

**FRANTZ FANON ON COLONIALISM AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF
OPPRESSION**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this work was carried out by OKAFOR RAPHAEL CHIBUIKEM with matriculation number ART2101129 in the Department of philosophy , Faculty of Arts University of Benin, Benin City under my supervision

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God my family and those whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been my anchor throughout this academic journey. This work is also dedicated to my friends and mentors, who inspired me to persevere and strive for excellence.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

It is generally admitted that in the specific case of self-defense involving persons or nations, recourse to violence is a legitimate choice. Outside such cases of self-defense, only the state has the legitimate power to use violence, it being assumed that the monopoly of violence by the state is precisely how individuals give up their own right to violence and agree to come under a political authority. However, theories, such as Marxism, have also approved violence as a legitimate expression of revolutionary movements. They identify violence as a midwife of history whereby emerging higher social demands overthrow outdated and reactionary social systems¹.

Frantz Fanon provided us with a new legitimation of violence issuing from the specific case of colonial oppression. Arguing that colonialism is qualitatively different from previous forms of conquest and subjugation, Fanon recommended violence for reasons surpassing the necessity of self-defense or the removal of a rotten social system. He sees violence as a necessary therapy for a cultural disease brought about by colonial subjugation. The mere departure of the colonizer is not enough; liberation and dignity cannot be recovered unless the colonized get involved in violent performances. This article first examines the reasons and experiences that led Fanon to endow violence with a curative

¹ Messay Kebede. The Rehabilitation of Violence and the Violence of Rehabilitation: Fanon and Colonialism, *Journal of Black Studies*, 31(5), 2001, 539-562

effect and then evaluates the consistency of his interpretation².

Researchers has defined colonization as the establishment and maintenance of political and economic control by one country over another territory or people, often involving settlement and exploitation of resources. It involves a power dynamic where a colonizing nation subjugates a colonized territory and its population, imposing its own culture, values, and often its language. The process can involve settling, displacing, and exploiting the indigenous population, often leading to significant social and cultural changes³.

Colonial oppression refers to the systemic and institutionalized control exerted by colonizing powers over colonized peoples, often manifesting through economic exploitation, cultural domination, and political subjugation. This term encompasses the various ways in which colonial authorities enforced their rule, stripping away the rights and identities of indigenous populations while imposing foreign ideologies and structures⁴.

Colonial oppression, as a form of dominance by one group over another, has a long history dating back to antiquity. Ancient civilizations, such as the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans, established colonies and exerted political, economic, and cultural influence over other populations. These practices, while different in scale and scope compared to later colonial empires, involved the imposition of foreign rule, exploitation of resources, and disruption of indigenous cultures⁵

Frantz Fanon was one of a few extraordinary thinkers supporting the decolonization struggles occurring after World War II, and he remains among the most widely read and influential of these

² Ibid

³ Ömer F. U. Frantz fanon in the context of colonial discourse. A Thesis Submitted to the Institute Social Sciences of Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, 2019, 1-26

⁴ Zielonka, J. Empires and the Modern International System. *Geopolitics*, (2012), 502-525.

⁵ Strickland, W. Frantz Fanon: His Life And Work. *Afro-American Studies*, (1979), 67-73.

voices. His brief life was notable both for his whole-hearted engagement in the independence struggle the Algerian people waged against France and for his astute, passionate analyses of the human impulse towards freedom in the colonial context. His written works have become central texts in Africana thought, in large part because of their attention to the roles hybridity and creolization can play in forming humanist, anti-colonial cultures. Hybridity, in particular, is seen as a counter-hegemonic opposition to colonial practices, a non-assimilationist way of building connections across cultures that Africana scholar Paget Henry argues is constitutive of Africana political philosophy⁶.

Tracing the development of his writings helps explain how and why he has become an inspirational figure firing the moral imagination of people who continue to work for social justice for the marginalized and the oppressed. Fanon's first work *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs (Black Skin, White Masks)* was his first effort to articulate a radical anti-racist humanism that adhered neither to assimilation to a white-supremacist mainstream nor to reactionary philosophies of black superiority. While the attention to oppression of colonized peoples that was to dominate his later works was present in this first book, its call for a new understanding of humanity was undertaken from the subject-position of a relatively privileged Martinican citizen of France, in search of his own place in the world as a black man from the French Caribbean, living in France. His later works, notably *L'An Cinq, de la Révolution Algérienne (A Dying Colonialism)* and the much more well-known *Les Damnés de la Terre (The Wretched of the Earth)*, go beyond a preoccupation with Europe's pretensions to being a universal standard of culture and civilization, in order to take on the struggles and take up the consciousness of the colonized natives as they rise up and reclaim

⁶ Ridwan I. M. & Adewale O. M. Frantz Fanon and the Critique of Colonialism: A Philosophical Inquiry. *International Journal of Religions and Peacebuilding*, 2(1), 2025, 80-97

simultaneously their lands and their human dignity. It is Fanon's expansive conception of humanity and his decision to craft the moral core of decolonization theory as a commitment to the individual human dignity of each member of populations typically dismissed as "the masses" that stands as his enduring legacy⁷.

The ancient understanding of "psychology of oppression," though not explicitly formalized as a distinct field of study, is evident in various philosophical and historical accounts. These accounts highlight the impact of power structures and social inequalities on individual psychology and social behavior, foreshadowing modern concepts of oppression and its psychological effects. The psychology of oppression under colonialism involved the colonizers' imposition of power and control through methods like warfare, economic exploitation, and the denial of humanity to the colonized. This created a psychological state of inferiority, dependence, and a distorted self-identity among the colonized, often leading to internal conflict and a redirection of frustration towards those less powerful than themselves. Colonialism's psychological impact, as explored by Frantz Fanon, also manifested in the development of a false identity, diminished resources, and stunted growth and development within colonized communities⁸. In response to colonial oppression and exploitation, Fanon believes that violence is intrinsically valuable in the anti-colonial struggle for freedom and therefore urges the decolonizing natives to extricate themselves from the grips of colonial domination and achieve equal status with the settlers by means of violence⁹.

Statement of the Research Problem

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Blake T. H. (2011). Frantz Fanon and colonialism: A psychology of oppression. *Journal of Scientific Psychology*, 2(1), 45-59

⁹ Aghamelu, F. C. & Ejike E. C. (20). Understanding fanon's theory of violence and its relevance to contemporary violence in Africa. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(4), 22-45

In much of his work Fanon used the concept of Manichean psychology to describe the roots of oppression in Algeria. This Manichean psychological analysis can be generalized to understand the oppression of the indigenous Native American Indian. While the intentions of the European colonization of North Africa, the Antilles, and North America may have been dissimilar, the psychological effects are notably congruent. The horrific circumstances endured by Native American Indians have been alarmingly silenced; although Fanon's work briefly mentions Native American oppression in North America, the situation remains highly unvoiced. The Native American people began experiencing oppression as a result of colonization, similar to that of the Algerians, in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. This oppression began over 500 years ago and its malevolent face remains visible today. Through the historical and systematic attempt to destroy the Native American people and assimilate them to the "Euro-white culture," European colonialism, and the United States in particular, has caused serious detrimental effects on the Native American psyche. It is imperative that these effects of colonialism are understood and overturned for the benefit and well-being of the Native American people. Fanon's theories and analysis provide an effective avenue for deconstructing the horrors and trauma of Native American oppression. As studies proliferate depicting the immense prevalence of mental illness, poverty, and population decline of the Native American population, the effects of colonialism and oppression in North America are becoming more evident.

Fanon's contribution to phenomenology, glossed as a critical race discourse (an analysis of the pre-conscious forces shaping the self that organizes itself around race as a founding category), most particularly his exploration of the existential challenges faced by black human beings in a social world that is constituted for white human beings, receives its most explicit treatment in *Peau Noire*, *Masques Blancs*. Fanon dissects in all of his major works the racist and colonizing project of white

European culture, that is, the totalizing, hierarchical worldview that needs to set up the black human being as negro so it has an other against which to define itself¹⁰.

