

Upright and free: Fanon in South Africa, from Biko to the shackdwellers' movement (Abahlali baseMjondolo)

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(Received 3 June 2008; final form 16 July 2008)

Grounded in the South African experience, in discussions with Blacks about their everyday experiences of oppression and in attitudes formed from that experience and sharpened by an engagement with Africana philosophers like Fanon, Steve Biko recreated the kind of praxis that Fanon suggested in the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth*, namely that the working out of new concepts cannot come from the intellectual's head alone but must come from a dialogue with common people. Today a new shackdweller movement (Abahlali baseMjondolo) has emerged in South Africa, which has put post-apartheid society on trial and has resonated with Fanon and Biko's idea of a decolonized new humanism. At the same time Abahlali's notion of a person and its critique of reification has been challenged by the spontaneous eruption of xenophobic violence indicating that the stark choice between humanism and barbarism is a most concrete question in the shack settlements. Because Biko's development of Black consciousness and his engagement of Fanon's thought remains of historic importance to contemporary South Africa, the paper begins with a focus on the creativity and the contradictory processes by which Fanon's philosophy of liberation is articulated in Steve Biko's conception of Black consciousness. From this starting point the discussion shifts from Biko's critique of white liberalism to the dialectics of contemporary neoliberal 'postcolonial' reality. What remains central, however, are the creative and contradictory processes that a reengagement with Fanon will create. In other words, since it is 'the live subject that unites theory and reality', the issue becomes how, in a new historic moment, a philosophy born of struggle makes itself heard.

Keywords: Fanon; Biko; Cone; Black consciousness; Black theology; South Africa; shackdwellers; Abahlali baseMjondolo; xenophobia

The *practice* of philosophy is itself *theoretical*. It is the *critique* that measures the individual existence by the essence, the particular reality by the Idea. (Marx, 1841)

To speak about the practice of Fanonian philosophy one first needs to think about the question of method. This paper thinks through what Walter Rodney (1969) calls 'groundings with my brothers' in two, not necessarily opposite, but in Fanon's case, dialectically connected, directions. Since philosophy – not simply practical philosophy but a quest for universality, a philosophy of liberation – is present in the movements of the damned of the earth, a philosophic moment makes itself heard when the exchange of ideas

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In memory of Aimé Césaire who died as I was completing a draft of this paper.

across the Black world is grounded in the strivings both for freedom and lived experience from 'below' and when, as Marx puts it, philosophy grips the masses. These dialogues, often hidden, underground and subjugated, make up what could also be called 'philosophy born of struggle' (Harris, 2002).

Grounded in the South African experience, in discussions with Blacks about their everyday experiences of oppression and in attitudes formed from that experience and sharpened by an engagement with Africana philosophers like Fanon, Steve Biko recreated the kind of praxis that Fanon suggested in the conclusion of *The Wretched of the Earth*, namely that the working out of new concepts cannot come from the intellectual's head alone but must come from a dialogue with common people.¹ Today a new shackdweller movement (Abahlali baseMjondolo, Zulu for people who are staying in shacks) has emerged in South Africa that has put post-apartheid society on trial and has resonated with Fanon and Biko's idea of a decolonized new humanism. At the same time Abahlali's notion of a person and its critique of reification has been challenged by the spontaneous eruption of xenophobic violence indicating that the stark choice between humanism and barbarism is a most concrete question in the shack settlements. Because Biko's development of Black consciousness and his engagement of Fanon's thought remains of historic importance to contemporary South Africa, the paper begins with a focus on the creativity and the contradictory processes by which Fanon's philosophy of liberation is articulated in Steve Biko's conception of Black consciousness.² From this starting point the discussion shifts from Biko's critique of white liberalism to the dialectics of contemporary neoliberal 'postcolonial' reality. What remains central, however, are the creative and contradictory processes that a reengagement with Fanon will create. In other words, since it is 'the live subject that unites theory and reality' (Dunayevskaya, 1991, p. xxxiv), the issue becomes how, in a new historic moment, a philosophy born of struggle makes itself heard.

Grounding Fanon in South Africa: James Cone and the critique of white liberals

[I]t appears to us as too much of a coincidence that liberals – few as they are – should not be determining the modus operandi of those blacks who oppose the system, but also leading it, in spite of their involvement in the system. (Biko, 1979, p. 89)

Accept life together or nothing at all. (Jaspers, 1978, p. 32)

Fanon remained vital to liberation struggles on the African continent after his death. The 1967 French edition of *The Wretched* carried a picture of Congolese rebels still fighting years after Lumumba's murder. In the Portuguese colonies, Amílcar Cabral remained one of Fanon's most important interlocutors. In Mozambique, Yoweri Museveni, who would later become the President of Uganda, wrote about Fanon's applicability to 'liberated Mozambique' (Museveni, 1971). But in South Africa, where the apartheid regime banned anything that smacked of Marxism, Fanon arrived via the Black power movement building in the United States – in the form of young black students schooled in apartheid's 'bush colleges' and hungry for a philosophy of liberation to call their own. Founded in 1969, the South African Students Organization (SASO) heralded the beginnings of the new Black consciousness movement, which found an affinity with Fanon's philosophy, not across the Limpopo but almost subterraneously through the writings of an emergent American Black theology, specifically that of James Cone.³ The importance of Black theology as a medium for Fanon's travel into South Africa and also the quite different objective

circumstance meant that the usual primacy (see Arendt, 1971) given to Fanon's so-called theory of violence was muted. Indeed the emphasis on Fanon's conception of identity and liberation by figures like Cone had a direct connection to Blacks' experience in South Africa where, as Biko put it, 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressed [was] the mind of the oppressed' (Biko, 1979, p. 68).

Like Cone, Biko recognized that Christianity was an effective tool for mental enslavement (Cone, 1986a, p. 127) and he did not think Christian pacifism made sense 'to an oppressed and destitute people' (More, 2004, p. 214). But while Christianity in Africa was recognized as 'Western' – part of the oppressive system and colonizing process – Black theology, with its focus on the liberation of Black people from tyranny and servitude and on Jesus as a political rabble-rouser of the poor and a 'fighting God' (Biko, 1979, p. 94), was considered a positive contribution. Rooted in the language of the slave revolts led by Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner in the early nineteenth century, Black theology in the US also emphasized the significance of churches as spaces for Black political autonomy. But it was Cone's critique of white liberals that particularly resonated with Biko, and his first articulations of Black consciousness were a sharp critique of white liberalism, a suggestive point given that contemporary South Africa has embraced not only neoliberal economic policies but also neoliberal ideas of possessive individualism mediated through the capitalist market place.

Biko directly engaged Cone in his paper 'Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity', which he submitted to *Black Theology: The South African Voice*. The paper spoke of a vision of a true humanity that drew strength from solidarity, an articulation that contrasted starkly with the talk about 'integration' popular among liberal whites. Indeed, in the paper, Biko holds that the liberal discussion of integration forgets that it is people and human relationships that are at stake, not the liberal's instrumentalist concern with the administration of things. For this 'forgetting', according to Biko, far from an aberration, is derived from the exploitative values that liberalism is based on. And as if intimating a critique of post-apartheid society, he argues that the liberal's idea of integration

is an integration in which black will compete with black, using each other as rungs up a stepladder leading them to white values. It is an integration in which the black man will have to prove himself in terms of these values before meriting acceptance and ultimate assimilation, and in which the poor will grow poorer and rich richer in a country where the poor have always been black. (Biko, 1979, p. 91)

Returning to this point, Biko's 1970 essay, 'Black Souls in White Skin', further argues that the kind of integration that white liberals talk about is 'artificial' and would only perpetuate the 'in built complexes of superiority and inferiority' which would 'continue to manifest themselves even in the "nonracial" set-up' (Biko, 1979, p. 20). Echoing Cone, Biko then asks, 'Does this mean that I am against integration?' He answers:

if by integration you understand a breakthrough into white society by blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and codes of behavior set up and maintained by whites, then YES I am against it... If on the other hand, by integration you mean there shall be free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people, then I am with you. (Biko, 1979, p. 24)

Thus Cone's influence is manifest in Biko's articulation of Black consciousness philosophy as a critique of white liberalism. Taking many of its themes from the first chapter of Cone's *Black Power and Black Theology*, Biko concretized them for the South

African condition. For example, under a subsection of chapter one in *Black Power and Black Theology*, entitled 'Black Power and Existential Absurdity', Cone quips on the absurdity of the American declaration of independence especially its most famous lines, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal'. For Cone, Blacks were and are not equal. To the white retort that the Black is no longer a slave and therefore subject to integration, Cone replies that this is a camouflage, and echoing Fanon, adds that 'the absurdity arises as the Black man seeks to understand his place in the white world'.⁴ Thus, for Cone,

if integration means accepting the white man's style, his values or his religion, the black man must refuse ... [O]n the other hand, if integration means that each man meets the other on equal footing ... then mutual meaningful dialogue is possible. (1997, p. 7)

Cone's argument has a resonance with Biko's paper. Like Cone, Biko takes issue with the liberal's idea of integration, insisting that mutual recognition can only come from a rejection of the other's definition. Yet Mark Sanders argues that Biko's critique of white liberals is essentially a 'more "true" liberalism' (Sanders, 2002, p. 168), and to a degree he is right. In as far as 'liberal' is understood in terms of a discourse of mutual reciprocity and dignity, of equals facing each other in an equal situation, even Biko would agree. To be a 'true' liberal, the situation has to change in a double sense: in its structure and its values. And Lewis Gordon makes this point in his 2002 foreword to Biko's *I Write What I Like*:

Liberalism offers a double-edged sword. On the one hand, there is 'conservative' liberalism, where the goal is to be colorblind. The problem with this kind of liberalism is that it changes no structures. Thus, this liberalism expects us to be colorblind in a world of white normativity, a world where whites hold most of the key cards in the deck. Another kind of liberalism focuses on bringing blacks 'up' to whites. The problem with this strategy is that it makes whites the standard. Blacks would thus fail here on two counts. First, they would fail simply by not being white. Second, why must it be the case that what whites have achieved constitutes the highest standards that humanity can achieve? (Gordon, 2002, p. x)

Indeed, in 'Black Souls in White Skin', Biko argues that, rather than acknowledging their ability to think for themselves, white liberals and leftists treat Blacks as if they were perpetual 'under-sixteens' always looking toward whites for recognition. This situation, clear to Biko as a student in the 1960s, led to his first articulation of Black consciousness. Responding to his experiences of white liberal domination of the national student union, NUSAS, he argued that since the dialogue between Blacks and whites was always going to be unequal, mutual reciprocity was not possible; in contrast to the old 'non-racial approach' (Biko, 1979, p. 35), which in reality does nothing to challenge the dominant paradigm, Biko further maintained that the Black's 'inferiority complex' was a 'result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision' and to expect mutual respect between whites and Blacks would be like 'expecting the slave to work with the slave-master's son to remove all the conditions leading to the former's enslavement' (Biko, 1979, p. 35). In other words, for Biko, it was only by removing *all* the conditions of oppression that one could begin to speak about mutual respect and a non-racial society.

