Fanon and the Counterinsurgency of Education

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Foreword by Ato Sekyi-Otú

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TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant. But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what *Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Fanon and the Counterinsurgency of Education

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As this volume goes to press a new school year has begun in Toronto, as indeed in many parts of the world. In Toronto this is also the occasion for a novel experiment in public education: the opening of the first Africentric elementary school in the province – one in which the canonical curriculum will be delivered with a particular attention to the histories, cultures and living experiences of African peoples. For its advocates and architects, the necessity and mission of this experiment are ones that, as attested by the essays assembled here, are at the heart of the work of the African-Caribbean psychiatrist and social philosopher Frantz Fanon. For central to Fanon’s critical theory is the insight that racist culture vitiates the promise of education, understood not only as the acquisition of knowledge but also as the initiation of persons of equal moral worth into a civic community, even a world, of shareable affections and allegiances. How can it be otherwise in a social world in which the full humanity and individuality of persons are, according to Fanon, fundamentally called into question? In such a world the institutions, conventions and practices charged with the formation of the future citizen pose an enormous challenge to the self-esteem, expectations and capabilities of those set apart by race. A great many are condemned to fail, expected to fail, and do indeed fail. Under the ordinance of race, excellence and blackness are and are seen to be mutually exclusive, save for the anomalous exceptional black who, precisely, confirms the rule. Just as the social convention of blackness – “the lived experience of the black” – becomes “the fact of blackness”, so the judgment that black students fail becomes the reality of forty per cent of black schoolchildren failing in Toronto schools.

What is to be done in the face of this toxic marriage of judgment and fact? If he were alive today, would Fanon endorse the establishment of Africentric schools as a solution to this problem, while we wait with baited breath for the dawn of the “postracial” day? We cannot answer with any degree of certainty. It is enough that with Fanon as pathfinder the contributors to Fanon and the Counterinsurgency of Education revisit the drama of racial degradation and other scenes of social exclusion and political subordination – from gender and cultural representations to internal colonialisms and the plight of the Palestinians. Together they explore paradigmatic forms of social, cultural, psychic and political structures that thwart the mission of education in the enlarged sense of the cultivation of human autonomy and community. More than that, they offer useful sketches of insurgent practices designed to reshape in life and mind what Fanon called “this narrow world” of subjugated beings.

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1. FANON, ANTI-COLONIALISM AND EDUCATION

AN INTRODUCTION

As noted in Dei and Simmons (2010a) Fanon is too important not to have been seriously engaged within debates about schooling and education. This book takes up the challenge of an anti-colonial reading of Fanon to broach questions of identity, difference and belonging, and the implications for schooling and education. The intention is to offer a careful and selective capturing of Fanon’s works, pointing to the relevance for oppressed communities as they resist re-organized colonial relations. While colonialism and neo-colonialism have functioned and continue to function differently in diverse environments and social contexts, we believe we can raise new questions in a bold attempt to re-theorize colonial relations, social difference and the representational politics of education. We must ask new questions in order to contribute to knowledge of how to resist the poisonous viruses of colonialism, racism, exploitation and alienation. Fanon is informative to the pursuit of critical education, especially, when we examine the colonial encounter and the colonized experience. Today we see a saturation of redemption and colonial discourses that re-insert oppressed bodies in re-organized colonial relations.

Colonial colour lines continue to play out in our education system from the ways certain bodies and their knowledges are validated or invalidated. Notations of ‘excellence’ are usually ascribed to dominant bodies, their values and practices and, as many others have pointed out, Eurocentricity becomes the tacit norms that all learners are expected to reference in order to seek validation and acceptance in the educational system, (see Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998). There is a privileging of white colonial knowledges, Black and minoritized bodies are the experts on ‘race’ and equity studies. In high schools, there is streaming of bodies in various programs with Black bodies largely represented in vocational courses as opposed to university-bound academic courses which have largely White and Asian populations (Dei, 2008, Scheurich & Young, 1997, Karenga, 1999, King, 2005, Brathwaite & James, 1996, Brown, 2004). In the universities notwithstanding attempts to diversify faculty we still have an overrepresentation of white bodies in the senior professoriate. We have an educational system that have materialized through a standardized curricula, we have an educational system that have been compartmentalized through a particular geo-body, we have those courses positioned as ‘science’ being represented through the body of the Euro-pedagogue, while at the same time the racialised body becomes the expert within the sphere of humanities. Reading Fanon provides some clues for the search for a subversion of
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the imperial schooling and education [dis]order. The violence of colonialism is physical, mental, symbolic and much more. Fanon helps us to reinterpret violence, dehumanization and liberation in multiple educational sites. His understanding of the psychiatry of race, gender, class, sexuality and disability is powerful in that we are allowed to rethink the project of education for social change. Fanon understood the politics of embodiment, as well as what is means to evoke race, difference and nation simultaneously. Even in his problematic reading and analysis of gender, disability and difference Fanon’s insights pave way for us to re-theorize the links between race, class, gender, disability and the psychology and psychiatry of oppressions.

One decides to edit a collection of essays with the belief and conviction that contributors have something new and important to say on the topic. I strategically digress therefore, to briefly speak about how I came to ‘know Fanon’. This is important in expressing how my intellectual knowing of Fanon has guided the way to bring his ideas into schooling and education. I remember as an undergraduate student at the University of Ghana, Legon, one of my sociology lecturers mentioned Fanon and compared his ideas with Gandhi. The lecturer argued that, and I am paraphrasing here, ‘Fanon was wrong in proposing violence as a solution to oppression and colonization’. This was a brief and cursory reference and I imagine most students would not have read anything into it, or been encouraged to explore further the works of this brilliant thinker. As a graduate student attending conferences in North America in the 1980s, I became increasingly aware of Fanon through a number of scholars who cited or quoted his work. Soon, it became apparent to me that not only was it intellectually fashionable to claim to know about Fanon, but also, that to cite his works had some currency attached to it in some quarters. As I started to read more about Fanon and other anti-colonial theorists, I increasingly realized Fanon’s depth of knowledge as well as the limits of my own knowledge of Fanon. I taught graduate courses that cursorily used some works of Fanon, which opened my eyes to the breadth of his ideas. When a graduate student agreed with me about the pedagogic urgency and relevance of doing a whole course on Frantz Fanon, I took up the challenge and developed a new graduate course on this brilliant thinker. And the rest is history, as they say, a learner has come to know a little bit about Fanon and decided to run with it! To reiterate, I have offered these personal reflections primarily to help the reader contextualize my current engagement with Fanon.

FANON, SOCIAL DIFFERENCE AND AGENCY

In broaching Fanon, anti-colonial education and addressing the oppressive relations of schooling and education, perhaps we need to ask some questions: Beyond discourses of race saliency/centrality and the ways we also speak of the race-class connection, where then is gender (and by extension sexuality, disability, etc.) situated in anti-colonial analyses of schooling and education? This is the question about social difference and it can be approached in multiple ways. For me, answering this question offers an opportunity to ground the discussion in schooling and education as I/we know it. Schools utilize gendered tropes to create new
re-organized relations of ruling based on the allocation of power and resource. We note from Fanon that the colonizer and the colonized mutually constitute each other’s identity. Males subordinate females in order to lay claim to societal resources. Gender is and has been fundamental principle of social organization and identity formation. For anti-colonial discourse and practice, the question of how race is lived through the lens of gender (and also social class, disability, sexuality, etc.) must necessarily be theorized to inform politics of liberation. We have long learned that the experiences of gender oppression conflated and compounded with racial, class, sexual, ability, religious and linguistic oppressions indicate a ‘simultaneity of oppression’ (Brewer, 1993), ‘a matrix of oppression’ (Collins, 1993) and ‘a multiplex of oppression’ (Dei, 1996). This oppression represents a different kind of oppression that moves away from the additive model of oppression (e.g., double/triple jeopardy). Such oppression is qualitatively different in both substance and intensity from other experiences.

Again we must ask new questions if even we cannot provide fitting answers: How are gender, colonial and patriarchal relations reproduced in schooling? Gender is a contested, fluid and paradoxical discursive formation. Much of the scholarly discussions around gender speak about the aestheticised heterosexual performativity of femininity and masculinity. But how might we understand gender through race? Is gender as configured through Euro-modernity race? Is the subject of Euro-modernity as constituted through gender a racializing procedure? Is the “archetype of humanism” as endowed through Euro-modernity, discursively formed through particular bodies of racialized classifications, and by producing/reproducing ontological gendered normatives? How might we begin to engage a discussion concerning race and the ontological able-body through the perspectives of disability studies? In other words, how is the ontological able-body constituted through race and gender? What does Fanon give us by way of an anti-colonial framework to discuss gender by centering race?

