

Meditations on Frantz Fanon's

The Wretched of the Earth

**For NAC's and Other Activists Who Struggle
Against Racism and Neo-Colonialism (Capitalism)
and for the 'Setting Afoot' of New People
(Socialist/Communist Humanism)**

Owusu Yaki Yakubu

**Meditations on Frantz Fanon's
The Wretched of the Earth****Part One: By Way of Introduction**

Comrads:

Today, i started the fifth draft of this piece. My original intent had been to shape it for print, and for distribution among a wide (and rather academic) audience. However, i've abandoned that aim, for two reasons. First, because i'm anxious to complete this project, and move on to others -- i've been working on this for much too long, putting it to the side several times in order to address other concerns. Second, i want to return to a style of writing similar to that used to produce Book One of the Journal, i.e., when i wasn't concerned about "style" or about meeting the assumed expectations of an (academic) audience. i hope that these "Meditations" will prove useful to you. They give me an opportunity to work out some ideas and to put some of what's in my head onto paper--as seeds, hopefully, for later development, and which may help to clear the way. i strongly suggest that none of you be content with reading these reflections. You should study and reflect upon your own copy of Wretched, the sources that i list, and any other related materials.

A Note on Citation

Because there are several editions of Wretched in print (i'm using the Grove Press, First Evergreen Edition, 1966), i'm not using the standard form of citation, because something that i'd cite as being on page ten of my copy, may be on page eight or fifteen of yours. Therefore, i've devised a chapter-and paragraph system. i've designated the chapters as follows:

- Preface = "P"
- Concerning Violence = "1"
- Violence in the International Context = "1A"
- Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness = "2"
- The Pitfalls of National Consciousness = "3"
- On National Culture = "4"
- The Reciprocal Bases of National Culture and the Fight for Freedom = "4A"
- Colonial War and Mental Disorders = "5"
- Conclusion = "C"

i've also numbered each paragraph, separately for each chapter, so that (P.1) cites the first paragraph of the Preface; (2.5) cites the fifth paragraph of the second chapter; (4A.2) cites the second paragraph of Reciprocal Bases....; and (C.3) cites the third paragraph of the Conclusion.

1. Background on How and Why the Project Was Begun

1A. The project was initially inspired by the reading of a paper by Ron Karenga, in which he cited Fanon and a number of others (including Cabral, DuBois, Lenin and Gramsci), in support of his contention that petty-bourgeois intellectuals (or, the petty-bourgeois class as a whole--at some points he lumps these together), play "the decisive role in the theoretical and practical project of liberation." (1) (my emphasis) i believed that Karenga had distorted Fanon (and others) on this question. i happened to have a copy of Wretched, and i went to it to first check the lines that Karenga had quoted or paraphrased, and then to search the entire book for all references to the petty-bourgeoisie, and to intellectuals.

During this time, i mentioned to Amilcar that i was checking out Wretched, and that i had gained new insight into some of the issues that now confront us. He suggested that i write something that would help "unravel the book's complexity," as he had recently encountered young activists who'd picked up Wretched only to put it down before completing it, because they'd found it "too hard to read."

i didn't feel up to the task, nor did i want to put other projects to the side in order to give time to this. However, while not fully committed to writing on Wretched, i did begin to study it more meticulously, primarily for my own benefit, but also knowing that such study would be necessary should i decide to do a "breakdown" of sorts, for an audience of young activists, and attempt to emphasize the relevancy of the book's subject matter to our struggle, i.e., to strongly suggest that the book is relevant to contemporary issues, and that Fanon is as worthy of attention (if not more so) than most of the contemporary "public intellectuals" or "activist-scholars" feigning a radical or revolutionary stance these days.

As time passed, i began to feel as though i was experiencing something of a revelation, all the more so because i wasn't unfamiliar with the book. i'd read it for the first time in 1967 or 1968, and can't recount the number of times that i've opened its pages to check a reference or to read a few pages as a way of obtaining inspiration or orientation. i became convinced that i should write "something" -- if only for myself and my comrades.

1B. If you complete the reading of a (non-fiction) book today, you'll usually feel as though you know what it's about, that you've "got it" and don't have to return to it. However, if you pick up that book a month from now, or a year from now, you're bound to be surprised when it appears that you're reading lines that weren't there originally. You'll gain new insight into certain concepts that you thought you'd fully understood; you'll gain an understanding of propositions that had previously shot past you. What's happened between the first reading and the second? You've "grown"--had more experience, acquired more knowledge, become able to make more connections, grasp nuances that previously slipped through unnoticed or unappreciated.

It took me several readings before i was able to make out the outlines of the "forest" of Wretched. It was at this point that i could begin to distinguish sections within each chapter, and i then began to number the paragraphs of each chapter--and to read and meditate upon one paragraph at a time, then one section at a time. Sometimes i'd read through three or four paragraphs, or two or three sections, and then start over again. (For example, i divided "Concerning Violence" into eight (8) sections: paragraphs 1-6; 7-15; 16-30; 31-44; 45-66; 67-76; 77-87; and 88-99.)

Now, i know that some people will resist the adoption of a similar method, but i strongly suggest that anyone desiring to "fully" understand this book adopt a similar

process. i've come across several references to Wretched made by academics (e.g. Cornel West), and it seems to me that they don't understand the book, and maybe a re-read would help them -- assuming, of course, that they really want to be helped, since so many of them are representative of the "wily intellectuals" that Fanon scorches. (1.24)

The proposed process is also time consuming, and some folks will feel that they could be reading other, more contemporary books, and not "wasting time" with this one. i'm reminded of a section of Wretched that somewhat applies here. (3.85) It's not about being "fast" or reading everything that's published, or of reading whoever seems to be most popular at the moment. Don't let the market dictate your taste. Time taken to fully grasp this book will be made up in the better practice and the development of consciousness that result from adopting this method. Time taken to read and re-read Wretched will enable you to: 1) discern the b.s. in some of the other stuff that you read; 2) make more relevant connections to issues and concepts that you confront on a daily basis.

1C. The cover of my edition of Wretched says that it's Fanon's "study of the problems of racism and colonialism in the world today." Colonialism confronts us today, in a form more unique than is normally the case (i.e., forms always differ from one country to another), shaping the context for OUR engagement with: racialized capitalist exploitation; internal class struggles; the nature and role of armed politics; relations between the people and the organizations that claim to represent them; Pan-Afrikanism/internationalism; the relations between our people and their allies in the imperialist state; the strengths and weaknesses in the theory and practice of nationalism -- all this, and more, is spoken to by Fanon in Wretched, and there are nuances and connections to our situation that We can't afford to ignore.

While reading Wretched it's of course necessary to base ourselves on the concrete reality out of which it came and primarily speaks to. However, We must also be able to use our understanding of the laws of contradiction, i.e., be able to see the general in the particular (and, the particular in the general), and to recognize the extent to which OUR reality is being described and critiqued; the extent to which Fanon points the way forward for US.

It helps to know, going in, that Fanon speaks in several "voices," so to speak. He uses the "voice" of the "native" or "negro" who, during the colonial period (before the "fighting" starts), avoids confrontation with colonialism and directs all violent impulses inwardly-- while being envious of the colonialist's position. He speaks in the "voice" of the ex-"native" or ex-"negro" who, having decided to re-direct violence toward the colonialist, is not yet fully conscious, and thus suffers set-backs and allows the betrayals of the bourgeois forces that claim to speak for and to lead the struggle. And, he speaks in the "voice" of the person who's overthrown colonialism, only to now confront neo-colonialism, realizing that "national independence" wasn't the end of the struggle, and that the fully new people will develop only with the construction of the fully new social order.

Fanon is carrying us through a process of "decolonization" -- through the stages of struggle for national independence and social revolution. However, he doesn't take us through a "linear progression" as (western) convention may have it. At one point he'll be talking about conditions and consciousness characteristic of the "period of colonization" or the "colonial period" -- this is the "first voice" heard during the "peaceful" stage between colonial conquest and the beginning of the struggle to decolonize. He'll then move to some reference or discussion of the "decolonization" period--that between the beginning of the struggle and the winning of independence, and he may not always leave easily

recognizable signs of transition. In the third chapter, he tends to move from the "decolonization" stage to the "post-independence" or neo-colonial stage--and then back again. Therefore, one must be able to distinguish the terms used to describe the several stages, because an inability to do so or a failure to do so can lead to confusion and a feeling that the book is "too complex".

Fanon treats the major themes in the same way, e.g., "violence" is not left to the first chapter, but actually runs from cover to cover; "spontaneity" (of "violence") is taken up initially in the first chapter; the "racism" and/or Manichean ideologies of both the colonizer and the colonized are treated, too, practically from cover to cover. How could these themes not be so treated, since We're dealing with the PROCESS and the stages in the evolution of peoples' consciousness, social revolution, and social development?

Maybe i should suggest that the chapters be read in the following order:

- First, read the Preface.
- Then, read Chs. 1, 2, and 5, as parts of a whole.
- Then, read Chs. 3, 4, and 4A, also as parts of a whole.
- Then, read 1A--which is not so much about "violence" as it is about reparations.
- Then, read the Conclusion.

Chapter One introduces the themes of "colonial violence" and "revolutionary violence," i.e., that the violence of colonialism isn't merely physical or military, and that the violence of the oppressed peoples, once re-directed, must also take other than physical or armed forms. Ch. 2 is also on the theme of colonial and revolutionary violence, but focuses on the "spontaneity" of the initial forms of the people's violence--a spontaneity essentially characterized by its lack of coherence and consciousness and foresight. Read Ch. 5 with Chs. 1 and 2 because it deals with violence and the need for the liberatory process to 'concern itself with all sectors of the personality'. (5.182) Ch. 3 is about class struggle and what could be called a form of "critical race theory". Ch. 4 and 4A deal with the formation of new (national) identity, with a focus on the need to deconstruct "blackness" or "niggerhood". Ch. 1A is, as i said above, on the subject of reparations. The Conclusion sums it all up.

1D. i'm not sure that anything i say here will actually "unravel the complexity" of Wretched for anyone, but i am sure that if one sincerely wishes to understand what's being said by Fanon in the book, then one must read it, cover to cover, at least twice.

Don't, for example, read only the first chapter and then think that you know Fanon's position on "violence"; don't read the eleventh paragraph of the first chapter, without reading the last four paragraphs of the second chapter (or, the relevant lines in the third

chapter), and think that you understand Fanon's position on "race" or "racism". An incomplete reading means superficial understanding and a distortion of your own development.

Moreover, i wouldn't suggest that one rely solely upon a book or paper by any author claiming to "explain" Fanon or Wretched, from any perspective, on any theme. Such material will probably prove useful, in one way or another, but it's no substitute for the real thing.

Shortly after our discussion, Amilcar sent me a copy of Fanon for Beginners, which has a chapter devoted to Wretched. (2) i found the book and the chapter in question to be informative. However, i also found the author to have certain biases which lent themselves toward an inaccurate appraisal of Fanon, and of Wretched.

Whatever one gets from an "easy read" (e.g., Fanon for Beginners), will be less rewarding than what will result from a personal venture through the "difficult" process of going to the source and struggling with whatever obstacles one may encounter. You'll come away with self-confidence, and an awareness appreciated all the more because it was achieved as part of a self-development undergone by mastering your fears, completing an intellectual process that you at first thought too difficult to attempt. Such a process of self-transformation and intellectual development is the central theme of Wretched, stated explicitly or implicitly on nearly every page (e.g., 3.85-96).

Read Wretched (for) yourself. Study it. Take as much time as you think necessary. Don't be put off by any apprehensions or assumed "complexity," wanting everything to come to you easy and fast. You are equal to the task, and you'll get better as you go along. Dare to struggle--with your self. Dare to learn--and to apply what you learn to the transformation of your world.

2. Speaking to the Subtitle

2A. This piece is subtitled: "For NAC's and Other Activists Who Struggle Against Racism and Neo-Colonialism (Capitalism) and for the 'Setting Afoot' of New People (Socialist/Communist Humanism)."

i've come to think of these "Meditations" as an exercise in the process of creating a New Afrikan Communist "school of thought," developing, in part, through ideological struggle, theoretical development, the critique of past and present institutions, concepts, practices, etc.

Stretch yourself, and consider: Can We regard as an "historical necessity" that We are here today, calling ourselves "New Afrikan Communists," engaged, collectively, in the development of a shared world-view, in struggle for a socialist society? Are We not carrying on a tradition that, in one context, goes back thousands of years, to "communalism" or "primitive communism," and, in another context, ("modern") goes back, on these shores, at least to Peter H. Clark and the 1820s? Can We say that We've already begun to share the "school" as manifested by our practice--that the words We've produced, and the lines and ideas We've tested over the years, already lend themselves toward shaping a distinct body of thought? Can We pull from the Journals, from Crossroad, from the New Afrikan Community Bulletin, and from The Grassroots -- from anything written by any of us--and say that We have examples of "New Afrikan communist thought"?

i'm not being purely rhetorical here. i'm suggesting that We should get more serious about who We are and what We should be doing. i'm suggesting that affirmative answers

can be given to the above, but We also have to work at it more consciously and systematically.

2B. Why call it "New Afrikan" communism, and not plain old "communism"? For much the same reason as We continue to say "Russian Communism" or "Chinese communism"; because "plain old communism" only exists as an ideal. There's theory, and there's practice...practice engaged on the base of the concrete conditions of one's own social situation. The actual construction of a communist society within any particular nation can only result in a form unique to that nation, no matter any similarities to the theory of communism held by other(s) nations.

Angolan, Russian, Algerian, Chinese, French, Vietnamese, Cuban, Korean, Tanzanian -- these are nationalities. Our nationality is New Afrikan. We don't refer to ourselves as "black" because We don't base our nationality (nor our politics) on "race" or color or a biological element of our being. Social factors are the primary determinants of our national identity (and our politics).

Why not call ourselves "African-American" or "American" communists? For much the same reason that folks still talk about a "black America" and a "white America" -- We are oppressed and exploited as a distinct people, and the particular development and present reality of "America" as a settler-imperialist state prevents any such identification. "Race" has been used to help realize and perpetuate the material and sociological factors that make us a distinct people. "America" (i.e., the United States) is an empire with a distinct nationality and world-view. So long as "America" means what it means, to people here and throughout the world and so long as We're oppressed as a distinct people, it's hard for me to see us ever calling ourselves "Americans" of any political persuasion.

