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Honors Thesis

AFFICHAGE: POSTERS AS A POWERFUL TOOL OF PROTEST, POLITICS, AND
PROPAGANDA IN FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

AFFICHAGE: POSTERS AS A POWERFUL TOOL OF PROTEST, POLITICS, AND
PROPAGANDA IN FRANCE

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French Minor

This article explores the importance of French political posters throughout history and how they reveal complex connections between the subjects of immigration, colonization, and racism in France. An overview of the history of immigration and colonization in France is offered, and the history of posters in France is covered briefly. Posters from World War I to the present day are then analyzed for their political content and social commentary. The specific case of the 1995 Ibrahim Ali murder committed by far-right National Front activists and the posters involved are also studied as a potent example of the power of posters in perpetuating ideology influenced by the aforementioned subjects. Posters are an integral part of French culture and an important, democratic social media that has endured to the present day. This article argues that posters are a powerful vehicle for political rhetoric, and that the posters of the National Front party directly contributed to the death of Ali.

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Introduction

Long before social media pages appeared online, there were other ways of communicating information through visual mediums. Stained glass, statues, and paintings offered visual representations of familiar stories to the illiterate public, for example. One of the most powerful and lasting forms of social media in France is the poster. French posters have not only become a celebrated art form but also an important form of communication, effectively conveying political ideologies and propaganda, supporting protests and mobilizing social movements, and proclaiming individual and communal identity. Posters have made their way into French legislation, culture, and politics, enduring as an important democratic tool to this day. Of all the political and social subjects covered by posters, immigration, colonization, and racism are some of the most potent. The connections between these subjects and how they relate to modern attitudes in France is revealed through the art and text of both historic and modern posters. The notable Ibrahim Ali murder and its connection to the far-right in France is an important case study exemplifying the influential power of posters and the pervasive nature of the layers of historical memory underlying current political discourse.

Ibrahim Ali was 17-years-old when he was murdered on February 21, 1995 in Marseille, France. His family had immigrated from the Comoro Islands (formerly a French colony until 1974) and he was a French citizen. Ali and his friends were running down the street after a music rehearsal to catch a bus when Robert Lagier, Mario d'Ambrosio, and Pierre Giglio, three members of the far-right National Front party who were hanging campaign posters, started shooting at them.¹ Lagier killed Ali, who was

¹ Daniel Groussard, "Marseille: Ibrahim, Tué à 17 Ans Par Des Colleurs D'affiches Du FN," *Libération*, February 23, 1995,

almost 40 meters away, with one shot to his back.² The three men claimed that the teenagers were intimidating them so they defended themselves out of fear, but this was disproven and the men were convicted. This case sparked controversy in the media from those outraged at the crime, with National Front leaders initially defending the perpetrators.³ This incident reveals deep-rooted issues in France related to race, immigration, national identity, and politics—issues which are also exemplified by art and media throughout French history. Evaluating how posters have been used to communicate different messages historically is integral to understanding how the anti-immigrant posters of the National Front directly contributed to the murder of Ibrahim Ali. This article will also demonstrate that posters are an integral part of French culture and amplify certain attitudes and behaviors, some of which are largely influenced by traditional notions of French identity and France’s history of colonization, immigration, and racism. This will be accomplished by exploring the history of immigration, the use of political posters, and the perpetuation of certain ideologies in France as demonstrated by specific posters that are analyzed.

Immigration

In order to understand how posters capture the complexities of racial tension, immigration, and national identity, it is important to revisit the historical foundation on

https://www.liberation.fr/france/1995/02/23/marseille-ibrahim-tue-a-17-ans-par-des-colleurs-d-affiches-du-fn_125119/?redirected=1.

² “26 Ans Après le Crime Raciste d’Ibrahim Ali, une Avenue à Son Nom à Marseille,” *Le Figaro*, February 3, 2021, www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/26-ans-apres-le-crime-raciste-d-ibrahim-ali-une-avenue-a-son-nom-a-marseille-20210203.

³ Philippe Bernard, “Des Militant du FN sont Impliqués dans la Mort d’Ibrahim Ali, 17 Ans,” *Le Monde*, February 24, 1995, https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1995/02/24/des-militants-du-fn-sont-impliques-dans-la-mort-d-ibrahim-ali-17-ans_3840992_1819218.html. Bruno Megret, a leader in the National Front party at the time of the crime, defended the perpetrators (along with other leaders of the National Front). He stated that they had been “violently attacked” by Comorians and shot in the air to defend themselves.

which modern French ideologies rest. France, like other formerly imperialist countries, has a complex history of immigration, colonization, and racism. Recently, there has been a high level of controversy over the subject of immigration, with politicians especially using the subject as an important aspect of their platforms.⁴

In the early years following the French Revolution, immigration was not generally considered a national issue, and the concept of a “foreigner” was only starting to be commonly understood.⁵ Immigrants were relatively accepted as part of French society as they contributed positively to the labor market and, as Gérard Noiriel points out, there was actually no coherent way to define a French “race.”⁶ Many of these immigrants were also European and did not appear threatening to the French people; they were allowed to assimilate over time. In the late 1800s however, attitudes towards immigration became less relaxed as concerns grew over economic competition; this was also a politically turbulent time overall as the Republicans had finally prevailed and the Third Republic had just begun after the fall of the Second Empire.⁷ New “science” concerning ethnicity and hereditary traits was gaining traction during this time period as well, and this became an important component of defining nationality for the French.⁸ Antisemitism followed increased immigration of Eastern European Jews, and French Jews were conflated with

⁴ Geert De Clercq, “France’s Le Pen proposes referendum on immigration if elected President,” *Reuters*, September 27, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/frances-le-pen-proposes-referendum-immigration-if-elected-president-2021-09-27/>. For example, Marine Le Pen made immigration a main part of her platform in the 2022 French elections, proposing a referendum on the subject. In this article, she states that (in opposition to her opponent) she stands to defend the French people.

⁵ Noiriel, Gérard, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 46.

⁶ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 10.

⁷ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 53.

⁸ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 54

these immigrants; both groups experienced discrimination and were seen as an enemy in France.⁹

Following increased focus on the subject, laws concerning immigration grew in complexity over time. Noiriel emphasizes the emergence of the identity card in 1917 as significant to immigration; illegal immigration did not exist until immigration became a legal process.¹⁰ Tightened restrictions followed this new legal identification, especially because of increased distrust of foreigners after World War I; they later became a tool used against Jews during World War II, among other strict laws regarding foreigners.¹¹ After World War I, political parties took on the subject of immigration, with stances across the spectrum changing little since then.¹² Immigration had officially become a political issue as well as a legal and social one, and this remains an important political subject today.