Frantz Fanon's work provides a profound exploration of the psychological dimensions of colonialism and its oppressive structures. His analysis reveals how colonial rule not only exploits the physical resources of colonized nations but also systematically dehumanizes their populations, leading to deep psychological scars that persist long after formal independence. The research problem centers on understanding how Fanon's theories illuminate the interplay between colonialism and psychological oppression, particularly in terms of identity formation, internalized racism, and resistance¹¹.

The Fontan procedure is a palliative surgical operation performed on patients with complex congenital heart defects, particularly those with a functionally univentricular heart. While the surgery improves survival rates, it also introduces a range of late complications that significantly impact the quality of life for these patients. The psychological impact of living with a Fontan circulation and its associated complications can be profound, relating to themes found in the psychology of oppression.

Research Objective

The major objective of this study is to evaluate Frantz Fanon's impact on the colonialism and the psychology of oppression. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine how Fanon's theories illuminate the interplay between colonialism and psychological oppression

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹

2. provides a profound analysis of the colonial condition, the psychology of oppression, and the struggle for liberation.
3. To examine the significant impact of Movements and Thinkers Influenced by Fanon
4. Evaluate frantz fanon achievement in relation to decolonization

Scope of Study

This study covers the colonization period. This period was selected because it covered the period Frantz Fanon examined the psychological effects of the colonial language on the colonized and tried to understand the colonizer-colonized relationship with the psychoanalytic method. Born in French colonial Martinique, Fanon grew up with a French education system, joined the French side in the Second World War, and received his college education in France. Having experienced French colonialism in his own life, Fanon studied psychoanalysis of colonialism and uncovered the subconscious of both the colonizer and the colonized. Fanon therefore explored the material effects of colonialism as well as its spiritual effects, revealing the destructive effects of colonial discourse on the colonized.

Methodology

This work will adopt Qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a systematic and naturalistic method of inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. It focuses on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and relies on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning-making agents in their everyday lives. Qualitative research as a method of research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reason, opinions and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypothesis for potential quantitative research.

Secondary Source

Sources of secondary data for the purpose of this work are journals, text books, articles, newspapers, magazines, library materials, government publication and web materials that is relevant to this research work.

Literature Review

Victor U. .E. dissected the influence violence had in the struggle. Secondary method of data collection was employed and documentary tool of analysis was adopted. The primary objective of the study is to ascertain the role of violence towards the liberation struggle of Africa and post Independent Africa. Hence, the research question of how has violence aided the liberation struggle in Africa? In course of this, it was discovered that the introduction of racism by the colonialists created inferiority sentiment in their subjects and that instigated violence as the Black sought for existential relevance as advised by Fanon knowing fully well that they have nothing to loss except their binding chains. Again, it was discovered that this racism seed planted in the mentality of the Black continent destroyed the very power of unity amongst the Blacks and this presently account for the cases of insecurity, racism and religious bigotry that have bedeviled the continent¹²

Emmanuel and Essien compare the philosophy of decolonization and violence of Frantz Fanon to social processes in the present African societies, and to determine how it might be applicable in addressing the social decay in Africa. In this their work, it is observed that there is a seeming semblance between the Fanonian philosophy of violence and the operations of revolutionary groups in Africa. In conclusion, this article contends that in a philosophical analysis manner that African

¹² Victor U. E. (2022). The theory of alienation by Frantz fanon and the reality of the politics of African liberation. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, 7(1), 81-96.

intellectuals and intelligentsia have the obligation and should involve themselves in guiding society to obtain freedom from oppressors¹³.

Hamza H asserted in his work that we cannot talk about Fanon without grappling with his analysis of violence and the psychology of oppression, especially during the present era of destruction and death. What would Fanon say about the colonial genocide and ‘avalanche of murders’ currently taking place in Gaza and other places? What would he say about the traumatic and tormenting effects on Palestinian children, women and men? How would he analyse the ongoing violence and counter-violence?. He quoted Fanon, that in situations of oppression we must treat root causes and not only symptoms; we must prevent diseases, not only treat them; we must empower victims to solve their problems, rather than keeping them dependent and powerless; and we must foster collective action, not a self-defeating individualisation of difficulties. Here in lies one of Fanon’s most important contributions. A psychology of liberation of the kind advanced by Fanon gives primacy to the empowerment of the oppressed through organised and socialised activity, with the aim of restoring individual and collective histories that have been derailed and stunted by oppression and colonialism. Whether by peaceful or violent means, it is only through organised struggle that the oppressed can change themselves and overcome the predicaments they face¹⁴.

CHAPTER TWO

¹³ Emmanuel B. E. & Essien A. E. (2017). Frantz Fanon’s Philosophy of Violence and the Participation of Intellectuals in the Advancement of Social Liberation in Africa. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 10(3), 62-73

¹⁴ Hamza H. (2024). Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression and Liberation.

HISTORY OF COLONIALISM, COLONIAL CONDITION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF OPPRESSION

History of Colonialism

The term colonialism refers to a "...large-scale political and economic system that allows one geopolitical entity (such as a nation-state or city-state) to establish controls beyond its traditional geographic borders in the service of increased profit or power". The term is coined out of the English word 'colony', while the English word colony is derived from the ancient Latin term *colonia*, which interprets to be an outpost or settlement. In other words, colonialism etymologically means "...the domination of a society by settlers from a different society"¹⁵

Scholars can be trace colonialism to antiquity, when it was practiced by empires, including Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Ancient Egypt, and Phoenicia. These civilizations expanded their borders into nearby areas starting around 1550 B.C. They set up colonies that used the resources and people they conquered to gain more political power¹⁶

Colonialism is both a practice and a worldview. As a practice, it involves the domination of a society by settlers from a different society. As a worldview, colonialism is a truly global geopolitical, economic, and cultural doctrine that is rooted in the worldwide expansion of West European capitalism that survived until well after the collapse of most colonial empires¹⁷

Historically, colonies in the strict sense of "settlements" had existed long before the advent of global capitalism. The English word colony is derived from the ancient Latin term *colonia*, denoting

¹⁵ Ahuja N. (2017). Colonialism. Macmillan, USA.

¹⁶ Henderson, E., Kunitz, S., Gabriel, K., McCright, A., & Levy, J. (2009). Boarding and public schools: Navajo educational attainment, conduct disorder, and alcohol dependency. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center*, 8(2), 28-49.

¹⁷ Ibid

an outpost or settlement. However, colonialism as a principle of imperial statecraft and an effective strategy of capitalist expansion involved sustained appropriation of the resources of other societies¹⁸. Colonialism is a system of political control and economic exploitation of underdeveloped countries, land acquisition policy and the use of territory for economic and political growth of the country controlling the colony. It can also be seen as a form of temporally extended domination by people over other people and as such part of the historical universe of forms of intergroup domination, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation¹⁹.

Colonial Condition

Colonialism could be considered to be a form of domination whose necessary goal for success was the reordering of the world of indigenous (“native”) people, with the use of violence (Peterson, 2021). However, the colonial masters involved in this act have over the year justified their every action by Euro-centrism. They are of the view that they are superior to every other race and because of that warrant their interference with every other nation in order to save them from the wilderness into being civilized. To be factual with, Colonialism came with racism, segregation, and alongside violence and, many other inhuman and devastating experiences²⁰.

Colonialism has been confirmed to be direct form of imperialism. This explains the reason behind the assertion that all colonialisms are imperialism but not all imperialisms are colonialism. As portrayed above, the African continent did suffer the most in the hands of colonialism. Specifically, as opposed to the insinuation that colonialism aims at civilizing a less civilized nation, colonialism

¹⁸ E. Hansen, “Freedom and Revolution in the Thought of, Frantz Fanon”, *Africa Development/Afrique et Developpement*, 2, 1 (1977), pp. 18 – 19.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

manifest itself in two prospects which has to do with the seizure of the political power and the embark on exploitation in order to make the work easier and faster. However, exploitation and extortion remain the major goal of colonialism²¹.