Why call it New Afrikan "communism" and not, say, "Marxism" or "Marxist Leninism"? Well, on one hand, because Marx wasn't a "Marxist," and Lenin wasn't a "Leninist"; because this kind of reductionism is part of the problem We face while sorting out what's relevant from the many other "schools," and trying to find our own way. Because "The struggle against narrow interpretations of Marxism, against West-centered reductionism, is part of the struggle for social and national liberation, of the struggle against ideological imperialism." (3)

We look back as far and as accurately as We can, into the social thought and practice of people on the planet, and We say that We can see an "original" socio-economic formation that We call "primitive communism" or "communalism": there was collective use of means and instruments of social production, prior to the development of huge surpluses, commodities and their exchange (value), and division of labor based on the exploitation of one group of people by another group of people; no concept of "ownership" or "private property" as We now know it; group interests were valued over individual ones, even while the individual was respected as an end ~n her or himself -- yet, always within the context of collective work and responsibility, for no individual survived alone. The Bambara have a saying: "who am i without the others: In coming to life i was in their hands, and in leaving it i will be in their hands." We outline the primary characteristics of that type of formation--those kinds of social relations--and, together with a critique of the way We now live, We shape a vision of "modern communalism"--only these days We call it "communism."

Marx called it "scientific communism" or "scientific socialism," and he made particular contributions to that body of thought. However, We must remember that neither Marx nor anyone else singlehandedly "created" what We now regard as the theory of

communism. From the communalism of the past, unto today, untold numbers of individuals and peoples have made and are making contributions to that body of thought, as they practice/struggle(d) to approximate the ideal in their actual social situations. (Nor can We overlook the roots of the philosophical base, i.e., dialectics, and a materialist world-view. That is, for example, as New Afrikan communists, when We begin to write our texts, We'll look to Egypt and other places along the south-eastern coast of Afrika as the source of understandings of the relation between thinking and being, from a materialist standpoint. If Marx, et al claim to rest on the Greeks, then it must be understood that the Greeks rested upon the Egyptians. The fact is, the Greeks were unable to reconcile, to absorb or fully understand the system that they were "given", e.g., they were faced with a system that talked about "four elements" as the source (earth, air, fire, water), and Thales, for example, could only deal with water, and Democritus, as another example, could only deal with air. This disjointed system was, say, passed down to Hegel--it was thus "upside down" and when Marx made the switch on Hegel, he simply tried to right the distorted world-view of the Afrikans.)

2C. The struggle against "racism" is, in the spirit of Fanon, one in which We struggle to become "anti-racist" in uncommon ways, in both our thought and our practice. It's also an attempt to approximate the communist ideal, transcending the boundaries of racialized discourse and practice that were erected by the oppressive apparatus, and which serve to reproduce, reinforce, and sustain it.

Because "race" and "racism" (like class and communism) will be discussed below, all i wanna say here is: No matter how We see the relation between "racism" and capitalism (e.g., that they arose simultaneously, or that one preceded the other), i think they should always be mentioned together. That is, i believe it's counter-productive to ever talk about "racism" without immediately and thoroughly linking it to capitalism, so that no one can be unmindful of the need to struggle against capitalism if they claim to be "anti-racist" or "against racism."

"Racism" is used to justify and facilitate the exploitation of peoples, and it's based on the false belief that humanity is divided into a plurality of "races" that stand in relation to each other as "inferior" or "superior" based on physical and/or cultural differences. There are no "races" -- only people(s) and groups of people(s), united and distinguished by common history (social development), habits, interests, etc. -- sometimes We call all of this "nationality" or ideology.

To be "anti-racist" is, first of all, not to hold the false belief in an alleged plurality of "races"; to be "against racism" is to combat all beliefs and practices that facilitate the exploitation of peoples, particularly when such exploitation is supported by the social construction of "race." Any attempt to destroy "racism" without an explicit link to the struggle against capitalism ultimately serves only to reinforce "racist" ideology and to shield capitalism from attack. On the other hand, an attempt to combat capitalism without an explicit link to anti-racist discourse and struggle allows capitalism to use the belief in "race" held by oppressed peoples, and appeal to the "racism" of citizens of the oppressive state, thus undermining all revolutionary initiative.

This combat also requires that We begin to de-link ourselves from the use of language that reinforces and reproduces racial ideology, e.g., the terms "white" and "black" in reference to the identity of people. This will be a difficult process, because: 1) the capitalist system depends upon continued use of such language, and its ideological apparatus is designed to oppose and undermine all attempts to de-link; 2) peoples

oppressed through means of racial ideology have come to accept these terms as legitimate and as their own--even as they tend to acknowledge the constructedness of "race" and the terms used to make and perpetuate its "reality" (its reification):

References to the realness of race are the means through which race as a reality is constructed.

Abby Ferber

...[W]e always agree that "race" is invented, but are then required to defer to its embeddedness in the world.

Paul Gilroy

Some of the seeds for my present perspective were given to me by Ngugi wa Thiongo, in an article in which he discussed the thought and practice of writers under colonialism, who,

...did not always adequately evaluate the real enemy...Imperialism was far too easily seen in terms of the skin pigmentation of the colonizer.

Labor was not just labor but black labor; capital was not just capital but white owned capital. Exploitation and its necessary consequence, oppression, were black. The vocabulary by which the conflict between colonial labor and imperialist capital was perceived and ideologically fought out consisted of white and black images sometimes freely interchangeable with the terms Europe and Africa.

The sentence or the phrase was "...when the white man came to Africa..." and not "...when the imperialist or the colonialist came to Africa..."; or, "...one day these whites will go..." and not "...one day imperialism or these imperialists will go..."! Except in a few cases, what was being celebrated in the writing was the departure of the white man, with the implied hope that the incoming black man -- by virtue of his blackness -- would right the wrongs and heal the wounds of centuries of slavery and colonialism.

As a result of this reductionism to the polarities of color and race, the struggle of African people against European colonialism was seen in terms of a conflict of values between the African and European ways of perceiving and reacting to reality. But which African values? Which white values? The values of the European proletariat and the African proletariat? Of the European imperialist bourgeoisie and the collaborationist African petty-bourgeoisie? The values of the African peasant and those of a European peasant?

An undifferentiated uniformity of European or white values was posited against an equally undifferentiated uniformity of African or black values. In short, the writer and the literature

he/she produced did not often take and hence treat imperialism as an integrated economic, political and cultural system whose negation had also to be an integrated economic, political and cultural system of its opposite: national independence, democracy, and socialism.... (4)

Now, check this: Even as Thiongo says all this, he himself defers to the embeddedness of "race" and its language, as he critiques the "reductionism to the polarities of race and color." More from habit, and failure to follow through on his own logic, Thiongo (and so many others these days) continues to use "white" when he means "European" or "British" or "colonialism" or "capitalism"...he continues to use "black" when he means "African" or "Kenyan"....

2D. The "setting afoot of new people" is taken from Fanon. The last line in the book is: "For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man." Of course, We read and say "new people," but the line captures, for me, what the book is really about -- what the struggle for decolonization or for national independence...what the struggle for socialism is about.

To "turn over a new leaf" can mean, in this instance, the creation of a new set of social relations--socialist social relations. On the basis of these relations We seek the "attainment of so high a level of consciousness in all members of society that the norms of law and morality merge into a single code of conduct" for all members of the society. (5)

The phrase "new people" thus refers to the "immediate" (new) identity and social reality of the people as they struggle, and upon reaching a stage of independence and revolutionary seizure of power. It also refers to the on-going struggle and development of social relations that carry us toward that ideal code of social conduct, and economic arrangement.

Check this:

Decolonization...influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally....It brings a natural rhythm into existence introduced by new [people], and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new [people]...the "thing" which has been colonized becomes [human] during the same process by which it frees-itself. (1.3)

i think it's important to keep this concept of the "new people" in mind as We think and move all through each day, especially as it relates to the objectives of the struggle--objectives to be kept in mind no matter what the particular issue one deals with, because all issues are important, all are "revolutionary" and all are related to our need to help "modify individuals". Simply put: The objective of the struggle is to "modify" the people....

2E. "Humanism" is mentioned several times by Fanon in the book and, as i pointed to earlier, the book is about the struggle for a revolutionary, socialist, humanism, e.g.,:

The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former value and shapes; this struggle which aims at a

fundamentally different set of relations between [people] cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism, but also the disappearance of the colonized [people].

This new humanity cannot do otherwise than define a new humanism, both for itself and for others. It is prefigured in the objectives and methods of the conflict. A struggle which mobilizes all classes of the people and which expresses their aims and their impatience, which is not afraid to count almost exclusively on the people's support, will of necessity triumph.... (4A.19-20)

The humanism that We seek--a humanism that truly places its emphasis upon the social and political needs of the whole of the people--is the opposite of what passes as humanism under the bourgeois order. The bourgeois order claims to value the dignity and inherent worth of people, but its ideals of private property, individualism, and exploitation unmask the true concerns of capitalism's inhumane essence.

The revolutionary, socialist humanism that We seek has to be based on the collective/social ownership of the major means of production, the end of exploitation and all forms of oppression, because only on this basis can all people be allowed the conditions to fully develop as individuals, and to realize the ideals of humanism.

As We develop our new concept and practice of humanism, We'll need to keep the struggle against patriarchy and all forms of gender oppression also up front. How can We claim to seek to create a social environment that will allow the full and free development of each person, and not pull out all pillars of oppressive social relations?

3. A Few Words on the Preface to Wretched

You may be tempted, as i was, to skip the reading of the Preface, thinking it a poor substitute for the words of Fanon. Or, you may think it unnecessary to read what appears as one European's address to other Europeans, on purely European concerns. In either case, you'd be mistaken.

Sartre "says beforehand" essentially what Fanon says on most of the major themes of the book. i only take issue with one assertion made by Sartre, as you'll see below. Otherwise, the Preface is as good a place as any to begin one's study of, and meditation upon, Wretched.

3A. The struggle(s) against "racism" and colonialism (capitalism) involve struggle between classes (in both the objective and subjective senses of the term, i.e., as groups whose position is narrowly defined in economic terms, and as groups distinguished by their "stands"--their consciousness and their political and social practice). Sartre opens on the theme of class (struggle), i.e., the "manufacture" of a "native elite"--"a bourgeoisie, sham from beginning to end," which serves as intermediary between the people and colonialism, and is branded with "the principles of western culture." (P.1)

The contemporary decolonization process (our own, in particular), involves struggle between the class forces within colonized society, and is of central importance in the fight

for liberation and social revolution. To paraphrase both Sartre and Fanon: In order to effectively engage and overcome the settler imperialist state, We must fight among ourselves--the two struggles forming parts of a whole, from beginning to end.

Some of the new concepts that We must work out involve "class"--to interpret or reinterpret the concept and break it free of definitions grounded in dogma, "west-centeredness," or the biases of other "schools of thought" and political tendencies. Our emphasis regarding the concept has to shift from the purely objective (i.e., relation to means of production, the size or source of income, etc.--all rather economic), and begin to include the subjective criteria (i.e., the recognition of common interests and a common opponent; common organization to pursue those interests and defeat that opponent; a common vision of what We want the new society to look like; a common language--the medium for the new consciousness, etc.).

We also need to work out new concepts in relation to the major forms of class struggle, i.e., ideological, political, socio-cultural, as well as economic, and begin the efforts (theoretical and practical) to ground the new forms in a mass base, a "proletarian"/revolutionary/socialist line and class stand. I'd think that, overall, the most important form of mass-based class struggle would be ideo-theoretical--to promote the intellectual development of the majority of the people; to guide practice in all fields. It never hurts to raise these points, at every appropriate opportunity: The "anti-intellectualism" in the U.S. and the rest of the West (or, wherever) is about having the people hooked on a "what to think" program, rather than a "how to think!" program. Everyone is or can/should be "intellectual," because We all have mental capacity and a need to develop and use it in the "collective mastery" of our society.

Fanon repeatedly points to the need for the people--not just the "intellectuals"--to be enlightened, to develop political and social consciousness; to accept responsibility for the entire social and political process. How can this be done if people don't think, question, develop their critical capacity, study the process of social development and know that they can change social reality?

And, as touched already, it's not just the "West," as We generally think of it, but "Marxism" in its predominant forms, which emphasizes economic elements (as does the bourgeois order itself) at the expense of ideological ones, superstructural ones. Thus, We overlook the importance of ideological struggle, the role of ideology (ideas) in the maintenance of capitalism--and in the struggle to overthrow it. If people are to struggle for a particular vision, they must make conscious decisions to do so...informed decisions.

When Sartre uses the term "manufacture" with respect to the colonized elite, he doesn't mean that no class structure existed in African societies prior to European colonization. Similarly, when he refers to the lack of homogeneity in the colonized world as being "born of colonial history" (P.6), that, too, needs clarification, because one would assume that any or all social, political, or economic divisions (i.e., class divisions and lack of "unity") in oppressed societies today are solely the result of imperialist oppression, and that's not the reality--even though some "elite" forces within oppressed societies find it in their interests to promote such a false image. Here's how Kwame Nkrumah attempted to correct the false image of "classless African societies":

Today, the phrase "African socialism" seems to espouse the view that the traditional African society was a classless society imbued with the spirit of humanism and to express a nostalgia for that spirit. Such a conception of socialism makes a fetish of the communal African society. But an idyllic, African classless society (in which there were no rich and no poor) enjoying a drugged serenity is certainly a facile simplification; there is no historical or even anthropological evidence for any such a society. I am afraid the realities of African society were somewhat more sordid.

All available evidence from the history of Africa, up to the eve of the European colonization, shows that African society was neither classless nor devoid of a social hierarchy. Feudalism existed in some parts of Africa before colonization; and feudalism involves a deep and exploitative social stratification, founded on the ownership of land. It must also be noted that slavery existed in Africa before European colonization, although the earlier European contact gave slavery in Africa some of its most vicious characteristics. The truth remains, however, that before colonization, which became widespread in Africa only in the nineteenth century, Africans were prepared to sell, often for no more than thirty pieces of silver, fellow tribesmen and even members of the same "extended" family and clan. Colonialism deserves to be blamed for many evils in Africa, but surely it was not preceded by an African Golden Age or paradise. A return to the precolonial African society is evidently not worthy of the ingenuity and efforts of our people.

