



# The New North African Syndrome

## A Fanonian Commemoration

*Nigel C. Gibson*

*Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy - Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française*, Vol XIX, No 1 (2011) pp 23-35

Vol XIX, No 1 (2011)

ISSN 1936-6280 (print)

ISSN 2155-1162 (online)

DOI 10.5195/jffp.2011.475

<http://www.jffp.org>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.



This journal is operated by the University Library System of the University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program, and is co-sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press

# The New North African Syndrome

---

## A Fanonian Commemoration

Nigel C. Gibson

Emerson College

*Revolution: the only solution*

Sign, Manama, Bahrain (March 2011)

### Burials and Beginnings

You must go back into history, that history of men damned by other men.

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

What better way to celebrate, commemorate, critically reflect on, and think through Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* fifty years after its publication with a new North African syndrome:<sup>1</sup> Revolution—or at least a series of revolts that continue to rock regimes across North Africa and the region. Fanon begins *The Wretched* writing of decolonization as a program of complete disorder, an overturning of order—often against the odds—*willed* from the bottom up. Without time or space for a transition, there is instead an absolute replacement of one “species” of humanity by another.<sup>2</sup>

In periods of revolution, like the one we are experiencing today, such absolutes appear quite normal. Indeed, radical change becomes the “new normal” and the idea that revolutionary change is impossible is simply the rantings and ravings of the conservatives and reactionaries of the ancient regime.

Too long buried under the weight of the tomes of academic discourse, Fanon has been resuscitated by the new dawn of North African revolutions. To celebrate Fanon, the revolutionary, all of a sudden seems contemporary and pertinent, while the musings of the critics who consigned him to postcolonial oblivion seem out of touch. But rather than continuing the painstaking work of exhuming Fanon from the postcolonial burial site,<sup>3</sup> let

us turn a commemoration of Fanon into an event. Indeed, why assume that a commemoration of Fanon after fifty years is not critical? Moreover why begin a contemporary engagement with Fanon assuming *a priori* the limits of his thought?

Indeed, where to begin is a philosophic question. It is a question of “intention” as Edward Said puts it in one of his most radical and *Vicoian* works. Beginnings are revolutionary, implying return and repetition and, following Said, “a sort of historical dialectic that changes its character and meaning.”<sup>4</sup> Vico, Said argues “said that the word *human* comes from root to *bury*” suggesting that “his humanistic philosophy” contained “elements of its own negation.”<sup>5</sup>

## A new humanism?

“Liberty or death,” a slogan of revolutionary struggles against the odds from the American Revolution, undergirds the current Arab revolts, but is also based on a mathematical certainty as expressed in Shelley’s poetry, “yea are many, they are few.” And so Fanon begins *The Wretched* not simply with violence but concerning violence in the context of colonial brutality and revolutionary transformation, of total disorder, where the last shall be first. Fanon’s *decolonial* philosophy can be considered a critique of the order of European “civilization,” of universalistic, imperialistic man. Called a new humanism developed from the bottom up, Fanon’s philosophy has an element of its own movement of negativity in the quest for freedom.<sup>6</sup> His concrete universal of human freedom, expressed at the 1956 first congress of Black Writers, was a call to “fight all forms of exploitation ... and alienation.” And though he did not mention Algeria, Fanon’s commitment to the Algerian revolution was obvious in his conclusions:

The logical end of this will to struggle is the total liberation of the national territory. In order to achieve this liberation the inferiorized man brings all his resources into play, all his acquisitions, the old and the new, his own and those of the occupant. The struggle is at once total, absolute.<sup>7</sup>