Colonialism is the direct and overall domination of one country by another on the basis of state power being in the hands of a foreign power (For example, the direct and overall domination of Nigeria by Britain between 1900-1960). The first objective of colonialism is political domination. Its second objective is to make possible the exploitation of the colonized country. To deduce from the above, colonialism has no positive intention neither is it legal, but negative and ill perpetuated towards its colony because “European colonial expansion was an inherently violent affair. By laying the groundwork for profitable transoceanic trades in minerals, agricultural commodities, manufactured goods, and enslaved human laborers...”.²² Colonialism was initiated by the western states, and the two major hosts on the African soil are the British and the French masters. They believed their actions are justified on the grounds that they are superior to every other race which in turn, means their right to rule over others. The British masters employed the indirect rule system in its colonial affairs, while the French masters made use of the policy of assimilation system to control, manage, and direct the affairs of its’ colonies. Colonialism without doubt turned and influenced every state it comes in contact with, for “...colonialism allowed the Spanish, intense economic and military competition with one another, and leads to inhuman extortion of their colonies²³.”

The meaning of colonialism has been classified into two strands, which, in essence, represent definitions based on practice and worldview. As a practice, colonialism involves the domination of

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

one society by settlers from another. As a worldview, it is a global geopolitical, economic, and cultural doctrine rooted in the worldwide expansion of Western European capitalism, which persisted even after the collapse of most colonial empires²⁴.

However, upon closer examination, the first definition serves as the cause of the second. In other words, colonialism as a practice directly led to the emergence of colonialism as a worldview. Hence, the latter can be interpreted as the effect of the former. Colonialism had a devastating impact on African states, contributing to the economic advancement of Western Europe at the expense of the colonized. It systematically dismantled the social, legal, political, and economic structures of indigenous societies. This process involved imperial warfare, which led to the displacement and mass killings of indigenous populations, as well as the destruction of their technologies, trade networks, and economic institutions. Colonizers imposed foreign legal systems, replacing communal land ownership with private property laws to facilitate taxation on agricultural production²⁵

To the above effect, it is open and clear that colonialism only came into being out of selfish desires and quest for power and control, over other states that appears weaker. Hence, it is deducible that colonialism has psychological effect, physical effect and as well structural effect. Not positive effects as the colonial masters will claim, but that that which is embedded in vice because “.... it involved the superimposition of the rule of an alien social order on another, violence inhered in all aspects of colonialism”²⁶. This is so because no sane nation will willingly relinquish its freedom to an external control in the name of civilization. This explains why Aimé Césaire compared

²⁴ Afisi, T. O. (2009). “Human Nature in Marxism-Leninism and African Socialism”, *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya, New Series*. Vol. 1(2): 25-40

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

colonialism with the European experience when he pointed out that colonialism allowed the routine practice of all elements of what later came to be regarded as Nazi violence within Europe, on non-European populations overseas²⁷

Fanon's understanding of the colonial condition is multifaceted, encompassing its psychological, social, cultural, and political dimensions. He argued that colonialism is not merely a system of economic exploitation but a total project that profoundly deforms the human psyche and social relations.

Psychological Impact of Colonialism

Fanon extensively explored the psychological trauma inflicted by colonialism on both the colonized and the colonizer. In his seminal work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he psychoanalyzed the oppressed Black person, detailing the negative psychological effects of colonial subjugation. He argued that racism and dehumanization lead to feelings of inferiority among Black people, preventing their full assimilation into white society and hindering their path to full personhood. Fanon described how the colonized are forced to internalize the colonizer's racist views, leading to an "inferiority complex". This psychological violence is so pervasive that it "turns him into an animal," stripping the colonized of their humanity²⁸.

Fanon's psychiatric practice in Algeria, where he treated both French soldiers who carried out torture and Algerian torture victims, provided him with firsthand insight into the mental disorders caused by colonial violence. He observed that the "systemic negation" of the colonized subject over

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Mogaji R. I. & Motadegbe A.O. (2025). Frantz Fanon and the Critique of Colonialism: A Philosophical Inquiry. *International Journal of Religions and Peacebuilding (INJOREP)*, 2(1), 80-97

time forces them to question their identity, leading to mental health issues such as psychosomatic disorders, anxiety, and even psychosis. He noted that Algeria became a "favourable breeding ground for mental disorder" due to colonial rule and ideology²⁹.

Social and Cultural Deformation

Fanon viewed colonialism as a system that fundamentally distorts social relations and cultural life. He argued that the colonizer's presence is based on sheer military strength, and any resistance must also be violent because it is the only "language" the colonizer understands. This violent imposition of power leads to a "sclerosis of cultural life," where the colonized people's culture becomes "shriveled, inert, and hollow". Traditional art forms and customs are either suppressed or reified as "primitive," losing their dynamic and evolving nature³⁰.

In *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), Fanon detailed how the Algerian people fought their oppressors by changing centuries-old cultural patterns and re-embracing ancient practices long derided by colonialists. This demonstrated his understanding that for the colonized, decolonization involves not just political liberation but also a struggle to decolonize their "mind" and reclaim their cultural identity. However, Fanon was also critical of cultural movements like Négritude that he felt were too focused on a nostalgic past or a generalized "African culture" rather than on concrete national liberation struggles. He argued that such approaches could be "politically impotent" and "cut off

²⁹ Nurnberger, J., Wiegand, R., Bucholz, K., O'Connor, S., Meyer, E., Reich, T., Rice, J., Schuckit, M., King, L., Petti, T., Bierut, L., Hinrichs, A., Kuperman, S., Hesselbrock, V., & Porjesz, B. (2004). A family study of alcohol dependence: Coaggregation of multiple disorders in relatives of alcohol-dependent probands. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, *61*(12), 1246-1256.

³⁰ Ibid

from reality" if they did not serve the explicit purpose of revolutionary change. For Fanon, true national culture could only emerge from the struggle for national liberation³¹.

The Role of Violence in Decolonization

One of Fanon's most controversial yet central arguments is that decolonization is inherently a violent process, a necessary response to the systemic violence of colonialism. He asserted that colonial rule is maintained through violence and repression, making violence its "natural state". For the colonized, engaging in revolutionary violence is not merely a tactic but a cathartic and self-actualizing experience. It allows the colonized to shed their inferiority complex, restore their self-respect, and reclaim their humanity. As Fanon famously stated, the thing' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself³².

He distinguished between the violence of the colonizer, which dehumanizes, and the violence of the colonized, which is a "cleansing force" that liberates and creates a "new man". This violence, for Fanon, is a "shock to the entire system," forcing the colonizer to recognize the humanity of the colonized and enabling the colonized to forge a new collective identity. However, Fanon was not an advocate of gratuitous violence; he stressed that violence must have a clear political goal and be oriented toward world-making, warning against its potential to become an end in itself or to lead to new forms of exploitation³³.

³¹ Ibid

³² Peterson, C. (2021, December 2). Frantz Fanon. Encyclopedia Britannica.
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon>

³³ Ibid

Post-Colonial Challenges and the "New Man"

Fanon also critically examined the challenges faced by newly independent nations, particularly the emergence of a local elite that often perpetuates the divides established by colonialism. He warned that this "national bourgeoisie" could become a "caricature" of Europe, interested only in self-enrichment rather than genuine national development³⁴.

His vision for a post-colonial society was rooted in a "new humanism" that would transcend the limitations of European thought. He called for the creation of a "new man" and a new history, free from the pathological tearing apart of functions and the crumbling away of unity that characterized European colonialism. This new humanism would be built through collective, unalienated work that integrates individuals into a social fabric and elevates their consciousness. Fanon emphasized that post-colonial nations should not simply imitate European models but forge their own paths to development, rooted in their own values and methods³⁵. Fanon's work remains highly relevant for understanding the enduring legacies of colonialism and the ongoing struggles for liberation and self-determination worldwide.

Psychology of oppression

The psychology of oppression explores the psychological effects of systemic inequality and discrimination on individuals and groups. It examines how oppressive forces, both direct and indirect, can shape thoughts, behaviors, and mental well-being. Fanon's core contribution lies in his comprehensive analysis of the psychopathology of colonization and the psychology of liberation, arguing that oppression is not merely a political or economic phenomenon but deeply infiltrates the

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Borocz, J. & Sarkar M. (2012). Colonilism.

psyche of both the oppressed and the oppressor. He asserted that colonialism, in its essence, is a major producer of madness, necessitating psychiatric hospitals in colonized countries³⁶. Fanon's experiences as a psychiatrist in Algeria, particularly at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Hospital, shaped his understanding of how colonial structures naturalized mental disorders that were, in fact, determined by social and cultural factors. He critically exposed the crude racism and justification of colonial oppression embedded in colonial ethnopsychiatry, advocating for a "psychiatry of liberation" that aimed to restore integrity and freedom to patients by addressing the socio-historical and cultural roots of their suffering³⁷.

