they are equipped to better direct their intentions and energies to be effective in collective action. They refer to this realization of this potential as “movement-process” (Nilsen and Cox 2013, 74), and it is part of an attempt to make a theoretical intervention that can be applied. That is, the knowledge produced as part of the development of skilled, collective activity is knowledge that can help activists think about how they do what they do.

The student activist landscape of UEH, including those who collaborated in this project, constituted a social movement given this definition. Though fractures and disagreements existed, their “movement-process” and conscientization made them very aware of their class positions and their class adversaries; they recognized that they come “from below,” and organized around that rationality. Janil, as a martyr and symbol, took an important place in their movement-process as a mobilizing force, invoked at protests, justice for him demanded, after his death. The social relations that produced Haiti’s situation, the relationship of domination and subordination, secreted, in a dialectical process, the emergence of this movement. Students coming from poor rural areas to study in the city experienced the material and ideological relations that make their class consciousness possible although not inevitable.

I take an approach that accounts for an anthropological approach to interpretation, in conjunction with an approach from the perspective of anthropological political economy, thus using a frame of both structural factors and meaning-making (Roseberry 1982). The symbols
people deploy and adopt become more meaningful within an analysis that accounts for where those symbols and people fit within social and political relationships.

*Resistance and Social Movement Scholarship in Haiti*

This study is proposed among growing discussions of Haiti’s representation. Scholars, artists, and activists are increasing calls for “new narratives” of Haiti (Trouillot 1977; Ulysse 2013; Dubois and Glover 2013; Katz 2013). Much of the scholarship on Haiti until recently has fallen into the trap Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1990b) called “Haitian exceptionalism,” where the image of Haiti is promoted as exotically unique. For Trouillot, “the more Haiti appears weird, the easier it is to forget that it represents the longest neocolonial experiment in the history of the West” (1990, 7), while Gina Athena Ulysse reminds us of Haiti’s history “silenced, disavowed, reconstrued, and rewritten as the ‘Haytian fear’—code for an unruly and barbaric blackness that threatened to export black revolution to neighboring islands and disrupt colonial power” (Ulysse 2013, 245). This has endorsed an exceptionalist image “overdetermined by politics far beyond (but ultimately connected to) the politics of the academy” (Magloire and Yelvington 2005, 128).

Though historians and anthropologists have begun to paint new portraits, re-centering resistance throughout Haiti’s history, Western scholarship on the topic has generally neglected that which Haiti has produced. This academic disregard has served at best to undermine the quality of such scholarship, at worst, to continue the representation of Haiti as passive and miserable. Not all of the scholars mentioned below envisioned their work as scholarship within “social movement studies” per se, but they deserve inclusion because of, as argued above, the way some forms of less organized resistance can operate to motivate participation in movements, in some cases a prerequisite for movement participation, because they explore literary traditions that have come
to be important in Haitian traditions of social movements, and because they are the intellectual work that has stemmed out of participants in social movements themselves. That is, they have played a significant part in movement mobilization, and help us grasp the cultural, historical, political economic contexts in which more formal movements have arisen.

Historically in Haiti and elsewhere, resistance has often been complicated in this way. It has involved working both with and against a system of repression, defying and collaborating with that system at the same time, acts of *ti mawonaj* (or *petit marronage*)\(^{11}\) and grander acts of rebellion (*gran mawonaj*) throughout the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period. The interventions of Michel Rolph Trouillot (1998), and the works of Mimi Sheller (2004, 2012), David Nicholls (1996), Carolyn Fick (1990), Gerard Barthélémy (1989), and Sidney Mintz (1989), have considered and reconsidered the constitution and implication of resistance as it relates to broader social movements throughout Haitian history and have posed important questions about how does one resists a system which has so thoroughly excluded one from social and political structures. As in the case of peasants, or the surplus labor force that constitutes a sort of world “beyond” capital but fundamentally connected to capital flow, where is resistance to take place? Scholars and social movement actors alike must consider this question.

J. Michael Dash traces Haitian exceptionalism as, in fact, a racist fiction which goes back to nineteenth-century Eurocentrism which viewed the creation of a modern black state as an aberration, and further points out that Haitian exceptionalism has been preoccupied with establishing a sense of territorial identity which is purportedly outside global modernity (Dash

\(^{11}\) Throughout the times of slavery on Hispaniola, many enslaved people escaped their captivity, some successfully setting up communities in the mountains, often referred to as *mawon* (maroons). *Ti mawonaj* refers to those individuals whose absence were more short-term (as some fled and came back), while *gran mawonaj* refers to larger, armed bands of escaped slaves who raided plantations. It is commonly argued that the first 1791 rebellion of the Haitian Revolution grew out of this tradition of resistance.
Thus, Haitian exceptionalism is a colonial construct, but also has served as part of the anti-colonial narrative that sees itself as outside of modernity and thus part of something uniquely Haitian. Scholars have begun to pay special attention to conceptualizing resistance in Haiti through honoring Haitian intellectual contributions, particularly in the literary traditions of Jacques Roumain and Jacques Stephen-Alexis, who wrote against authoritarian state power in favor of popular emancipation. Dash’s discussion of narrative, for instance, highlights the ways Jacques Roumain demonstrated awareness of Haiti’s rupture with nationalism, within the context of global social and geographical space, in his 1944 novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* wherein his protagonist Manuel embodies the transformation of Haitian peasantry first into the Caco rebels and then into an international proletariat (2008, 35). The anthropologist Anténor Firmin has also been reclaimed as an early departure from Haitian exceptionalism as he broke rank with the populist, nationalist lines of his time by arguing against the closedness of Haitian national identity in favor of a heterogeneous, hemispheric identity (Magloire and Yelvington 2005; Dash 2008).

There have been exceptions to the exceptionalist portrait, as in David Nicholls and Ch. Carlier’s (1975) accounts of popular movements between 1915 and 1945, Sheller’s 2004 study of nineteenth-century peasant movements, and Carolle Charles’s study (1995) of more contemporary politics and resistance in relation to feminist organizing in Haiti. Such historical work has been extremely important for scholarly re-imaginings of Haiti, but demands more work on current politics. In more recent years the reductionist and exceptionalist narrative has continued to be countered by various anthropologists and Haitianists (Magloire and Yelvington 2005; Doubleday 2013; Kivland 2012). In his work on Haiti, Matthew J. Smith (2009) emphasizes a history of continuous resistance. Smith criticizes Nicholls for overestimating the
power of elites over shaping Haitian politics, stressing instead the role of Marxists and *noiristes* (black nationalists) in influencing contemporary Haitian politics.

There are both strengths and limits to these recent conceptualizations of resistance. Laurent Dubois’s (2012) almost exhaustingly exhaustive historical account of Haiti, lauded as emphasizing the contemporary valiant struggle of Haitians to redefine freedom and finally realize the promise of the revolution, almost completely removes women from his text, except as victims or as shadowy supporters of their ruthless husbands. Until recently, such scholarship has almost entirely eclipsed the struggles of women, often because women’s resistance to gender oppression has not frequently been in traditions forms of formal organizing (Charles 1995). Beverly Bell (2001) has done the sensitive work of oral history with women of varying ages who lived through political turmoil of the last several decades in attempt to share stories of strength, resilience, and clever defiance, but women who were more explicitly “activist” were excluded from her study.

A large gap in English-language literature social movements remains in the lack of attention to the post-François Duvalier period’s (1959-1971) resurgence of popular movements. The primary reason for this is a neglect of the work of Caribbeanist scholars who have discussed the movements of the 1970s and on. Haitian social scientists (Lwijis 1998, 2007; Luc Smarth 1998; Hector 2006) on the other hand, have done thorough work chronicling and critically analyzing the post-Duvalier history of popular movements in Haiti. These years indeed had an active, if underground, leftist movement, with its own developments and internal difficulties due to splinterings and espionage. Peasant movements and community mobilization, with difficulty but energy, have also continued to be active, including the konbit (Lwijis 2007, Smith 2001).
Janil Lwijis wrote on how NGOs\textsuperscript{12} have created a new social category of governance, and a hegemonic U.S. military presence, in Haitian peasantry through aid and economic dependence, affecting the basis upon which peasant movements organized (Pierre 2007, 28). In the context of such a rich history of organizing, it is woeful that the literature of the English-published academic world obscures such vibrant resistance.

The first to write a (sadly unfinished) history of the Haitian communist movement was the esteemed social scientist Janil Lwijis (2007), who chronicled the PEP (Parti d’Entente Populaire), PUDA (Parti Uni des Démocrates Haïtiens), PUCH (Parti Unifié des Communistes Haïtiens), and the PPLN (Parti Populaire de Libération Nationale). This is not to overstate the success of such organizations under Duvalierism. Rather, they sustained many attacks through outright assassination, disappearances, and imprisonment, but such organizations refused \textit{anrasinaj} (to be uprooted). The historian Michel Hector (2006) has explored at length popular movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, up through the 2004 ouster of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, in relation to social crises and political processes. Luc Smarth, writing as part of a research group at the Centre de Récherche et de Diffusion Populaire (CRESDIP), has aimed to shed light upon popular movements as important sites of research as part of casting social research itself into a more dignified position in the “national enterprise of democratization and socioeconomic development of the country” (1998, xii). His intervention is to expose how popular organizations, always associated with marginalized sectors of society, have been on the one hand criminalized through dominant constructions of the foolish and unruly peasant, the resident of the \textit{bidonville} (slums), and the disorderly rebel, and on the other hand,

\textsuperscript{12} Schuller has also written at length how the humanitarian apparatus in Haiti functions as an instrument to reinforce United States domination of Haiti (2012, 2013, 2016), but also discussed how the grassroots and NGO realms can be overlapping.
romanticized and overemphasized in their role in social transformation by the Haitian left. He looks at the ideological and practical basis of post-Duvalier popular movements, including the vital contributions of liberation theology to movements from the 1970s and onwards, whose influence has been downplayed by many leftists of Marxist traditions. Countering the idea that Haiti and the Dominican Republic have always hated each other, Smarth recounts the many solidarity efforts between leftist groups and unions and locally-based neighborhood organization in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, such as COPADEBA (Comité para la Defensa de los Derechos Barriales). In light of such a wealth of activity on the part of popular movements and limited but strong texts that have been written on them, the Western disregard for discussion of organized resistance feeds back into the narrative of helplessness and eternal misery that afflicts Haiti’s representations.

Western scholarship thus far contains myriad contradictions in locating power and resistance in expressive culture in Haiti. Activism can of course be defined in many ways, ones that are not overly “political” with a line or program. This is salient in Haiti where vodouesque space often blends activism and religious activity. Scholars who have discussed Vodou are infrequently interested in locating activism, rather in more muddied idea of “resistance.” In fact,  

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13 Sharing the same island, the two nations have had a complex social and economic relationship since colonial times and the European struggle over control of the New World, and different language, social structure, and conceptualizations of race on either side of the island took root. In addition to state violence against one another, there has been exploitation-migration of Haitians, primarily in the sugar industry, in the Dominican Republic (DR) going back to the beginning of the twentieth century. In 2015, the DR began mass deportations of Haitian-Dominicans after a 2013 court ruling which stripped citizenship from Haitian-descended Dominicans as far back as 1929. There is a strong perception that the citizen of Haiti and the DR are always in conflict, and Dominican conservatives invoke the post-revolutionary Haitian occupation of their country as the beginning of an endless national and racial feud. The focus on particular historical events of conflict and violence, however, prevent us from seeing alliances, struggles, and violences at the local level, and that such views are not held by all in each class and status (see Martínez 2003), and the fact of migration, shared culture, and political mobilization around solidarity between the populations of the two countries furthers this point.
many overt, self-identifying activists have shared these vodouesque spaces. Regarding the practice of folk traditions in Haiti, there has been tendency among leftists, particularly Marxists, to disregard various strategies of survival or critique especially when vodouesque in nature. At the same time, Haiti’s folk traditions have been overemphasized in the scholarly imagination, to the extent that until recent years it was a feat to find scholarly work about Haiti that did not focus primarily on Vodou. Smith provides a two-pronged for the diminished importance given to such strategies: on one hand, it is the racist treatment of social actors who are dark-skinned and often illiterate, and on the other, because the method of critique is not through officially mediated channels or formally organized political forums; such strategies and practices, if addressed at all, often get discussed by outsiders as folk relics, as “aesthetically interesting, but for the most part, outdated and irrelevant” (2004, 106). On the opposite pole lies the tendency to overestimate or romanticize oppressed groups’ cultural practices, hailing them as somehow intrinsically political, rather than politically naïve. Such interpretations become problematic by obscuring a different set of processes of how and where resistance takes place and where people have the power to respond to, act in, and affect the social worlds in which they exist.