Grounded in revolutionary Africa, Fanon’s critique of Europe built on colonial expropriation, exploitation, racism and exclusion is absolute and universal. Demanding that we turn away from Europe, he calls a decolonial (new) humanism an “untidy idea propounded as an *absolute*.”<sup>8</sup> “At whatever level we study it,” Fanon opens *The Wretched*, “decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species’ of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete, and an absolute substitution.”<sup>9</sup> The beginning emerges in a violent rupture with the past. But what Fanon also calls a “second phase of total liberation”<sup>10</sup> is a notion of freedom and human dignity created by the *authentic* liberation of

the wretched of the earth, which equates with the collective actions of those hitherto damned, uncounted, and dehumanized people becoming historical protagonists, turning the world upside down. “An authentic national liberation,” he adds, “exists only to the degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation.”<sup>11</sup> Europe had to be left not because it was materialistic, but because its materialism was based on alienation and separation, on the expropriation, exploitation, and indeed murder of humanity. Fanon’s new humanism is thus defined by “the existence of men and women who truly liberated, who are truly masters of *all the material means* which makes possible the radical transformation of society.”<sup>12</sup>

In other words, Fanon’s notion of a second phase of liberation describes the self-activity and self-bringing forth of liberty as the phenomenology of liberation. Autonomous time is created by bodies which are no longer hemmed in and constrained, but freely thinking and moving through space. A democracy from below is developed by the will of the people by their own power. To accomplish this new beginning, the African revolution could not return to the past but would have to “let the dead bury the dead,” as Fanon quotes Marx as the epigraph to his “in lieu of a conclusion” to *Black Skin White Masks*. Marx continued in the 18<sup>th</sup> *Brumaire* that these new revolutions would have to “criticize themselves continually ... deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltriness of their first attempts.”<sup>13</sup> Addressing these inadequacies and weaknesses is certainly what Fanon attempts to do in *The Wretched*.

*L’an V de la révolution Algérienne* (*Year Five of the Algerian revolution*), titled after the revolutionary calendar of the French revolution and later called *Sociologie d’une Révolution* (*The Sociology of Revolution*) and published as *A Dying Colonialism* in English, is grounded in what Fanon call the “radical mutation” in consciousness and social relations that an anticolonial revolution creates –the thesis that people change as they change the world<sup>14</sup> – as it draws on the people’s “hidden resources” and their social creativity as new revolutionary subjectivities. The book reflects the insurrectionary moment of the Algerian revolution and attempts to work out in practice the ways in which society is being reconstituted. Fanon begins the work claiming that “The Algerian nation is no longer in future heaven” but already existing in the heart of the Algerian people.<sup>15</sup> *The Wretched of the Earth*, published only two years later, made a number of essential further contributions. For Fanon, like Rosa Luxemburg, “the revolution was magnificent and everything was bilge.”<sup>16</sup> Rather than the end of the dialectic, the revolution became the ground for a Fanonian epistemology.

## The politics of negotiation

This sleep-cure used on the people may sometimes be successful; thus out of the conference around the green baize table comes the

political agenda which enables Monsieur Mba, the President of Gabon to state in all seriousness on his arrival in Paris for an official visit: “Gabon is independent, but between Gabon and France nothing is changed.”