The significance of gender for anti-colonial work is that it [gender] is a form of identity and a basis of knowledge production. Gender is also about embodiment and how bodies are read. It is a basis of political mobilization and the entanglements of gender and power demand that we do not decouple gender and race in anti-racist work. In other words, gender is a social relations of power and privilege that shapes, structures and is informed by identity and experience. The social categories of gender, class, race, disability, etc are not mutually exclusive categories. For example, one’s Blackness cannot erase one’s femaleness or [dis]ability. Race does not exist outside of gender, sexuality, class or vice versa. There are gender differences around how race and racism are experienced. There is a specificity to a Black woman’s experiences. Bodies matter and body image and representation are key sites of anti-racism investigation.

Like gender, race intersects with sexuality. We should be careful not to phrase the challenges oppressed peoples face as issues that stem from our ‘cultural/sexual/class/linguistic differences’ and not from the power of ‘common sense/hegemonic thinking’ which are presented as rigid ideological orthodoxies. There are gender/sexual/class/disability differences and specificities around how race and racism are experienced. Bodies matter and body image and representation are
key sites of anti-racism investigation. Sexuality is about the state of being, manner or characteristic of ‘sexual’, constitution of sexual orientation. [Transgender/bisexual are not simply expressions but a way of being]. Understanding the extent to which the violence of history has shaped fears and anxieties about sexuality. For example, Black and Asian femininity have been accorded a sexualized promiscuity and the notions of Jezebel/Hottentot have conjured up sexualized images for the consumption of the dominant. Similarly, we must be careful that we do not assume the markers of Western sexuality for all peoples. Sexuality is constitutive part of our identities. It is socially constructed, politically constitutive and relational to other sites of difference. Sexuality is significant for anti-colonial work because it is expressive of self, feelings, body and image. Sexuality also helps in destabilizing notions of the essential subject. The question of political disaggregation of identities – Blackness/Whiteness/Indigeneity, spiritual identities, etc. – as notions marked and demarcated by sexuality and sexual politics cannot be dismissed. Sexuality relates to the political project of decolonization. That is, an acknowledgment of the ways, for example, the gay and lesbian space and presence along with Black feminisms and pan-Indigeneity have altered “the public face of Black politics” (Mercer, 1996, p. 128). This calls for linking sexual politics and Black liberation.

We are increasingly learning how educational studies show homophobia and misogyny are linked in everyday schooling interactions. It is also important to call on anti-colonial politics to challenge the racialist construct that Blacks are “somehow intrinsically more homophobic by virtue of being supposedly closer to nature and hence less civilized”? (Mercer, 1996, p. 121)

Increasingly critical anti-colonial work in schooling is broaching the intersections of race and masculinity in terms of how notions of manhood are racialized. Seeing schools as masculinizing agencies, means exploring the ways school policies and practices (curriculum, pedagogy and instruction) reinforce certain notions of what it means to be a man. We also know that there are hierarchies of masculinity in school and society (for example, in examination of which forms of masculinity are granted the most power and privilege on what basis, using who or what as a reference point, etc.). Research is beginning to explore whether or not there is a connection between masculinity and school-based violence (McCready, 2008, personal communication).

As noted in Dei (2010b), the question of gender and sexual identities in Fanon’s work may inform a reframing of critical anti-colonial education. In raising issues of gender and sexuality in Fanon, I acknowledge that there has been thought provoking critical feminist analysis of Fanon highlighting the problematic of his over-sexualizing Black women’s bodies, his use of hyper-masculine language, and general misunderstanding of the complicated experiences of Black women’s lives (see also Wane and Torres, this collection). Fanon did not acknowledge the possibilities of the gendered [in this case Black female] subject in his work. Fanon’s analysis of the Black ‘Other’ is devoid of gender and female subjectivity (that is, contributions of Black women to discussions of race, nation and citizenship and the Black Diaspora).

Pedagogically, Fanon worked with essentialist, anti-essentialist, materialist and idealist interpretations of “Blackness and subjectivity”. It may be argued that his
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analysis of White[ness] and Black[ness] subjects, despite pretensions to the contrary, was still caught in the oppressive effects of the colonialist binary modes of thought (see Mercer, 1996). But this binary was part of the contradiction. In coming to consciousness the Black subject must move from the margins [void] to the centre to achieve subjectivity. It is not important for the Black ‘Other’ to be recognized by the White subject in order for the former to become a subject. The search for recognition can place Black bodies in the dominant tropes of searching for legitimacy in White colonial and colonized spaces. To recall, this was one of Fanon’s critique of the Negritude movement. To Fanon the Black subject can only achieve his subjectivity independent of the dominant through political action not mimicking the language of the dominant.

Fanon (1967a) opines further that the mask a Black subject wears in his quest for Whiteness [subject status] is language. The mask is about assimilation to the colonizer’s institutions (e.g., education, media, communication, politics, etc.), which ensures that the colonized “can only express himself in terms that renders him as an object” (Wright, 2004, p. 115). The mask gives a semblance of ‘subject status,’ which is simply about mimicking the White subject, his institutions and his values. Yet even in such a case, the Black ‘Other’ never assumes the ‘identity of the White subject’. Hence what appears to be a binary of White subject and the Black ‘Other’ can be located in both a materialist and idealist nexus/bifurcation. An idealist dialectic affirms the Black will always be the ‘Other’ while a materialist dialectic holds possibilities for resistance and change. To Fanon, the binary itself points to the paradoxes and contradictions of oppressions. The struggles to “perform a negation of the negation” (Wright, 2004, p. 119) points to the paradoxes of resisting oppressions (e.g., every action produces a reaction, and sometimes the double slippage into the form, logic and implicit assumptions of the very things the oppressed is contesting and the ensuing personal contradictions). Hence, the [im]possibility of the Black subject in the West/Diasporic context. The first action of the Black ‘Other’ is a reaction to the white subject act. While the colonizer has his own space [the metropolis] there is also the ‘colonial and colonized space’ [the margins] which is dictated and shaped by the colonizer. In the eyes of the White subject, the Black functions in the collective as there is an ambivalence in a lack of individuality, being indistinguishable from the collective, ensuring that the white subject only enunciate the Black subject as the ‘Other’.

To Fanon, psychoanalysis and the pre-occupation with sexuality offer ‘an explanatory paradigm of the Black problem’, there is more to sexuality. Questions of gender and sexuality linger in decolonizing projects of the oppressed and colonized. Sexuality is a key component of identities. Though Fanon has been taken to task for his problematic treatment of sexuality, he still cannot be dismissed in a totalizing way. His work is relevant when engaging the issues of identity and sexual politics within and among colonized and oppressed communities.

It is not just that homosexuality “is a powerful source of anxiety within Fanon’s theorizing” (Mercer, 1996, p. 125). In fact, homosexuality is a “key issue in Black sexual politics” (ibid. p. 128) and an inability to recognize this fact points to the limits of a given politics. Thus, in re-theorizing the anti-colonial with a Fanonian gaze, we need to pay attention to the role of sexuality and, particularly, sexual
politics among oppressed groups in furthering resistance struggles. Given the connections of sexuality and politics one would have hoped that Fanon had embarked upon a critical analysis of sexuality and the connections with politics and liberation struggles. As signaled in Dei (2009a), again if it is the violence of history that has shaped fears and anxieties about sexuality then we must focus on and re-tool Fanon’s analysis of colonial, colonialism and psycho-sexuality, as well as on integrating sexual politics, Black peoples struggles and oppressed people’s liberation everywhere. We must be able to link sexuality to the political project of decolonization as one of the political strategies to de-center what has been called “the outmoded notion of the essential Black subject” (Mercer, 1996, p. 122) that schools continually reproduce.

An integrated anti-colonial analysis of Fanon must seek to draw out pedagogic implications. Colonizing relations of schooling are structured along race, class, gender, sexuality, [dis]ability, language and religious lines. Dealing with social difference is also to confront the power saturated issues of schooling. An anti-colonial analysis of schooling informed by Fanon offer a space for us to think about colonizing procedures of schooling and education and how we work to create a decolonized education. Decolonized education is education that brings to the forefront questions of power relations among actors and different players in the school system while at the same time upholding the agency, resistance and local cultural resource knowledges of all learners. Decolonizing education is about change, it is about a particular way of knowing that emerged through bodies of difference, it is about embodied knowledge, it is a particular process that counters the foreign and the local of imposition. It is about resistance and the fight for social justice. It is about understanding spirit injury through critical consciousness. It is about the process of coming to know self through historic specificities. Decolonization as Fanon tells us “is always a violent phenomenon.” (Fanon, 1963, p. 35).