Certainly, Vodou itself occupies highly contested grounds as a political space and tool that has been mobilized in manifold and contradictory ways from the time it was sensationalized in the U.S. press and in travelogues at the time of the U.S. military and political occupation. Such representations tended to rationalize the occupation of such a “barbarous” country. Religious matters cannot be excised from political matters, and resistance against imperialism and oppression among Afro-descendants in the Americas is fundamentally related to African-centered traditions in black diasporic communities, including religious ones (Stewart 2005). Rachel Harding has discussed candomblé, the Afro-Brazilian religion, for instance, as “a
collectivizing force through which subjugated peoples organized an alternative meaning of their lives and identities that countered the disaggregations and the imposed subalterity to which they were subjected by the dominant social structure” (2003, 1). People can be cultural producers and political agents in their own right, and should be regarded as such as they participate in social movements.

*Political Economy and Anthropology*

This study uses an anthropological approach from Marxist political economy that draws particularly from Donald Robotham and William Roseberry. The significance of Marxist political economy, departing from classical political economy, is that it centers upon understanding the “twofold” character of the commodity, and thus the flows of capital, alienation of labor, and historical class struggle that Marx derives from his study of the commodity. Marxism, birthed, cultivated, and refined out of the experiences, debates, theories, and conflicts of popular movements, can respond to the demand for a scholarship that helps us as activists think about what we do. This approach focuses on class, culture and politics, placing human subjects at the center of its analysis. Political economy becomes a necessary tool in understanding large social processes and dynamics of inequality within the social relations of production. Roseberry (2002) and Robotham (2012) have outlined the Marxist political economy tradition in U.S. anthropology. Both argue for a more substantive and complicated engagement with political economy as a means to be better armed to critique neoliberal globalization and present economic crises. This perspective articulates clearly with social movements that seek to address problems of social inequality; understanding the relationship of and between quotidian experience and larger processes of capital aids in locating social movements.
I argue for an interpretive perspective that requires consideration of Marxist political economy. Just as symbols take meaning because of their historical and political economic context, meaning-making and activist symbols can reveal the nuances of the dynamics of capital and production. Roseberry’s critique of the Geertzian interpretive approach is that it treated culture “as product but not production,” but he criticizes the materialist tradition of Marvin Harris as well for the “constant reproduction of an antinomy between the material and the ideal” (1982, 1024). This binary, he argues, must be resolved through a non-reductive materialism. Cultural creation itself is a form of material production, a social process where “material” and “ideal” are constantly created and recreated. Social constructs have material consequences, and social constructs inform action. There is always room and potential within the social relations of hegemonic\textsuperscript{14} rule for alternative values, meaning, versions of people’s history as a potential challenge to dominant powers. Ultimately, “interpretation cannot be separated from what people say, what they do, what is done to them because culture cannot be separated” (Roseberry 1982, 1028). Following this logic, stories and the people who tell them can actually provide fuller pictures of material circumstance. A dialectical approach can, rather than reject interpretive frameworks, use political economy to gain a deeper understanding of symbols, in this case, Janil as a meaningful set of symbols to a movement, which themselves are infused with meanings that are historically produced. Cultures of activism and the emergence and deterioration of movements must be interpreted alongside political economy. These cultures are steeped in power, historical derived from political and economic processes and an underlying class hierarchy of which activists in this particular movement are conscious. What is required is a rejection of

\textsuperscript{14} For Gramsci, hegemonic social control is exercised both through its social relations of production and state institutions, forms of consciousness, and political and cultural practices (see Williams 1977).
vulgar approaches to political economy that would regard a cultural superstructure to be directly determined by the economic base, in favor of a dialectical, interpenetrating relationship between the two. Social movements consistently display actors who are not simply shaped by the huge processes around them, but themselves shape their world in active ways. Social movements can and should be studied in their social “whole” (Nash 2005).

The questions of symbol, memory, meaning, and identity, are central for an anthropological study of social movements, and across disciplines, for understanding forms and strategies of protest\textsuperscript{15}, and therefore for thinking about what constitutes “politics.” More than simply accounting for the “cultured features” of the manifestations of social movements, which in fact entail collective memories, body attitudes and “bodily memory” (Roodenburg 2004, 219), \textit{le sens pratique} (Bourdieu 1980), disputed legitimizing narratives and cosmologies, and collective identities, we need to look at culture as a site in which relations of power play out in a struggle, structured by capital and capitalism. Culture reaches beyond the discursive realm, and discourse reaches far into personal meaning and consciousness: these all must be understood as political. What we need, then, while we consider the social relationships of power that underlie symbols and culture, is an extension of the definition of “politics.” Politics can be understood not only as the material relations of power, or as concrete forms of political action or political players, but as immaterial, within processes of conscientization. In other words, we can look at political processes revealed within people’s own interpretations of their movements, how they came into political consciousness, came to be involved in them, or even how they came to be discouraged from them. We can begin to understand the internal worlds of politics: feeling, anger,

\textsuperscript{15} Culture surfaces in many and diverse ways in social movement actions. As Escobar pointed out, “problems of meaning and identity that are essential for understanding ... forms of protest” (1992:400)
fear—all as political. This approach allows us to consider the imperative part culture plays in the ideologies and actions (or inactions) at work within social movements; cultural manifestations are informed by and sites of class struggle and political process, and political economy permits us to understand the conditions surrounding those manifestations, and what is at stake for individuals as well as collectivities as they manifest.

Political economy permits an understanding of student activism as a consequence of the contradictions in peripheral capitalism and state relations because it enables us to locate the dynamic politics of the public university system as it relates to the exertion of state power, and thus understand the conditions for student consciousness. First, we must understand where Haiti is situated historically and geopolitically in terms of its political economy. Its enormous unemployment rate can be well understood as a Marxist reserve army of labor, and adapted as a labor pool that has been geographically and racially determined such that this labor reserve exists within Haitian national borders, securing a future for the successful and differential exploitation of the entire region and in those countries who export production to Haiti and the Caribbean. Then, we can look at how the public university system is positioned in relation to a “weak state” and class domination.

Those who study at Haiti’s state university are uniquely positioned to wage, to ignite, and to participate in the movements oriented toward class struggle, but also to be exposed to critical traditions and other people where they become aware of not only the way Haitian elite function in relation to the university system, but become able to articulate and contextualize their class positions. Historically, this has been true, to again echo Malfan (1981). As discussed above, students have played pivotal roles alongside labor since the late 1920s. This argument requires further contextualization of the State University system. In 1960, in the authoritarian context of
François Duvalier, the university system of Pòtoprens, or Port-au-Prince in French, was renamed as the State University of Haiti (Université d’État d’Haïti), that is to say the university was consciously re-envisioned to be directly in the service of the state, wherein the state could, with force, impose its will about learned content, as well as instruct the behavior of students and professors. Many students were killed because they were adversaries of Duvalierism, and some went into exile. During and after 1986, the fall of Baby Doc, enormous student protests erupted. There are strong histories of student organizing, against the “makoutization” of society and university in the 1960s, against the Haitian elite and U.S. imperialism are also deeply rooted in anti-Duvalierist legacies in the university milieu (Lwijis 2003b). The importance of student protest as it relates to broader protest has revealed itself many times in the last century; one recalls France in 1968, or the role of Students for a Democratic Society in the anti-Vietnam war movement in the United States. However, in this context, we must look deeper at student movements or we risk functionalist conclusions about the romanticized role of students and youth. We can avoid this by thinking through Haiti’s political economy: in a peripheral state whose history is mired so deeply in colonialism, though also in resistance, becomes a fruitful place to understand how these student social movements have formed. Haiti’s rural-urban divide where an agricultural peasantry produces for a bourgeois in the metropole that has access to international trade is a colonial fact (Mintz 1983), the small and fragile state, diminishing state grip and the “Republic of NGOs” (Schuller 2013), the small and fragile state university system,

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16 The *Tonton Makout* or *Makout*, named after the Haitian mythological bogeyman “Uncle Gunny sack” who punishes poorly behaved children by carrying them off to be eaten, were the famously brutal militia under the rule of François and Jean-Claude Duvalier. Achille Mbembe has discussed “makoutization” as the establishment and re-establishment of authoritarian rule with the use of armed formations (e.g. police, gendarmes, “security forces”), particularly to deal with protest movements (2001, 83).
and the traditions of organizing in the university milieu all must be understood in historical, political, and economic terms and as a colonial and capitalist post-colonial fact.

The state university of Haiti is a classic example of Gramscian bourgeois intellectual production, cranking out intellectuals who support and legitimize the Haitian state, where deans often had close relationships to the government. It is quite a sight in the gallery of the Faculté d’Ethnologie to see the pictures of past deans and their corresponding years of service displayed—almost every time period consistent with regime changes, each handpicked by the state. Janil Lwijis (2004), though not first scholar to do this, discussed at length the state university’s ideological-political domination of educational space, and talks about how the university was founded upon being disconnected from the main social and technological problems of the country (even if it supposedly synthesizes historical, sociological, philosophical, ecological, human reality as a whole), arguing that it was created to reproduce cultural discrimination and sociocultural dependence, and social inequality.

Conclusion

Social movements, and student social movements in this context, become an expression of the capital-labor contradiction where peripheral capitalism does not and cannot provide jobs or basic social needs, especially when we come to understand the context of a “weak state” where there can be no subsidies for the poor (Trouillot 1990a; Pollis 1996). Only through an understanding of the political and economic geography of Haiti do the demands and emergence of Haitian social movements begin to make sense. Michel-Rolph Trouillot prompts us to, as we think about the telling of history, “examine in detail the concrete production of specific narratives” (1995, 22), thus narratives themselves matter alongside the context in which they are
produced, those narratives within the movement and those external to it. For the state and dominant media to silence Janil’s assassination (see below) is a political act that can be understood in light of Haitian state interest. For those in Janil’s wake to honor for him because he taught and produced scholarly work in Kreyòl, to be inspired to act in or around his name, or to be scared into inactivity because of his assassination are also politically packed phenomena, and each are central to understanding how, why, and in what ways this social movement has acted. Through an anthropological approach to social movements that centers an interpretive mode of analysis integrated with political economy, this research explores those narrations alongside conditions which have produced them.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

In this section, I trace some of the complexities of activist research that I did not anticipate going into the field. First, I define my approach to activist research. Then I discuss a few particular issues of the research as I work through questions of what collaboration can or should mean. I end with a discussion of the efficacy of oral history in a project of social change, exploring some of the complications and limitations, but also strengths of producing knowledge rooted in activist research, and producing research products beyond the Western academic sphere.

In order to contextualize Janil within student organizing and Haitian geopolitics, I used a “mixed-methods” (see Bernard and Gravlee 2015) approach including ethnography, in-depth key informant interviews and oral history interviews. I also did archival research, principally from personal archives, to provide richer background to the ethnographic work, and to compile and produce written documents about Janil in collaboration with Haitian student organizers. Within an activist anthropological approach, these methods come together to form a participatory approach called transformational research (TR), which seeks “collaborative relationships with groups experiencing injustice… to identify with them issues that are problematic for them” and form a research program thusly (Schensul et al 2015, 195). Oral history is considered to be co-authored by the interviewer and narrator, and though the interviews themselves are often laden with uneven dynamics in that relationship, the result is undoubtedly shaped by both parties, and in this sense has potential to be conducive to a collaborative methodological approach (Mazé 2006, 246).
My participant observation involved participating in activist events, meetings, protests, and organizing efforts. From mid-May to mid-August of 2015, this fieldwork took place in Pòtoprens at FASCH, FE, the École Normale, IERAH, and the UEH School of Graduate Studies, meetings of peasant/community organizations in Gantye (Ganthier), Gonayiv (Gonaïves), and Ti Sous, and was based around quotidian interactions among student organizers, particularly at FASCH and the Faculté d’Éthnologie. It also involved participation and observation in protests, forums, and panels organized by students and left organizations on UEH campuses. UEH does not have open campuses, but I was able to gain access through my activist and scholarly associations with faculty and students, and because I gave seminars and lectures throughout July and August. Some stories shared here came from previous, longer visits and involvement in student activism in Pòtoprens going back to the post-earthquake period in 2010.

Participant observation consists of participating and recording information gained from participating in a social setting and observing what is happening in the setting explicitly in the analysis (Musante 2013, 252). It is a foundational method for cultural anthropology because it is what allows the researcher to get close, through immersion, to the “realities of social life” through “systematic hanging out,” that is, building friendly and informal relationships with members of a community (DeMunck 1998). In my research, both the participation and observation as an activist researcher enabled me to gain knowledge about more of the workings and tensions of student activist organizations, and observe strategies and debates through engagement with them. Through friendly relationships alongside my participation as an activist, I was able to be actively engaged in students’ lives, bringing me closer to an understanding of my collaborators’ points of view.
In-depth, unstructured interviews enable the elicitation of research participants’ subjective worlds. Because new ideas can develop within interviews themselves, while they are happening, qualitative interviewing can be considered an emergent method. In other words, it allows for the flexibility of questions to be modified during an interview depending on the dynamic between each particular interviewer and interviewee.

