UNDERSTANDING FANON'S THEORY OF VIOLENCE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The main thrust of this paper is to demonstrate that Fanon's thesis of violence is relevant to violence in modern times. It explores Fanon's analysis of colonial violence and violence for liberation. It then argues that socio-economic deprivation and alienation which he identifies as the root causes of racial and tribal violence in the colonial world are responsible for the outbreak and escalation of racial and ethnic violence in modern society, especially Africa. Rather than subscribe to Fanon's belief in revolution, this paper recommends that restructuring of socio-political systems, and development of humans and infrastructure, among others, remain major panaceas for contemporary violence in Africa.

Keywords: Colonialism, Violence, Decolonization, Freedom.

Introduction

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

So, while the influence of French education was moving the young Fanon towards assimilation, Césaire's negritude was tilting him towards self autonomy. He was therefore "plagued during much of his life by the demands of assimilation and the need for autonomy, the need to be one's authentic self. He embodied within himself these two contradictory positions."[1] The outbreak of Second World War interrupted Fanon's education and he was enlisted in the Free French Army to fight for the French. His travels during war brought him face-to-face with the experience of racism in Europe, Africa and in the French Caribbean. He observed that in the army France had a different place for Black Frenchmen despite the value of liberty, equality and fraternity it proclaims.

Fanon returned to school to complete his education when the war ended. At this time, his teachers observed that he became more and more withdrawn and introspective, suggesting that he was going over his war experience in his mind. He then turned his attention to the work of philosophers such as Jean Paul Satre, Aime Césaire, Karl Jaspers, Soren KierKegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. In 1847 Fanon went to France to study Medicine with a specialization in Psychiatry at the University of Lyon. During his medical training he continued to study the works of philosophers, including Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Friedrich Hegel. After completing his studies, we went to Algeria in 1953 to serve as head of the Psychiatry department of Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria. In the hospital Fanon began to observe the effects of colonial violence on the human psyche, as he was giving Algerians and French soldiers treatment.

Fanon's study and experience of the existential conditions of the oppressed people in France and Algeria prompted him to join National Liberation Front (FLN) and work actively for Algeria's liberation. By day he would work for the French administration, while by night he would work for the Algerian nationalists. When it dawned on him that he could no longer cope with this double role, he resigned from the psychiatric job to devote himself wholeheartedly to the FLN and the Algerian revolution. He pointed out the futility of practising psychiatry in a degrading and dehumanizing colonial world in his letter of resignation. As he states it: "if psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalization."[2]

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

Nature of Violence
Violence is the "use of force to harm or destroy human beings or non-human objects, for the purpose of preserving or altering political institutions, systems, governments, or policies."[3] Violence may be physical or psychological. Roberts explains that violence "contains dimensions of physical and psychological domination by one species of mankind over another."[4] Physical violence is the infliction or threat of infliction of painful injury by the use of instruments like whips, guns, bayonets and fists. Psychological violence involves the use of hostile behaviour such as gestures and words to cause emotional damage or harm to the victim. Both forms of violence are aimed at diminishing the victim's sense of identity, dignity and self-worth.

There are two distinct concepts of violence, namely instrumental violence and intrinsic violence. Instrumental violence refers to "a concept in which the implementation of either wanton irrational or calculated rational violence occurs as a means to an end."[5] This means that violence is employed with the sole purpose of achieving a specific result. Here, the party does not place a metaphysical value on the violent act but sees it merely as an instrumental means to attain an end. Intrinsic violence, in contrast to instrumental violence, refers to "a metaphysical concept in which the act of either random irrational or calculated rational violence itself contains inherent value."[6] Intrinsic violence does not operate in a means-end continuum; it places positive value on a violent act, regardless of the outcome at a specific moment of implementation.