Frantz Fanon's work provides invaluable insight into the psychology of colonial oppression in Algeria; so too can his theories be generalized to explain the plight of other colonially oppressed individuals. Fanon's analysis can be used to analyze and understand other nations that compartmentalize, dehumanize, and oppress groups of individuals based on race, origin, religion, or skin color, as well as to comprehend the psychological effects that these actions bring forth³⁸.

Similar to the oppression in Algeria by the French, the indigenous Native Americans of North America were forced to endure countless massacres, attempts at cultural assimilation, dehumanization, sterilizations, and denials of nearly all rights and freedoms. These malicious events, along with the loss of their homeland to foreign invaders, left the population with grave, recurrent psychological consequences, as suggested by the high prevalence of mental illness in the

³⁶ Wu, Y. (2024). Colonial Legacy and Its Impact: Analysing Political Instability and Economic Underdevelopment in Post-colonial Africa. In SHS Web of Conferences (Vol. 193, p. 04016)

³⁷ Cabral, A. (1966). "The Theory of the National Liberation Struggle". *Latin American Perspectives*, 11(2), 43–54.

³⁸ *Ibid*

modern population. Although the intents of the colonization of North Africa, the Antilles, and North America may have varied, the resulting psychological effects are quite congruent³⁹.

Beginning with the settlement of the early colonies, the United States alone has fulfilled, in regards to the Native Americans, all five present-day criteria of the United Nations which define genocide under international law (Resolution 96): killing members of a specific group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to other members of that same group; deliberately inflicting conditions aimed directly at the destruction of these individuals; imposing measures to prevent births of the group's progeny; and forcibly transferring children for rearing from the individuals in question to ethnically-dissimilar families⁴⁰. Use of the term genocide may seem extreme, but perhaps it is quite amiable after one has studied even a minimal account of Native American history⁴¹.

It seems logical to suggest the genocidal actions against the Native American people were a result of dehumanization, for the guilt and shame normally accompanying these actions would be greatly reduced if the Native Americans were considered less than human. This argument is validated on numerous occasions by "famous" court rulings, U.S. presidents, physicians, educators, governmental policies, and U.S. military officials. The intent of this section is to analyze the endured oppression of the Native American, and as Fanon (1952) stated, "by analyzing it we aim to destroy it" (p. xvi). Indian Reservations: Toward a Manichaeic America Addressing the Native Americans, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 reads, "Article III. . . The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall never be taken from them

³⁹ Blake T. H. (2011). Frantz Fanon and colonialism: A psychology of oppression. *Journal of Scientific Psychology*, 1(1), 45-59

⁴⁰ Ahuja N. (2017). *Colonialism*. Macmillan, USA.

⁴¹ Ibid

without their consent⁴². Written with the best intentions, this promise is but one of the numerous forgotten promises and treaties of the United States regarding the Native Americans, perhaps best illustrated as President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, resulting in the Native Americans first “legal” loss of land to the European settlers.

Shortly after the act was passed, the Native Americans that willingly agreed to relocation were forcefully herded like cattle to the newly formed Indian Territory, west of the Mississippi River, in the eastern half of present-day Oklahoma. Hearing of the Act, many Indians exercised their alleged right to refuse relocation. Governor Wilson Lumpkin of Georgia wrote to President Jackson, regarding the Indians who refused to relocate, “If now they refuse to accept the liberal terms offered, they only must be responsible for whatever evils and difficulties may arise... starvation and destruction await them if they remain much longer in their present abodes). The United States government then intervened by passing the Treaty of New Echota in 1836; a “forced removal” by the United States Army followed. This forced removal and relocation to lands west of the Mississippi became a brutal “death trip” for thousands of Native Americans (mostly members of the Five Civilized Tribes), and is now referred to as the Trail of Tears⁴³.

This brief overview of Native American land allotment and relocation alone provides sufficient justification for use of the term oppression, although these events served merely as a prelude to the torment and struggle that lie ahead for the indigenous people. As settlers in the east began to move to the Great Plains region of North America, the “real” segregation and compartmentalization of the Native Americans commenced. With the passing of the 1851 Indian Appropriations Act, the Native

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Henslin, J. M. (2008). *Sociology: A down-to-earth approach* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

American tribes were transferred from their allotted lands west of the Mississippi River to reservations, small portions of “sovereign” Indian Territory, as there was no place left to relocate them. The mindset and attitude of top U.S. officials at the time, regarding these acts of aggression, can be articulated in no better terms than those of President Roosevelt himself, using his own dehumanizing, animalistic speech when referring to the Native Americans: “justice is on the side of the pioneers . . . this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game reserve for squalid savages⁴⁴.”

Fanon's work, including seminal texts like *Black Skin, White Masks (1952)* and *The Wretched of the Earth (1961)*, delves into the psychological effects of racism and colonialism. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he psychoanalyzes the oppressed Black person's experience of navigating a world that perceives them as inferior, exploring how this leads to internalized racist beliefs and a distorted self-image. He highlighted the "disembodying effect" of racism, where Black individuals experience alienation from their own bodies and a sense of being viewed as objects. Fanon also critiqued how the science of psychology was constructed around white norms, arguing that psychopathology failed to account for Black experiences. He even extended his analysis to the oppressor, suggesting that white people's "phobic" fear of Black people was an adverse psychological effect of colonialism, portraying racism as a malady afflicting both parties⁴⁵.

A central tenet of Fanon's psychology of liberation is the idea that psychopathology in oppressed contexts is a "pathology of freedom," meaning it stems from the denial and deformation of human freedom and agency. He argued that oppression has a "totalitarian character," not only conquering

⁴⁴ Khodadadzadeh, O. (2017). “China In Africa: A Modern Story of Colonization”? In Master Programme in Political Science, 120 Credits Department of Government Master’s Thesis, 30 Credits Uppsala University.

⁴⁵ Ibid

land but also invading the lives and consciousness of the people, leading to depersonalization, deculturalization, and dehumanization. Fanon believed that the path to recovery and liberation involved agency and collective responsibility, asserting that "an authentic national liberation exists only in the precise degree to which the individual has irreversibly begun his own liberation"⁴⁶.

Fanon also famously grappled with the role of violence in liberation struggles. While often misinterpreted as an advocate for violence, he described and analyzed it as an unavoidable response to the inherent violence of the colonial system. For Fanon, the colonial world is Manichean, dehumanizing the native, and colonial violence is total and pervasive. He argued that violence could have a liberating role in situations where all other means had failed, serving as a "disintoxifying" force for the colonized mind. However, he was also deeply ambivalent about violence, recognizing its brutal residual effects and the blurring of lines between perpetrator and victim⁴⁷.

Ultimately, Fanon's work calls for a political psychiatry that understands mental health within its socio-historical and cultural context, emphasizing collective liberation and the radical transformation of social structures over individual adjustment to an oppressive status quo. His insights continue to inform critical social psychology, urging a shift from individual-centric analyses of violence to those that acknowledge historical-material conditions and challenge complicity with militarism⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Mogaji, R. I. (2024). Redefining Domestic Violence: An Earth-Eco-Socialist Consideration. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, Review and Studies*, Vol. 1(1): 1-16

⁴⁸ Ibid

CHAPTER THREE

UNDERSTANDING FANON'S THEORY OF VIOLENCE AND ITS RELEVANCE

FANTZ FANON UNDERSTANDING OF COLONIALISM

Frantz Fanon's understanding of colonialism, as articulated in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth*, centers on its inherently violent and psychologically damaging nature. He saw colonialism as a system of domination that not only exploits the physical resources of a colonized land but also inflicts deep psychological wounds on both the colonizer and the colonized. Fanon's analysis emphasizes the structural violence of colonialism, the psychological impact of oppression, and the necessity of revolutionary violence for liberation⁴⁹.