This work is based on interviews with over 60 people who knew Janil, whose politics were shaped by him, many who use his work in their organizing and teaching, his colleagues, and his family members. These interviews ranged from five to 20 minutes of unstructured, casual conversation, to semi-structured interviews that lasted one or two hours, to several sittings of multiple hours of both unstructured and semi-structured recorded life history and oral history interviews. The project participants came from contacts I had already made as a solidarity activist and through sampling methods, where participants helped to identify other people in key positions to contribute. These were conducted wherever possible: in empty classrooms, in semi-occupied classrooms, in homes, courtyards, cafés, rooftops, and parks.

My approach to activist research is informed by Hale (2008) and also falls into the Participatory Action Research tradition of Fals Borda (1979) and Paulo Freire (1970). This methodology of activist research also stays in a feminist of color theoretical framework, without which the foundations of activist research would be unsteady; it takes seriously positionality and the interconnectedness and contradictions within national, racial, and political identities, it foregrounds (certain) marginalized subjects, all the while with a very specific aim of creating social change, and one that involves creating dialogic and collaborative relationships among all of those involved in the research process. This means first, being politically aligned with the participants of the project, second, open and dialogic relationships between researchers and
participants (Shayne 2013, 13), and collaborating in the way knowledge is produced, which emphasizes the importance of writing, sharing, and producing documents of research. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is the importance of the political implications and applications of developing the project that should relate to provoking social change, or bettering oppressive circumstances.

Activist methodologies in anthropology have gained traction in the last two decades amid increasing calls for engaged, collaborative, and social justice-oriented research (Hale 2008; Vargas 2008; Gordon 2008; Speed 2008, Stuesse 2016). Distinct from the broader category of applied anthropological research, which could refer to any sort of application of anthropological knowledge to a human problem, activist research seeks to align itself with an organized group of people in struggle, and work with them toward political goals. Charles Hale defines activist research as research that “helps to understand root causes of inequality…is carried out at each phase in direct cooperation with an organized collective and is used together with people in question to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions” (Hale 2001, 13; 2008).

This definition frames my study as research with activists who wanted their stories told and who found Janil inspirational. To collect their stories in their name and in his name is thus a kind of activist anthropology. I worked in “direct cooperation” with my research collaborators in an attempt to move toward a decolonized anthropology, or an anthropology of liberation (Harrison 1991). Gordon proposes that an anthropology of liberation “must contribute to a people’s effort to understand the nature of their own oppression and to conquer it” (1991, 155), building a base for Nilsen and Cox’s proposal for Marxist theory with practical application to situations of oppression. Yet Gordon argues that it must further emanate from a collective assessment (of both scholar and the people themselves) of the nature and source of oppression.
The anthropologist in this model must become actively involved in the politics of the fieldwork situation. For Elizabeth Enslin (1994), activist research must move beyond “dialogic relationships,” past the production of ethnography as an end goal of the anthropological endeavor, and into the arena of concrete collaboration in order to be directed at social transformation. The documentation of oral histories and collaborative editing into a useable audio documentary is this study’s attempt at such concrete collaboration.

_Collaboration: With and for Whom?

Fals Borda states the need for the researcher to be “inserted into political process” and argues even further that rigorous scientific research benefits from this when he says that we will be even more “consistent, efficient and productive scientists if [we] maintain the balance, the rhythm and the dialectic of communication with the people, and if the political organization encourages, admits and respects the scientists as such” (1979, 52). Hale continues this thread of thinking as he synthesizes his theory of activist research. I came into the research only loosely aligned: as a Marxist, though not as orthodox as many of my collaborators, as an anti-imperialist, as one who respected the legacy of Janil and thought the project to be politically important.

The idea of staying “inserted” and collaborative becomes more complicated than some of our scholarly activist forbearers have outlined. For this research, it was difficult because of the multiple political factions and people invested in particular and divergent political claims to Janil’s memory (for instance, whether or not he was a misogynist, or how much of a Vodou practitioner he was), and in this sense, there is not one political organization as there were in Fals Borda’s case studies. Doing research with various activists where there were fractures in movements meant that I had to ask myself constantly, “With whom am I trying to work?” And in
situations where people specifically told me “Don’t talk to her\textsuperscript{17} – we don’t trust her!” This is of data in and of itself, but what are the implications for doing the activist part? I found myself in one situation hiding behind the argument of “needing to have more objective perspectives” in order to justify my contact with “her,” which is perhaps quite at odds with an ideal, Halean, clear political stance. This also worked because my collaborators ultimately wanted rigor, not plain subjectivity. Moreover, wonderful collaborators also appeared at times that I did not expect.

Halfway into my fieldwork, I introduced myself to someone at a panel on imperialism, and an hour later he was sitting me down trying to help me re-design my methods into a new project that we could do together. I ultimately remained with the original research design, for the most part, but I want to illustrate that I needed a certain flexibility of allowing new people to involve themselves.

\textit{A Reflection on Position}

Because of my earlier work as a solidarity organizer, some of my potential informants met me with great support. I would be seen in the company of a trusted comrade, for instance, or introduced to others by a close old friend. Weeks into my thesis fieldwork, as I continued to introduce myself to people, many had already heard of the project and had already made up their mind about if they wanted to participate. As previously mentioned, I was not alone in spreading the word; it helped me greatly that people who had the respect of their comrades were there to help generate interest in the project or vouch for me.

For some, my presence was met with serious distrust. In certain cases, individuals already held a general distrust for anyone interested in openly discussing movement politics due to

\textsuperscript{17}“She” was a specific narrator with whose opinions several participant strongly disagreed.
experience with espionage and betrayal in the left and my project was just another thing to suspect. As a blan (literally white, but specifically a foreigner), an American, a person from the West, and a person interested in the history and actors of an activist milieu, there was plenty to doubt. Distrust of foreigners is not new. Though this distrust of Westerners is not unique to Haiti, the mass influx of foreigners and the NGOs before and after the earthquake has “exacerbated both distrust of foreigners and the hope that talking to those foreigners might still result in material gain” (Wagner 2014, 34) creating doubt on both ends. We can also attribute distrust to the history of mawonaj\textsuperscript{18} or marronage in French. Already in Haiti there are traditions of mawonaj, the cultural practice of hiding or omitting either literally or through the use of metaphor, and this is seen often in speech among Haitians. When a foreigner enters, it is logical that mawonaj would intensify.

Among activists who are conscious of the long history of saboteurs, spies, and traitors in the left, there was even more reason for suspicion. I found out, for instance, after several meetings with one key participant that he thought I was in the CIA. This individual called around about me, asking if anyone could vouch for me. But then, people I had known for years did vouch for me. Slowly I built trust with people I had not met prior to this study. I used all of my connections, activist and reactionary. I depended on my trust in them and theirs in me, and on my whole history of engagement with activists. Even among Haitians, among those who have developed tight bonds with each other in lit la (the struggle for justice), this refleks mawonaj can be seen. Several who remained too cautious to give their voice to the project still played critical

\textsuperscript{18} Mawonaj has already been discussed as methods of resistance, but here I am reflecting what some have referred to as what has become a type of “reflex” (refleks mawon) to distance oneself from another, with some level of awareness that distrust leads to safety. This should not be generalized as a way of speaking about “Haitian culture,” but it is found nonetheless.
roles in bringing this research into fruition by connecting me with others and offering questions, critiques of, and key insights about Janil that I could explore with other participants.

Listening and documenting is an important part of social movements research, and I hope that as activist research continues to gain traction and more is produced, and more scholars reflect on the political and methodological and scholarly contradictions we find, that we can formulate ways of doing research in all of its complexities, while proposing or involving ourselves in political interventions toward social change. The power of oral history to contribute to an activist project depends on the conception of the project. In this research, it was conceived by several student activists in Haiti who were ultimately not significant participants in the project, but contributors nonetheless. As the project moved on, as new collaborators involved themselves in shaping what kinds of stories were told and who would tell them, those newer participants began to claim it for their own. It became clear that carrying out the project out in the ideal sense Hale (2008) advocates throughout the entire process would be impossible, and I doubt that it is always necessary to do so. Even the politics that inform which research question is asked can generate activist projects. Moreover, activist research is endlessly messy. Fals Borda asks political organizations to take scholars seriously in a project for social change (1979), but how would this account for the researcher who is herself a part of a political organization? Splinters occur and we might end up on the wrong side. This would mean having less access to some, but perhaps better access to others. There is a strong, if not urgent, need to engage with Third World knowledge production, to do collaborative activist research, but this might look very different depending on the specific historical and political situations in which we are working. In this case, it required flexibility, willingness to hear out many perspectives, to engage with folks honestly if
I disagreed, to check in constantly with trusted collaborators to discuss in which direction the project should go, and facing the consequences of choosing a side lest it be chosen for me.

For participation in an activist context, positioning in one sense means political alignment or agreement, as well as participation in political activity. It helped me methodologically beyond measure to have a political position. I disagreed with the politics of my collaborators often, and this helped to generate productive debate and conversation that helped me understand the realities and consciousness of my participants. My ability to critique the “right people” sometimes served as a rite of passage, for instance, after having interviewed a known reactionary professor, I was asked about my analysis of his politics. Taking a stand helped grant me access, privileged me to information I would not otherwise have had. Criticizing the “right” people earned me respect as a moun serve,\(^\text{19}\) allowed me to be taken seriously as a leftist, that is, positioning myself and taking a stand, and distancing myself from particular people in the university milieu. Having an earnest interest and prior knowledge in folk songs, political chants, language, history of the movement, having political agreement with the importance of Janil, agreement that his story and their stories were worth telling, and were all necessary components for the ability to carry out this study, all are part of my own political positioning. Some of our debates became loud, particularly surrounding questions gender and homophobia, but to have a well-reasoned position, even if in opposition to many around me, helped me to be taken more seriously. One particularly helpful debate was a very noisy and public disagreement I had with a young student during a conference lunch about how progressive the U.S. linguist Noam Chomsky is. The student fiercely defended him as a scholar of the people, I called Chomsky more or less benign, but with a perhaps-helpful mass appeal, and later that week, I met some

\(^{19}\) This translates to a serious or earnest person. In addition to being able to be taken “seriously,” a moun serve is someone trustworthy, righteous or just, one who walks the talk.
students who were waiting to talk to me about participating in the project after hearing our debate that day. These were tests, politically, theoretically, and linguistically. Multiple people tested my political analysis of current events: What do you think of what is happening in the Ukraine? What’s happening with Black Lives Matter? What do you mean when you say you are a queer activist? Some tests were more playful and some more serious, but my ability to play the game put my ability to participate at stake.

Beyond how flexing my muscles in political debate was helpful, however, is the glaring issue of being a blan woman in Haiti. I am visibly not “completely” blan, it is apparent to many that I have multiracial parentage, and this might or might not have been a factor in how I was seen and treated by those in the project. “It helps you, definitely, that you are a person of color,” said a close friend, “Whiteness isn’t an easy thing to face on these streets.” Yet the view of me by strangers in the streets of Pòtoprens are not the same as those who had a political stake in the project and wanted to see it come to fruition. In terms of access, my political identity as an anti-capitalist ended up being more significant than my being as a blan. What this meant methodologically for the politics of this project was trying to listen as much as possible and frequently check in with participants about what they thought of the project’s stories and politics. What were participants’ desires for results of the project? “All I want is for there to be concrete results of this project,” said Johane, who was echoed by many others. “Do not let us down.”

The utmost confirmation that we had built a serious political collaboration was when I was criticized by the thoughtful young professor Joseline about canceling an interview we had scheduled after our initial meeting about the project’s goals and participants. When I later checked my calendar and realized a friend’s marriage was that day, I had canceled and could not again get a response from her. Joseline was a very close associate of Janil, someone everyone
wanted in the project, and eventually, weeks later, when I ran into her on campus, she told me that she wanted to tell me to my face: “We are serious about our activism, and it should come before all else. When you cancelled our interview, I took you for someone who was not serve [serious]. So let’s plan this.” Later, speaking with others about the confrontation, it was explained to me that Joseline was a particularly strong and well-respected comrade, who upheld a revolutionary discipline perhaps unparalleled by anyone except Janil himself. I was taken aback by her words, nervous that I had destroyed the chance for her contribution to the project, even questioning my own commitment. I learned eventually to take her criticism as a complement to the research: she took it seriously as an activist endeavor. Many narrators have continued to check up on how the project is progressing, over a year after we interviewed, and some are excited to participate in the curation of the documentary.

On Oral History as Activist Research

Oral history, the collecting and documenting of personal memoirs as historical documentation, has been increasingly used in conjunction with social movements research as part of an effort to challenge dominant discourses (Pearce 2013; Varriale 2013). It is not only a way to understand local history and the surrounding sociopolitical system, but a way to explore the nexus between individual and collective memory. From a social movements perspective, oral history has been considered a way to facilitate empowerment of those marginalized by History²⁰ by allowing stories to be documented and transmitted (Abrams 2013), giving back to “the people

²⁰ The capital H of History signals both academic study and dominant paradigms of what counts as legitimate in the historical record. Édouard Glissant (1981), in *Le discours antillais*, defines History with a capital H as distinctly Western, and a totalizing and colonial system that proffers ideals about Western civilization while marginalizing, and making Africa and Asia non-, pre- or ahistorical.
who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place” (Thompson 1978). The telling and recording provides some legitimacy for a movement.