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Most scholars have engaged the work of Frantz Fanon through a phenomenological reading. While we too embrace such inquiries we are engrossed with thinking through a reading of Fanon in an anti-colonial framework. In this way we can speak to the interwoven complexities of race, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, language, religion and class. With Fanon and the Counterinsurgency of Education, we hope to invoke different possibilities for emancipatory ways of knowing. We come to this writing through a sense of solidarity and urgency for equity and social justice. In the essays that follow, the authors take on the myriad challenges of anti-colonial work and decolonizing education through a not so conventional engagement with the writings of Frantz Fanon. Education is conceptualized broadly through the different socio-cultural/political terrain. The essays start with a direct focus on schooling and education questions and then venture into the educative potential of the arts and popular culture. There is an engagement of the question of difference, specifically Fanon and gender and womanist studies. The essays further extend to the pedagogic implications of decolonizing projects of the contemporary state in the context of competing political agendas and struggles for national and
Indigenous liberation and self determination. Collectively, the quest for educational transformation is the underlying intention of this much-needed collection. In particular, a common theme discussed is the way in which the colonial experience becomes organized through foreign and local sites of imposition. We have struggled with the burgeoning pedagogical implications of engaging Fanon’s oeuvre, and at the same time having to work through the colonizing masculinist and de-ableizing overtones residing within Fanon’s language. We share a spirited belief in praxis for social justice. We hope this contribution encourages sincere dialogue for all political actors alike committed to better the quality of humanism.

Dei’s opening chapter sets the tone for the interrogation of Fanon and anti-colonial theorizing, pointing to the pedagogic and revolutionary possibilities of ideas. It is argued that in line with Fanonian conception of colonial and colonizing relations as unending we need to theorize the ‘colonial’ in anti-colonial theory as re-organized, continual relations that shape the organization and operation of social structures in contemporary society. Dei links the relevance of Fanon to other anti-colonial theorists like Memmi, Cabral, etc. in pointing to the colonizing relations of schooling and education as broadly defined. He concludes the discussion identifying the key elements of a ‘pedagogy of hope’ that could transform schooling and education for true democratic and humane participation.

Paul Issahaku’s chapter, Decolonizing the Euro-American Public Education System: A Transgressive Revisiting of Fanon, problematizes the North American public education system and offers ways for social transformation. He contends that the Euro-American system is violent and invisibilizes racialized minoritized students. He argues that the current system of public education is a colonial edifice, founded upon the imperative of promoting white European supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism. After noting how the education system violates and renders racial minority students invisible, Issahaku then calls for decolonization in the Fanonian sense, where teaching and learning are worthwhile activities, one where all stakeholders come to find space, voice and meaning.

Natacha Nsabimana’s essay, Colonizing and Decolonizing Imaginations, is concerned with the violence of colonialism and the mis-education of colonial education. Through illustrations from the mainstream media and the entertainment arena, Nsabimana discusses particular manifestations of colonial mis-education, the focus being on how violence, as it resides outside of the classroom, comes to be deeply embedded in popular culture. Much attention is paid to the psychological, cultural, intellectual and emotional implications of colonial education on the human psyche. We are reminded of the challenges and labour that decolonizing education is faced with in transforming the educational system, deeply entrenched as it is within historical colonial paradigms.

Hannah Dyer’s, The Cinematic Legacy of Frantz Fanon: On Claire Denis’ Beau Travail and I Can’t Sleep, examines the filmic work of Claire Denis and its acknowledged debt to Fanon’s writings, specifically its citations of Black Skin White Masks. Underscoring this paper is a call for a better understanding of film and artistic representation as pedagogical texts. Dyer addresses the corpus of Denis’ work, but privileges two of her films as texts that detail the “psychological damage wrought on many colonial peoples—and the colonizers who oppress
them.” The author proposes that, the ambivalence with which Denis treats her (post) colonial character, and her refusal of the many colonial linguistic traps, has created pieces of art that speak with Fanon’s postures on the psychic toll of colonialism.

Meredith Lordan’s, Meeting Fanon in the Kasbah: Reading *The Wretched of the Earth* through the cinematic lens of *The Battle of Algiers* – Personal and Pedagogical Reflections, recalls the enigmatic images of the Kasbah in Gillo Pontecorvo’s film *the Battle of Algiers* (1964). Her discussion recounts the author’s first encounter with Fanon via the film. Uniting cinematic and theoretical insights, Lordan’s discussion reveals some of the first tensions emerging for the new – and now more mature – student of anti-colonialism. Drawing upon these early recollections and their influence over a young student, her discussion concludes with pedagogical ideas for critical engagement of anti-colonialism via self-reflexive learning, critical media analysis, and how to support students as they link the ideas and images found in the theoretical and artistic realms to real-world issues and events.

Njoki Wane’s, Reading Fanon Differently: Black Canadian Feminist Perspectives, discusses the issues of colonization and decolonization in *Black Skin White Masks*, through a dialogue with themes concerning language, interracial marriages, politics of the color line and psychological violence. One of her goals is not to argue whether Fanon engaged with the issues of Black women, but rather, to think about how Fanon’s work can help us to understand the experience of Black Canadian women’s lived realities, realities that constitute their feminist theorizing. It is with this focus that Wane re-reads *Black Skin White Masks*, to initiate a dialogue concerning the relevance of Fanon’s work on theorizing Black Canadian feminisms. Nevertheless, her reading of *Black Skin White Masks* may leave more questions than answers and this is to echo Fanon’s final quest – “My final prayer: O my body, always make me a man who questions” (206).

Nadesha Gayle addresses the Black women’s experience and race-induced trauma. In her chapter, Understanding Race Induced Trauma and the Black Women’s Experience through Fanon, Gayle takes up the task of understanding the role of racism and the co-present trauma, as a lived reality for women of African ancestry. An anti-colonial framework and Black feminist thought are utilized to situate the experiences of race-induced trauma by Black women, and also to problematize the failure of the Western academy to include black women within the discourse of trauma.

Central to Rose Ann Torres’ writing is the decolonizing of education in the Philippines context, and the impact of colonialism on the Indigenous Filipino women, in particular the way in which colonialism informs gendered relations. Her chapter, Fanon’s Pedagogical Implications to Women’s Studies in the Philippines, allows us to engage with Fanon’s work on colonization and invites us to consider the pedagogical implications to Women’s Studies in the Philippines. Her reflexivity is grounded in her experience as a previous graduate student in the Women’s Studies in the Philippines. Importantly, Torres notes how decolonization, the meeting of two oppositional forces, comes to be identified as a violent encounter.

A key contribution to the conversation is Yumiko Kawano’s *Fanon’s Psychology of the Mind, the “Yellow” Colonizer and Racialized Minorities in Japan*. Kawano
speaks about how Japanese people, once labeled as inferior by European countries, became a colonizer of other Indigenous groups in Japan and other geographies of Asia. Her discussion brings to the surface the importance of Ainu and Japan Indigenous knowledges in decolonizing historical colonial schooling and the creation of a Japanese “yellow” colonizer in the school system in the broader social context of European colonizer, Japanese elite and Indigenous Ainu peoples.

The contemporary situation of the African nation-state of Somalia is discussed in Fouzia Warsame’s “The Last shall be First”: Nationalism, Decolonization and “New humanism,” Somalia – a nation in waiting, a state in the making. Warsame, through a discussion concerning Somalia and the politics of identity, draws on Fanon’s work on decolonization, to engage historic classifications of nationalism, humanism and nation-building, social transformation and the implication of violence, and neo-colonial narratives of body and state. Ultimately, Fouzia’s intention is to reclaim Somalia’s negated history and devalued cultural heritage, through a pedagogical recovery of the human.

Neil Orlowsky’s, The Hundred Year Headache: Israel, Palestine, and Frantz Fanon, grounds his discussion in Fanon’s “The Wretched of the Earth.” He engages with a historical and ethnographic inquiry of the Middle East region in order to better understand what are the conditions that allow for contemporary discourses of peace and violence to render themselves as seemingly permanent. Through conversations concerning violence, nationalism, subjugation, decolonization and colonialism, as it forms itself within historical debates concerning Israel-Palestine, Orlowsky engages the act of political violence as it is utilized as an agent of change for reclaiming national, cultural and political liberation.