Like every other philosopher, Fanon is a child of his time. His time, his world and existence is the colonial world – a Manichean world. He wrote from this specific time and history. It is therefore necessary to furnish ourselves, by way of introduction, with circumstances and events in the colonial world which shaped his life and thoughts. Fanon was born on 20th July, 1925 on the Island of Martinique. He was one of the descendants of slaves shipped to the Island in the 17th century. It was a society in which economic condition and social status mainly depended on colour. In Martinique blacks were subjected to French education aimed at assimilating them into French culture and language. However, the French policy of assimilation, in Fanon's case, was countered by the influence of Aime Césaire who was propounding the philosophy of negritude as an

⁴⁹ Bulhan, H. A. (1985). *Frantz Fanon and the psychology of oppression*. New York, NY: Plenum press

intellectual reaction to alienated consciousness experienced by the black people as well as an affirmation of their existence and culture⁵⁰.

So, while the influence of French education was moving the young Fanon towards assimilation, Césaire's negritude was tilting him towards self autonomy. He was therefore "plagued during much of his life by the demands of assimilation and the need for autonomy, the need to be one's authentic self. He embodied within himself these two contradictory positions."⁵¹ The outbreak of Second World War interrupted Fanon's education and he was enlisted in the Free French Army to fight for the French. His travels during war brought him face-to-face with the experience of racism in Europe, Africa and in the French Caribbean. He observed that in the army France had a different place for Black Frenchmen despite the value of liberty, equality and fraternity it proclaims⁵¹.

Fanon returned to school to complete his education when the war ended. At this time, his teachers observed that he became more and more withdrawn and introspective, suggesting that he was going over his war experience in his mind. He then turned his attention to the work of philosophers such as Jean Paul Satre, Aime Césaire, Karl Jaspers, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1947 Fanon went to France to study Medicine with a specialization in Psychiatry at the University of Lyon. During his medical training he continued to study the works of philosophers, including Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Friedrich Hegel. After completing his studies, he went to Algeria in 1953 to serve as head of the Psychiatry department of Blida-Joinville

⁵⁰ Chuka A. F. & Cyril E. E. (2013). Understanding fanon's theory of violence and its relevance to contemporary violence in Africa

⁵¹ *ibid*

Hospital in Algeria. In the hospital Fanon began to observe the effects of colonial violence on the human psyche, as he was giving Algerians and French soldiers treatment⁵².

Fanon's study and experience of the existential conditions of the oppressed people in France and Algeria prompted him to join National Liberation Front (FLN) and work actively for Algeria's liberation. By day he would work for the French administration, while by night he would work for the Algerian nationalists. When it dawned on him that he could no longer cope with this double role, he resigned from the psychiatric job to devote himself wholeheartedly to the FLN and the Algerian revolution. He pointed out the futility of practising psychiatry in a degrading and dehumanizing colonial world in his letter of resignation. As he states it: "if psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization⁵³."

Fanon's war experiences and the legacy of colonial domination, together with his study of philosophical works and training as a psychiatrist, had a strong influence on his conception of decolonization within the context of anticolonial struggle. It was the dehumanizing and excruciating circumstances in the colonial world that influenced Fanon's advocacy of revolutionary decolonization aimed at destroying the unjust colonial structures and liberating alienated consciousness⁵⁴.

Nature of Violence

Violence is the "use of force to harm or destroy human beings or non-human objects, for the purpose of preserving or altering political institutions, systems, governments, or policies."³

Violence may be physical or psychological. Roberts explains that violence "contains dimensions of

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Josh P. (2016). Fanon on Violence and the Person

⁵⁴ Ibid

physical and psychological domination by one species of mankind over another. Physical violence is the infliction or threat of infliction of painful injury by the use of instruments like whips, guns, bayonets and fists. Psychological violence involves the use of hostile behaviour such as gestures and words to cause emotional damage or harm to the victim. Both forms of violence are aimed at diminishing the victim's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth⁵⁵.

There are two distinct concepts of violence, namely instrumental violence and intrinsic violence. Instrumental violence refers to "a concept in which the implementation of either wanton irrational or calculated rational violence occurs as a means to an end."⁵⁵ This means that violence is employed with the sole purpose of achieving a specific result. Here, the party does not place a metaphysical value on the violent act but sees it merely as an instrumental means to attain an end. Intrinsic violence, in contrast to instrumental violence, refers to a metaphysical concept in which the act of either random irrational or calculated rational violence itself contains inherent value. Intrinsic violence does not operate in a means-end continuum; it places positive value on a violent act, regardless of the outcome at a specific moment of implementation⁵⁶.

Fanon conceives of violence in the colonial world as both physical and psychological. For him, violence is an intrinsic nature of the colonial system which produces alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions that are formidable obstacles to man's liberation. In response to colonial oppression and exploitation, Fanon believes that violence is intrinsically valuable in the anti-colonial struggle for freedom and therefore urges the decolonizing natives to extricate

⁵⁵ Abdelnaeim I. A. E. & Abdalatif M. H.(2021). Frantz Fanon's justifications to violence as discussed in the wretched of the earth. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9(9), 12-20.

⁵⁶ Ibid

themselves from the grips of colonial domination and achieve equal status with the settlers by means of violence⁵⁷.

Fanon's Analysis of the Colonial Situation

Fanon notes that colonialism is violent in its natural state. In other words, he sees violence as the defining characteristic of colonialism. For him, colonial world is characterized by dichotomy between the settlers and the natives. It is deeply rooted in Manichean structure, that is, it is arranged in such a way that there is conflict or opposition between the settlers and the natives. Fanon states that colonial world is divided into two compartmental zones: the zone of the settlers and the zone of the natives. Barrack and police stations partition these zones. Narcissism and Chauvinism permeate the consciousness of the settlers. They see their zone as being the sole sphere of humanity. So, if one does not belong to that sphere, one cannot claim to represent a civilized human species.

The natives are being exploited, enslaved, oppressed, marginalized, dehumanized, abused and devalued by the colonizers. Fanon therefore writes: "The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white."⁵⁸ Fanon views colonialism as a system of exploitation which makes the colonized people feel inferior to the colonizers. He contends that the instrument of colonial rule is violence. This violence is cruelly executed by means of bayonets and canons and sustained by the police and the army. Fanon writes thus: "their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons."⁵⁸ He explains further that in the colonial world:

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

The policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native⁵⁹.

The racially motivated physical violence is perpetrated to subject the natives to awful abuse and traumatic experience in order to force them into submission. In the light of this, Hansen explains that physical violence does not only refer to “the wars of conquest, pillage and plunder by which in many places colonial rule was established but also refer to the day employment of strong arm measures to keep the colonized population in a subject state.”⁶⁰

Psychologically, the colonized people are robbed of their being and made to feel inferior and worthless. To be human is to be white. The white is civilized and rational but the Negro is primitive, uncivilized and inhuman. The colonizers do not recognized the colonized people as being human and thus treats them inhumanely. Satre notes the physiological and psychological violence in the colonial world:

Sheer physical fatigue will stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are levelled at the peasant; civilians come to

⁵⁹ Memmi, Albert. 1973. "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon." *The Massachusetts Review*. XIV. 1, Winter: 9-39. Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to fill the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. The business is conducted with flying colors and by experts; the "psychological services" weren't established yesterday; nor was brainwashing.⁶¹

Culturally, the natives are degraded and devastated colonialism robs the African culture of its essential value. The colonists present their culture as being superior to that of African and so the natives are made to view realities from the perspective of French culture. African culture which is once open to the future automatically becomes "closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression." In this way, African culture loses its autonomy and becomes an instrument of colonial oppression. Satre reveals that "violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours." Through the exploitative racism inherent in colonial rule the cultural legacy of the natives are destroyed and they are made to feel that their culture and all aspects of their being are inferior. As Kebede puts it: "The tag of primitiveness affixed on them, the contempt for and complete destruction of their cultural legacy, their forced assimilation into the European culture at a reduced price, all have resulted in the inculcation, deep into the soul of each colonized person, of a devastating inferiority complex."⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Chuka F. A. & Cyril E. E. (2019). The Morality of Frantz Fanon's Philosophy of Violence. *Tropical Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 1, 13 – 26

Structurally, colonialism creates economic alienation and alienated consciousness through exploitation that permeates into colonial, political and socio-economic structures. The natives are prohibited from participating meaningfully in the political processes which affect them and thus could not express their authentic existence. Though they are indispensable force, they are separated from their products. Through violence they are subjected to forced labour and made to think that their blackness bars them from possessing wealth and occupying high social status. Like Marx, Fanon holds that economic condition is the substructure of the colonial world which determines the superstructure. However, he identifies this substructure with the race so that material possessions and social status are tied to one's race. He asserts thus:

When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a give race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence: you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.⁶³

The above quote suggests that “the white man is the symbol of capital as the Negro is that of labor.”¹⁶ The implication of this is that the colonized people would remain impoverished, thereby leading to alienated consciousness and alienating material conditions.