A potential limitation of oral history as a method is that it is grounded in memory. Memory is a subjective method of recording the past through individual experiences, shaped and reshaped over time, through retelling and through the politics that shape what is told and what is silenced, and thus is often thought of as “unreliable” and needing confirmation with other sources. Beyond needing confirmation with other sources to get to the “truth,” its subjectivities themselves are framed by politics. This limitation is also the strength of this research. Memories are real, whether they represent historical fact or not, and have great meaning and consequences. The examination of all of the imperfections, contradictions of, and investments in memories of Janil, mutable as they are, is what produced fruitful data for anthropological analysis. The ways in which they contradicted, that is, revealed deeper social and political rifts which lended themselves to thorough deconstruction (to be discussed in Chapter 4).

One question that I have grappled with while thinking through how much the results of my research fit within an activist paradigm is, to what extent can oral history really “empower” (Abrams 2013)? First, oral history has been considered a collaborative method from the start, one where knowledge production is being decolonized, or for Fals Borda (1979), where the expert/scientist needs not be the only qualified producer of knowledge, because the interviewer and interviewee work together to form the record. Many narrators expressed to me, during and after the interviews, how they felt lighter, how they needed to actually tell the stories. Some of these participants were close to Janil, and some were not. They found a personal healing through the interview. But can this be considered activism? I would argue that such catharsis, if we

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21 See Yelvington (2002) for a discussion of how the boundaries between memory and history are politically established.
dislike thinking of it formally as activism, plays an important role for activists. When we return to our expanded definition of what counts as politics, and including the realm of the emotional as a necessary part of politics (Jaggar 1989), there is a stronger argument to be made that, as activist work, this project fits the proverbial bill. For the purposes of this project, perhaps the question of “empowerment” through oral is the wrong one to ask. Instead, the question is about re-centering of the importance of sharing our stories in activist spaces.

I must say also that the presence of my project itself enabled certain activists to raise politics with others. To have the attention to Janil itself was important, and shined a light onto issues that people already were wanting to mobilize around, and I would say, not out of self-congratulations, that there was a certain education about him and the social injustices in which he was involved in fighting against (the neocolonial legacy in Haiti, for better conditions of education, an autonomous university) at times within my interviews. There was attention not only to him but to problems of social consciousness with some of the interviews. The hope is that the project can provide tools for social change. One can say also that looking at storytellers not just as data producers but as intellectuals, in a Gramscian sense, is already empowering, but decolonizing our academic methods is not equal to an activist intervention.

Having first come to Port-au-Prince as a solidarity activist following the earthquake, I was lucky to have laid a foundation for such a collaborative project with student activists through working on solidarity campaigns and in a project to develop a post-earthquake Freirean popular education school in Port-au-Prince called Ti Lekòl. Through Ti Lekòl, I forged relationships with leftist university activists who had been active in the 2008-2009 fight for a minimum wage, including members of GREPS (Group for Reflection on Social Problems), Sèk Gramsci, and ASID. Though there were a number of fractures in the student movement in the year following
the earthquake, several individual university students from these organizations and I discussed what sort of anthropological project would be interesting for the student movement. When Janil was mentioned, there was unanimous interest in a project devoted to telling his stories, and those students asked that I conduct an oral history about Janil’s legacy as part of their political mobilization. These were not official organizational endorsements of the project. It came together more loosely, among individuals whose political goals were not always overlapping, but still with a definite politics: the purpose was to document previously excluded counter-narratives in ways that could be helpful to those activists as part of a broader effort to legitimize their demands, while examining conflicting political claims to his memory.

I conducted dozens of long interviews, cried, laughed, and joked, together with interviewees, but also participated in their daily political activities: continued popular education schools participating as a teacher and student, participating in protests, giving radio interviews about the project, and generally hanging around campus as they, and we, discussed and debated politics. Collaborative research did not depart, often, from what many anthropologists discuss in their experiences of “reciprocity” in the field, where things like providing childcare, buying groceries or a tap tap\(^{22}\) ride, taking care of friends when they were sick, translating someone’s writing into English for publication, are suggested if not required in order to help in the process of data gathering. It should be noted that aspects of such “reciprocity” are a basic part of relating in a friendly way to other people, but there are also specific aspects of reciprocity within a Haitian context, like being quickly invited to people’s hometowns to meet families, literally exchanging the shirts off our backs, making daily short phone calls to check up on one another and ask if the other had eaten.

\(^{22}\) Tap taps are the brightly and extravagantly painted buses and pickup trucks that serve as public transportation and share taxis throughout Haiti.
In my case, it was a question of fundamentally being and walking with other human beings, friends, and comrades. It meant people correcting me as they watched me write fieldnotes with the wrong spelling or date, their book recommendations and referrals to other narrators, taking care of me when I was ill. When someone corrected my spelling or dates or references in my fieldnotes, it was because of a shared political interest in the project’s success, not only out of friendly kindness. Oral history allowed a collaboration at times which was reciprocal in itself. Several narrators thanked me after their interviews, for the opportunity to speak about what was a heavy, and for some, traumatizing experience. The commitment of others to this project for its political goals allowed a political collaboration that surpasses common notions of reciprocity in fieldwork because it calls upon collaborators in a different way, wherein they can see their own gain, as well as a higher purpose in participation. People went out further out of their way than they otherwise might have. When I was struggling to get in touch with certain individuals to be interviewed, it would often become a collective effort, and I would sometimes find that meetings had been set up for me. Many collaborators helped spread the (political) word about the project, giving it credibility to potential participants in ways I would not alone have been able to bring across. I gained access to personal stories and personal archives through the trust that came with profound political agreement. And, importantly, collaborators critiqued me and the project openly and honestly in productive ways as it took shape, a privilege that could not be taken for granted if those collaborators did not share a political commitment to seeing the project come to fruition.
The Politics of the Promotion of Memory

It is arguable that this work itself is canonizing of Janil. In other words, would he be as much on the minds and tongues of students at his university had there not been a blan present for months, asking about him and his work? This is an unanswerable question and a tension at the heart of anthropological fieldwork, where our own presence has an impact and we may never be quite sure how to measure that impact, yet we can say assuredly that there is one. For a project with such activist intentions, I would hope the project did promote critical attention to his memory and work. Often, discussions of interviews would spill out into public discussions and debates about politics in Haiti. At public events where his name or scholarly work was invoked, it was clear to me that his memory was alive and at work regardless of this project’s presence. I hesitate to overstate the spotlighting effect of this project’s presence because of how present, prezan, Janil continues to be already in the physical space around UEH: his murals and the debates about them that rage on, graffiti dedicated to him the pedagogical space (his work read in sociology and social work classes and in the prefak), and in spaces of protest. Yet certain interviews promoted critical attention to him because it put collaborators into dialogue that they would not otherwise have found. The project also generally garnered interest in what sort of tools might result; would an investigation finally be held? Would attention to Janil draw more attention to the general conditions at the state university? Foregrounding the attention to the project was the collective political motivation and mobilization around doing the project; it required meeting and open discussion of Janil’s politics, if and where the current student movement, fractured as it is, departs from him, the planning events and popular education around him and the antiliberal, anti-imperialist politics that grounded his work and activism. Being
public about the project was itself a political act that said he was a force still to be reckoned with, that his contributions could not be forgotten, even if his physical self had been extinguished.

Figure 3. The corner where Janil was shot. “Janil, we won’t forget your assassination.” Avenue Fleure du Chaines. Photo by author.
Conclusion

Methods in fieldwork are always political. Classical anthropological methods insisted on a need to stay apart, observe while participating, but somehow stay objective—not have so much of an impact that the data would become skewed. Unfortunately, a lot of these methods historically were used in concert with colonial projects, and certainly, both pre- and post-Writing Culture,23 did not question or problematize the politics of doing ethnography. Theory around applied anthropology has started to ask important questions about what is at stake when our job is to study people, when the majority of the studied face conditions of extreme inequality and marginalization. It is my view in many circumstances, it would be unethical not to try actively to apply our anthropological knowledge solve the problems of those people in our research projects. “The university system itself,” Gordon points out, “depends on elitism, hierarchy, and on the rhetoric of staying “objective (mystified), nonpolitical (nonsubversive), academic (elitist)” (2008:212). If we are interested at all in trying to decolonize our discipline (Harrison 1991), our methodology is one of the first places to start. For this project, the ability to carry it out hinged upon my not staying apart or objective, that is, upon my taking very clear political stances, being open about them with those in and outside the project. Taking a stance must not be confused with a lack of analytic, academic, or theoretical rigor, rather, it often grants access, and allows us to probe even more deeply into our research questions than if we had not taken a position and recognized where we are positioned in the first place (Hale 2008; Speed 2008; Stuesse 2016).

23 Writing Culture came as a highly influential and significant contribution to anthropology as it called into question the epistemically and politically embattled site of ethnographic production and representation. It is arguably the harbinger of anthropology’s so-called “crisis of representation.” (See James Clifford and George E. Marcus [1986].)
Chapter Four: Janil Remembered

Janil’s memory was alive, not only in the heads of people. It unified the practices of groups of militan. Symbols are used as a way of making solidarity, but the meaning of the symbols is always contested. What structures enable or prevent solidarity? Class conflict and political repression can be seen throughout all of the symbols employed by activists, and modes of action depend on values. These values depend on and are defined by the larger context in which social life is being practiced. The image of Janil as a freedom fighter, an intellectual, a leftist, an angry hot-headed troublemaker, the misogynist—are each significant because of the ways they are imagined and remembered. By exploring the accounts of his life and death, especially those that are infused with myth and nationalism, we can better grasp not only Janil’s importance as an intellectual and political figure, but his context, the movement and moment from which he emerged. It is possible to examine both his life and the way his life is reconstructed in others’ memories, both the concrete situations around his own politicization and assassination and their symbolic value. Understanding the symbols that have emerged around him forces us to consider how meaning is constructed and what interaction meaning has with the material world around it. This chapter examines various aspects of Janil as he is remembered by looking at the stories told of him, and how they conjoin with their political economic backdrop. It explores how Janil as a symbol has become a mobilizing force for students organizing in his wake.

24 Militan is the Kreyòl word for “activist,” but one who is willing to engage in both leftist critical theory and militant activism in the struggle for social justice.
The Haitian Intellectual

“General Dessalines put life before all things. While he recognized private property, he made it dependent on the collective interest. So, no commodities could be sold without taxes not being paid; no landowner could sell his or her goods without having first paid the workers. There is a public spirit that animated the measures that General Dessalines took to ensure that liberty flourished in Haiti. Dessalines’s liberty was not the same idea as the formal idea that declares that all people are free, but they don’t have the conditions to realize this freedom.”

Janil Lwijis, “Ideyal Desalinyen” [translation by author]

Every generation in Haiti has interpreted and laid claim to the revolutionary Jean-Jacques Dessalines in its own way. One at times hears Haitians, including the elite, speak of themselves, as *pitit Desalin* (Dessalines’s children); a presidential candidate in 2015, Moïse Jean-Charles even created a political platform under this name, but Dessalines is far from an empty nationalist signifier. For many in the current activist student milieu, Dessalines has been reinterpreted as a proto-socialist, or even as advocating a particular Haitian style of socialism in a way that can and must be applied to Haiti’s current social formation. “DESALIN – Premye Jeneral Antiliberal Nan Limanite [Dessalines – First Communist in History]” titled the fourth edition of ASID’s pamphlet in the autumn of 2008 (see Lwijis 2008). Long blamed for betraying the Haitian revolution, Dessalines has started to be understood by some on the left as the true idealist of the Haitian revolution, as he called not only for the evacuation of the French, but for agrarian reform that would make great movements toward social equity in the nation. The question of land rights has continued to stay central in Haiti through post-revolutionary times, American occupation, Duvalierism, the Lavalas regimes which followed (despite rhetoric to the contrary), and in current politico-agricultural crises. It is certain that once one is concerned with not only anti-imperial nationalism but with land redistribution, one moves into the realm of fundamental social and economic changes. Dessalinians (*Desalinyen/Desalinyèn* in Kreyòl) thus frame him as
having a revolutionary character that was two-fold: advocating both against imperialism and for redistribution of wealth. A favorite Dessalines quotation dropped frequently from the lips of Dessalinian activists: “Pa gen libète san byennèt” (There is no liberty where there is not wellbeing). “Liberty” in a U.S. and French context has always been sufficiently vague to justify the fundamental non-liberty of others, but, as many participants of this project discusses, when we think about “wellbeing,” we must think about basic economic and social freedoms and rights. Janil was one of several of the contemporary intellectuals who politically champion Dessalines, and he must be at least partially credited for his reclamation. Years after Janil first wrote about Dessalines fighting for a “double liberty,” U.S. scholar Deborah Jenson (2015) published on how Dessalines was fighting both against imperialism and against any form of slavery. As students in Janil’s milieu started to see her argument, they ridiculed United States scholarship for only “just catching on.” One posted on social media: “I would direct you to go read the fourth volume of the DESALINYEN that ASID published on the Dessalinian Ideal; this is exactly what we said. They are just repeating us."