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

Fanon's Analysis of the Colonial Situation

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

The natives are being exploited, enslaved, oppressed, marginalized, dehumanized, abused and devalued by the colonizers. Fanon therefore writes: "The Negro problem does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men but rather of Negroes exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white."[7] Fanon views colonialism as a system of exploitation which makes the colonized people feel inferior to the colonizers. He contends that the instrument of colonial rule is violence. This violence is cruelly executed by means of bayonets and canons and sustained by the police and the army. Fanon writes thus: "their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together – that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler – was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons."[8] He explains further that in the colonial world:

> The policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.[9]

The racially motivated physical violence is perpetrated to subject the natives to awful abuse and traumatic experience in order to force them into submission. In the light of this, Hansen explains that physical violence does not only refer to "the wars of conquest, pillage and plunder by which in many

places colonial rule was established but also refer to the day employment of strong arm measures to keep the colonized population in a subject state."[10]

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

> Sheer physical fatique will stupefy them. Starved and ill, if they have any spirit left, fear will finish the job; guns are levelled at the peasant; civilians come to take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to fill the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all; shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. The business is conducted with flying colors and by experts; the "psychological services" weren't established yesterday; nor was brainwashing.[11]

Culturally, the natives are degraded and devastated colonialism robs the African culture of its essential value. The colonists present their culture as being superior to that of African and so the natives are made to view realities from the perspective of French culture. African culture which is once open to the future automatically becomes "closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression."[12] In this way, African culture loses its autonomy and becomes an instrument of colonial oppression. Satre reveals that "violence in the colonies does not only have for its aim the keeping of these enslaved men at arm's length; it seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without giving them ours."[13] Through the exploitative racism inherent in colonial rule the cultural legacy of the natives are destroyed and they are made to feel that their culture and all aspects of their being are inferior. As Kebede puts it: "The tag of primitiveness affixed on them, the contempt for and complete destruction of their cultural legacy, their forced assimilation into the European culture at a reduced price, all have resulted in the inculcation, deep into the soul of each colonized person, of a devastating inferiority complex."[14]

Structurally, colonialism creates economic alienation and alienated consciousness through exploitation that permeates into colonial, political and

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

> When you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a give race, a given species. In the colonies the economic substructure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence: you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich. This is why Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem.[15]

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

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

> Hatred, blind hatred which is as yet an abstraction, is their only wealth, the master calls it forth because he seeks to reduce them to animals, but he fails to break it down because his interests stop him halfway. Thus, the 'half-natives' are still humans, through the power and weakness of the oppressor which is transformed within them into a stubborn refusal of the animal condition.[17]

However, the natives are deprived of expressing their aggression. Though they are burning with rage, they dare not confront the well-armed colonists due to the psychological inhibitions created by the repressive colonial regime and the trepidation of being sanctioned. Consequently, colonial rule sets one native against the other. Initially, the colonized man applied defence mechanism. He "will manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people"[18] as a way of relieving the emotional stress and avoiding violent confrontation with the colonizers. As Fanon puts it: "The settler keeps alive in the native an anger which he deprives of outlet; the native is trapped in the tight links of the chains of colonialism … The native's muscular tension finds outlet regularly in bloodthirsty explosions – in tribal warfare, in feuds between sects and, in quarrels between individuals."[19] Satre argues that the natives deteriorate their degrading and dehumanizing experience by transferring their repressed anger to one another. For him, such act does not amount to liberation but promotion of dehumanization. He explicates thus:

> At first it is not their violence, it is ours, which turns back on itself and rends them; and the first action of these oppressed creatures is to bury deep down that hidden anger which their and our moralities condemn and which is how ever only the last refuge of their humanity … If this suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves since they cannot face the real enemy … They can only stop themselves from marching against the machine-guns by doing our work for us; of their own accord they will speed up the dehumanization that they reject.[20]

In the light of this background, Fanon believes that tribal violence does not predate colonialism. He views both "tribal and social divisions as the conjuring of colonialism."[21] Violence, for him, emanates from colonialism which breeds and preserves tribal antagonism. Colonialism by its very structure is separatist and regionalist. Colonialism does not simply state the existence of tribes; it also reinforces and separates them …[22] On the part of nationalist bourgeoisie or political leaders, they manage their aggressiveness by assimilating themselves into the colonial system to such a degree that their interests are bound up with the interests of the colonizers. In the words of Fanon: "The native intellectual has clothed his aggressiveness in his barely veiled desire to assimilate himself to the colonial world. He has used his aggressiveness to serve his own individual interests."[23] Fanon explains that the nationalist bourgeoisie have no option but to conform to colonial model,

