

Biography : Martinique and Algeria's Fanon Remembered

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"When we revolt it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe."

Franz Omar Fanon was born July 20, 1925 in the Caribbean nation of Martinique. He was a revolutionary philosopher, writer and psychiatrist who participated and influenced political processes for liberation across the world. His work has marked decolonial thought and anti-colonial struggles for the globally oppressed, especially African nations and people of the African diaspora.

Fanon supported the Algerian War of Independence from France and was actively involved in the Algerian National Liberation Front. Although he lived a comparatively short life, Fanon produced emblematic texts and theories that have proliferated anti-colonial revolutionary thought such as "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952) and "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961).

Fanon's political thought encompassed the implications and consequences of colonization. He focused considerably on anti-colonial struggles of the time and people's transforming consciousness. He focused on language, land and other factors that were utilized by the colonizer to oppress people's of the world.

Fanon detailed the connections between the systematic colonization of people, land and language. For example, Fanon declared that "Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land but from our minds as well." As such, he defended that "For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity."

In 1953, Fanon was named the Head of the Psychiatry Department of the Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria. There, he spearheaded patient care reform and desegregated the wards. The war for Algerian independence began during this time and patients shared with Fanon stories of torture and brutality. Learning the realities firsthand of the Algerian cause, in 1956, Fanon resigned from his position with the French government to struggle for Algerian independence.

Fanon went to Tunisia and began to work with the Algerian independence forces. He documented the independence movement writing articles in a number of publications. Several of his pieces were published after his death. He also served as the Ambassador to Ghana for the Provisional Algerian Government.

After returning from a trip to the Sahara to build another front for the Algerian independence movement, Fanon was diagnosed with leukemia. Despite the burden of his illness, Fanon continued to give lectures to the National Liberation Army, or ALN, along the Algero-Tunisian border.

His final text, "The Wretched of the Earth" was written in 10 months as he fought his cancer. Jean Paul Sartre published the text the year of his death. He sought treatment for his cancer but died in Bethesda, Maryland December 6, 1961. Fanon's body was buried with honors by the ALN and his

body currently rests at the martyrs' graveyard in Ain Kerma, Algeria.

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