After World War II, immigrants were still seen as helpful to the labor market, but there was a strong emphasis on the need to assimilate to French culture.¹³ In the 1960s, a large influx of immigrants, many from Algeria, also changed the way immigration was viewed. Even French historians stated as recently as the 1980s that being North African and Muslim (identities which are often conflated) posed an especially difficult problem to integration.¹⁴ As Joan Wallach Scott points out, the term “immigrant” has often been conflated with North Africans, who are conflated with Arabs, who are conflated with Muslims (who are also conflated with each other as there are different branches of Islam

⁹ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, (Princeton University Press, 2010), 76.

¹⁰ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 59.

¹¹ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 61.

¹² Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 85.

¹³ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, 87.

¹⁴ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, xii.

as well).¹⁵ This is likely a result of a long history of French colonization in Africa, rooted in racist ideology.

France colonized many areas around the world (including countries in Africa) beginning with a first stage from the 1500s to the early 1800s, and another wave of colonization beginning in the 1800s and continuing actively until the early 1900s. The prevailing ideology behind French imperialism was the “mission civilisatrice” [civilizing mission], the purpose of which was to teach and improve “inferior” peoples.¹⁶ This paradoxical push to teach people of many different cultures to become “French” occurred while the general belief was that these people would never be fully French as the European French “race” was superior.¹⁷ Remnants of this ideology are persistent; while France was happy to absorb these peoples as colonial subjects, they were in no way considered fully “French” when they began to immigrate in larger numbers to metropole France. Decolonization was also a difficult and sometimes violent process that unfolded over the course of several decades in the mid twentieth century. In 1954, war broke out in Algeria against their colonizers, and it took eight years to gain independence—and many more to make progress towards a healthy international relationship. With Algerian independence in 1962 came a large number of immigrants to France—some of which were “*pied noirs*” (descendants of European settlers that were born in Algeria) in addition to former colonial subjects.¹⁸

Colonization included a very negative view of the Islamic religion; it was both exoticized and seen as oppressive by the French, especially because of strong feelings

¹⁵ Scott, *Politics of the Veil*, 70.

¹⁶ Alice L. Conklin, “Colonialism and Human Rights, A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914,” *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (1998): 420, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2649774>.

¹⁷ Scott, *Politics of the Veil*, 46.

¹⁸ Scott, *Politics of the Veil*, 43.

about the importance of *laïcité* (which may be translated as France's unique form of state secularism) in France.¹⁹ Negative attitudes towards Muslims persist today with issues over the headscarf in France and a strong tendency to stereotype. Islamist terrorism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries strengthened French fear of Islam, as unfortunately (similar to Judaism) different branches of Islam are conflated with each other and with ethnicity. During World War II, Jews were considered impossible to integrate, and Scott points out this is very similar to how Muslims are seen today.²⁰ Stereotypes of Muslims are often applied to French Africans in general. As the French tend to see Africans as especially difficult to integrate, "immigration" in a political context generally refers to them, not other European immigrants.

French expectations of assimilation, now more commonly referred to as integration, require total commitment to the republic as an individual who has left other communities behind—however, this is rather difficult if stereotypes and identities are assumed by others. Immigrants from Africa (and their children) are still often pushed to the margins of French society and used as a scapegoat for societal problems in France.²¹ Support for immigrants and a resistance to racism and xenophobia grew on a larger scale from the 1960s to a full movement in the 1980s.²² In the 1980s, antiracist progress was made, but the far right also made a comeback unseen since World War II.²³ During the 80s and 90s, there were large numbers of visibly different immigrants, which was a phenomenon around the world; the emergence of the far right National Front party

¹⁹ Scott, *Politics of the Veil*, 45.

²⁰ For further study on *laïcité*, see Joan Wallach Scott's *Politics of the Veil* and Jean Baubérot's *La Laïcité Falsifiée*.

²¹ Joseph Zivny, "Liberté, Égalité, Animosité: An Analysis of the Causes Behind Racial Tensions in France," *Harvard International Review* 37, no. 3 (2016): 26, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26445834>.

²² Françoise Lionnet, "Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship: France 1968-1988," *SubStance* 24, no. 1/2 (1995): 93, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3685093>.

²³ Noiriel, *French Melting Pot*, xi.

followed during the 80s and gained traction to the dismay of antiracist activists.²⁴ Violence against immigrants continued, however, and tension remains today over immigration—and especially over Islam. Recent rhetoric and laws often continue to reinforce, although at a subtler level, the idea of a “timeless superiority of French civilization in the face of a changing world.”²⁵

Posters

Political posters, and posters in general, have a rich history in France. French poster art is visually iconic and democratic by nature; it is a versatile mode of creation. This art form has been admired for many years, with artists like Jules Cherét, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and Raymond Savignac celebrated around the world over a hundred years after producing their first iconic posters. Posters have been used for many different purposes in France, including for art, advertising, and, of course, protests and politics. While early posters often advertised products or expositions, the French have also employed posters for political purposes since the revolution. Posters have expressed declarations from the government to the people, criticism from the people to the government, political statements, and propaganda, with *affichage* [poster-hanging] being a highly effective and inexpensive way to disseminate important information to the public both before and after electronic media.²⁶ As Françoise Lionnet describes, the social practice of hanging posters in France is a form of dialog, at times subversive, offering new definitions of community and new ideas of “Frenchness” as traditional French identity is challenged.²⁷ One can even consider the poster as a both early and enduring

²⁴ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 95.

²⁵ Scott, *Politics of the Veil*, 89.

²⁶ Karen L. Carter, “The Specter of Working-Class Crowds: Political Censorship of Posters in the City of Paris, 1881-1893,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 122 (2012): 132-134, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23646029>.

²⁷ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 95-96.

form of social media; it is highly visual, easy to reproduce and spread to the public, and all may participate. When we use the term social media we are usually referring to the use of the internet for this purpose, but media is social by nature. Visual art and short statements on posters have highlighted cultural conflicts at different points throughout history and allow the people to broadcast ideologies from every corner of the country.²⁸ For example, both far right and antiracist activists have used posters to express their very different views.



Figure 1. Still from the George Méliès 1896 film, *Défense d’Afficher* (Ciné-Archives).

Posters are so deeply ingrained in French culture they even made it into one of the first films produced in France (or anywhere else). *Défense d’Afficher* [Post No Bills] is a one-minute silent film by the famous George Méliès made in 1896, just one year after the

²⁸ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 93.

