

C'est un plaisir et un honneur d'ouvrir ces deux jours de réflexion et d'étude sur la pensée de Franz Fanon 50 ans après sa mort--deux jours de conférence bilingue qui s'étendront de notre campus américain dans le 7ème au Lavoir Moderne dans le 18ème.

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I am so happy to welcome scholars and intellectuals from such a range of different institutions, from such a spectrum of fields, to our Grand Salon at AUP. I would like to thank Neil Gordon, our dean, for having has the idea of a conference honoring Fanon's work, and the three graduate students who rose to the occasion: Lisa Damon, Sousam Hammad, and Francois Huguet conceived of the intellectual frame, called scholars of your heft to it, and organized every detail. From our students, we have learned.

The Wretched of the Earth is a book that holds a special place in my own imagination. Translated into English in 1963, and very present in my own household when I was still a child, living intensely, alongside my parents, the early sixties, those years leading to the passage of the American Civil Rights Act in 1964. Parts of *The Wretched of the Earth* were read at our dinner table to me and my little sister, who would have been about five at the time. My parents were activists in the Civil Rights Movement in our southern state of the US, and I have always believed that Fanon's powerful book had an impact on my own family's decision to take community leadership roles in the political movement to the Civil Rights Act. That is my memory of the impact of Fanon on my own ten-year-old self--coinciding with the birth of my own fledgling political consciousness.

Fanon's texts--ever relevant to anti-colonialist independence struggles, to post-colonial national struggles, to human liberationist struggles of all kinds--will be read today alongside the Irish language revival, African and Latin American decolonialization, contemporary French philosophical thought, the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, the so-labeled Islamist group Boko Haram, even the social movements of the Arab Spring. You will be looking at elisions as well--the absence of Fanon's work in certain French intellectual circles today, and the absence in Fanon's own work of attention to female gender and (homo) sexual identity. And of course, you will be taking up the subject of teaching Fanon, and that of Fanon's impact on literature and film. We can all agree, I think, that whether we read with the grain or against the grain, Fanon's influence is "inépuisable."

We, at The American University of Paris—where 100 nationalities abound in our student body, 25 in our faculty body—inhabit a space in the heart of Paris where no national majority reigns, where no one is precisely “at home,” and where everyone is a language learner. This “third space” although perhaps all-too-comfortably located in the 7th arrondissement, permits us to stage, often, the kind of international, broadly cultural and historical, yet persistently local conversation such as the one you are undertaking today.

May your deliberations be fruitful. May they be as compelling, as challenging, as radical as the Fanon texts that inspire them.