It was Black action, however, that led to the white liberal's reaction, and Cone addressed this issue in his essay, 'Is Black Power a Form of Black Racism', where he articulates the idea that 'Black racism is a myth created by whites to ease their guilt feelings' (1997, p. 15). For Cone, guilt is a product of whites projecting onto Blacks the whole edifice of white society's 'brutal' oppositional myths, myths which Fanon also takes to task in *Black Skin*: 'myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, education, enlightenment,

refinement' (Fanon, 1967, p. 194). In other words, for Cone, the white liberals' equation of Black Power with Black Racism is nothing more than an attempt to construct the Black as the white's scapegoat, once again mobilizing myths in which, to borrow Fanon's words, white liberal's superiority is based on the Black's inferiority, or more precisely *nonexistence*. Challenging whites to confront their own 'indifference to suffering' (Biko, 1979, p. 23),⁵ Biko quotes Karl Jaspers on metaphysical guilt by way of Cone's essay, who in turn takes it from Fanon's *Black Skin* (p. 89). The problem is not a 'Black problem', Biko insists, 'the problem is WHITE RACISM'. Indeed in 'Fear: An Important Determinant', Biko repeats the Jaspers quote including the following lines from Fanon's *Black Skin* excerpt ellipsed by Cone: 'somewhere in the heart of human relations, an absolute command imposes itself: in the case of criminal attack or of living conditions that threaten physical being, accept life for all together or nothing at all' (Biko, 1979, p. 78). For Jaspers, the obligation of human solidarity in the face of injustice stems from God, but for Fanon the obligation derives not from God but 'the reality of the feeling responsible for one's fellow man'. Biko sees in Jaspers' proclamation 'life for all or not at all' not so much the issue of white metaphysical guilt but Black solidarity. What for Jaspers might be ethical bad faith becomes for Biko a discourse on the fear created by the apartheid state security police. For Biko, the issue is circular, for it is solidarity that will undermine the fragmentation and the division on which fear breeds, and for Biko as for Fanon, solidarity is based on action: 'alterity of rupture, of conflict, of battle' and the need 'to educate man to be actional' (1967, p. 222).

Dialectic of solidarity: Being on your own

[I]t is too late in a sense. We don't need an organization to push the kind of ideology that we're pushing. It's there; it's already been planted. It is in the people. They could ban five of us; it makes no difference. (Biko, 2008, p. 37)

In contrast to the liberal argument that Black consciousness is a closed world, Biko's conceptualization expresses the dialectic of liberation he found in Fanon. In 'White Racism and Black Consciousness', Biko takes a quote from the conclusion of Fanon's chapter 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' in *The Wretched of the Earth* which summed up Fanon's dialectic of self-consciousness: 'As Fanon puts it', Biko writes, "'the consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication ... National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension'" (Biko, 1979, p. 72). This notion of dialectic is important to Biko as he situates the struggle in South Africa within the 'Black world'. In 'White Racism and Black Consciousness' (which was first published in *Student Perspectives on South Africa*⁶), Biko cites Aimé Césaire's 1956 letter of resignation from the French Communist Party. He finds Césaire's remarks about the specificity of the Black's place in the post-war world resonating with his own understanding of South African politics. For Biko, the South Africa of the mid-1950s was a place where Black consciousness was germinating among

young Black men who were beginning to 'grasp the notion of (their peculiar) uniqueness' and who were eager to define who they were ... [D]isgruntled with the direction imposed on the African National Congress ... [they were] beginning to realize that they need[ed] to go it alone and to *evolve a philosophy based on, and directed by, blacks*. (Biko, 1979, p. 67, my emphasis)

Then, after the banning of the Pan Africanist Congress (and the ANC) in the early 1960s, Black political expression was silenced. In such a situation the evolution of a philosophy based on self-determination appeared difficult. Yet for Biko it was not altogether impossible. He believed that if Blacks realized that they were truly *on their own* – that is, autonomous – and that genuine liberation must be an act of self-activity articulated in contrast to being beholden to white liberals and their values, such a direction was possible. Black consciousness would then, in response to the old 'multiracial' approach,⁷ represent a new direction and new articulation that drew from cultures of resistance in the present.

Thus, for Biko, Black consciousness was an important challenge to young educated Blacks wooed by white liberals. Eschewing the 'old non-racial approach', Black consciousness' claim to authenticity and self-determination would have to come endogenously. But this did not mean that it could not look to anything outside of itself for its becoming; self-determination was not a 'closing of the door to communication'. Rather, it was signal to encourage mutual reciprocity. This concept of being on your own can be traced to Fanon's discussion of Black consciousness in *Black Skin, White Masks*, and Biko's colleague, Barney Pityana,⁸ quotes the following from Fanon as a crucial articulation of Black consciousness in his paper, 'Power and Social Change in South Africa', also published in *Student Perspectives in South Africa*:

The dialectic that brings necessity into the foundation of my freedom drives me out of myself. It shatters my unreflected position. Still in terms of consciousness, Black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something. I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. No probability has any place inside me. My Black consciousness does not hold itself as a lack.⁹ It IS. It is its own follower. (1972)¹⁰

Pityana then goes onto add,¹¹ 'This is what we Blacks are after TO BE. We believe that we are quite efficient in handling our BEness and for this reason we are self-sufficient'. In short, even if Pityana's articulation of Black consciousness had an individualist existential moment of self-examination and personhood¹² – a quest 'TO BE' – the emphasis is still on becoming actional *social* beings. This is not unlike Biko's formulation, which following Fanon, links psychological liberation to a 'sociodiagnostic' (1967, p. 11), grounding individual alienation in its socio-economic and political contexts and individual liberation in the social situation. In other words, they all saw and built on Fanon's concern with the social individual and the idea that individual liberation required a psychological revival that had to be intersubjective.¹³

Biko's essay, 'We Blacks' (Biko, 1979, pp. 27–32), expresses the importance of self-consciousness of the individual in the collective nature of social action, which, in apartheid South Africa, necessitated a complete break with the ideological and psychological system produced by colonialism and apartheid. For Biko, such an action demanded the understanding that white liberals were not simply apartheid's beneficiaries but active accomplices in reinforcing the idea that Blacks were not capable of becoming autonomous human beings. Moreover, Black consciousness' internal revolution – its becoming – required the subject's total commitment. For Black consciousness was a political movement whose philosophy was not simply strategic but a demand for total liberation.¹⁴ This, though, did not mean that Biko rejected strategy, but it did mean that Biko's vision, like Fanon's, was a total critique. The quest for a new humanity required fundamental change.

Radical mutations: Culture and revolution

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*)

I worked on jobs with my feet and my hand
 But all the work I did was for the other man
 Now we demand a chance to do things for ourselves
 We're tired of beatin' our head against the wall
 And workin' for someone else
 We're people, we're just like the birds and the bees
 We'd rather die on our feet
 Than be livin' on our knees
 Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud (James Brown, 'Say it Loud, I'm Black and Proud')

To be sure, the historical contexts for Fanon writing the *Wretched of the Earth* and Biko developing Black consciousness are quite dissimilar in that the situation in South Africa in 1969 is far different from that of revolutionary Algeria in 1959. Biko argues, for example, that by 1960 'all Black resistance was killed, and the stage was left open to whites of liberal opinion to make representation for Blacks' (Biko, 2008, p. 21). In other words, the 1960s in South Africa was less a decade of turbulence than quiescence. Nevertheless it is clear that Biko found the issues Fanon developed in *The Wretched* similar enough and compelling for this reason. For example, in 'Some African Cultural Concepts', Biko, like Fanon, views African cultures as neither time bound nor pre-colonial but have very nearly been battered out of shape by settler colonialism (Biko, 1979, p. 41). In fact, he says, even talking about African culture is a difficult thing to do because the African is not supposed to have an understanding of his or her own culture. Thus Biko, like Fanon, is critical of educated Blacks who, mimicking white liberals, take an elitist attitude toward African cultures, failing to understand that the rural folk's criticism of apartheid is based on a fundamental truth, that it is an elemental resistance to the destruction of the African ways of life (Biko, 1979, pp. 69–70). Biko's call for a reconnection to the people's elemental resistance is, as we remember from reading Fanon, a critical element of the dialectic of national consciousness. So while Biko acknowledged the Fanonian notion of cultural resistance, he also recognized Fanon's critique of the native intellectual, especially since Black consciousness first emerged among Black students.¹⁵ And, like Fanon, Biko argued that a critical consciousness must encourage a self-critical attitude toward elitism. And in this vein, he argued that in order for SASO to transition from being a student organization to becoming a national organization, the Black People's Convention (BPC) had to 'stress . . . the relation of the intellectuals with the *real needs* of black community'. Thus emphasizing the need for national policies that are grounded in the 'real needs' – the *experience* – of common people, Biko was developing a notion of solidarity that rejected the notion of 'tribal cocoons . . . called "homelands" which he saw as nothing else but sophisticated concentration camps where black people are allowed to "suffer peacefully"' (Biko, 1979, p. 86). At the same time, he was also following Fanon's conception of a dialectic of a national consciousness, which insisted not only that radical intellectuals reject the racist regime and its invention of 'tribal' politics, but that they also, somewhat paradoxically, use what they learned in the apartheid schools and colleges against the regime itself. This, of course, meant that, far from a simple critique of 'Bantu education', 'tribal homelands' and any collaboration with apartheid, intellectuals had to rethink concepts of collectivity and what it meant to 'return to the source' (Cabral, 1974).

For such a return required a mental liberation from the all the inferiority complexes that had been produced by years of living in apartheid South Africa. And, particularly for Biko, it meant a liberation grounded in African cultural concepts of collectivity and sharing that put the human being at the center. Like Latin American liberation theologians and US Black theologians like Cone, Biko rejected the Christian homily that the poor are always among us,¹⁶ and viewed the kind of poverty and destitution that one sees in Africa as not endemic to it, but a product of colonialism and apartheid. Thus he maintained that 'poverty was a foreign concept' in precolonial Africa (Biko, 1979, p. 43) and would probably agree with European economists like Karl Polyani that starvation and malnutrition did not exist in communal societies in Africa where assistance to the destitute was given unquestionably (Polyani, 1957, pp. 163-164).

So while Biko emphasized the specificity of the African situation, he also understood the international urban scope of the modern Black consciousness movement¹⁷ that was developing among the youth in Africa.¹⁸ Young Blacks, Biko argued, were finding inspiration from the soulful¹⁹ and defiant message of James Brown's anthem 'Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud'. Biko identified this song as part of 'our modern culture; a culture of defiance, self-assertion and group pride and solidarity' (Biko, 1979, p. 46). Indeed, Cone had also applauded James Brown's 'Say it Loud' as a source of Black theology, adding, 'It is the Christian way of saying, "to hell with your stinking white society and its middle-class ideas about the world. It has nothing to do with the liberating deeds of God"' (Cone, 1973, p. 25; see also Cone, 1997, p. 25). So, going back to Biko's demand for African cultural concepts for self-becoming, how did the 'Soul Power' of the African-American singer, James Brown, singing from the heart of the capitalist monster, the United States (Fanon, 1968, p. 313), with its narrowly instrumental individualist ideology, jibe with his conception of Black communalism?

Biko did not address the possible ambiguities, rivalries and incipient class divisions in the Black world. But, like Fanon, his rejection of white liberal (and colonial) culture was based not on a belief in cultural essence but on an embracing of the tradition of popular resistance to apartheid. Emphasizing the threads of solidarity in the Black community, Biko argued that 'the basic tenets of our culture have largely succeeded in withstanding the process of bastardization'. Still, when it comes to a difference between Fanon and Biko, 1969 was not 1959 in another important sense. South Africa aside, 1969 was almost synonymous with the word revolution, especially the Black revolution in the United States. And Biko's notion of African cultural concepts, of 'giving the world a more human face', was, as I have argued, worldly and revolutionary – not a harkening back to any imagined past but rooted in the lived experience of the here and now. And its sources are continental, including the intellectual and cultural exchanges between the United States and South Africa. Thus, for Biko, the reference to James Brown is not external to African cultural concepts but an expression of an 'all-engulfing rhythm' that 'immediately caught on and set millions of bodies in gyration throughout the world' (Biko, 1979, p. 46). But the question is, as far as he was making claims about millions of people 'throughout the world', was he falling into the abstractions of negritude?