All this notwithstanding, one would still argue that the basic organization of many African societies in different periods of history manifested a certain communalism, and that the philosophy and humanist purpose behind that organization are worthy of recapture. A community in which each saw his well-being in the welfare of the group certainly was praiseworthy, even if the manner in which the well-being of the group was pursued makes no contribution to our purposes. Thus, what socialist thought in Africa must recapture is not the structure of the "traditional African society," but its spirit, for the spirit of communalism is crystallized in its humanism and in its reconciliation of individual advancement with group welfare....
(6)

Pre-colonial African societies had their own "elites," their own classes and class struggles--imperialism merely arrested the independent development of these social formations, and stamped them with "the principles of western culture." Greed, exploitation, individualism, patriarchy--these weren't peculiar to the West, and they were among the indigenous traits looked for by colonizing agents as they sought out "promising

adolescents" to join the first generation of "go betweens"--the very first "go betweens" were adults members of the colonized societies, whose pre-existing class consciousness and interests led them to serve the interests of imperialism, which found pre-existing African class structures and used them to serve its purposes. (P.1)

3B. Let's give some attention to the meaning of the "creation" of "native" elites--of course, not unrelated to colonialism's creation of the "native" (and, keeping in mind that Fanon makes an effort to point out that both the "native" and the settler, as "species," are creations of colonialism).

As Sartre describes the evolution of succeeding generations of the "elite" (also succeeding generations of "natives" or the changing structure of the colonized society under the impact of colonialism), he takes us from discussion of those who speak only when ordered, through to the fourth generation, represented by Fanon: these are "ex-natives" (P.4,5), who begin to bend the language of the colonizer to the new requirements of the colonized people.

What is an "ex-native"? Essentially, the same as an ex-"colored," an ex-"negro" or an ex-"black" -- even an ex-"African American." Fanon gives the key when he points out that: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person, and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: 'In reality, who am I?'" (5.6)

The "native" and the "negro," the "black" and the "African American" -- these are persons who are struggling for a new identity, which can only result when they attain -- or, regain -- freedom as a people. They are persons who have been denied independent development and the unfettered expression of their own ideologies. They haven't yet accepted the responsibility to develop a self-awareness, because they can't or won't de-link from the definition of "humanity" established by their oppressor -- an oppressor constantly telling them that they aren't human.

Lets pick up Fanon:

The defensive attitudes created by this violent bringing together of the colonized [people] and the colonial system form themselves into a structure which then reveals the colonized personality. This "sensitivity" is easily understood if we simply study and are alive to the number and depth of the injuries inflicted upon a native during a single day spent amidst the colonial regime. It must in any case be remembered that a colonized people is not only simply a dominated people. Under the German occupation the French remained men [i.e., people, human, and French]; under the French occupation, the Germans remained men. In Algeria there is not simply the domination but the decision to the letter not to occupy anything more than the sum total of the land. The Algerians, the veiled women, the palm-trees and the camels make up the landscape, the natural background to the human presence of the French.

Hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes, natives and fever, and colonization is a success when all this indocile

nature has been finally tamed. Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps, and a native population which is nonexistent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing. (5.7-8) (my emphasis)

Reflect: The movie Shaka Zulu -- the British "scouting party" is swept ashore by the storm. As they gather themselves on the beach, they're approached by a regiment of Zulu soldiers. Because he speaks the language of the Zulu, one of the party is taken to Shaka. In the next scene, Shaka asks him: "Of what tribe are you?," and the man answers, "Dutch."

When We cut to it, Shaka's question was about what We now call "nationality." Shaka asked the man, "of what people are you?" And, Fanon has just told us--what? That under German occupation, the French remained French; that under French occupation, the Germans remained German; that the Algerians made up part of the "Landscape" to the "human" presence of French colonialism.

We'll get deeper into this below, but the point to be made here is that the problem arises when the colonized people "forget" who they are--"forget" that they are "human"--and succumb to the ideology of the colonizer which claims that only the settlers are "human". This results in the colonized people believing that they have to "prove their humanity" to the colonizer--but the standards are those of the colonizer, not those of the colonized. The colonized people simply fail to define--fail to continue to define--themselves...for themselves.

The "native," the "negro," the "colored," the "black," and the "African-American," have no identity apart from that given them by the colonizer -that is, not unless they RESIST colonialism, which entails: 1) their maintenance of an identity that is separate and distinct from that of the colonizer, and from that given them by the colonizer; 2) they begin to develop a NEW identity, through the process of "decolonization" -- though having remained separate and distinct, colonized people aren't who they were prior to colonization, and they can't return to the past. Colonization has arrested their independent development, distorted who they are, and now they must become (a) NEW people during the process by which they regain their independence.

Now, the population native to the land under colonial domination is "nonexistent politically and economically." What exactly does that mean? In essence, it means that they aren't sovereign (which is why Fanon uses the phrase 'the restoration of nationhood to the people'). It doesn't mean, in a strict sense, that they aren't "involved" in politics or that they aren't "involved" in an economic system. It means that the political and economic processes that they participate in are not of their own design, not under their control, and don't serve their interests.

This point is particularly relevant to us, and to neo-colonial situations generally, e.g., having a job and money and "being part of the American economy" doesn't mean that you're not colonized! Being able to vote in the American political process don't mean that you're not colonized! It all simply means that you've been tricked, and that you're still avoiding reality and confrontation with capitalism in its post-neocolonial form.

Here's another key point: It's not like i'm saying anything "new" here. DuBois was talking about this (the "double consciousness" and the need to make the choice between being a "negro" and being an "American"); Ralph Ellison talked about it in Invisible Man (when the guy was asking "WHO AM I?")

A "native" -- or rather, an ex-"native" -- is one who is "constantly in the making" (P.6; 1.22; 1.45 and 1.46) and who is cured of the "mental pathology which is the direct product

of oppression" (5.9), and who claims an identity apart from that of the colonizer and the colonial system, and struggles to become a new person and to build a new society.

3C. Another important theme touched by Sartre in the Preface is that on the successive generations of "elites" (each generation also reflecting phases of colonial violence and the development of social/class structure and struggle, characterizing the fundamental contradiction, its aspects and forms), their roles and interests...the relations between the "elites" and the masses, and between the "elites" and colonialism.

As you read, stop now and then to meditate upon the similar development of generations of "elites" among our own people, and look for all of the implications and the need for re-interpretation of the Story. For example, was Phyllis Wheatley representative of the "promising adolescents" that were sought out among the Africans colonized by U.S. settler-colonialism? What she and others actually represented is, in one important respect, a matter of interpretation, i.e., from a "proletarian"/revolutionary (New Afrikan) and nationalist perspective, or from a bourgeois, assimilationist, colonialist perspective.

In Africa -- and in New Afrika -- the first generation of "elites" established under the colonial system, had little or no independent voice of initiative; they expressed little or no resistance to colonialism, and they didn't represent the revolutionary interests of the people. Who cares if Phyllis Wheatley was "the first negro to publish" -- What did she say?!! Did she call George Washington a settler-colonialist/"slaveowner"? Did she call upon the newly-colonized Afrikans to rise up and throw off the chains? Did she bend the language to the new requirements of the people as they sought to regain independence and sovereignty?

The point is this: Even in 17th century "colonial America," (New) Afrikans were trying to regain their independence -- that is, most of them were, while others were trying to accommodate themselves to the new colonial situation.

The 18th and 19th centuries, here, saw the rise of our second generation of "elites" (e.g., William Whipper), and there was also the rise of nationalist and socialist voices, speaking to the struggle to regain independence and create a new social system.

The third generation of "elites" was distinguished from those preceding it by a greater degree of frustration over their failure to be "included." They pushed the struggle for "integration" and "equality," while strengthening their base as a class. But again, there were "left" petty-bourgeois currents, the evolution of those earlier nationalist and socialist voices. Most importantly, there-were the masses of the people, who had always maintained an identity and a set of interests that were (and remain) separate and distinct from those of the colonizer -- without this base or foundation, the "elite" would have no standing.

Why are We not more aware of the social reality and political consciousness of the "lower classes" (the majority) of the people -- not more aware of the existence of the nationalist and socialist currents in our social development? Because the tendencies that they represent haven't written (enough of) the "history" books or otherwise been legitimated as the propagators of OUR Story. The "elite" forces that write the books (especially those "marketable" or "acceptable" books), get time on talk shows and space in the U.S. press--they interpret our past and issue the commentary on current events through their own class perspective, and based on their own class interests--interests that they hold in common with their capitalist/colonialist masters.

Re-building requires re-orientation and re-interpretation. We don't yet have what could be called a revolutionary "people's history," because those doing the writing are part

of the wrong class, and express the wrong interests. But, a reinterpretation of OUR Story is necessary, and there'll be no independence or socialism without it. The "intellectuals" who write what We need must represent a combination of those who "commit class suicide," and those who "come up from the people."

3D. These days it supposedly passes as common knowledge that a major consequence of -- a major aim of -- the counter-revolutionary initiative that went into high gear in the late 1960s and early 1970s was the thrust of pseudo-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces into "leadership" -- and yet We claim to be confused and unable to explain the present absence of progressive and revolutionary momentum "from the bottom up."

i like to look to 1968 -- let's call it a "high tide" of our decolonization struggle. As symbols of the people's revolutionary-nationalist initiative, i see those Brothers standing with raised fists during the Olympic games--raised fists that were like raised flags of Red, Black and Green.

Look to 1968 and the establishment of the Kerner Commission, and its mandate: 'To determine what happened; why it happened; what the U.S. needs to do to prevent it from happening again!'

The Kerner Commission was like any other body established by colonial powers (e.g., Kenya/Britain) to investigate "disturbances" in the colony, to divert the revolutionary drive of oppressed peoples into mere reformism; to grant "formal independence" and shape a neo-colonial solution. It can't be done without an alliance between colonialism and pseudo-bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces among the oppressed people.

Underlying the "civil rights movement" and the "black power movement," the "riots," "rebellions," and "revolts," was a revolutionary (socialist) and a nationalist initiative. So, what did the settler-colonialist say? 'Quick, quick, let's decolonize. Let's integrate, i.e., "include" some of them, and make the rest of them believe that they are "Americans," too.'

Jump to 1972, i think -- wasn't that when George Foreman ran around the boxing ring at those Olympic games, waving the flag of the U.S.?! Even symbolically this captures the reality of the moves made between 1968 and 1972: It represents the success of counter-revolution, the success of the neo-colonial solution (but it was really a post-neocolonial solution, because the first neo-colonial structure had been established one hundred years earlier), the ascendancy of the "new black middle class" -- and the "black" liberation movement was turned into its opposite. (See: Vita Wa Watu, Book Eight.)

Even Robert Allen's interpretation of the period can help to give sight to the blind:

In the United States today a program of domestic neo-colonialism is rapidly advancing. It was designed to counter the potentially revolutionary thrust of the recent black rebellions in major cities across the country. This program was formulated by America's corporate elite -- the major owners, managers, and directors of the giant corporations, banks and foundations which increasingly dominate the economy and society as a whole -- because they believe that the urban revolts pose a serious threat to economic and social stability, [and they are] attempting with considerable success to co-opt the black power movement. Their strategy is to equate black power with black capitalism.

In this task the white corporate elite has found an ally in the black bourgeoisie, the new, militant black middle class which became a significant social force following World War II. The members of this class consist of black professionals, technicians, executives, professors, government workers, etc., who got their new jobs and new status in the past two decades. They were made militant by the civil rights movement; yet many of them have come to oppose integrationism because they have seen its failures. Like the black masses, they denounced the old black elite of Tomming preachers, teachers, and businessmen-politicians. The new black elite seeks to overthrow and take the place of this old elite. To do this it has forged an informal alliance with the corporate forces which run white (and black) America.

The new black elite announced that it supported black power. Undoubtedly, many of its members were sincere in this declaration, but the fact is that they spoke for themselves as a class, not for the vast majority of black people who are not middle class. In effect, this new elite told the power structure: "Give us a piece of the action and we will run the black communities and keep them quiet for you." Recognizing that the old "Negro leaders" had become irrelevant-in this new age of black militancy and black revolt, the white corporatists accepted this implicit invitation and encouraged the development of "constructive" black power. They endorsed the new black elite as their tacit agents in the black community, and black self-determination has come to mean control of the black community by a "native" elite which is beholden to the white power structure.

Thus, while it is true that blacks have been granted formal political equality, the prospect is--barring any radical changes--that black America will continue to be a semi-colony of white America, although the colonial relationship will take a new form.
(7)

Remember: Allen published the above in 1970 -- take just a peep at what's happening today: George Curry, writing in EMERGE, 11-99, that the attack on affirmative action "would essentially wipe out the black middle class. If we can't go to college in significant numbers, if we are not able to take our rightful place in the job market, and if we cannot take advantage of the tax dollars we provide to our government bodies, we will be relegated to a life of second-class citizenship." (my emphasis) He's talking to and for his class, not the people as a whole! Add to this Skip Gates, also speaking in EMERGE, 3-99, as he talks about the role of his class and of his group of intellectuals at Harvard: "Our purpose is to get more black people to the middle class." Do i really need to expound on this?

3E. Sartre's reference to the peasantry reminded me that Fanon's popularity among blacks in the U.S. in the 1960s rested, in part, upon his characterization of the peasantry

and the lumpen as "revolutionary" and/or as the "vanguard." These characterizations have been widely and successfully challenged (or, clarified), over the years, and on an international level. While our practice has proven the unsoundness of prior beliefs, We've failed to put the premise to a thorough theoretical analysis, and put it to rest, which will allow this or similar incorrect views to surface again and to disrupt the momentum of the next revolutionary thrust.

A revolutionary class must: 1) recognize that it's a class, and that its members have common interests and enemies; 2) engage in conscious, unified action in pursuit of its interests; 3) act as the "vanguard" of the whole people. Fanon clearly described both the peasantry and the lumpen as initially absent these features. Why then did he refer to them as "revolutionary"? (1.49; 2.45)

These questions are all the more necessary because Fanon later described both the peasantry and the lumpen in different terms (e.g., 2.5-7; 2.59). And, his subsequent comments on the peasantry seem to confirm the observation that he saw in them a "force" that was "spontaneously" resisting certain "principles of Western culture," and that segments or strata of the peasantry sporadically resisted colonial occupation. Fanon "bends the stick" several times in Wretched in order to emphasize a point. In this instance, he bent it in order to contrast the "elite" and reactionary bourgeois classes and strata, against the "traditional," "patriotic," and progressive strata and class (embryonic) within the people as a whole.

Moreover, Fanon's characterization of the lumpen was also not uniform, i.e., he pointed to progressive and reactionary tendencies within the strata--leaving us to conclude that the lumpen is, essentially, of a petty-bourgeois character, i.e., vacillating, and illegitimate or would-be capitalists and parasites.

Keep in mind: Simply performing an objectively political or progressive act doesn't reflect a subjective class/revolutionary consciousness -- just as consciousness alone is insufficient to change the world.

