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# Transcolonial Carceralities: Memories of Algerian and Japanese Civilian Internment and Denaturalisation

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the overseas French empire's denaturalisation, civilian internment, and carceral policies vis-à-vis Algerians in North Africa and the Japanese in New Caledonia during and after the Second World War. Illuminating the histories of Algerian and Japanese civilian internment, this article analyses how overlapping, uneven colonial policies pertaining to incarceration spanning multiple empires produced complex settler-colonial entanglements with racial implications. This article reveals how multifarious colonial policies gesturing to a global, carceral, and colonial continuum against Algerians and Japanese reinforced parallels between diasporic and ideological movements from francophone North Africa to Oceania.*

'The first essential step on the road to total domination is to kill the juridical person in man.'

Hannah Arendt<sup>1</sup>

By April 1941, the Vichy French government in Algeria had established networks of internment camps, including the infamous Bedeau and Tèlèrgma labour camps, to which authorities would begin the transportation of Algerian Jews and political prisoners. These internees would work for the French empire as forced labourers under insalubrious conditions until 1943.<sup>2</sup> By the same year, French authorities detained over two thousand Algerian Jewish internees in camps with political

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<sup>1</sup>Hannah Arendt, *On Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1968), p. 447.

<sup>2</sup>Norbert Bel Ange, *Quand Vichy internait ses soldats juifs d'Algérie: Bedeau, sud Oranais, 1941-1943*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

prisoners, totalling approximately twenty thousand subjects across camps in Algeria.<sup>3</sup> Displaced refugees whom officials qualified as internees and labourers would arrive in freighters along routes extending from Oran to Algiers. According to former Bedeau prisoner Charles Malka, the Nazi German leadership recognised and praised the creation of these camps under the control of the Vichy French authorities.<sup>4</sup> According to Malka, shaven-headed internees were destined to endure deplorable physical and sanitary conditions, often leading to severe illness and death. Camp Hadjerat M'Guil in South Oran, most infamously known by survivors as the 'French Buchenwald', housed prisoners whom Vichy authorities tortured and murdered. Prisoners at Hadjerat M'Guil were mainly foreign workers, and camp guards included German Nazis and French Vichy collaborators.<sup>5</sup> Nazi-supported Vichy projects, such as the creation of internment camps in the Maghreb, unfolded simultaneously with the opening of internment and death camps across Europe. Strict censorship policies prohibited reports on these Algerian camps until the liberation of North Africa – a fact that would enshroud the existence of North African labour camps in darkness until nearly a decade after the Second World War.

Nearly twenty thousand kilometres from these Algerian camps lies Oceania's New Caledonia where historians can locate another neglected history of the overseas French empire's use of incarceration camps. Although incarceration spaces in the penal colony of Nouville, New Caledonia, were not labour camps connected to the Third Reich, French officials collectively detained political undesirables and Asian emigrants for national security reasons. Understanding the place that internment camps occupy in New Caledonian history entails analysing its unique settler-colonial status and the presence there of indentured Japanese labourers. Having arrived in New Caledonia in 1892, Japanese settlers served the overseas French empire as indentured labourers whom French officials, liaising with the Japanese government, contracted to work in the archipelago's valuable nickel mining industry. Nearly fifty years later and fearing imminent threats from an imperial Japanese attack after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the French governor of New Caledonia Henri Sautot received orders from Charles de Gaulle on 8 December 1941, that the colonial authorities were to detain all

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<sup>3</sup>Susan Slyomovics, 'Other Places of Confinement: Bedeau Internment Camp for Algerian Jewish Soldiers', in Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds.), *The Holocaust and North Africa*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 95-112 (p. 99).

<sup>4</sup>United States Holocaust Museum, RG-50.030.0610, Charles Malka, 'Oral History Interview with Charles Malka,' <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn42308> Accessed 10 July 2022.

<sup>5</sup>Cristina Bejan, 'Hadjerat M'Guil', in Geoffrey P. Megargee, Joseph R. White, and Mel Hecker (eds.), *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945, Vol. 3*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 270-272.

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Japanese civilians residing on the archipelago and send them to the Nouville penal colony.

The French empire maintained *de facto* all of its overseas Vichy colonies when Germany occupied France in May 1940. New Caledonia, unlike Vichy North Africa, changed support from Vichy to Free France in September 1940.<sup>6</sup> This Vichy-to-Free French transition characterises New Caledonia as a unique territory that claimed both Vichy and Free French allegiances within such a short period. Beginning on 8 December 1941, French officials in the Free French territory of New Caledonia conducted unannounced door-to-door raids, arresting 1,152 Japanese subjects and detaining them under austere conditions.<sup>7</sup> These raids transpired throughout the French Pacific empire with the objective to rapidly expel the Japanese and thwart any surprise Japanese attack on Free French Oceanic territories. Cabled reports at the time indicated that the Japanese empire planned to occupy New Caledonia and other overseas French territories.<sup>8</sup> New Caledonian Japanese who were naturalised French citizens were stripped of their French citizenship. Collaborating with the Australian government, French authorities in New Caledonia deported 1,126 Japanese civilians held at the Nouville internment camp in Nouméa to various internment camps throughout Australia. While French authorities detained nearly all of the Japanese in New Caledonia, they exempted the mixed-race children of Japanese civilian detainees. Most of these children were from Japanese-Indigenous New Caledonian families, also referred to as Nippo-Kanak, and were excluded, along with their Melanesian mothers, from this mass deportation. Divested of their citizenship by French colonial authorities, these mixed-race children witnessed their Japanese fathers' arrest not knowing that this would be the last time they would see them. Nearly all of the Japanese detainees were unable to return to New Caledonia immediately after the Second World War due to financial hardships and preventative legislation. The French

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<sup>6</sup>On New Caledonia's decision to align with Free France, see Kim Munholland, *Rock of Contention: Free French and Americans at War in New Caledonia, 1940-1945*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 33-42.

