

STATE OF POWER 2017

# Culture, power and resistance

*reflections on the ideas of Amilcar Cabral*

– Firoze Manji





## Introduction

Amílcar Cabral and Frantz Fanon<sup>1</sup> are among the most important thinkers from Africa on the politics of liberation and emancipation. While the relevance of Fanon's thinking has re-emerged, with popular movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo in South Africa proclaiming his ideas as the inspiration for their mobilizations, as well as works by Sekyi-Otu, Alice Cherki, Nigel Gibson, Lewis Gordon and others, Cabral's ideas have not received as much attention.

Cabral was the founder and leader of the Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde liberation movement, *Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC). He was a revolutionary, humanist, poet, military strategist, and prolific writer on revolutionary theory, culture and liberation. The struggles he led against Portuguese colonialism contributed to the collapse not only of Portugal's African empire, but also to the downfall of the fascist dictatorship in Portugal and to the Portuguese revolution of 1974/5, events that he was not to witness: he was assassinated by some of his comrades, with the support of the Portuguese secret police, PIDE, on 20 January 1973.

By the time of his death, two thirds of Guinea was in the liberated zones, where popular democratic structures were established that would form the basis for the future society: women played political and military leadership roles, the Portuguese currency was banned and replaced by barter, agricultural production was devoted to the needs of the population, and many of the elements of a society based on humanity, equality and justice began to emerge organically through popular debate and discussion. Cultural resistance played a critical role in both the defeat of the Portuguese and in the establishment of the liberated zones.

Cabral understood that the extension and domination of capitalism depends critically on dehumanizing the colonial subject. And central to the process of dehumanization has been the need to destroy, modify or recast the culture of the colonized, for it is principally through culture, 'because it is history', that the colonized have sought to resist domination and assert their humanity. For Cabral, and also for Fanon, culture is not some aesthetic artefact, but an expression of history, the foundation of liberation, and a means to resist domination. At heart, culture is subversive.

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## Culture as subversion

The history of liberalism has been one of contestation between the cultures of what Losurdo<sup>2</sup> refers to as the sacred and profane spaces. The democracy of the sacred space to which the Enlightenment gave birth in the New World was, writes Losurdo, a '*Herrenvolk* democracy', a democracy of the white master-race that refused to allow blacks, indigenous peoples, or even white women, to be considered citizens. They were regarded as part of the profane space occupied by the less-than-human. The ideology of a white, master-race democracy was reproduced as capital colonized vast sections of the globe. Trump's victory in the US and the establishment of his right-wing, if not fascist, entourage, is in many ways an expression of the growing resentment and antagonism among significant sections of white America towards the perceived invasion and defiling of the sacred space by indigenous people, blacks, 'latinos', Mexicans, gays, lesbians, organized labour,

immigrants and all those profane beings that do not belong in that space. We can safely predict that Trump's presidency will see efforts to mount an assault on the cultures, organizations, and organizing capacities of those they view as the detritus of society, to remove them from the privileges of the sacred space and to 'return' them to the domain of the dehumanized. At the same time, we can predict that there will be widespread resistance to such attempts, in which culture will be an essential element.

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In this context, Cabral's writing and speeches on culture, liberation and resistance to power have important implications for the coming struggles not only in the US, but also in post-Brexit Britain, and in continental Europe, where fascism is once again raising its ugly head in several countries. Drawing upon Cabral's works,<sup>3</sup> I look at how colonialism established and maintained its power through attempts to eradicate the cultures of the colonial subject, and how culture as a liberatory force was essential for African people to reassert their humanity, to invent what it means to be human, and to develop a universalist humanity. I discuss how neocolonial regimes have attempted to disarticulate culture from politics, a process that neoliberalism has exacerbated. But as discontent after nearly 40 years of austerity (a.k.a. 'structural adjustment programmes') in Africa rises, as governments increasingly lose popular legitimacy, there is a resurgence of uprisings and protests, and once again culture is re-emerging as a mobilizing and organizing force.



## Colonialism, culture and the invention of the dehumanized 'African'

The philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Hegel, considered that Africans had no history. But what was the 'African' that they were referring to? It was only in the 15<sup>th</sup> century that Europeans began to use the term 'African' to refer to all the peoples who live on the continent. The term was directly associated with the Atlantic slave trade, and the condemnation of large sections of humanity to chattel slavery in the Americas and the Caribbean. To succeed in subjecting millions of human beings to such barbarism depended on defining them as non-humans.