3F. Fanon's message to oppressed peoples does include important themes on the character and roles of citizens of settler-imperialist states. i'd like to think that Sartre was simply over zealous when, at P.24, he says of Fanon: "If he had wished to describe in all its details the historical phenomenon of decolonization he would have spoken of us; this is not at all his intention."

That's simply not true, and Sartre even contradicts himself when, in P.9, he says: "Why read it if it is not written for us? For two reasons: The first is that Fanon explains You to his [people] and shows them the mechanism by which we are estranged from ourselves..." And, in P.10, he gives the second reason: That Fanon brings "the process of history into the clear light of day...the dialectic which liberal hypocrisy hides from you and which is as much responsible for our existence as for his." (my emphasis)

In the first pages of Wretched, Fanon introduces us to the Manichean ideology of the colonial system (of the West), and he makes it clear that the colonized people adopt this Manichean perspective in their evaluation of the settlers. However, as i pointed out above, Fanon is taking us through a process of development. By the end of the second chapter, he shows us how and why the colonized people begin to abandon that form of dualism.

In this connection, Deborah Wyrick asks: "How can a people wage an anti-colonial struggle without reinforcing and replicating the very categories that have organized its own oppression? Or, put another way, how can necessarily Manichean combat promote a post-Manichean world?" (8)

Fanon's answer, stated simply, is that the oppressed people must reject and abandon Manichean divisions if they want to avoid reinforcing and replicating them. In a paragraph that should be reflected upon in its entirety, he points out that "Racialism and hatred and resentment...cannot sustain a war of liberation." (2.62) He then adds that the people reach a point in the struggle when they begin to 'take stock of the situation, increase their knowledge and their political and social consciousness,' and this allows them to "pass from total, indiscriminating nationalism to social and economic awareness. The people who at the beginning of the struggle had adopted the primitive Manicheism of the settler--Blacks and Whites, Arabs and Christians--realize as they go along that the fact of having a national flag and the hope of an independent nation does not always tempt certain strata of the population to give up their interests or privileges....The people find out that the iniquitous fact of exploitation can wear a black face, or an Arab one, and they raise the cry of 'Treason!' But the cry is mistaken, and the mistake must be corrected. The treason is not national, it is social....In their weary road towards rational knowledge the people must also give up their too simple conception of their over-lords. The species is breaking up under their very eyes. As they look around them, they notice that certain settlers do not join in the general guilty hysteria; there are differences in the same species. Such [people], who were before included without distinction and indiscriminately in the monolithic mass of the foreigner's presence, actually go so far as to condemn the colonial war. The scandal explodes when the prototypes of this division of the species go over to the [colonized people], become Negroes or Arabs, and accept suffering, torture, and death." (2.67)

Fanon continues: "The settler is not simply the [person] that must be killed. Many members of the mass of colonialists reveal themselves to be much, much nearer to the national struggle than certain sons [and daughters] of the nation. The barriers of blood and race prejudice are broken down on both sides....Consciousness slowly dawns upon truths that are only partial, limited and unstable...." (2.69)

Thus, We begin to refuse to identify ourselves--refuse to identify anyone-in "racial" terms. When Fanon says, early on, that "What parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species" -- he's not putting this forth as unalterable reality, but as something that needs to be changed. He's merely describing the Manichean world, the capitalist/colonialist world, the imperialist world; he's reflecting the state of consciousness of colonized peoples as they begin the struggle to become NEW PEOPLE.

When Fanon later talks about the "species" breaking up before our eyes (or, about 'niggers disappearing', at 4.44), he's talking about the break-up of "races" themselves--the "races" which were constructed as part of the construction of world capitalism, and which must be de-constructed along with the de-construction of capitalism. The break-up of the "species" now identified by skin color, becomes a new "species" to be characterized by what people think and by what they do...distinguished by social and political consciousness, and economic awareness.

Wyrick also notes that Fanon didn't separate **friends from enemies** by the use of any fixed notions, such as "race" or religion, and she cites a passage from Fanon's **A Dying Colonialism**: "For the FLN, in the new society being built, there are only Algerians. From the outset, therefore, every individual living in Algeria is an Algerian." (9)

How did Fanon distinguish friends from enemies? Friends were those who actively worked for Algerian independence, i.e., the FLN and its supporters in Algeria; anti-colonial people in France; formerly colonized nations throughout the world. Enemies were those who worked against Algerian independence, i.e., the colonial government in Algeria and

its supporters; the government in Paris and its followers; developed nations with a vested interest in maintaining the imperialist status quo. (10) This is what allows 'every individual living in Algeria' to be an Algerian. This is why friends and enemies are distinguished by the choices they make, the positions they take with regard to the struggle for independence and for socialism.

End of Part One

Part Two: Concerning "Violence" and the Development of New People

NOTES/PART ONE

1. "The African Intellectual and the Problem of Class Suicide: Ideological and Political Dimensions," African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity, ed. Molefi K. Asante and Kariamuwelsh Asante, Greenwood Press, 1985, pps. 91-106.
2. Fanon for Beginners, Deborah Wyrick, Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1998.
3. Class and Nation, Samir Amin, Monthly Review Press, 1980, p.4.
4. "The Writer in a Neocolonial State," The Black Scholar, July/August, 1986, pps. 2-10; pps. 3-4.
5. Dictionary of Philosophy, ed. Ivan T. Frolov, International Publishers, 1984, p.76 ("Communist Public Self-Government")
6. "African Socialism Revisited," Revolutionary Path, International Publishers, pps. 438-445.
7. Black Awakening in Capitalist America, Doubleday, 1970, pps. 17-20.
8. Wyrick, op cit., p.84.
9. Ibid., p.87.
10. Ibid., p.85.

Meditations on Frantz Fanon's

The Wretched of the Earth

**For NAC's and Other Activists
Who Struggle Against Racism and Neo-Colonialism (Capitalism)
and for the 'Setting Afoot' of New People
(Socialist/Communist Humanism)**

**Part Two
Concerning "Violence" and the Development of New People**

Owusu Yaki Yakubu

Meditations on Frantz Fanon's
The Wretched of the Earth

Part Two
Concerning "Violence" and the Development of New People

4A. In the first two chapters of *Wretched*, Fanon sets out to show that (armed) "violence" is essential to the initiation and maintenance of colonialism, e.g., "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 cannon." (1.2) He also sets out to show how -- and why -- (armed) "violence" is also a necessary means for the successful pursuit of national and social revolution, for "The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it," and because decolonization "can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of [armed] violence." (1.5) (my emphasis)

Meditate on "all means" -- most people read that line, and by the time they get to the last word in the sentence (violence), they've totally forgotten the "all means"! Consequently, what they come away with is something like: "Decolonization can only succeed if We use armed violence," and this reading and understanding leaves something out, and the absence proves itself in subsequent practice.

The use of all means demands theory and practice on all levels and in all social spheres. Our job is to determine how to do this based on the conditions that We find in our own social reality, especially as We want to move from a "low tide" to a "high tide." Our job is to acquire an understanding of the weak links in the system of oppression that binds us in the 21st century U.S.A., where revolution has "failed" not once, but several times before. Look back over the past and seek out the reasons for previous "failures," e.g., was it because people didn't "fight," or was it because their "minds weren't right"; that they got "fooled" or "bribed" or misled by the "wrong ideas"? Or, was it that they didn't use all means including that of armed violence?

Meditate again, when you get to 1.6, as Fanon says that from the "actual formulation of the program," one must have decided to overcome all ... obstacles. Now, don't limit yourself and think that "all obstacles" will present themselves only as military phenomena. "All obstacles" means obstacles on the economic level, on the socio-cultural level, and on the political level.

As you formulate a program, you must have a broad vision, a comprehensive social platform that addresses issues of mental and physical health, education, social services of all kinds, economic welfare, the production and distribution of food and clothing, adequate housing....You have to understand that you and the people are waging a struggle to fully control and administer your own society, and you must assume responsibilities beyond those of wanting to vent your frustration or act out your ideal conception of the heroic guerrilla and merely go out and shoot at someone. And, of course, this awesome responsibility, as James Boggs called it, requires united and coordinated effort, because no one person can do everything, but every person can do something -- and all jobs are more or less equally important. That is, the "soldier" is no more important (may in fact be less important) than the person putting out the newsletter, or the person organizing the students, or the person agitating on issues of no-rent housing, or people's control of the air-waves....

This need to understand that all means must be used is why Fanon quickly brings to our attention subjects (e.g., Maintain/white supremacist, and racial ideologies -- and later points to the process of their deconstruction; forms of "avoidance" employed by oppressed peoples, and the ways that they/We exercise violence upon each other, while avoiding confrontation with the oppressive apparatus; narrow, bourgeois nationalism, and its pitfalls; the process of forming new, collective identity; relations between "leaders" and the people -- class struggle -- and the need for ever-greater people's democracy --- all of this in the first chapter), which are meant to sharpen our understanding -- and to broaden our concept -- of "violence," in order to show that colonial "violence" is a single process, which manifests itself in several forms (socio-cultural, political, economic, and military), and that "counter-violence" -- the revolutionary "violence" of oppressed peoples -- must also be exercised as a comprehensive process, assuming several forms. It's within this context that Fanon speaks of "violence" as he closes the second chapter: "Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives the key to them." (2.70) (my emphasis)

Meditate: What does it mean to "educate" violence -- so that the people may thus understand social truths? How does the "education" of violence give the key to the people? Most importantly, what is the "key"?

Maybe We're not far enough into the book to begin answering these questions, or maybe We can go back to the Preface in the search: "...In this violence which springs from the people...the military, political and social necessities cannot be separated." (P.22) Could it be that to "educate"..."violence" We must increase our political and social awareness?

"Violence" is educated -- the people are educated -- via the development of theory and the conduct of practice in all areas of social life. "Violence" is "educated" as the people develop their political consciousness, and as they assume what Le Duan calls "collective mastery" of the society.

The "key" can't be a key to "violence" (narrowly speaking, mere armed forms), because an "educated" violence is that which provides the "key". Only when We understand "violence" (i.e., colonial and revolutionary) in a broad way can We begin to understand the "key" as the awareness derived by the people of their role as the makers of history -- "history" here being all of the activity of people in pursuit of their aims as a sovereign entity. Making history requires the making of informed choice, and decisions to act in one way and not another. Choices must be made based on a particular interpretation of reality. Read Wretched carefully, and you'll see that Fanon talks much less about the use of arms than he does about the need for the people to develop their consciousness, and to learn to lead themselves...

Check it out: Here We are reading a chapter on "violence" -- which most of us think of only in terms of arms or physical force -- but how much does Fanon actually talk of arms or physical force? You might expect every page to contain some mention of guns, knives, armed encampments, guerrillas training in the forests, nightly raids on the farms of settlers, attacks on local police stations or military outposts -- but how much of this is actually there, in this chapter on "violence"? Not much, you say? Well, why do you think that is?

Fanon doesn't talk much about guns or armed forms of violence because it's the other forms -- rather, it's the whole -- of colonial violence that most concerns him, e.g., "In the colonial context, the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man's values. In the period of

decolonization, the colonized masses mock at these very values, insult them, and vomit them up." (1.16) (my emphasis)

Colonial violence must be negated by revolutionary violence, i.e., when the colonized mock Western and Euro-American values, insult them, and vomit them up, during the period of decolonization -- a period comparable to our 1960s and the early 1970s, when We had a "black arts movement," and debated the need for, and the value of, a "black aesthetic," and the poets rapped about new values as they mocked those of "the man"; the singers sang about new values as they insulted those of "the system"; the writers wrote novels and essays about new values as they vomited up those of "white america"...But today, We still send our children to the schools of the U.S., where they pledge allegiance to the U.S. and its flag, and in a thousand ways, every day, We and our children admit loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of Euro-American values, and demonstrate the effectiveness of colonial violence and the absence of a counter-violence, a revolutionary violence, which negates the influence of foreign values in our homes and in our minds....

All of this has to be brought home.... and We can take it backward, beyond the 1960s and trace it without a break to the 1660s, and see that there and then, too, We mocked the settler's values even as he tried to break us in - "What's your name, boy?" "Kunta Kinte, motherfucker!"

We seldom, if ever, think of ourselves as among those petty-bourgeois forces in need of committing "class suicide" -- but We must remember where We are. Here, in the seat of empire, even the "slaves" are "petty-bourgeois," and our poverty is not what it would be if We didn't in a thousand ways also benefit from the spoils of the exploitation of peoples throughout the world. Our passivity wouldn't be what it is if not for our thinking that We have something to lose....

How much more necessary must it be for us to focus on the need to develop a revolutionary consciousness, here in the belly of the beast, where even the so-called radical left is little more than an appendage to bourgeois liberalism and in many cases serves as a buffer between capitalist-colonialism and a peoples' struggle for independence and socialism. Here, the ideology of "economism" dominates so-called radical discourse (e.g., "class struggle" is reduced to its economic dimension, functioning solely within capitalist relations, thus supporting rather than undermining these relations), and the "conscious element" is ignored or distorted. All critical thought is suppressed by the media and the market.

4B. Let's start with same questions and meditate on the first paragraph of the first chapter: "National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people...whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon....the replacing of a certain 'species' or [people] by another 'species' of [people]. Without any period of transition, there is a total, complete and absolute substitution.... the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up...." (1.1)

Among the questions i've raised about this paragraph and meditated on are: 1) What is "violence," and why is it (always) necessary?; 2) What is "decolonization"?; 3) What is "social structure," and why is change thereof a necessary criterion for the success of the struggle?; 4) What does Fanon mean by "species" and why does he put it within quotation marks in this paragraph?; 5) Why does he refer to the "restoration" of "nationhood" -- and what is a "nation"?

Only after going through *Wretched* several times, and then returning to reflect on this paragraph, was i able to recognize the context (or, the "voice") in which Fanon was speaking here. That is: 1) He appears to be telling us what it, but he's actually telling us what was; 2) He seems to be speaking in absolute terms, suggesting, for example, that there will not be, or should not be, a "period of transition," and that there be a simple, mechanical, "substitution" of "species" -- a mere change of place, one for the other. This is not the case.

