

# POSTCOLONIAL AUDACITY:

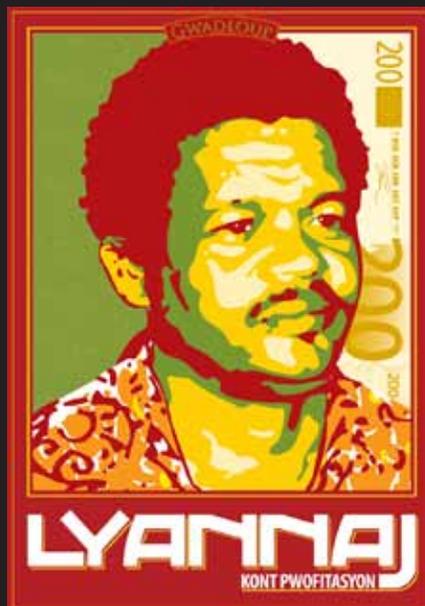
## THE POLITICAL ICONOGRAPHY OF THE 2009 STRIKE IN GUADELOUPE

**MONDAY, OCT. 11, FROM 5:30-7:00 P.M. IN  
ROOM 1117 OF THE UNIVERSITY CAPITOL CENTRE**

### YARIMAR BONILLA

Yarimar Bonilla is an assistant professor of cultural anthropology at the University of Virginia. She teaches and writes about Caribbean historical memory, colonial and postcolonial politics, and contemporary social movements. She is currently completing her first book manuscript which examines contemporary labor activism in the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe as a site of emerging postcolonial politics.

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On January 20, 2009, as the first black president of the United States was sworn into office, the island of Guadeloupe witnessed the launching of the biggest general strike in the island's history. Over 50 cultural and civic organizations came together with the island's leading labor unions in order to form a coalition "kont pwofitasyon" – that is, against profiteering, exploitation, and the expensive life (la vie chère) that characterizes the French Caribbean. Armed with a list of 120 claims that spanned the terrain of disability rights, environmental policies, cultural nationalism, syndical freedom and economic gains (and sporting their recently acquired Obamat-shirts) Guadeloupean militants took to the streets, declaring their own version of the "Yes we Can" motto. With their chants of Guadeloupe is ours, not theirs, they effectively asserted that they had the right to shape the course of their social, economic, and political futures -- despite their colonial relationship with France. This presentation will examine the political icons of the 2009 mass strike and how the Obama political esthetic was deployed within a particularly Guadeloupean form of postcolonial audacity.