

Fanon's Rebel Fifty Years Later*

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This article examines two milestones separated by eight months: the fifty-year anniversaries of Frantz Fanon's passing and the independence of Jamaica. Although Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago each achieved independence from the United Kingdom the same year, the latter became a republic whereas the former, similar to the Bahamas, has remained a British Commonwealth polity. The article contends that Fanon, in an appropriation of Aimé Césaire, develops an archetypal figure of the Rebel as central to his overall political thought and one that, when applied at the macro-level to contemporary Jamaica, presents a challenge applicable to the heated discourse on whether Jamaica should become a republic. It explores Fanon's Rebel, the independence-freedom distinction, the Rebel's role in achieving freedom, and what Fanon would say today about the political future of late modern Jamaica under incumbent Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller.

It was early December 2011 in Nassau, The Bahamas, and our hosts picked us up from the hotel en route to the opening ceremonies of a symposium at The College of the Bahamas where I would be among the guest speakers. As we drove in the car, we passed the lavish Atlantis Resort, a mega-complex positioned on a tiny island oasis just off the main coastal borders of the road. We heard that the well-known actor, Sean Connery, lives in the Bahamas, a sign of self-imposed exile in which Connery vowed never to reside in Scotland again until his native land achieves independence from Great Britain and extricates itself from English hegemony. Not a bad place for exile, I thought. And not to be outdone, there was the recently unveiled national

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sports stadium: an Olympic-style superstructure built with funds estimated at \$50 million US. Remarkable.

Yet when I began to ask a series of questions, it revealed the Janus-faced contours of many phenomena in the world. The national stadium was erected with funding from the Chinese state. China, with the support of Bahamian Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, sent hundreds of their workers for the construction. These labourers were not to be confused with the local Sino-Bahamian population, who, like the Afro-Bahamian majority, were not the primary beneficiaries of the terms of the building contract. *The Economist* (2012) reports that in another upcoming project, China State Construction Company is sending up to five thousand more workers to the Baha Mar resort project, a \$2.6 billion property funded by the Export-Import Bank of China. Baha Mar is close to the stadium.

After I arrived at the forum and listened to half a day's worth of panels, a sudden exogenous shock to the rhetoric of well-ordered social tranquility occurred. A Rastafari intellectual stood up in a question and answer period and delivered a passionate, point-by-point analysis of why Bahamians were not free, why they were living a deluded reality, why local work opportunities were increasingly disappearing, why black youth in a predominantly black country were nevertheless disproportionately targeted by police in racial profiling, and why there appeared to be negligible outcry by citizens at this present existential impasse. If I questioned my presence at the conference on Fanon's pertinence to the region today, then my reservations were rendered moot.

Acknowledgement of Fanon's contemporary relevance fifty years after his death on December 6, 2011 is evident, however deferred, in the Arab Spring revolutions that erupted in the Middle East and North Africa, the riots that rocked the United Kingdom, the reactionary politics of mainland France vis-à-vis the overseas territory of Reunion island in the Indian Ocean, indigenous social movements in Latin America, and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States. Commentators including Anthony Alessandrini (2011, 2014), Paul Gilroy (2011a, 2011b), Achille Mbembe (in Fanon 2011: 9-21; 2013), Anjali Prabhu (2011), Françoise Vergès (2010), and the

Director of the Fondation Frantz Fanon and daughter of Fanon, Mireille Fanon Mendès-France (2011), of late accentuate this. Nigel Gibson's book-length study of Fanonism in post-Apartheid South Africa points to the prescience of Fanon's warnings, underscoring the staggering fact that income inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient, is continuing to rise between the black poor and the black middle and upper classes irrespective of nearly two decades of ANC rule (Gibson 2011: 240n.3).