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DEI

REFERENCES


2. FANON AND ANTI-COLONIAL THEORIZING

INTRODUCTION

It is useful for me to start by contextualizing Fanon with other thinkers and the near global anti-colonial movement going on during his time. As argued elsewhere (Dei, 2006) contemporary anti-colonial thought has its roots in the decolonizing movements of colonial states that fought for independence from European countries at the end of the second world war. The revolutionary ideas of Frantz Fanon, Mohandas Gandhi, Mao-Tse-Tung, Albert Memmi, Ame Cesaire, Kwame Nkrumah, and Che Guevara, to name a few, were instrumental in fomenting and shaping anti-colonial struggles. Most of these scholars were avowed nationalists who were deeply committed to social transformation. They saw the existing social order and did not like it one bit. There were born to be resisters! They sought political liberation for all colonized peoples and communities using the power of knowledge and a passion for justice and fairness. In particular, Fanon’s and Gandhi’s writings on the violence of colonialism and the necessity for open resistance (see Fanon, 1967a, b, Gandhi, 1967). Similarly, Albert Memmi’s (1969) discursive on the relations between the colonized and the colonizer helped instill in the minds of colonized peoples the importance of engaging in acts of resistance to resist the violence of colonialism. In later years, particularly in the contexts of Africa, other scholars including Aime Cesaire (1972), Leopald Senghor (1996) and Amilcar Cabral (1969, 1970) introduced questions of language, identity and national culture into anti-colonial debates for political and intellectual liberation. Very significant in the early theorizing of anti-colonials was the idea of the ‘two-sidedness’ (see also Howard, 2004) of colonial relations. In other words, there is a two-sidedness to any critical study of domination and oppression. The privileged and the subordinate position. Thus, dismantling colonial relations and practices has as much to do with studying whiteness and oppression as well as a study of the marginalized positions and their strategies of resistance. It is also clear from the early scholarship on anti-colonialism that it was colonized peoples and minoritized scholars who have spearheaded the study of the colonial encounter and resistance.

In re-thinking ‘anti-colonial thought’ today we must see it as the emergence of a new [but an old idea] political, cultural and intellectual movement that reflects the values and aspirations of colonized and resisting peoples/subjests. Memmi and Fanon were both instrumental in shaping and refining the thought that colonization is equally about a study of subjectivity and power relations. Colonialism and colonization had significant effects on the human [colonized] psyche. The psychological effects of colonization (Fanon, 1967a) – colonized mimicry can lead

G.J. Sefa Dei, Fanon and the Counterinsurgency of Education, 11–27.
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to a loss of the soul, just as the effects of colonization can render the colonizer with no heart. These ideas also propelled a larger politics built on the efficacy of global anti-colonial politics. While Cesaire (1972) was drawing parallels and equating colonization with ‘thingification’ (i.e., the objectification of the colonized subject), a Negritude politics affirming a Black consciousness and racial identity was becoming key to anti-colonial struggles. Memmi (1969) recognized the colonial encounter as a violent encounter creating an intense divide between the colonizer and colonized. He would note that this schism/divide has detrimental consequences in terms of depersonalizing the colonized and simultaneously making the colonizer inhuman. Cabral, for his part stressed the importance of forging a ‘national culture’ through a positive (solution-oriented) retrieval of cultural values of every social group in society in service of the anti-colonial struggle. Culture was more about ideas and a political consciousness. Thus, in Cabral’s anti-colonial work ‘culture and politics’ became powerful intertwined in the discourse of ‘national culture’. It was the values, traditions (culture) provides the [colonized/African] personality. And, political liberation is predicated upon effective rehabilitation of the cultures of the colonized so destroyed by the colonial encounter. Mohandas Gandhi was intent upon ‘speaking truth to power’. He saw the development of a strong inner and collective sense of self and group as central to social justice pursuits and he would argue that spirituality, religion and politics and intertwined. His was a politicized understanding of spirituality and religion. In effect a coming to being of a ‘religious spirituality’. The colonizer/oppressor must reclaim the self [the spiritual sense of self] ....but not for oneself, but for a meaningful collective existence. His thesis of non-violence was that the oppressed cannot overthrow violence/oppression through more violence/oppression. Gandhi like Fanon was opposed to aimless and misdirected violence.

Perhaps, and as noted in the Introduction to this collection, the failure to powerfully situate gender and difference (locational, cultural and sexual politics) in early anti-colonial thought [narratives] and practice was a limitation of knowledge. Gender and sexual politics, as well as women as importance voices in anti-colonial struggles needed to be acknowledges not merely sites for the production and pursuance of knowledge but for political action. Women participated actively in anti-colonial struggles and yet their voices have been missing. Also, the ambiguity around gender politics was such that on the one hand women militancy was lauded and yet silenced in the telling of the anti-colonial story! Increasing a global anti-colonial politics has recognized that women struggles and participation in anti-colonial movements provided important lessons to challenge dominant feminist, anti-colonial thought and theorizing. Women’s role in anti-colonial struggles point to both their intellectual agency and resistance of the colonized.

Frantz Fanon (1925–1961) has been described as a psychiatrist, humanist, revolutionary, and a political analyst whose writings have influenced anti-colonial struggles, black consciousness and the civil rights movement. The importance of Fanon for anti-colonial theorizing is not in question. His ideas challenge us as we come to terms with the process and evocation of modernity. Although modernity has many faces, as a particular ordering of society it is still a colonial and colonizing modernity. The privileging of certain values and the contestations
over knowledge are a case in point. In the modernizing project, questions of representation (identity/subjectivity/hybridity) and materiality go hand in hand. Fanon was big on broader political economic issues. But the reading of the dialectic espoused by both Hegel and Marx (ideas and materiality) cannot be dismissed even as we engage with Fanon [with his political-economic emphasis]. I read materiality in this sense as viewing the body as consequential, also acknowledging the material conditions under which bodies reproduce themselves as ‘subjects’ and ‘agents’, as well as the ways in which subjects reproduce themselves as ‘constitutive bodies’.

In linking Fanonian ideas and anti-colonial theorizing, I am also working with an understanding of the power of both ‘theoretical integration’ and a cultivation of a ‘diversity of episteme’. As already noted, Fanon did not develop his ideas in isolation. He was influenced by other social thinkers. What is crucial though is to acknowledge that Fanon is pivotal to anti-colonial theorizing as the latter is equally central to Fanonian discursive analysis. Similarly, reading Fanon means knowing about the intersections of anti-colonial and anti-racist analyses. So, it is important to ask: how do we bridge integrative anti-racist analysis and anti-colonial theorizing with Fanon? The search for a theory to understand oppressions/colonialisms must be cognizant of the implications of theoretical clarity. Epistemological positioning is always critical, as much as we use tactical methods of analysis to examine, analyze and interpret social reality (i.e., technique and technologies of knowledge and power). Similarly educational strategies should not only be a discursive approach to change but must also allow for actual political intervention. By anti-colonial, I refer to an approach to theorizing colonial and re-colonial [re-organized colonial] relations and the implications of imperial structures on processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of Indigeneity, as well as the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics. ‘Colonial’, in this context, is understood as not simply ‘foreign’ or ‘alien’ but as anything ‘imposed’ and ‘dominating’ (see also Dei, 2000, Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). Anti-colonialism today is about re-organized ‘colonial’ rather then a ‘new colonial’. The old colonial and colonizing have not disappeared. They appear in new organized forms and means. Hence anti-colonial practice means a focus on the ways re-organized colonial relations and the power of a colonial and colonized mindsets dominate relations of knowledge production, ruling and social practice (Dei, 2006).

Fanon contributes to the basic ideas of anti-colonial thought by writing about and cautioning that the colonial encounter and the politics of decolonization as a huge undertaking filled with risks and violence (see Dei, 2010b). He theorizes the links of the colonized and colonizer, as subjects and encounters, in his many works. Colonial relations implicate both the oppressor and oppressed. Both the colonized and colonizer need to simultaneously decolonize. By decolonization as anti-colonial practice, Fanon is referring to the intellectual, cultural and political resistance of dominant knowings and practices. Understanding colonial relations and encounters is critical to pursing decolonization as a political, mental and spiritual practice. This process is about allowing theory to inform practice and vice versa. Situating decolonization in the anti-colonial project calls for the cultivation of one’s self-identity and collective consciousness. Decolonization is an activity,
which also recognizes that the social and political processes of education as a dynamic, encounter between different actors with different and sometimes competing stakes in the outcomes.