⁶³ Ibid

This dehumanizing treatment of the natives and the Manichaeism of colonies generate conflicting demands, interests and identity. The colonists are desirous of privileges, domination and racial superiority, while the essential needs of the colonized people are land, communality, dignity and cultural expressions. The colonists consider themselves superior to the natives, while the natives refuse to accept their inhuman condition. In the light of this, Satre writes:

Hatred, blind hatred which is as yet an abstraction, is their only wealth, the master calls it forth because he seeks to reduce them to animals, but he fails to break it down because his interests stop him halfway. Thus, the 'half-natives' are still humans, through the power and weakness of the oppressor which is transformed within them into a stubborn refusal of the animal condition.⁶⁴

However, the natives are deprived of expressing their aggression. Though they are burning with rage, they dare not confront the well-armed colonists due to the psychological inhibitions created by the repressive colonial regime and the trepidation of being sanctioned. Consequently, colonial rule sets one native against the other. Initially, the colonized man applied defence mechanism. He "will manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people" as a way of relieving the emotional stress and avoiding violent confrontation with the colonizers. As Fanon puts it: "The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism ... The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions – in tribal warfare, in feuds between sects and, in quarrels between individuals." Satre argues that the natives deteriorate their degrading and

⁶⁴ Ibid

dehumanizing experience by transferring their repressed anger to one another. For him, such act does not amount to liberation but promotion of dehumanization⁶⁵. He explicates thus:

At first it is not their violence, it is ours, which turns back on itself and rends them; and the first action of these oppressed creatures is to bury deep down that hidden anger which their and our moralities condemn and which is how ever only the last refuge of their humanity ... If this suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves since they cannot face the real enemy ... They can only stop themselves from marching against the machine-guns by doing our work for us; of their own accord they will speed up the dehumanization that they reject.⁶⁶

In the light of this background, Fanon believes that tribal violence does not predate colonialism. He views both “tribal and social divisions as the conjuring of colonialism.”²¹ Violence, for him, emanates from colonialism which breeds and preserves tribal antagonism. Colonialism by its very structure is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces and separates them ... On the part of nationalist bourgeoisie or political leaders, they manage their aggressiveness by assimilating themselves into the colonial system to such a degree that their interests are bound up with the interests of the colonizers. In the words of Fanon: “The native intellectual has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world. He has used his aggressiveness to serve his own individual interests.”⁶⁷ Fanon explains that the nationalist bourgeoisie have no option but to conform to colonial model, having

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Fashina, O. (1989). Franz Fanon and the ethical justification of anti-colonial violence. *Social Theory and Practice* 15 (2): 179-212.

⁶⁷ Ibid

seen that the colonialist bourgeoisie have administrative apparatus in place to sanction and suppress dissenting and critical voices. The nationalist bourgeoisie are not part of the productive forces. Their duty is to ensure that colonial administration runs smoothly and effectively. They will seek some sort of compromise when the masses become increasingly restive, all in a bid to maintain the status quo and propagate the interests of the colonists as well as their own interests⁶⁸.

Fanon frowns upon reactionary attitudes of the nationalist bourgeoisie. He notes that they are complicit in the colonial domination and capitalist exploitation. For him, the nationalist political leaders allow themselves to be brainwashed and incorporated into the capitalists' and colonialists' desire for a peaceful settlement. They deny the violence and careless brutality structurally present in the colonial regime. They use anti-colonial struggle to acquire more power and serve their individual interests at the expense of the poor natives. Fanon argues that the nationalist bourgeoisie have taken for themselves the power and advantages that are heritage of the colonial era and have just replaced the colonist bourgeoisie. Having been assimilated into and aligned with the colonial system, they believe in the reformation agenda, rather than revolutionary violence. Although they are violent in their words before the common natives to keep the nationalist zeal alive, they are reformist in their attitudes. In other words, they speak a lot and in great words to their people without any action. They claim to be identifying with the plight of the poor natives, but they do not want the transformation of the colonial system⁶⁹. Fanon expresses the complicity of the nationalist bourgeoisie with the colonial regime and their betrayal of his people in this way:

The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophicopolitical dissertations on the

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid

themes of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: “one man, one vote.” The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity of a trial of armed strength, for the good reason that their objective is not the radical overthrowing of the system. Pacifists and legalists, they are in fact partisans of order, the new order – but to the colonialist bourgeoisie they put bluntly enough the demand which to them is the main one: “Give us more power.” On the specific question of violence, the elite are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes. When the nationalist political leaders say something, they make quite clear that they do not really *think* it.⁷⁰

This renewed aggression continues until violence against other natives changes direction. The aggression becomes unbearable to such an extent that the natives react to the colonizers’ violence with their own violence. At this time, colonial violence only serves to provoke the natives’ aggression against the settlers. Exploitative and oppressive colonial regime increases the consciousness that “between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force.”⁷¹ The colonized people now identify their real foes as the colonists and come to believe that only violence can free them. They thus channel their violence towards the annihilation of the unjust colonial system. Fanon thus explains: “yet in spite of the metamorphoses which the colonial regime imposes upon it in the way of tribal or regional quarrels, that violence makes its way forward, and the native identifies his enemy and recognizes all his misfortunes, throwing all the exacerbated might of his

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

hate and anger into this new channel.”⁷² However, the nationalist political leaders would not call for armed insurrection. Instead, they would opt for dialogue with the colonialist bourgeoisie in order to relax the tension and restore order. Fanon believes that all repressive measures and actions of the native elite cannot end colonial oppression. He sees any attempt by the natives to entrust their eventual freedom to negotiation between the native political elite and the colonizers as a false path. This is because, for him, the exploitative and oppressive rules will continue even if the colonial system is reformed so that the corrupt nationalist political elite rule the people directly under the dictates of the colonialist bourgeoisie.

In Fanon’s view, arbitrary violence is an intrinsic quality of colonial system and so colonial government is a living negation of its proclaimed values. Hence, he writes: “when I search for man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man and an avalanche of murders.”⁷³ Given that the colonizers deny the humanity of the colonized people, Fanon believes that it is a futile effort to persuade the colonizers to end colonial oppression for the sake of the humanity of the natives. For him, colonialism is an embodiment of injustice and so deserves to be destroyed by whatever means possible. The injustice of colonialism includes the suppression of people’s right to self-determination, economic and racial exploitation, and violation of other democratic rights. Violent change would correct the injustice. The end of colonial exploitation would inaugurate “the unconditional reign of justice.” Fanon therefore thinks that the colonized peoples could “create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth” through revolutionary violence⁷⁴.

Fanon’s Decolonization/Revolutionary Theory of Violence

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Fanon, Frantz. (1963). “On Violence.” *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 1-52.