In spite of these important recoveries of Fanon, a peculiar silence regarding Fanon's current relevance to the region of his birth persists. Notable works by scholars such as Louis Lindsay 2005 [1975], Lewis Gordon (1996, 2006, 2015), David Scott (1999), Paget Henry (2000, 2005), Sylvia Wynter (2000, 2001), Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2005), Anthony Bogues (2010), John Drabinski (2013), and Jane Anna Gordon (2014) attempt to position the ideas of Fanon in relation to Caribbean thought and politics. It is the Trinidadian intellectual C.L.R. James, though, who makes the clearest early case for a Caribbean recuperation of Fanon in a surprisingly ignored essay. James considers Fanon as a person of action and as a Caribbean citizen, reminding us of Fanon's desire to return to the Caribbean as Algerian Ambassador to Cuba and later as a revolutionary within the region. James remarks in "Fanon and the Caribbean":

[T]he moment Fanon heard that in the Caribbean Cuba was free and the other countries were gaining independence, he said that he could go back to struggle there with them. I feel that today there would be no place for Fanon working elsewhere. He would be in the Caribbean, where he was born, bringing the knowledge that he had had and giving to the people of his own country all that he had in him and all that he had learnt (James 1978: 46).

Geopolitical complexities rendered Fanon's wish unrealized, but the implications of James's assessment in 1978 are as vital now as ever.

2012 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Trinidad and Tobago's independence and the bicentennial of the Aponte rebellion in Cuba. In what follows, I examine two other milestones separated by exactly eight months: the fifty-year anniversaries of Fanon's passing and the independence of Jamaica. Al-

though Jamaica and Trinidad achieved independence from the United Kingdom the same year and month, the latter became a republic in 1976 whereas the former, similar to the Bahamas, has remained a British Commonwealth polity with Queen Elizabeth II the official Head of State. I argue that Fanon, in an appropriation of Aimé Césaire, develops an archetypal figure of the Rebel as central to his overall political thought and one that, when applied at the macro-level to contemporary Jamaica, presents a challenge applicable to the heated discourse on whether Jamaica should become a republic. This article explores Fanon's Rebel, the distinction between independence and freedom, the role of the Rebel in achieving freedom, and what Fanon would say today about the political future of late modern Jamaica under incumbent Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller.¹

The Rebel as Archetype

Narrations of Martinican poet, philosopher, and politician Aimé Césaire's influence on Fanon's intellectual formation are both essential and predictable. They begin by describing Fanon's years as a student of Césaire at the Lycée Schoelcher in Martinique, note the respective reflections of each thinker's time in France, the ensuing lived experiences and phenomenological processes of race, racism, and racialisation that radicalise their worldviews, portraying next stories of Fanon's brief flirtation with the *négritude* movement to which Césaire was among the progenitors, and then end with articulating the rejection by Fanon of *négritude*'s metaphysical presuppositions. Alice Cherki's (2000: 150) revelation that Fanon, in his last year, planned to complete a book with a final chapter entitled "Negritude and Black-African

¹ I delivered this essay originally as a public lecture in 2011 and the majority of the text remains exactly the same. I have chosen not to make significant alterations in the paper content in order to preserve the spirit of its claims at that moment of my reflection on Fanon's relevance for the Caribbean fifty years after his passing. Additionally, the Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller—who was about to be sworn into her second term as Prime Minister of Jamaica at the time of my talk—is still PM of the island in early 2015.

Civilization, an Illusion” surely emboldened this camp’s philosophy of history.

The problem with this linear teleological tale is that it contains as many truths as it does absences. For one, the primary object of Fanon’s critique of conceptions of black consciousness in the *négritude* movement is Léopold Senghor and Senghorism, not Césaire. Moreover, it neglects a glaring reality all too often disavowed: Fanon engages positively with Césaire’s political philosophy from his earliest writings through posthumously published texts. Indeed, Fanon does not agree with all of Césaire’s prescriptions, for he contends, as Édouard Glissant would echo, that a fatal error in the life and times of Césaire—illustrated in Césaire’s 1946 support for the Departmentalization of Martinique—is Césaire’s inability at times to follow his own prescient advice. Césaire’s resignation from the French Communist Party a decade later and founding of the Martinican Progressive Party mark a suggestive turn that stops short of renouncing the assimilationist structure of *département* status. Nevertheless, Fanon builds upon crucial aspects of Césairean philosophy to craft distinct political principles.