The process of dehumanization required a systematic and institutionalized attempt to destroy existing cultures, languages, histories and capacities to produce, organize, tell stories, invent, love, make music, sing songs, make poetry, create art – all things that make a people human. This was carried out by local and European enslavers and slave owners and all those who profited from the trade in humans, not least the emerging European capitalist class.

In essence, the word that encapsulates this process of dehumanizing the people of this continent is *African*. Indeed, anthropologists, scientists, philosophers and a whole industry developed to ‘prove’ that these people constituted a different sub-human, biological ‘race’. Africans were to be considered as having no history, culture, or any contribution to make to human history. As slaves, they were mere chattel – property or ‘things’ that would be owned, disposed of and treated in any way that the ‘owner’ thought fit.

This attempt to erase the culture of Africans was a signal failure. For while the forces of liberalism destroyed the institutions, cities, literature, science and art on the continent, people’s memories of culture, art forms, music and all that is associated with being human remained alive, and were also carried across on the slave ships to where African slaves found themselves, and where that culture evolved in their new material conditions to become a basis for resistance.

The Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery were the cornerstones of capital accumulation that gave birth to capitalism, as were the concurrent genocides and mass killings of indigenous populations of the Americas and beyond. The systematic dehumanization of sections of humanity – racism – was intimately intertwined with the birth, growth and continued expansion of capital, and remains the hallmark of its development.

Cabral understood that separating Africa and Africans from the general flow of common human experience could only lead to the retardation of social processes on the continent. ‘When imperialism arrived in Guinea it made us leave our history ... and enter another history.’ This process was to continue from its origins in the European enslavement and forced removal of people from Africa to the expansion of Europe’s colonial ventures to the present day. The representation of Africans as inferior and sub-human justified the terror, slaughter, genocides, imprisonments, torture, confiscation of land and property, forced labour, destruction of societies and cultures, violent suppression of expressions of discontent and dissent, restrictions on movement, and establishment of ‘tribal’ reserves. It justified the division of the land mass and its peoples into territories at the Berlin Conference in 1884-85 by competing European imperial powers.

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The faith in the superiority of the culture of the sacred space combined with Christianity’s missionary zeal laid the foundations for empire and the spread of Christendom. ‘After the slave trade, armed conquest and colonial wars’, wrote Cabral, ‘there came the complete destruction of the economic and social structure of African society. The next phase was European occupation and ever-increasing European immigration into these territories. The lands and possessions of the Africans were looted’. Colonial powers established control by imposing taxes, enforcing compulsory crops, introducing forced labour, excluding Africans from particular jobs, removing them from the most fertile regions, and establishing native authorities consisting of collaborators.



Cabral pointed out that whatever the material aspects of domination, 'it can be maintained only by the permanent and organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned'. Of course, domination could only be completely guaranteed by the elimination of a significant part of the population as, for example, in the genocide of the Herero peoples in southern Africa or of many of the indigenous nations of North America, but in practice this was not always feasible or indeed seen as desirable from the point of view of empire. In Cabral's words:

The ideal for foreign domination, whether imperialist or not, would be to choose: either to liquidate practically all the population of the dominated country, thereby eliminating the possibilities for cultural resistance; or to succeed in imposing itself without damage to the culture of the dominated people – that is, to harmonize economic and political domination of these people with their cultural personality.

By denying the historical development of the dominated people, imperialism necessarily denies their cultural development, which is why it requires cultural oppression and an attempt at 'direct or indirect liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people'.

'Of the African population of Angola, Guiné and Mozambique, 99.7 per cent are classified as uncivilised by Portuguese colonial laws...' wrote Cabral in an assessment of the Portuguese colonies. 'The so called "uncivilized" African is treated as a chattel, and is at the mercy of the will and caprice of the colonial administration and the settlers. This situation is absolutely necessary to the existence of the Portuguese colonial system. He provides an inexhaustible supply of forced labour for export. By classifying him as "uncivilized", the law gives legal sanction to racial discrimination and provides one of the justifications for Portuguese domination in Africa.'



## Culture and the reclamation of humanity

The use of violence to dominate a people is, argued Cabral, 'above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least neutralize and to paralyze their cultural life. For as long as part of that people have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be assured of its perpetuation'.