⁷⁴ Ibid

Fanon advocates violent revolution within the context of anti-colonial struggle. He contends that the absolute necessity of violent revolution stems from the violent nature of colonial world. Colonialism “is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence.”⁷⁵ Violence is a necessary ingredient of liberation without which there is no genuine freedom. He sees this violent break with colonialism as true decolonization that can only guarantee authentic liberation. In the light of this, Fanon writes: “National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon.”⁷⁶ He explains that decolonization is a violent phenomenon because it is “the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantiation which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies.” Therefore, the Manichaeism inherent in the colonial system is preserved in the process of decolonization. This means that “the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown.”⁷⁷

Fanon shared the same view with Satre that the dialectic is the practical consciousness of an oppressed class struggling against its oppression.” This dialectic can only be resolved through “the dialectical reciprocity of antagonism.” As Fanon puts it: “The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the colonized balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity.” Decolonization, for him, is necessary violent because it seeks to right a situation that is created by violence in the colonial world. Just as colonization seeks to violently uproot the colonized people from their cultural placing and make them inhuman, so is

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

decolonization a veritable means of creating new persons, so that natives become human during the same process by which they free themselves. Fanon argues thus:

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men ... the "thing" which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.⁷⁸

In Fanon view, therefore, it is only through violence that man creates himself. Violence restores the humanity of the colonized man which has been eroded by colonial violence. He contends further that:

Irrepressible violence is neither sound nor fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself ... no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When this rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self. Far removed from this war, we consider it as a triumph of barbarism; but of its own volition it achieves, slowly but surely, the emancipation of the rebel, for bit by bit it destroys in him and around him the colonial gloom.⁷⁹

He insists that the only true liberation is the liberation of the self from the self, that is, the liberation from a desire to become something other than the true self. In this case, it is the liberation from a

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ibid

desire by the blacks to become the whites. Thus, violence within the context of anti-colonial struggle becomes the necessary means of bringing the colonized person from a situation of alienation to the discovery of true self. For Fanon, anti-colonial violence is justified when it is directed towards a reclaim of the humanity of persons to whom this has been denied. So, “in order to win genuine respect, dignity, the colonized must force the settler’s recognition through physical violence.” The colonized man reclaims his humanity by denying strenuously and completely all values that characterize the settlers, for the “Manicheism of the settler produces the Manicheism of the native.”⁸⁰

Again, Fanon claims that violence has a beneficial effect on the natives’ psyche. For him, it has cathartic element or cleansing force which purges the natives’ soul of ill psychological feelings accumulated as a result of the evil of colonialism which includes oppression, police brutality, racial discrimination and psychological abuses. In the words of Fanon: “At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his selfrespect.”⁸¹ The native man achieves psychological liberation and is rid of his inferiority complex when his oppressors are removed violently and the existing political and socio-economic structures are violently changed. Fanon notes, as stated before, that the colonial world is a white-dominated world. It is white to the extent that the colonized people internalize the racist standards of the colonizers and begin to fight against themselves. He now urges “black men to overcome their inferiority complexes by killing the white man within themselves.” But this is only possible through violence, for it is “the intuition of the colonized masses that their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force.” Since anti-colonial

⁸⁰ Zenon N. (2022). Fanon on the Arbitrariness of Using Violence: An Inevitable for Both Colonialism and Decolonization. *Journal of Black Studies*, 53(5), 464–484

⁸¹ Ibid

violence is a redirection against the “perpetrators of the violence of colonialism itself,” it will liberate the colonized people from inferiority complex and bring back “their lost self-respect, courage and their sense of self-worth.”⁸²

Fanon’s contention is that the settlers first flout the universalized norms of conduct by denying the natives equal right to human dignity and respect and relegating them to the state of inhuman. Thus, his concern is not about showing compliance with the universal norms, but to repel the oppressor through violence as a cathartic liberation of the soul. In this regard, he argues that “as far the native is concerned, morality is very concrete; it is to silence the settler’s defiance, to break his flaunting violence – in a word, to put him out of the picture. The well-known principle that all men are equal will be illustrated in the colonies from the moment that the native claims he is equal of the settler.” Fanon therefore believes that the right thing to do is to employ violence to free the natives from their dehumanizing experience and restore their human dignity, identity and self-worth⁸³.

Besides, Fanon thinks violence for freedom unifies the people on a national basis and builds solidarity among them. He explains that violent struggle would re-unite the native intellectuals with his people and the intellectuals would abandon individualist principles which the colonialist bourgeoisie have made them embrace and then imbibe their rich and cherished traditional values. He explicates thus:

The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully, the colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native’s mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native

⁸² Ibid

⁸³ Ibid

who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory ... such a colonized intellectual, dusted over by colonial culture, will in the same way discover the substance of village assemblies, the cohesion of people's committees, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of local meetings and groupments. Henceforward, the interests of one will be the interests of all. ...⁸⁴

He explains further the alleged sociological function of revolutionary violence by claiming that it binds the colonized people together and mobilizes them to pursue their common cause and collective destiny. In the words of Fanon:

The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upward in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. The groups recognize each other and the future nation is already indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people, that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction.⁸⁵

In Fanon's view, therefore, the armed struggle builds solidarity among the natives and introduces into their consciousness "the ideas of a common cause, of a national destiny and of collective history." For Fanon, when the masses are partakers of a violent struggle towards their national liberation, their confidence is built up and political consciousness is raised. They come to realise that their liberation is an outcome of their concerted efforts and not a one-man band. In this case, no one solely claims to be a liberator or has a special merit of national liberation. They now have a

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

strong sense of destiny and dare not place their future “in the hands of a living god.”⁸⁶ Thus, there is little or no room “for the rise and growth of the demagogues and the opportunists.”

Fanon insists that only revolutionary violence can liberate man’s consciousness and create a new man, for “the colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence.” He thinks that all attempts to elucidate African history and juxtaposes it with European history are only the corollary of a profound inferiority complex. For instance, he argues that an attempt to study African past and romanticize it through negritude movement cannot solve the African problems and so is futile. He acknowledges the negritude, which Senghor characterizes as “the awareness, defense and development of African cultural values,” for raising the consciousness of the blacks and affirming their cultural roots and values of civilization. However, Fanon agrees with Satre that negritude is an anti-white racism which merely negates white supremacy without effective strategy for black liberation. He expresses growing discontent with the idea of watching history unfold itself without any action. He asserts thus: “In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization.”⁸⁷ He states further in this regard:

I am not a prisoner of history ... the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which travel, I am endlessly creating myself ... I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Zeilig, L. (2016). Frantz Fanon: The militant philosopher of third world revolution. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

fact would change anything in the lives of the eight-year-old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe.⁸⁸

What Fanon is driving at is that consciousness cannot change reality. It must be backed up with a violent struggle to achieve freedom from colonial domination.

In a similar vein, Fanon follows Marx in maintaining that thought must be united with action. Like Marx, he insists that all that matters is not to know the world but change it. He writes thus: “But when one has taken cognizance of this situation, when one has understood it, one considers the job completed. How can one then be deaf for that voice rolling down the stages of history: ‘What matters is not to know the world but to change it.’ ”⁸⁹ So, Fanon’s advocacy of revolutionary violence in resistance to and defeat of oppression is in line with the Marxist revolutionary tradition. He notes that the nationalist bourgeoisie and the urban working class are reluctant to embark on a revolutionary violent against the system that benefits them enormously. They cannot perform this revolutionary role because they are “not only conditioned to operate in the colonial mode of production”⁹⁰ but have also “been subjected to colonial socialization” which makes them accept such order as natural. Hansen asserts that it is not surprising that “a group which owes its entire privileged existence to such a system will not play a prime role in its abolition.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

Therefore, Fanon assigns the revolutionary role to the peasantry and lumpenproletariat. Unlike the nationalist bourgeoisie and the urban working class, the peasantry are not integrated into the colonial system. They benefit nothing from colonial rule and are not corrupted by it. Fanon believes that the peasants are in touch with their culture and have not suffered from inferiority complex and cultural degradation. They are therefore potential revolutionaries who possess a great deal of brute force. Lumpen proletariat are also suitable for revolutionary violence. They consist predominantly of the unemployed and unemployable masses, a horde of starved men who have drifted from the countryside to the city but have not secured a place in the social system. They are willing to employ whatever means possible to achieve their ends. Fanon thinks that they have the proclivity to engage in an armed struggle against the colonial regime since they have no stake in the colonial system.