When asked about what they remembered of Janil as a person, many recall his artisan sandals, his dreadlocks (dreads), his traditional Haitian shirts. A medical student activist, Guerenson, said,

He showed us how to live otreman, I mean, to see a dreadlocked professor, in those beautiful sandals! Before that, I thought it was just school, marriage, family. After meeting him, it was how I was going to help fight against capitalism.

So, dreads became a signifier of living radically. “Janil wore dreads for two reasons,” a close professor friend and comrade of Janil discussed with me:

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25 This Kreyòl literally translates to “in another way.” It carries the connotation of alternative modes of being in this context, or ways of prioritizing collective behaviors in a capitalist society.
They [the dreads] affirmed his identity because of his experiences of racism in Brazil. So it reaffirmed his identity as a black man. In the universities in Brazil, you practically never see black folks. Eight percent of people who graduate are black, while they are over half of the population. And further, if you are black, it is assumed you are not Brazilian—Guinea Bassau, Cape Verde, Angola, some even from Congo and now Haitians are beginning to go. But for black Brazilians it’s nearly impossible to enter the university.

I’ll give you an example. While Janil was finishing his doctorate and needed to defend his thesis, he met with a professor to invite him to sit on his jury, a professor from an outside department, who didn’t know him. When he approached him to ask him, the guy says, “No, no. I don’t have anything.” You understand? He thought Janil was asking for charity, for cash. So, I think he wore dreads to reinforce his racial identity, his Haitian identity. But secondly, I think he wore his hair that way because this hair bothered people in Haiti. I believe it was a way for him to say, “I’m not in the same mindset as you.” In Haiti a person who has dreads is seen as a *vakabon* [vagabond, or homeless person], a bad person who doesn’t contribute to society, who is worthless. And Anil, a Doctor of Social Work, it was his way of saying, “I’m not your friend.” And in the very campus in which he taught. I do think Brazil re-enforced his identity in this way.

An essential part of social movements and movement identity is a focus on cultural recognition in order to confront the invisibility that is part of dominant cultural paradigms and capitalist ideals. In the case of these particular symbols that invoke blackness, Africanness, and Haitianness, the legibility of politics comes down to taking a cultural form, a nationalist form. Moreover, dreads have legibility because dreads index a broader cultural movement that is not at
its foundation a political battle over rights or liberation, but still political to its core. As such it is necessary, if not convenient for organizers to involve and take on cultural questions of blackness in order to be made legible. Vodou is considered a salient part of the national fabric but is at the same time suppressed. The choice to privilege Kreyòl, too, allows a particular legibility of Dessalinian politics.

Dreadlocks (dreads), artisanal leather sandals, rather than tennis shoes, seashell adornment, rather than metal jewelry, are all associated with Janil in how people spoke of him as a person. He was a man “of style.” Dreadlocks become significant in this remembering as part of a system of “style-signs” that represent peasant dress as a direct resistance to European styles (McAlister 2002). Dreads can be read as a religious and political display. For some, dreads are referred to as chevè Simbi (Simbi’s hair) and suggest association with the lwa of water and snakes, Simbi. For others, it is a geopolitical identification with Rastafarian tradition. As discussed above, the Haitian state has tried for a long time to distance itself from African markers. Protests erupted in December, 2014 after military police forced several dread-bearing men to lay down, and cut off their hair. Being forced to cut off one’s hair harkens back to the days of Duvalierism, when those with hair over a few inches long could be arrested (McAlister 2002). Politically, long locks are symbolic of the celebration of post-Duvalier freedom, blackness, Africanness, and rebelliousness.

The Professor

Johane, an old leader of ASID, met me at the university after she finished work one day. She spoke as she bagged groceries in a chain store. “Sweetie, the routine is so hard,” she said as she gave me a kind, fatigued smile. “You wake up, you look at the sun shining, you put on your
shirt and go to look for water and you’re already worried. Take my young [six-year-old] son waking up this morning, he goes to see his friend, and his friend hasn’t eaten yet. His friend has his twòket26 in hand, ready to go ask if he can wash someone’s clothes for them or do an errand to make a little money. Every time you wake up, every second, you’re worried. There’s no room to think beyond that moment because you’re so worried. You can go and get a little money for yourself, sure. But to take care of yourself here, get money, and not be destroying someone else’s life, exploiting someone else—that’s almost impossible.” We sit quietly for a minute and I ask her how she came to understand exploitation.

Machè (my dear), I had a sad thing happen in my life. My father wanted to finish school but he couldn’t. His aunt didn’t have the money to pay the fees. She had other concerns…kids, she had to pay her grandon27 and she sent him away to work in the sweatshops. He was working in a car factory for the Krann family, making Isuzu cars. You don’t know how they were exploiting these people. They wouldn’t even pay them, no matter what betiz (cursewords) came out of their [the workers’] mouths, they wouldn’t pay them. He spoke up, and they beat him. They beat him so badly he couldn’t work for a long time. He’s not so old now, but now they tell him he’s too old to work anymore. I was 13 when he was at Isuzu. But when I got to the university, the passed me books. Gramsci, Freire, Marx, Anil. And then I had a language to talk about the exploitation.

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26 A twòket is a cushion or cloth used to protect a person’s head as they walk bearing a heavy load. It is usually made of cloth or leaves from a plantain tree.
27 After the Haitian revolution, the Louverturian aristocracy reproduced oligarchic practices of import-export to the detriment of the development of Haitian independence and production, and set the stage for the system of a wealthy landowning class in rural areas, the grandons, who operate thought a sharecropping-like system of debt, alongside development of the Haitian factory-owning bourgeoisie and proletarian workers.
Then I understood it. And I learned I could reflect on it, and I saw people fighting against it, and I saw I could fight against it.

Johane’s story is common. She speaks differently than some of the other students as a parent, with more concern of having to provide, with what will happen to youth who need to learn how to think critically. The overwhelming majority of student activists in this research came from poor rural families. Most students, in remembering Janil, recount their stories of coming into political consciousness, just like Johane. Overwhelmingly from poor areas and from uneducated families, they speak of coming into the university milieu and being handed a text by Antonio Gramsci, Paolo Freire, Jacques Roumain (the founder of the first Haitian communist party in the 1930s), or Janil. And then, they each speak of encountering him. His critical texts were and continue to be important to their conscientization. Many recall his artisan sandals, his dreads, his traditional Haitian shirts.

Johane’s story is also illustrative of processes of imperialism and Haiti’s political economy over the last several decades. Her parents were both sent to work in low-wage factories by their families who could not otherwise support them. This represents multiple multinational processes of capital as they have affected Haiti, including the utter devastation of rural agriculture by U.S., French, and Canadian agribusiness (Barthélemy 2008). Hillary Clinton famously declared Haiti officially “open for business” in 2011, and already many new, enormous multinational corporations who pay the equivalent of US$14 every two weeks, sometimes, have entered. But Clinton’s call is nowhere near new. Over the past three decades, the effects of structural adjustment programs and the implementation of neoliberal policy on trade practices, agricultural, and food distribution transformed an already suffering economy into a barely functioning one, and this has provided the basis for such severe exploitation. The import taxes on
rice, sugar, and flour dropped dramatically through the late 1980s, and this worked to lower the quantity of production for a certain number of these products. Focusing on rice production as just one of many examples, the production of rice in 1988 was 110,000 metric tons, and the national consumption was 125,000, 15,000 metric tons coming from imports. By 2007, while the needs of the national economy for this product stood at 450,000 tons, national production reached a level of only 90,000; imports made up 360,000 tons (Barthélemy 2008, 5). In 1983, by decree of Jean-Claude Duvalier’s government, almost all of the creole pigs were killed,²⁸ decimating the rural economy and plunging almost every peasant family into poverty. The number of slaughtered pigs was estimated at 1,500,000, and they had served as the “bank account” for most families, especially in more rural areas of Haiti (Barthélemy 2008:3), that is, this reserve could send a child to school or pay for a funeral or emergency medical expense.

Portion of the state budget devoted to the sector of agricultural production, education, and health has decreased steadily from year to year, from 11.63 percent in 2001 to just 4.62 percent in 2008 (Barthélemy 2008:9). By 2016, there was between 70 percent and 80 percent unemployment.

The Lavalas governments offered peasants and workers the alternative of retooling themselves as workers in the assembly industries in the free zones, under control of multinational firms where poverty wages are assigned to them. It is not surprising in these conditions that the majority of the country’s inhabitants suffer from chronic malnutrition.

It was around the time that he came back from his Master’s degree in Brazil that Janil began to teach in only Kreyòl. This was fondly recalled by his students. As a GREPS activist explained,

²⁸ Known as kochon planch, these resilient pigs were a key component of the rural economy. When a contagious swine fever spread from Spain to the Dominican Republic in 1978, the United States government pressured Duvalier to kill them all, with the promise of compensation to rural farmers. Most of this compensation ended up in the pockets of Duvalier.
He understood that speaking French in Haiti means: Savant, distinction, it means cutting
the majority of possible expression – it’s practically an expression of the dominant class,
because it seems like a discriminatory act. Me, if they speak to me in French, I make a
point of speaking Kreyòl. I’ve done this to professors. I had an old professor at L’École
Normale, and every time we spoke he would speak to me in French and I would respond
Kreyòl.

Teaching in Kreyòl can also be read as a practical choice. An old student of his raved about his
teaching: “He always spoke in bon Kreyòl29 so that we could understand the theoretical concepts.
We were university students and we spoke French, but I don’t think we would have been able to
really grasp those ideas in the French of all those other professors.”

Many students, most of them from rural areas of Haiti who had come to Pòtoprens to
study, discussed coming into political consciousness in the university milieu. They already had
“organic” knowledge of the workings of oppression in Haiti because of backgrounds and
experiences, seeing what their parents had undergone during Duvalierism, but their
conscientization congealed in new ways in the university environment as they came and were
given a language to talk about exploitation and lanmizè.30 Janil was commonly invoked, if not as
a political papa, as an educator who played a key role in facilitating the development of a critical
consciousness. “It meant everything for my own critical development to read his work, and to

29 Bon Kreyòl translates directly to “good Creole,” but connotes one’s ability to use its
expressions, idioms, and playfulness to the fullest. I have been told by several Haitians across
generations, for instance, that my Kreyòl was fluent, but that I still needed to learn bon Kreyòl,
the language of the people and of the countryside.

30 This translates to “misery,” and in this context has a more politicized connotation. That is, it is
a misery understood as being part of the political and economic situation and history of the
country.
relate with a true organic intellectual,” remembered an activist who had worked with ASID, “someone so serious yet so committed to an open university and social revolution.”

The Comrade

Johane gave me the same lovely, but fatigued smile as she told me that the faktori is where her parents met. “Men Janil se Papa’m!” (But Janil, he is my father!) She explained, he is her “political father,” an exemplary role model of a true revolutionary. Many others idealized him in similar ways. They talked of his “revolutionary discipline.” He always arrived for meetings 30 minutes early. If one was late, one was not to be taken seriously, even in dangerous or insecure meeting conditions. If one missed a political meeting, even if one were very sick, Janil considered it unacceptable. “He was sometimes too hard on people. But it was a discipline that everyone aspired to.”

Many students fondly remembered how he would sit in the courtyard of FASCH, where there is no formal seating, on a curb or on the stairs, next to students for lunch. “None of the other professors could come off their high horse to come and break bread with us in that way,” recalled Stephane-Alix warmly, a member of Sèk Gramsci who also grew up in Janil’s hometown, though a generation later. A member of GREPS from FE recalled, “He took comradery seriously. He lent out books, though he would chase you down if you didn’t give them back when you said you would, he would have you over to his house, and he would critique31 you if you needed critiquing. And he knew how to listen to critiques too.” Not everyone agreed about the way he critiqued others. “He didn’t have to be so hard with people, so exaggerated with his critiques. I mean, when you critique someone, you shouldn’t destroy the

31 In many left revolutionary circles, the practice and process of “criticism and self-criticism” is held up as a vital part of how collectives can evaluate themselves and grow from their mistakes.
person,” continued Stephane-Alix. Others said that his style of sharp critique is what made him valuable as a comrade. An anthropologist I met in Haiti who knew him told me the story of how the two had met at a conference, and Janil had agreed to read a short piece he had written about education in Haiti. They met soon after, and, as the anthropologist tells it, Janil spent two and a half hours critiquing not only the document but his person. This was not the last story I heard of this nature, but the anthropologist interpreted the critiques as a sign of respect. That is, had Janil not critiqued him, it would mean that Janil did not take him seriously enough as someone to critique, as someone with whom it was not worth working, at a scholarly, or a comradely level.