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

If it is the insurrectionary mobilizations of the rural and urban poor which become the epistemological dividing line on which *The Wretched* is grounded, then finding their own voices and means of communication (including linkages with intellectuals and militants from the cities) becomes crucial. But what are the forces aligned against them? The anticolonial rebellions create continual panic among the colonial and metropolitan elite who, along with their willingness to constantly threaten an endgame based on the military option, begin to enter into strategic negotiations with colonized elites about a “postcolonial” pacted transition. Even as political activity is banned and leaders of nationalist parties imprisoned, there continues to be informal contact with those the regime (or at least the more liberal element) considers moderates. During periods of quiescence these are nothing but patronizing dialogues, but what pushes the colonial reformists to search out moderate nationalists is their fear that everything will be lost to mass movements. In the final analysis the strategy of elite negotiation is a zero-sum game; whatever is “won” is won at the cost of demobilizing and depoliticizing the mass movement and by reducing politics to technical and legal issues. Through an admixture of incorporation and repression, Fanon argues, elite negotiations necessitate that the mass movements are sent back to the caves.<sup>17</sup> Of course, these pre-emptive negotiations are often backed by the ex-colonial powers (especially the former colonial powers as well as the U.S. who act as brokers) and though the actual content of the transition may well depends on a number of strategic factors (including the relative power of participants and the relative openness of the negotiations), the form remains directive with economic interests (especially access to “natural” resources) determinant. For Fanon, therefore, a new political dispensation cannot be built on the politics of elite negotiation. A new politics, instead, must be promoted and must be based in the ways in which the colonized, dehumanized, and formerly motionless—the damned of the earth—become human, actional and self-determining. Thus Fanon is concerned with moving beyond a knee-jerk anti-imperialism. He remains committed to the principle that any freedom given by the colonial master or given in the master’s terms can be neither “authentic” nor liberating.<sup>18</sup> Instead, the kind of “work” necessary to gain “a mind of one’s own” can only occur in a struggle which finds its own content. Refusing to be a “slave of the past,” to rely on memories of the past, Fanon rejects anything that defines him by the other, which includes being defined in *reaction* to the other. Instead he insists that existence be defined in a leap that creates its own foundation beyond the instrumental and the contingent.<sup>19</sup> Yet liberation, Fanon reminds us, also

depends on the ability of the oppressed to bring every resource into play, “the old and the new, his own and those of the occupant.”

There is quite a bit of truth to the subtitle of the 1960s U.S. editions of *The Wretched* as “the handbook for the third world revolution,”<sup>20</sup> but it is little understood by situating Fanon as a product of the time. *The Wretched* is also a tactical manual in the adventure of revolutionary politics. It is a warning to intellectuals who support decolonization to develop the epistemology of the revolt, not simply by a theoretical critique but by shifting the ground of reason toward those who have been considered completely beyond the pale of reason develop a new basis for praxis. Yet Fanon argues that one of the problems in the decolonization struggle was the willingness of many intellectuals and self-proclaimed leaders to continue to think in a Manichean framework (this is a particular characteristic of intellectuals who have only recently broken with the principle of the “backwardness of the masses”). Manicheanism, which can be expressed in a rigidity of thinking and action, of agitation and withdrawal, is a result of the multiple traumas of colonialism. Among colonized intellectuals this trauma and alienation is expressed through a rejection of “indigenous” culture and an internalization of the “Greco-Latin pedestal.”<sup>21</sup> During the decolonization period this attitude swings the other way, rejecting everything associated with the colonial culture and uncritically embrace of every “indigenous” action. Thus the Manichean framework continues. The intellectual who discovers the bravery of the masses can go from heralding the new society already in existence to fearing, without a clear understanding of the situation, that all is lost or that military technology is the answer to all problems.<sup>22</sup> This rigid and reactive thinking means that those who had in a moment of exuberance optimistically believe that the revolution could be won in one fell swoop soon become downhearted and pessimistic when faced with tactical losses. Clearly, for Fanon, the intellectual is in need of political education, a kind of psychotherapy where there is a genuine and open discussions within the movement. But into this confusing whirlpool, the enemy changes tack, Fanon argues, and the politics of reform and negotiation reappear. Nationalism, which had been a unifying slogan, appears increasingly threadbare with nationalist politicians peddling a rhetoric based on race or “tribe” but offering no real political or social program. The politicians speak of “we Arabs, we Blacks” and in “profoundly ambivalent” terms which “make the people dream dreams ... [but] avoid the actual overthrowing of the state.”<sup>23</sup> But the state must be overthrown. For Fanon, the revolutionary maturity of the resistance also means that a critique of spontaneous impetuosity, on one hand, and an over-reliance on a military model on the other becomes a practical need. The Manichean certainties that had fueled the initial movement must break apart because the “native” / “settler” binary that powered the early resistance (and seemed to power Fanon’s analysis)<sup>24</sup> are ultimately regressive and can only lead to defeat. Slogans and sayings will not suffice to raise