Lumière brothers showed their first films.²⁹ In this film, a soldier is guarding a wall painted with large words that say “défense d’afficher” [post no bills] when he walks out of frame and a man quickly runs up with a bucket of glue and a poster. He glues his poster to the wall and runs away. A second man appears and glues a second poster over the first; the other man returns and they begin fighting before running away.³⁰ The remaining second poster even advertises George Méliès’ own theater, Théâtre Robert-Houdin. When the soldier returns, another soldier appears and is angry with him for not guarding the wall successfully. This comedic film reveals that the act of hanging posters was considered a common phenomenon and offered a familiar situation that could be portrayed humorously. It also demonstrates the battle for territory that often accompanies poster hanging, both for physical space and ideological dominance. *Affichage* tells an inherently French story and illuminates the importance of free expression and rebellion as a part of French identity.

French legislation regarding *affichage* is especially interesting as it reveals the strong effect that posters can have on the public and the government's reaction to this over time. For most of the nineteenth century, political *affichage* was banned as the government saw it as a powerful (and potentially dangerous) tool of subversion, and censorship of posters became a means of political control.³¹ In 1881, however, France passed a law to legalize *affichage* for everyone which dramatically increased the amount of posters that were hung, although there were rules in place for those who chose to

²⁹ “Défense D’Afficher,” *Ciné-Archives: Fonds Audiovisuel du PCF Mouvement Ouvrier et Démocratique*, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://www.cinearchives.org/catalogue-d-exploitation-d%C3%A9fense-d-afficher-494-605-0-1.html>.

³⁰ The superposition that occurs when one is posting over other posters is similar to how films are made frame by frame. Superposition can be used to conceal underlying images. Similarly, superimposed posters can take over physical and ideological space initially occupied by the first poster.

³¹ Carter, “The Specter of Working-Class Crowds,” 133.

participate. While there were bans in place on where posters could be hung, the French government was actually aiming to protect the public's right to express themselves by designating certain areas specifically for *affichage* and making it illegal to tear approved posters down—while also protecting government propaganda.³² In subsequent years, the law was amended multiple times in order to limit locations, poster size, and content; the government banned posters advocating for anarchy in the late 1800s and at times this was also used as an excuse to censor socialist posters.³³ Some called for bans because of worker protests, and others complained of indecent images and anticlerical sentiment.³⁴ Currently, it is illegal to hang posters outside of designated areas, but the practice is still widespread.³⁵

In 1990, there were restrictions put in place specifically for campaign posters regarding the designated areas for the posters (no campaign posters could be hung outside of these areas in the 6 months preceding the election), the number of posters allowed, their content, and financial reimbursements.³⁶ These regulations demonstrate that regardless of the use of modern technology like television, websites, and social media, political posters still play an important role in elections in France. In addition to designated poster areas, there are temporary metal billboards placed outside of voting

³² Hannah Feldman, "Of the Public Born: Raymond Hains and La France Déchirée," *October* 108 (2004): 75-76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3397615>.

³³ Carter, "The Specter of Working-Class Crowds," 137.

³⁴ Carter, "The Specter of Working-Class Crowds," 134-136.

³⁵ "Où Est-il Interdit d'Apposer Des Publicités Extérieures ?" République Française Entreprendre Service-Public, accessed June 2, 2023, <https://entreprendre.service-public.fr/vosdroits/F24356>; Delia Dumitrescu, "French Electoral Poster Campaigns in the Twenty-First Century," in *Election Posters around the Globe: Political Campaigning in the Public Space*, ed. Christina Holtz-Bacha and Bengt Johansson, (Springer Cham, 2017), 146, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32498-2_8.

³⁶ Dumitrescu, "French Electoral Poster Campaigns," 140.

stations a few weeks before elections specifically for campaign posters, and the order of the posters is decided by a draw for the candidates.³⁷

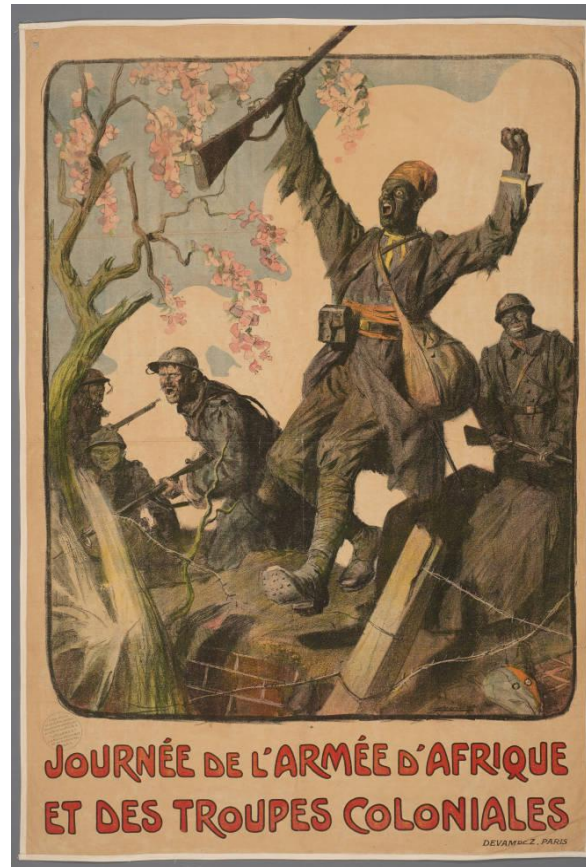


Figure 2. *Journée de l'Armée d'Afrique et des Troupes Coloniales*. 1917 Propaganda poster (University of Texas).

This World War I poster from 1917 features French soldiers fighting alongside the African army and colonial troops with the words “Journée de l’armée d’Afrique et des troupes coloniales” [day of the African army and the colonial troops]. The African army was really the army of Northwestern French Africa, established after the colonization of Algeria to occupy and defend this area for France by using Africans as well as units like

³⁷ James Harrington, “EXPLAINED: The Very Precise Rules of French Election Billboards,” *The Local*, June 2, 2021, <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210602/explained-the-very-precise-rules-of-french-election-billboards>.

the Foreign Legion.³⁸ The Troupes Coloniales, as they were known during this time, consisted originally of French troops sent to occupy French colonies and was expanded to include locals from the colonies as well.³⁹ This propaganda poster promotes an image of unity between the two groups; they are fighting alongside each other against the enemy. The image also, however, reveals a glimpse of the darker history of France in Africa.