Anyone familiar with Fanon's *Black Skin* will be immediately wary of such a claim of 'rhythm' since it echoes Senghor's essentialist claims about the Black's emotion, sensitivity, intuition, and rhythmic attitude (1967, p. 127).²⁰ In fact, in 'Some African Cultural Concepts', Biko does approvingly quote Kenneth Kaunda (then the president of Zambia) about Africans beings pre-scientific people. Yet, if we briefly hold this in abeyance, we see that 1969 is not 1948²¹ or 1949, when negritude was essentially a literary movement

connected to the burgeoning anti-colonial movements. Rather, in 1969, Black Consciousness was a worldwide mass and revolutionary phenomenon, and 'Say it Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud' took on a revolutionary significance,²² listening to 'Say it Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud' in this context, Biko seems to have been describing what must have felt like the rhythm of a mass movement in the immediacy of Black revolt. After all, Biko showed no interest in making claims about a Black essence, only the attempt to develop authentic links (in an existential, not essential, sense) for an autonomous and revolutionary humanist politics which he called 'situational-experiencing' (Biko, 1979, p. 43). For him, the future of South Africa is Black in the sense of struggle rather than a timeless, static essence, and Black solidarity meant rejecting the apartheid division along essentialist 'tribal' lines. Thus Black *becoming* is the Black masses making themselves and making history; it is a process of re-entry into their own history and the creation of an alternative history that had been buried and dismissed by colonialism and apartheid. In short, in Biko's conception, self-determination is an 'endogenous' process rooted in a critique of liberalism and elitism, not an embrace of an *ahistorical* cultural or racial essentialism.

Paraphrasing Fanon's statement in 'On National Culture' (see 1968, p. 210), Biko writes 'as one black writer says, "colonialism is never satisfied with having the native in its grip but, by some strange logic, it must turn to his past and disfigure and distort it"'. However, a major, though subtle, shade of difference between Fanon and Biko's conception of culture seems to be over their attitudes to 'native' culture under colonialism. Though Fanon appreciates how the 'native's' culture has continued to resist colonialism, 'On National Culture' seems to follow a different trajectory, one that emphasizes how this clandestine culture of resistance is 'condemned to extinction' (1968, p. 237). Inert and already destroyed, indigenous culture can only be rejuvenated, indeed transformed, by the 'struggle'. Fanon sums up the dialectic (1968, p. 210):

The struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former values and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form nor content of the people's culture.

And indeed for Fanon this development is crucial to the definition of a new humanism.

When Fanon speaks of culture he maintains that it is opposed to custom. Culture is living and changing, while custom is reified, formal and rigid.²³ And it is culture, not custom, Fanon argues, that the damned of the earth hang onto even under the most extreme conditions. Contested and clandestine, and however broken-down, rigid and smashed by poverty this culture has become, it remains an original source of resistance which keeps the spirit of struggle alive. During the anti-colonial struggle, Fanon argues, these cultures are often transformed. After all, this national culture is also a struggle against the reification of tradition and custom (and with them the narrow nationalism of xenophobia, regionalism and chauvinism), and while Fanon appreciated the recovery of the history of African civilizations, he also seemed to suggest that such a discovery did not change the objective situation. For Fanon, national culture must be a fighting culture, one that draws from the long resistance to colonial occupation and transforms it in its struggle for national liberation.

Biko's idea of African cultural concepts was concerned with expressing a critique of the alienating character of capitalism that is based, as Biko argued, on dehumanization (see Olyphant, 2008). In other words, Biko's concern, not unlike Fanon's, was first and foremost with the need to reconnect with national culture to resist reification – the inert, static and outworn *custom* that served as the outer shell on which ethnic

entrepreneurs and chauvinists, as well as homeland leaders, apartheid academics and colonial apologists, based and drew their power. When it came to the rural areas, the centrality of the so-called 'Homelands' to apartheid's hegemony made it clear to Biko just what the recovery of the people's culture and their history was about – namely, the real history of anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, for Biko, it is revolutionary anticolonial history that relates 'the past to the present and demonstrates a historical evolution of the black man'. Thus when Biko spoke about paying attention to 'our history' (Biko, 1979, p. 95), it had nothing to do with the 'customary' – the reified traditions and manners – that had been fashioned according to the needs of the colonial state. And Biko's idea of history did not jibe either with the tactics of Bantustan leaders like Buthelezi, who claimed to be fighting the regime from the inside. As Biko put it, 'We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulus, Xhosa, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black' (Biko, 1979, p. 97). Of course, Bantustans played an important material and ideological role for white South Africa, but the mass of people in rural areas did not accept Bantustans because they were fundamentally at odds with 'the basic tenets of our culture which ha[d] largely succeeded in withstanding the process of bastardization' (Biko, 1979, pp. 95–96). Thus apartheid fabrication of the tribal homeland is an imposition that is utterly in contradiction with the real needs of the mass of the people. And, for Biko, African cultural values, which center on appreciating 'man for himself', are not only crucial to the 'quest for a true humanity' but also in direct contrast to white liberal culture:

Ours is a true man-centered society whose sacred tradition is sharing. We must reject, as we have been doing, the individualistic cold approach to life that is the cornerstone of Anglo Boer – culture. We must seek to restore to the black man the great importance we used to give human relations ... to reduce the triumph of technology over man and the materialistic element that is slowly creeping into our society. (Biko, 1979, p. 96)

Rather than simply a 'multi-ethnic' or 'multi-racial' nation, the Black consciousness slogan 'One Azania, One Nation' echoed Fanon's double warning that if social consciousness is reached without a strong national consciousness, it could 'paradoxically' lead to regionalism and ethnic xenophobia. At the same time, if 'nationalism' was not made explicit and 'enriched' into a 'consciousness of social and political needs, in other words humanism, it leads up a blind alley' (1968, p. 204). Thus, for Biko, appreciating the nation building attempts of Shaka, Moshoeshe and Hintsa did not mean accepting 'Bantustan theory' grounded in colonial concepts of race and tribe. What was important was to be reminded of what Africans had achieved and what could be created in a quest for a new humanity. The history of nation building thus was part of the contemporary dialogue that strove for the freedom of the formerly excluded and dehumanized mass of people who were now being encouraged to hear themselves speak and be part of creating a new nation.

Fear and the fragmentation of black resistance

Ground for a revolution is always fertile in the presence of absolute destitution. (Biko, 1979, p.30)

When I turn on my radio, when I hear that someone in jail slipped off a piece of soap, fell and died I say that we have been lied to: Hitler is not dead, he is likely to be found in Pretoria. (Biko, 1979, p. 75)²⁴

Biko's critique of white liberals and his challenge to the Black's 'inferiority complex' (Biko, 1979, p. 45) was not the main issue in the townships where, as Biko argues, Blacks have no respect for white people and instead there is an 'aura of immorality and naked cruelty' perpetrated in the name of whites (Biko, 1979, p. 76). Thus political paralysis is not created by a complex; it is not a hallucination; it is a social fact created by force and the fear of reprisal that 'erodes the soul of black people' (Biko, 1979, p. 76). Fanon himself insists on this in chapter 4 of *Black Skin*: that one return to 'reality' in order to get the source of the problem. This leads us to Fanon's second idea of hegemony, hegemony based on pure force, which he discusses in *The Wretched*.²⁵ Hemmed in and controlled by the colonial policing system, the 'native', subjected to violence, struggles to survive, and Fanon contends that this violent atmosphere, deprived of an appropriate outlet against its real source, results in an 'aggressiveness turned against his own people'. Apartheid is simply the logical conclusion of a rule that is meant to teach the 'native [to] learn to stay in his place and not go beyond certain limits'. In this totalitarian context, Fanon argues, freedom is achieved during sleep, 'in the dreams of movement and aggression' (1968, p. 52).

Echoing Fanon's discussion of life under colonialism, Biko argues that 'Township life alone makes it a miracle for anyone to live up to adulthood. There we see a situation of absolute want, in which black will kill black to be able to survive. This is the basis of vandalism, murder, rape and plunder that goes on while the real sources of evil – white society – are sun-tanning on exclusive beaches or relaxing in their bourgeois homes' (Biko, 1979, p. 75). In other words, the system of oppression is not nuanced; white domination is maintained by fear and force, and Blacks in the township understand this. While this understanding alone does not undermine the reality of the force on which fear is constructed, it does allow another point of view. And Biko once again takes up Fanon's position, understanding that colonial society is a Manichean reality, a world split in two, where the 'natives' are bowed but not broken and kept in check only by force.

Because such a society can subdue Blacks only by force, the apartheid system is, as Biko says, 'the best economic system for revolution'. It is the 'great leveler' because it blocks the development of a Black middle class in the urban areas. Living in the same-sized four-room houses and taking the bus or train to work, Biko argues, solidarity could emerge across class lines. 'It's a perfect system for common identification', he adds, because 'the evils of it are so pointed and so clear, and therefore make teaching of alternative methods, more meaningful methods, more indigenous methods even, much easier' (Biko, 2008, p. 45). Arising from a new generation of young Blacks, Black consciousness was, in a sense, a product of this leveling, which rescribed 'non-white' and with it 'Indian' and 'Coloured' as 'Black', and promoted Black consciousness as a transformative social action. Black consciousness is, in this sense, a fairly straightforward philosophy of solidarity that reflects what the people already know, even if they have not systematically thought about or articulated it. But while Fanon discusses the possibility of violence emerging as a 'cleansing force' (1968, p. 94), Biko makes no reference at all to the possibility of such counter-violence. Rather, his focus is on the work needed to break the hold of fear that has been so crucial to apartheid rule, violently 'fragmenting' Black resistance and turning itself against itself. Yet, Biko's objective remains similar to Fanon's: what Blacks need is to stand up as a group, and Black consciousness' role is to rechannel the 'natives' 'pent-up' aggression toward the real source of violence.²⁶ On this score, Biko heeds Fanon's warning that liberation cannot come about from a reactive action based on a politics of revenge. Thus, Biko emphasizes Black consciousness' notion of solidarity, one that is based not on a

dogmatic sinking of differences, but on an intellectual elaboration that encourages Blacks to follow up their chain of reasoning:

'Black consciousness' therefore seeks to give positivity in the outlook of the black people to their problems. It works on the knowledge that 'white hatred' is negative, though understandable, and leads to precipitate shot-gun methods which may be disastrous for black and white alike. It seeks to channel up the pent-up forces of angry black masses to meaningful directional opposition basing its entire struggle on realities of the situation. It wants to ensure a singularity of purpose in the minds of the black people and to make possible total involvement of the masses in a struggle essentially theirs. (Biko, 1979, pp. 30-31)

In short, Black consciousness is a philosophy of self-emancipation. And, like Fanon, Biko understands that there is no demiurge, that freedom will not come from outside.²⁷ There is no use simply waiting for men with machine-guns to come and liberate them. They must stand up to oppression together. Surely this was what the Soweto student rebellion of 1976 heralded. And, for Biko, this idea of autonomy was not only necessary but also practical, and in retrospect, his position is absolutely correct. Black consciousness would soon represent a new stage of cognition and revolt, a stage that was essential – even to those in the mass democratic movements of the 1980s who had not been part of Black consciousness (see Gibson, 1988) – to the eventual unraveling of apartheid South Africa. Indeed after Soweto, 1976, Black consciousness became a philosophy whose time had come.