The reason for this is clear. Culture is not a mere artefact or expression of aesthetics, custom or tradition. It is a means by which people assert their opposition to domination, a means to proclaim and invent their humanity, a means to assert agency and the capacity to make history. In a word, culture is one of the fundamental tools of the struggle for emancipation.

Haiti's slave revolution in 1804, which established the independent black republic, constituted one of the first significant breaches against racial despotism and slavery. Toussaint Louverture, the first leader of the rebellion, drew on an explicit commitment to a universal humanism to denounce slavery. In Richard Pithouse's succinct summary: 'Colonialism defined race as permanent biological destiny. The revolutionaries in Haiti defined it politically. Polish and German mercenaries who had gone over to the side of the slave armies were granted citizenship, as black subjects, in a free and independent Haiti.'

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In Guinea-Bissau, Cabral was commissioned by the colonial authorities to undertake an extensive census of agricultural production, enabling him to gain a profound understanding of the people, their culture and forms of resistance to colonial rule. He recognized that building a liberation movement required a 'reconversion of minds – a mental set' that he believed to be indispensable for the 'true integration of people into the liberation movements'. To achieve that required 'daily contact with the popular masses in the communion of sacrifice required by the struggle'. PAIGC cadres were deployed across the country to work with peasants, to learn from them about how they experienced and opposed colonial domination, to engage with them about the cultural practices that formed part of their resistance to it. 'Do not be afraid of the people and persuade the people to take part in all the decisions that concern them', he told his party members. 'The leader must be the faithful interpreter of the will and the aspirations of the revolutionary majority and not the lord of power.' And, 'To lead collectively, in a group, is to study questions jointly, to find their best solution, and to take decisions jointly.'

For Cabral, culture has a material base, 'the product of this history just as a flower is the product of a plant. Like history, or because it is history, culture has as its material base the level of the productive forces and the mode of production. Culture plunges its roots into the physical reality of the environmental humus in which it develops, and reflects the organic nature of the society'.

Culture, insists Cabral, is intimately linked to the struggle for freedom. While culture comprises many aspects, it '... grows deeper through the people's struggle, and not through songs, poems or folklore. ... One cannot expect African culture to advance unless one contributes realistically to the creation of the conditions necessary for this culture, i.e. the liberation of the continent'. In other words, culture is not static and unchangeable, but it advances only through engagement in the struggle for freedom.

National liberation, says Cabral, 'is the phenomenon in which a socio-economic whole rejects the denial of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, it is their return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subject'.

Or, as Fanon put it: 'To fight for national culture first of all means fighting for the liberation of the nation, the tangible matrix from which culture can grow. One cannot divorce the combat for culture from the people's struggle for liberation'. Furthermore: 'The Algerian national culture takes form and shape during the fight, in prison, facing the guillotine and in the capture and destruction of the French military positions.' And, 'National culture is no folklore ... [it] is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remain strong.'

If being cast as African was originally defined as being less than human, the resounding claim of every movement in opposition to enslavement, every slave revolt, every opposition to colonization, every challenge to the institutions of white supremacy, every resistance to racism, every resistance to oppression or to patriarchy, constituted an assertion of human identity. Where Europeans considered Africans to be sub-human, the response was to claim the identity of 'African' as a positive, liberating definition of a people who are part of humanity, 'who belong to the whole world', as Cabral put it. As in the struggles of the oppressed throughout history, a transition occurs in which terms used by the oppressors to 'other' people are eventually appropriated by the oppressed and turned into terms of dignity and assertion of humanity.

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It was thus that the concept of being 'African' became intimately associated with the concept of freedom and emancipation. The people 'have kept their culture alive and vigorous despite the relentless and organized repression of their cultural life', wrote Cabral. Cultural resistance was the basis for the assertion of people's humanity and the struggle for freedom.

With the growing discontent with the domination of the colonial regimes, especially following the second world war, many political parties were formed, many of which sought to negotiate concessions from the colonial powers. Colonialism had been reluctant to grant any form of pluralism to black organizations, but as popular protests grew, so there was a grudging opening of political space, often involving favours to those who were less threatening to colonial rule.

But such associations with freedom were, tragically, not to last for long beyond independence.

## The depoliticization of culture

What happens when culture becomes disarticulated from struggles for freedom and emancipation? In a speech to cadres of the PAIGC, Cabral said:

We talk a lot about Africa, but we in our Party must remember that before being Africans we are men, human beings, who belong to the whole world. We cannot therefore allow any interest of our people to be restricted or thwarted because of our condition as Africans. We must put the interests of our people higher, in the context of the interests of mankind in general, and then we can put them in the context of the interests of Africa in general.