Janil, by 2008, had become an open political target because of his engagement with the fight for a minimum wage of 200 gourdes (then around US$5) in Haiti. Many media outlets pinned him as the leader of the movement. “Certainly in a sense, he was a leader, but he was only one among many leaders, some who played much bigger roles, along with students and the organizers in the faktori (sweatshops),” explained a student who was imprisoned after one of the protests. Said another participant in the fight for a minimum wage, “People who thought he was the leader don’t have the political maturity to understand that many people can give leadership to an organization in ways [where they aren’t a cult of personality], or that an organization could actually function collectively.” Others theorized that if he had not been mischaracterized as “the” leader of the minimum wage struggle, he might not have been assassinated.

_The Misogynist_

“Tchhhhhp”

“Tout sosyete ayisyen se machis epi machis yo pafwa pi rèd nan milyè militant”

(Pfffff… Haitian society is machista through and through, and machistas are sometimes even worse in the activist environment) – Anabèl, over a late afternoon beer

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32 This is what is referred to in the Francophone world as a _tchip_, a bilabial click or a velaric ingressive, that commonly signifies disapproval, contempt, or frustration. It can also be a
Haitian machismo connotes the role expected of men as providers and thinkers, to which most might wish to aspire, and can be connected also to masculine aggression. Understandings of machismo in Haiti are not all negative, depending on how feminist a person one might be talking to, as it might involve notions of responsibility, what kind of sexual relationships are socially permissible, and even has to do with mentalities of resistance against imperial oppressors. Elizabeth McAlister, for instance, talks about how male promiscuity and machismo involve “rebellion against Catholic moral codes in and resentment over the relative economic empowerment of women and the African-based polygamous ethos of domestic partnership” (2002, 67). In activist circles, I have heard a number of men go further to describe their “polygamous ethos” as being rooted in a resistance to not only religious norms but capitalist family structure. This argument at times resembles a deeper sexism, a justification of endless sexual exploits under the guise of “sexual liberation.” At other moments, it has appeared a much more earnest attempt to live otrèman. Some of the men I have come to know and trust, those who do not display aggressive machismo and who are critical of the machismo among activists, I have seen with their ti menaj.33 One cannot ignore the context, saturated with gendered stratifications in labor and performance.

Though there are always females present in activist spaces, they are few and often quieted. “Oh there were certainly women,” offered an ex-leader of ASID, “and some of them were very active. I can’t recall many of their names, no. There was Johane, Charlène, and Eline

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33 *Menaj* translates to boyfriend or girlfriend, and with the addition of the diminutive *ti*, it often denotes added affection. In this case, the speaker is using *ti* to denote casual relationships, much similar to “seeing someone on the side.”
was so *djanm* [strong, firm] and sharp with her commentary.” Other members did not note such strong female participation: “Women are around, yes, but usually it is their boyfriends who bring them along.” In an event against mining held at FASCH in mid-July, 2015, I counted 11 women present including myself in a crowd of over 130. I had seemingly endless arguments with my buddies sitting around the stoop at FASCH. “Where are all the women?” I would not-so-jokingly shout. “When so few women are present, shouldn’t you be asking yourself if *lit la* is really rooted in equality? Isn’t it even more important to be actively reflecting upon what kind of machismo is preventing women from being involved?” said one woman. “*Ma chère*, yes, but most of them aren’t interested!” several folks claimed.

The most common critique of Janil came about his relationships with women. No one liked to speak explicitly about it and when people did speak, men and woman alike, they tended to be remain vague about his activities. “*Li renmen fann anpil, anpil, anpil*…” (He loved women very, very, very much…), or “*Kritik m gen sou li? Sa rapport avèk fam*” (A criticism I have of him? His rapport with women). Fabrice, a co-founder of Sèk Gramsci and member of ASID, discussed his concerns over Janil having *ti menaj avèk militan* (with other activists), and how it threatened the culture of comradery and created “petty personal problems” and “*jalouzi*” (jealousy) in an environment that needed to be honest and supportive. This is by no means a phenomenon unique to Janil’s behavior or in activist culture. It is rather quite common for men in Haiti to have a number of *ti menaj* without being open about it with their girlfriends and wives, but among groups of people trying to create cultural, political, and economic alternatives that purportedly fight *machism*, it pronounces itself in a particular hypocritical way. Others, including Janil’s partner at the time of his death, explain rumors of his misogyny, which are many, as being drummed up by various feminist NGOs to destroy his credibility. Many of his comrades had
never heard of accusations against him as a sexist. When hearing about them for the first time, some reluctantly accepted the possibility. Others refuted it as a patent lie. Two activist men who seemed more politically seasoned, not so coincidentally, those of a particular generation (approximately a decade younger than Janil, but significantly more politically experienced than the university students) and politics who were too prudent to participate openly in the research, were intensely critical of his and others’ sexism in the activist realm. They were familiar with and invoked the interventions of United States-based black feminists, a familiarity I have found rare among the communities of leftists in Haiti with which I have associated. They also spoke from experience; they had seen how machism divided the movement and promoted similar social violence to what a left movement was supposedly fighting against.

The Martyr/The Murder

Narrations of Janil’s death itself and the events leading up to it, and who was responsible for his murder, were caught up in various mystifications and explanations that were political and cultural and can only be understood in the context of Haiti’s political economic situation. In these narrations, Janil became a symbol that was deployed with different political purposes. In the news, his death was reported as an accident by thieves, though nothing on his person was stolen from him. “Oh please—moun dread [people wearing dreads] are never robbed in Haiti,” said a GREPS activist, “and you want me to believe someone as well known and recognized as Janil would be gunned down in the street? It’s a political silencing!”

A common story had Janil clutching Karl Marx’s Grundrisse at his chest, the book catching one of the bullets meant for him as he dies. “It’s true!” a once-leader of ASID confirms. “The Poverty of Philosophy and the Grundrisse—those two. He had them both and a bullet
pierced one. Ask his *menaj! There is a picture of the book somewhere.* Multiple narrators told me a picture of the bloodied book exists, though I was never able to see it. The poetics of image of Marx’s own texts protecting Janil feel almost unbelievable, yet it was insisted upon repeatedly.

Whether or not it was “true,” it was true for them, and thus a basis for action. It is also a story people *enjoyed* to tell because in this version he is a true Marxist, intellectual hero. Another FASCH student depicted him nobly standing up to his murderers who demanded he get on the ground, “I’ll never bow to you or die on my knees!” before being shot down like an animal in the street.

There was a version of his murder where the state exterminated him because he so staunchly critiqued the NGOs, the argument being that the state relies so heavily on them economically and politically. “Every politician has his own NGO, and his [Janil’s] condemnations threatened them,” a good friend of Janil, another professor at FASCH, explained to me. One veteran activist professor said that the United States was involved in both his death and the earthquake, saying that they had tectonic weapons. After the earthquake, there was wide reporting of allegations made by Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela, that it had been cause of the United States testing tectonic weaponry. Though I highly doubt the latter, Wikileaks (2009) released cables about the United States gathering intelligence about campus organizing at FASCH, FE, and L’École Normale, including student involvement in the minimum wage struggle. Further, such a deep distrust of the United States has existed for quite a while, connected to awareness of the destruction already reaped upon Haiti by free trade agreements and U.S.-owned agribusiness. “Have you heard of HAARP?" Look it up. You’ll see,” she

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34 HAARP (the High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) was an ionospheric research program launched through joint funding from the United States Air Force and Navy and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and is the subject of a number of conspiracy
warned me. This same professor was also one who, extremely politically active for decades preceding the earthquake, had ceased to attend protests or political events, instead viewing her activism now as existing mostly in her pedagogy. She stood out in the extent to which she feared organizing, but her fear was not unique. Running to the hospital to attend to the political demands of Janil’s assassination, her son, alone at home, was crushed to death in the earthquake. Hit hard by Janil’s death, but even more by her son’s death, she became extremely cautious, constantly worried that she herself may be targeted someday. Each meeting we had was carefully planned; we were never to speak on the phone about this research or be seen together in public on campus. She often wanted to ensure that I was not seen arriving on campus on foot.

One of Janil’s sons, Samora, who tragically committed suicide in Canada a month before Janil’s murder, is thought by many to have been poisoned as a way to bring Janil to his knees. “Don’t you know what they did to his son? They found him up in Canada. They poisoned him. They were trying to show him they could do anything they wanted to, hurt his family, kill him right where he taught and ate and danced,” said a friend of Janil’s, a comrade and professor at L’École Normale.

Mesyè Odney, a friend of Janil since childhood, fondly related stories of their time in primary and secondary school, when Janil was frustratingly always one level ahead of him in their subjects. He lamented that Janil had not remained a vodouizan (a practitioner of Vodou).

Son orgueil, fierté ki sòti papa’l. W pa jwenn tel moun sou late. Me li’t genyen feblès tou.
Li ekate, li pa rete nan basen mistik maman ak papa’l. Li pa rete nan kilti’m li. Li pa rete nan lwa yo, lwa yo neglije, li vin adopte lòt bagay. Fò ’n appran. Men lè’w fin fè filosofi nan Pòtoprens, fò ’w vin andeyò pou fè filosofi andeyò!

theories. It has been blamed for causing catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts. In this case, the professor discusses it as causing the 2010 Haiti earthquake.
(A strong man, his pride, his dignity. You don’t find such people on earth. But he had weaknesses. He put aside, he didn’t stay in his mother and father’s faith. He didn’t stay in his culture. He left the *lwa* [Vodou spirits/entities], neglected the *lwa*, and went on to adopt other things. Of course you must study. But when you finish studying philosophy in Pòtoprens, you must come back to the countryside to study the philosophy of the countryside!)

Rumors that he was a practitioner of Vodou were further laughed off by others. “A mystic? Ha!” laughed an old friend and professor at FASCH. He was no mystic. This man was a materialist through and through! He was a Marxist, a dialectician.”

One particularly compelling story about his death is that, months before his assassination, while the battle for a minimum wage was at its height, 30,000 workers and students in the street, and a time of particular fear as death threats were being sent over text, he was asked at a conference, “Aren’t you scared they’re going to kill you?” He reportedly responded: “*Jou yo touye m, latè a ap tranble*” (The day they kill me, the earth will tremble). Some, depending on how religious they were (especially those initiated into Vodou) interpreted this prophetically and mystically, others—most followers who heard the story perhaps—as a political metaphor for the mobilization that would take place. Some say he embraced Vodou not only religiously but politically in reconstructing a political identity based on an understanding of the importance of folklore and Vodou for the Haitian underclass. But most refuted this. “He didn’t mean it physically, but because of the quantity of support he had and the power our movement could deploy…we would make the earth shake,” said an ex-leader of ASID. The devastation wrought by earthquake itself, however, diminished the mobilizations that could have otherwise taken place in the wake of Janil’s death, discussed further below.
Vodou, too, must be understood within political economic processes’ relationship to culture, where it was demonized not only during colonial times, but in post-revolutionary times. The 1915 U.S. invasion of Haiti was accompanied by missionaries who led vicious “anti-superstition” campaigns against Vodou, although it must be said that these picked up where persecution by Haitian authorities and elites had existed for many decades. Vodou had become linked to depictions of peasants as backward, uncivilized, needing modernization. These are discourses that continue today in justifying exploitive practices of development. These are discourses that have lively impacts, but Vodou was also claimed by some among the left (I wouldn’t say yet in an organized way) as essentially anti-imperialist, as in fact central to a nation-making, anti-imperial project because it is linked to the making of Bwa Kayiman, the Vodou ceremony in the forest which is thought to be the first slave insurrection of the Haitian revolution. When I spoke to those in his home town, his family, and those who had grown up with him, it was clear that though he grew up in lakou, his father an oungan (a Vodou priest), he “abandoned the lwa.” “He was being punished for leaving them behind,” claimed an old friend of his from his hometown, a devout Christian and active vodouizan. He held my hands in his: “If you do one thing as you continue in your life’s work, Laura, stay true to the faith that you were brought up with. Never leave it behind you.”

35 The term lakou translates to court or courtyard, but has deep significance to family and religious life in Haiti. It is used to describe the plot of land in which a large extended family lives together in individual units, including an agricultural area and family cemeteries. This organization is rooted in the colonial legacy of plantations, where the lakou could be a means of safety from having to return to plantation life. Here, its usage is a spiritual one: the lakou is the intersection between spirituality, family, and land, wherein ancestor worship, a central part of Vodou religion, becomes a symbol of both liberty and respect to the elders and spirits. In Janil’s case, he grew up in lakou in both a spiritual and family-organizational sense, as his father was an oungan, and his mother was a mambo. See Dubois (2012).
There is a stake in claiming him as a vodouesque practitioner for those invested in Vodou as an anti-imperialist practice; a couple students wondered if he could even be canonized someday as a *lwa*. There is stake in claiming that his death was directly part of a U.S. conspiracy, whether or not this was true. Thus we see how reverberations of the nation’s history of enslavement, occupation, and imperialist-backed dictatorship, the thousands of NGOs (of which there was a post-seismic influx), the UN’s militaristic presence all echo through the claims of and to Anil’s memory.