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

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

> The entire action of these nationalist political parties during the colonial period is action of the electoral type: a string of philosophicopolitical dissertations on the themes of the rights of peoples to self-determination, the rights of man to freedom from hunger and human dignity, and the unceasing affirmation of the principle: "one man, one vote." The national political parties never lay stress upon the necessity of a trial of armed strength, for the good reason that their objective is not the radical overthrowing of the system. Pacifists and legalists, they are in fact partisans of order, the new order – but to the colonialist bourgeoisie they put bluntly enough the demand which to them is the main one: "Give us more power." On the specific question of violence, the elite are ambiguous. They are violent in their words and reformist in their attitudes. When

the nationalist political leaders say something, they make
quite clear that they do not really *think* it.[24]

This renewed aggression continues until violence against other natives
changes direction. The aggression becomes unbearable to such an extent that
the natives react to the colonizers' violence with their own violence. At this
time, colonial violence only serves to provoke the natives' aggression against
the settlers. Exploitative and oppressive colonial regime increases the
consciousness that "between oppressors and oppressed everything can be
solved by force."[25] The colonized people now identify their real foes as the
colonists and come to believe that only violence can free them. They thus
channel their violence towards the annihilation of the unjust colonial system.
Fanon thus explains: "yet in spite of the metamorphoses which the colonial
regime imposes upon it in the way of tribal or regional quarrels, that violence
makes its way forward, and the native identifies his enemy and recognizes all
his misfortunes, throwing all the exacerbated might of his hate and anger into
this new channel."[26] However, the nationalist political leaders would not call
for armed insurrection. Instead, they would opt for dialogue with the
colonialist bourgeoisie in order to relax the tension and restore order. Fanon
believes that all repressive measures and actions of the native elite cannot end
colonial oppression. He sees any attempt by the natives to entrust their
eventual freedom to negotiation between the native political elite and the
colonizers as a false path. This is because, for him, the exploitative and
oppressive rules will continue even if the colonial system is reformed so that
the corrupt nationalist political elite rule the people directly under the dictates
of the colonialist bourgeoisie.

In Fanon's view, arbitrary violence is an intrinsic quality of colonial system
and so colonial government is a living negation of its proclaimed values.
Hence, he writes: "when I search for man in the technique and the style of
Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man and an avalanche of
murders."[27] Given that the colonizers deny the humanity of the colonized
people, Fanon believes that it is a futile effort to persuade the colonizers to
end colonial oppression for the sake of the humanity of the natives. For him,
colonialism is an embodiment of injustice and so deserves to be destroyed by
whatever means possible. The injustice of colonialism includes the
suppression of people's right to self-determination, economic and racial
exploitation, and violation of other democratic rights. Violent change would
correct the injustice. The end of colonial exploitation would inaugurate "the
unconditional reign of justice."[28] Fanon therefore thinks that the colonized
peoples could "create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of
bringing to triumphant birth"[29] through revolutionary violence.

Fanon's Decolonization/Revolutionary Theory of Violence

Fanon advocates violent revolution within the context of anti-colonial struggle. He contends that the absolute necessity of violent revolution stems from the violent nature of colonial world. Colonialism "is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence."[30] Violence is a necessary ingredient of liberation without which there is no genuine freedom. He sees this violent break with colonialism as true decolonization that can only guarantee authentic liberation. In the light of this, Fanon writes: "National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon."[31] He explains that decolonization is a violent phenomenon because it is "the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of substantiation which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies."[32] Therefore, the Manichaeism inherent in the colonial system is preserved in the process of decolonization. This means that "the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown."[33]

Fanon shared the same view with Satre that the dialectic is the practical consciousness of an oppressed class struggling against its oppression."[34] This dialectic can only be resolved through "the dialectical reciprocity of antagonism."[35] As Fanon puts it: "The violence of the colonial regime and the counter-violence of the colonized balance each other and respond to each other in an extraordinary reciprocal homogeneity."[36] Decolonization, for him, is necessary violent because it seeks to right a situation that is created by violence in the colonial world. Just as colonization seeks to violently uproot the colonized people from their cultural placing and make them inhuman, so is decolonization a veritable means of creating new persons, so that natives become human during the same process by which they free themselves. Fanon argues thus:

> Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them. It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men … the "thing" which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself.[37]

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

> Irrepressible violence is neither sound nor fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself … no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When this rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self. Far removed from this war, we consider it as a triumph of barbarism; but of its own volition it achieves, slowly but surely, the emancipation of the rebel, for bit by bit it destroys in him and around him the colonial gloom.[38]

He insists that the only true liberation is the liberation of the self from the self, that is, the liberation from a desire to become something other than the true self. In this case, it is the liberation from a desire by the blacks to become the whites. Thus, violence within the context of anti-colonial struggle becomes the necessary means of bringing the colonized person from a situation of alienation to the discovery of true self. For Fashina, anti-colonial violence is justified when it is directed towards a reclaim of the humanity of persons to whom this has been denied. So, "in order to win genuine respect, dignity, the colonized must force the settler's recognition through physical violence."[39] The colonized man reclaims his humanity by denying strenuously and completely all values that characterize the settlers, for the "Manicheism of the settler produces the Manicheism of the native."[40]

Again, Fanon claims that violence has a beneficial effect on the natives' psyche. For him, it has cathartic element or cleansing force which purges the natives' soul of ill psychological feelings accumulated as a result of the evil of colonialism which includes oppression, police brutality, racial discrimination and psychological abuses. In the words of Fanon: "At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."[41] The native man achieves psychological liberation and is rid of his inferiority complex when his oppressors are removed violently and the existing political and socio-economic structures are violently changed. Fanon notes, as stated before, that the colonial world is a white-dominated world. It

is white to the extent that the colonized people internalize the racist standards of the colonizers and begin to fight against themselves. He now urges "black men to overcome their inferiority complexes by killing the white man within themselves."[42] But this is only possible through violence, for it is "the intuition of the colonized masses that their liberation must, and can only, be achieved by force."[43] Since anti-colonial violence is a redirection against the "perpetrators of the violence of colonialism itself,"[44] it will liberate the colonized people from inferiority complex and bring back "their lost self-respect, courage and their sense of self-worth."[45]

Fanon's contention is that the settlers first flout the universalized norms of conduct by denying the natives equal right to human dignity and respect and relegating them to the state of inhuman. Thus, his concern is not about showing compliance with the universal norms, but to repel the oppressor through violence as a cathartic liberation of the soul. In this regard, he argues that "as far the native is concerned, morality is very concrete; it is to silence the settler's defiance, to break his flaunting violence – in a word, to put him out of the picture. The well-known principle that all men are equal will be illustrated in the colonies from the moment that the native claims he is equal of the settler."[46] Fanon therefore believes that the right thing to do is to employ violence to free the natives from their dehumanizing experience and restore their human dignity, identity and self-worth.

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

> The native intellectual had learnt from his masters that the individual ought to express himself fully, the colonialist bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought. Now the native who has the opportunity to return to the people during the struggle for freedom will discover the falseness of this theory … such a colonized intellectual, dusted over by colonial culture, will in the same way discover the substance of village assemblies, the cohesion of people's committees, and the extraordinary fruitfulness of local

meetings and groupments. Henceforward, the interests of one
will be the interests of all. …[47]

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

> The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since
> each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part
> of the great organism of violence which has surged upward
> in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning. The
> groups recognize each other and the future nation is already
> indivisible. The armed struggle mobilizes the people, that is
> to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction.[48]

In Fanon's view, therefore, the armed struggle builds solidarity among the
natives and introduces into their consciousness "the ideas of a common cause,
of a national destiny and of collective history."[49] For Fanon, when the masses
are partakers of a violent struggle towards their national liberation, their
confidence is built up and political consciousness is raised. They come to
realise that their liberation is an outcome of their concerted efforts and not a
one-man band. In this case, no one solely claims to be a liberator or has a
special merit of national liberation. They now have a strong sense of destiny
and dare not place their future "in the hands of a living god."[50] Thus, there is
little or no room "for the rise and growth of the demagogues and the
opportunists."[51]