What is important here is the assertion that Africans are not only human beings, but that their history, struggle and experiences are part of the struggle for a universal humanity that 'belong[s] to the whole world'. 'We must have the courage to state this clearly', wrote Cabral. 'No one should think that the culture of Africa, what is really African and so must be preserved for all time, for us to be Africans, is our weakness in the face of nature.'

This is in marked contrast to the ideology of 'Negritude' that emerged in the 1930s and 1940s in Paris and was to become associated with the writings of Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. Its philosophy was based on essentializing Africa and Africans, claiming that Africans have a core quality that is inherent, eternal and unalterable, and which is distinct from the rest of humanity. However, as Michael Neocosmos points out, if Africa 'historically was a creation of liberalism's sacred space which claimed a monopoly over history, culture and civilisation, then as a way of resisting, Africans have understandably tended to emphasize and idealize their own distinctive identity, history, culture and civilization'. Or, as Fanon put it: 'It is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude.' And that '... it is all too true that the major responsibility for this racialisation of thought, or at least the way it is applied, lies with the Europeans who have never stopped placing white culture in opposition to the other noncultures'.

While the ideas of Negritude had positive impacts on the way in which the colonized viewed themselves, and helped to inspire the flourishing of poetry, art and literature, and of research about the pre-colonial civilizations in Africa – such as the exceptional work of Cheikh Anta Diop – it also contributed to depoliticizing the meaning of African and of culture that was once powerfully associated with freedom. This resulted in eschewing the idea of human universality, preventing African people's 'return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which they were subject', as Cabral put it.

But Negritude was only one of the factors that led to the depoliticization of culture and identity.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of independence governments in most of Africa (the exceptions being Western Sahara, currently occupied by Morocco, and US-occupied Diego Garcia). Movements that had sought a radical agenda to advance the people's interests were systematically removed through coups d'état and assassinations (for example, Lumumba in Congo, Nkrumah in Ghana, Sankara in Burkina Faso). As stated earlier, Cabral too was assassinated by a group of his own comrades, apparently with the support of the Portuguese secret police (PIDE), on 20 January 1973.

The rise of neocolonial regimes, many of which arose out of the defeat or attrition of the mass movements, gradually resulted in the demise of the struggles for emancipatory freedoms in Africa. What happened after independence cannot be entirely blamed on imperialism. As Cabral pointed out: 'True, imperialism is cruel and unscrupulous, but we must not lay all the blame on its broad back. For, as the African people say: "Rice only cooks inside the pot"'. And '... here is the reality that is made more evident by our struggle: in spite of their armed forces, the imperialists cannot do without traitors; traditional chiefs and bandits in the times of slavery and of the wars of colonial conquest, gendarmes, various agents and mercenary soldiers during the golden age of colonialism, self-styled heads of state and ministers in the present time of neo-colonialism. The enemies of the African peoples are powerful and cunning and can always count on a few lackeys....., since quislings are not a European privilege.'



Nationalist governments were to play a critical role in the demise of emancipatory struggles. The newly emerging middle class saw its task as one of preventing 'centrifugal forces' from competing for political power or seeking greater autonomy from the newly formed 'nation'. Having grasped political self-determination from colonial authority, it was reluctant to accord the same rights to others. The new controllers of the state machinery saw their role as the 'sole developer' and 'sole unifier' of society. The state adopted an interventionist role in 'modernization' and a centralizing and controlling role in the political realm. The idea of 'development' had, as was intended by Harry Truman, an implicit allusion to progress of some kind, and acted as a counterweight to the attraction of socialism that the US saw as a threat to its growing hegemony.

The popular associations that had projected the nationalist leadership into power began to be seen as an obstacle to 'development'. No longer was there a need, it was argued, for popular participation in determining the future. The new government would bring development to the people, representing the nation and everyone in it. Now that political independence had been achieved, the priority was 'development' because, implicitly, the new rulers concurred that its people were 'under-developed'. Social and economic improvements would come, the nationalist leaders said, with patience and as a result of combined national effort involving all. In this early post-independence period, civil and political rights soon came to be seen as a 'luxury', to be enjoyed at some unspecified time in the future when 'development' had been achieved. For now, said many African presidents, 'our people are not ready' – echoing, ironically, the arguments used by the former colonial rulers against the nationalists' cries for independence a few years earlier.