What can be determined from the many and various stories of Janil’s last moments? These stories were told and retold, and re-adapted, embellished upon or diminished. It seemed that Janil was less mystified by those who were closer comrades to him; they were more willing to talk about his wrinkles and faults. In the stories I document about his assassination here a certain about of embellishment was common, and this can be attributed to his status as a martyr. Some stories seemed almost too unreal to be believed. Yet much of Janil’s life and work was extraordinary, from the sheer amount of scholarly work that he was able to produce given the conditions of the state university system, to his teaching style and comradery. It is no surprise that his death should also be remembered as an exceptional kind of execution. As Achille remembered:

It was 3 or 4? 3? I was at FE, and when I arrived they told me he’d been shot and we all went to the hospital. We couldn’t see him because he was in grave condition – he was shot in the eye, and in the chest, and they didn’t want us to enter. And one professor was allowed to go in, and talked to another professor who was inside with him. And when the professor came out, he took a deep breath, and he told us, Anil is dead. My friends said, “Let’s go,” and we went into the street. Students started to cry, their mouths quivering,
“He’s dead, he’s dead.” And then, the batay\textsuperscript{36} began. Just a short time after, after we arrived at FE, the earthquake hit. A fiery mobilization was beginning, at L’École Normale, Syanzimèn… we thought when the earthquake hit, we thought it was MINISTA committing a genocide against us. And many students thought the earthquake was intentionally provoked. It was a political catastrophe. They saw after 2009, after the huge fight for the minimum wage, they saw what kind of force UEH could muster. Eklat sosyal oubyen jenosid (It would be either a social explosion or genocide [against us]).

When the earthquake hit, as described by Ernie, many students said “Anil said this! He said this would happen!” referencing his comment months earlier at the FOKAL conference. “It was as if nature avenged Janil… Some of us, drunken with the madness of heartbreak and shock, we yelled, ‘We’ve won! We’ve won!’”

“Even students that weren’t friendly with him,” Ernie continued, “that had disagreements with him ideologically, were an kolè [enraged]. His death also meant that it prevented a lot of deaths in the university.” And so many say that they owe their lives to him, because they were there in the courtyard of the hospital where he died, and because he gave them political life, as Johane described, where he facilitated her political “birth.” Achille spoke passionately:

I think if the earthquake hadn’t have happened, there would have been huge political battles. I think I probably would have been killed. Because I couldn’t tolerate it, the police would have killed me. I thought, if they can kill Anil who had all of his political engagement, who was so useful to the working class, with all of his intellectual production, for them to kill a person like him. I would have fought without any reserve, against the bourgeoisie, against the Haitian state, against the rektora [the governing body

\textsuperscript{36} Batay translates to battle, but connotes political struggle.
of the university], against the directors of the university, I would have fought with all my strength, with all the reflection I could muster and imagine, without any reservation. Now, it’s not the same emotion. Now, I think that we can build. I think Anil stays living all the time in every place there is injustice, and I think we have to keep living in order to fight. We have experimented very little.

It was as if the university became automatically paralyzed, described several students. “I remember being in class at FE,” said Dara, an old student of Janil’s, “and they all yelled from the courtyard, ‘Get down here! Get down here! They’ve shot Anil!’ And we all left classes to go outside and see what had happened.” Only at the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, characterized often by the students as the most conservative of campuses, incidentally where Janil had the fewest of friends, did classes continue after Janil’s shooting. “And this is where many, many students died,” explained Stephane-Alix, “Professors too, and the dean, Pierre Vernet…” His voice trailed off. He later spoke of the strange poetry he saw: “Those who thought that his shooting mattered, their lives were saved.”
Figure 4. A protest demanding justice for Janil Lwijis from February, 2010
“Who killed Janil Lwijis? Why did they kill him? How many more must be killed?”
Photo credit: Sèk Gramsci archives.

Justice (Commemorations)

The struggle over Janil’s memory was an active political struggle over storytelling. The main activities of Sèk Gramsci, one of the militant political organizations Janil participated in founding in 2005, is the performance of popular theatre. Their tradition falls into a long line of political street theater in Latin America and the Caribbean, many strands of which have been woven together by the Brazilian theatrical practitioner Augusto Boal (1993). To understand the nature of their political activities, we should include performance in how we conceive of knowledge production. After Janil’s death Sèk Gramsci continued to hold popular theater
performances about him every year. Such performances allow students to tell a particular story of the significance of Janil’s life and death.

There was not a formal (institutionally-sanctioned) commemoration of Janil Lwijis. However, he continues to be honored in grassroots events, particularly on the days of his birth and death. Even amid the chaos following the earthquake his assassination had a deep impact on the Haitian left. “With the assassination of Janil, we became scared, and a lot of us fled to the pwovens [rural villages] to try to conserve our own existences,” recounted Achille, “But when we came back, some of us were stronger.” In 2015, on Janil’s birthday, Sëk Gramsci acted out bits of his life at the intersection where he was shot, two blocks from the university. A student dressed as him, gave a great revolutionary oration, in Janil’s style, for a group of his students, and then the group acted out his assassination, followed by a funeral protest for him. Sëk Gramsci was not performing for simply spectacular or theatrical attention, but to expose, document, and educate the populace about parts of history and the present that they believed must not be forgotten, a history of inequality and brutality that they were showing to be still present. This performance was not part of any formal archive of knowledge, but, rather, part of a grassroots-based battle over whose stories should be told, over whose stories about history are more truthful, and whose stories can be accessed; this is the politics in wrestling such stories out of the hand of the elite, of corporate Haitian or American news’ narrations of the happenings of the left.

Among many there was a desire for a physical structure to be dedicated to him. There was also the desire to name a library after him, or build a monument because murals are not enough. In December, 2015, a new mural, painted from a photograph, was erected on the walls
of FASCH. Under his hard stare reads a Janil quotation loved by his disciples: “Yon revolisyonè se yon moun [A revolutionary is human].”

The chant “Janil Lwijis, prezan!” rang through a protest against the university administration’s negligence in late June, 2015. Following Latin American traditions for justice that invoke the memory of those who have lost their lives in battle, it is used to remember martyrs. The cry of prezan, literally meaning “here” or “present,” pronounces that they are not forgotten and that the battle continues in their name. “You see,” explained Claude of Janil’s continued presence, “some are more alive when they are dead than the living. We live in a country of zonbi.” Janil’s memory was not only alive but it was considered to be alive in every humanist sense of being alive and having an impact.

Leftists in Haiti have often talked about zonbifikasyon (zombification) as the dehumanizing, stultifying effect of the reproduction of hegemony upon mas pèp la (the Haitian masses, the working class). The zonbi is a symbol of the history of the enslaved, of the ultimate robbery of capacity and will. Though there is still not anthropological consensus, there is some agreement (Ackerman 1991) that turning people into zonbi is a way of exacting popular justice when there is no other possibility of finding it. Zonbifikasyon in this light can be seen as a means to maintain social order; once transformed, the zonbi no longer poses a threat to society. Now we can understand the metaphorical power when one speaks of the elite “zombifying” the masses, through mis- and non-education, through the reproduction of elitist power in such powerful institutions as the church, through hegemonic processes.

Mounifikasyon (humanization) in this context is given potency in being the solution to, or the opposite of, zonbifikasyon. Moun (human) from this perspective means, as one FASCH student explained to me,

(It [moun] means that it is a living being with blood flowing through its veins. A revolutionary, a humanist—not in the Christian sense—but in the sense of a revolutionary humanist. There are so many in Haiti who think revolutionaries are devoid of love or sentiment, but it’s the state who wants to zombifye mas pèp la. That’s what Anil’s people [we] are talking about.)

When students quoted Janil’s “a revolutionary is a human,” this is what they were invoking.

“What would justice for him look like?,” I asked many of my interlocutors. There was never an investigation, many responded angrily. “But what would an investigation do?” The state is silent about him. His death was declared in the media an accidental robbery due to the uptick in violent motorcycle thefts, reported Radyo Kiskeya following his murder. Several students proposed a bust of him be erected, or that a library be named for him. There was never an investigation into his murder or a public commemoration of him sponsored by the university itself. “Just something, so that his memory isn’t just completely denied. It’s repulsive the way the FASCH administrators commemorate all of those from January 12th, but not him. His death was not just any death,” said a GREPS medical student who says he owes his politicization to Janil almost entirely.

The traditional left, I wouldn’t say they were happy that he was killed, but they didn’t like him during his life. A year after his assassination on January 12th, they [the students]
were doing a ceremony. They [agents of the administration] threw dirt, flour, water on them to prevent it. The students were furious. They came out of Ethnology, FASCH to protest the activity. Because the rektora refused to demand justice for Anil, there was never an effort to find it. Anil was not a victim of the earthquake. It was…it was a different death. They never demanded an investigation to find out who killed him. They’ve never done a thing to commemorate him, nothing formally in his memory. And this silence, it emphasizes his absence. It makes his absence louder. The more salient question be is who profited from his death? Who was he upsetting? Imperialist power, Clinton, these were all parties that benefited.

Johane’s response turned into a sort of speech to the others as the students sat around in their usual hangout spot.

Justice for him won’t be killing those who killed him, or arresting them, or an investigation [into his death]. To me, there won’t be justice for Janil until we have schools, until we have health care. When I see children growing up who aren’t in hunger, who aren’t eating trash, when I don’t see these young children sleeping on the sidewalk of Chan Mas37 who work in the sweatshops, these factories that do nothing for people, and when I say nothing, I mean nothing. That would be justice. People being able to live. This hangout is on the stairs of a building that was destroyed in the earthquake but has neither been torn down nor rebuilt. Three different consultants have come in to assess the building; the first two said it was impossible to rebuild, and last said it would be possible but quoted a price far beyond what UEH could afford.

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37 Chan Mas is the largest public square in downtown Pòtoprens.
“You know that’s what it is,” agreed her young comrade. “Dessalinian revolution. That is the only justice for him.” The call for justice for Janil in these cases became part of the mobilizing process itself.

What was salient in these calls for justice was that they were calls to revolution that these radical students were already making, and that Janil became part of that call. Not only was revolution what was right, according to these students and activists, it would be the only way to avenge his murder. It was Janil employed as a symbol at its most potent. These calls are part of how he was actively constructed as a symbol each time his name was chanted at a protest, each time Sék Gramsci acted out his life or his murder. A medical student said, “I don’t know what words I could pick to thank him. There are so many youth now who should have known him. Now they just have us.”

Conclusion

What was remarkable in the way Janil’s memory existed was not only those moving stories that accompanied it. What was remarkable is the investment that various actors had in making the claims that they made. There are social and historical reasons people have the ideas that they have, so to probe the complex way in which people with disparate images of reality find ways of acting, or not acting, collectively, and the symbols at work within those actions, is politically meaningful. This requires an expansion of general understandings of “politics,” that is, politics need not exist in some concrete “political” form for it to be understood as a political thing. Conscientization, as Freire (1970) tells it, is the process of developing a critical consciousness of one’s social reality through reflection and action; discouragement and fear are
also a part of conscientization and of politics. That realm of the intangible also has concrete
effects, as we see from the professor I interviewed, scared into almost complete inactivity.

Each story of Janil is infused with discursive politics that are determined outside of
themselves, by history, the state, culture and social structure, and as people spoke of him, they
did so intentionally, to be legible within that discourse. Each of these stories is also a story about
what social movements mean, what they mean to the narrators, what they are or are not and what
they should be. They demonstrate how symbols, those that Janil stood for and those that he
deployed himself, are places of political contestation that need to be read in regard to the
relations of power that underlie them. The politics that have pushed people toward action and
inaction, into angajman or into fear, are ridden with symbols and interpretation, and an
anthropology of social movements can help to account for those symbols within their political
context.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

Martyrs cannot be silenced, ultimately, nor can they die. During his life and since his death Janil lived many lives through those affected by him. I would direct the reader back to the passionate exchanges after his 2015 mural was vandalized, where one student put it succinctly: “Janil lives because he chose to fight for the masses, to transform this disheveled society. They killed him—but Janil is only just beginning to be born.” Janil was reborn as a mobilizing force for those organizing in his wake, and the polemics gave life alongside him. Articles continued to be written, reading and re-reading his texts and his ideas (Gregor 2016, Ligue Haïti 2015).