Fanon insists that only revolutionary violence can liberate man's
consciousness and create a new man, for "the colonized man finds his
freedom in and through violence."[52] He thinks that all attempts to elucidate
African history and juxtaposes it with European history are only the corollary
of a profound inferiority complex. For instance, he argues that an attempt to
study African past and romanticize it through negritude movement cannot
solve the African problems and so is futile. He acknowledges the negritude,
which Senghor characterizes as "the awareness, defense and development of
African cultural values,"[53] for raising the consciousness of the blacks and
affirming their cultural roots and values of civilization. However, Fanon
agrees with Satre that negritude is an anti-white racism which merely negates
white supremacy without effective strategy for black liberation. He expresses
growing discontent with the idea of watching history unfold itself without
any action. He asserts thus: "In no way should I dedicate myself to the revival

of an unjustly unrecognized Negro civilization."[54] He states further in this regard:

> I am not a prisoner of history … the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which travel, I am endlessly creating myself … I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this fact would change anything in the lives of the eight-year-old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinque or Guadeloupe.[55]

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

In a similar vein, Fanon follows Marx in maintaining that thought must be united with action. Like Marx, he insists that all that matters is not to know the world but change it. He writes thus: "But when one has taken cognizance of this situation, when one has understood it, one considers the job completed. How can one then be deaf for that voice rolling down the stages of history: 'What matters is not to know the world but to change it.' "[56] So, Fanon's advocacy of revolutionary violence in resistance to and defeat of oppression is in line with the Marxist revolutionary tradition. He notes that the nationalist bourgeoisie and the urban working class are reluctant to embark on a revolutionary violent against the system that benefits them enormously. They cannot perform this revolutionary role because they are "not only conditioned to operate in the colonial mode of production"[57] but have also "been subjected to colonial socialization"[58] which makes them accept such order as natural. Hansen asserts that it is not surprising that "a group which owes it entire privileged existence to such a system will not play a prime role in its abolition."[59]

Therefore, Fanon assigns the revolutionary role to the peasantry and lumpen-proletariat. Unlike the nationalist bourgeoisie and the urban working class, the peasantry are not integrated into the colonial system. They benefit nothing from colonial rule and are not corrupted by it. Fanon believes that the peasants are in touch with their culture and have not suffered from inferiority complex and cultural degradation. They are therefore potential

revolutionaries who possess a great deal of brute force. Lumpen proletariat are also suitable for revolutionary violent. They consist predominantly of the unemployed and unemployable masses, a horde of starved men who have drifted from the countryside to the city but have not secured a place in the social system. They are willing to employ whatever means possible to achieve their ends. Fanon thinks that they have the proclivity to engage in an armed struggle against the colonial regime since they have no stake in the colonial system.

Relevance of Fanon's Thesis to Contemporary Violence
The fact that African nations have achieved independence does not invalidate Fanon's theory. He makes it clear that independence does not translate to authentic freedom and unity of the colonized people. Rather, it is a stepping stone to revolutionary struggles. Satre explains that this struggle is "a work in progress, which begins by the union, in each country, after independences before, of the whole of the colonized people under the command of the peasant class."[60] Although the era of colonialism has elapsed, Africans are being recolonized through productive activities of external imperialists (western bourgeoisie) and African governments. It cannot be rightly gainsaid that the free penetration of imperialists' oligopolies into African nations and their alliance with African governments in this age of mercantilism are responsible for political, social and economic woes of Africans. The phenomena associated with imperialism which include, inter alia, economic and political hegemony, oppressive state machinery, militarism, enslavement and exploitation of indigenous population and racism are intrinsic features of colonialism which Fanon frowns upon and fights against.

A case in point is the violence in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Imperialist oligopolies represented by multinational oil companies forge an alliance with the Nigerian State (ruling class) through its agents to mindlessly explore and exploit oil from Niger Delta region. This is done to develop capitalism and maximize profit at all cost without regard to the deplorable state of the environment and the plight of the host communities. It is no longer news that oil spills pollute streams, destroy crops, kill aquatic life of the organisms and make water unsuitable for fishing and unsafe for drinking. Consequently, the natives, who predominantly specialize in farming and fishing, have been denied of their means of livelihood and impoverished. Nwosu laments that "the oil which has brought so much wealth to the multinational oil companies and the Nigerian State has at the same time brought to the people of the Niger Delta untold poverty, disease, persistent pollution, ecological and environmental degradation."[61] Despite the vital contribution of the region to Nigeria's economy, the people have not been adequately compensated and

the extent of the development in the region does not commensurate with the level of benefits that accrue from the region.