Anti-colonialism acknowledges the power of Indigenousness and Indigeneity (see Dei & Kempf, 2006). ‘Indigenousness’ is about developing a local consciousness of one’s existence (individual, social and collective). The understanding of the notion of ‘Indigenousness’ draws on the absence of colonial imposition and a spiritual awareness. Anti-colonialism is also about spirituality and spiritual knowings. The idea of spirituality and ‘spiritual knowing’ entails a shift in our understanding of spirituality beyond the aesthetic concerns of peace, love, humility, respect to what can be termed, action-oriented/revolutionary spirituality. It calls for action and revolutionary struggle to bring about change. In order to engage spirituality we must avoid the secular/sacred split, the material, non-material dichotomy and the tendency to evade power issues in speaking about spirituality and multiple knowing. Anti-colonialism is also about troubling the subjectivity/materiality. The world is not all about ‘subjects and subjectivities’ and the preoccupation with the subject, forgetting that there are powerful material and political questions that script us (as subjects), is limiting (Dei, 2006). For Frantz Fanon this means addressing spiritual and psychological damage, scars of the colonial process, what this has done to the African psyche, and what it means to resist the amputation of the past.

Fanon’s ideas about the colonial project and the consequences for humanity, speak to his grounding in spirituality. He connected human spiritual existence to an end goal of becoming free from oppression, colonization and domination. Setting aside a critique of the gendered language it can be argued that when Fanon says “Man is a Yes: Yes to life, Yes to love, and Yes to generosity” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 222) he is referring to creating a basic humanness that respects oneself and the collective existence that uphold certain moral and spiritual virtues while rejecting values that are inhuman. His abhorrence of oppression leads him to claim “[Hu]man is also No: No to scorn of [hu]man. No to degradation of [hu]man. No to exploitation of [hu]man (Fanon, 1967a, p. 222). When the self encounters resistance from the Other, the self consciousness undergoes the experience of desire and, further, assumes a risk of life in the course of searching for the dignity of spirit. Such ‘desire’ is asking to be “considered……not merely here and now, sealed into thingness…. But somewhere else and for something else” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 218). In other words, pursuing spiritual politics for a larger cause.

Colonization has consequences for any attempts to evoke spirituality. To say no to oppression, colonization and racism is to contribute to “the victory of the dignity of the spirit” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 226). Alienation from body, mind and soul emerges when a colonized person aspires to a white world that rejects him or her. Reclaiming the past can be a limiting exercise in spiritualizing the self/body [decolonization] unless it is matched with a politics of social transformation. As Fanon argues “the discovery of the existence of a Negro civilization in the fifteenth century confers no patent of humanity on me. Like it or not, the past can in no way guide me in the present moment” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 225). Disalienation comes into being “through a refusal to accept the present as definite” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 226). When a Black,
oppressed or colonized body “conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated” (Fanon, 1967, p. 224). In effect, decolonization involves a spiritual undertaking as much as intellectual, mental and concrete material practice. Fanon makes the point that a spiritual community constitutes “the most solid bastion of the…Revolution” (Fanon, 1965, p. 120). It is the inner strength, confidence and internal resistance of a colonized people that defeats colonialism.

Being reflexive on the power of anti-colonial theory, I would argue that we need to offer counter and oppositional critiques of the ‘post-colonial’ experience that foreground an anti-colonial framework. As I note elsewhere (Dei, 2006) while critics like Benita Parry or Neil Lazarus offer a Marxist critique of postcolonialisms, I am influenced by writings of Fanon to develop an integrated critical perspective informed by an anti-colonial framework to understand the experiences of colonialism, colonial, re-colonial relations, and the continued relations of social oppressions. In the Fanonian sense, colonialism cannot exist without imperialism to politically, militarily, culturally and economically support it. Fanon argued that “colonialism is not a type of individual relations but the conquest of a national territory and the oppression of a people [by mental, physical and spiritual force]” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 81). He saw colonialism as “a military domination” (p. 81) and something which constitutes an important part of the [imperial] history” (p. 83). Definitely anti-colonial knowledge overlaps critical race theory, critical antiracism, Black feminism, critical whiteness, and other liberatory discourses. What anti-colonial theory shares with these frameworks is the critique of liberalism, the dominant framings of the essentialism vs. anti-essentialism debates as without fecundity, and a call to focus on intersectional analysis of power and difference.

Fanon helps us to rethink transformative anti-colonial pedagogy and education. The oppressor can only oppress those he/she considers less than human to her/himself. In objectifying human qualities, our experiences, histories and lives become ‘things’ devoid of human characteristics and worthy only of the utmost ideological (and concrete political) contempt. Colonialism comes with a persistent dehumanizing portrayal of the colonized subject. This has continued in the modern day with negative portrayals and dehumanization of certain groups [especially, but not exclusively peoples of African descent] in modern popular culture, mass media. Colonized peoples, especially Africans, have been characterized with a ‘defective rationality and depraved sexuality’. Western European imperial practices continue to produce the colonized subjects as symbolically, philosophically, and material inferior human beings – [i.e., ‘other and lesser’ – (relative to Western Europeans)]. There is a long history for this. Colonized subjects were considered to be incapable of complex abstract thought, and instead, capable only of the most elementary animalistic thinking.

What are needed then are revitalized cultural knowledges to challenge the dominance of Western imperial knowledge, a knowledge system that privileges universality, naturalism, hierarchy, and elitism. We must search for discursive ways to challenge the Enlightenment and its centralizing rationality, which for the dominant is the litmus test of civilization. We need cultural knowledges to trouble and complicate a politics devoid of the ‘us/them’ binaries of the
Enlightenment. Western knowledge’s systemic indifference to social historical analysis as well we resistance to the grounding of local cultural knowledges has constituted a serious impediment to the pursuit of knowledge. Despite the institutional indifference of the academy to a social and historical reading of ideas, we must continually challenge the dominance of Eurocentricity as far as the ownership and promotion of ideas. In this context, local cultural knowledge becomes an intellectual and political resistance. Affirming such knowledge means we cannot exclude other thinkers from the pantheon of ideas that have shaped and continue to shape human growth and development. Personal and collective experiences are helpful. But, there are limits and possibilities to the focus on storytelling and lived experience as the way to name the reality of the marginalized. A major problem that oppressed and marginalized people have to deal with is the negation of historical experiences and collective and cultural memories, negation of our subjectivities, the denial of the embodiment of knowledge, engaging in a continual struggle against our dehumanization, and the incurring ‘spirit injury’ due to challenges of perpetual resistance.

In looking at contemporary education we may ask: what constrains, but at the same time promotes, transformative learning for young adults? To provide an answer, we must understand how race and social difference affect schooling and education. We must talk about how categories of difference can help facilitate a meaningful dialogue about accountability and responsibility, and acknowledge oppressive and privileging practices that influence students’ educational achievement. These social categories are themselves discursively constructed. Yet this realization does not detract from the legitimacy of the categories themselves due to their political effects and currency in schooling. Furthermore, due to the existence of multiple identities, we know that some racialized-minoritized bodies may experience multiple violations, making historical contexts critical when accounting for academic ‘success.’

Race and difference are linked with school practices and, particularly, to knowledge production. The relative saliencies of different identities and the situational and contextual variations in intensities of oppressions coupled, with an extreme diversity of issues for certain groups in our school system, means that a social theory that accounts for educational transformation must centre its analysis around an understanding of social difference. For example, as Howard (2004) aptly notes, while not conflating race and politics, we recognize that, despite its fluidity, porosity and contexts, race works through well-rehearsed narratives and in broadly predictable ways to position Whites as superior to the ‘othered’ body. Apart from such saliencies, there is also the issue of particularity. For example, difference produces its own set of experiences, that is to say the experience of being Aboriginal is different for Indigenous populations, just as, for example, the experience of being Black, is different from the experience of other racialized-minoritized bodies. By no means is the intent here to homogenize the experience of Blackness, instead we must recognize and centre the historic specificity of oppression within the Black experience if we are to understand the complex relationships within identity and identifications. These distinctions are facts and must not be confused with a discourse about a hierarchy of oppression. They
instead acknowledge the various contexts of social groups, which is something that
certain aspects of the postmodern fascination with difference has unwittingly
erased with its critique of essentialism. Hence, we must also connect schooling to
class, sexuality, [dis]ability, gender and the hetero-patriarchal structures of society.
In considering the interconnected practices of schooling, it is imperative to
challenge how dominant notions and expressions of socialization in schools
reinforce mutual disempowerments of race, class, gender, [dis]ability, culture and
sexual orientation.