<sup>7</sup>This figure is an average across various archival sources that disclose different numbers. The total figure appearing in this article is based on (1) the official number of New Caledonian Japanese detainees, including female Japanese under house arrest, whom French officials deported and (2) the number of detainees who were exempted from deportation. On this point, see Benjamin Hiramatsu Ireland, 'The Japanese in New Caledonia: Histories of Citizenship, Incarceration, and Nippo-Kanak Identity', *French Historical Studies*, 43, 4 (2020): pp. 667-703 (p. 690).

<sup>8</sup>Personal archives of Paul Paturel, 'Note de renseignements: Espionnage japonais', 1941: Poindimié, New Caledonia.

government's refusal to allow New Caledonian Japanese to re-enter the country after the war further hindered their ability to reunite with the families left behind.<sup>9</sup>

Focusing on this transnational framework, the author has examined critically neglected histories in Japanese, French, and Algerian contexts, in which colonial officials in the overseas French empire manipulated the juridical statuses and ordered the physical incarceration of civilian subjects. This article considers the time frame of the Second World War in New Caledonian and Algerian contexts, as well as the years leading to the war in both locations. In this article's North African context, the author's focus on denaturalisation policies and displacement also concerns the years spanning the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). French officials adopted these policies to safeguard its French colonies in North Africa and Oceania. The article thus explores the French empire's denaturalisation and carceral policies aimed at the Japanese in New Caledonia, including their Nippo-Kanak children, situating the case of the Japanese in New Caledonia against carceral and sociolegal policies operating in Algeria both during and after the Second World War. In so doing, the article shows that denaturalisation and carceral practices in these geographies were interrelated colonial mechanisms. The French empire employed these mechanisms to reproduce what Hannah Arendt describes as 'statelessness'. Namely, stateless individuals are denied their human personhood when a regime prevents them from partaking in an organised political body and citizenship within a nation-state.<sup>10</sup> For Arendt, when colonial bureaucracies deny individuals their citizenship within a nation-state, the individuals are fundamentally 'stateless': dehumanised, deprived of their human agency, and subjected to pervasive surveillance. Considering carceral practices and statelessness, historians can orient Japanese and North African emigration and internment in the overseas French empire around 'transcolonial carceralities' – a concept referring to the overlapping yet uneven policies of incarceration, dehumanisation, and dispossession spanning multiple empires and temporalities. This study illuminates the parallels between diasporic, ideological movements across empires in a global carceral continuum on which historians can place French colonial policies in North Africa and Oceania.

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<sup>9</sup>Ireland, 'The Japanese in New Caledonia', p. 698. See also Rowena Ward, 'Repatriating the Japanese from New Caledonia, 1941-46', *Journal of Pacific History*, 51, 4 (2016), pp. 392-408.

<sup>10</sup>Arendt, *On Totalitarianism*, p. 596. Although Arendt's commentaries reference historical atrocities beyond this article's geocultural framework, her commentaries on the demonisation of targeted, oppressed populaces by colonial bureaucracies can extend to any regime, including the French empire, that regarded its legally precarious subjects as an expendable surplus population.

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Specifically, the article examines the impact that incarceration and legal policies had on Indigenous and Algerian Jewish communities, on the one hand, and settler-colonial Japanese and racially hybrid Nippo-Kanak communities in New Caledonia, on the other. This article does not posit or intimate there was any causal relationship between the French empire in North Africa and in the Asia Pacific. The objective is to examine the similar carceral policies in North Africa and the Pacific Islands to dismantle the notion of a monolithic French empire. The article is also cautious not to employ any comparative frameworks that could problematically minimise or equate the lived experiences of Algerian Jews, non-Jews, Japanese, and Japanese-Indigenous subjects when all were impacted by the French empire. The productive juxtaposition of asymmetrical Algerian and New Caledonian histories represents a heuristic allowing historians to uncover violently marginalised, silenced transnational histories. Michael Rothberg qualifies this interpretive methodology as an 'emergent model of multidirectional memory' – one that serves as a mode of transnational remembrance evincing the racialised, colonial violences against persecuted civilian populaces.<sup>11</sup> As suggested in this article's conclusion, this multidirectional memory is noteworthy because it allows historians to explore the traumas embedded in 'complex and uncertain moral and ethical terrain'.<sup>12</sup> This article's multidirectional engagement invites historians to move across temporalities and geographies to promote an active decolonial solidarity with the victims of this French colonial history.

After German soldiers marched down the Champs-Élysées in June 1940, German and French officials signed an armistice at Compiègne. This divided France into a German-occupied zone in northern France and an unoccupied zone (*zone libre*) in south-eastern France under Marshal Philippe Pétain's authority. Establishing his collaborationist government in the spa town of Vichy, Pétain assumed leadership on 16 June 1940 after the resignation of Prime Minister Paul Reynaud. Notably, Germany did not confiscate France's colonies and allowed France to keep 150,000 men in the country's overseas colonies for defence purposes.<sup>13</sup> French colonies, such as North Africa and the French West Indies, would support Pétain's regime until 1943, while others, such as francophone territories in the South Pacific, would quickly rally to de Gaulle's

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<sup>11</sup>Michael Rothberg, 'On the Mbembe Affair: The Specters of Comparison', *Zeitgeist: International Perspectives from Culture and Society*. <https://www.goethe.de/prj/zei/en/pos/21864662.html>. Accessed 11 May 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 40.

<sup>13</sup>Brian L. Herder, *Operation Torch 1942: The Invasion of French North Africa*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 5.

leadership.<sup>14</sup> Pétain was actively complicit in advancing antisemitic legislation that the Third Reich had moulded. The Marshal also supported the operations of numerous transition camps located in the outskirts of Paris where French Jews were incarcerated and then sent on to extermination camps. Approximately 76,000 Jews in France were deported to concentration camps in Poland.