Alreaed Stubbs notes that in May 1976 Biko's comments at the Black consciousness trial had become public knowledge. Reported daily in the *Rand Daily Mail*, he had become the 'toast of the shebeens'.

Here was at last the authentic voice of the people not afraid to say openly what all blacks think but are too frightened to say ... Can the example of this man's courage have inspired the boys and girls of Soweto to face death, as they bravely did just six weeks later? (Biko, 1979, pp. 120-121)

The concreteness, indeed brilliance, of Soweto as an 'event', a subjective moment that had become objective, initiated a new stage: the beginning of the end of apartheid. Grounded in a specific situation and experience, Black consciousness in South Africa is a product of the experience of a 'moment' – of apartheid, of postcolonial Africa and of the Black consciousness mediated by US Black freedom movements. So, while Black consciousness as such signified a new stage of cognition, we have to ask: is Black consciousness applicable to contemporary South Africa? If so, how?

To be sure, Biko's Black consciousness may be too specific to be immediately applicable outside of its historical context, but as an idea of liberation, it still remains essential for any contemporary critique. Raya Dunayevskaya's 1973 discussion of the African 'revolutions' seems to talk to this issue when she argues that

it is not possible to comprehend the African reality apart from the compelling objective forces of world production, the pull of the world market, and the underlying philosophy of the masses which Marx called 'the quest for universality' ... [E]ven now ... after all the set backs ... far from rigor mortis having set in among 'the poor Africans', they are continuing the discussion of the relationship of philosophy to revolution. (1982, p. 246)

The point is that a philosophy born of struggle is ongoing. There is nothing to prevent it from presenting epochal truths. Even if philosophy belongs to its time, it should not be *reduced* to its time. After all, Soweto's 'concretization' of Black consciousness as a new stage enlivened rather than worked out the 'contradictory processes' internal to it.²⁸

Thus while the brilliance of the Bikoan moment is a historical event, 'Biko Lives'. When the death knell of apartheid sounded, what became urgent was working out the problem of the aftermath, namely what needed to happen after the end of apartheid: To work through the contradictory relationship of subjectivity to objectivity by 'hold[ing] onto the principle of creativity, and the contradictory processes by which creativity develops' (Dunayevskaya, 1982, p. 246). Indeed this is what Fanon confronted and summed up in *The Wretched of the Earth* as he reflected on the 'pitfalls' of the anti-colonial movements. And it is this problematic that we are still confronting in the long postcolonial moment.

Toward a new beginning or a return to the old? Fanon, Biko and contemporary South Africa

Equally victims of the same tyranny, simultaneously identifying a single enemy, this physically dispersed people is realizing its unity and founding in suffering a spiritual community which constitutes the most solid bastion of the Algerian Revolution. (Fanon, 1994, p. 120)

[T]he biggest mistake the black world ever made was to assume that whoever opposed apartheid was an ally. (Biko, 1979, p.63)

The crowd was yelling kill the Shangaanis. . . . They even said, 'Comrade, help us kill the Shangaans'. But I couldn't do that. I have loyalty to my ancestors. (Ernest Ngywenya quoted in Bearak, 2008, p. A13)²⁹

Biko's critique of the white liberal idea of integration was derived in part from Fanon's idea of Black consciousness. For Fanon, Black consciousness was a critique directed as much to the Black *évolue* as to Sartre's contention that Negritude was a 'minor term'. For Fanon the critique returned to the problematic addressed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, namely the problematic of recognition: the Black turning toward the white master and trying to 'make it' in white society. This problematic was couched in terms of alienation, or what Fanon called the quest for disalienation and the development of a 'new humanism', which he brilliantly redeveloped in *The Wretched*, shifting the critique from the Black *évolue's* troubling internalization of 'whitening' to the nationalist elite's cynical desire for a place in the machinery of colonial expropriation. For, if in *Black Skin*, the *évolue*, corrupted by the air of bourgeois society, goes from one way of life to another, imbibing values secreted by the white master (see Fanon, 1967, pp. 221–224), in *The Wretched* these 'emancipated slaves' become the huckstering nationalist petit bourgeois and party leaders who betray the emancipatory goals of the movement for pieces of silver. Thus for Fanon postcolonial society cannot be understood simply as a psychological return of the repressed since it is the mass of poor people who concretely feel the degeneration and betrayal of the nationalist movement.

South Africa has followed Fanon's prognosis to a 'T' and yet at the same time it has tried to prove Fanon wrong. While government schemes of 'Black Economic Empowerment' (BEE) have tried to create a 'risk-taking' 'productive' African bourgeoisie rather than the senile huckstering caste that Fanon predicted, neither these schemes, nor the fact that South Africa has created more new (US\$) millionaires than any other African nation (in fact the fourth most in the world) is really evidence that proves Fanon's thesis wrong. Moeletsi Mbeki (President Thabo Mbeki's brother) argues as much, positing that

Overall the BEE is crony capitalism . . . Most of these so-called business leaders are agents of white capital, hand in glove with the state; they aren't entrepreneurs.. Our country is

undergoing very rapid de-industrialisation under the joint influence of its lack of entrepreneurial ability and Asian competition.

Continuing in this Fanonian vein, he notes that

There was a wide sociological gap between grassroots activists and the leaders of the struggle. The latter did very well out of it, because they took over the state. They and their children now make up the ranks of the emerging middle class ... The government spawned an enormous bureaucracy which was spectacularly successful in feeding off these resources, without creating work for the wider population. (cited in Rivière, 2008)

Indeed, the fact that (despite promises to the contrary) the socio-economic inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa are as extreme, if not more extreme, than during the apartheid period, supports Fanon's prognosis.

Fanon warns in 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' that '[I]f nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley' (1969, p. 204). This blind alley – from national liberation to national chauvinism – has been followed in South Africa.³⁰ In May 2008 outbreaks of violence against non South African Africans spread across urban areas resulting in over 60 deaths and more than one hundred Africans driven from their home. 'Since the sole motto of the bourgeoisie is "replace the foreigner"', Fanon argues,

the small people of the nation – taxi drivers, cake sellers, and bootblacks – will be equally quick to insist that the Dahomans go home to their own country, or will even go further and demand that the Foulbis and the Peuhls return to their jungle or their mountains

(for contemporary South Africa one only need insert Zimbabwean,³¹ Malawian, Mozambican, and Congolese). Racial, regional and tribal antagonisms, Fanon continues, come to the surface as the 'hollow shell of nationality' crumbles. This process of national degeneration is far from inevitable; it results from a political and economic program that lacks a minimum humanist content. After independence, the people are driven back to 'the caves', Fanon argues. Almost out of sight, they 'stagnate deplorably in unbearable poverty'. Poor people lash out at their neighbor out of desperation and feelings of powerlessness. The situation is tragic and terrible but Fanon does not blame the poor. Rather he points his finger at the nationalist party masked by a rhetoric of Africanism, which has betrayed the people and has become simply the means for private advancement. This situation is being played out in contemporary South Africa. The anti-human neoliberal economic program, the authoritarianism with which it is implemented at the local level, the perceptions of corruption, the way in which the party has become a mode of private advancement and top-down social control, the feeling that nothing has improved, the 'unbearable poverty' and the increasing criminalization of the poor – in short the betrayal of the idea of freedom – has created a desperation that is setting the stage for all sorts of morbid symptoms to appear (Gramsci, 1971, p. 275).³²

In as much as Black consciousness expressed national consciousness in South Africa, the contradiction between the image of South Africa as a 'successful' postcolonial society and the concrete reality of the mass of its population is often articulated within a Black consciousness paradigm. Just as schemes favoring the development of a Black petit bourgeois and bourgeois class trade on the rhetoric of nationalism and ethnic identity, Biko's critique of liberalism and the necessity of political autonomy have taken on a new relevance. Post-apartheid society has created the type of integration that Biko would have

abhorred (an artificial integration where blacks are judged in terms of white values [Biko, 1979, p. 91]). At the same time South Africa's masses of poor people, politicized by the long anti-apartheid struggle, but marginalized from the post-apartheid polity, have been quick to understand that the betrayal of 'the struggle' is not simply a moral issue but a social phenomenon. This realization, which has corresponded with outbreaks of 'disobedience' and revolt,³³ is once more returning the regime to authoritarian tactics as well as smear campaigns, reverting to force, fear and ethnic and racial patronage in an attempt to keep a new mass movement from emerging and threatening their legitimacy.

Indeed the period between 1977 and the present is marked by the rise of neoliberalism as the 'latest stage' of capitalism. This is particularly apparent in the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa. Whereas apartheid South Africa was a state-capitalist society based on white privilege, where the state guaranteed whites' welfare, full employment and a certain standard of living on the backs of Black labor, post-apartheid South Africa has seen the introduction of neoliberal economic policies. These policies, replete with privatization and corporatization of state-run sectors of the economy, have played a role in the country's over 50% unemployment rate and the shift away from the social democratic ideology of the ANC's Freedom Charter.³⁴ Freedom and liberation from apartheid – terms that once helped mobilize masses of people – have been reduced to the freedom and liberty of the narrowly defined 'self' that competes in the market. Presented through financial institutions (i.e. World Bank and International Monetary Fund), as well as presented through multinational corporations, governments and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), neoliberalism is heralded as the equal opportunity truth of colorblind self-advancement and self-promotion. Here the self-as-commodity is presented not only as the ideology of the rising petit bourgeoisie but also as the only possible way for the poor to raise themselves out of poverty.³⁵ Socioeconomic inequality is thus dismissed as the old discourse of class politics, and the poor is understood simply as people who need to become entrepreneurs, responsible for their own self-exploitation as human capital. As Margaret Thatcher succinctly put it, there is no such thing as society,³⁶ only ethical life centered on the 'care of the self'³⁷ and its fabrication as human capital. In short, there is no longer ethical social life; self-emancipation has quite literally become the work of self-will.

While this sophistry presents the freewheeling ideology of contemporary South Africa, it has not changed the reality still structured by legacies of apartheid and colonialism. In post-apartheid South Africa, the concrete socioeconomic inequalities of apartheid and colonization – impoverishment and forced labor – are often reduced to abstract political rhetoric of the kind Fanon spoke about in *The Wretched*. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), based in a discourse of human rights, was created to redress apartheid's horrors through forgiveness (Chipkin, 2007, pp. 173–187). It proposed no redress and said nothing of the expropriation of African land that was systematized in the 'pre-apartheid' 1913 'Native Land Act'. And despite numerous government promises, only a miniscule amount of land has been redistributed to Africans, while feudal – (white) Baas/(Black) servant – relations continue in the rural areas. In addition, the great promise of homes in the urban areas has been transformed into a threat of destruction as shack settlements are demolished and their inhabitants are forcibly 'relocated' to miserable 10 x 10 foot 'houses' in the peri-urban areas often 20 miles from the city (and thus from possible jobs, health care, education and other services). Moreover, rights formulated in the South African constitution – such as the right to water, electricity, sanitation – have been refigured into the neoliberal discourse of 'access' based on 'cost-recovery', and the promise of electrification of the shack settlements reneged.³⁸

Biko's critique of liberalism speaks to this neoliberal discourse. As we have seen, rejecting both kinds of liberalism delineated by Lewis Gordon, Biko's idea of Black consciousness is not positivistic or solipsistic. It does not accept white normativity, or the idea that Blacks be brought up to white standard as though white liberalism is the standard of humanity. Moreover, it does not take an *a priori* individual as the basis of political change. Rather, Biko's idea of Black consciousness is a process that comes into being in a social context. It is an activism that understands the importance of thinking as collective acts that change the world. Thus Biko's Black consciousness cannot be an individualist consciousness looking for an entrepreneurial niche in the capitalist market where the 'struggle' becomes the rhetorical space – the 'school' – for the Black *évolue* to market itself and find a niche for self *quá* 'human capital'. In this sense, the neoliberal spirit is perfect for the Black elite, who consider education part of their self-fashioning. A far cry from what Biko had in mind.