The French during this time period had an image of Africa as a land of violence and the people as naturally aggressive and savage, seeing their military recruitment as a way to channel this violence into military power for France.⁴⁰ This poster leans in to this stereotype by placing the black soldier in front of the others with a fearless and wild expression, walking through the barbed wire fence with very open body language and no helmet, presumably straight towards the enemy. He holds his gun with the butt facing the enemy, and the weapon even extends past the frame of the poster. This image emanates raw power and energy. In contrast, the white soldier takes a crouched, defensive possession while still facing the enemy, giving the impression that he is a brave but cautious man who is not naturally comfortable with brutal violence; he is the picture of French restraint. This military propaganda promoting unity between French and colonial soldiers is also ironic considering France's history in Africa and the violence that follows colonization. The soldier depicted in the center of this poster ironically represents unity while in reality he exists in a marginal space, pushed to the edge of French society.

³⁸ Ruth Ginio, "Historical Background: The Army, the Empire, and the Decolonization of French West Africa," In *The French Army and Its African Soldiers: The Years of Decolonization*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 4, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1hfr1hf.7>.

³⁹ Ginio, "Historical Background," 4-5.

⁴⁰ Ruth Ginio, "French Officers, African Officers, and the Violent Image of African Colonial Soldiers," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 36, no. 2 (2010): 59-60, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41403692>.



Figure 3. *La Révolution Nationale ou le Redressement de la 'Maison France.'* 1940 Propaganda poster (L'Histoire par l'Image).

Posters were also used as propaganda for the government during the Vichy regime. During World War II when Germany occupied part of France, the other part of the country was under the control of the collaborationist Vichy regime led by Philippe Pétain. Despite claiming to be neutral, Vichy France was complicit in Germany's treatment of Jewish people and was also an authoritarian government. This image represents the Vichy propaganda of this time period as Pétain framed the situation as a "National Revolution." The poster by René Vachet from 1940 uses language and symbols to appeal to French ideals. Describing the Occupation and Vichy puppet government as a "revolution" that would repair a war-torn France could not only appeal to a traumatized people in its promise of stability, but also to their deep-rooted cultural heritage of revolution—a concept that is very familiar in France. However, the word revolution also implies instability and ironically foreshadowed the rather swift demise of Vichy France.

The colors, words, and symbols used in the poster send a similar message through visual imagery.

Stability (and the lack thereof) is portrayed with this concept of two houses. The house on the left represents pre-Vichy France with the Jewish star and an overwhelming amount of red, which often represents communism but has also been linked for decades to radical politics.⁴¹ The use of these symbols to evoke fear in the viewer reveals the ideology driving Vichy France, which included blatant antisemitism, but also appealed to genuine fears of the French people during this time period. Its crumbling, unstable foundation is built on words such as “radicalisme” [radicalism], “désordre” [disorder], and “juiver,” or possibly “juiverie” (as some words are incomplete). This last word points to another important aspect of Vichy identity politics: Jewish people could not be fully French, but instead were inherently foreign and thus inferior. The old words “juiver” and “juiverie” are derived from *juif* (the French word for Jew). *Juiver* was defined as “commettre une action usuraire” [to commit a usury action, meaning illegal money lending] and “tromper dans un marché” [to deceive in a market]; “juiverie” referred to either a Jewish neighborhood or a “marché usuraire” [money lending market].⁴² In the poster, this is used to reference negative stereotypes of Jewish people and exemplifies the antisemitic views of the government. Through the use of propaganda, the Vichy government blamed problems in France on the Jewish people, labeling them as crooks and thieves, and signaled to citizens that Jewish people were taking up their space and threatening their way of life.

⁴¹ Carter, “The Specter of Working-Class Crowds,” 144.

⁴² Antoine de Rivarol, *Dictionnaire Classique De La Langue Française, Avec Des Exemples Tirés Des Meilleurs Auteurs Français, Et Des Notes Puisées Dans Les Manuscrits De Rivarol*, (Imprimerie de Fain, 1827), 553.

In contrast, the house on the right is stable and beautiful, complete with all three colors of the French flag—and the flag itself. The smoke from the chimney suggests productivity and warmth inside, and the foundation is secure. This symbolism ties Pétain and the Vichy government to an idyllic return to “normal” French life with security for the hard-working French people, with Pétain specifically honored by the stars on the right side, a nod to his rank in the army.⁴³ Both houses are built on a foundation containing three words; this is reminiscent of the three-word slogan of France: liberty, equality, fraternity. On the left, the foundation shows negative words (laziness, demagoguery, and internationalism) to portray pre-Vichy France as drowning in problems; on the right, however, the three words are positive (work, family, and homeland) and show the Vichy vision for the future of France while rejecting the original revolutionary values of the people. This poster is a great example of how visual imagery can carry powerful political ideas to the public.

Antisemitic ideas were not created during World War II, but the scale of the violence against Jewish people left a lasting scar on France. Maurice Samuels explains that the collective discrimination against the Jews during this period involved one group with a communal identity being treated differently—something that France has attempted to eliminate by embracing universalism and treating citizens only as individuals (although he points out that this can go too far).⁴⁴ For the French, universalism would eliminate discrimination based on communal identity by refusing to formally

⁴³ Alexandre Sumpf, “La Révolution Nationale ou le Redressement de la ‘Maison France,’” *L’Histoire par l’Image*, September 2020, <https://histoire-image.org/etudes/revolution-nationale-redressement-maison-france>.

⁴⁴ Maurice Samuels, *The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 169.

group famous for their use of visual imagery on posters to broadcast their revolutionary ideas and their frustration with the government; the movement spread and workers joined.⁴⁶ They produced many posters as a group and pasted them on walls around the city, exemplifying the way the French use poster art to communicate with the public and express themselves socially and politically. The movement spread, through the medium of posters, to all the major cities of France.⁴⁷

May 68 posters often included the use of irony and comparisons to the past, which Walter Benjamin would refer to as “dialectical images,” meaning they collapse the past and present to compare historical struggles to the current movement.⁴⁸ This is evident in the posters in the above photograph, some of which include the Hitler salute and the Cross of Lorraine symbol to evoke different historical memories and use them as powerful tools of protest for their present struggles. The image also includes posters that say “La Lutte Continue” [the struggle continues], and includes “étudiants” and “travailleurs” [students and workers], showing the unity between the two groups that made this movement so powerful.

Other posters in this photograph refer to “ORTF,” which stands for the “Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française.” This was France’s broadcasting network run by the government, which the students protested because President De Gaulle enacted heavy censorship of visual information, including controlling ORTF and the illustrated press during May and June of 1968.⁴⁹ This ban heightened the importance of the poster as a

⁴⁶ Clifford Deaton, “The Memory of May ’68: The Ironic Interruption and Democratic Commitment of the Atelier Populaire,” *Design Issues* 29, no. 2 (2013): 31-34, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24266992>.