Vichy France was under the influence of the Third Reich, which meant that most of France's overseas territories became Vichy colonies, including North Africa and French Indochina. New Caledonia and Tahiti which had rallied to the Free French cause in September 1940 were noteworthy exceptions, although they had briefly been Vichy colonies before the Gaullist *coup*. New Caledonia is a unique French 'collectivity' that transitioned from Vichy to Free French status, and both Vichy and Free French regimes, although seemingly antagonistic, maintained close relations with the pro-Axis, imperial Japanese government. Perhaps most noteworthy was de Gaulle's continued reliance on Japanese-owned nickel mines in New Caledonia for France to procure its own natural resources. New Caledonia's relations with Japan meant that de Gaulle's Free French empire of New Caledonia was also complicit in allowing nickel exportation to continue to 'Japan [then] to Vladivostok, across the Trans-Siberian railway, and into German armaments factories before Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941'.<sup>15</sup>

New Caledonia's interest in Japan began in 1892 when Japan sent its initial convoy of indentured labourers to work in New Caledonia's nickel mines. The French Empire recruited the Japanese for their favourable reputation as hard workers, and offered them three year contracts as immigrant labourers. The initial three-year period of the Japanese presence in New Caledonia evolved into nearly five decades of residence on the archipelago. The Japanese in New Caledonia progressively carved their place in French New Caledonian society, fathering mixed race Japanese-Indigenous children who occupied a unique position in society. These mixed-race, Nippo-Kanak children traversed French, Indigenous, and Japanese socio-cultural and linguistic spaces as they grew up with a Japanese father and Kanak mother in this overseas French territory. Mixed-race Japanese children in New Caledonian society were faced with considerable racial discrimination by French colonials. Japanese emigration in the French Pacific was

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<sup>14</sup>Jean-Marc Regnault, 'La France Libre, Vichy et les Américains: Des relations difficiles dans le Pacifique en guerre. L'exemple des îles Wallis et Futuna (1940-1942)', *Outre-Mers: Revue d'histoire*, 91, 344-5 (2004), pp. 181-200 (p. 200).

<sup>15</sup>Chad Denton, 'New Caledonian Nickel and Origins of Axis Alliance', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 54, 4 (2019), pp. 443-460 (p. 458). On how the New Caledonian Japanese nickel mining industry prompted national security concerns in Australia, see Alexander Lee, 'Avoiding Japanese Intervention in New Caledonia: June and July 1940', *The Journal of Pacific History*, 58, 3 (2023), pp. 215-231.

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particularly complex because Japanese emigrants were also settler-colonial subjects who would have had a unique recourse to imperial intervention in Tokyo if conditions in the French islands became unfavourable. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Nippo-Kanak children were left behind and allocated a juridically stateless status after French officials had detained, incarcerated, and then deported their Japanese fathers.

What scholars refer to as the ‘overseas French empire’ during the Second World War was not a monolithic entity, but one composed of two separate and seemingly antagonistic administrations – Vichy and Free French – that centralised powers around colonial exploitation. Despite their ideologically different platforms, both Vichy and Free French empires shared their colonialising, racialising implementation of juridical policies over Indigenous and emigrant populations in the colonial territories over which they maintained influence. In the scope of this article, Vichy France and its policies were applied to Algerian Jews in North Africa from June 1940 to 1942, while Free French policies were applied to the Japanese emigrant population in the South Pacific after September 1940. Between 1940 and 1942, there were some 110,000 Algerian Jews residing in the Maghreb who represented a diversity in linguistic, legal, and ancestral backgrounds.<sup>16</sup> Most Algerian Jews were French citizens with linguistic ability in French and were regarded by many Muslims as agents of European ‘embourgeoisement’ and ‘social and cultural change’ in the Maghreb.<sup>17</sup> After the German occupation of France in 1940, which prompted France’s North African colonies to operate under Vichy policy, anti-Jewish, race-based policies began to take effect in Algeria. Vichy French colonial policy over Algerian Jews, as Daniel Schroeter affirms, included the 1940 ‘abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, [whereby] those who had been naturalized as a result of the decree were stripped of the citizenship’.<sup>18</sup> Schroeter makes clear that the abrogation stemmed from Vichy policy in metropolitan France and the Nazi Racial Legislation of 1933 in Germany that ‘was designed to strip French nationality from those who had been naturalized since 1927’ with the purpose of ‘demoting the status of the Jews of Algeria’.<sup>19</sup>

A year after the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree in Algeria, the Free French government in New Caledonia implemented a similar practice of revoking citizenship

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<sup>16</sup>Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein, ‘Introduction’, in Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds.), *The Holocaust and North Africa*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 1-16 (p. 3).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Daniel J. Schroeter, ‘Between Metropole and French Africa: Vichy’s Anti-Semitic Legislation and Colonialism’s Racial Hierarchies’, in Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds.), *The Holocaust and North Africa*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 19-49 (p. 37).

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 37.



statuses against its settler-colonial population. Beginning in February 1942, colonial authorities stripped all New Caledonian Japanese who had been naturalised French citizens of their citizenship, while officials manipulated the juridical identities of the Nippo-Kanak children that the Japanese deportees had left behind. Due to their father's citizenship, Nippo-Kanaks born in New Caledonia were Japanese in the eyes of French colonial law. Free French officials illegally revoked Nippo-Kanaks' citizenship, making Nippo-Kanaks effectively stateless or *apatride* from 8 December 1941, despite their original designation as Japanese. This situation continued until after the war. Their statelessness demoted their juridical status to lower than that of Indigenous Kanaks who at least maintained a French autochthonous citizenship in Oceania. Stateless Nippo-Kanaks were thus legally outside of any formal French governmental oversight, and numerous Nippo-Kanaks were forced to reside in Catholic orphanages or return to their mother's tribe because the French government did not provide adequate monetary resources to Nippo-Kanak families.