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Camouflaged in the rhetoric of independence, the prevailing narrative treated the problems faced by the majority – deprivation and impoverishment and its associated dehumanization – not as consequences of colonial domination and an imperialist system that continued to extract super-profits, but rather as the supposedly 'natural' conditions of Africa. The solution to poverty was seen as a technical one, supported by 'aid' from the very colonial powers that had enriched themselves at the expense of the mass of African people.

Almost without exception, the nationalist movements insisted on occupying the colonial state rather than constructing democratic structures that enabled popular participation, as Cabral had created in the liberated zones of Guinea. As a result, the repressive arms of the state remained intact. The police, armed forces, judiciary, and civil service, had been designed to protect the interests of capital and of the colonial powers. Fundamentally, the colonial state was premised on the notion that its function was to perpetuate the dehumanization of the colonized. In almost every case, freedom fighters of the liberation movements were, if not entirely marginalized in the post-independence period, incorporated, integrated, and placed under the command of the existing colonial military structures. The only real change was to deracialize the state while dressing up the armed forces in the colours of the national flag.

Cabral was adamantly opposed to this tendency. He did not believe that independence movements should take over the colonial state apparatus and use it for their own purposes. The issue wasn't the colour of the administrator's skin, he argued, but the fact that there was an administrator.

'We don't accept any institution of the Portuguese colonialists. We are not interested in the preservation of any of the structures of the colonial state..'

The destruction of the colonial state was not a goal in itself, but the means to establish structures that the people would control and whose interests they would serve. 'Our objective is to break with the colonial state in our land to create a new state – different, on the basis of justice, work, and equality of opportunity for all the children of our land ...We have to destroy everything that would be against this in our land, comrades. Step by step, one by one if necessary – but we have to destroy in order to construct a new life.'

Culture was no longer considered a means of liberation. Instead, disarticulated from such notions, it was left empty of meaning beyond representing a caricature of some imagined past comprised of customs and traditions, consistent with notions of the savage that still prevailed in liberalism and which provided fodder for tourists' imaginations. As Fanon described it, 'Culture never has the translucency of custom. Culture eminently eludes any form of simplification. In its essence it is the very opposite of custom, which is always a deterioration of culture. Seeking to stick to tradition or reviving neglected traditions is not only going against history, but against one's people.'

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At the same time, the emerging national bourgeoisie had growing aspirations to assimilate and become full members of the culture of the sacred space, for which they received encouragement from cultural institutions such as the French Cultural Centre and British Council.

Once the concept of being African is delinked from notions of liberation and emancipation, all that remains is a depoliticized taxonomic identity that renders people merely objects rather than determinants of history. Indeed, the very notion of African began to disintegrate, except if it represented the sum of national states, as in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (and subsequently the African Union). It was easy then for empire to drive a wedge between the emancipatory histories of the peoples referred to as 'Arab' and those of so-called 'Black Africans' in the mythical geographies of 'Sub-Saharan Africa'.

Even the idea of the nation, disconnected from ideas of liberation, gradually gave way to the politics of identity, tribe and ethnicity. The consequences of this degeneration became apparent in the genocide in Rwanda, the ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Kenya and Burundi (to name just a few), the disenfranchisement of citizens because of their supposed ethnicity, as in the DRC and Côte d'Ivoire, the growing antipathy towards and internment of refugees, especially in Kenya, and the xenophobia that has taken root in South Africa.

The re-emergence of liberalism in the 1980s in the form of 'neoliberalism'<sup>4</sup> exacerbated the depoliticization of culture. The cult of the individual, fundamental to neoliberalism, has grown, especially among the middle classes for whom personal accumulation and privilege is held as a value above all else. It is accompanied by attempts to break up the collective – especially organized forms such as trade unions, farmers' organizations and youth movements. The decline in the



value of wages and the need to do more than one job in order to survive has frequently restricted the time for community and organization.

The growing domination of Western culture is supplemented by the hegemony of the corporate media, the ubiquity of CNN, Fox News and of a generalized Coca-colonization of everyday life, with the commodification of anything that can make a fast buck. Just as the early years of liberalism were characterized by the plethora of charitable organizations, so today Africa is replete with development NGOs contributing to the depoliticization of poverty by diverting attention away from the processes that create mass impoverishment and misery. Citizens have been transformed into consumers, and those without the means to consume have been thrown on the dung heap of history as the seldom or never employed. And neoliberalism has attempted to rewrite the histories of the damned (Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre*), seeking to erase their memories of the past through its invasion of the curriculums of schools and universities.