Fanon has demonstrated that the socio-economic conditions are at the root of the racial problem which engenders the feeling of inferiority complex. He notes that the prevalent racism in the colonial world is deeply rooted in social and economic conditions and so should not be regarded as a mental disturbance. As he puts it: "Racism belongs to the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development ... The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw must be abandoned."⁹² Again, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, he adds that though a psychological interpretation of the black problem is crucial, yet "the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily economic; subsequently, the internalization – or, better, epidermalization – of this inferiority."⁹³

⁹² Sartre, J. -P. ([1961] 2017). 'Preface'. In F. Fanon (Ed.), *The wretched of the earth* (pp. 43–62)

⁹³ *Ibid*

There is therefore need for restructuring of the existing socio-political systems in African nations which provoke a sense of alienation from the society. Fanon's concern is social freedom – the freedom of the individual in the state. For this freedom to be achieved, it is crucial that the “state not only be free from external control but also that political and social arrangements should be such as to enable man to express and maintain his freedom.”⁹⁴ It will be a “Pyrrhic victory if the liberation still leaves intact the broad macro structures of economic, political and material conditions that determine everyday existence.”⁹⁵ Economic exploitation and deprivation violate human dignity. Each individual human being has an intrinsic worth and dignity in virtue of being part of humanity. Social institutions and practices are justified when they promote human dignity. It requires concern and respect for rights equality and justice which are the ultimate preconditions for societal development. It is injustices, oppression and man's inhumanity to man that Fanon frowns upon and fights against.

We must say that though it is the dehumanizing circumstances that prompt Fanon to advocate a violent struggle for liberation, his claim that his call for violence is rooted in “a profound humanism characterized by the primordial concern for the human being and in all human beings, no matter their color and their condition” is untenable. Humanity is indivisible in the sense that no one can degrade or brutalize another without brutalizing himself. In other words, no one can inflict psychic damage on others without inflicting it on himself. This is because when people are dehumanized, their self-worth and dignity are destroyed. In so doing, both the oppressed and oppressor deprive themselves and the world of the benefits of their potential contributions to humanity. Fanon even admits that violence can cause more psychological damage to the psyche of both the colonized

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

people and the colonizers. His psychiatric case histories show that the violence engenders neurosis and distortion of personality.

Besides, Fanon's claim that violent decolonization will create new humanity, unify the people and build solidarity among them leaves much to be desired. Experience and studies have shown that harmony and friendship cannot be secured on the basis of violence, but rather through non-violent struggle which seeks to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth and justice. Fanon's emphasis on violence risks the reduction of action to reaction, that is, the determination of a solution by the nature of the problem it aims to solve. More often than not, the use of violent resistance is counterproductive and the end for which it is used is defeated. It is not true in reality that violence can be used to quench violence when erupted. "Overtime, the employment of violence has only succeeded in escalating violence."⁹⁶ To use violence against violence is to add to the vicious circle of violence, thereby reverting to the Hobbes' state of nature where life is brutish and short. Revolutionary violence does not appeal to humanity and so is undesirable.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned flaws, Fanon is calling African governments today to nip in the bud the growing racial and ethnic tension across Africa by addressing socio-economic alienation and political injustices which he identifies as the root causes. There is ravaging hunger in Africa and the masses are in dire need of a decent living. The primary duty of any responsible government is the security of lives and property as well as the promotion of people's welfare. Unfortunately, there is a gaping disconnect between African leaders and their masses. We appeal to the African governments to respond to this clarion call by restructuring socio-political systems, developing humans and infrastructure, alleviating poverty, deepening democracy and improving governance.

⁹⁶ Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study critically has critically analyzed the impact of Frantz Fanon on colonialism and the psychology of oppression. Specifically, the study examines how Fanon's theories illuminate the interplay between colonialism and psychological oppression, providing a profound analysis of the

colonial condition, the psychology of oppression, and the struggle for liberation, examine the significant impact of Movements and Thinkers Influenced by Fanon and also evaluate Frantz Fanon achievement in relation to decolonization.

Base on the analysis it was discovered that Frantz Fanon's theories offer a profound and multifaceted understanding of the intricate relationship between colonialism and psychological oppression. Frantz Fanon's work, spanning from his early psychiatric observations to his revolutionary political analyses, consistently highlights how colonial systems inflict deep psychological damage on both the colonized and, to a lesser extent, the colonizer. Fanon argued that colonialism is not merely a political or economic subjugation but a pervasive psychological assault that fundamentally alters identity and self-perception.

Fanon's analysis highlights several key aspects of the psychology of oppression under colonial conditions:

Alienation and Inferiority Complex: Colonialism forces the colonized to internalize the colonizer's values and perceptions, leading to a profound sense of alienation from their own culture and self. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explores how the colonized individual, particularly the Black man, is coerced into adopting a "white mask" by speaking the colonizer's language and aspiring to their cultural norms, thereby alienating themselves from their own identity. This process can lead to an inferiority complex, where the colonized view their own blackness or cultural heritage as something negative or phobogenic. Fanon argued that this self-hatred and feeling of inferiority are direct consequences of the oppressive colonial relations.

Psychotic Reactions and Trauma: Fanon documented numerous cases of mental illness among the colonized, which he termed psychotic reactions directly linked to the stress and violence of colonialism. These included symptoms like impotence, migraines, anorexia, and homicidal impulses, often stemming from experiences of torture, massacres, and the constant threat of violence. He also observed the psychological impact on children, who suffered from adjustment disorders, bedwetting, insomnia, and anxiety due to the war and the loss of their parents. Fanon's work demonstrated that the physical and psychic dislocation caused by colonial warfare cemented his conviction that mental health institutions in oppressive societies were places of violence rather than healing.

The Colonizer's Psychological Damage: Fanon's insights extended beyond the colonized, recognizing that colonialism also inflicts psychological damage on the colonizer. He presented cases of European police officers and soldiers who developed depression and anxiety from their involvement in torture and oppression, and even a police inspector who, after participating in colonial violence, began torturing his own family. This illustrated his argument that the practice of colonialism is psychologically damaging to both sides of the colonial relationship.

Violence as a Liberating Force: While often misinterpreted as an advocate for violence, Fanon viewed it as a necessary and unavoidable response to the inherent violence of the colonial system. He argued that colonialism is violence in its natural state and that appeals to reason are often futile against a system impervious to the humanity of the oppressed. For Fanon, revolutionary violence could serve as a disintoxicating force, allowing the colonized to reclaim their agency, overcome their internalized oppression, and reconstruct their identity. This act of resistance, whether peaceful or violent, was seen as crucial for the psychological liberation of the oppressed.

Psychiatry of Liberation: Fanon advocated for a "psychiatry of liberation," which recognized the socio-historical and cultural context of mental illness and aimed to restore integrity to the colonized individual's body and mind. He challenged traditional psychiatric practices that naturalized mental disorders and instead sought to empower patients by connecting their individual struggles to the broader social and political realities of oppression. His approach emphasized collective action and the radical transformation of social structures as the true path to psychological well-being, rather than simply adjusting individuals to an oppressive status quo. Fanon's work remains highly relevant today, particularly in understanding the enduring psychological impacts of coloniality and the importance of decolonial approaches to mental health

Fanon's insights into psychological oppression are primarily articulated through two key concepts: the colonization of the mind and the Manichean world of colonialism. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon meticulously dissects the "colonization of the mind," where the colonizer imposes their values, culture, and worldview, leading the colonized to internalize feelings of inferiority. This internalization manifests as a desperate attempt to emulate the colonizer, often through language, behavior, and even romantic relationships, in a futile effort to escape the imposed inferiority, ultimately resulting in profound alienation and self-hatred. Black individuals were subjected to constant devaluation and might strive to whiten themselves, a phenomenon he explored through personal anecdotes, such as a white child exclaiming fear upon seeing him, which inflicted lasting damage on his self-image. This process creates a unique embodied experience of oppression for Black people, where they feel alienated from their own bodies and perceive themselves as objects. This was contrasted with anti-Semitic racism, noting that for Jewish people, oppression is often

based on ideas about history and ancestry rather than visible physical traits, unlike the uniquely embodied experience of Black individuals.

Fanon contribute by providing a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the psychological and political dimensions of colonial oppression and the process of liberation. The *Wretched of the Earth* is widely considered a foundational text for decolonization studies, offering a searing critique of colonialism and a passionate defense of the necessity of armed struggle for liberation. Colonialism is a system of total violence that not only exploits resources but also systematically dehumanizes the colonized, leading to a profound sense of alienation and self-hatred according to Fanon. Furthermore, violence, for the colonized, is not merely a tactic but a cathartic and unifying force that restores dignity and agency. Fanon's insights into the psychological scars of colonialism and the challenges of building truly independent nations remain a crucial guide for understanding the complexities of decolonization and its enduring impact on the global landscape.

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