The Law of Jonnart of 4 February 1919, 'created within the French empire's colonies an autochthonous citizenship, linked to the existence of a personal civil status, distinct from the civil status of common law'.<sup>20</sup> The Law of Jonnart primarily applied to French Algerians, but the category of Indigenous citizenship that the Law of Jonnart purportedly created was an empty one and applicable to Natives in all overseas French territories. Its racist, segregationist implications suggested a continued sociolegal, colonial control over Native peoples. The history of the legal status of mixed-race Native subjects belongs within this broader framework of citizenship law across the global French empire. Whereas Indigenous populations passed from 'autochthonous citizens' or 'French subjects' to either 'citizens of the French Union' or 'citizens of France', depending on their geographic location within the French empire, there was no specific law that granted Indigenous mixed-race French citizenship uniformly across the empire before 1946. Certain subjective measures, such as those that Saigon lawyer Henri Sambuc proposed in 1913, would allow mixed-race individuals to undergo naturalisation as French only if they overtly exhibited French values. Coupled with this subjective qualification of 'Frenchness', decisions on whether mixed-race persons could receive citizenship would also touch on questions of race. Here 'race' would correspond not only to biological features, but also to sociocultural characteristics.<sup>21</sup> Sambuc noted in this regard:

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<sup>20</sup> '[C]réait dans les colonies de l'Empire français, une citoyenneté autochtone, liée à l'existence d'un statut civil personnel, distinct du statut civil de droit commun'. Olivier Gohin, 'La citoyenneté dans l'outre-mer français', *Revue française d'administration publique*, 1, 1 (2002), pp. 75-76.

<sup>21</sup> Emmanuelle Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie: les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2007), p. 196.

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It would also be necessary that the current legislation applied to mixed-race individuals be liberally modified and permit treating [...] these [mixed] children exhibiting French ideas and leanings as true French [who require] a normal naturalization or an equivalent procedure.<sup>22</sup>

Between 1910 and 1920, various territories comprising the French empire formulated differing and often conflicting responses to the question of citizenship pertaining to mixed-race individuals. New Caledonia granted citizenship to a French-Kanak in 1923 simply because he had lived in a French manner, raising his family with his French wife.<sup>23</sup> Only three years prior, French administrators in New Caledonia had rejected granting French citizenship to a mixed-race man despite his claims that he fully embraced European culture.<sup>24</sup> Because Nippo-Kanaks were partially autochthonous, half Japanese and thus could not be racially French in the eyes of the French administration, Nippo-Kanaks' citizenship status as a doubly-marginalised group operated differently from French-Kanak in New Caledonia until May 1946. From this point the French administration granted Nippo-Kanaks a path toward citizenship but required Nippo-Kanaks and other mixed-race Japanese to formally renounce their Japanese nationality in writing at their local municipal bureau.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, French naturalisation for half-Japanese individuals was no guarantee in New Caledonia even decades after the war. The Laws of Jonnart and Lamine Guèye did not apply to Nippo-Kanak children if these children chose to keep their father's Japanese surname. *De facto* representative of the Japanese community in Nouméa, Hidekio Nishiyama registered all Nippo-Kanak births before 1941 and sent each child's birth certificates to the Japanese Consulate in Sydney to validate Nippo-Kanaks' legal status as Japanese. However, the veracity of that historical claim has been problematised by subsequent honorary Japanese Consuls in New Caledonia because no records exist of such items held with the Japanese Consulate in Sydney.<sup>26</sup> Nippo-Kanaks were in theory Japanese citizens according to Japanese law until eighteen years of age before they would choose to undergo French naturalisation. To date, there remain no records in New Caledonia or in Australia showing an officialised designation of Japanese citizenship of a mixed-Japanese born in New Caledonia that the Japanese

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<sup>22</sup>Il faudrait aussi, de toute nécessité, que la législation actuellement applicable aux métis soit modifiée dans un sens très libéral et permettre de traiter [...] ces enfants [métis] à idées et à tendances françaises, comme de vrais Français [...] [requérant] une naturalisation régulière ou [...] tout autre procédé équivalent'. See Henri Sambuc, 'Enquête sur la question des métis II', *Revue Indochinoise*, 19 (1913), p. 205.

<sup>23</sup>Saada, *Les enfants de la colonie*, p. 200.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ismet Kurtovitch, interview by author, Nouméa, July 15, 2018.

<sup>26</sup>Marie-José Michel, interview by author, Nouméa, July 16, 2018.

government had officially validated. Because there was no recorded proof of official Japanese citizenship at the time, coupled with Nippo-Kanaks' collective exclusion from the Laws of Jonnart and Lamine Guèye, Nippo-Kanaks were *apatride* or legally stateless subjects until 1946. Free France in New Caledonia was thus complicit in undermining the juridical status of Nippo-Kanaks, which demonstrates how both Free France and Vichy France deliberately manipulated citizenship laws to victimise stateless populations over which both empires exerted control.

Although French officials did not place Nippo-Kanaks in carceral sites, Nippo-Kanaks' collective denaturalisation and statelessness were important facets of this francophone history of Japanese internment. Like their detained Japanese fathers, Nippo-Kanaks were deprived of their rights to fully exercise their citizenship. Building on Arendt's notion of 'statelessness', Ayten Gündoğdu notes,

[The] term 'stateless' [...] refer[s] to not only those who formally lost their nationality but also those who could no longer benefit from their citizenship rights: refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, even naturalized citizens who faced the threat of denaturalization in times of emergency.<sup>27</sup>

The statelessness of Nippo-Kanaks and denaturalisation of Japanese New Caledonians were extensions of the French empire's colonial practice to control and limit each colonised subject's humanity. The French empire was able to finance the deportation of the New Caledonian Japanese by sequestering all property belonging to New Caledonian Japanese, including the Japanese-owned nickel industries. The value of sequestered property from the New Caledonian Japanese totalled 125 million Pacific francs.<sup>28</sup> French officials in New Caledonia imposed restrictions on Nippo-Kanaks' ability to reclaim their Japanese fathers' assets. Because only French citizens could purchase sequestered property, stateless and economically destitute Nippo-Kanaks had no choice but to relinquish their fathers' properties to de Gaulle's Free French regime. Denaturalising Nippo-Kanaks allowed Free France to develop and wield carceral policies culminating in the internment of Japanese New Caledonians in Nouville before their fathers' internment in Australia.