Consider for a moment where Fanon examines Césaire: numerous sections in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), starting with the epigraph to the Introduction from the first edition of Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950); “West Indians and Africans” (1955); articles anonymously composed for the Front de Libération (FLN) underground periodical, *El Moudjahid*, and collected in *Toward the African Revolution* such as “Racist Fury in France” (1959) and “Blood Flows in the Antilles Under French Domination” (1960); and the magnum opus, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), particularly the chapters “On Violence” and “The Misadventures of National Consciousness.” Coupled with the transparent, Fanon employs the lexical cadences, syntax, and neologisms of Césaire that he assumes the astute reader will notice, as in use of the verb “to thingify”, coined by Césaire in the searing *Discourse* statement: “My turn to state an equation: colonization = ‘thingification’ (*chosification*)” (2000: 42).²

² Fanon employs a neologism of Césaire in “The ‘North African Syndrome’” (1967 [1952]: 14), written in the same year as the publication of *Black Skin, White Masks*, when stating: “This man whom you thingify (*tu chosifies*) by calling him systematically Mohammed, whom you re-

Césaire unequivocally issues a critique of late colonialism and the crisis of European Man, a particularistic agent masking itself as the universal understanding of what it means to be Human through coercive and alienating institutional apparatuses of the state. Additionally, Wynter observes that Césaire offers Fanon a framework to interpret the unique philosophical contributions of poetic knowledge to the theorizations of freedom and humanism (Scott 2000; Maldonado-Torres 2006; McKittrick 2015).³ As Césaire declares in a 1944 speech originally delivered in Haiti, “poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge,” and it is the “fulfilling knowledge” of poeticism that complements the important, albeit “half-staved,” insights of the social and physical sciences (1990: xlii-xliii).

It is from this epistemology that Césaire created the figure of *the Rebel* in the three-Act tragedy *Et les chiens se taisaient* (*And the Dogs Were Silent*). *Dogs* appeared originally as the concluding section to the 1946 collection, *Miraculous Weapons*, and it is this version that Fanon would reference in *Black Skin*.⁴ Présence Africaine published an edition of the tragedy by itself in 1956, and subsequent editions were released in 1970 and 1976, the latter being the basis of the main English translation. Although Fanon would have had access to the second edition of *Dogs* when composing *Wretched*, he maintained the practice of citing the first version. In some cases, Fanon extracts the exact same quotations for use in *Black Skin* and *Wretched*, likely to the perplexity of readers who tend to contrast starkly the aims and objectives of those works especially on, albeit not limited to, issues of violence and repa-

construct, or rather whom you dissolve, on the basis of an idea, an idea you know to be repulsive. . .well, don't you have the impression that you are emptying him of his substance?" For analyses of Césaire's ensuring syntax of influence on black intellectuals that utilizes different examples, see Edwards 2005; Walker 2010.

³ This conclusion complements the contention of Sekyi-Otu (1996) that what distinguishes Fanon's dialectic of experience is the *dramatic narrative* and dramaturgical elucidations of political categories therein.

⁴ The first edition of *And the Dogs Were Silent* appeared the same year that Césaire led the movement for the Departmentalisation of Martinique. This irony points to Fanon's one major quip with Césaire: Césaire the politician often contradicted the radicalism of Césaire the poet-philosopher.

rations for historical injustices. Closer introspection illuminates the rationale.⁵

The Rebel in *Dogs* is a hero and someone that, conceivably, we should admire. Yet given the dramatic structure of the dialogues, we know that one or more people will have to suffer an unavoidable horrible fate by the last scene. The opening of Act I confirms these suspicions with the ominous warning of the Echo:

ECHO: For sure the Rebel is going to die. Oh, there will be no flags, not even black ones, no gun salutes, no ceremony. It will be very simple, something which in appearance will not change anything, but which will cause coral in the depths of the sea, birds in the depths of the sky, stars in the depths of women's eyes to crackle for the instant of a tear or the bat of an eyelash...

beware architect, for if the Rebel dies it will not be without making everyone aware that you are the constructor of a pestilential world
architect beware. (Césaire 1990: 3)

Near the end of Act III, the declarations of Narrator and Narratress announce “Dead, he is dead!” “Dead right in the middle of the calabash pulp” (1990: 69). The Rebel is a person inextricably connected, in the lyrical oratorio of Césaire, to a system designed by an architect of state to enslave and appropriate the body and being of the Rebel’s community. Whoever or whatever the Rebel is, the Rebel is bound to fate. Fate, however, need not be in vein if it leads to an alteration of an architect’s beleaguered, pestilential, and coercive status quo.