⁴⁷ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 93.

⁴⁸ Deaton, “The Memory of May ‘68,” 30.

⁴⁹ Victoria H.F. Scott, “‘Le Carré Blanc’: Censorship and the Posters of May and June 1968,” *Annali Della Scuola Normale Superiore Di Pisa. Classe Di Lettere e Filosofia* 2, no. 1 (2010): 257-258. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24308623>. Scott 257-258.

means of visual expression that the government could not completely censor; ironically, the ban on visual media surrounding the protests only strengthened the power of the students' visual art in the streets. While print media was still circulating, the government focused on censorship of visual art, revealing that the state saw the art as most dangerous to the collective imagination of a revolutionary people.⁵⁰



Figure 5. Photograph by Bruno Barbey of two posters from May of 1968 (Artstor).

The Atelier Populaire often used references to World War II in their art, comparing police and politicians to the enemy. In the image above, Daniel Cohn-Bendit is depicted as laughing at a riot policeman in the poster on the left. This student was an important figure in May of '68 because he was banned from returning to France after a trip and was also harassed by the French police; he was French, German, and Jewish, so the comparison to World War II shown by the use of the word “undesirables” and the SS

⁵⁰ Scott, “Le Carré Blanc,” 258.

Nazi symbol is especially poignant.⁵¹ The poster on the left includes the words “Nous sommes tous ‘indésirables’” [we are all undesirables], an allusion to a word the Germans used to refer to Jews and others they were persecuting and killing. The combined use of this word with the image also creates a comparison of the riot police with the Nazis, comparing Cohn-Bendit and “nous tous” [all of us], the students, to the persecuted.

The poster on the right side of this image further strengthens this comparison as a policeman is shown with his baton raised, ready to strike, and the Nazi SS symbol on his riot shield. The use of sunglasses and lack of a distinct identity furthers the comparison by using this policeman to represent the French police in general. The perspective causes the viewer to find themselves on the other end of the violence, in solidarity with the students—it would be ridiculous to side with the Nazis after all, and this is how the students wanted to portray their enemies as well. Not only are these comparisons to World War II powerful as they raise familiar ideas to make a point about the police being corrupt and violent, but they also reveal the strength of collective memory in the public. These allusions to historical events were an integral part of a movement that inspired many to participate in protesting injustice.

The use of “indésirables” in the poster on the left also speaks to the students’ solidarity with immigrants. One of the main goals of this movement was the solidarity of workers of all nationalities against their common enemy, with a goal of equal pay and treatment for all.⁵² On other posters, they used phrases like “frontières = répression” [borders = repression] and “travailleurs, français, immigrés, UNIS” [workers, French,

⁵¹ Deaton, “The Memory of May ‘68,” 30.

⁵² Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 95.

immigrants, UNITED] to show their support.⁵³ Growing from 1968, posters also became a catalyst for the anti-racist movements of the 1980s.⁵⁴

Throughout postwar history in France, anti-racism groups have sprung up as a result of periods of racism and violence.⁵⁵ During the next few decades after the 60s, growing numbers of immigrants arrived in France and were met with violent retaliation. The summer of 1973 is remembered as “l’été meurtrier” [deadly summer] because of attacks on hundreds of Algerians that even caused the Algerian government to halt emigration; in addition, a synagogue was bombed in 1980, and, among even more racist attacks, children of immigrants were brutally murdered in the early to mid 1980s.⁵⁶ These events along with a strong tradition of protest in France and the momentum from 1968 naturally led to an anti-racism movement that flourished during the 1980s. Posters were instrumental in this movement, helping to proclaim public opinion, spreading information about laws and the rights of citizens, and raising important questions about cultural ideology among the people; however, they often presented diversity only in a way that was palatable to the “French” public.⁵⁷

As Patrick Soulsby puts it, antiracism during this period was consciously rooted in the past, with references to World War II remaining prevalent and a new acknowledgement of colonial violence emerging.⁵⁸ While antiracist groups continued to oppose antisemitism, there was a clear shift to include people of other ethnicities as well.

⁵³ Henriette Touillier Feyrabend, “Un Discours d’agitation Par l’Image: Les Affiches de Mai 68,” *Ethnologie Française* 13, no. 3 (1983): 256-257, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40988775>.

⁵⁴ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 93.

⁵⁵ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 99.

⁵⁶ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 99.

⁵⁷ Lionnet, “Immigration, Poster Art, and Transgressive Citizenship,” 96.

⁵⁸ Patrick James Soulsby, “‘History Takes Its Time...’: Anti-Racist Temporalities and Historical Memory Cultures in France, c. 1980–1998,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’Histoire* 28, no. 4 (August 2021): 550, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2021.1904839>.

Larger numbers of North African immigrants (especially from former French colonies) from the last couple of decades raised a familiar question: can one be French and not be white? Or does a visibly different ethnicity make them inherently foreign? The French republican idea of citizenship, as Soulsby explains, consisted of an individual stripped of external markers, making it difficult for some to see past “non-traditional” ethnicities or religious traditions.⁵⁹ Efforts in the 1980s (which included attempts at inclusion through poster art) pushed for equality and for a more multicultural France over pure assimilation, battling deep-rooted fears of division based on identity in France.⁶⁰ With many groups determined to fight against the racism of the past and improve the future for immigrants, the rise of the far-right in the 1980s may be surprising. Strife over this question of identity and a fear of the foreigner contributed, with the National Front party making gains unprecedented for the far right since World War II.

Case Study: Ibrahim Ali & the National Front

The perpetrators in the case of Ibrahim Ali were hanging posters for their political party, the National Front, specifically in support of their Presidential candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen at the time that they committed the crime. Their posters read: “Avec Le Pen, Trois Millions Immigrés Rapatriés; En Avant pour la Sixième République” [with Le Pen, three millions immigrants repatriated; onward for the Sixth Republic].⁶¹ The use of the words “immigrants” and “repatriated” here is important; “immigrants” implies that these are people who have come to France to stay permanently, while “repatriated” implies that one is being sent back to one’s own country. This highlights the way the National Front viewed immigrants: immigrants can never be truly French—even if some

⁵⁹ Soulsby, “History Takes Its Time,” 551.

⁶⁰ Soulsby, “History Takes Its Time,” 551.