In the Algerian context, the French empire's wartime denaturalisation policies were in full effect. French authorities targeted Jews whom officials subjected to the Vichy regime's antisemitic policies. These policies included justifying the dispossession of

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<sup>27</sup>Ayten Gündoğdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Philippe Palombo, *La présence japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie (1890-1960): Les relations économiques entre le Japon et la Nouvelle-Calédonie à travers l'immigration et l'industrie minière*, (Saarbrücken: Éditions universitaires européennes, 2012), p. 523.

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Indigenous Algerians' land, the sequestration of Algerian Jews' properties, and the application of antisemitic decrees. After the Fall of France in June 1940, Vichy France enacted antisemitic legislation taken from German racial ordinances. Vichy France implemented the same race-based antisemitic legislation in North Africa as those in being applied in metropolitan France. Among the many anti-Jewish laws that Vichy enforced was the Law of 3 October 1940. This law dispossessed Jews from their property, depriving them of the ability to work in certain professions. The Vichy regime applied this same law in Algeria on 7 October 1940, known as the abrogation of the Crémieux Decree, which exceptionally excluded Mzabi Jews who had not been impacted by French colonial law. The abrogation of the Crémieux Decree was further reinforced by, as Daniel Schroeter shows, 'a second law [that] [...] made Jews ineligible for naturalization by the process stipulated by the Jonnart Law of 1919, which set conditions for allowing *indigènes* to become French citizens'.<sup>29</sup> Schroeter further notes,

The Statut de Juifs [revoking Jews' French citizenship in Algeria] was intended to satisfy Vichy's Nazi allies [...] and to stem the growth of anticolonial [anti-French] nationalists across North Africa who had, since the beginning of the Third Reich, turned to [Nazi] Germany for support, denouncing Jews [in Algeria] for having too much power.<sup>30</sup>

Algerian Jews were thus Indigenous imperial subjects with no French citizenship status. Vichy's dehumanising, antisemitic laws were a keystone to French colonial domination in Algeria that would continue after the country's Allied liberation and the Second World War.

Until 1943, Vichy labour camps in North Africa provided the French empire with an outlet to exercise its antisemitic policies while advancing its control of the francophone Maghreb. France's antisemitic legislation against Algerian Jews during the war was further exemplified by the creation of secret forced labour camps in Algeria, secret to the extent that the public elsewhere was largely unaware of the existence of these sites of human trauma, although civilian internees within the camps did recognise that their ability to survive was predicated on their submission to colonial orders. As Aomar Boum has noted:

[I]nternees were to a degree aware of the fate of inmates in Nazi death camps and strategically understood that their compliance with [French] authorities

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<sup>29</sup>Schroeter, 'Between Metropole and French Africa', p. 44.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

could postpone or prevent a transfer to Nazi death camps or to a disciplinary internment prison, where the mortality rate was quite high.<sup>31</sup>

One of the most infamous camps in Algeria was Bedeau, located in the Algerian village formerly known as Ras-El-Ma; renamed Bedeau to honour French General Marie-Alphonse Bedeau who overcame Algerian resistance in 1840. Bedeau was constructed as a *commune mixte*, or an administrative structure that enforced Metropolitan France's settler-colonial presence over its prisoners, composed primarily of Algeria's Jewish population and Indigenous population. These prisoners worked on a Nazi-supported project advanced by Vichy France to build a trans-sub-Saharan railroad to connect Europe and North Africa with West and Southwest Africa. Forced labourers in Bedeau in 1940, suffered inhumane conditions under Algeria's Vichy French regime. However, Bedeau was not an extermination camp like those in Europe, so North Africans Jews could maintain a small 'margin of hope of survival' in Algeria.<sup>32</sup>

Those who were imprisoned in Vichy French camps in Algeria were not allowed to record their daily events. The French camp guards actively burned all 'proof', namely written testimonies by prisoners to conceal the dehumanising experiences within the camps. In fact, even after the liberation of Algeria in 1943 by the combined Free French and Allied forces, de Gaulle's administration, with the United States' backing, deliberately extended Vichy Algeria's antisemitic legislations. On 20 October 1943, due to U.S. governmental pressure, Algerian Jews were granted French nationality by the reinstatement of the Crémieux Decree one year after the Allied invasion of Algeria, which Hannah Arendt claimed to be an 'unnecessary prolongation'.<sup>33</sup> This prolongation was also due to hesitation in the Roosevelt administration which feared potential domestic complications, fearing that American Jews in light of the Crémieux Decree's reinstatement could have their own 'rights, too, [...] one day be vulnerable to some circumstance of political or military expediency'.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately in 1943, Jews were restored French citizenship in Algeria, but the French administration continually relied on Algerian internment camps, well after the Second World War, extending into the Algerian War from 1954 to 1962. These carceral spaces that reinforced

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<sup>31</sup>Aomar Boum, 'Eyewitness Djelfa: Daily Life in a Saharan Vichy Labor Camp', in Aomar Boum and Sarah Abrevaya Stein (eds.), *The Holocaust and North Africa*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), pp. 149-167 (p. 158).

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 150. There were no death camps in North Africa; however, the Vichy regime expelled an estimated 1,200 North African Jews residing in metropolitan France to Nazi death camps through Drancy transition camp.