⁵ Other interpretations of *Dogs* include Arnold 1981: 105-32; Arnold Introduction to Césaire 1990. Césaire (1990: xiv) classifies *Dogs* as his “lyrical oratorio.” Macey (2000: 425) notes that chapter one of *Wretched*, “On Violence,” was published first in the May 1961 edition of *Les temps modernes*. The original version did not contain the lengthy citations from *Dogs*. However, Fanon inserted the significant passages from *Dogs* in the final revisions to *Wretched*, a testament to the enduring impact of the Rebel archetype on Fanon’s political theory.

The Rebel arguably is the Negator, the critic of colonialism and enslavement, the denunciator of unfreedom projected by a master class onto its subjects, an avatar of another world, an agent of change, and a catalyst for the decolonisation process. For Césaire, the crescendo of the Rebel's existence in the tragedy is death; a *death* with a dual valence: 1) the physical death of the Rebel character and 2) the simultaneous death and rebirth of a system. While *Dogs* accentuates each, Fanon draws from valence two. Not only can we notice this in a controversial sentence at the end of the Introduction to *A Dying Colonialism* (1959) consistently deleted from the English translation due to misinterpretations of Fanon—"the death of colonialism is at the same time the death of the colonised and the death of the coloniser" (Fanon 2011: 269, orig. emphasis; my translation). In Sylvia Wynter's Fanonian language, Fanon calls for the death of Man and the sociogenic emergence of the Human (2001, 2003). We must shed old skins before developing new ways of thinking, acting, and living.

This is evident in *Black Skin* and *Wretched* where Fanon pens a mutated notion of the Rebel. Acts I and II of *Dogs* are the locus of Fanon's exegetical pursuits, lending credence to the claim that the third Act's description of the Rebel's physical death is not what concerns Fanon most. Fanon preserves the essence of Césaire's figure while appropriating Césaire to reinforce the Fanonian project of anti-colonialism, the decolonisation of knowledge, the refashioning of the human sciences, and the attainment of freedom.

In *Black Skin*, Fanon cites *Dogs* in the epigraph to chapter 4, "The So-Called Dependency Complex of the Colonised," and several times in the longest section of the book, chapter six entitled "The Black and Psychopathology." The integral fifth chapter, "The Lived Experience of the Black," posits the core theses of *Black Skin*: the racial gaze, the Look, the benefits of sociogenic analysis over ontological and phylogenetic studies, the dilemmas of an agent locked in an infernal circle of bad faith and tenuous demands of authenticity, unsure how colonialism, racism, and unfreedom can be overcome. "Listen to Césaire's Rebel" (2008: 171), Fanon implores, and a few pages afterwards Fanon proclaims this again as he invokes a block citation from *Dogs* (174).

But as much as Fanon urges us to uphold the intuitions of Césaire's Rebel, it is *Fanon's Rebel*, his own construct, which should give us pause. Fate cannot encase this Rebel. The Rebel has the capacity to create her or his future, struggle notwithstanding. *Black Skin* diagnoses the dialectics of recognition and misrecognition in an unfree society, the "pathology of freedom" (200), the disposition to become *actional* beings, and "what is most human in man: freedom" (197). It presents the foundations for what subjugated agents, who are the object of personal and institutional acts of bad faith, ought to do and paths not to follow in order to augur successfully the death of a system of unfreedom. Fanon's Rebel in *Wretched* begins to outline the requisite normative prescriptions.

More so than *Black Skin*, *Wretched* explores the meaning of violence and violence's relationship to freedom. No wonder that Césaire's *Dogs* return in the (in)famous first chapter. Between the relevant, but submerged, footnote from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason (Vol. I)* [1960]⁶ on racism, colonialism, and native subjects and the long cited passages from *Dogs* are a series of terse declarations animating much of Fanon's political theory. Fanon asserts that the "colonised man liberates himself in and through violence." Fanon writes of violence as "praxis." The poeticism of Césaire vis-à-vis the Rebel takes on a "prophetic significance" (2004: 44). And of course, there is the revolutionary dialogue between the Rebel and the Rebel's Mother. A small portion of the cited discourse was used as the epigraph of *Black Skin*, chapter four noted earlier. The majority of the excerpted conversation between the Mother and the Rebel focuses on the Mother's disapproval of the Rebel's actions and the Rebel's defense of violence, consummated in the death of a plantation master.