consciousness<sup>25</sup> as it becomes clear that not all “settlers” are enemies and that “exploitation can wear a black face or an Arab one.”<sup>26</sup> Fanon concludes that Manicheanistic thinking, the brutal thought typical of revolutions, “inevitably leads to defeat.”<sup>27</sup> “Political education”—genuine dialogue—and space for a more nuanced politics and time for the movement to develop inclusive political analyses become necessities just when having time and opening up new space becomes more difficult. Tactically it might be a moment to go underground, but strategically the movement kept to its principle of grassroots democracy. Thus becoming part of the “school of the people” is not easy, especially pressured by the tactics of the day to day, but the answer to the future can only begin by asking new questions grounded in people’s needs, namely land, bread, freedom and dignity. Without a humanist program, without including “men and women ... in enlightened and fruitful work,” without giving back “dignity to all citizens” and filling “their minds and ... eyes with human things,” the struggle for national liberation becomes a “sterile formalism.”<sup>28</sup> We have to return to the beginning.

## The Egyptian moment: The revolution in our minds

Decolonization, as we know is a historical process ... the thing becomes Man during the same process by which it frees itself.

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

What determines the timing of when the lid blows off, Fanon asks in *The Wretched*? In spite of everything, he says, ideas flow across frontiers and people begin again “to make history.”<sup>29</sup> The Egyptian revolution is dated January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, but its prehistory includes years of labor struggle: the sit-ins, strikes, and demonstrations of 2006, the almost daily workers’ actions of early 2007, the massive strike of textile workers in Muhalla al-Kubra in 2008 initiated by working women and the bread revolts of the same year.

During the insurrectionary moment of “Tahrir Square,” the Egyptian people opened up political space, as an ongoing public debate in the squares, outside the parliament, in the streets. Cairo, a city of 18 million – abundant in its history and riches and also in the lived realities of the majority of its citizens who are poor – became associated throughout the world, and especially the Arab world, with liberation. Caireans showed the world how social media relates to social transformation and the retaking of public space. They implicitly brought into focus the idea of the “right to the city” as a collective project of social transformation. They were not stopped by fears about maintaining order, nor by the police and the state’s paid murderers, or by threats of a coup. Instead they organized a continuous occupation of a city’s central square by tens, then hundreds of thousands, then millions of people, defending it, feeding it, nurturing it, articulating it,

and developing it as their daily work. Clearly things were changing during those eighteen days after January 25<sup>th</sup> and the speed of change was manifested in the people's experience of solidarity and fearlessness. But once the mind of the oppressed experiences freedom – not as an abstraction but in and through collective actions – it also becomes a force of revolution. Fanon's Marxist opinion that people change as they change the world became reality: "They were scared. They are no longer scared," many argued, wondering why it had taken so long. "When we stopped being afraid we knew we would win. We will not again allow ourselves to be scared of a government. This is the revolution in our country, the revolution in our minds."<sup>30</sup>

Once the lid is taken off a police state, it is very difficult to put back on. Once Mubarak's violence was unsuccessful, the generals made a strategic decision to manoeuvre a post-Mubarak outcome.<sup>31</sup> But what influenced their decision was the people's liberation from fear. Fanon insists that it is the mental liberation and the radical change in consciousness that accompanies revolution, begins the process of rethinking everything, questioning everything that has been hitherto taken for granted.<sup>32</sup> What had been *normal* for so long is fundamentally shaken. After thirty years of life under a dictatorship, the Egyptian people, too long hemmed in by the secret police, became actional beings. Tahrir Square, the revolution's focal point, became territorialized by those who had formerly not counted at all as the poor joined the festival. It became the space for a new kind of work in Fanon's sense, namely the hard but collectively joyous work of human liberation. As Sinan Antoon, the Iraqi born poet, novelist and filmmaker put it, "What distinguishes this revolution is the wonderful and sublime example it sets in terms of solidarity among protesters and citizens at large. The spontaneity and cooperation in managing their daily affairs without a hierarchy is what the state didn't expect as it deprived the people of basic services and tried to spread fear and chaos to terrorize the citizenry." The "commune" at Tahrir Square produced a new political form.<sup>33</sup> After Mubarak was forced out, Tahrir Square was "cleared" and as the movement reached its first turning point, no longer united by what it was against, one possibility was to become united by what it had created. The Argentinian social theorist Raul Zibechi characterizes the moment of insurrection as "times in which there is an intensely creative outpouring – during which social groups release huge amounts of energy – act like a bolt of lightning capable of illuminating subterranean molecular cooperation, hidden by the veil of everyday inertias that are imposed ... by domination and subordination."<sup>34</sup> Fanon similarly begins *Year 5* with the chapter "Algeria unveils itself" (*Algérie se dévoile*) discussing how the insurrection engenders a movement toward social liberation. For Fanon, woman's actions, transgressing the boundaries of the city as well as the boundaries of her family and becoming aware of herself as a body time and in space, express a radical new beginning that went to the root of decolonized social relations. The point is not to wax elegiac about