Taking us through the process of struggle, Fanon starts at the "beginning" of the birth of revolutionary consciousness and confrontation; he gives us a look through the eyes and into the mind of the colonized person who stands in the colonial period and is only beginning to engage the process of decolonization. That is, it's in the colonial period that the people look ahead and tend to believe that there should be no period of transition, and they assume that there will be a simple substitution of themselves for the settlers. At the beginning of the struggle, the people don't understand, for example, the multiple meanings of the term "species" that causes Fanon to qualify it (in fact, the word is placed within quotation marks to warn us not to take it at its conventional meaning).

i know it's kinda like giving away the plot, but We need to jump to the second chapter for a moment, and try to unravel a bit of "complexity," because it's there that Fanon, then speaking in the voice of one who's matured a bit and suffered a few setbacks during the decolonization period, tells us that: "... While the native thought that he could pass without transition from the status of a colonized person to that of a self-governing citizen of an independent nation, while he grasped at the mirage of his muscles' own immediacy, he made no real progress along the road to knowledge. His consciousness remained rudimentary...." (2.61)

Now, i've chosen to make this connect between the first and second chapters... between the subjects of "violence" and "spontaneity" as a way of erecting my own flashing light, and to make the point that Fanon makes repeatedly throughout the book, but that We tend to miss: It's not a mere matter of using armed forms of struggle. To paraphrase Fanon, the people can't become self-governing citizens in a truly independent nation, without developing their consciousness, no matter how much or how well they "fight" or their skill in the use of weapons. Failure to grasp this fact accounts for much of the backsliding among would-be activists, and for many of the failures of past attempts at revolutionary transformation on these and other shores. "National liberation" and "revolution" is about the transformation of people and their consciousness.

Fanon started by giving us a glimpse of the state of people at the beginning and We should reflect upon our own beginnings, past and present. In our present, We stand in what i call a "post-neocolonial" period, but no matter what it's called, it's a period of beginnings, a period 'before the fighting starts' and We're engaged in building foundations for a renewed effort to decolonize. In this context, Fanon reminds us that as We look ahead, We must be able to determine "which is a true decolonization [i.e., one in which the people have developed a revolutionary consciousness and assumed "collective mastery"] and which a false," and the importance of a coherent perception of appropriate means and tactics, i.e., "how to conduct and organize the movement." (1.45)

In order to determine the best means and properly conduct the struggle, We gotta ask questions...call into question everything about colonialism, post-neocolonialism, and

capitalism. Some people may think that the raising of questions (such as those i raised above about the first paragraph) is unnecessary, or that the answers are obvious. i've read that first paragraph more times than i can remember, but the questions weren't always raised, and the answers weren't then, nor are they now, obvious. My understanding of Wretched and of Fanon's thought, and of the/our social revolutionary process always suffered for my failure to raise and properly answer these and similar questions. i know i'm not alone.

When Fanon implores us to "question everything," We must take that literally, and probe the meaning and implications. Underneath it all is a quest to share with Fanon "that obsession...about the need for effort to be well-informed, for work which is enlightened and freed from its historic intellectual darkness," (2.88) so that We may "hasten the growth of consciousness...a necessity from which there is no escape" if We wish to make progress. (2.75) Through the process of raising questions, We challenge ideas and structures, and We transform ourselves--all through reflection. Fanon wants us to raise questions because he wants us to think--critically. This is a simple, but fundamental point, one of the "keys" to a truly independent and progressive future.

Reflect a bit, too, on the phrase "intellectual darkness" and get away from. the conventional, Western, Euro-American idea that "ordinary people" aren't, can't be or shouldn't be "intellectual." Get away from the idea that only certain people or groups can be "intellectual," and think about everyone as "intellectual." Even go back to the first paragraph and reflect on that question about the social structure being changed, from the bottom up, and connect this to the need for ALL of the people to develop and exercise their mental capacities in the effort to solve the theoretical and practical problems of the society. This reminds me of another line from George Jackson, re: the oppressive state has molded the people through a "what to think" program, and the task of the people is to develop a "how to think" program. To question. To imagine that things can be different and that the people themselves can make all necessary changes. There will be no revolution without theory and without mass participation and the assumption of responsibility by the people.

Since the publication of Wretched, people have read that opening paragraph and come away with a narrow or one-sided concept of "violence"; they've read the first two chapters and come away with little more than a belief in the need to "pick up the gun." The people of Africa have suffered for this. We've suffered for it, and our children and grandchildren suffer for it today. Too many of us still fail to question everything about the colonial relationship; too many of us still fail to grasp that the aim of revolution is to change people and to develop their political and social consciousness. Everything else that We usually associate with "revolution" or "national liberation" comes through and after change in the people's consciousness!

As We attempt to "re-build," it's fitting that We re-read and meditate on this book by Fanon, especially if We understand its relationship to the problems that We face forty years after it was written.

There are some who think that the slogan "re-build" means that We, in some mysterious way, "start where We left off," meaning the "high tide" of struggle in the 1960s and early 1970s. It's assumed that We can start to rebuild by miraculously producing an instant "high tide" which, of course, should include armed actions. It's assumed that the new

high tide can be created by simply wishing for it, or calling for it. It's assumed that armed actions are appropriate simply because some of us are angry or frustrated, or mistake our consciousness for that of the people. It's also assumed that the high tide was arrested by the mere repression of the movement by the settler-imperialist state, and had nothing to do with our own shortcomings. My generation may remember Mao saying that, on occasion, when the revolution fails, it's the fault of the "vanguard".

We need to understand: The old movement is dead, and IT can't be rebuilt! We can't return to the past, or rebuild the past, nor can We build a NEW movement without sufficient foundation. If We consider that the late 1960s represented the high tide of a process, We have to know when and how that process was started—a "high tide" is something that must be built up to, the result of the kind of work that most of us shun like a plague.

In this instance, We're like those "militants" Fanon refers to, who must go to the countryside and/or to the mountains, "toward bases grounded in the people." (1.21) and, i'm not even talking about what to do when one reaches those bases, just that those bases must be approached. Hopefully, We won't act like the Vietnamese cadre (see: CROSSROAD, Vol. 9, N. 4, Spring, 2001, pps. 9-11) who got to the base but didn't know what to do or how to do it, and blamed his shortcomings on the people. He merely cursed reality because he didn't fully appreciate that his job was to change reality—to take it as it was/is, and transform it into the pattern of new customs and the plan for freedom. (1.43)

We can even put it another way: If We wanna help to build a NEW revolutionary movement, among the things that We must do are: 1) thoroughly re-examine the past, learn the lessons, and begin to use what We learn while, 2) building bases grounded in the people, learning from them, sharing our knowledge with them, becoming one with them, and share with them as one of them the responsibility for leadership of the movement and for the new society that We're creating.

We have to start this process by finally admitting to ourselves that the old movement is dead. We have to acknowledge that, say, We didn't take George Jackson to heart when he told us what We needed to do in order to keep the people from becoming "Americans" again, after they left the marches and rallies...ten minutes after the success of the state's strategy to neutralize the movement, create new "buffer classes" of pseudo-and-petty-bourgeois "spokespersons/leaders"....

Today, the people ARE "Americans" -- even most of the so-called "radicals" and "nationalists" ARE "Americans" at heart. Not only will they not advocate real revolution and the armed forms of struggle that must be part of the process; they won't support any sincere attempt to generate such a process. These are the people about whom Fanon said, "their objective is not the radical overthrow of the system." (1.46) In all the scholarly work that they do, they won't write about the Nat Turner's or hold seminars on the legitimacy of the counter-violence of oppressed peoples: "They do not assert that the people have to use physical force, and it sometimes even happens that they go so far as to condemn the spectacular deeds which are declared hateful by the press and public opinion in the mother country." (1.52)

Would-be cadres think that all they should have to do is give a brief talk about how bad things are, and why the people should resist (i.e., take up arms), and think that this is all that's necessary, and then curse the people when they don't respond as We think they should...as if this is enough to change a mindset that's reproduced and reinforced by print media and soap operas, romance novels and ads for cosmetics and cars and gadgets that claim to solve all our problems. We become confused when We find that the five minute

talk isn't enough to overcome the pressures that force people to conform on the job, or to give in to the children who want the latest fashions, toys, and video games....

Check it: All of this is about "values" and it's about the forms of colonial violence that creep into our homes and into our minds. The job of the would-be cadre is to begin to analyze and understand our concrete reality and to apply what We learn in the books to this reality. We have to be creative in shaping forms of "revolutionary violence" in order to negate colonial violence in all its forms, on all social levels.

4C. What is "violence," and why is it (always) necessary for successful decolonization? Since We're talking about the colonial (and capitalist) context, it will be necessary to know something about colonialism and how "violence" is manifested in the colonial context (i.e., colonial violence).

In my search for answers to the questions, i first went to the dictionary and then to the Thesaurus, and here is what i began to work with: Violence is that which INJURES (i.e., it does an injustice to; it wrongs, harms, impairs, and tarnishes the standing of; it gives pain to, as in "to injure one's pride"; it's detrimental, defamatory, and it violates others).

Violence is that which ABUSES (i.e., even with words--it reviles); it's that which puts to a wrong or improper use; violence is maltreatment.

Violence is TREATMENT (i.e., behavior--to bear oneself toward; to act upon, especially to alter or manipulate), or PROCEDURES (i.e., action, conduct, process), that DISTORTS (alters out of original condition or situation; deforms or falsifies), INFRINGES (breaks, defeats, frustrates, encroaches upon in a way that violates another), or PROFANES (i.e., debases or defiles).

Colonialism (and capitalism), in the economic, political, and socio-cultural forms, brings "violence" into the home and into the minds of the people (1.8), and the process of decolonization (revolutionary counter-violence) is a battle to be waged in the media and in the marketplace, the sports arena, and the barber shops and street corners even as We select subjects to be discussed....

Colonialism is a form of imperialism, and imperialism is an international expression of capitalism--you don't fully understand colonialism, and you don't successfully attack it, without understanding and attacking capitalism.

Colonialism is a comprehensive system, operating on all social levels (economic, political, cultural), and is not a mere expression of military aggression, i.e., "violence" in physical forms.

In most cases, colonial violence in armed/physical forms is preceded by unarmed and nonphysical forms of aggression, in the guise of traders, academics, missionaries--who seek not only to lay hold of the land and labor of the peoples, but also to lay hold of their minds, their customs, and their languages. These violent actions suppress, distort, injure, frustrate, infringe, profane and unduly alter the targeted peoples and their social orders, and cripple the people's ability to resist and to regain their independence!

Let's take a look at Wyrick's description of colonialism: Colonialism means the forceful occupation of another people's land in order to extract material benefits; thus it means compelling the colonized to work for the colonizer's economic interests. If there aren't enough suitable native workers, more can be imported. This is where slavery comes

in handy. Fanon believes that colonialism depends on racism. Enslaving or oppressing another group of people is easier if they look different than you do. Colonialism also means imposing the cultural values of the colonizing nation upon the colonized; this is called "the civilizing mission" or "the white man's burden." Such phrases mask and justify the massive theft that drives the colonial project. Modern European colonialism began with Columbus. Voyages of discovery involved claiming "new" land for European powers.

The growth of consumer capitalism mandated the growth of colonialism, and vice versa. "Exploitation colonies" had the sole purpose of producing wealth and extracting marketable commodities -- Caribbean plantation colonies are prime examples.

"Settler colonies" had the additional purpose of moving large groups of people from the colonizing nation to the colony - the United States was a settler colony, as was Australia.... (1)

Colonialism is a single process, manifesting in several forms, and each of these forms "injures" oppressed peoples, i.e., colonialism is, as a whole, a form of: the exploitation of natural resources, and the prevention of the independent development of industry; the drawing of arbitrary national borders, and the implantation of alien political systems; the imposition of a Euro-centric educational system, and the distortion of the history of the colonized people; the daily psychological trauma -- "the injuries inflicted upon a native during a single day spent amidst the colonial regime," (5.7) -- or the use of arms to enforce all of the above.

Therefore, colonial violence must be negated by revolutionary violence, that "violence" exercised by oppressed peoples which contests for power by opposing the ideas which uphold the existing social reality; creates new ideas and a new social reality. Revolutionary violence contests colonial rule on the streets, in the schools, in the homes, and in hospitals; it repairs what colonial violence has impaired; it renews the momentum and initiative that colonial violence has caused to stagnate; it liberates what colonial violence has arrested, e.g., Colonialism is not satisfied with merely holding a people in its grip and emptying [their] brain of all form and content... it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today. (4.7)

The "dialectical significance" is that even today, We have to deal with the past as part of the process of shaping the future. It's also that here, for us, inside the belly of the beast, where the material dominates, We must begin to place greater focus on the non-material -- ideas over things; help people to become aware of the workings of economic relationships by first helping them to develop their analytical skills and their ideological capacities...their intellectual capacity. You must understand that THIS is "a necessity in any coherent program." (4.19)

Colonialism creates a "colonized personality" (5.7) and "total liberation is that which concerns all sectors of the personality." (5.182) Therefore, It is not only necessary to fight for the liberty of your people. You must also teach that people once again, and first learn once again yourself, what is the full stature of a [person]; and this you must do for as long as the fight lasts. You must go back into history, that history of [people] damned by other [people], and you must bring about and render possible the meeting of your people and other [people].

In reality, the soldier who is engaged in armed combat in a national war deliberately measures from day to day the sum of all the degradation inflicted upon [people] by colonial oppression. The [person] of action has sometimes the exhausting impression that [they] must restore the whole of their] people, that [they] must bring every one of them up

out of the pit and out of the shadows. [They] very often see that their task is not only to hunt down the enemy forces but also to overcome the kernel of despair which has hardened in the native's being. The period of oppression is painful; but the conflict, by reinstating the downtrodden, sets on foot a process of reintegration which is fertile and decisive in the extreme. A people's victorious fight not only consecrates the triumph of its rights; it also gives to that people consistence, coherence and homogeneity. For colonialism has not simply depersonalized the individual it has colonized; this depersonalization is equally felt in the collective sphere, on the level of social structures. The colonized people find that they are reduced to a body of individuals who only find cohesion when in the presence of the colonizing nation.

The fight carried on by a people for its liberation leads it, according to circumstances, either to refuse or else to explode the so-called truths which have been established in its consciousness by the colonial civil administration, by the military occupation, and by economic exploitation. Armed conflict alone can really drive out these falsehoods created in [people] which force into inferiority the most lively minds among us and which, literally, mutilate us. (5.141-143)

Now, let's meditate on some of this. It's not only necessary to "fight" so that you can raise your own flag and declare the existence of your own nation. You must also teach the people...once again...and first learn again yourself, what is the full stature/meaning of being "human"...of being sovereign and having the capacity to pursue your own aims.... To define for yourself the content of your "humanity" and not have it defined by others--especially when those others are oppressing you, arresting your development, and restricting you to an environment that alienates you from yourself--from what you would or could be if not for their violence.