⁶¹ Bernard, “Des Militants du FN.”

of them have legal status or are committed to becoming members of the country for the rest of their lives. “Repatriated” also disguises the experience of deportation for immigrants; sending someone home is much different than taking them away from the home they have created. This paints Le Pen as noble both for protecting the interests of the “truly French” and “helping” immigrants return to where they “belong.” The use of “Sixth Republic” to describe Le Pen’s potential Presidency insinuates that his leadership would be another revolution for France, pointing to the radical nature of his politics and how National Front activists saw themselves as fighting for their country. This is also reminiscent of the Vichy government’s attempt to appeal to the French people by calling their reign a “National Revolution.”



Figure 6. Screenshot from France 2 news broadcast covering the Ibrahim Ali case (Institut National de l’Audiovisuel).

Just as gluing a poster like this makes a powerful statement, so does tearing one down. The above National Front posters, appearing in a video covering the Ibrahim Ali

murder and presumably posted in Marseille, feature Jean-Marie Le Pen. There has been a clear (and most likely unprofessionally executed) effort to remove them. The posting and subsequent destruction of these posters exemplify the divided public opinion, especially in relation to Le Pen and the National Front. Making this statement against the National Front required a tangible object to destroy in a public space; the poster not only offers the *afficheur* an opportunity to express themselves in public spaces, but also offers itself up to the public as an idea to be received, rejected, or replaced. Vandalism and the ripping of posters can be in themselves forms of social commentary from the public—a rejection of an idea or of propaganda. When a poster is torn beyond recognition, all that is left is the residue of political tension and division.

Décollage, the practice of lacerating posters (basically the opposite of *collage*), has even evolved as its own artform since the late 1940s.⁶² *Décollage* was displayed in a 1961 art exhibition by Raymond Hains called “*La France déchirée*” (France in shreds) during the political turmoil near the end of the Algerian war. This art form was used to portray the complicated experience of the public during this time, as most of the fighting was lurking at a distance in Algeria and the subject was often layered under politicians’ political euphemisms; Président De Gaulle did not call it a war, he called it a “peace-keeping operation.”⁶³ While not highlighted in an art gallery, the torn and vandalized National Front posters throughout France tell a quietly defiant story of resistance to the far right and support for the French immigrant.

The *affichage* restrictions mentioned earlier, particularly those enacted in the 1990s, are also important as they apply to our perpetrators in the Ibrahim Ali case. Robert

⁶² Feldman, “Of the Public Born,” 73-74.

⁶³ Tom McDonough, “Raymond Hains’s ‘France in Shreds’ and the Politics of *Décollage*,” *Representations* 90, no. 1 (2005): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2005.90.1.75>.

Lagier and his entourage were hanging posters outside approved *affichage* areas, but this additional violation of law is rarely mentioned in articles reporting on the incident.⁶⁴

There is also no mention of whether or not the men were fined for this infraction, and the focus on the posters in news articles has more to do with the political content than the fact that these men were not supposed to even be hanging them. This seems to indicate a widespread acceptance of *affichage sauvage* (literally “wild poster” but translates to “illegal poster”) in France as it was barely mentioned.⁶⁵ It could also be that it paled in comparison to the murder, however; this would be another reasonable explanation for the media’s omission of this fact.

⁶⁴ Bernard, “Des Militants du FN.” Bernard’s article in *Le Monde* does briefly mention that the National Front activists participated in “affichage sauvage” but focuses mainly on the actual murder and does not mention any punishment for this illegal posting.

⁶⁵ Norimitsu Onishi and Constant Méheut, “Once a Slogan of Unity, ‘Je Suis Charlie’ Now Divides France,” *New York Times*, December 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/19/world/europe/france-charlie-hebdo-slogan.html>. *Affichage* is an important aspect of free speech in France, a country in which that right is taken very seriously. The *Charlie Hebdo* terrorist attack and subsequent protests in support of free speech are evidence of this. *Charlie Hebdo* is a satirical magazine; their office in Paris was attacked by Islamists after they published an unflattering caricature of the Prophet Muhammad in 2015. The people were appalled by this act and participated in protests with signs reading “Je Suis Charlie” to show their support for the journalists and the right to free speech. Recently, however, this has become more divisive as the right has sometimes used to slogan as an anti-Islam statement. “I am not Charlie” has, of course, appeared in opposition.



Figure 7 (Left). *Les Français d'abord*. National Front poster from 1988 (Odysseo: Des Ressources pour l'Histoire de l'Immigration).



Figure 8 (Right). *1 Million de Chômeurs*. National Front poster from the 1980s (Odysseo: Des Ressources pour l'Histoire de l'Immigration).

The perpetrators' posters were not the only Le Pen posters using the subject of immigration as a political angle. Many of the National Front's posters reveal the party's stance on the issue and how they view what it means to be French, either explicitly or implicitly. Above are two National Front campaign posters from the 1980s featuring Le Pen. Again, the words used in the poster on the left allude to the party's anti-immigration stance: "les Français d'abord!" [the French first!] sends the message that the French people are under threat of subordination and need to vote for someone who would value them over immigrants. The poster on the right makes this even clearer: "1 million de chômeurs c'est 1 million d'immigrés de trop ! La France et les Français d'abord !" [One

million unemployed is one million immigrants too many! France and the French first!]. Again, Le Pen makes a zero sum calculation: the implication is that the presence of immigrants in France by definition threatens French livelihood, and the poster posits a causal link between those who do not have jobs in France with those who are immigrants.



Figure 9. *Des Maires et des Députés Immigrés ?* National Front poster (Odysseo: Des Ressources pour l'Histoire de l'Immigration).

Similar to the previous two, this National Front poster also expresses an anti-immigrant agenda. The text at the top reads “Des maires et des députés immigrés ?” [Immigrant mayors and deputies?] and the reply in red answers: “Non, c’est non !” [No–period!]. The white government building in the back is labeled “Assemblée Nationale” [National Assembly], which is part of the French parliament, and the word “National” is crossed out. Along with the red sign in front that reads “vote des étrangers”

[foreigners' vote], this implies the crumbling national identity of France and a government overtaken by immigrants (similar to the anti-semitic propaganda from World War II). The warning to “défendez-vous !” [defend yourselves!] strengthens once again the idea that immigrants are a threat not only to France as a country and French identity as a whole, but also to individuals. The way these posters treat immigrants as a monolithic threat to the truly “French” both reveals and spreads anti-immigrant sentiment among their supporters, clearly painting immigrants as their enemy. The perpetrators' behavior in the Ali case reveals the violent implications of these ideas and the power that posters hold in amplifying them.