this moment as if it is simply a beautiful memory. In a sense Tahrir Square has become deterritorialized. It is a concept born of practice, not a sacred space. In his critique of spontaneity in *The Wretched*, Fanon argues that there is no privileged territorial position. Yet in the process of territorialization and deterritorialization, how can the revolution hold onto its epistemological moment?

## Individualism, national liberation and the new citizenship

It is a question of the Third World starting a new history of Man.

Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

It turns out that the greatest threat to African revolution has not simply been the small “Western” educated colonized elite but a narrow and often populist ethnicized nationalism. Ethnic and religious identities and patronage systems are essential to colonial governance and while many identities precede European colonialism, they are reimagined, ordered and institutionalized by the colonial regimes. Identity becomes inert, reproduced and often times authenticated by colonial power and patronage into a static and ordered system through which life is lived (not only through identity cards, movement, and labor but also over issues of land, inheritance, and so forth). A powerful force of anticolonial mobilizations, a politics based solely around identity, becomes a “misadventure” with disastrous consequences. The newly independent nation is crippled from the start; rather than a liberating ideology based in democratic practices, subjugation continues through religious and ethnic entrepreneurs and politicians who continue to peddle “primitive manicheism.”<sup>35</sup> Fanon argues that religious tension, often at the root of the “commonest racial feeling,” is “stiffened” by the nationalist bourgeoisie’s “laziness and will to imitation.”<sup>36</sup> The point is that the bourgeoisie is bankrupt, unable to put into “practice a program with even a minimum humanist content.”<sup>37</sup> Where the western bourgeoisie proclaims equality and practices contempt toward the Arab and the Black, the “young nationalist bourgeoisie,” he adds, peddles a “racism of contempt ... no different from tribalism.”<sup>38</sup> In this context Fanon writes of the importance of tourism to the neo-colonial economy. Fifty years later the state, the military, the party and local entrepreneurs continue to play a crucial supporting role in promoting commodified indigeneity, reproducing hierarchies and inequalities that colonialism took over and created. Thus achieving anything, Fanon concludes, can only done “in defiance of the interests of the bourgeoisie” and in defiance of the interests of local and global capitalism.

Fanon’s critique of the nationalist bourgeoisie and its uselessness as an innovative class have become axiomatic with nationalism reduced to flag waving global corporate sports events (for example, the World Cup in South

Africa, or the Olympics in Brazil) with the state playing the role of easing the way for the spectacular event, which often uses its forces to remove poor people from the cities. However, as much as nationalism is simply a veneer of neoliberal capitalism, the recent North African “syndrome” indicates how the national consciousness can be taken over and imagined in a more radical form. In the name of “the nation,” the North Africa revolts have equated national consciousness with justice, dignity, freedom and equality. In the same way, Fanon contrasts the crude attitudes of the incipient bourgeoisie and colonized middle class, who consider the struggle an opportunity to take the place of the colonizer, to the new sense of comradeship and solidarity emanating from the anticolonial movement and heralds the collective resistance inherent in social forms that have predated colonialism. As much as he praises the history of resistance keeping alive “revolutionary zeal,” the new society becomes evident in the radical mutation these forms undergo as the local community “spreads its own light and own reason”<sup>39</sup> and as new social relations emerge from new collective actions and discussions.<sup>40</sup>