Why is it that We can only find cohesion when in the "presence" of the colonizing nation? In one sense, it's because that "presence" imposes itself upon us in a way that prevents us from concentrating our energies upon our own needs. That "presence" is everything about the thought and practice of the colonizing nation and its influence upon us and our heretofore inability to de-link from it and create our own "presence" in the world. To a great degree, We do know who We are, but We're afraid to fully manifest ourselves. (This brings to mind a line from Cornel West, which i wonder if he fully understands or has the courage to follow-through on: "...black people will not succeed in American society if they are fully and freely themselves...." (my emphasis) (2)) We know that We aren't really "natives" or "negroes"...that We aren't "blacks" or "African Americans" -- but We're afraid to cut the cord. It's safer and easier to continue to be "blacks," because We can do that without undergoing the discomfort and insecurity that comes with the effort to de-link.

To put it another way, focus on the last two sentences in the second quoted paragraph: We've not only been "depersonalized" as individuals, but as a people, "in the collective sphere, on the level of social structures." What does it mean for a people to be "depersonalized" on the level of "social structures"? It's very simple, really. It's about losing independence as a people; it's about not having "authentic" classes because the development of the nation/people has been distorted and frustrated by colonialism. Thus, all the social and political science of the colonizing nation says that either the colonized people don't have their own classes, or that they are in some strange way "unequal" members of the classes of the colonizing nation -- "a body of individuals who only find coherence when in the presence of the colonizing nation."

Now, the third quoted paragraph takes us again to the issue of the forms of colonialism and the expression of its violence in each of these forms, i.e., its "civil administration," its "economic exploitation," as well as its "military occupation".

As colonialism causes the "death" and mutilation of the colonized people ("The appearance of the settler has meant...the death of the aboriginal society, cultural lethargy, and the petrification of individuals...." (1.95)), it also creates the "native" or the "negro" -- which Fanon described as an "arrested image of a type of relationship"! (4A.13) Yeah, "niggerhood" is the same as being a "native," a "negro" or "black" and "African American" - - it's not really about the color of the skin, but about a type of relationship that we otherwise refer to as colonialism, or imperialism, or as capitalist exploitation...the relationship between the master and the slave, the settler and the native, the "white" and the "black"...the "bourgeoisie" and the "proletariat"...the oppressor nation and the oppressed nation...the exploitative ruling class and the revolutionary class....

Colonial violence is that which "has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the system of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life...." (1.13) It attacks, as a whole, the colonized peoples' material and intellectual life.

We begin to see a direct connection between the forms and effects of the process of colonial violence, and the demand for an all-inclusive program of national and social revolution, at 1.31-1.42, where Fanon talks of muscular tension and begins to list the forms of avoidance along which the paths of revolutionary violence must travel, while negating colonial violence.

However, none of this is inevitable: "The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called in question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization--the history of pillage--and to bring into existence the history of the nation--the history of decolonization." (1.30) (my emphasis)

4D. What were those questions again....What is "decolonization"?

Let's say that from the NAC perspective, "revolutionary violence" and "decolonization" are the same--that the terms describe the same process. For example, Wyrick's definition of decolonization is that it is a "process of changing from a colonial territory to an independent nation, occurring in social and cultural ways, as well as in political and economic ones." (2) So, i'd say that this describes the process of revolutionary violence, as well as the process of decolonization.

Granted, simply pointing to "social and cultural ways" and to "political and economic" (and military) ways leaves out the kind of detail that most young activists and would-be cadres are quick to ask for. Most folks want blueprints handed to them.

The fact is, i don't have all the answers; i'm in prison and removed from

the setting where the answers are most likely to be found. Now, i could talk in ' more detail on each of the areas, but it would all be more or less abstract, because only those out in the real world can locate and link themselves to the -

concrete realities in their environments that will allow motion to be made. My job is to help with the "how's" and the "why's" -- you have to find the "what's"

for yourselves, and then test the theory, test the lessons, find the appropriate ways to take reality as it is, and transform it.

***** 1:

My concern is that We more fully and firmly grasp the "how's" and the "why's," and begin to maintain some continuity from one generation to the next, and not continue to repeat the pattern of having to start from scratch every twenty or thirty years. This kind of continuity will help us to create social environments in our homes and neighborhoods that will allow entire families to be conscious and active, and not just one member of the family; allow entire communities to be conscious and active, and not just one family, on one block, surrounded by "Americans"....

So, We can't restrict our concept of "decolonization" to a narrow vision of merely "seizing power" or "regaining independence" while otherwise maintaining a rudimentary development of consciousness, and leaving the running of the society in the hands of relatively small, privileged groups.

To end the "static period" (1.64), brought on by colonial oppression, is not only to regain a certain physical or political independence, but to pursue a certain path of social development: "...When the nation stirs as a whole, the new [people are] not an a posteriori product of that nation; rather [they] co-exist with it and triumph with it....Independence is...but an indispensable condition for the existence of men and women who are truly-liberated; in other words, who are

truly masters of all the material means which make possible the radical transformation of society." (5.182)

Decolonization is the "renaissance" of the nation--a revival or rebirth; it's the "restoration of nationhood" (i.e., sovereignty) to the people. Think here in terms of dynamism and dialectical relationships. Think in terms of things either stagnating and passing away, or as in forward motion, newness rising. So, terms like "renaissance" and "revival," "rebirth" and "restoration" have to be understood not as static images, but as terms describing phenomena in motion and development; what's being "revived" is the people's ability to control their environment and shape their lives, their futures. It's not the "old" nation that rises, but a new one.

Decolonization is the establishment of new (social) relations between individuals; new names for (the) people, for schools and streets -- and sometimes, even a new name for the (new) nation. At bottom, decolonization is the process which results in a new, revolutionary and socialist consciousness.

On the surface, it's easy to say what decolonization is: It "sets out to change the order of the world" (1.2) and it only appears, initially, to be a program of "disorder" because it opposes the "order" of the colonial system. Decolonization (revolutionary violence) requires an

ordering, a discipline, a coherence--it's an "historical process" which can't be understood, became intelligible nor clear to the people unless and until We "discern the movements which give it historical form and content." (1.2) (my emphasis)

Unfortunately, our clarity comes only after many setbacks and much suffering and loss of life. The understanding of a need for "ordering" has certain prerequisites, e.g., "All this taking stock of the situation, this enlightening of consciousness and this advance in the knowledge of the history of societies are only possible within the framework of an organization, and inside the structure of a people. Such an organization is set afoot by the use of revolutionary elements coming from the towns at the beginning of the rising, together with those rebels who go down into the country as the fight goes on. It is this core which constitutes the embryonic political organization of the rebellion. But on the other hand the peasants, who are all the time adding to their knowledge in the light of experience, will come to show themselves capable of directing the people's struggle...." (2.67) (my emphasis)

Check: If there are to be guns, then there must first be "minds behind the guns"! Even "embryonic" consciousness/self-awareness is the prerequisite for the people's decision to call into question the colonial world. A "program" is a plan, and a plan means We must reflect upon our situation, and develop a vision of how We want to live--it's not enough to say that We simply don't wanna continue to live as We do.

Changing the way We live demands a vision of a new way, and We presently lack that vision. I say that We lack the vision because not enough of us understand the need for it; not enough of us put in the time to reflect upon the present reality in a critical way. We lack vision because not enough of us work on making the analyses of the concrete situation, and too many of us lack the ability to take our reality, as it is, and begin to transform it. We haven't yet learned to apply theory in--and through--the test of practice, and our shortcoming leads us to downplay the need for theory only because We don't know how to develop it, test it, evaluate and adjust it.

Decolonization is (but not quite simply), the "replacement" ("to put some thing new in the place of") of a certain "species" of people by a new "species" = of people. Now here, only in one context, is there meant a "restoration" of the 2~r "native inhabitants" to their former position as an evolving, independent people, by and through the process of "removing" the colonizer. In a broader context, ~ there are actually two "species" being "replaced," because the colonizer can't 2=~r remain the same if colonialism truly comes to an end. There is no colonizer without the colonized. Both "species" are affected by the decolonization process; both "species" are "replaced"--transformed into something new. t:

***** h

Decolonization must have a period of "transition" (a period of development). From our studies, from our observations and our practice, We know that "leaps" =~ don't happen all at once, in an instant. All the more need for the people to have knowledge of the laws of social development, and understanding of the process

of social/revolutionary change; all the more need for the people to have an aware- t:

ness of the phenomenon of spontaneity and its weaknesses an awareness of the
2~r

pitfalls of a narrow nationalist consciousness; all the more need for the people to be helped to realize that "everything depends on them and their salvation lies in their own cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests and in knowing who are their enemies," (3.83), and that if they stagnate, it's their responsibility; if they go forward, it's due to them, too: "[T]here is no such thing as a demiurge...there is no famous man who will take responsibility for everything...the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people." (3.89)

Decolonization is class struggle among the people -- a struggle not simply between groups, but between "stands," between forms and levels of consciousness; "class struggle" is struggle between visions of how the world works and of how We should live; it's a struggle between interests. So, Fanon tells us that the ~ people need to 'have it out with each other' (2.21), so they can avoid the creation of neo-colonialism, and not have to "realize two or three years after independence that they have been frustrated, that it wasn't worthwhile' fighting," and that nothing has changed but the form. (1.75) Why is this so? Because the people didn't adequately change, advance in their knowledge, their political, economic and social awareness, etc.

Check it again: "Decolonization ...influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators...into privileged actors" and is "introduced by new [people], and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new [people[...the 'thing' which has been colonized becomes [human] during the same process by which it frees itself." (1.3)

This is the heart of the book, the "key" to it all. Decolonization--the revolutionary process--is about "influencing" and "modifying" people. The revolutionary process aims to transform "spectators" into "actors"--the revolutionary process is introduced by "new people"--i.e., not until the people have made fundamental change within themselves do they begin the revolutionary process. The process includes "new language" which means the people have already begun to shape new meanings, new consciousness, and language is its medium. The revolutionary process exhibits a new humanity.

It seems that Fanon's thought is a bit contagious--i'm beginning to share his obsession with the need for consciousness developed by the people, so that they can use their "magic hands" to fully control their lives. Of course, i mean "the masses" or the "lower classes" or even the "proletarian masses" and not the "intellectual elements" as We generally think of them. How did We used to say it: All Power to the People!!? The aim is to turn all of the people into "leaders" and into "intellectuals".

So, decolonization requires the use of ALL means; revolutionary violence must be exercised in all forms (cultural, social, political, economic and military). In order to "pick up the gun," the colonized person must first begin to challenge colonial violence by developing and employing an opposing consciousness. The people must gradually begin to question the legitimacy of the colonial (and capitalist) world, and to believe in themselves, to assume responsibility for the institutions which, because they are theirs, stand as poles of opposition to the oppressive state and pillars to uphold the new peoples' state.

In other words, armed struggle is "started!" when people begin to: re-define themselves, lose their fear and awe of the oppressive state and see it as illegitimate; to build their own socio-cultural, political and economic institutions; to de-link from the colonial/capitalist world, and their own anarchic myths and traditions.

Revolutionary violence (decolonization) is, as a whole, a form of "self-defense" (i.e., that slogan and concept most widely used these days, as part of a minimum program of agitation and propaganda), but a defense of the whole self, not just the physical body. The people's "self-defense" is an aggressive assertion of a new identity, a new self-awareness, and the acquisition and use of arms against the colonial system follows the spark of this new sense of self, a new sense of responsibility on the plane of morals.

The people's "self-defense" follows a certain awakening, during the colonial period, where they'd otherwise "fight among themselves" and "use each other as a screen, and each hides from his neighbor the national enemy." (5.178) It's only after they realize their humanity that they begin to "sharpen the weapons" (all weapons) for use against colonialism, and to forge the new society. (1.15)

We know that our people are armed today, as never before (and in many respects, armed by the oppressive state), but their having arms doesn't signal a turn toward the left. Even when We consider efforts by the enemy to disarm the people, it's not the guns in their hands, as such, that's the source of the settler's fear, but the potential threat posed by an armed and politically conscious people.

4~._Violence Re-Directed

"...the people have the time to see that the liberation has been the business of each and all, and that the leader has no special merit...When the people have taken violent part in the national liberation, they will allow no one to set themselves up as 'liberators'. They show themselves to be jealous of the results of their action and take good care not to place their future, their destiny or the fate of their

country in the hands of a living god. Yesterday, they were ~;
completely irresponsible; today, they mean to understand ~:

everything and make all decisions. Illuminated by violence the consciousness of the people rebels against any pacification. From now on the demagogues, the opportunists and the magicians have a difficult time. The action which has thrown them into a hand-to-hand

struggle confers upon the masses a voracious taste for the concrete. The attempt at mystification becomes, in the long run, practically impossible." (1.99)

Here We see the ideal result -- a "true" decolonization. Read it again, carefully. Center your meditations upon "the consciousness of the people"

and "they mean to understand everything and make all decisions." And, it never ~;

hurts to lay stress again upon the concept of "violence" that We're using, i.e., ~: it relates to all aspects and levels of struggle' all areas of social life and the development of the peoples' consciousness, resting on their active parti

cipation in all areas of struggle. Keep in mind: It's not the mere use of arms ~;

by the masses that ensures that they become responsible, want to know everything, and make all decisions -- including those decisions that dictate that they remain armed after independence is won.

However, the ideal outcome is not always what We get. Below, We'll see that: ~: 1) The people's violence is re-directed, but it begins as a spontaneous process; its strength is that it's "voluntary," and its weakness is that it lacks coherence and deliberation. 2) It should be a violence that leads to the people assuming total responsibility for the struggle, and to their becoming fully conscious, new people. 3) However, the weakness of spontaneity also means that the people are restrained and not enlightened; independence becomes a farce -- and a new struggle begins, now against neo-colonialism and, more directly, a struggle for socialism.

***** ~

Fanon tells us that "Well before the political or fighting phase of the national movement," the people re-build their "perceptions." (4A.14) These should be understood as perceptions regarding the world, the settler and colonialism and, most importantly, the peoples' self-perception.

How does the colonized people -- how do We -- come to make the decision to begin the decolonization process, to develop and practice a program of revolutionary violence?

The "fighting phase" begins only after 'the moment We decide to embody "history" in our own person' (1.13); the decolonization process begins only after 'the moment We realize our "humanity",' and then 'begin to sharpen our weapons' (1.15); the process of revolutionary violence begins only after We 'vomit up bourgeois/Western values' (1.16), and only after 'We discover that our lives,

our breath, our beating hearts are the same as those of the settler; that his ~:

skin is of no more value than ours,' and "this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner. All the new, revolutionary assurance...stems from it...." (1.18) (my emphasis)

Before--and in order that--the "fighting phase" may begin, the people must ~:

begin to re-build their perceptions of themselves and of the social environment within which they live; they must re-build their perceptions of the world--a world now dominated by capitalism, and struggles against it.