Similarly, we must make the connection between schooling and student
aspirations in terms of future social success, and what students see as the capital of
educational achievement. Students from diverse social backgrounds see these
issues differently based on their experience and ability to make links with broader
macro-economic and political structures and this is significant to our theoretical
analysis. The psychology of oppression is about understanding both the contexts
and implications the dialectic of both oppressed and the oppressor. The psychology
of the oppressor is working on the oppressed’s mind and intellect. The oppressed
internalizes the tropes of the oppressor and oppression itself. This internalization
requires a resistant consciousness to overcome the invisibility and visibility of
oppression. Both the oppressor and oppressed simultaneously engage in the cult of
victimization. There is the internalized racism of the colonized/oppressed and the
false rationality [of dominance] and objectivity [of the oppressor].

Fanon’s ‘psychology of oppression’ was in a sense, pre-conditioned through
Gramsci’s notion of hegemony in terms of how dominance and hegemony work.
Fanon maintained that the oppressor has within herself/himself the capabilities and
the tools to transcend the woes of oppression. That power, when unleashed, can be
devastating to the reigns of dominance. This power can only be manifested through
strategies, for decolonization includes mind, body, spirit and political action. Fanon
(1967b) argues, that “the habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a
psychological flaw must be abandoned” (p. 38). There is a rationality to racism as
much as racism is an irrational act or an irrational systemic practice. The racist “in
a culture with racism is therefore normal. He has achieved a perfect harmony of
economic relations and ideology” (p. 40). In fact, “at the time of imposing his
domination, in order to justify slavery, the oppressor had invoked a scientific
argument” (p. 43). Fanon (1967b) opines, that “race prejudice in fact obeys a
flawless logic. A country that lives, draws its substance from the exploitation of
other people, makes those peoples inferior. Race prejudice applied to those people
is normal” and that “racism is therefore not a constant of the human spirit” (p. 41).
To Fanon, it “is not possible to enslave men without logically making them inferior
through and through. And racism is only the emotional, affective, sometimes
intellectual explanation of this inferiorization” (p. 40).

In resisting racism there is a particular truth claim, for example, “customs,
traditions, beliefs formerly denied and passed over in silence are violently
valorized and affirmed” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 43). In truth, “tradition is no longer
scoffed at by the group. The group no longer runs away from it. The sense of the
past is rediscovered, the worship of ancestors resumed…..The past becomes
henceforth a constellation of values, becomes identified with the Truth’ (p. 43). In
other words, this “rediscovery, this absolute valorization almost in defiance of reality, objectivity indefensible, assumes an incompatible and subjective importance’ (p. 43).

FANON AND NEGRITUDE

Teasing out the intersections of anti-racist and anti-colonial analyses invariably and necessarily should lead us to consider the understanding of race in Fanon’s works. In fact, to flesh out the place of race in Fanon’s thinking we must step back and examine an important philosophical prism that shaped the practice of Black decolonization. It is also fitting and appropriate that in teasing out Fanon and the links of to anti-colonialism and social difference, we briefly examine his early engagement with Negritude philosophy. This is in no way an exhaustive treatment of the topic. Fanon was influenced by the late Martinique poet and anti-colonial theorist Aimé Césaire and the Negritude Movement. Césaire was his teacher and it accounts for the Fanon’a initial embrace and later critical engagement of Negritude philosophy. There is a little doubt that race was central to Fanon’s life in Martinique, France and later in Algeria although to different degrees. The Negritude movement was about Black cultural consciousness and the legitimizing of Black culture and identity. Often critiqued as an intellectual luxury, its protagonists believed in the power of ideas to bring about racial and social change. In fact, Negritude as theorized by Césaire (1972) was a liberation philosophy and movement. As a philosophy (i.e., an idea) Negritude postulated cultural action informed by the spiritual, existential and sociological conditions of the Black person. It is “humanism with a universal scope” (Senghor, 2001, p. 144). It was also a political ideology, as well as an artistic movement expressed in figurative and surrealistic (not literal) language. It was a primary vehicle for the liberation of the colonized mind. Negritude asserted that there is Black African ontology, a particular way of knowing self, through a collective history and shared memory of enslavement.

Negritude also espoused a totality of values of the Black and oppressed humanity, a unity of existence and the need to see the self and the subject as a whole, not fragmented parts. Arguably, the failure of Negritude may be its discursive connection to modernity and its failure to broaden an anti-racist agenda into the more expansive terrain of anti-colonialism, one that engages and subverts the larger issues of political economy and globalization. Other critics point to what is perceived as Negritude’s embrace of primitivism and a wholesale valorization of the traditions of Indigenous society (Fontenot, 1978, p. 111). With its post-colonial overtones, Negritude’s response to historical racist narratives as located in France, considered a reclamation of humanism through black cultural tropes. Part and parcel of Negritude was a sense of a celebratory narrative, which worked to evoke a particular qualification of African cultural practices to counter the governing aestheticized narratives of Euro-modernity. At the same time, what Negritude left intact were the colonial paradigms, which located blackness outside the schema of Euro-humanism. Fanon’s lived experience with racism in France and Martinique differed.
Moving through the interstices of race, class, gender and sexuality as endowed through the material good of education, Fanon experienced a privileged way of life in Martinique. He found though in France, that this privilege was no more. In France, the discursive formations of race were rigid and permanent, neither as elastic nor pliable than what he had experienced in Martinique. Notably, in France the constitutive good of education did not allow the black body relative agency as inscribed through the colonial governance located in Martinique. Fanon understood that he too was positioned as “the wretched of the earth” within the Euro-circumscribed Fr"{a}ance, that the materiality of education did not allow for a privileged of his body as experienced through the circulating class construct immanent to Martinique. The experience of this cultural and discursive dislocation led to critical interrogation of questions about Eurocentric identity formation and resistance thereto. What Fanon is asking, is “how do we extricate ourselves?” (Fanon, 1967, 10). That is, how do we retrieve a humanism from the confines of Euro-modernity? Fanon is pushing us to move beyond the telling of “lived experience of Blackness”. He does this through an anti-colonial reading, postured through in particular, an anti-racist lens. The problematic surfaces, through Fanon’s hyper-masculinist and de-ableizing language, and the manner in which it constitutes local discursive forms of imposition.

The desire to develop a broad social movement politics presented challenges particularly around the limits of knowing. Fanon, who was initially steeped in Negritude politics, later criticized and rejected the movement and philosophy. He pointed to its celebration of the “authentic Negro” and his suspicions regarding “the magical elements in the tribal customs of the African people” (Fontenot, 1978, p. 111). To Fanon, the religious, spiritual and magical beliefs of African peoples prevented mounting a formidable resistance to European colonization. However, it would appear that to Fanon it was the [rightly or wrongly] perceived parochial interests of race and racial politics that he was objecting to. It is arguable whether or not Negritude was an irrational reaction to white colonialism in its insistence of the union of ‘Black Soul’ with nature (see Fontenot, 1978, p. 111). What is critical though is that Negritude was forerunner of Black consciousness. It accorded an ‘absolute density’ to the Black experience, that is an “essence and determinations of its being” (Bernasconi, 2004, p. 107).

There is no doubt that Negritude centered race while also working against other forms of oppression. Yet, this fact is often lost on critics who argue Negritude was about race essentialism. Negritude followers would argue racist colonialisms trump simple class analysis. Such position is informed in part by the evidence of pre-modern, pre-capitalist prejudices against minoritized peoples, especially Blacks, as well as the expressed trans-historical and trans-class European cultural, religious, moral and aesthetic superiority. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that Negritude is deeply rooted in anti-capitalist critiques. I have always assumed [as a racialized minoritized body] that a critical raced-based analysis is necessary to develop a strong anti-capitalist position in the first place. And, as Kempf (2008) also argues, for the racially dominant perhaps a class-based analysis may be the gateway to better understand anti-racism theory and politics. In fact, Aime Césaire’s work is the foremost race-laced in an anti-capitalist formulation. While Césaire was anti-capitalist
his entry point to colonialism is largely [although not exclusively] through race. Negritude long recognized that when class is presented as the sole or primary basis of identity construction and articulation it serves to displace notions of culture, place, land, spirituality and race ….which have long been central in the construction of traditional/Indigenous identities of many colonized peoples (see also Kempf, 2008). Negritude philosophy worked with a broader definition of ‘colonial’ understood as asymmetrical power relations. In many ways negritude also foresaw the need to be critical of how anti-colonial discourse can be co-opted in order to silence anti-racism, which speaks of a race saliency.