A new sense of collectivity and solidarity is crucial to building the new nation and Fanon contrasts the possessive individualist imperative of bourgeois society to the sense of comradeship that is emerging from the practices of the revolutionary movement (i.e. the moment of “Tahrir”). However, he insists that liberation cannot be obtained by subsuming the individual to the collective either in theory or in practice. The individual remains the social entity. And while he argues in *Black Skin* that the individual’s situation could only be understood “socio-diagnostically,” the goal remains the disalienation of the individual. “Total liberation” and the release of creativity, he argues in *The Wretched*, “concerns all sectors of the personality.”<sup>41</sup> Thus Fanon’s aim for the total liberation of the human individual is not simply a liberation from the social-political order. Everybody’s individual creativity counts and it is the creative energy of the masses that becomes the measure of national liberation. Therefore, the recollection of the past is not only a reconnection with a time before colonialism but also the anticipation of the future as the birth of historical time. The collective democracy of the local village communes, for example, would therefore have to be regenerated, indeed transformed, by the transformation of society of which they are a part, so that nobody could be excluded.<sup>42</sup>

Burying the reactive and ascriptive politics of identity, Fanon suggests a new beginning where “everything needs to be started over again.”<sup>43</sup> Concretely, for Fanon, national liberation meant not just citizenship for everyone, but an active citizenship—without reference to anything else, without any claim to indigeneity—who would be involved in and synonymous with the creation of a new society. It was not a future dream but, he believed, already happening: “in the new society that is being built, there

*are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian.*"<sup>44</sup>

Fanon's optimism was born from the optimism that radical changes in social relations derived not from an "objective dialectic" of a dying colonialism but from the "effective solidarity" that was killing off the old society:

The optimism that prevails today in Africa is not an optimism born of the spectacle of the forces of nature that are at last favorable to Africans. Nor is the optimism due to the discovery in the former oppressor of a less inhuman and more kindly state of mind. Optimism in Africa is the direct product of the revolutionary action of the masses.<sup>45</sup>

### Whether this truth is real?

Yet Fanon warns in *The Wretched* that all progressive organisations, parties and social movements can degenerate. Just as organizations of national liberation can become chauvinistic, so too can democratic movements become professionalized and authoritarian. The dialectic of transformation into its opposite is, however, neither an iron law nor simply the result of external pressure. In fact, inasmuch as Fanon believes that it is the subjective powers – namely, the hands and brains – of Africans that will create new beginnings on the continent, Fanon's idea of a new humanism insists on absolute vigilance and checking practice by principle. The achievements of liberation movements become part of the struggle's history; they are never lost, even if the movements later degenerate. In the colonial context, Fanon argues, there is no truthful behavior. But there is a veracity for Fanon: the poor, the unemployed, the excluded, in short the damned of the earth, are "the truth" because they express the truth of the "national cause," namely promised land, promised bread and promised freedom. In the colonial situation, the colonizer paints the colonized as the quintessence of evil and the colonized return in kind. What is good is simply what hurts the colonist. But beyond good and evil, truth is whatever fosters the end of the living death of colonialism. Truth is what puts Africa in motion behind revolutionary principles.<sup>46</sup> Yet, aware of the counter-revolution that lurks inside as well as outside the movement—its transformation into its opposite—Fanon's notion of dialectical negativity means that a new humanism draws itself not simply in reaction to postcolonial realities in their neoliberal form, but also as a resumption of an interrupted history. Thus, when Fanon states that the unemployed, the poor, don't *represent* the truth but are the truth *in their being*,<sup>47</sup> he contrasts this to the inventory of "true representations" created by the intellectual. These representations, always external to the people's real movement, are "reminiscent of death rather than life," he argues, because they reflect the legacies of colonialism. The need to break with such assumptions and establish a decolonial and