It is also interesting to note that political *affichage* has often been seen as marking one's political territory in France, which is clearly a concept that would resonate with the National Front.⁶⁶ This is notable as the perpetrators in the case of Ibrahim Ali were hanging the National Front posters in a neighborhood in Marseille known for its large immigrant population. Hanging these posters in this area sends a clear anti-immigrant message to the immigrants themselves and attempts to mark their party's territory. This can be seen as part of an attempt of the French far right to reclaim areas they have “lost” to large immigrant populations. The fact that the perpetrators were armed in this case is also compelling; they automatically adopted a defensive stance by brandishing weapons. Historically, *afficheurs* (poster-hangers) throughout French history would hang illegal posters at times when they knew the police were not yet taking them down, use glue that was difficult to remove, and were often armed.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Dumitrescu, “French Electoral Poster Campaigns,” 146.

⁶⁷ Carter, “The Specter of Working-Class Crowds,” 146. Carter explains that one prisoner even admitted he carried a knife during his *affichage* sessions and would have killed a police officer if he had the opportunity.



Figure 10. Photograph by Martine Franck showing posters used in the 1992 protest against the National Front (*JSTOR*).

This image captures a poster used by the opposition to Le Pen and the National Front three years previous to the murder of Ibrahim Ali. Martine Franck took this photograph on January 25, 1992 at Place de la Nation in Paris during a protest against Jean-Marie Le Pen.⁶⁸ This event consisted of almost 100,000 protestors who were supported by over 70 different activist groups who wanted to bring attention to the anti-immigrant and racist attitudes of the National Front that were spreading in French society as elections approached.⁶⁹ This poster, designed by artist Marc Pataud, shows Jean-Marie Le Pen's face merged with Hitler's profile, articulating a comparison between the two leaders to make a point about their ideologies concerning those of other races.

⁶⁸ Martine Franck, *FRANCE. Ile de France region. Paris. Jan. 25, 1992*, January 25, 1992, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.9871239>.

⁶⁹ William Drozdiak, "Protesters in Paris Assail Racism," *The Washington Post*, January 26, 1992, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/01/26/protesters-in-paris-assail-racism/eb7f01cf-d3f1-4f07-81cd-ab93ef020c16/>.

The use of this poster offers additional evidence of the medium's importance as a vehicle for the democratization of information, as well as the common use of historical references to make points about current issues. The comparisons to World War II have endured to recent years, showing the strength of the memory of the Holocaust in France. While comparing Jean-Marie Le Pen to Hitler may seem jarring and possibly hyperbolic, the protestors' posters point out with just one powerful image the perceived similarities in their ideas and attitudes and suggest the potential dangers of repeating the past.

Ibrahim Ali



Figure 11. Poster of Ibrahim Ali on the wall of the street where he was killed (Outre-mer la 1ère with AFP).

This poster of Ibrahim Ali reveals the sometimes ignored existence of a multicultural France and shows that this case became representative of a larger resistance to the far-right. The text overlaying a caricature of Ali reads: “Combien d’Ibrahim Ali avant qu’on se réveille ?” [how many Ibrahim Alis before we wake up?], indicating that Ibrahim Ali’s name has become eponymic by representing other victims of racial violence. The colors used in this poster are also meaningful; the red, white, and blue evoke the French flag, but the addition of yellow and green is a nod to the Comorian flag which contains all five colors in this order. This poster, which features French language and was used for the public protests that have become the hallmark of French political life, also represents an immigrant and a foreign flag. It makes a visual argument that one can be an immigrant and be French, standing in opposition to those who would disagree and taking up physical space in Marseille to show respect and support for Ali and his family.

As a way to memorialize Ali’s tragic death, the community in Marseille, presumably including the creator of this poster, fought for the street on which Ibrahim Ali died to bear his name instead of “Avenue des Aygalades.” This fight took 26 years, mainly because of political resistance from the center-right mayor in office until 2020, but was ultimately successful as the street name was changed in 2021.⁷⁰ In an article for *Le Figaro*, the deputy mayor of Marseille in 2021 was quoted as saying she never missed the yearly commemoration of Ali’s death on February 21, and that changing the name of the street is the community’s way of saying to the youth that the erasure of this piece of history has been made right.⁷¹ The fake street sign on this Ibrahim Ali poster became a

⁷⁰ *Le Figaro*, “26 Ans Après.”

⁷¹ *Le Figaro*, “26 Ans Après.”

permanent reality as the continued efforts of Ali's family, friends, and community over many years paid off. Their dedication and the ultimate success of this movement speaks to the continued resistance of the far-right in Marseille and a supportive community for immigrants in France.

Present Day

Like most countries across the globe, France still has a difficult relationship with race. Discomfort over colonial history and embarrassment over defeat in the case of Algeria led to a desire to suppress these memories and move on.⁷² France did not even acknowledge that what happened in Algeria was a war until 1999; it was referred to as a “police action,” a “peace-keeping operation,” or “the Algerian drama” among other euphemisms.⁷³ Embarrassment over Vichy France and their complicity in Holocaust also promoted a culture of suppression, but in 1995 this was finally formally acknowledged by President Jacques Chirac.⁷⁴ Only recently in 2021 did the current French President, Emmanuel Macron, apologize for atrocities committed against Algerians who fought for the French; criticism and plans for reparations continue today.⁷⁵ This desire to suppress difficult memories and conflicts surrounding old French views of other races is one reason for the continued struggle to redefine French identity and the relationship to other countries and cultures.

Concern over modern attitudes towards visibly different immigrants has also risen as the National Front has grown successfully under a new name: *Rassemblement*

⁷² Naomi Greene, *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema*, (Princeton University Press, 1999), 133, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/byu/detail.action?docID=581597>.

⁷³ Greene, *Landscapes of Loss*, 133.

⁷⁴ Marlise Simons, “Chirac Affirms France's Guilt in Fate of Jews,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/17/world/chirac-affirms-france-s-guilt-in-fate-of-jews.html>.

⁷⁵ “France Apologizes to Algerians Who Fought for Colonizers,” AP News, September 20, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/europe-france-emmanuel-macron-781e0129b136872988d17b2ce804eddb>.

