

## Prelude

This essay will be focusing on two influential French philosophers of the 1900s. Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. Aimé Césaire was born in Basse Pointe, Martinique in 1913. He was considered to be one of the founding fathers of the négritude movement in the francophone world. This essay will center on his speech *Culture and Colonization*, delivered at Le Premier Congrès International des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs in 1956. Frantz Fanon was also born in Martinique, Fort-de-France Bay, in 1925. Fanon is best known for his influential works on post-colonial studies and national liberation. This essay will emphasis on his book *Black Skins, White Masks*. Specifically, Chapter Five, *The Lived Experience of The Black Man*. Fanons book was published in 1952.

### On “Culture and Colonization”

In Aimé Césaire’s speech, *Culture and Colonization*, Césaire voices a strong opinion on colonialism and its contributions to culture in three substantial parts. First, is the illustration of what Césaire means by “Culture” in his text. “Culture” as Césaire pronounces it is, “national culture. But it is immediately apparent that national cultures, as particular as they are, are grouped by affinities. And these great cultural relationships, these great cultural families, have a name: they are *civilizations*” (*Culture and Colonization*, 128). Likewise, Césaire here is explaining to us that culture pertains to a collection of single colonies and their respective traditions. But also, tends off to another word such as “civilizations”. Which includes a shared collection of multiple colonies. Similarly, “civilizations” is the macroscopic generic picture, whereas “culture” is the specific microscopic picture. Secondly, Césaire goes on to state that

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these national cultures want to get past an invisible colonialist line to move towards a new future.

For instance, he states the following, “There is a double solidarity among all those who are gathered here: first, a horizontal solidarity, a solidarity created by the colonial or semicolonial or parcolonial situation that has been imposed on us from without. And on the other hand, another solidarity that is vertical, a solidarity in time, which comes from the fact that out of an initial unity, the unity of African civilization, there has been differentiated a whole series of cultures that all owe something to that civilization” (Césaire, 130). This shows us that colonialism is preventing civilizations from jumping forward. However, if they feel the need to look backwards in history this may aid them towards the future. In addition, it also reveals to us that civilizations are bound together by colonialism. As they share the obstacle of colonialism, they have this metaphorically shared history in common. The third element is that Césaire believes colonization has essentially killed cultures by attempting to replace theirs with the new European universal one. He states the following, “a political and social regime that suppresses the self-determination of a people thereby kills the creative power of that people” (*Culture and Colonization*, 131). In addition, Césaire believes that a culture needs its originality. If it’s replaced by a new universal one, it ends up killing human dignity. As well as, leads to some problems with the so called “exchange” of European and indigenous culture.

### On “Black Skins, White Masks”

Franz Fanon's ideology on culture is a personal philosophical reflection on what it means to be a black man in the ‘world’ of a white man. For instance, he describes multiple scenarios in which he is emotionally challenged by the way he doesn’t fit in with society in France. Even though he is an elite coming from Martinique, essentially a francophone country. Fanon states

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the following, “And then we were given the occasion to confront the white gaze. An unusual weight descended on us. The real world robbed us of our share. In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema” (*Black Skins, White Masks*, 90). Similarly, he feels empty to the eyes of the white men. As though he is there to be gawked at and remains confused on how to react psychologically to that. Fanon goes further on to describe his frustration with having to live in his black body and how much of an inferior object he felt to *the Other*. The author states, “I existed in triple: I was taking up room. I approached the Other ... and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea. I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors” (*Black Skins, White Masks*, 92). Similarly, this shows us another psychological evaluation of the self in a negative destructive self-esteem. And its rationalization is that it’s not just his skin tone, but what it’s represented over the course of history. Thus feeling the need that he can’t fit in with the ‘white’ folks. Likewise, this was a very similar theme throughout chapter five. The theme of responsibility of not just himself, but of others. Such as black cultural traditions, the black skin, and the white man. Thus, leading into argumentatively, the most important piece to his philosophy. The idea of the white man needing to feel the need to infuriate the black man in order to achieve a sense of self-worth. Césaire states the following, “I am the world! The white man has never understood this magical substitution. The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself. He discovers he is the predestined master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is one of appropriation. But there are values that can be served only with my sauce. As a magician I stole from the white man a "certain world," lost to him and his kind” (*Black Skins, White Masks*, 107). Essentially, Césaire is explaining that the black man does have worth in the white man’s life. That it’s as though the black man is a reflection of the white

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man's insecurities. Conclusively, when a white mans materialized society grows mundane they seek to find spiritual comfort from black culture. Césaire argues that they will never be able to satisfy that hungry.