dialectical praxis is intimately connected with Fanon's critique of the idea of an objective Truth that towers above human society. And, Fanon adds, "we have every right to ask ourselves whether this truth is real."<sup>48</sup> Subjectivity, which Fanon equates with the freedom of the whole person, the creative, thinking, feeling human being, is the truth which through praxis absorbs objectivity and changes the world.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fanon's first published article was "The North African Syndrome."

<sup>2</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trs. Constance Farrington. (New York: Grove Press, 1968), 35.

<sup>3</sup> See Reiland Rabaka's excellent critique of "Faux Fanonism" in *Forms of Fanonism*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 284-295.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), xvii, 373.

<sup>5</sup> Said, *Beginnings*, 373.

<sup>6</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trs. Chales Lam Markmann. (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 230.

<sup>7</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trs. Haakon Chevalier. (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 43.

<sup>8</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40. My emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 35-36.

<sup>10</sup> Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 126.

<sup>11</sup> Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 310. My emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire," 19.

<sup>14</sup> Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trs. Haakon Chevalier. (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 30.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Rosa Luxemburg, quoted in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*. (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1985), 227.

<sup>17</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 183.

<sup>18</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 220-221.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 229.

<sup>20</sup> It is also subtitled "The Handbook for the Black Revolution"

<sup>21</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 46.

- <sup>22</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 63.
- <sup>23</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 68.
- <sup>24</sup> See for example, Mamdani's reading of Fanon (2001:10, 13) in the context of the Rwandan genocide.
- <sup>25</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 135-136.
- <sup>26</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 145.
- <sup>27</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 147.
- <sup>28</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 204-5.
- <sup>29</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 69-71.
- <sup>30</sup> See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/feb/09/egypt-north-africa-revolution>.
- <sup>31</sup> For Fanon, it is not the regime's violence that defines decolonization but the willingness of the masses to put their lives on the line for freedom.
- <sup>32</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 100.
- <sup>33</sup> See <http://libcom.org/news/cairo-commune-07022011>
- <sup>34</sup> Raul Zibechi, *Dispersing Power: Social Movements as Anti-State Forces*, trs. Ramor Ryan. (Oakland: AK Press, 2010), 11.
- <sup>35</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 93.
- <sup>36</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 162.
- <sup>37</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 163.
- <sup>38</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 164.
- <sup>39</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 48.
- <sup>40</sup> A good example of this is how Abahlali baseMjondolo—the shack dwellers movement in South Africa—has encouraged grassroots democratization of shack settlements and its own notion of “Abahlalism” which draws on Ubuntu but includes all—one's “ethnic” heritage, place of birth, gender and age—in the notion of humanism (see Gibson 2011).
- <sup>41</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 310.
- <sup>42</sup> The social revolution transforms the humanism of Ubuntu or democracy of the Djemma from abstract (or dead) cultural practices into concrete lived experiences. His criticism is based on two factors. First, he noted that in many cases colonial violence has seriously undermined these forms and ethical-political systems make them impoverished shells of their former selves. Second, where they had not become colonized and reproduced as part of the colonial system (in other words, they had not been immune from the politics of divide and rule based on privileging region, religion, race, ethnicity etc.), they had become inert and impoverished. This is an example of Fanon's stretching of “Marxism” with its echo of Marx's letter to Zasulich, where Marx, critical of the Marxists, argues that the Russian peasant commune—the Mir—could become an essential part of a revolutionary movement that would not have to pass the capitalist stage.
- <sup>43</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, 152. This principle should be the measure of contemporary Africa from the North Africa revolutions of Egypt and Libya to the southern tip of the continent.

<sup>45</sup> Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 171.

<sup>46</sup> Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 177.

<sup>47</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 49.

<sup>48</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 218.