Piqued by economic deprivation and exploitation, marginalization and developmental neglect, Niger Delta militant youths emerge to struggle for resource control. Rather than involve the armed youths and the community leaders in constructive dialogue and peaceful negotiations, the pattern of regime response is more or less militaristic in nature – unleashing state violence through militarism. The forces that control the Nigerian State (state officials and petrobusiness actors) have privatized the instrumentalities of the state to pursue their private interests "through public works contracts and outright misappropriation of public funds."[62] Thus, the oil exploration and exploitation by the multinational companies have made the region poor, insecure and underdeveloped. In the light of this, Ibeanu notes that Niger Delta is the major source of oil wealth. However, paradoxically, this wealth has created poverty in the region, the national security has generated insecurity in the region, and the national development has underdeveloped the region. The high rate of poverty and underdevelopment in the Niger Delta arising from economic deprivation, injustice and marginalisation is an emblematic of deplorable and socio-economic conditions of the Nigerian society. Needless to say, other parts of the country have their fair share of the political and economic conundrum, hence the agitation of some region for secession.

Another classic case is violence in the northern part of Nigeria. Some analysts usually look at the cause of the persistent spate of militant attacks and killings in the north from political and ethno-religious perspectives. Though the violence and destruction may be motivated and precipitated by political and ethno-religious differences, they have economic undertone. Untold economic hardship in the region arising from poverty and unemployment is the determining factor. Youths have a predisposition towards violence when they suffer from economic deprivation and social alienation. Perpetrators of terrorist acts in Nigeria are mostly hordes of unemployed and hungry youths who are frustrated with their life. An educated gainfully employed person will not abandon the trappings of his work or business and indulge in insurgency or become a slavish stooge for terrorism. There is therefore a strong correlation between poverty and violence. A hungry man is an angry man. When a lot of citizens are poor, hungry and unemployed, insurgency and other crimes ensue.

Besides, the recent atrocious xenophobic violence in South Africa is a consequence of economic deprivation and social alienation of black South

Africans. The rage behind the violence unleashed on foreigners (other Africans, particularly Nigerians) is neither xenophobia nor Afrophobia but the high rate of poverty and hunger. The policy of apartheid regime viciously restrains the blacks from achieving parity with their white counterparts by denying them, among other things, access to quality education. Thus, in this post-apartheid society, most black South-African youths lack the requisite skills to compete with the whites for skilled jobs. Regrettably, there is a credibility gap between the promises of post-apartheid governments and their achievements. Despite the promises of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) during campaigns, the blacks are yet to be widely integrated into the socio-political systems. Consequently, the rate of unemployment has surged to 23.5% in South Africa – the worst rate since the first labour force survey in 2008. It is the socio-economic deprivation and alienation that prompt the frustrated and jobless blacks to turn their aggression on the foreigners who are being accused of taking jobs meant for them. Therefore, economic deprivation is the root cause of the violent outbreak. Racism or xenophobia, to use Fanon's terminology, is just the superstructure. Like in the Fanon's colonial world the blacks are conscious that their plight is occasioned by those at the helm of affairs. But they cannot attack their leaders due to adequate security forces in place to ruthlessly suppress any violent outbreak or armed uprising. Thus, they find an outlet for their deep and repressed resentment in violent attacks on other Africans. Racial, tribal and ethnic conflicts, which are reinforced and sustained by exploitative and oppressive colonial rule in Fanon's time, still linger today because decisive social and economic factors in which they are deeply rooted are yet to be completely addressed.

From the foregoing examples, it is obvious that the political and economic activities of the African governments are conditioned for them to accumulate all the resources left by the colonial regime in alliance with the western bourgeoisie, at the expense of the poor masses. Thus, the exploitation, racism, oppression, deprivation and alienation inherent in the Fanon's colonial world persist in African nations.