<sup>33</sup>Slyomovics, 'Other Places of Confinement', p. 107.

<sup>34</sup>Rafael Medoff, *The Jews Should Keep Quiet: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and the Holocaust*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2019), p. 138.

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civilian dispossession – camps totalling over two thousand in number – were networks where famine, malnutrition, and death defined the prisoners' experiences.

Amidst ongoing violence between French and Algerians after the Second World War, the vestige of Vichy-era internment sites in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia remained present. These post-war internment camps that ranged from penal sites to labour camps included Jewish and non-Jewish European refugees, prisoners-of-war, and relocated civilians whom officials had forced to evacuate. Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who ardently denounced the torture methods that the French army used in North Africa, expressed that 'nothing in the Algerian War is as important as the problem of internment.'<sup>35</sup> In this regard, the French administration continued to use Vichy-era internment camps after the Vichy administration's departure from the Maghreb. The French empire established highly secretive networks of internment camps and prison sites in Algeria to reinforce its colonial domination while enacting policies of denaturalisation of Algerian civilians of the Muslim faith. Colonial domination also included the dispossession of Native lands, which officials advanced in the name of modernisation.

Throughout the Algerian War of Independence, the French administration placed over two million Algerians in carceral networks of approximately two thousand internment camps.<sup>36</sup> Reports indicate that the estimated cost for these relocations totalled nearly three billion French francs.<sup>37</sup> The French government's justification to maintain these internment camps was primarily to 'facilitate the tasks of the pacification [of the nation] and to assure the protection of the population, to place dispersed populations in better economic and social conditions'.<sup>38</sup> Those whom the French government placed in these camps faced the dispossession of their lands, were required to sell their property, and were confronted with sanitary conditions much like those found in Vichy-era camps, such as the notorious Camp Bedeau. Although not legally stateless, Algerians forcibly displaced in these post-Vichy era internment camps were deprived of their rights and humanity while confined in these carceral sites. The national French newspaper *Le Monde* would only briefly publicise the existence of these camps in Algeria on 12 March 1959, to the metropolitan French public in a special article

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<sup>35</sup>Michel Rocard, *Rapport sur les camps de regroupement et autres textes sur la guerre d'Algérie*, (Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2003), p. 15.

<sup>36</sup>For more information regarding the estimated numbers of internees, see Fabien Sacriste, *Les camps de regroupement en Algérie. Une histoire des déplacements forcés (1954-1962)*, (Paris: Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2022). See also Irwin M. Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 159-63.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, photographic plate, np.

dedicated to the subject. This article created an uproar in France to such a degree that French authorities categorically rejected the term 'concentration camps' and opted for the more innocuous label 'relocation villages' (*centres de regroupement*) in publicity documents.

For de Gaulle, these internment camps, under the operational watch of his handpicked administrator Paul Delouvrier, offered a process toward industrialising seized Algerian land. Delouvrier affirmed that the post-war relocations to desert land away from cities promoted the growth of a renewed agricultural industry, which led de Gaulle's administration to offer the following justification: territorial dispossession correlated to the rapid and humanitarian development of Algerian society. De Gaulle made clear that the camps or 'relocation villages' provided the French empire with a level of national protection. He contended that interned Algerians and other Maghrebians – physically uprooted from their home territories – could no longer interact with or directly support the anti-French, pro-independent National Liberation Army or FLN.<sup>39</sup> The food and supplies which de Gaulle's French administration provided Algerian internees were limited to eleven kilogrammes of barley per month for each adult, which resulted in severe infantile undernourishment. Reports note that one child perished of malnutrition per day in these camps, and French guards would often find children dead from hypothermia in overcrowded encampments where tuberculosis was concurrently spreading.<sup>40</sup>

In New Caledonia, however, the number of internees was far less than those in Algerian internment camps, given the considerably smaller size of the Oceanic archipelago. The main internment site, the Nouville penal colony was initially constructed as a church, built between 1875 and 1886, and later served as a warehouse and theatre. Beginning on 8 December 1941, Japanese civilian internees were placed in either a preferred or non-preferred section of Nouville based on whether they had children serving in the French military. Along with Nouville, French authorities used detention sites in Bouloupari, Bourail, la Foa, Païta, and Freycinet, New Caledonia, to detain the Japanese; however, authorities ultimately transferred all Australia-bound Japanese to Nouville between 19 December 1941 and 30 May 1942.<sup>41</sup> French authorities transferred a total of 1,126 New Caledonian Japanese to Australia, denaturalising all Japanese who were naturalised French citizens. This denaturalisation

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 236. See also Bernard Sicot, *Djelfa 41-43: un camp d'internement en Algérie: histoire, témoignages, littérature*, (Paris: Riveneuve, 2015).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>41</sup>French authorities interned suspected intelligence agent Berthe Kitazawa-Fouque and French nationals on Freycinet Islet, New Caledonia, who expressed pro-French sentiments, including two SLN engineers. See Palombo, *La présence japonaise en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p. 409.

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allowed the French administration to seize the Japanese emigrants' properties left behind in their respective villages throughout New Caledonia because denaturalised Japanese were effectively stateless.<sup>42</sup> The denaturalisation process was not the only element rendering carceral life in Nouville a dehumanising experience. As archived reports indicate, the austere physical conditions in Nouville prison centre included,

700 [internees] [who were] forced to sleep on pavement strewn with hay. No bathroom, laundry, or lavatory; [...] [c]ooking [was] done with rain water resulting in diarrhoea, eight proving fatal before arriving in Australia'.<sup>43</sup> Reports from Japanese prisoners, such as those noted by Tadao Kobayashi, expressed that '[the] food was scarce; during the mornings, [they] were given a slice of bread and coffee' and that 'there was no water and no electricity. When [they] went to get water from a nearby well, the guards would yell "Go, scam," pointing their bayonets at [them]'.<sup>44</sup> French officials denied all accusations of mistreatment in Nouville.<sup>45</sup>

Housing the exempted Japanese until the end of the war, Nouville served as a hospital and asylum for Indigenous patients before becoming a geriatric hospice in 1952. After the Second World War, Nouville no longer served as a penal site.