But, as Veriava and Naidoo point out (2008, p. 232), 'corporate Black consciousness' is still an expression of Black consciousness. It reflects the neoliberal ideology that judges the worth of individuals in terms of competition in markets so that even freedom and creativity are limited, indeed defined, by marketability, and ethnic entrepreneurship – the trading and marketing of niche ethnic identities – finds a new expression in 'difference' and claims to 'authenticity'. Thus, by denying a social world in favor of an individualist one, neoliberalism silences public discourse, and there is no public space that is not always already commercial. In this situation, corporate Black consciousness expresses a depoliticized version of Biko's Black consciousness, one that is stripped of any ideas of Black solidarity, instead promoting a discourse of egoistic self-advancement that leads inevitably to fear and fragmentation, despite the chummy 'networking' conducted in posh downtown bars and restaurants. One result of this discourse, manifested in the elective affinity of technocratic and identity politics, is the rise of xenophobia. Produced by the deteriorating situation for the poor and aided by the recent turn to ethnic populism within the ANC (most notably in the campaign in support of Jacob Zuma's accession to the presidency³⁹), xenophobia expresses the collective badge of power of the powerless against the powerless.

The dialectics of national consciousness

The bondsman becomes aware, through this rediscovery of himself by himself, of having and being a 'mind of his own'. (Hegel, 1967, p. 239)

If the philosopher ... assigns himself the task of pursuing the immanent logic of other experiences and other existences instead of putting himself in their place, if he forsake the illusion of contemplating the totality of completed history and feels caught up in it like other men and confronted by a future to *be made*, then philosophy fulfills itself by doing away with itself as isolated philosophy. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 133)

Fanon's scathing critique of post-independence Africa, and thus his critique of 'postcolonialism' (and here I include post-apartheid), were developed in his decolonial reading of the Hegelian dialectic and the quest for recognition in *Black Skin, White Masks*, particularly in the chapter entitled 'The Black and Hegel'. Though, at the conclusion of 'The Black and Hegel', Fanon emphasized social action rather than the labor of working on the thing (as Hegel had) as key to the development of the Black's consciousness in a racist society, what Hegel identified as the slave's gaining a mind of his or her own

remained an essential measure of 'self-emancipation'. And though it is often assumed that Fanon moved toward a class position in the conclusion to *Black Skin*,⁴⁰ this did not necessitate a move away from Black consciousness. In fact, it deepened its conceptualization in that Fanon's critique of the master/slave dialectic becomes an articulation of a race/class dialectic. After all, Fanon was talking specifically about incipient class attitudes within the Black world without dismissing the lived reality of Blacks in a racist society. And he saw that Black workers knew of one solution, namely to fight collectively for survival against injustice (Fanon, 1967, p. 224). Of course, to fight, Blacks had to know what to fight for, and, for Fanon, this signaled a need to become 'actional'. As he puts it, 'To educate man to be actional, preserving in all his relations his respect for the basic values that constitute a human world, is the prime task of him who, having taken thought, prepares to act' (1967, p. 222). For Fanon, to be actional meant taking thought and changing the material world.

Following Fanon, Biko also understood the importance of mental liberation to the freedom struggle. Like Fanon, concerned with the mind of the oppressed, Biko saw Black consciousness as a practical education, not in the sense of technique, but in the sense of thought practised in the *school of struggle*, that is to say in the capacity to reflect on the experience of the struggle. Without this grounding, the worldview and struggle of the alienated Black middle class,⁴¹ the subject of Fanon's *Black Skin*, is limited precisely to the terms given them by the white master. As Fanon puts it, 'Liberty and Justice will always be white liberty and white justice'.

Thus, it is not surprising that the nationalist middle class discussed in *The Wretched* either does not gain a mind of its own, or if it does, it does so as an alienated stoic who has not experienced the mass dimension of 'revolutionary' Black consciousness (1967, p. 225). Blinded by the capitalist technology commodity culture, the nationalist middle class is beaten from the start (see 1968, p. 63) or they have, in 'bad faith',⁴² accepted the neocolonial as definitive and the new rules of the new national game of accumulation as normative. And the resulting asymmetry means, as I said earlier, that these Blacks go from one way of life to another rather than one *life* to another; they merely take over positions vacated by the colonialist rather than smashing the oppressive structures and beginning anew. After all, the nationalist struggle is often fought *only in relation* to the white masters and so precludes mental liberation, producing instead participants who do not develop a coherent liberatory philosophy. As Fanon puts it, if the master furnishes the ground of the nation, it is already corrupt (1967, p. 221). Thus, there must first be in practice a discussion of philosophies of liberation that is open to all, from the bottom up, not cut off behind closed doors. To aid this process, the intellectual has to undergo a double critique, first, against elitism and prejudice toward the damned, and second, against the complacency such internalized elitism and prejudice produces. For both points of view are products of alienation from the masses, who may turn to intellectuals, not for technocratic assistance or uncritical praise (as might be commonly assumed), but for practical help in understanding the political situation and for a genuine discussion about ideas of liberation. In fact, for Fanon, the greatest threat that confronted Africa on the eve of independence in 1960 was not the colonial regime but the anti-colonial movement's 'lack of ideology' – that is, the lack of a serious philosophical discussion about how to put a working humanist program into practice. Indeed, Fanon set himself the task of filling this vacuum by writing *The Wretched*.

The Wretched is also Fanon's summation of the anti-colonial struggle. It is powerful, not at least because what eventually happened was more than what he had anticipated. For

what characterized the anti-colonial movements on the eve of independence was not only the lack of open discussion but the silencing of opposition, and the same process happened in South Africa as well. The transition from apartheid turned out a 'passive revolution' in Gramsci's sense (1971, pp. 105–120) in as much as it was a revolution without a revolution, the opposition effectively contained from the start and the potentially revolutionary mass movements rendered ineffective. Of course, to speak of the South African transition in this way is not to discount real changes that have taken place or to forget that it was real mass movements that forced these changes. But it does underscore the ways in which capitalist interests, both national as well as multinational, dominated the South Africa transition. Indeed, instead of addressing the deep-seated economic and social inequalities that are the legacies of capitalist 'development' in South Africa, every possible guarantee was given to guarantee the interests of capital and stop a feared white capital flight.⁴³ And it played out like an 'abandonment neurosis' (1967, pp. 79–80), while the real movement that had brought about the crisis in capital was suppressed. In other words, the transition took on a class character.

The class character of South Africa was of course apparent during Biko's life, and it may explain Biko's critique of white liberals and his insistence on creating solidarities and making sure that Black consciousness students working with community-based projects were interacting and speaking with working people as part of their daily struggle under apartheid. As early as 1972 Biko warned that,

This is one country where it would be possible to create a capitalist black society, if whites were intelligent, if the nationalists were intelligent. And that capitalist black society, black middle class would be very effective ... South Africa could succeed in putting across to the world a pretty convincing, integrated picture, with still seventy percent of the population being underdogs. (Biko, 2008, pp. 41–42)

This is exactly what South Africa has done: put across a pretty convincing picture of integration while seventy percent of the population lives close to or in poverty. In contrast to 'corporate Black consciousness', which has become synonymous with making fast money and treating your brother as a purse, ideas of community and solidarity central to Biko's notion of Black consciousness – however fragmented and often fleeting – survive among the poor and other sectors of the population marginalized in the post-apartheid polity. Just as apartheid created the conditions for Black consciousness to form solidarities, Biko saw that the inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa could potentially create conditions for new possibilities for solidarity. Yet without organization and a clarity of thinking, potential solidarities would fragment and the old divisions encouraged by apartheid would remain or reappear.

A state of emergence

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that accords this insight. Then we will clearly see that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency. (Benjamin, 1968)

A person cannot be illegal. (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2008a)

In contrast to the apartheid period (1948–1994), the dialectic of Black consciousness takes on a different spatial/class dynamic in postcolonial South Africa. These differences were suggested by Fanon in the first chapter of *The Wretched*, where the manicheism of the

colonial city is starkly drawn between the rich, brightly lit expanses of the 'European' town and the dark confined spaces of the 'native' quarters. In the postcolonial city of *Black Skin, White Masks*, this same desire is expressed as the wish to become rich by living on the hill and looking down on the urban sprawl. Now in the desegregated cities of post-apartheid South Africa, this bourgeois desire remains powerful but is constantly upset by the sight of shack settlements whose presence had earlier threatened the order of colonial segregation and apartheid. After all, during the late colonial period, the movement of people from the rural areas and the growth of shantytowns, as Fanon saw it, appeared almost as a biologically necessary – a sore on the colonial body politic – with the 'lumpenproletarian'⁴⁴ masses forcing down the walls of segregation and prohibition. And, in fact, apartheid was, in part, a response to the growth of shantytowns and the constant 'influx' (to use the lexicon of apartheid) of Africans to the cities during World War Two. By the 1980s, as apartheid South Africa declared a state of emergency, shack settlements had again emerged and grown in the interstices of the cities, in the spaces in between the racially segregated areas and in the marginal, barren and almost liminal but concrete spaces – next to a highway, a river, a garbage dump or into the sides of a steep hill. It is not surprising therefore that the great inequalities, not only economic but simply spatial – land and homes – would be a major issue in post-apartheid South Africa. In the urban areas a flash point emerged between the neoliberal urban planners' vision of 'world class' cities⁴⁵ (which specifically excludes the shackdwellers) and the shackdwellers who do not want to be moved – or 'relocated' in the still current language of apartheid – to outlying areas (usually far from urban centers).

Thus Fanon argued that the 'lumpenproletariat' constitutes 'one of the most spontaneous and most radically revolutionary forces of the colonized people' (1968, p. 129). But he also warned that without the mediation of the 'force of intellect', anger and revolt could be exhausted by the 'mirage of its muscles' own immediacy' and transformed into a reactive rage used for reactionary purposes. Without political education, and the collective reflection on experience that comes with it, Fanon cautioned that the desire for revenge can take the place of thought, allowing 'racism and hatred [to] triumph'. This dynamic does not change in the postcolonial situation. In South Africa, for example, new revolts have emerged among the poorest of the poor in cities across the country, their outrage most often directed against party councilors as more poor Blacks are being excluded from the cities where urban land is being reallocated according to 'market forces'. Shacks are demolished often at gunpoint and people are left homeless or relocated to inadequate poorly built 'houses' far away from work and schools. To seek access and survival opportunities, therefore, many have found no choice but to move back to the cities, into the remaining shacks, in increasingly overcrowded and insecure conditions. The shacks that remain are also denied services such as electricity, toilets and adequate access to water in order to further encourage people to accept removal, and so political opposition, if it can no longer be repressed, is often fragmented and met violently. These progressively more desperate situations have become the breeding grounds for xenophobic ideologies.