Concluding Reflections
Fanon has demonstrated that the socio-economic conditions are at the root of the racial problem which engenders the feeling of inferiority complex. He notes that the prevalent racism in the colonial world is deeply rooted in social and economic conditions and so should not be regarded as a mental disturbance. As he puts it: "Racism belongs to the shameless exploitation of one group of men by another which has reached a higher stage of technical development … The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw must be abandoned."[63] Again, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, he

adds that though a psychological interpretation of the black problem is crucial, yet "the effective disalienation of the black man entails an immediate recognition of social and economic realities. If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily economic; subsequently, the internalization – or, better, epidermalization – of this inferiority."[64]

There is therefore need for restructuring of the existing socio-political systems in African nations which provoke a sense of alienation from the society. Fanon's concern is social freedom – the freedom of the individual in the state. For this freedom to be achieved, it is crucial that the "state not only be free from external control but also that political and social arrangements should be such as to enable man to express and maintain his freedom."[65] It will be a "Pyrrhic victory if the liberation still leaves intact the broad macro structures of economic, political and material conditions that determine everyday existence."[66] Economic exploitation and deprivation violate human dignity. Each individual human being has an intrinsic worth and dignity in virtue of being part of humanity. Social institutions and practices are justified when they promote human dignity. It requires concern and respect for rights equality and justice which are the ultimate preconditions for societal development. It is injustices, oppression and man's inhumanity to man that Fanon frowns upon and fights against.

We must say that though it is the dehumanizing circumstances that prompt Fanon to advocate a violent struggle for liberation, his claim that his call for violence is rooted in "a profound humanism characterized by the primordial concern for the human being and in all human beings, no matter their color and their condition"[67] is untenable. Humanity is indivisible in the sense that no one can degrade or brutalize another without brutalizing himself. In other words, no one can inflict psychic damage on others without inflicting it on himself. This is because when people are dehumanized, their self-worth and dignity are destroyed. In so doing, both the oppressed and oppressor deprive themselves and the world of the benefits of their potential contributions to humanity. Fanon even admits that violence can cause more psychological damage to the psyche of both the colonized people and the colonizers. His psychiatric case histories show that the violence engenders neurosis and distortion of personality.

Besides, Fanon's claim that violent decolonization will create new humanity, unify the people and build solidarity among them leaves much to be desired. Experience and studies have shown that harmony and friendship cannot be secured on the basis of violence, but rather through non-violent struggle which seeks to secure the cooperation of the opponent consistently with truth

and justice. Fanon's emphasis on violence risks the reduction of action to reaction, that is, the determination of a solution by the nature of the problem it aims to solve. More often than not, the use of violent resistance is counter-productive and the end for which it is used is defeated. It is not true in reality that violence can be used to quench violence when erupted. "Overtime, the employment of violence has only succeeded in escalating violence."[68] To use violence against violence is to add to the vicious circle of violence, thereby reverting to the Hobbes' state of nature where life is brutish and short. Revolutionary violence does not appeal to humanity and so is undesirable.

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

In the case of Nigeria, there is need for political restructuring of the defective federal system so as to have fair, equitable and balanced federal structure. Currently, there is too much concentration of power at the centre and federating units depend heavily on federal allocations for their needs. True federalism will enable the regions to maximize their potentials, develop at their own pace and contribute their quota to the Federal Government. A nation in turmoil cannot achieve a lasting peace unless they come together to lay down their conditions of political union and reach a compromise. A conference of ethnic nationalities organized by the Jonathan's government in which useful recommendations were made is an effective way of achieving true federalism and peace. Regrettably, the recommendations of the conference have been brushed aside by the present administration.

There is no gain saying the fact that the fight for corruption and security cannot be successfully won, unless the political, social and economic issues are addressed by adopting true federalism. For instance, it is difficult to stem the tide of corruption "where the federating units virtually run on free federal allocations that some people see as national cake, not their own sweat. Conversely, the people will be more vigilant and ready to hold their leaders accountable when the federating units begin to live largely on internally

generated revenues and their sweat."[69] Nigerian government must rise to the challenge to resolve the already escalating violent conflict and forestall the future ones before the nation is irretrievably torn apart. Dealing with this despicable act calls for review of the major recommendations of the 2014 National Conference for immediate implementation. Beyond this, there is need to diversify and industrialize the economy, invest in technology and people to drive sustainable economic growth and create jobs.

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