

Black Masculinity

Abstract

This text deals with a comparative-analytical approach to the influence of Franz Fanon as a black, contemporary, and male influential figure in relation to other male writers who have recently focused their analytical and emotional capacities on the black masculine experience.

Towards an agency of black masculinities: Fanon as a proto-theorist and practitioner of black masculine healing

Introduction

Frantz Fanon was born on the Caribbean island of Martinica into a middle-class family.

Martinica is a region dominated by France and in which people learn to identify as French.

When he arrives in continental France, he is able to question what it means to be French and why is he not considered French. He studies psychiatry and settles down in Lyon. There he discovers existentialism and left-winged movements. His thesis

“Essays on the Alienation of the Black Man”, is rejected by the university and published later under the name *“Black Skin, White Masks”*, one of the most influential texts in the history of liberation movements against racism.

Fanon asserts that active engagement is as important as ideological engagement in liberation struggles; this is why he enrolled in the liberation wars in northern Africa.

At the beginning of his famous book *“Black Skins, White Masks”* he raises a complex question: *“What does the black man want? He wants to be human”* (Fanon, 2008).

Understanding Fanon’s Critique

Frantz Fanon’s studies on racism and psychology shed light upon an often relegated sphere of social sciences—the emotionality of racialized human beings for domination. Fanon himself utilized his own life experiences as a black man to break down the complexity of racism as a system of oppression. In his most fundamental contributions to anti-racist critique, he points out the ontological hierarchy imposed by the historical origins of “race”. Colonialism established the economic and therefore the ideological background for race itself. (Wynter 2003)

Colonial narratives aim at a notion in which white European settlers and invaders were predestined to enslave and/or exterminate the peoples from other geographical and cultural realities to ensure the survival and growth of the European Kingdoms and the expansion of European cultural values and customs throughout the “uncivilized” world. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:)

Even though Fanon’s most fruitful phase regarding his writings was in the 1950s, his focus still maintains enormous relevance in today’s political agenda. Decolonial struggles, European imperialism in Afrika and Abya **Yala**, the healing of collective trauma, and the different perspectives of black males and females within contexts of migration as well as systematic and everyday racism. In this text, we shall pay special attention to Fanon’s contributions to a series of political statements made by black males throughout history.

Although Fanon didn’t explicitly claim a political “spotlight” as a black man interested in “gender” affairs, he pinpoints vital traits in relation to sexual and corporal identity and its interweaving with racial and class domination. (Fanon, 2008).

View on Racism and Power

Fanon explains that racism as a system functions based on a contradiction between whites and non-whites. Psychologically, Fanon managed to portray how this contradiction affects harshly the human psyche because it subtracts the human condition from non-whites, those racialized for domination, the non-humans. By acknowledging this, one can better comprehend the nature of such atrocious deeds carried out at least for the past five centuries. Genocide, land theft, segregation, apartheid, massive sexual violence and kidnapping, enslavement and human trafficking are the most widely associated deeds with colonialism and the realization of coloniality of power, being and knowledge (Grosfóguel, 2018)

Fanon’s view on racism, colonialism and domination as well as his decolonial narrative entrenched on the emotional baggage of black people in Europe is highly remarkable. Beyond its effects on sociopolitical relevance of racism and systematic oppression,

Fanon’s concern about the invaded people’s mental health was a revolutionary assessment. He, as a black male, addresses collective and personal healing as a means to restore humanity and return the human condition to all black people and other racially subjugated (Fanon, 1994).

Kommentiert [CA1]:

Kommentiert [CA2R1]: bya Yala is the Name that the Kuna people who reside in the current territories of the nation-states of Colombia and Panama gave to a major territory comprising lands and countries beyond those of the Kuna. This term is politically utilized in opposition to the foreign Name (Latin) America given by European invaders.

What is the Agency of Black Masculinities? *The Man-Not*

The Man-Not, the black person, was created as a sub-human and sometimes as a super-human depending on which narrative is intended to underline in order to legitimate European domination over the bodies and territories of the Afrikan people, e.g.: Physical traits are often exaggerated and treated as a deviation of normality, whereas intellectual faculties are stereotypically annulated and/or minimized to the extent of creating a portrait of an incomplete (black) human being (Curry, 2017)

According to Fanon, dissertations regarding social transformation can no longer be limited to understanding what has been done until now, but rather a time to shift it. Black Masculinities are vividly growing in different continents and rural and urban spaces. In any case, there is an expanding consciousness regarding the non-human state, imposed over our bodies and cultures. The black masculine experience is a necessary subject within the construction of a different reality among the peoples of black/Afrikan communities on the entire planet (Milton, 2012).

From where do black males speak? What do they speak about? Whom are they speaking to?

In his book, Curry emphasizes the urgent need to condemn the preoccupying rates of violence that black males are subjected to in the United States of America and around the globe. The safety of black families and the integrity of black males is risked due to the high rates of violence, school dropouts and other systematic factors. (Ferguson, 2000)

Sexual violence is a popularly invoked chapter from the sexuality of black males. This is a zone in which racist concepts have flourished in diverse cultural and geographical scenarios. The American (colonial) myth of the *black rapist* has obtained large credibility and generate tremendous damage to black communities. On the other hand, black masculinity discourses and communal organizations are actively exhibiting historical and current forms of sexual violence known to the black masculine experiences. The black man as a victim of sexual violence and the innocence of these when systematically and unfairly accused of rape. (Curry, 2018)

Fanon studies first-hand several of these topics throughout his own experiences and his contemporaries'. This enables an intergenerational dialogue between him and currently active writers and activists on sexuality, interracial affairs, the image of black males amid a racist society, etc. (Dei, 2010)

The Proto-Black Male Activist

Perhaps, Fanon's greatest contribution to these considerations is the exposure of the dehumanizing standards that came into being during colonial invasions. In his book "*Black Skin, White Masks*" he exemplifies concretely how black male subjects build an identity and several social practices to reobtain his human condition, from which he, as a collective unit, is deprived of centuries ago. Contemporary literature on black masculine thematic fields still underscores the brutality and subaltern categories to which black males are supposed to comply to. (Lemelle, 2010)

Conclusions in Common

Both kinds of black masculine activists plea for a loving and healing way to bring together all different parties torn apart during the history of enslavement and land theft. Fanon states that at some point the black man will start to hate all elements of *white culture* with the same strength that he used to love them, though he stresses that no revolutionary agenda can be pushed through based on hatred but rather on love. At first, this has a positive consequence since it helps to destabilize white supremacist hegemony. Yet love for oneself and humankind beyond any racial cast system are transformative forces per se.

Only by suturing open wounds from the past, will we be able to encounter change.

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