In newspaper opinion pieces and blogs, critics of government were quick to see the 'xenophobic violence' in the townships and shantytowns as products of the government neo-liberal economic policies and inadequate response to the needs of the poor (see Amisi, 2008). Of course, they were right. Others, though, were also right to note that the 'xenophobic violence' did not occur 'out of the blue', but has been brewing ever since the birth of a 'new' South Africa encouraged by politicians and media hostile to 'illegal aliens', not to mention the government's own 'crackdowns' on 'illegal immigrants' (see

Neocosmos, 2008; COHRE, 2008). Every year the South African Human Rights Commission reports on state agencies harassing and detaining so-called 'illegal aliens': people being apprehended by the police for being 'too dark' or 'walking like a black foreigner'; people rounded up and sent to deportation centers, such as Lindela on the outskirts of Johannesburg where the 'undocumented' are 'systematically' denied basic rights (IRIN, 2008; Neocosmos, 2008). So one could argue along with Fanon that xenophobia is not simply an elemental expression of mass rage, but a politics that, even in rainbow South Africa, is promoted or at least channeled by factions of the postcolonial elite. At the same time, it would also be reductive to think that to understand post-apartheid South Africa one simply has to replace race with class, just because the economic structure of South Africa has not been fundamentally changed and the life of the Black poor has remained the same, conditioned by unemployment, landlessness, spatial exclusion, inferior education and violence. After all, the economic reality and the glaring inequalities do not mask the racialized human reality. As Fanon put it in *The Wretched*, 'You are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich' (1968, p. 39). But is this the reality in post-apartheid South Africa?

To understand the Black with a white mask, Fanon's suggestion was to focus on *both* the 'primarily economic' and the 'internalization – or better, the epidermalization – of ... inferiority' (1967, p. 13). The rhetoric of Black 'empowerment' and the hollow mask of Africanity does not change Fanon's thesis that the Black bourgeoisie is essentially a neo-colonial comprador class and that the new class of Black 'diamonds' with its hollow mask of African nationalism is the new Black with a white soul. We cannot assume that being Black or Black experience of suffering and rebellion insulates Black people from taking advantage of social mobility pathways afforded by living and being socialized in a capitalist society. What would be extraordinary is if well-educated and well-placed Blacks did not take advantage of class mobility (see Moodley, 2008, pp. 273–274).⁴⁶ And certainly, one cannot talk about xenophobia in South Africa without thinking of the political and psychological phenomena, which are products of what Fanon calls an 'incomplete liberation'. For Fanon the question of 'who is South African' would turn on the *creation* of a political subject – the coming to be of subjectivity – in the struggle against colonialism and the process of decolonization. Fanon equated the history of the nation with the history of decolonization so that what defines the nation is not 'some vague sense of cultural personality so much as a common sense of purpose and solidarity born of radical commitment' (Hallward, 2002, p. 128). Decolonization is incomplete if it is not waged on both levels, political-economic and psychological, objective and subjective (Fanon, 1967, p. 13). This incompleteness produces both national and ethnic chauvinism and the emergence of a new caste of bourgeoisified Blacks. At the same time, it legitimates power via claims of indigeneity while simultaneously reproducing a politics of political, social and spatial exclusion rooted in colonial racial classification. This incompleteness marks postcolonial society, turning the project of decolonization backwards so that, rather than creating a new history, it marks time in *neocolonialism*.

Because the apartheid system was based on white power and privilege, whites who seriously wanted to uproot apartheid had to totally reject the system and its values. In post-apartheid South Africa, however, much energy has been used to include whites in the 'rainbow nation' without challenging their power or their values, in other words without creating a new political subjectivity, a new life, as Fanon puts it. And despite white negrophobic fears of Blacks, expressed in their flight to gated communities or in mass emigration to white-dominant countries, whites have not been systematically attacked since

1994 and were not singled out for attacks during this latest (May 2008) 'pogrom'.⁴⁷ The specificity of the conditions for anti-foreigner attacks were unemployment and frustration with failed government policies in the face of white and Black middle class prosperity but in fact, it was the Black poor who were singled out for their skin color – stopped on the street for being 'too Black' – their inauthentic accent, or their lack of knowledge of formal linguistic terms,⁴⁸ not whites, who are by definition not foreigners in South Africa (indeed we should remember that whites were the only real, that is indigenous, South Africans in apartheid South Africa; Africans were temporary sojourners, who had to carry a pass with their ethnic identity). The situation is more than an echo of the disguised racism (1994[1956], p. 36) Fanon discusses in his paper, 'Racism and Culture', presented at the First Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris in 1956. In the 'new' South Africa the dehumanizing and derogatory attitudes formerly projected towards all Blacks have been channeled toward the Black poor. As Richard Pithouse puts it, 'Things that can no longer be publicly said about black people can be said about the poor' (Pithouse, 2008b).

Writing of the pogroms, Zimbabwean refugee Mavuso Dingani (2008) asks why the 'rightful anger of the poor' was not directed toward big supermarket chains or even small white traders. Economic reductionism cannot explain it, and xenophobia, he says, 'is too empty a term that says much and explains little'.⁴⁹ Likewise, Andile Mngxitama notes that 'Xenophobia is the hatred of foreigners, but in South Africa, there are no white foreigners', just tourists, investors and professionals; unlike Africans, whites foreigners are not stopped in the street and asked for identification (Mngxitama, 2008). They do not experience xenophobia; they are not considered illegal. Biko's critique of white liberals as the major barrier to Black liberation takes on a new concreteness. White liberals have gotten their wish. For what has replaced the narrow confines of apartheid is a multicultural paradise with a Black mask that has been integrated into a global cosmopolitanism neoliberal capitalist economy. In this context then, the pogrom against Africans takes on what Andile Mngxitama (2008) calls a negrophobic character.⁵⁰ Black economic empowerment has simply become the legitimating veneer that masks the 'foreign' presence of capitalist investors (read white) and top executives of multinational corporations (read white); the 'foreigners' are now simply the poor, and since there are, by definition, no poor whites, the targets are poor Africans.

One cannot escape the 'primary economics' (as Fanon calls it) in the new South Africa, where the poor are continually told that African 'aliens' are to blame for their situation and the ruin of their country. The 'xenophobia' thus repeats the psychological economy of violence and poverty around which Fanon structured his analysis of colonial and postcolonial repression. Deflected from the real sources and channeled inward, the violence of the lived experience of the poor must be allowed expression. For Fanon, it is allowed expression – or more precisely, allowed release – in the form of 'black on black' violence. The speed with which the violence spread across the South African cities indicated that however much it was decried, this was for many an acceptable outlet, if not the only available outlet.⁵¹

While the legacies of colonialism and apartheid are thus apparent in the contemporary situation in South Africa, what is new in the recent period is the development of shack settlements that have begun to organize autonomously from the ANC. The double movement remained one of Fanon's enduring concerns: how outburst of frustration can take progressive *and* reactionary forms. Rather than advocating violence as an end in itself (as some have accused him of doing), Fanon thus warned that such a position often lead to brutality and barbarism, a fighting on the wrong side (see 1968, pp. 136–139). What was at

stake was the vision of human liberation, a fully decolonized humanism. Indeed, he contended that 'all this taking stock of the situation, this enlightening of consciousness, and this advance of knowledge of the histories of societies are only possible within the framework of an organization and inside the structure of the people' (1968, p. 143). Otherwise, at a certain point, 'the people find out the iniquitous fact that exploitation can wear a black face' (1968, p. 145). Certainly, he was right about this. But he was also right that frustration could take progressive forms.

Abahlali baseMjondolo is the largest shackdweller organization, organized outside of the ANC. The movement emerged out of a road blockade, organized in early 2005 by residents of the 7000 strong Kennedy Road settlement in Durban in response to broken promises about land. The blockade led to a clash that incited the residents to break with the party. Kennedy Road began to work independently with nearby settlements that also wished to break with ANC party control. By the end of that year a movement was launched, and now it has members in almost 40 settlements, with 24 having voted to collectively affiliate with the movement.⁵² Attempting to free politics from party control by articulating a notion of 'being on their own', and speaking for themselves, Abahlali (AbM) has created an ongoing 'living politics' grounded in the active participation of the poor in their own struggles. Insisting on their autonomy, AbM has since been accused of being reactionary and counter-revolutionary.⁵³ But out of the state of emergency (see Benjamin, 1968; Löwy, 2006), which is the daily reality of life in the shack settlements, there has emerged a new self-conception and a new dignity that has challenged the common view that sees the poor as generally useless, dirty and ontologically poor, and the shackdwellers as a mindless, instinctual, antisocial mass, a formless 'sack of potatoes'⁵⁴ incapable of acting as social individuals. This view is sometimes shared by the left who equate shackdwellers with the 'lumpenproletariat' incapable of progressive organization. The fact is that it is from the shack settlements that the most significant challenges to the post-apartheid state are now being issued. And while the politics of the shackdwellers' revolts around the country varies considerably, in Abahlali it is clearly consciously grounded in the experience and dialogue and the thinking taking place in communities. A space has been created in which poor people can think a politics for and by the poor, and despite significant state repression, the three sector model of state, capital and civil society (NGOs) is being challenged by the emergence of a fourth force – the autonomously organized poor (Zikode, 2006).

The development of AbM, which has begun to have considerable access to a national voice, and the May 2008 pogroms in shack settlements across South Africa's major cities are connected. Both have arisen as responses to increasing pauperization and spatial and political exclusion, but the pogroms are also a consequence of the criminalization, repression and the depoliticization of shack revolts by the police and governmental authorities. The attacks on African foreigners, in other words, are products of pauperization but are also a consequence of the state's silencing of alternatives – what Fanon would consider a suppression of politics and oppositional discourses that allow the poor to organize and make their own demands. For example, in the Harry Gwala settlement in Johannesburg,⁵⁵ the struggle against forced removals began in 2004. Declaring a boycott of the local elections that year, the Landless People's Movement, which was working within the settlement, suffered severe police repression. In 2006, resistance to a new round of forced removals resulted in the police firing rubber bullets and bulldozing their way into the settlement. In May 2008 mobs burned shacks in Harry Gwala belonging to Shangaan people from Mozambique and Northern South Africa. Of course, there is not a one-to-one

relationship between political repression and the pogroms, but as Richard Pithouse (2008a) points out, 'it is striking that in many although not all of the areas under the control of militant organizations of the poor that have been in serious conflict with the state there were no attacks at all'. Whereas other revolts have been crushed by mass arrests leading to a fragmentation of political focus, AbM⁵⁶ has, partly because of its horizontal organizing model that reduces dependence on individual leaders, been able to weather it and build around it.⁵⁷ And as Abahlali continues to develop its voice, it has begun to develop a critique of housing policies, including the 'slum eradication' bill, grounded in real needs. One could say following Biko that the organization is successfully seeking and finding ways 'to channel up the pent-up forces of angry black masses to meaningful directional opposition basing its entire struggle on realities of the situation' (Biko, 1979, pp. 30–31).