It's simply (!) about the people asserting their (new) identity--asserting a form or concept of "humanity" that's distinct from that form or concept established by the colonial order and imposed upon the colonized, e.g., they say they're "human" and that We aren't; that if We wanna become "human" We must be like them--exploiters and oppressors and "individuals". Yet, the more We become like them, i.e., the more bourgeois We become, the more inhuman and inhumane We become, the more insane We become...the more We become alienated from our selves....

During the colonial period -- the so-called peaceful period -- the people react to being "hemmed in" by "dreaming" of action, achieving freedom "from nine in the evening until six in the morning." (1.31) During the "peaceful" period, when colonialism is "in power and secure," it's rather difficult to notice any widespread, fundamental change in the self-perception of the people.

During the colonial period, the oppressive system keeps alive in us an anger which generally finds no external outlet, but rather takes the form of internally directed violence, in various forms, e.g., "the niggers beat each other up, and the police and [courts] do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime...." (1.32)

Our "muscular tension finds outlet in bloodthirsty explosions--in tribal warfare, in feuds between sects, and in quarrels between individuals.

"...[A] positive negation of common sense is evident. While the settler or the policeman has the right the live-long day to strike the native, to insult him [or her] and to make him [or her] crawl to them, you will see the native reaching for his [or her] knife [or gun] at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him [or her] by another native....By throwing [themselves] with all [their] force into the vendetta, the native tries to persuade [him or her self] that colonialism does not exist, that everything is going on as before [the conquest], that history [sovereign existence] continues...." (1.34-35)

During the colonial period, the mass of the people exercise violence through what Fanon describes as "behavior patterns of avoidance" (1.35), which are used to "by-pass the settler." These include: a belief in fatality, which removes all blame from the oppressive system, and attributes all misfortunes and colonial violence to "Fate" or to "Cod"; myths, spirits, and a magical/metaphysical superstructure which creates "a world of prohibitions, of barriers and of inhibitions far more terrifying than the world of the settler" (1.36); eroticism (1.40); dance (1.41), and seances (1.42). All of these forms of "avoidance" or internally-directed violence allow "the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence, to be canalized, transformed and conjured away." (1.41)

On the other hand, while the masses exercise their violence through these patterns of avoidance, the violence of the "elite" assumes other forms, i.e., "...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." (1.41)

As We read about this canalized violence, We should make an effort to uncover the forms of avoidance that are peculiar to us. Most of us read Wretched and fail to make the connections between the colonial situation that he describes, and the one that We are subject to.

Don't We exercise our aggressiveness against ourselves? Don't We witness bloodthirsty explosions in the form of "gang" warfare and "black-on-black crime"? On the individual and the collective levels, don't We evidence a positive negation =~ of common sense as We, too, try to persuade ourselves that colonialism and capitalist exploitation and alienation don't exist? Don't We, too grab hold of a belief in fatality (very common among young people these days)? And, what about OUR myths, spirits and magical/metaphysical superstructure? In our context, We employ conspiracy theories, the zodiac and numerology, Kente cloth and phrases from ancient languages; We invoke the power of a diet and the taboo of certain animals as food products. Without a doubt, We have our own prohibitions and inhibitions that We use to avoid a confrontation with the reality of colonial violence...our own barriers that We use to avoid de-linking from the colonial world.

So, WE come back to the questions: How do We begin to re-build our perceptions? How do We come to make the decision to engage the decolonization process? How-and why--do We begin to re-direct our violence? How do We come to make the decision to embody "history"? How do We "realize our humanity"? Again: It's only after We do this that the "fighting phase" begins. And yet, Fanon says that it's "During the struggle for freedom" that a "marked alienation" from the patterns of avoidance is observed. (1.43) (my emphasis) It's during the struggle that We come face to face with colonialism, discover reality, and transform it into the pattern of new customs and into the practice of revolutionary violence. But, how does this happen?

It happens under the influence of internal and external factors...under the influence of changed and changing objective and subjective conditions...under the influence of class forces inside and outside of the structure of the people -- most of all, it happens more or less spontaneously.

One thing We must always keep in mind...one thing that Fanon and Cabral and so many others take pains to remind us: The people are the nation, and they maintain the national culture and identity, distinct from that of the oppressor, even when the oppressor appears "in power and secure." The period appears "peaceful" simply because the people don't see a viable alternative--but We never know when or in what form that alternative will make itself apparent and mark the shift to qualitative change, the "leap" to the beginning of a new stage.

However, when that situation emerges--spontaneously--the task will be to change the spontaneous character, and give the movement conscious and comprehensive direction, under the leadership of the people and a revolutionary or "proletarian" class stand.

At 1.44, Fanon says: "Now the problem is to lay hold of this violence which is changing direction. When formerly it was appeased by myths and exercised its talents in finding fresh ways of committing mass suicide, now new conditions will make possible a completely new line of action." (He uses somewhat different language to pose the same problem, at 1.67) And, at 1.46, Fanon asks, "What are the [class] forces which, in the colonial period, open up new outlets and engender new aims for the violence of colonized peoples?" (my emphasis)

Here's how Fanon frames the examination:

Nowadays a theoretical problem of prime importance is being set, on the historical plane as well as on the level of political tactics, by the liberation of the colonies: when can one affirm that the situation is ripe for a movement of national liberation? In what form should it first be manifested? Because the various means whereby decolonization has been carried out have appeared in many different aspects, reason hesitates and refuses to say which is a true decolonization, and which a false. We shall see that for a man who is in the thick of the fight it is an urgent matter to decide on the means and the tactics to employ: that is to say, how to conduct and organize the movement. If this coherence is not present, there is only a blind will towards freedom, with the terribly reactionary risks which it entails. (1.45)

Let's stop here for a bit of orientation.

1) In a sense, the remaining chapters of *Wretched* are "previewed" in the first chapter--all of the themes are introduced and briefly treated there. That is, in the first chapter we encounter discussion of "spontaneity," "national consciousness," "culture" and "mental disorders"; we encounter discussion of "racism" and "class struggle". How could it be otherwise, if we recall our concept of revolutionary violence and decolonization? The first chapter provides an overview of all elements of both colonialism and anti-colonialism. If we confine ourselves to one theme, "violence" is the concern of the first chapter, but it's also the concern of the second chapter....

2) As we search for answers to the questions I've raised in this section, and as we focus particularly upon a brief examination of the "new conditions" and the class forces that open new outlets and create new aims for the people's violence, we're gonna encounter overlapping themes, e.g., spontaneity, and class struggle. We're gonna take up the theme of class struggle in Part Three, so here I wanna concentrate on the theme of spontaneity: It's the spontaneity of violence that's at issue--the strengths and weaknesses of a spontaneity that tends to characterize the beginnings of peoples' struggles and which, if not overcome, result in their failures, i.e., the failure to achieve "true" decolonization.

3) Now, let's go forward by going back to 1.45, break it down just a bit, and look for points that will help to orientate us as We proceed:

a) National liberation revolutions have given rise to theoretical problems, on the historical plane, and on the level of political tactics;

b) How do We determine whether or not a "revolutionary situation" exists within the colonial context?;

c) What form(s) (i.e., political, economic, cultural, or military) should be the first manifestation of the qualitative shift from the colonial to the anti-colonial period?;

d) We've witnessed many national liberation struggles and the raising of many flags over newly "independent" nations. How do We determine which, if any, of these "independent" nations were or are truly decolonized, i.e., where "new people" have arisen and assumed collective mastery over a truly liberated society?;

e) How do people's still suffering the capitalist/colonialist yoke answer all of the above questions, and decide upon the means and tactics to conduct and organize their revolutionary process? More to the point: How do they develop a "coherent" program-one that will allow them to avoid a mere "blind will" towards freedom (i.e., avoid the weaknesses of spontaneity), and thus also to avoid the "terribly reactionary risks" (i.e., neocolonialism) which the absence of coherence, and the presence of spontaneity, entail?

Yeah, We're still talking about how and why the people come to re-direct their violence. But, these questions lead into a discussion of "new conditions" and class forces which, in their turn, lead to discussion of the need for "coherence," and to overcome or avoid spontaneity, i.e., to avoid or overcome a mere "blind will" towards freedom, and its terrible consequences.

4F. Spontaneity and the Need for a Coherent Program

You turn to the second chapter and say: i've read about "violence," now i'll read about "spontaneity". Well, Fanon first raised the issue of spontaneity in the first chapter--and he's still talking about "violence" in the second chapter.

For example: At 1.26, he tells us that the people want and need "things explained to them; they are glad to understand a line of argument, and they like to see where they are going." (my emphasis) He then points out that, "...at the beginning of his association with the people, the native intellectual overstresses details," and "carried away by the multitudinous aspects of the fight, he tends to concentrate on local tasks," and "fails to see the whole of the movement all the time....He is occupied in action on a particular front, and... loses sight of the unity of the movement...."

Now, compare the above (from the chapter on "violence") with these lines (from the chapter on "spontaneity"): "...The elite will attach a fundamental importance to organization, so much so that the fetish of organization will often take precedence over a reasoned study of colonial society...." (2.1)

At 2.52, Fanon explains that "...During this period spontaneity is king, and initiative is localized....We are dealing with a strategy of immediacy" in which "the aim and program of each locally constituted group is local liberation. If the nation is everywhere, then she is here. One step further, and only here is she to be found...."

As you begin to read the second chapter, notice that Fanon opens it on the subject of a difference of "rhythm" between the so-called "leaders," and the mass of the people. you know me...i went to the dictionary to see if i could get a better grip on "rhythm," and i did, basing it on: 'an ordered, recurrent alternation in the flow of...that relates to forward movement; the aspect comprising all the elements that relate to forward movement; movement marked by regular recurrence of related elements; effect created by the elements that relate to development'.

You'll have to pardon me if i'm a bit slow, or seem to take unusual and extended routes to points that you reach in more conventional and timely ways. To some of us, it's not immediately clear that a difference of "rhythm" implies difference in: class/consciousness; interests and tactics; ways and means of conducting and organizing the movement; "identity, purpose and direction"; true from false decolonization; "blind will" and "coherence". A difference of "rhythm" means that the elements are unrelated--like another way of saying "class contradictions" or contradictions between ideological world-views....

Next, notice how Fanon points up the distinction between those who want an "immediate bettering of their lot," and those who want to "limit and restrain" the former. Now, a "better lot" doesn't just mean, say, a higher wage; it also means the all-round development of the person/people....

We're then shown that the "politically informed" person, under colonial domination, is one who "knows that a local conflict is not a decisive settlement" between the people and the system of colonialism. (2.1; also see 2.54)

No doubt, someone is asking: What does all this have to do with "spontaneity"?

True to form, i went to the dictionary and to the Thesaurus to check the word "spontaneity," and i began to work with: "the quality or state of being spontaneous; voluntary or undetermined action or movement." When i checked "spontaneous," i focused on: "1) proceeding from natural feeling or native tendency without external constraint; 2) arising from momentary impulse; 3) controlled and directed internally--self-acting; 4) not apparently contrived or manipulated." Synonyms are: impulsive; haphazard; instinctive. Antonyms are: studied, and deliberate. The shared meaning element of the synonyms is: acting or activated without deliberation, insight, forethought, or knowledge.

i then shifted my attention to the subtitle of the second chapter, and asked myself what may Fanon have meant by the "strength" and the "weakness" of spontaneity? Of course, i had to re-read and meditate on the chapter several times before it began to hit me. The "strength" of spontaneity (which i term its "objective" aspect) is its positive or progressive character--

action that's self-motivated or unrestrained by external forces. The "weakness" of spontaneity (which i term its "subjective" aspect) is evidenced when the action is taken without sufficient deliberation or knowledge--without sufficient development of consciousness and conscious direction..."coherent" or comprehensive direction, which coordinates the movement as a whole....

It's easy to notice that although Fanon often points (especially in the early stages) to the people's violence as "impatient" (1.52), spontaneous (1.69 and 2.17), and intuitive (1.71), he portrays this action in its "objective" aspect, as the manifestation of the "strength" of spontaneity. This comes across in one paragraph fairly clearly:

But it may happen that the country people, in spite of the slight hold that the nationalist parties have over them, play a decisive part either in the process of the maturing of the national consciousness, or through working in with the action of nationalist parties, or, less frequently, by substituting themselves purely and simply for the sterility of thee parties.... (2.25)

However, for every reference to, or example of, the "strength" of spontaneity, there are two or three references or examples of spontaneity's "weakness" -a weakness which Fanon discusses primarily in reference to the character and activity of the "leaders," the bourgeois nationalist parties, or the "intellectuals."

The "weakness" of spontaneity (i.e., the weakness in the decolonization process), is revealed when the so-called leaders and/or the "intellectuals" fail to make an analysis of colonialism (and capitalism) from a revolutionary (i.e., "proletarian") perspective, rather than using the bourgeois models of political or social science, and suggesting reformist solutions. It's also seen in the failure of these forces to put themselves "to school with the people: in other words, to put at the people's disposal the intellectual and technical capital that [they have] snatched when going through the colonial universities." (3.6)

If these forces truly have the people's interest at heart, then they should go to the people and help to prepare them to lead the struggle and to govern themselves; they should help the people to shape a vision of the new society--a vision developed as they challenge and critique the capitalist-colonialist world.

The "new conditions" that help to open-new lines of action -- and which bear most directly upon the issue of spontaneity -- are those involving the international situation (especially the struggles of other colonized peoples), and the repression of the people's rising by the colonial system, i.e., colonialism will "create spontaneity with bayonets and exemplary floggings." (1.60)

With regard to the latter, Fanon shapes the context by first rephrasing, at 1.67, the questions that he first posed at 1.44: "But let us return to that atmosphere of violence, that violence which is just under the skin. We have seen that in its process towards maturity many leads are attached to it, to control it and show it the way out. 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 [the source of] all his misfortunes, throwing all the exacerbated might of his hate and anger into this new channel. But how do we pass from the atmosphere of violence to violence in action? What makes the lid blow off?...."