On July 28, 2015, after a spirited march of hundreds on the capital to condemn 100 years of U.S. interference in Haiti, a large symposium at FASCH was held. Songs were sung for Charlemagne Peralte, the martyred nationalist leader who led guerrilla forces, the Cacos, against the U.S. invasion, and whose bloodied picture was widely circulated by the U.S. troops to discourage rebellion. Dr. Rachel Beauvoir-Dominique, the esteemed Haitian anthropologist and daughter of the great oungan Max Beauvoir, spoke against the robbery of Haitian humanity and culture, Camille Chalmers, FASCH professor and leader of PAPDA, condemned the logical result of neoliberal policy in Haiti, the growing mining industry. Members of MPP recounted the Jan Rabel (Jean Rabel) massacre. And a poem, read by a student leader at FASCH, was

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38 Under Duvalierism, several grands claimed ownership over arable land, renting it for the state at low costs, forming a monopoly over the rental of land, and then leasing it to peasants for tenant farming. In Jan Rabel, peasant leaders pressed for equitable land distribution, and the ensuing political struggle resulted into a massacre of hundreds of tenant farmers on July 23 1987. See Lwijis 1997.
dedicated to Jean Anil Louis-Juste. Janil has taken his place, within the walls of his own university, in the history of Haitian casualty-martyrs.

The memories of Janil never took a singular shape. Instead, they were invoked and debated, and represented deep political rifts and economic divisions and processes. From the minutes after his murder and the earthquake to the many social protests and political symposia, an anthropological perspective about his memory can tell us about social and economic structures. It reveals the motivations between discourses about Janil, and at the same time, the significance of that discourse within Haitian politics. What sense people make out of events in their own lives is not completely purposeful and coherent, but aspects can be traced to reveal deep social patterns and workings of power, and crises in particular often reveal social anatomy. That is, in times of crisis, deprivation of memory or the reclamation and revival of memory can tell us about the political context in which people live.

There is another mural of Janil at Ethnology that was erected in the year following his murder, standing proud, arms folded, decorated in a meticulously sewn traditional Haitian shirt. It is painted from a picture of him. At times, students look upon it, but overall, the hustle and bustle continues. Many of the students who entered in 2011 are aware he was a professor, but have no idea of his teachings or the circumstances of his life and death. Nobody I interviewed knew quite certainly who painted it, just that it had been a group of art students.

Not everyone in the left, or even all his close comrades, agreed with his politics and practices. A radical colleague of the old Haitian left discussed with me at length his disagreement with Janil’s reclamation of Dessalines, and was deeply critical of Janil’s machista “rapport with women.” He also fondly shared old war stories of Janil and battles with the police when they were at university together. “He’s been turned into an utter myth, and I’m sure he would have
plenty of *betiz* (profanities) to say at some of these stories if he were here to see them,” he laughed. “But I have to say, if they are myths, then they are myths for a good cause.” Narratives of his death, from the state and from those close to him, were motivated by some aspect of the political discourse.

**Figure 5.** Janil’s mural at the Faculté d’Ethnologie. Photo by author.
Such meanings and motivations are what a Marxist anthropology of social movements can help to consider. The symbols of Janil were alive and meaningful in a fractured, yet still active student movement, where activists were looking for alternatives to capitalism. They became meaningful, politically and anthropologically, because they existed in the context of ever-increasing inequality, racism, and exploitative systems of production that have plagued not only Haiti but in many parts of the world. The dispensation of debates of the revolution that have carried through over the years related to class, color, religion, and language, all are most clearly understood through an analysis that integrates the symbolic with political economy.

Janil as a martyr became a critical element in radical imagination because he, as a symbol, condensed a number of virtues into a single figure: as an organic intellectual, a person who affirmed his blackness and Haitianness, who embraced his kreyòl identity, a radical, a deep and critical thinker, a model educator, an upholder of revolutionary discipline, an anti-imperialist who paid the ultimate price for never backing down. When revolutionary leaders like Dessalines and Akawo are already held up in the particular historical discourse of Haitian national imagination, and of this social movement, Janil was poised to take his own place as a revolutionary hero. He, as a symbol, can help to unveil the dynamics of the political economy.

Many students in Haiti come from the dispossessed class, and to come into class consciousness and fight for others to also gain that consciousness is how they come to terms with their dispossession; they resist the dominant power structures, and many use Janil Lwijis’s own theories about imperialism and capital in Haiti to do so. Thus, this thesis contributes to social movements because it centering an anthropological, political economy perspective allows us to understand how this movement came to be. Through this perspective we can find a synthesis in

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39 Akawo (in French Jean-Jacques Accau) was a peasant leader who led an insurrection in the Tòbèk (Torbeck) region that lasted from 1844-1866.
the dialectics of culture and political economy, how they work against, upon, and with each other not only to have meaning, but to function. Through an investigation of the historical development of social relations, social movement emergence can be understood as part of social relations that are made, and re-made, in processes that have a material basis. It opens up possibilities for explaining the conditions for critical consciousness, without reducing social actors completely to their circumstance.

Moreover, the social movements literature has too often neglected the intellectual contributions within movements themselves (Chester 2012; Casas-Cortés 2008). An emic anthropological endeavor that takes seriously the analyses and knowledge production already at work within left social movements of their own conditions and politics can offer a step toward decolonizing research methodology. As it sheds light upon contemporary student activism, it answers calls to treat Haiti outside of popular depictions of eternal suffering and poverty. The poverty, the enormous social problems lanmizè, are there, and they are ugly, but there have been many organizing to do something about it. Looking at the political and economic foundations of the situation in Haiti that produced Janil and his analyses as well as his status as a martyr and symbol for radical social movement participants, I have explored the conditions for consciousness-making, regarding symbols to be crucial in an effort to make sense of what a social movement remembers, and why it does so, and how it affects its action or inaction.

Applied Implications

Applied anthropological research generally has the goal of using anthropological knowledge to identify, address, or solve social problems. The application of this research began before it started, by asking those I was already involved with what kind of project would be
meaningful to their activism. Rather than just propose an answer to a problem, or use anthropology to identify a problem that has to be solved, the project was conceived within a situation with folks who have already identified their problems and what the long term solutions should be. This research serves as a means to legitimize demands in the name of Janil, the demand that he not be silenced and forgotten, and the broader anti-imperialist demands for justice and equity in Haiti for which Janil stood. Janil, as a figure, a friend, comrade, and professor, was discussed so often, and it was the stories about him that people said they wanted to share.

The process of collecting narrations had a particular impact on some of the project’s participants because it allowed stories that had been held inside, in some cases for years, to be told, and it allowed the narrators the catharsis of sharing those stories. Thus, the project provided a meaningful space for emotional politics to be heard, recorded, and legitimized. In other cases, storytelling and collective discussion of those stories created the possibility for new moments of reflection, where critical ideas could be discussed, debated, and evaluated among groups of students as they think through strategies for the long haul. This is an aspect of the project that is interesting to conceptualize as we think through what applied anthropology can mean, in the sense that applied anthropology can offer theoretical tools to help people think about what they do and the context in which they live, and this is the praxis for which this project has strived.

As activist research, which seeks to change the conditions that are being studied, this functions as an applied project. One application is that multiple forms can be made accessible to the project’s participants. Short pamphlets in Kreyòl about Janil’s ideas and life are one result of the project, meant for a large audience. Those particularly in his hometown expressed an interest in having a short, written document about him so that he can be remembered, and have helped
compose one. The documentation provided in this thesis is intended as an aid and supplement to these efforts. One of the main goals of activist research is that it can be useful for those who participate in social movements such as the one that is the subject of this thesis. Thus, this thesis is not only about Janil, but about the political struggles and ideas in which he participated, and the cause for which he lived and died. We can and often should be activists just as much we anthropologists, and at times the reverse is true. Anthropology can be helpful in unveiling what the conditions are for consciousness.

Activist anthropology is applied anthropology at its most engaged. Anthropology was “applied” in the service of colonialism, war, and state-making long before Applied Anthropology emerged as a subdiscipline. To bring in the question of activism means that anthropology is not only a tool of assessment or suggestion, but garners the possibility of unison with the practical efforts of activism geared toward counterhegemonic struggle. Activist anthropology carries with it the self-questioning and self-critical traditions of critical politics, and distinctly transformative possibilities through appreciating knowledge created in activist spaces. Might we be able to move beyond debates of ethnographic authority and representation of truth claims, and enter into a consideration of who has power, and who else may find power through the process of collaborative research, or at least research aimed at progressive social change? This dilemma must be resolved in the practical means of political struggle that is overtly directed toward empowerment of marginalized populations. Those of us concerned with effective applied interventions should, as Fals Borda asks us to do, “follow Marx’s advice of helping build a social science as the product of the historical movement, and as a science which becomes revolutionary when it ceases to be doctrinaire” (1979: 21). Activist anthropology permits and promotes becoming involved in the politics of the fieldwork, a politics within which any fieldworker is
already mired, but allows us to actively seek out the problems and solutions that are important to our collaborators. It is a logical engagement in the context of research motivated to enact social change.

Our historical moment demands a scholarship where knowledge and action go hand in hand: one that stems from communities in struggle, and that is directed toward empowerment of those communities to understand and change their conditions. As we ask questions about how anti-capitalist student activists in Pòtoprens mobilize, why they do it, and under what conditions, it only makes sense to move beyond asking questions, to becoming involved in whichever capacity we are able, to becoming involved with that struggle against the dominant and colonizing discourses that attempt to neutralize, if not exterminate, in the case of Janil Lwijis, the anti-capitalist subject. How else might our research be of human use if it is not defined with and by the groups of people with whom we work? How else might we hope to understand such matters than to collaborate, as academics and as moun, in the fullest sense of the word, toward the struggle for liberation?
References


McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, Mayer N. Zald. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Appendices

Appendix A. IRB Certification of Approval

June 18, 2015

Laura Leisinger
Anthropology
Tampa, FL  33612

RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review
IRB#: Pro00021986
Title: The Other Earthquake: The Politics of Student Protest in Urban Haiti


Dear Ms. Leisinger:

On 6/17/2015, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and APPROVED the above application and all documents outlined below.

Approved Item(s):
Protocol Document(s):
Leisinger Protocol

Consent/Assent Document(s)*:
IRB Verbal Consent Form Leisinger  **granted a waiver of documentation

*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent document(s) are only valid during the approval period indicated at the top of the form(s). **Waivers are not stamped.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:
(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent as outlined in the federal regulations at 45CFR46.117(c) which states that an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects if it finds either: (1) That the only record linking the subject and the research would be the consent document and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each subject will be asked whether the subject wants documentation linking the subject with the research, and the subject's wishes will govern; or (2) That the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval by an amendment.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson
USF Institutional Review Board
Appendix B. Fair Use Worksheet for Figure 4.

INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Laura Leisinger  12/01/2016

Name: ______________________ Date: ______________________

The Other Earthquake: Janil Lwijis, Student Social Movements, and the

Class or Project: _______________________________________________________

A protest demanding justice for Janil Lwijis

Title of Copyrighted Work: _____________________________________________

PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely Supports Fair Use</th>
<th>Likely Does Not Support Fair Use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use)</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research or Scholarship</td>
<td>Bad-faith behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment</td>
<td>Denying credit to original author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work)</td>
<td>Non-transformative or exact copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group)</td>
<td>Made accessible on Web or to public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit</td>
<td>Profit-generating use</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Overall, the purpose and character of your use ☐ supports fair use or ☐ does not support fair use.

NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

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<th>Likely Supports Fair Use</th>
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<tr>
<td>Factual or nonfiction</td>
<td>Creative or fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important to favored educational objectives</td>
<td>Consumable (workbooks, tests)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published work</td>
<td>Unpublished</td>
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Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material ☐ supports fair use or ☐ does not support fair use.

AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

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<tr>
<th>Likely Supports Fair Use</th>
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<tr>
<td>Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose)</td>
<td>Large portion or whole work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives)</td>
<td>Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the ‘heart of the work’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)</td>
<td>Similar or exact quality of original work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LeEtta Schmidt, lmschmidt@usf.edu and Drew Smith dsmith@usf.edu
Reviewed by USF General Counsel 08/11/2015
Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole supports fair use or does not support fair use.

**EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL**

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<tr>
<th>Likely Supports Fair Use</th>
<th>Likely Does Not Support Fair Use</th>
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<tr>
<td>□ No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original</td>
<td>□ Replaces sale of copyrighted work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ No similar product marketed by the copyright holder</td>
<td>□ Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material</td>
<td>□ Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The copyright holder is unidentifiable</td>
<td>□ Made accessible on Web or to public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Lack of licensing mechanism for the material</td>
<td>□ Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing</td>
</tr>
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Overall, the effect on the market for the original supports fair use or does not support fair use.

**CONCLUSION**

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original likely supports fair use or likely does not support fair use.

Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to contact your Copyright Librarian.

This worksheet has been adapted from:

Cornell University’s Checklist for Conducting A Fair use Analysis Before Using Copyrighted Materials:  
https://copyright.cornell.edu/policies/docs/Fair_Use_Checklist.pdf  
Smith, Kevin; Macklin, Lisa A.; Gilliland, Anne. A Framework for Analyzing any Copyright Problem. Retrieved from:  
https://d396quszo4orc.cloudfront.net/cfr/Reading%20Docs/A%20Framework%20for%20Analyzing%20a%20Problem%20Copyright Problem.pdf

LeEtta Schmidt, lmschmidt@usf.edu and Drew Smith dsmith@usf.edu  
Reviewed by USF General Counsel 08/11/2015