Nationale [National Rally]. The National Front was revived by Jean-Marie Le Pen's daughter, Marine Le Pen, who took over in 2011 and even ran against the current President in the 2022 French presidential election. Her political agenda is very similar to her father's, but she presents it with a more palatable discourse while avoiding his more radical rhetoric. The National Rally maintains an anti-immigration stance and is still a nationalist party, but Marine Le Pen avoids the overtly racist and radical language often used by her father and uses more populist, anti-elite language to appeal to the general public. Le Pen's platform includes making France more independent from international influence, including pulling out of NATO, as she sees French sovereignty and identity as most important. Other plans she expressed during the 2022 election included passing laws by referendum (this would even require amending the French constitution), banning headscarves in any public place, increased deportation, and no longer allowing children of foreigners who are born in France to gain automatic citizenship.⁷⁶ Her stances and rhetoric reveal that her main priority is to preserve a strict, traditional French identity and "protect" the "French" from foreigners and immigrants.

⁷⁶ Elaine Ganley, "Le Pen's Far-Right Vision: Retooling France at Home, Abroad," *AP News*, April 22, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/2022-french-election-marine-le-pen-vision-1dc32d753e839a2c1871db3bb47a3e2f>.



Figure 12. Marine Le Pen's poster from the second round of the 2022 election (Posted on Marine Le Pen's Twitter).

Figure 12 shows one of Marine Le Pen's posters from the 2022 presidential election. Daniel Stockemer and Mauro Barisione point out that Le Pen's main strategy for strengthening the National Rally by softening the party's harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric has been rather successful, as shown by increased membership, electoral success, and improved public opinion.⁷⁷ This strategy is visible in the posters Marine has chosen as well as the design of her website for the election, *mlefrance.fr*. Both mediums present an inviting image of an approachable woman who wants to be the voice of the people. The above poster, for example, uses a very simple image of Le Pen and the slogan "Pour tous les Français" [for all French people]. Marion Ballet points out that the use of Le Pen's

⁷⁷ Daniel Stockemer and Mauro Barisione, "The 'New' Discourse of the Front National under Marine Le Pen: A Slight Change with a Big Impact," *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 2 (2016): 101, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323116680132>.

first name throughout her political campaign could be in an effort to distance herself from memories of her father and the National Front; she also explains that Le Pen's use of the phrase "pour tous les Français" is double-sided in that it appears inclusive but really excludes anyone that she does not see as French.⁷⁸ The somewhat softened rhetoric that Marine Le Pen has encouraged still reveals the anti-immigrant sentiment that remains a cornerstone of her political party regardless of a shift in the communication style, logos, slogans, and posters of the National Rally.

This is also evident on her website, where she directly blames immigrants for problems including "communautarisme, insécurité, saturation de notre système de protection sociale, islamisme" [communitarianism, insecurity, overloading of the social system, Islamic fundamentalism] and a lack of safety for women.⁷⁹ Mentions of *communautarisme* and *islamisme* are especially important here because they suggest that immigrants can never truly become French, and that certain racial or religious identities are inherently divisive. Fear of *communautarisme* has been common throughout French history; Maurice Samuels translates this as "communalism" and explains that this is seen as prioritizing religious or ethnic affiliations over one's national affiliation.⁸⁰ This fear continues to hinder full acceptance of immigrants today as it contributes largely to xenophobic responses to visibly different ethnicities and religions.

⁷⁸ Sébastien Seibt, "La Nouvelle Affiche de Marine Le Pen, Ou Les Faux-Semblants de La Com' de l'extrême Droite," *France 24*, April 12, 2022, www.france24.com/fr/france/20220412-la-nouvelle-affiche-de-marine-le-pen-ou-les-faux-semblants-de-la-com-de-l-extr%C3%Aame-droite.

⁷⁹ Marine Le Pen Campaign, "Marine Le Pen 2022," <https://mlafrance.fr/>.

⁸⁰ Samuels, *Right to Difference*, 4.



Figure 13. Photograph of posters seen in Paris in 2017 (*The Independent*).

While Marine has made much progress with the National Rally, there are also many, like Ibrahim Ali's community, who continue to resist the xenophobia of the far right. Posters are effective vehicles of this rhetoric. The posters above contain multiple critiques of both the current President Macron and of Marine Le Pen. Keeping with tradition, the posters suggest that the past is prologue, with a Hitler mustache scribbled on Marine's face and SS Nazi symbols on another image of her. One poster has Macron and Marine Le Pen speaking to each other, with Macron saying, "And if we robbed the poor?" and Le Pen responding: "Okay, but we'll say it was the foreigners' fault!" This poster is clearly criticizing both politicians and references Le Pen's tendency to blame problems on immigrants; this interaction also insinuates that the problems are coming from the French government, not foreigners, and that Le Pen is wrong to blame them.

Another poster reads, “give the National Front the middle finger,” not only showing opposition to the party, but also refusing to use the new name—perhaps in another effort to avoid forgetting, suppressing, or repeating the past. The continued dissemination of these political posters in the present confirms that they have endured as an important form of social media in France and remain a powerful democratic tool to this day.

Conclusion

In 2015, three days of Islamist terrorist attacks left France devastated. In response, the people, the police, and local and world leaders (although the National Front was specifically barred from joining the rally as a party), set aside differences to hold the largest demonstration in French history in Paris to call for unity across the country.⁸¹ Posters and signs were used in this protest to show support and solidarity with the victims and to call for unity.⁸² The protesters were unified with no violent incidents during the entire demonstration, and they were able to express a deep desire for freedom for all. While xenophobia is by no means eradicated, clearly there is a strong resistance growing in France. As Samuels suggests, there may be a way to keep the positive aspects of French universalism that defy discrimination while preserving individual rights to religion and culture.⁸³

The Ibrahim Ali case reveals the power of posters to influence attitudes and behaviors as evidenced by the actions of the National Front perpetrators. The National Front posters, around the time of this crime and those used during the crime, perpetuated racist ideas and contributed to his death. While tamed by softer rhetoric, the modern

⁸¹ “France: 3.7 Million Attend Unity Rallies, Setting Record,” *CBS News*, January 11, 2015, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/france-nearly-4-million-attend-unity-rallies-setting-record/>

⁸² This protest included many “Je Suis Charlie” signs as the *Charlie Hebdo* attack was one of these incidents.

⁸³ Samuels, *Right to Difference*, 6.

National Rally party continues to uphold colonial era values, evidenced by their politics and subtly reinforced through slogans and posters. Immigration as a political issue will continue, not only for the far-right, often influenced by France's history of colonization and racial tension. The posters analyzed here show only a small piece of France's long history of *affichage* as a powerful tool of communication for these and other ideas, with each new poster revealing unique expression of the individual and their communal ties. As France moves forward and the struggle continues, posters will remain one form of social media allowing freedom of expression for all. The ephemeral poster has become an eternal fixture of France.

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