The Rebel states: "My family name: offended; my given name: humiliated; my profession: rebel; my age: the stone age." The Mother retorts that

⁶ Note that the footnoted passage Fanon cites is taken from a lengthy footnote in Sartre's *Critique* (2004: 303n88), Book I, chapter four entitled "Collectives." Fanon soon thereafter formulates a notion of the Rebel that shares many of Césaire's core axioms, but Fanon extends the Rebel figure to the collective level along similar lines to Sartre's shifts in Book I of *Critique* from individual praxis to the practico-inert. Fanon's Rebel, though, ultimately is his own political vision, not pure mimesis of Césaire or Sartre.

she “had dreamed of a son who would close his mother’s eyes.” In reply, the Rebel declares: “I chose to open my child’s eyes to another sun,” another vision of the world (cited in 2004: 44-45). Only a matter of pages afterwards, Fanon explains the cathartic rationalisation for his now well-known contention, “At the individual level, violence is a cleansing force. It rids the colonised of their inferiority complex, of their passive and despairing attitudes” (51). The Rebel is “Enlightened by violence” (52). In contrast to *instrumental* notions of violence that operate within a linear metric of means and ends, Fanon develops what we can refer to as *intrinsic violence*: a metaphysical concept operating outside of a means-ends continuum wherein a violent act, whether it is through either wanton irrational or calculated rational reasoning, contains an inherent value regardless of the results.⁷ The Rebel must die for a cause deemed intrinsically valuable.

Following the invocation of *Dogs*, Fanon shifts from imagining the Rebel as individual agent to a notion of the Rebel as a social collective and the responsibility that the Rebel as a group has for their actions in *marronage* (flight); that is, during the process of becoming free. The initial individuated conception of the Rebel reflects Césaire’s partial interest in the physical violence and death of the Negator. Fanon’s move to examine the Rebel at the collective, systemic level—in effect, throughout the substantive portions of the treatise—in the subsequent discussions of violence in the international context, the grandeur and weaknesses of spontaneity, the question of national consciousness compared to nationalism, national culture, colonial wars and mental disorders, and a post (not anti-) European humanism afforded by the consolidation of freedom specifies the normative stakes of the Rebel model. The death of Man toward the Human is a systemic, structural re-ordering rather than an individuated ontology. It is, correspondingly, a marker of alterations in agents’ levels of consciousness.⁸

⁷ I introduced the distinction between instrumental violence and intrinsic violence previously in Roberts 2004.

⁸ Henry (2002: 196) rejects criticisms of those including Norman Girvan, whose “Caribbean Fanonism Revisited” (in Lindsay 2005: 29-40) reduces the thought of Fanon to a narrow conception of revolutionary violence that obscures the centrality of consciousness in Fanon’s system. As Wynter (2001) further submits, Fanon disentangles the late modern “puzzle of conscious ex-

Césaire's homage to Fanon bolsters this in its acknowledgment of Fanon as a theoretician of violence whose main contribution to posterity should be remembered as a theorist of action, of which freedom is an outgrowth (Césaire 1961).⁹ If Césaire's political education involves the "invention of souls" (Fanon 2004: 138), then Fanon's is the invention of a political vocabulary to facilitate freedom.

Architecture of Freedom

The meaning of freedom in the political imagination of Fanon underlies his vision of what society the Rebel aims to create and preserve. Clarifying how *freedom* is distinct from both *independence* (interchangeable with the words *liberation* and *emancipation*) and the mediating notion of *decolonisation* is necessary before moving on. The polarities of absolute unfreedom, or *slavery*, and absolute freedom condition the parameters of the definitional imperative. We can classify Fanon's argument for the flight from slavery in two dialectical stages: slavery to independence and independence to freedom. Processes of decolonisation are at work in each stage. Fanon imagines that agents who have attained freedom, but act irresponsibly, can fall from grace out of freedom. Let us address here the twofold flight.