While other organizations such as the Landless Peoples' Movement and the Anti-Privatisation Forum, which have members in some shack settlements in Johannesburg, and the West Cape Anti-Eviction Committee took practical actions of various sorts against the pogroms,⁵⁸ in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, where AbM was also proactive, the results were instructive. There were no attacks in the 24 shack settlements affiliated with the movement or in the 10 where AbM has a strong presence. When the violence first broke out in Johannesburg, AbM immediately responded to the 'Xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg'⁵⁹ with a press statement highlighting the important principle of solidarity and the unity of the oppressed in their organization. The principle also reflects Biko's notion of 'community' rooted in African cultural concepts of collectivity and sharing.⁶⁰ But like Fanon, they also warned that the 'anger of the poor can go in many directions' and insisted that all who live in a shack settlement are from the community and have equal voice irrespective of their origins. This was not mere rhetoric. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a strong political self-organization, and with undocumented migrants in key positions within the movement, the shackdwellers' political leadership was eloquent and direct. They insisted that neither poverty nor oppression justified turning on another poor person:

We have been warning for years that the anger of the poor can go in many directions. That warning, like our warnings about the rats and the fires and the lack of toilets, the human dumping grounds called relocation sites, the new concentration camps called transit camps and corrupt, cruel, violent and racist police, has gone unheeded.

They went on to warn that the war against Mozambiquan and Zimbabwean was already becoming a war against the Shangaan and Shona and could degenerate into a war against the Venda and Xhosa. In a 'rainbow' city like Durban where Zulu, Xhosa, Phondo, Sotho mix, where Indian and African militants together created Black consciousness, where people born in Asia and Africa congregate.

Demonstrating the political self-education acquired in their living discussions in the shack settlements, AbM insist that the issue is not educating the poor about xenophobia. Instead they challenge society to educate itself about the real situation in the settlements with a Fanonian resonance. They also challenge those in the settlements to educate themselves 'so we can take action':

Always the solution is to 'educate the poor'. When we get cholera we must be educated about washing our hands when in fact we need clear water. When we get burnt we must be educated about fire when in fact we need electricity. This is just a way of blaming the poor for our suffering. We want land and housing in the cities, we want to go to university, we want water

and electricity – we don't want to be educated to be good at surviving poverty on our own. The solution is not to educate the poor about xenophobia. The solution is to give the poor what they need to survive so that it becomes easier to be welcoming and generous. The solution is to stop the xenophobia at all levels of our society. It is time to ask serious questions about why it is that money and rich people can move freely around the world while everywhere the poor must confront razor wire, corrupt and violent police, queues and relocation or deportation. ... Let us all educate ourselves on these questions so that we can all take action. (AbM, 2008a)

Their appeal to a basic humanism is as profound as it is simple: no one is illegal; as AbM puts it, 'a person cannot be illegal. A person is a person whether they find themselves'. Abahlali's political action is a product of political education grounded in an ongoing collective reflection on everyone's lived experience shared in formal meetings dedicated to this purpose. But it also reaches for enlightenment through a continuing discussion of the relationship of philosophy born of struggle to liberation. In fact, it has recently developed a small library that includes works by Fanon and Biko.⁶¹

Thus, what one might call the *fact of shackness*,⁶² is not simply the fact of living in a shack but also a critical reflection on that shackness. It is resonant with Pityana's conception of the fact of Blackness and has a resonance with Black theologies of liberation. Blackness has nothing to do with indigeneity or place of origin of a person, but is an 'attitude of mind' and a commitment to struggle against objectification. Shackness (or what is called 'Abahlalism' among AbM members) is a decision – in an existential sense – not to not flee from reality but take it on. And for the shackdwellers in AbM, this has meant rejecting the 'other's' definition of them as a 'lack', a dependent, a nonhuman appendage, and articulating a belief in their own ability to self-organize. In other words, the imperative is on arriving at a 'BENESS' grounded in self-sufficiency based on the strength and solidarity that come from collectively standing up for oneself.⁶³ The most important struggle the shackdwellers have articulated, argues S'bu Zikode, Abahlali's elected President, 'is to be recognized as human beings' (2006, p. 187). Here, one can find a resonance with Biko's conception of Black consciousness as a positivity of outlook that makes possible the 'total involvement of the masses in a struggle essentially theirs' (Biko, 1979, pp. 30–31). For Abahlali, this has meant living a different kind of practice, an ongoing and dialogical one, as well as expressing a different kind of organizational form, one that encourages the most subjugated voices to be heard. Indeed, from the extraordinary and arid zone of nonbeing – 'the underside of modernity' (see Mal-donado-Torres) – an 'authentic upheaval' heralded by Fanon in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks* had been born. And these voices of the excluded are challenging the system's moral and ontological order.

Arguing that there is no holiday in the shacks and that every day is a state of emergency for the last three years Abahlali has mourned the major national holiday in South Africa, 'Freedom Day', April 27th, calling it 'Unfreedom Day'.⁶⁴ They speak of the struggle for houses and democracy, and of the importance of solidarity, but they add:

freedom is more than all of this. Freedom is a way of living, not a list of demands to be met. Delivering houses will do away with the lack of houses but it won't make us free on its own. Freedom is a way of living where everyone is important and where everyone's experience and intelligence counts. (AbM, 2008b)

The intelligence of the shackdwellers expresses a kind of Fanonian shift where the geography of experience becomes the geography of reason (Mignolo, 1995; Gordon 2005),

where the thinking of the formerly excluded 'damned of the earth' – those denied any human worth – now become central to the future of humanity. AbM concretely challenges the policymakers by insisting on shifting the geography of reason from the soft chairs of government policy makers' offices to the grounds of the shack settlements where everyone can participate in what they call the 'University of Abahali'. For AbM, political education⁶⁵ begins inside the shacks and with the struggle to democratize the settlements.⁶⁶ This in turn will challenge the limited form and content of South African democracy, bringing into relief the legitimacy of the new Black elites, and the white liberals and their claims of 'historical victory' in the struggle against apartheid. What is currently at stake in AbM's demand for recognition *qua* human being is a contestation over 'history' itself. In other words, this radical humanism is implicitly a critique of the presentist notion of history as the story of the inevitable victory of those who triumphed, and an ethical demand to overthrow the conditions of human debasement⁶⁷ and to stand in solidarity with everyone who has said no to subjugation and yes to the dignity of the spirit (1967, p. 226). In other words, what has emerged in this post-apartheid struggle – in the 'creative processes' and in 'the thinking of the masses of the people' (Zikode, 2006, p. 189) in the shack communities – has been a self-reliant, non-professionalized organization based on autonomy and bottom-up democracy. Action as a result of perpetual consultation and taking thought.

I am not saying that AbM are *the* new society, but they have, as I have said, emerged from a state of emergency. From within this state of emergency they find support among themselves, and from others. From within the state of emergency they have begun to fashion alternatives, not only criticizing government but also appropriating services, building and defending well-located shacks in defiance of the state and, most recently, leading a movement against the pogroms across South Africa. Their strength comes from collectivity, that is to say principled democratic practices where everyone's views are taken seriously (see Patel, 2008; Nimmagudda, 2008a). Decentralization means that every community that joins the movement makes decisions autonomously and collectively and develops practices for what it views important, and the elected leaders of the movement are accountable on a day to day basis to the people who elected them (Nimmagudda, 2008b). As such, the organization represents new possibilities of a new politics of freedom based in necessity, where their principles of grass-roots democracy and equality are not abstract but the source of their political enlightenment, which seeks the meaning of events not as reflections on strategy and tactics but also in Fanon and Biko's deeply humanist sense: as reflections on the struggle itself.

Just as Marx argued that new impulses and passions for freedom are found in 'lower and deeper' strata of the working class (Dunayevskaya, 1982, p. 108), Fanon might have considered the self-organized shackdwellers as an expression of how 'the thing becomes [human] during the same process by which it frees itself'. By appropriating and defending the right to think for himself and herself in the public sphere, people who appeared to some to be 'things' are asserting their humanity to wider society and sounding the tocsin for a new South Africa. As such they are inheritors of Fanon's challenge to BE 'honest' and committed intellectuals invested in creating an active solidarity. Fanon warns that the militant intellectual's discovery of such a movement can lead from abstract critique to uncritical praise, but a living solidarity that demands practical work and thinking with everyone through the rough pitfalls of national consciousness and the confrontation with

the contradictions of the present reality by working out new concepts of freedom on African ground, is a philosophy born of struggle.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Andile Mingxhama, Richard Pithouse and Lou Turner for their critical comments; to Lewis R. Gordon, Jane A. Gordon and Kate Josephson for their encouragement; to Jonelle Lonergan for her editorial assistance and especially to Asako Serizawa for her intelligence and help to give the paper form though its length is my fault alone!

Notes

1. Thus Biko, in the context of reading Fanon, Aimé Césaire, James Cone, Paulo Friere, and others and discussing these ideas with his comrades in the emergent Black consciousness organizations like the South African Student Movement and the Black People's Convention, found the sources of many of his *Frank Talk* columns listening to and talking with people on trains, buses, in the shebeens and on street corners. Mark Sanders (2002, p. 179) suggests that Biko's nom de plume 'Frank Talk' echoes Frantz Fanon.
2. Recent discussions of Fanon and Biko in a South African context include Ahluwalia and Zegeye (2001), Hook (2003, 2004a and 2004b), More (2004, 2008), Pithouse (2001, 2003b) and Turner (2008).
3. Cone's book *Black Theology and Black Power* was an important source for Biko and his colleague Barney Pityana. The University Christian Movement (UCM) sent a delegation of three to meet Cone. One was Basil Moore, the compiler of a book of essays on Black Consciousness including writings by Biko, Cone and Pityana, the second was Manana Kgware who was killed in a car accident, and the other was a special branch spy.
4. Later, in another subsection of the chapter, 'Why Integration is not the Answer', Cone, following Fanon's understanding of the impulse to say 'no to those who attempt to build a definition of him' (Fanon, 1967, p. 36), calls Black Power a humanizing force because it attempts an affirmation of being (1997, p. 7).
5. Cone takes this up directly in the section 'How Does Black Power Relate to White Guilt'.
6. The ordering of the papers by the editors Hendrik W. van der Merwe and David Welsh is suggestive of an implicit racism. After the editors' papers, the ordering of the papers is as follows: English speaking White South Africa, Afrikaner student politics, new Afrikaners followed by two papers on NUSAS after which we get to African high school pupils and students at Fort Hare. Only then do we have Pityana and Biko's articles.
7. The alliance of the ANC with the white Congress of Democrats and the Indian Congress.
8. Pityana became SASO president after Biko in 1972. After a decade of political activity and bannings he left the country and for a short while became the leader of the BCM's external wing before joining the ANC. He became an ordained minister in England and returned to South Africa to head the Human Rights Commission and later UNISA.
9. Pityana writes this sentence as 'My negro consciousness does not hold itself out as black', not as 'a lack'. I am not sure that this makes sense, especially in the context of Pityana's explanation. I assume it is a typo.
10. Fanon (1967), p. 135) as quoted by Pityana (1972). In a more Sartrean vein, Temba Sono (1971) argues, 'Being cannot be non-being. Black cannot be white, only in South Africa does a group of people become the negative of another'.
11. Since the quote marks are not closed it appears that it is Fanon, not Pityana, who is speaking.
12. In Cone's Black theology, the quest to be somebody required a break with the Black *nobodiness* in a racist society.
13. In this sense understanding that rather than counterposing the individual to collective solidarity, the individual is, as Marx argued, the social entity.
14. In this context, Pityana's revision in his 1991 retrospective is interesting. He declared that Black consciousness 'was not a political philosophy or ideology but a strategy for action'. (Pityana, 1991, p. 212).
15. Fanon argues that during colonialism 'the mass of people maintain intact traditions which are completely different from those of the colonial situation'. In contrast, during the anticolonial