What anti-colonial politics can learn from Negritude is the importance of being politically strategic. On that score, the movement is still relevant today for political and academic liberation. For example, cultural decolonization is critical to address cultural colonization, i.e., by developing a critical consciousness, a radical and mobilizing new awareness. Change must be read in transformation of the consciousness of the people. We know that cultural domination has been a major cause of so-called ‘underdevelopment’ [if ever there was such a thing]. It is also important to call for the re-affirmation of African [Indigenous] identities. Such political reclamation of identity rests on a true search for sovereignty and collective destiny. It also rests on the focus on Indigenous language and oral literature.

There are some important points in connecting Negritude philosophy and conventional Marxism: Marxism as a global theory of oppression overarching historical perspective has a lot to offer for understanding of oppression and colonial relations. The concept of historical materialism imbricates race, gender, class and capital. Material advantage is key to understanding social dynamics. There is a materialism of the body given the material conditions under which subjects reproduce themselves as constitutive bodies. Yet, as noted, the claim that the ‘material’ is simply the economic, can be problematic and limiting. We must see the ‘material’ in terms of a sociological and empirical understanding that can be other things than material. To Negritude, the notion of ‘race as consequential’ is equally a materialist interpretation. But it is a more complex understanding that helps us move beyond the ‘material and physical’ to the spiritual, ideological and non-material. Similarly, ‘exploitation’ in the case of race, gender, class, etc has other dimensions (spiritual, psychological, etc.) besides the extraction of surplus value in the relations and mode of production i.e., economic). The fact is that race, class, gender etc cannot simply be polarized as ‘separate and distinct analytical categories’. White colonial/racist privilege is trans-class, trans-gender. Similarly, we know in anti-colonial theory that language, religion, sexuality, etc. can be racialized and vice versa. In fact all identities are contingent upon each other – class, gender, sexuality, [dis]ability, etc.

As noted, Frantz Fanon, while coming out of the Negritude movement, later followed Sartre (2001) to declare the pitfalls of racial identification stressing that the “unconditional affirmation of African culture has succeeded the unconditional affirmation of European culture” (Fanon, 1967a, 212). Fanon was searching for a humanness. There are implications for social theory and theorizing Fanon for anti-colonial politics. The poverty of theory in not responding to the mechanizations
of the colonist and capitalist machine must be troubling to any anti-colonial practitioner. We must work on articulating a social theory that helps us to understand internalized oppression and the way it works. It must also help us to problematize the seduction of the ‘multicultural imperialism’ and the denial of the consequences of the materiality of race and social oppressions. The supposedly ‘clash of civilizations’ and ‘clash of fundamentalism’ is an imperial imagination.

**WHAT THEN ARE THE PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES OF WORKING WITH FANON?**

Fanon’s anti-colonialism, when engaged in schooling and education debates helps uncover the bankruptcy of ideas for social, economic, and political consciousness pursued through the pedagogic, instructional and communicative practices of schooling. There is an absence of a humanist ideology that usually characterizes any truly decolonized relation. The pursuit of critical education through anti-colonial perspectives requires that learning promotes and sustains new, creative and original ideas about what constitutes schooling and education. Critical educators will have to ground themselves in a firm knowledge of the importance of educational transformation that links schooling and education to the broader socio-economic and spiritual transformation of society for the benefit of all learners. Education should be seen as a social good in itself that should not necessarily be dominated by the needs of a particular sector of society.

The path to achieve a working humanist ideology in general is not easy and is filled with important lessons. For example, history suggests a passing phase of nationalism, ultra-nationalism, and chauvinism through racism, which reproduces its own internal colonialisms. Eurocentric educational projects can feed on nationalist sentiments to create divisions among communities of learners, those who see themselves as having entitlements to their schools and those who continually have to defend their presence/existence in such schools. If education is about creating a community of learners then we must find ways to work with difference. Education should be about a shared and collective consciousness and social action. Fanon’s analysis of nationalism and internal colonialism is helpful in this regard. Nationalism is a term crudely and loosely defined and applied to the development of a national consciousness. To Fanon, critical nationalism should be about a transition from national consciousness to social and political consciousness and action. For example, in the context of an anti-colonial discursive, what does it mean for Diasporic bodies to be cognizant of national consciousness? How does the Diasporic body actively engage with its difference to maneuver through colonial spaces of Euro-modernity? In an anti-colonial struggle, nationalism is not a mere political doctrine. It is about thinking through historic specificities to make possible different geographies of humanism. It is about the self, dialoguing with embodied knowledge as imbued through the colonizing experience. It is about colonized, oppressed and Indigenous peoples engaging with local memories to fecund the spirit of pan-Indigeneity. Education has a role to play here. Fanon (1963) admitted that the battle against colonialism runs along the tracks of nationalism. However, Fanon’s problem was with indiscriminate forms of nationalism that fails
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to bring about social and political awareness/consciousness or transformation. To him this was a narrow nationalism representing a race. When nationalism intended to uproot European colonialism is based on a ‘primitive Manicheism divide’ of the ‘settler’ [White] and subject colonized [Black] without looking at internal cleavages of class, age, ethnicity, and gender, then the reproduction of neo-colonial relations are held intact and not subjected to critique. What is needed is a rethinking of what constitutes a school [as nation] in which the sense of belonging and community applies to all learners irrespective of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. In other words, a feeling of belonging to a community of difference prepared to work together to create a new humanism. I see this new Humanism as one that builds on connections, interrelations among peoples and groups and subverts the asymmetrical power relations in society to create equity, fairness and justice.

Schools systems have a way of creating hierarchies of difference either through the privileges of knowledges, bodies, experiences or histories including demarcations of successes and failures. When this happens there is the absence of a collective consciousness of belonging to a community of learners. In such schooling spaces, interval divisions are fostered and cemented through practices of colonizing relations, i.e., internal colonialism. When Fanon asserts that “colonial domination has marked certain regions for privilege …[and]…colonialism hardly exploits the whole country” (Fanon, 1963, 159), one can apply this reasoning to school systems. The territories with rich resources [i.e., schools located in affluent communities or neighborhoods] are ‘developed’, while other areas [inner city schools or schools in poor neighborhoods] are neglected thereby creating internal inequities in the educational system. It is in the existing disparities that a new form of colonialism rears its ugly head. The parents and ‘communities of the powerful’ advocate on behalf of their children and they speak authoritatively on behalf of the entire educational system. Oppressed and marginalized groups are forced to compete for limited resources. Similarly, schools and educators gravitate towards those marked as ‘successful’ and confine those facing any academic challenges to the dustbin of ‘problem cases’. Such internal colonialisms feeds on ethnic, regional, class, religious, spiritual and [gender] rivalries and differences that rear their heads even in a given school. The formal colonizing authorities [in this case, dominant decision-making bodies] may intensify the existence of such divisions to their benefit. Such internal divisions not only create a dis-unified school, but also, thwart the cause of unity of the oppressed and marginalized, something that has historically been a torn in the struggle against colonialism.

In bringing an anti-colonial perspective to education, I am asking new questions about the procedures of educational delivery [i.e., processes for teaching, learning and administration of education]. For example, in the area of educational policy, I am asking questions about who is making policies of behalf of learners, what are the personal, educational and life histories that shape the work of policy makers? What policies are in place and what are the particular politics of knowledge production that shape policy making? Given that, notwithstanding the many progressive educational policies, many the books we have schools systems fail segments of our population. I thus wonder whether policy has itself become as an escape route not
to concretely deal with educational problems? I also marvel about the lip service engagement of the critical literature of minoritized scholars, the lack of attention to systemic and institutional factors and forces in favor of an audit culture? I ask why we expect to see success by doing the same things that have produced failures, and why is it that the false assumption of a level playing field still pervade our thinking? I inquire why the failure of educational policies to critically engage the question of social difference [i.e., race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, language and religion] persists, and why we continue to focus on ‘outcomes’ rather than ‘processes of schooling’? It is also important to ask why the unquestioned faith in integration? In the anti-colonial vein I call for a return to the source (see Dei, 2009b).