There are various mechanisms of movement from slavery to independence. Among these are anti-slavery movements, anti-colonialism, anti-racist movements, feminists movements against patriarchy and misogyny, and, for those whom Fanon calls "slightly stretched" Marxists (2004: 5), resistance to capitalism that operates in tandem with one or more of the aforementioned. For Fanon, slavery is *not* an inert state of social death or zombie existence as Orlando Patterson's (1982) celebrated thesis suggests. The enslaved

perience." See Oliver (2004) for an examination of the psychodynamics of consciousness pertinent to Fanon's rebel politics.

⁹ In "Homages à Frantz Fanon" (1962), Césaire issues a corresponding existential phenomenological assertion: "[O]nly a French Caribbean, in other words one so mystified to start off with, could manage to dismantle with such skill the most elusive mechanisms of mystification; only a French Caribbean, finally, could want so desperately to escape powerlessness through action and solitude through fraternity" (cited in Fanon 2004: 251).

have the capacity for *agency* and the consciousness of that capacity. It is the circumstances of slave life that constrain the exercise of this ability. Slavery, Fanon argues, is an existential phenomenological condition that is both hellish and the reservoir for humans to enact a bold flight. As Fanon writes, “there is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential form which a genuine new departure can emerge” (2008: xi). Moreover, “it is by going beyond the historical and instrumental given” that humans initiate the cycle of their freedom (205).

The moment of emancipation is a critical juncture presenting a people with two alternative post-slavery, post-colonial options: the first and suggestive path, *non-sovereign modes of constitutionalism*; and the second decadent route, *neocolonialism*. Prior to emancipation, decolonisation is primarily the excising of a malignant non-indigenous ruling order. After emancipation, decolonisation becomes as much about the recalibration of mind as it is the refashioning of structural institutions in the newly emerging native order. Non-sovereign constitutionalism is the creation of juridical documents of state and capacity-building of civil society, thereby endowing people living in a political order heightened input into the principles governing a society. Fanon states that “*Leader* comes from the English verb ‘to lead,’ meaning ‘to drive’ in French. The driver of people no longer exists today. People are no longer a herd and do not need to be driven.” “The nation,” he continues, “should not be an affair run by a big boss” (2004: 127). Non-sovereign does not refer to the withering away of the frame of the nation. It means that neither the people nor the head of state has a monopoly on present and future outcomes within a polity. Freedom is the result of a people and heads of state entering into an open exchange for the betterment of the polity.

An illusory freedom failing to achieve a non-sovereign decision-making structure is equally, if not more, destructive to the formerly enslaved. Fanon catalogues this in “Decolonisation and Independence” (1958) and, to a wider extent, *Wretched*. Fanon is recognized as a critic of indigenous bourgeois elites instituting authoritarian rule over their own community members in the postcolony. Less acknowledged is Fanon’s trenchant criticism of the logics of Departmentalisation in the former French colonies and Commonwealth

status of the Anglophone Caribbean islands that maintain Queen Elizabeth II as the postcolony's Head of State distinct from the Head of Government, the Prime Minister. These polity structures are an outgrowth of neocolonialism, which increases the agency of ex-slave inhabitants while nonetheless stifling the achievement of freedom. Reverberations of this are captured in Louis Lindsay's idea of the "myth of independence" (2005), Ernesto Laclau's (1996) ruminations on the valences of emancipation, and a speech delivered by former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley at my home institution, Williams College, in between Manley's ouster from power in 1980 and his return in 1988. Manley remarks: "Political independence opened the door of opportunity," but "it did not alter the political reality of Third World countries" (cited in Ehlers 1984). Offsetting the effects of going up a down escalator is no easy task.

Fanon crystallizes the unavoidable inference in the searing opening line of *Wretched*: "National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, decolonisation is always a violent event" (2004: 1). In other words, when decolonisation occurs successfully prior to emancipation but not afterwards, the systemic death of Man never transpires and additional work suffuse with struggle remains to be done. Freedom is not a given and freedom cannot have long-term contingencies to former ruling powers. Fanon is unwavering on these points in the inquiry into the struggle for recognition in *Black Skin* chapter seven, the contention in "Decolonisation and Independence" that illusory freedom is represented in postcolonial "ministers having a limited responsibility" who "hobnob with an economy dominated by a colonial pact" (1967: 105), and the anecdote at the end of *Wretched's* second chapter: "Without this struggle, without this praxis there is nothing but a carnival parade and a lot of hot air" (2004: 96). Freedom requires more. It requires materialisation of the group Rebel.