The overseas French empire created these carceral spaces built on Indigenous lands that existed both in Oceania and North Africa. These spaces physically uprooted victimised populaces while emplacing subjects therein deprived of their humanity. Algerian Jews totalling over 110,000 were stripped of their French citizenship in October 1940, and over twenty thousand subjects – those whom French officials

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<sup>42</sup>National Archives of New Caledonia, 'Secrétaire général du gouvernement à chef du service judiciaire', ANC 107 W, n.d.: Nouméa.

<sup>43</sup>National Archives of Australia (hereinafter NAA), 'Telegram to Department of External Affairs', A989, report dated 7 April 1943: Canberra. Conditions on vessels en route to Australia were austere. Reports representing Japanese prisoners in Australia sent to the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Masayuki Tani, described the poor, unsanitary conditions in Australian ships and in Nouville Prison. One report had called for the French, Australian, and United States governments to be held accountable for 'inhumane' and 'cruel treatment' toward Japanese prisoners, further appealing to the Japanese ambassador in the Vatican to request that the Pope intercede on their behalf. See Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, A7009111102, Reel A-1113, 92, 94–95, 20 February 1943: Tokyo.

<sup>44</sup>Tadao Kobayashi, *Les Japonais en Nouvelle-Calédonie: histoire des émigrés sous contrat*, trans. Keiko Raulet (Nouméa: Société d'études historiques de la Nouvelle Calédonie, 1992), p. 79.

<sup>45</sup>NAA, 'Telegram to Department of External Affairs', A989, 14 April 1943: Canberra.



deemed 'most dangerous' – were placed in Vichy-controlled carceral sites until 1943.<sup>46</sup> These detention sites strikingly remained in use during post-Vichy Algeria until 1963. In the New Caledonian setting, any interned New Caledonian Japanese with French citizenship was denaturalised, and this denaturalisation process extended to their Nippo-Kanak children who were formally stateless in the eyes of French colonial law. Although the histories and juridical practices pertaining to Algerian Jews, political prisoners in Algeria, Nippo-Kanaks, and New Caledonian Japanese cannot be equated, the effect that these spaces and manipulations had on the French empire's victims delegitimised each colonial subject's agency and ability to exercise fully his or her citizenship rights. As Susan Maslan notes:

[The] tragic irony of human rights is that when one loses one's status as a citizen – a process that often entails a loss of fixed residence, a loss of community, a loss of occupation or profession, a loss of one's place within a known social structure – one ceases to be human.<sup>47</sup>

The dehumanisation to which the French empire subjected these oppressed communities cannot be separated from the statelessness that each subject experienced. Algerian Jews, Nippo-Kanaks, and New Caledonian Japanese all experienced such dehumanisation while being bound to a colonial, carceral system that delegitimised their human agency.

The French empire's manipulations of juridical statuses, combined with the empire's forced relocation of subjects to carceral spaces, exemplify the notion of 'transcolonial carceralities'. This notion illuminates colonial regimes across differing geocultural *loci*, time frames, and communities under wartime threat. Michel Foucault defines the 'carceral' in the following manner:

The carceral 'naturalizes' the legal power to punish, as it 'legalizes' the technical power to discipline. In thus homogenizing them, effacing what may be violent in one and arbitrary in the other, attenuating the effects of revolt that they may both arouse, thus depriving excess in either of any purpose, circulating the same calculated, mechanical and discreet methods from one to the other, the carceral makes it possible to carry out that great 'economy' of power. [...] [T]he great carceral continuum [...] provides a communication between the power of discipline and the power of the law, [and] [...] constitute[s] the technical and

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<sup>46</sup>Slyomovics, 'Other Places of Confinement', p. 99.

<sup>47</sup>Susan Maslan, 'The Anti-Human: Man and Citizen Before the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103, 2-3 (2004), pp. 357-374 (p. 362).

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real, immediately material counterpart of that chimerical granting of the right to punish.<sup>48</sup>

In this historical framework involving differing yet overlapping French regimes, carceral bodies in Algeria and New Caledonia were part of a large-scale carceral continuum of exploitation with different, asymmetrical histories of oppression and victimisation. Although not all victims were interned, such as Nippo-Kanak children, all transnational victims experienced the effects of a global carceral continuum that, as Foucault suggests above, relied on a praxis of continual exploitation and 'expulsion from their political communities entail[ing] an expulsion from humanity.'<sup>49</sup> Extending from Europe and North Africa to the South Pacific, these dehumanising continuums are specifically transcolonial carceralities where colonialism, fascism, and violence converge under a globalising carceral empire. This French empire represented by both Vichy and Free France foregrounded the use of carceral spaces, denaturalisation, and arrogation of Indigenous resources to assert and maintain control. Not bound by fixed timelines or geographies, transcolonial carceralities bring together histories of Indigenous and stateless bodies to reveal how their erasures constitute critically urgent and visible transnational perspectives on exclusionary violences.

Free French policies cast aside Algeria's and New Caledonia's respective indigene populations – namely, Algerian Muslims and New Caledonian Kanaks – to target a specific demographic – Jew and Japanese – that denaturalised both attacked peoples, incarcerating both while using their labour to advance and aggrandise France's colonial presence in North Africa and Oceania. The sociolegal praxes of denaturalisation combined with displacement seen during Vichy French and Free French regimes in overseas territories underscore (1) the spectre of dehumanising policies that framed France's transcolonial presence during the Second World War and after and (2) the double-standard of Free French egalitarian republicanism by extending race-based Vichy policies. These illuminations into Japanese settler and Indigenous communities show differing forms of colonialisms that supported France's Afro-Oceanic empire – an empire equally extractive and exploitative as their Vichy-supporting antagonists. Of course, antisemitic and racial policies of the French Empire predated the Second World War. The Gaullist regime's hypocrisy is underscored by Free France's exploitation of racialised labour, oppression of Indigenous communities, and appropriation of their properties – properties that were ultimately sold and used to advance France's overseas operations.

