



Editor's Note

Reflections on Fanon

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The consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that it is its guarantee.

—Frantz Fanon, 1959

This Special (Summer 2007) Issue of *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* includes the proceedings of the fourth annual Social Theory Forum (STF), held on March 27-28, 2007, at UMass Boston. The theme of the conference was “The Violences of Colonialism and Racism, Inner and Global: Conversations with Frantz Fanon on the Meaning of Human Emancipation.”

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961), the revolutionary Martinique-born French psychiatrist, thinker, and activist—and author of the classics *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)—spent a significant part of his short life understanding the nature of colonialism and racism and their effects on the indigenous cultures of the colonizers and the colonized, and their psyche. Colonialism and racism do not stop at one’s skin, he observed, but penetrate the deepest recesses of one’s psyche regardless of where one stands on the colonial and racial lines. Equipped also with insights into how the oppressed have historically resisted and challenged the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and racism, Fanon prescribed courses of action involv-

ing psychological and socio-political education and activism through writing and participation in liberatory movements (especially in the Algerian context)—approaches that have informed the tumultuous decades of debates following his passing and still inspire scholars and activists alike to simultaneously combine inner and global inquiries into the nature of oppression and liberation.

Fanon’s thought has important insights into the relation of violence and oppression/liberation; interrelation of culture and psyche; racialized/colonized body and consciousness; imprisonment and torture; intersections of class, race, psyche, and revolution; and racial/colonial alienation and emancipation. Despite the transition of overt forms of racism and colonialism to much subtler and more covert forms amidst claims for their endings, however, the present period appears to paradoxically combine a deepening of their subtler forms with an unabashed return to overtly reconstructed modes of global imperial expansion and racial differentiation and discrimination.

The Social Theory Forum held in March 2007 at UMass Boston sought to revisit Fanon’s insightful joining of the micro and the macro—the everyday life and the increasingly global and world-historical—insights into critical social psychological and imaginative social analysis and theorizing in favor of innovative discourses on the meaning of human emancipation and toward disalienated and reimagined

inner and global landscapes.

Drawing scholars from various national and international universities, and widely attended by students and faculty drawn from UMass Boston and the surrounding on- and off-campus communities, the March 2007 conference was fortunate to have Fanon specialists and distinguished scholars such as Lewis R. Gordon (Temple University), Marnia Lazreg (Hunter College, CUNY), Irene L. Gendzier (Boston University), and Nigel Gibson (Emerson College), present insightful and provocative keynote speeches to a highly engaged audience. As in the previous year(s), the conference was opened with a warm welcoming address by Donna Kuizenga, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at UMB, and an engaging opening statement was then presented by Winston Langley, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at UMass Boston.

Since the collection of keynote presentations, papers, and commentaries that follow (aided by opening abstracts for each) provide a good sense of the scope and depth of the excellent dialogue undertaken at the conference, I will not provide further summaries herein and instead warmly encourage a thorough reading of the volume. The theme of the conference, while focusing on Fanon and his legacy, was broadly design to allow for the study of the implication of his thought in various theoretical and empirical/historical settings. Therefore, the reader will find some papers directly focusing on Fanon's life and thought, while others explore various theoretical and historical subjects in relation to one or another element in Fanon's life and writings. Subjects range from close textual analysis and rereading of Fanon's works in the context of those of other thinkers or historical events in regional or global frameworks, to specific explorations of topics such as those highlighted in the sub-themes and titles of conference papers.

As the STF organizing committee chair I would like to take this opportunity to thank other committee members Jorge Capetillo-Ponce, Estelle Disch, Panayota Gounari, Glenn Jacobs, and Anna Beckwith, for their involvement and support in making this engaging conference possible. Capetillo-Ponce, Gounari, Jacobs, and Beckwith additionally assisted

with peer reviewing the submissions to the proceedings issue.

Sherry Williams, office manager of the Sociology Department at UMB, provided valuable assistance in managing various pre- and post-conference tasks. Allison Duffy, Director of Special Events at UMass Boston and John Potter, Coordinator of the ITC Media Labs at UMB, and his staff provided excellent support in arranging the logistics of the conference. UMB students Jennifer Pfordresher, Linda Aspinwall, and Shauna Murray did a superb job attending the tables of the event during both days, and contributing to a lively and inviting atmosphere at the conference. For this, and previous allocations of graduate student assistantships, the STF organizing committee appreciates the contributions of the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology at UMass Boston.

The STF 2007 conference was made possible through the generous co-sponsorships (at UMass Boston) by the Department of Sociology, the Graduate Program in Applied Linguistics, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture, the Honors Program, the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Political Science, the Department of Africana Studies, and the Women's Studies Department. Local artists Gloretha Baynes and Khalid Kodi, from the African American Master Artists-in-Residency Program at Northeastern University, Boston, and Thanasis Gounaris in Athens, Greece, enriched the conference by lending their talents in designing the events' two posters. The STF organizing committee is highly aware and appreciative of the contributions all of the above have made to the continued success of the forum.

The editor wishes to acknowledge and thank the Grove Press, Inc. (841 Broadway, New York, NY, 10003-4793) for kindly extending permission to use the image of Frantz Fanon on the cover of this special issue of *Human Architecture*. The image appeared as a plate photo inserted in the 1967 hard cover edition of *Black Skin, White Masks*. (New York: Grove Press, Inc.).