Jamaica at Fifty

Jamaica acquired independence from Britain August 6, 1962. The lowering of the Union Jack and hoisting of the new gold, black, and green flag with then Prime Minister Alexander Bustamante and the boisterous crowd looking on represented a watershed moment in the island's history. When composing the treatise upon which the government would anoint the polity's inaugural national heroes inclusive of Bustamante, Sylvia Wynter wrote that the "trajectory of Jamaican history can be defined as the struggle of the majority of our people to transform ourselves from being the **object** of the history of other nations, into the agent and creative **subject** of our own" (Wynter 1971: 1, orig. emphasis). 1962 encapsulated the collective change from an objective to subjective worldview, as it did reflect the next stage in a series of momentous struggles begun with the abolition of slavery in 1834, continued in the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion—the closest uprising short of formal social revolution—, and reignited in the 1938 labour uprisings across the island that led to the founding of the longstanding main rival political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and Jamaica Labour Party (JLP).

The *problem of freedom*, as one commentator puts it, does not end in 1834, 1865, or 1938. It is *teleological discourses of independence* (qua emancipation, qua liberation) that are at the heart of quandaries surrounding the seemingly evanescent nature of freedom.¹⁰ Such political language incorrectly frames independence as an end state in the movement towards the free life. Independence *precedes* freedom, not the other way around. When states have periods of crisis that call into question the status of freedom within society, one has to ask, as in the case of Jamaica, if freedom on a macro-level ever structurally materialised.

¹⁰ Holt (1992) accurately classifies the *problem of freedom* between the dawn of abolition and the early twentieth-century Jamaican labour revolts. The emancipation of slavery does not eradicate the mistreatment and dehumanisation of the ex-slave population. Holt does not, however, specify the difference between *independence* and *freedom*, which explains how state crisis conjunctures repeatedly arise both within and after the time periods of his study. I examine in detail the independence/freedom distinction in *Freedom as Marronage* (2015).

It is undeniable that Jamaica has made numerous advances in the last fifty years. The forging of universal adult suffrage, extension of civil and political liberties beyond a white oligarch class, scores of decorated intellectuals with global renown, many prominent charismatic politicians, election of a woman as Head of Government, emergence and growth of Rastafari, iconic status of reggae music, cosmopolitan track and field stars, and other examples indicate the best of times. There are, however, factors of the worst of times. The rise of political garrison communities, the quotidian presence of violence, the black/brown divide that ensued after the quelling of Morant Bay, fractured international trade relations—much of which is a result of structural adjustment conditionalities imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in exchange for needed loans, wrecking the economic well-being of many local farmers—, ongoing economic inequalities, and social costs are unsettling.

If Jacques Rancière is right that equality is an organising principle of politics (1999: 31), then widening inequality can only exacerbate social predicaments. In 1960, for example, the rate of illiteracy in Jamaica at the dawn of independence was 24%. In 2002, that rate actually *increased* to 24.6% (Patterson 2002: 23). Educational restructuring has occurred between 2002 and 2012, but not at the pace expected by leaders of government and the people alike. Freedom is not on the run. Numerous citizens have not made it to the meet in order to be in a position to begin any act of retreat from free existence.

A significant vestige impacting the reification of teleological discourses of independence at the expense of freedom is the Jamaican Commonwealth governmental structure. Although some perceive Queen Elizabeth II's role as Head of State and the Governor-General to be merely figureheads, the architecture of the Jamaican state enervates the ability of Jamaica to rule autonomously. The Office of the Prime Minister has become more powerful than many citizens desire, reducing the possibility for non-sovereign constitutionalism. The PM, for example, appoints thirteen of the twenty-one members of the Senate and the Opposition Leader the other eight rather than Senators being an elected body as is the sixty-member House of Rep-

representatives. Additionally, Jamaica has had several juridical constraints over the decades. From 1962 until 2005, all final appeals cases in the Jamaican legal system went to the Privy Council in Britain. Only since 2005 have final Jamaican legal appeals been the subject of ruling by the regionally formed Caribbean Court of Justice in Trinidad.