Fanon was against the racist philosophy that emerges with uncritical nationalism. Hence he argued blood and race prejudice must be broken on both sides. In fact, he was alluding to both Western bourgeois racial prejudice and the nationalist racist philosophy. Applied to our reasoning of current school systems, those privileged who speak on behalf of the entire school system from positions of social difference (e.g., class and white privilege) must work for the good of education for all. But in admitting that a nationalist racism could be racism based on fear and pursued as defense (Fanon, 1963, 164) Fanon was making a distinction between racism of the dominant which is intended to establish advantage and oppress others on one hand. and those whose practices would advocate for their oppressed communities along lines of racial identity informed by the oppression of the dominant on the other. In any case, the oppressed must be careful not to substitute a new and equally racist humanist for the Europeans racist humanism that enslaved and oppressed ‘colonized’ subjects and devalued our humanity. But the biggest challenge lies in translating critical national consciousness into social and political consciousness. Uncritical nationalism can breed ethnic chauvinism and pure racism when based simply on primordial attachments and not grounded in the social and political realities of people. Within the nation the collective struggle must be against poverty, human dignity and rights of all people.

CONTESTING FUTURES: FANON, REVOLUTIONARY POSSIBILITIES, AND THE PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

To say that the future is being hotly contested is an understatement. It is imperative that we contextualize the place of knowledge and politics through an anti-colonial space, by claiming marginalized and resisting identities, as well as local cultural knowledges and experiences that help inform the way forward. Fanon cautioned us not to look to the colonizer for salvation. In fact, to him the colonizer himself/herself is in need of spiritual and psychological cleansing. So the search for the way forward must begin anew with rekindled hearts and spirits. The past and present are definitely relevant in the search for a way forward and we must critically read the past and its history. We must link identity, difference, knowledge, power and agency in terms of a critical Fanonian conception of the way forward. We must ask: what are the pedagogies of identification[s] that can be adopted to frame anti-colonial politics of education? How do we theorize the connections of
subjective agency, voice and national liberation? I raise these two questions not because there are perfect answers or solutions, but because it is important for us as critical educators to think about these issues. And, so I end where I began.

Fanon, anti-colonialism and education is part of the long search for ways to think through some new and hard questions. It is important to validate critical, oppositional voices that challenge the normalizing gaze and assumptions of schooling and education. There will be a cost to such intellectual and political engagements. But Fanon offers us some encouragement and caution in working through the challenges. It is about the power of ideas. Fanon long ago observed that colonialists look for collaborators and “feudal elements” on their side. Colonialists also embark upon an economic strategy- cutting of the people from the revolution, improving the living standards of the population will hopefully stifle the revolution. This strategy can be doomed to fail as it is based on the premise that the revolution does not rest on national consciousness but primarily economic survival. In any revolutionary struggle there are fabricating and fermenting contradictions in the movement (e.g., the existence of “counter-revolutionary currents” through the exploitation of “…local hostilities created by colonialism” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 59). Revolution is about decolonization, revolution is about engaging colonial historic specificities as they reshape history in contemporary life. Revolution engenders a consciousness cognizant of a colonial presence, be it foreign or local. Revolution is about praxis and transformation through social justice.

In arguing for oppositional discourses one must expect the evocation and use of academic torture or intellectual hypocrisy such as can be witnessed in the delegitimation of counter/oppositional/anti-colonial knowledge and the proponents as ‘anti-intellectual’, ‘separatists’, too ‘emotional’ and as not working with ‘theory’ or ‘rational thought’. Fanon himself understood this process in the colonial and colonizing context when he argued that, “colonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, of violating, or of massacring” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 66). By deliberating, complicating and/or negating the powerful dialectic of the ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’ we witness the denial of basic truths. Rather than see what is shared in the struggle for human dignity and self/collective worth, the colonizer sees his humanity above that of the colonized/oppressed. In fact, the colonizer as the oppressor always “looks upon the native as marking a limit to his dignity and defines himself as constituting an irreducible negation of the colonized country’s national existence” (Fanon, 1967b, p. 81). To discuss colonizer/colonialist or even the oppressed as “too affective, too emotional….is placing a national problem [colonialism/oppression] on a psychological level” (Fanon, 1967, p. 81).

To contest the future we must claim and reclaim the wholeness of being and bring politics and agency to our work as educators, learners and practitioners. We cannot afford to compartmentalize our work and individualize ourselves. Fanon is credited with the notion of ‘amputation’ that is, to sever ties or connections. While the notion evokes biological images of ‘disability’ I still think we can work with the concept in lieu of a more appropriate term/terminology. That is, to accentuate the need for the decolonizing project to cast away? that which the colonized has damaged (e.g., decolonizing the mind and body, sheds the legacies of dehumanization and depersonalization). The way forward for anti-colonial
education is for educators and learners to work together to create decolonized spaces that allow for rethinking of notions of ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ ‘history’ ‘culture’ and ‘politics’. For the oppressed, I see this form of education as reclaiming education (see also Rich, 1979). Fanon was not about a total negation or denigration of the past, culture and tradition (see also Dei, 2010b). At one level, there must be a ‘resistance to amputation’ that is a resistance to a total severing of any connection to that which helps the oppressed to resist – history, past and its lessons of resistance. We must resist any call for the severing of ties with any history, culture and tradition that strengthens and helps us challenge domination and colonization. Obviously there are significant pedagogical challenges. In the ‘Fact of Blackness”, Fanon concedes and acknowledges a resistance to amputation of the past, that is, a challenge to “an amputation, an excision” of a part of the Black body (Fanon, 1967a, p. 112). He writes, “nevertheless with all my strength I refuse to accept that amputation” (Fanon, 1967a, p. 140). He would add, “without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for me to live my Negrohood” (p. 138). We cannot acknowledge that the past informs us and simultaneously assert the past is irrelevant to present and future struggles.

Sure, we should let the past imprison us. We cannot be too steeped in the past. So then how are we to interpret Fanon’s (1967a) exhortations in the concluding chapter of: Black Skin, White Masks? “In no way should I derive my basic purpose from the past of the peoples of color” (p. 226). Or, that “I would not make myself a man of the past (p. 226)? He also goes on to write “I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and of my future” (p. 226) and that the “Vietnamese who die before firing squads are not hoping that their sacrifice will bring about a reappearance of the past. It is for the sake of the present and of the future that they are willing to die” (p. 227).

We can only confer that Fanon was more interested in a “living past” not a reclamation of a “dead and fossilized past”. In other words, to Fanon the past was only relevant if it informs political and liberation struggles of the present not in their mere recuperation, celebration or valorization. In The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon (1963) was emphatic that we “must use the past with the intention of opening the future, an invitation to action and a basis of hope. But to ensure that hope and to give it form, [we] must take part in action and throw [our] body and soul into the national struggle” (p. 232). This is an investment in the past for purposes of transforming futures. Our evocation of the past must not be reactive or reactionary. The past cannot simply be about looking to find “coherent elements which counteract colonialism’s attempts to falsify and harm” (Fanon, 1963). The past is relevant if it helps us “construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up” (Fanon, 1963, p. 233).

A pedagogy of hope (see also Freire 1994), which celebrates the indomitable human spirit, teaching love, justice and healing, is important to contest a future so over-determined current geo-political forces of colonial and imperial encounter. A pedagogy of hope allows us to bring emotions to our work and for it to propel action. It is about a conviction that there will be success at the end of a struggle and that hope for a better future has to be struggled for and gained. A pedagogy of hope is about coming to know holistically. A pedagogy of hope is teaching about
diverse and multiple knowledges, including the active learning of multiple cultures, histories, experiences and knowledges emphasizing the complexities of such knowledges). Such pedagogy seeks to promote and enhance local/Indigenous culture and languages and break the false separation between the ‘school’ and the ‘home’ or off-school culture. A pedagogy of hope creates spaces of knowledge and power-sharing for family/community involvement in schools (i.e., in areas of pedagogy, instruction and curricular development) and emphasizes instructional and pedagogic practices that herald collective learning and responsibility by redefining ‘success’ broadly to include academic and social success. Such a pedagogy of hope also promotes curricular and instructional approaches that foreground questions of social difference and power relations (race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, [dis]ability, religious, age, and sexuality issues). It seeks to heal wounds of colonizing and oppressive relations and practices and cultivates in all learners agency and upholding the virtues of spiritual, emotional, psychological and [moral] values development of a whole being. Such a pedagogy of hope assists learners to believe in their power to transform their circumstances and to create a better future for all. This is the critical humanism that Fanon wrote about as the creation of a new social world.

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NOTES

1 See *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, New York, 1963 (back cover).

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