## Césaire vs Fanon

Both francophone philosophers are clearly very intellectual scholars. However, it must be identified that in between the two. Césaire's ideology was the most appealing and perhaps the closest to reality as we will ever get. By this I mean, to accept that we need to look back on cultural history to move forward. For instance, author Robin Kelly states, "If anything, colonialism results in the massive destruction of whole societies—societies that not only function at a high level of sophistication and complexity, but that might offer the West valuable lessons about how we might live together and remake the modern world" (*A poetics of Anticolonialism*, 21). This shows us that looking back at the destruction inflicted on societies can help us reflect on these mistakes. Thus, we need to retain cultural history to help us reflect. Fanon seeks to replace the idea of cultural history with acting out now in the present time. Fanon believes that black men shouldn't assimilate to the white world. For instance he states the fallowing, "'Lay aside your history, your research into the past, and try to get in step with our rhythm. In a society such as ours, industrialized to the extreme, dominated by science, there is no longer room for your sensitivity. You have to be tough to be able to live. It is no longer enough to play ball with the world; you have to master it with integrals and atoms" (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 111). Be that as it may, it seems to be that Fanon does not want to accept the reality that he is already living in, at least completely. That is, one cannot change the socio standards that are already placed universally. He wants to change the view of European dominance and attempt to confront

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it in the present time. However, it's already set in place and one cannot change those cultures to wake up. They are already dead and invaded in some way or another with European dominance. Which is why all we have left to do is deal with the facts of the pasts to help the future free of colonization. Césaire states the following, "I refuse to yield to the temptation of the tabula rasa. I refuse to believe that the future African culture could totally and brutally reject the old African culture" (*Culture and Colonization*, 141). Similarly, it seems as though his philosophy gets carried away with an ineffective standard that black men should start behaving as their stereotypes with zero remorse. This in order to riot against the white man's restrictions in a 'white world'. This can prove to be ineffective in two ways. The first, In order to get people to actually listen to this revolution, it can't just be about the self. For instance, author David Macey even stated that, "Fanon's sense of not knowing what he is because that is what he is, is to a large degree an effect of his being Martinican, and there is considerable textual evidence to indicate that *Peau noire* could not have been written by anyone but a Martinican" (*Fanon, phenomenology, race*, 8). This essentially shows us that, Fanon's perspective is minuscular to his Martinican roots. If he were able to make this a universal ideal. Perhaps he could gain supplementary traction and let it have a larger impact on minorities universally. The second, is that if he's already in this 'white world', and wants this proclaimed self-demonizing state to go away. And actually be listened to. He has to accept the notion that it has to be done through the assimilation of the methods of European intellect. As Césaire and his forefathers ideologies have. Those have proven to be successful by yes adapting to the methodology of European intellect. However, also incorporating their own 'black' thought. This is why Césaire goes onto the conclusion that all we *can* do is look towards the past in order to learn from the mistakes colonization had implemented on live cultures.

## Climate Protests

Climate protests have never been anything out of the ordinary when it comes to the news. They gain incredible publicity when some environmentalists get a little carried away. In April 15<sup>th</sup> of 2019, a group of environmentalists named, *Extinction Rebellion*, protested at the Natural History Museum in London. This turned out to be successful as it gained more followers to listen their cause. Meanwhile, a week later, another group formed from those same members and decided to take matters into their hands. They attempted to vandalize properties around the city as well as even put their lives and others in danger by climbing onto a bridge. Well, the authorities were called in and made as many as 1,000 arrests during a week's span of time. The mayor even deemed that as "counter-productive" in regards to raising awareness for climate change. This shows us that if they would have continued peacefully protesting they would have gained the cities vote for climate change. This is very similar to the effectiveness of Césaire's theory as opposed to Fanon's ideology. Fanon would have encouraged these people to speak with action and not with words. Allowing for protests to be heard with compulsive actions. Hopefully, just as Césaire has emphasized, learning from these mistakes of protesting the wrong way. Will help them reflect on better methodologies in the future to have their movement be heard and eventually, approved by the government. Since the government will always have the last verdict.

## Conclusion

Aimé Césaire taught us that we all have a shared national culture. That of colonialism and its irreversibility. As well as, that we must maintain our cultural history in order to be able to progress forward. That is by reflection, because we can't change past history. Franz Fanon

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challenged us to sit through the psychological damages he went through. This by trying to find the meaning of what it means to be a black man in a white world. Fanon also gave us a utopian vision of a revolution. To metaphorically, kill the meaning of a white world. To step up to them and say that we don't want to live under your shadow anymore. Unfortunately, I like Césaire don't think it's possible to accomplish this. As Césaire once said, "such a solution is impossible under the colonial regime because such a mingling, such a commingling, can only be expected from a people if that people retains the historical initiative, in other words if that people is free. Which is incompatible with colonialism" (*Culture and Colonization*, 138).

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