## The re-emergence of resistance

Cabral's words resonate today: 'The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation on the ideological or idealist plane of the physical and historical reality of the society that is dominated or to be dominated.' Despite the power of neoliberalism and the trillions of dollars at the disposal of the corporations, banks, financial institutions, governments and local elites, the people have not lost their desire for agency, for making history, for engaging in struggles wherein they both demonstrate and invent their humanity, for constructing the basis for a true universalism.

The mass mobilizations in Egypt, Tunisia, and Burkina Faso that led to the overthrow of local despots are but some of the examples of such struggles. I have written elsewhere<sup>5</sup> about other uprisings and protests that have swept the continent as a result of growing discontent over austerity these uprisings and protests reflect the re-emergence of resistance in which culture is once again manifest with an emancipatory dimension. Consider how millions occupied Tahir Square in Cairo: songs, music and dance were just some of the features that emerged. People's security, defence, the provision of food, healthcare, childcare, and shelter, all these were created anew by those present. Decisions were made collectively. Where just a month before, people

were considered apathetic and seemingly non-political, were transformed into political beings willing to put their lives at stake, to participate in mass meetings, and to release their creativity. It was demonstration of how the engagement in struggles releases not only people's ability to claim their humanity, but also to re-invent themselves, something that Fanon insisted upon.

Many current movements are fired by the energy and creativity of young people. One effect of neoliberalism has been to endeavour to remove the experiences and knowledge of history. Fanon writes:

Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. The effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance.

In such circumstances, Fanon points out: 'Each generation must discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it, in relative opacity.' In the underdeveloped countries preceding generations have simultaneously resisted the insidious agenda of colonialism and paved the way for the emergence of current struggles.

The Western liberal conception of humanity has been deficient from birth, argues Neocosmos, and that deficiency is ever more obvious today.

Its ultimate dependence on exploitation, colonial oppression and racism for its existence is now more evident than during previous historical epochs because it exercises its dominance over the whole globe in a manner which is manifestly inhuman. Thus the contradiction between a liberal conception which restricts freedom, equality and justice to a minority while denying it systematically to the majority of the world's population is becoming more and more obvious. In this context, the search for a true universal, without excluding supposed 'barbarians', is becoming more urgent.

I end with the words of Cabral:

Except for cases of genocide or the violent reduction of native populations to cultural and social insignificance, the *epoch of colonization* was not sufficient, at least in Africa, to bring about any significant destruction or degradation of the essential elements of the culture and traditions of the colonized peoples ... the problem of a ... cultural renaissance is not posed nor could it be posed by the popular masses: indeed they are the bearers of their own culture, they are its source, and, at the same time, they are the only entity truly capable of preserving and creating culture – in a word, of *making history*. (Emphases in original)



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## About the author

Firoze Manji is an activist and public intellectual from Kenya and is publisher at Daraja Press. He founded Pambazuka News, Pambazuka Press and Fahamu – Networks for Social Justice, is a visiting fellow at Kellogg College, Oxford, and a visiting researcher at the Unit for Humanities at Rhodes University. With Sokari Ekine, he co-edited *African Awakenings: The Emerging Revolutions*, and with Bill Fletcher Jr co-edited *Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral*. He has edited books on China in Africa, women's rights, and trade and development.

## Endnotes

1. While Fanon was originally from Martinique, he became Algerian and was deeply involved in the FLN's struggle against imperialism in Africa. All quotes from Fanon are taken from the works cited in the bibliography.
2. Losurdo, D. (2014).
3. The essay quotes extensively from the works cited in the bibliography. For reasons of space, I do not give specific page references.
4. For more information about the nature of neoliberalism, the essay by Prabhat Patnaik is a useful starting point.
5. See Manji, F. (2012) 'African Awakening: The courage to invent the future', in Manji, F. and Sokari Ekine (eds.) *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions*. Oxford: Pambazuka Press.



**AUTHOR:** Firoze Manji

**EDITOR:** Nick Buxton & Deborah Eade

**ARTWORK:** favulas + Isk + no1

**LAYOUT:** Evan Clayburg

Published by Transnational Institute – [www.TNI.org](http://www.TNI.org)

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