The lid blows off when "good natives" become scarce; the nationalist parties call for public meetings and mass demonstrations, and, "...the agitation which ensues, the coming and going, the listening to speeches, seeing the people assembled in one place, with the police all around, the military demonstrations, arrests, and the deportation of the leaders -- all this hubbub makes the people think that the moment has come for them to take action," (1.62) and it's under such conditions that "the guns go off by themselves...." (1.68)

Colonialist repression follows, but "far from calling a halt to the forward rush of national consciousness, urges it on. Mass slaughter in the colonies at a certain stage of the embryonic development of consciousness increases that consciousness...." (1.69) (i find it striking that, here We are talking about "guns" going off, and Fanon chooses to characterize it as the forward rush of national consciousness.)

So, in the wave of repression and the rush of the people's embryonic consciousness, "daily life becomes quite simply impossible. You can no longer be a fellah, a pimp or an alcoholic as before," and the "recurring terror de-mystifies" the people. (1.91) A "point of no return" is reached, as repression engulfs all sectors of the population. (1.92)

Now, once this situation develops, We could say that We witness the manifestation of the "strength" of spontaneity. However, what happens after the guns go off...spontaneously? Having guns go off is no guarantee that the embryonic consciousness of the people will continue to develop, and to facilitate their assumption of leadership over the movement and the new society being fought for. Let's now take a look at those "forces"....

"What are the forces which in the colonial period open up new outlets and engender new aims for the violence of colonized peoples? In the first place, there are the political parties and the intellectual or commercial elites...." (1.46) There is also the peasantry (1.49) and the colonialist bourgeoisie. (1.50)

We've already seen how the colonialists create spontaneity with their repression of the people. They also create and/or take advantage of existing spontaneity by introducing the idea of "non-violence" and by encouraging a "compromise" solution, which "signifies to the intellectual and economic elites of the colonized country that the bourgeoisie has the same interests as them." (1.50)

The spontaneous rising of the people, and the existence of other national liberation struggles "modifies" the approach of the colonialists, who then set out "to capture the vanguard, to turn the movement of liberation towards the right, and to disarm the people." (1.66)

Towards this end of 'dislocating or creating diversions around the upward thrust of nationalism,' the colonialists take advantage of the ideological weaknesses and social divisions among the people. (2.24; 2.59; 2.60)

As We look at the role of the bourgeois nationalist parties, We should note that Fanon is not questioning the principle of the "party," but rather "the make-up of their leaders and the nature of their followings." (1.47) This note is for those who, for whatever reason, don't (yet) appreciate the need for and the role of structured organizations for the people to use as both weapons in the struggle against oppression, and as tools in the construction of the new society.

To begin with, "the characteristic feature of certain political structures is that they proclaim abstract principles but refrain from issuing definite commands. The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period [because they model themselves on those parties and principles of the colonialist bourgeoisie and its world-view] is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophico-political dissertations on the themes of the rights of the peoples to self-determination, the rights of [peoples] to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: 'One [person], one vote.' The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity for 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 [neo-colonial] 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." (1.46)

i hope We've said enough about "violence" so that as you read passages like the one above, you'll know that the opposition of the bourgeois nationalists to "violence" is an opposition to ANY form of fundamental change in the system of neo-colonialism, colonialism, imperialism, capitalism--and patriarchy. "Violence" to them is any talk about all power really being in the hands of the people; it's any threat to their interests and to the interests of their capitalist masters.

As you read 1.46, you should try to picture any and all individuals or groups...any voiced positions that seem to fit the bill, or that can be accurately characterized as narrow, bourgeois-nationalist/reformist/post-neocolonialist...as representative of the "intellectual or commercial elite." Farrakhan or Jesse? Manning Marable, Cornel West or Skip Gates? What about some of the other persons or groups that talk about "self-determination" or "empowerment" and sometimes even use the word "liberation" -- but they really think "assimilation" or "parity" or "pluralism" or, as is common these days, a bourgeois-oriented "multi-culturalism" -- what they're saying is, "Give us more power!"

The parties "show a deep distrust toward the people" (of the rural areas) and "pass the same unfavorable judgment" upon them as the settlers. (2.5) They fail to "direct their propaganda towards" the (rural) masses (2.9), and they don't try to organize them or to use "existing structures and [give] them a nationalist or progressive character....They do not go out to find the mass of the people. They do not put their theoretical knowledge to the service of the people...." (2.12)

As the people spontaneously engage the colonial system, the bourgeois nationalist parties "make the most of the manna, but do not attempt to organize the rebellion. They don't send leaders into the countryside to educate the people politically, or to increase their awareness or put the struggle onto a higher level...." (2.18)

The difference in "rhythm" continues after independence, "precisely because the people now at the head of affairs did not explain to the people as a whole, during the colonial period, what were the aims of the party, the national trends, or the problems of international politics." (2.21)

Ironically, the reformist activity and bourgeois character of nationalist parties indirectly takes a progressive twist, because, "In their speeches [they] give a name to the nation. In this way the [people's] demands are given shape.

"There is, however, no definite subject-matter and no political or social program. There is a vague outline or skeleton, which is nevertheless national in form, what we describe as 'minimum requirements'. The politicians who make speeches and who write in the nationalist newspapers make the people dream dreams. They avoid the actual overthrowing of the state, but in fact they introduce into their readers' or hearers' consciousness the terrible ferment of subversion....and the imagination is let loose outside the bounds of the colonial order...." (1.60-1.61)

Consideration of the intellectuals should begin at 1.17, where Fanon first mentions them, e.g., as the masses begin to vomit up bourgeois values, the "phenomenon is ordinarily masked" because of the action of certain intellectuals and, as the masses demand "that the last shall be first," the intellectuals bring "variants" to the petition. (1.20)

We've already noted the tendency of intellectuals to contribute to the development of spontaneity by their fetish for organization and their focus upon the immediate environment rather than upon the movement as a whole -- and their failure to make a reasoned study of the colonial system and of their own social structure.

"In order to assimilate and to experience the oppressor's culture, the native has had to leave certain of his intellectual possessions in pawn. These pledges include his adoption of the forms of thought of the colonialist bourgeoisie...." (1.25) "Thus there is very easily brought into being a kind of class of affranchised slaves, or slaves who are individually free. What the intellectual demands is the right to multiply the emancipated, and the opportunity to organize a genuine class of emancipated citizens...." (1.48)

(Now, go back a few pages in these Meditations to my mention of George Curry and Skip Gates--esp. Gates' stated aim 'to bring more black people into the middle class' -- yeah, that's them, the "affranchised slaves' who wanna multiply their class....

"[T]he elites of the colonial countries, those slaves set free, when at the head of the movement, inevitably end up by producing an ersatz conflict [i.e., artificial and inferior

substitute]....The truth is that they never make any real appeal" to the colonized people, "they never mobilize them in concrete terms...." (1.59)

Of course, there are individuals within the bourgeois classes who break from the class orientation and begin to make a contribution to the formation of a coherent and deliberate program. Fanon first mentions this tendency within the context of conditions which favor a "backward surge of intellectuals towards bases grounded in the people," and an "eradication of the superstructure built by these intellectuals from the bourgeois colonialist environment." (1.21)

When such intellectuals begin to live among the people, they, too, begin to vomit up bourgeois values, and individualism disappears (1.22), and they adopt the method of "communal self-criticism"; they abandon the "habits of calculation, of unwonted silence, of mental reservations...and the spirit of concealment."(1.23)

Fanon picks up the same theme at 1.59:

...Obviously there are to be found at the core of the political parties and among their leaders certain revolutionaries who deliberately turn their backs upon the farce of national independence. But very quickly their questionings, their energy and their anger obstruct the party machine; and these elements are gradually isolated, and then quite simply brushed aside. At this moment, as if there existed a dialectic concomitance, the colonialist police will fall upon them. With no security in the towns, avoided by the militants of their former party, and rejected by its leaders, these undesirable firebrands will be stranded in country districts. Then it is that they will realize bewilderedly that the peasant masses catch on to what they have to say immediately, and without delay ask them the question to which they have not yet prepared the answer: "When do we start?"

These "left" petty-bourgeois elements haven't prepared an answer to the question because, despite their antagonism toward the "right" bourgeois elements, they, too, have traditionally ignored the masses and failed to analyze their own social structure and to develop a coherent plan. It's here that Fanon places this theme within the context of the decisive intervention of the people, i.e., "in certain circumstances the country people are going to intervene in decisive fashion both in the struggle for national liberation and in the way that the future nation marks out for itself." (2.35) This is a fundamentally important phenomenon, and he proposes to study it in detail, as will We.

***** ~

Fanon sets the stage over the next several paragraphs, with a more detailed description of the process that was initially noted at 1.59, and here the focus is clearly upon the phenomenon of spontaneity.

We shouldn't be surprised to learn that there are "two wills" at play--a contradiction between progressive and reactionary tendencies within the party (tho, again, both tendencies have neglected to involve the masses), which reflects

the broader contradiction within the movement and among the people as a whole. ~;

(1.36) Fanon uses the terms "legalists" and "illegalists," altho other terms could be used to describe the opposing tendencies.

The "left" begins to raise questions about the movement's ideology, strategy and methods; they begin to suggest the use of "all other means"--which We should ~; understand to include armed forms of struggle, but only as one among ALL other means. Here, "coherent" program means one in which all elements of social life are systematically connected, and that struggle on each of the fronts is coordi

nated. ~:

The "right" wants to compromise with colonialism, to "change the system from within" as We often hear it said. They claim that joining, say, the Democratic or Republican parties will solve the problem--even a "third" or "inde

pendent" party-that plays by the rules of the oppressive state-is held out as ~:

a solution.

So, the "intellectual elements" (1.36) and the "militants" (1.37) combine to form a new party (1.38) They declare a new line (e.g., "Black Power" or the claim to open the "armed front" or to launch the "foco"). They end up going underground, or in the countryside or the mountains, while also realizing that activity in the urban centers alone won't be sufficient to overthrow colonialism. As they join the people--who are "rebels by instinct" (2.40), spontaneous action soon follows.

We should pay particular attention to 2.50, where We're given one of the reasons why, "in the beginning," there's a "veritable triumph for the cult of spontaneity" -- a one-sided analysis of the thought and practice of the bourgeois

parties and their leaders has caused a rejection of all "politics" rather than ~:

a righteous rejection of reactionary political thought and practice. The new "left" now substitutes its own superficial line for that of their former comrades which, in practice and over the long run, proves to be just as dangerous as the line that they repudiated -- it's "right" in essence. The next paragraph captures this, as We see that there's still "no program." And, at 2.52, We see the circumstances under which "spontaneity is king" and revolutionary politics are abandoned for the "art of war"....

The spontaneous action sparks a widespread feeling of solidarity and accomplishment, as the people "wills itself to sovereignty." (2.53) However, the enemy launches an all-out offensive (military, political and social), which calls the people's euphoria into question. (2.54) Soon, the "spontaneous impetuosity" is condemned to self-repudiation (2.55), not only with regard to the mobility of guerrilla warfare:

...the leaders of the rising realize that the various groups

must be enlightened; that they must be educated and indoctrinated, ~

and that an army and a central authority must be created Those ~:

leaders who have fled from the useless political activity of the towns rediscover politics, no longer as a way of lulling people to sleep not as a means of mystification, but as the only method

of intensifying the struggle and preparing the people to undertake ~:

the governing of their country clearly and lucidly....They discover that the success of the struggle presupposes clear objectives, a definite methodology, and above all the need for the people to

realize that their unorganized efforts can only be a temporary ~:

dynamic [and that the struggle can't be won, and] you won't change human beings if you forget to raise the standard of consciousness of the rank and file.... (2.57) (my emphasis)

Fanon now points again to the enemy's creation of spontaneity by taking advantage of the people's ideological and social weaknesses, and asserts that

"the political education of the masses is seen to be a historic necessity."(2.60) ~;~

What's happened to all the solidarity, the euphoria, the feeling of accom- ~:

plishment as We thought We were riding the "high tide"?:

That spectacular volunteer [spontaneous] movement which meant to lead the colonized people to supreme sovereignty at one fell swoop, that certainty which you had that all portions of the nation would be carried along with you at the same speed and

led onwards by the same light, that strength which gave you ~:

hope: all now are seen, in the light of experience, to be symptoms of a very great weakness. While the native thought that he could pass without transition from the status of a

colonized person to that of a self-governing citizen of an ;~:

independent nation while he grasped at the mirage of his muscles' own immediacy, he made no real progress along the

road to knowledge. His consciousness remained rudimentary. (2.61) ~;

Now, go back and read that again, because i'm sure that at least some of you have failed to notice the keys, e.g., what are the "symptoms" of the very great weakness? What is the "weakness"? What kind of "transition" is necessary?

More and more i come to believe that We periodically find ourselves having to start from scratch not because our job is hard, but merely because We don't know what our job is! Go back, now, to the close of 2.57: "...you won't change human beings...." That's our job; that's the aim of the national and social revolution.

Although We're only two chapters into Wretched, if you haven't firmly grasped i~:

this point yet, then you need to stop here, go back to the first page, and start over....In fact, you also need to go back to the first page of these Meditations and start over.

Many of us really need to pick up on the key in the last section of 2.61, as Fanon points up the period as one in which the people oppose their own "duality" to that of the settler. That they do so is a symptom of the ideological weakness characteristic of "spontaneity," which Fanon sheds light on at 2.62 and 2.63. That is, "racialism" won't sustain a war for national and social revolution, and that such a war should not be waged to allow racialism to triumph. People who hold and depend upon "racialism" don't yet fully realize their own humanity, and, among other things, they easily fall into the trap of the settlers' treatment of them as "human" within the colonial context: "The native is so ~ starved for anything, anything at all that will turn him into a human being.... His consciousness is so precarious and dim that it is affected by the slightest spark of kindness...." (2.63)

The message for all of us is that "explanation is very necessary," and that "the people must see where they are going and how they are to get there...." (2.64)

The message is in the last paragraph of the first chapter, and in the last paragraph of the second chapter -- We get images of what happens if spontaneity is overcome, and of what happens if it's not.

If "spontaneity" is overcome, then the "left" petty-bourgeois forces will commit "suicide" and become "new" with/as one of the people; the people will become totally responsible for the governing and development of their society.

If "spontaneity" is not overcome, then "independence" will become a farce.

NOTES PART TWO

1. Deborah Wyrick,- Fanon for Beginners, Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., New York, 1998, pps. 62-63.
2. Cornel West, The Cornel West Reader, Basic Civitas Books, New York, 1999, p. 105.
3. Op cit., Glossary

**

**Forthcoming: Part Three: The Pitfalls of National and Class Consciousness Part Four: On the
Deconstruction of "Race" Part Five: On "Culture" and "Nation" Part Six: On Reparations**