- period the native intellectual 'throws himself in frenzied fashion in the frantic acquisition of the culture of the occupying power and takes every opportunity of unfavorably criticizing his own national culture' (see Fanon, 1968, pp. 236–237). Since I am quoting Fanon often through Biko's 'Frank Talk', I am using the Constance Farrington (1968) translation throughout rather than the newer (2005) translation of *The Wretched* by Richard Philcox.
16. Cone argued that the Christian message of liberation of the poor in America must be a black theology.
 17. I am referring widely to Black consciousness rather than specifically to a movement called the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) using upper case C and M.
 18. Biko noted that Black consciousness was a 'sequel' to the continental anti-colonial struggle that was making its way South (1979), p. 69). This is not to downplay the international importance of the US black movement. Indeed, in the contrast to the hegemony of the apartheid state and the apparent quiescence of the political opposition during the 1960s, the Black revolution in the US resonated powerfully across the Black World.
 19. This is James Cone's term.
 20. Ousmane Sembene argues (Ghali, p. 52) that negritude underpins Africa's situation as poor and economically in disarray. While Europe is considered technological and rational, Africa is happy 'just being'.
 21. The year of the publication of Senghor's groundbreaking collection of negritude poetry introduced by Sartre's 'Orphée Noir', which was subsequently criticized by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*. See Gibson (2003), pp. 61–83.
 22. Veriava and Naidoo (2008) make a case for Biko taking a third position which is neither Senghor's or Fanon's.
 23. Fanon does not theorize culture and 'customary rule'. For a discussion of the importance of customary rule in late colonial Africa see Mamdani (1996). For an analysis of this in post-apartheid South Africa see Ntsebeza (2005).
 24. Biko (1979), p. 75) is adding these lines to a speech quote remembered from Aimé Césaire's mayoral campaign in Fort de France, 1945 (see Fanon, 1967, p. 109).
 25. Fanon introduces two ideas of hegemony in his work. Speaking of the situation of the *évolue* in France, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes of what we might understand as a quite 'normal' system of cultural hegemony. The Black, he writes, 'is a product of [the] cultural situation' which 'slowly and subtly – with the help of newspapers, schools and their texts, advertisements, films, radio – work their way into one's mind' (1967, p. 152). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, he argues that the system is not legitimated by 'moral teachers' and 'bewilderers' but is based on brute force: 'Colonialism is not a thinking machine . . . it is violence in its natural state' (1968, p. 106). These two concepts of hegemony are central to Biko's idea of Black consciousness and the idea of a liberated Azania. The first is essential to Biko's critique of white liberals. For though colonialism and late colonialism (and apartheid) is most certainly a system based on separation and force, Biko argues, educated Blacks, especially, have too easily taken the ground of opposition to apartheid society from white liberals and leftists.
 26. Fanon argues that during the freedom struggle 'the native discovers reality and transforms it' laying hold of the violence which was previously held in check and changing it direction toward the colonial regime (see 1968, p. 58).
 27. Fanon argues in *The Wretched* that political education means teaching 'the masses that everything depends on them . . . the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people' (1968, p. 197).
 28. I tried to develop some of these issues in Gibson (2007).
 29. I used this quote with the term 'comrade' as an expression of the degeneration of the freedom struggle into a xenophobic one. The *New York Times* reporter, Barry Bearak (2008) writes, 'Ernest Ngwenya is South African. But he is also Shangaani, an ethnic group largely found in Mozambique'. And in the context of this degeneration South Africa is an abstraction, his reason for not joining in the attack is his loyalty to the ancestors.
 30. See Michael Neocosmos' (2006) theorization of xenophobia in South Africa in Fanonian terms.
 31. Imraan Buccus reminds us not to forget the connection between Mbeki's support of Mugabe as he stole a third election and his 'repression of poor people's movements and the catastrophic xenophobic violence in May'. He adds that in contrast to elites talk of African unity, it was the 'magnificent work done by poor people's movements to stop the attacks and the incredible work

undertaken by the Treatment Action Campaign in Cape Town to shelter and care for people in those attacks ... that real Pan-African solidarity has been built' (Buccus, 2008).

32. The feeling of powerless is encouraged by practices that provide services to some over others and by the lack of safety and police response to crimes that become blamed on 'outsiders'. For an analysis of the violence in Alexandra see Allan and Heese (2008).
33. For example, from February 2004 to February 2005 there were 900 protests across South Africa's urban areas. See Susan Booysen (2007), pp. 21–22).
34. One can even include the populist Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) adopted by the ANC in 1994. Never seriously enacted, it was replaced two years later by the current neoliberal policy. It is also worth noting, given that so much of the more economic academic literature points to the abandonment of the RDP as the moment of betrayal, that the ANC acted to demobilize popular semi-autonomous political organizations very soon after it was unbanned in 1990. The people 'were sent back to their caves' long before the RDP was adopted. This fact may explain the ease with which the ANC could abandon the RDP (see Gibson, 2001, pp. 371–387).
35. For an excellent critique of the World Bank's discourse about the poor see Richard Pithouse (2003a). Pithouse argues (2003a, p. 120) that the discourse is based on the assumption that 'poverty is ultimately an ontological condition that can be transcended via transformation at the level of being'.
36. Thatcher said this in a 23 September 1987 interview with *Woman's Own* while she was still resisting sanctions and promoting 'constructive engagement' with P.W. Botha's apartheid regime. I am using this in Foucault's sense (Foucault, 1988).
37. On the morning that I sent this paper to *Social Identities* (14 July 2008) at least 200 shacks burned in the Kennedy Road settlement in Durban. The shack fires are a direct consequence of the decision by the eThekweni Municipality in 2001 to cease the electrification of shack settlements.
38. Though he distanced himself from the May 2008 pogroms, his mixture of the populist anti-elitism and ethnic demagoguery were clearly expressed in the mobs' singing Zuma's controversial trademark song, 'Bring me my machine gun' As they attacked African 'foreigners'.
39. For example, this is a position shared by Fanon biographer, David Macey and Fanon critic Jock McCulloch.
40. Or the enfranchised slaves as Fanon calls the nationalist bourgeoisie in the *Wretched*.
41. On the importance of Sartre's idea of 'bad faith' on Biko's thought see Magobo P. More (2008); for discussion of Fanon and bad faith see Gordon (1995).
42. For Fanon the accumulation of capital is a white value. As he puts it in both *Black Skin and The Wretched*, you are 'white above a certain financial level' (1967, p. 44, see also 1968, p. 40).
43. Lumpenproletariat is a derogatory term in the Marxian lexicon problematized but not abandoned by Fanon. For Fanon the lumpenproletariat are the damned of the earth who he calls 'that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan' and who constitutes both a most revolutionary *and* potentially a most reactionary force.
44. With 'world class' football stadiums.
45. I wish to thank Lou Turner for making this point. In this fascinating interview Ashwin Desai asks Sirimi Moodley why he didn't 'cash in' his credentials. Moodley answer reminds me of Fanon's discussion of the 'honest intellectual' in *The Wretched*. Moodley says, 'if you're involved in a revolutionary struggle, it's basically about mental strength'. He then goes on to talk about how 'the ANC has rewritten the whole struggle' and that 'BC has been written out of the struggle'. For him, he concludes, 'this is a good thing' (2008, p. 274).
46. Some preferred the word pogrom because xenophobia is considered an attitude rather than a specific kind of action.
47. Such as the Zulu word for 'elbow', which became known as the 'elbow test'.
48. In this wonderful piece that speaks of the Zimbabwean reality, Dingani writes, 'They do not beat everyone who disagrees'; 'the rest suffer from hyperinflation, poverty etc'. The alternative to starvation is to go south and work in the periphery of the South African economy.
49. Writers on the Western Cape Anti Eviction Campaign website used the term 'Afrophobic'. In discussions in *The Sowetan* many readers reacted to the attacks as 'un-African', that is against the spirit of 'ubuntu'.

51. Mavusi Dingani writes (2008) 'Moral outrage turned to analysis of poverty and the frustrations of the poor. The killing, looting and raping continued nonetheless. By the end of the week, all that talk of poverty and marginalization was still present, and moral outrage too, but strains of prejudice, and "these foreigners bring this and do that" began to creep into the callers' contributions. And then it finally dawned on me that this damnable disease, xenophobia, infected the middle classes too'.
52. A history of the movement can be found on its website, www.abahlali.org
53. See S'bu Zikode's retort to Abahlali being a 'Third Force', 'We Are the Third Force', which was reprinted in various popular South African magazines in four languages. The insistence on autonomy is based in necessity. They have been ignored. But Zikode also speaks of being invited to sit on comfortable chairs in government offices, while being given promises that 'something will be done'. Biko's insistence on autonomy from white liberals (he too speaks of comfy chairs) was also from necessity and incurred similar results.
54. This is a phrase used by Marx to describe the French peasantry in the 1850s. It is sometimes misunderstood as Marx's conception of the peasant consciousness rather than being historically and geographically specific. For example, see Marx's comment on the Russian peasant collective form, the 'mir', in his letters to Zasulich in the 1880s (Shanin, 1983).
55. Many of the shack settlements take their names from struggle figures, but sadly this did not save them from the pogroms.
56. Since its birth there have been a number of mass arrests and arrests of AbM leaders including charges of murder. Fortunately, after a 23-day prison detention and 14-day hunger strike, they were released, and a year later the murder charges were dropped for lack of evidence. See Abahlali 2008c for a list of incidences of police abuse.
57. For the history of Abahlali see Richard Pithouse (2008b) and Jacob Bryant (2008).
58. For statements by the Anti-Eviction committee and the Anti Privatization Forum see their websites.
59. At the time of writing the attacks had not spread to Durban. Later, when they did, there were no reports of attacks in the settlements associated with AbM. The movement was also able to mobilize against them more generally and to stop an in progress attack in the (ANC aligned) Kenville Settlement. They also arranged shelter for people who had fled their homes in their settlements as they always arrange shelter for South Africans evicted by the state. In a forthcoming book, 'Fanonian Practices', I will discuss these events in terms of Fanon's critique of national liberation and how it is playing out in South Africa.
60. In Zulu 'Ubuntu', the idea of sharing based not only on respect for others but a dependency expressed in the expression that 'a person is a person through other persons' and that 'I am because we are'.
61. Since English is not the first language of the majority of the shackdwellers, the works are currently undergoing translation. There is also an extensive on-line library at www.abahlali.org
62. 'The Fact of Blackness' is the English translation of 'L'expérience vécue de Noir' (which can be literally translated as 'the lived experience of the Black'). See the fifth chapter of the Charles Lam Markmann translation of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.
63. This is also articulated in Desai (2002); see also Gibson (2007).
64. About 3000 people attended the event in 2008.
65. Political education' is articulated in the understanding of shack-life itself as an education – the 'university of the shacks' and the 'university of the poor' also implies a critique of education, as Marx puts it, that as circumstances are changed by human beings 'it is essential to educate the educator' (see Karl Marx, 'Third Thesis on Feuerbach'). It is important to note that Abahlali's slogans 'University of Abahlali' and 'talk to us not about us' have been taken up by poor people's movements in the United States whose histories go back to the poor people's campaign of Martin Luther King Jr in the 1960s, thus completing the circle (and continuing the two-way road) of the exchange of radical ideas and movements between Black America and Africa.
66. The struggle rids themselves of authoritarian structures that are most often connected to the ANC – that exploit people as vote banks and use the party as a top-down mode of social control. Thereby, as a first step, to stand up and become recognized as human beings is expressed by

becoming free of politics by shaking off the yoke of the 'party of liberation'. See Richard Pithouse (2007).
 67. To overthrow', as Marx puts it 'all conditions in which man is a debased, enslaved, neglected and contemptible being' (Marx, 1975, p. 251).

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