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<sup>48</sup>Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), p. 303.

<sup>49</sup>Gündoğdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, p. 2.

Considering the global impact that the colonial French empire has had in North Africa and Oceania, historians can begin considering their role in the memorialisation of this transcolonial and carceral history. Michael Rothberg has contended that the transnational mobilisation of this memory in relation to other memories and histories of colonialism, slavery, and genocide – histories that may or may not be connected by empirical historical relations – could represent a novel methodological approach. Such a productive juxtaposition of histories can uncover violently marginalised, silenced histories, which as Rothberg contends, are

built on the entanglement of different moments in time that might, at first, seem to have little to do with each other. This [multidirectional] entanglement is productive; it leads to more memory as well as new constellations of memory – but it doesn't come with guarantees about the particular political valence of multidirectionality (which can be reactionary as well as progressive) and it does not mean that different memories automatically obtain an 'equal' place in the public sphere.<sup>50</sup>

Understanding the multidirectional parallax of entangled histories of the Third Reich, Vichy, Free French, and Japanese regimes is critical to illuminate the violence that Jews faced in Algeria, and the Japanese in New Caledonia. The notion of transcolonial carceralities thus emerges from this multidirectional memory that geoculturally links Europe and North Africa to Oceania through multi-sited, historical connections. These historical links are most manifested in the overlapping juridical policies pertaining to citizenship; to Indigenous resettlement policies; and to the victimisation of Jews, Nippo-Kanaks, and New Caledonian Japanese. I include Nippo-Kanaks in this carceral continuum because their statelessness allowed the French empire to sequester their lands from which Free France financed the internment of the New Caledonian Japanese. Transcolonial carceralities function as a cartography of dehumanisation defined by overlapping regimes that place settler colonialism, Native oppression, and racialised human labour in dialogue with shifting exclusionary juridical policies across geocultural spaces and times. These cartographies extending from North Africa to Oceania - spaces that reveal the deleterious effects of Native erasure – are networks that point to the multidirectional fluidities of historical entanglements. These entanglements productively work together to reveal civilian rights violations.

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<sup>50</sup>Michael Rothberg, 'History in Copresence: Creating a Multidirectional Memory of the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization', *The Funambulist*, 21 June 2021, <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/they-have-clocks-we-have-time/histories-in-copresence-creating-a-multidirectional-memory-of-the-holocaust-in-the-age-of-decolonization> Accessed 25 August 2024.

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Rothberg further proposes a mode of transnational remembrance that he calls an 'emergent model of multidirectional memory'.<sup>51</sup> This transnational remembrance should entail, as Rothberg suggests, interacting with the,

legacies of German and European colonialism and with Germany's implication in the structural racism and economic inequality of the present. [...] [Multidirectional memory] reflect[s] on the relationship between the Holocaust and the racist violence that emerged from centuries of the enslavement, colonization, and segregation of African and African diaspora peoples by Europeans and their descendants.<sup>52</sup>

As Rothberg contends, comprehending the indignities emerging from these colonisations constitutes an inherently dialogical and transnational remembrance of this empire history. Within the context of this article, this multidirectional memory that involves recognising the effects of European colonialism across geographies evinces the critically neglected histories between Algerians, Japanese, and mixed-Japanese populaces under two seemingly antagonistic but co-conspiring French empires: Vichy and Free French. Such comparative thinking about violence posits a multidirectional memory that mobilises global history to open new avenues of antiracist, decolonial understandings of history. Rothberg's model of memorialisation anticipates a productive, relational understanding of divergent imperial legacies and collective memories and moves beyond Europe, engaging other carceral histories, like those of North Africa and the South Pacific. The role of the implicated historian in relation to these histories is, in the words of Ariella Azoulay, 'to rehabilitate [...] citizenship or that of someone else who has been stripped of it'.<sup>53</sup> Citizenship, that is, the 'partnership of governed persons taking up their duty [...] and using it for another, rather than for a sovereign', brings to the forefront the importance of demarginalising the voices of transcolonial carceral bodies who were subjected to the impacts of a state-sanctioned racialised violence during processes of colonisation and incarceration.<sup>54</sup> Transcolonial carceralities not only shed light on the continuities across historico-cultural and temporal boundaries but also decolonise multidirectional memory, inviting the historian to memorialise colonial victims.

Although Vichy French carceral policies were largely informed by Nazi racial law, and while Free French policy sought to reverse Vichy French modes of governance, both colonial Empires in North Africa and the French Pacific ultimately reinforced

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<sup>51</sup>Rothberg, 'On the Mbembe Affair'.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, (New York: Zone Books, 2014), pp. 104, 117.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

disciplinary control over their carceral victims. This dehumanisation and statelessness advanced the primacy of a global carceral empire, upending sociolegal stability for its victims and forcing countless subjects, including Algerian Jews in Algeria and Japanese communities in New Caledonia, to internment sites. A critical engagement with transcolonial carceralities in the geocultural contexts of Algeria and New Caledonia shows the need for historians to recognise these marginalised histories of internment and dispossession. Proactive scholars revealing these histories actively revivify the agencies of those victims impacted and occluded by these histories that France has yet to fully acknowledge. In so doing, as this article concludes, implicated scholars engaging this history of transcolonial carceralities can illuminate the ideologically discriminatory, corruptive Vichy and Free French regimes that repealed the juridical identities of those whom these regimes incarcerated, ultimately enabling the silenced voices of past, forgotten victims to come alive into the present.