Trinidad and Tobago shifted to republic status in 1976 because the country experienced an economic boom with their oil reserves when politics including the United States were in petrol panic. Jamaica was in no economic position to do so neither then nor through the mid-1990s. Following reelection to a second period as Head of Government after an earlier brief term as Prime Minister between 2006-07, PM Portia Simpson-Miller vowed in her first speeches to the public and Parliament that top on the PNP government agenda would be a push for Jamaican republic status. The time had come, Simpson-Miller claimed, and it was long overdue. Prime Minister Simpson-Miller's reasoning was not merely economic. It was also an epistemological rationale that we could say echoes Wynter's treatises on Jamaican history and philosophical humanism and, most importantly, Fanon's *Rebel*.

It is noteworthy that the established CVM/Anderson polling body in Jamaica released a report in March 2012 indicating a cleavage in public opinion on Jamaica severing ties with the Queen. 44% of Jamaicans favored republic status, with 40% against a break with the British monarchy (Allen 2012). A near equal opposition to a measure that Simpson-Miller believes to be bipartisan, non-sovereign, and in the vested interests of all Jamaicans illustrates cautions expressed by Fanon. Fanon's warnings help to explain as well the anterior aspirations and contradictions of governance under Michael Manley when comparing Manley's democratic socialist rule during the 1970s to that of his neoliberal turn from 1989 to retirement in 1992.

Whether the present Simpson-Miller administration refashions Jamaica as a republic remains to be seen. What must happen to actualize freedom is the abandonment of logics of governance trapped in the idea of independence as finality. Freedom as flight involves broader processes. Political scientist Brian Meeks's call for a regular Constituent Assembly of the Jamaican People at home and abroad is one such imaginative transnational medium

to debate and decide on an agenda relevant to the collective. Meeks proposes creating an open and non-hierarchical agenda-setting space; a national and diasporic conversation spanning Jamaicans in Kingston and Mandeville to Brixton, Brooklyn, and elsewhere; a national and diaspora-wide convention; the reconvening of the Constituent Assembly once per decade; and a national land reform committee (2007: 127-30; 2014: 131-59).

This last recommendation corresponds to Fanon's contention that for a people experiencing either colonialism or neocolonialism in an independent, yet non-free, postcolony, "the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity" (2004: 9). The 50/50 Project of the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus is another intra-island initiative, as are the views in the newspaper letters to the editors of the *Daily Gleaner* and *Daily Observer*, the advocacy of elected officials, and the opinions of everyday people.¹¹ The lived experience of freedom demands nothing less.

Late Modern Challenges

The archetype of Fanon's Rebel and its attendant conception of freedom pose three late modern challenges for Jamaica at fifty and the future of the Caribbean. First, celebrating independence is of great value, especially annually and in the rare milestone moments, so long as there is acknowledgement of the meaning of freedom and recognition that freedom beyond independence entails the creation of state policies and attainment of individual and collective modes of consciousness which conceive of the flight from slavery in more expansive, perpetual terms.

Second, Human freedom necessitates the systemic death of Man. Another world is indeed possible. There is nothing wrong with Caribbean states having continued international diplomacy and exchange with Great Britain, France, and other former colonial powers. Devising non-sovereign forms of

¹¹ The website of the SALISES 50//50 Project is: <http://thesalises5050project.blogspot.com/>

constitutionalism and systems of governance are baseline requirements—though not the sole solutions—for Caribbean polities to be reservoirs of freedom.

Finally, we would be well-served in the region to juxtapose Fanon's Rebel's with the insights of the late Nesta Robert Marley. Perhaps it was fitting that our hosts of the Bahamas Fanon symposium mentioned at the outset housed us in the home where Marley resided whenever visiting Nassau. Marley developed inspiring and profound lyrical thought that he referred to as *Rebel music*. Rebel music is spiritual music, dread reasoning, livity, a vocal political theology of revolution, and a medium to channel the death of Man and (re)birth of the Human, of freedom. The album *Natty Dread*, particularly "Revolution" and the song with the identical name encapsulating Marley's lyrical political theory, is where Marley demonstrates this most directly. As Fanon ends *Black Skin* with a final prayer to be always a person who questions (2008: 206), let me conclude with the moving medley of interrogative words and yearning by Marley (1974): "Why can't we roam this open country?/Oh, why can't we be what we wanna be? We want to be free."

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