

Interview with Deivison Faustino conducted by Paula Gaudenzi and Wania Cidade

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Deivison, this interview is meant to build a Dossier on “Blackness and Subjectivity”, contemplating the subjective effects of racism, mainly on black women, as well as on the production of care. This Journal belongs to the field of Collective Health, so the issues of suffering, illness, and care are very important to us. One fact that caught our attention and that it would be a good place to start our talk, it’s is that your professional career is heavily crisscrossed by the discussion of racism, as well as by the field of health, primarily mental health. You are a sociologist, your Master’s degree was at the ABC Medical School, where you were interested in understanding how the black movement in ABC Paulista region was sensitive to the issue of the health of the black population, and your post-Doc was in Clinical Psychology at USP. We understand that your path as a sociologist, one who delves into the field of health, especially the psyche, is related to your concern regarding the harmful effects of racism and the understanding that confronting it is necessarily done through political and psychic paths. This is the conviction of the Amma Psique & Negritude Institute, of which you are the pedagogical coordinator. So, could you start by talking a little about your Master’s and Post-doctoral studies. What was your interest in both surveys? What were the findings? And why did you, being a sociologist, do your Master’s research within the School of Medicine? Moreover, what path did you take until you reached subjectivity studies, to the point of taking on a post-doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology.

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Dear Paula and Wania, I thank you for the opportunity of this dialogue within the scope of Fiocruz's National Institute of Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, which I have the highest of respect for. To answer that question, I must start by saying that I have been a health worker for over ten years. I started very young, when I was a rap singer and a member of the hip-hop movement, in the early 2000s, in the sexual and reproductive health debate because of our work to prevent STI/AIDS through rap. There I learned about and worked with the principles of harm reduction and, later, with complementary activities at a Psychosocial Care Center (NAPS) in Santo André. I was starting my degree in social sciences, but also, because of Angolan capoeira, I first came in contact with Reichian and Roberto-Freirian theories that circulated among young anarchists of somatherapy. Secondly, with the feminist theories that underpinned debates on sexual and reproductive rights, and thirdly, with the black movement, where I was introduced to Frantz Fanon. So, that was the context of my entry into the mental health debate, but it is curious to say that during this period, I worked in the area during the day and was active in the black movement at night, as there was no understanding in the health service that racism could be a working topic.

Later, I started to participate in the National Health Network of the Black Population, in which I had contact with the main articulators of the National Policy for the Comprehensive Health of the Black Population. The policy was conceived in 2001, but it was only approved in 2009, thanks to the intense articulation of the black movement that decisively influenced my trajectory as a student of the Social Sciences. It was because of this insertion that I entered the Master's degree program in Public Health at the ABC Medical School, where I studied, as you have rightly observed, the participation of the black movement in health policies in the ABC Region of São Paulo. In the research, the theme of mental health appeared in a very interesting way, but it was not something I focused on.

Two years later, I left the health field, started teaching African history and went on to study Frantz Fanon for my Ph.D. in Sociology at the Federal University of São Carlos. There, I came across the fact that Fanon was a psychiatrist who made extensive references to psychoanalysis and other psychological approaches. This forced me to reflect on mental health and Fanon's contribution to psychiatric reform. But from then on,

three events were decisive: 1) The publication of Professor Rachel Gouveia's article (*Holocausto or slave ship*), pointing out the Fanonian influences on the psychiatric reform of Franco and Basaglia and, at the same time, criticizing the silence of the Brazilian reform concerning Fanon and racism; 2) The invitation I received to join Amma Psique & Negritude; and 3) The connections I began to establish with the Laboratory of Psychoanalysis and Politics, coordinated by Professor Miriam Debieux. In addition, my contact with Priscila Santos Souza, a psychoanalyst at the Laboratory who studies Frantz Fanon and psychoanalysis, and the arrival from France to me, through her hands, of *Frantz Fanon: écrits sur l'alienation et la liberté* (text whose clinical excerpts were translated by Ubu as "psychiatric writings").

I, who had already worked in a NAPS, but who had also been trained by the black movement and later, in my Master's degree, in the sanitary principles present in collective health, but, more importantly, I, who at that point was already a professor in the Department of Health, Education, and Society of the Federal University of São Paulo, I was delighted with this material given to me by Priscila and decided to study Frantz Fanon's clinic in my post-doc studies under the guidance of Miriam Debieux. The result of my post-doc will be a book, which is still in the process of publication.

Considering that your Master's research, which took place between 2007 and 2009, was about the relevance of the health of the black population to black movements and that since then you have continued to be concerned about and study the psychosocial effects of racism, we would like you to talk a little about your point of view on how racism affects people's physical and mental health, how black movements deal with this issue, and how you understand that SUS is involved with Racism, both in the sense of institutional racism – as a producer of violence within the health services themselves – such as in the sense of producing care for black people.

Racism is a complex and multifaceted historical phenomenon with diverse social, cultural, institutional, and economic impacts, with objective consequences (the place in power relations and in the social bond), which are primarily subjective. It is present in all of society and configures a systematic form of humiliation and invisibilities with strong effects on subjectivity. If what we usually call "I" does not exist without the recognition

of the other – the mother figure and then the father figure, the broader family nucleus, the school and, subsequently, society as a whole – and racism systematically permeates all these instances, the question that needs to be asked is: what kind of image about oneself and the other can emerge from this?

For some time, several authors have been drawing attention to the subjective effects of racism – Du Bois, Sartre, Balandier, Memmi, Manoni, Bicudo, Guerreiro Ramos, Fanon, Neusa Santos, Isildinha Batista, Mussati, among others – but their studies still continue to be relatively ignored in the training of mental health professionals. The result is that the victim of racism suffers a second violence when he manages to access a professional service to talk about the issue. I've been calling this neglect 'institutional deafness'. Not to mention the (not rare) cases of explicit discrimination reproduced in clinical care. So, we can say that the simple absence of this theme in training is already an expression of institutional racism.

Another aspect of the question has to do with the black movement. Although this has not always had elements to guide the theme of mental health, it is mainly responsible for providing spaces of protection and psychological care. The historical ties of solidarity between the various enslaved African peoples, as well as the institutions of resistance that were being created or recreated during slavery, such as brotherhoods and religious interactions, fellowships, clubs, and especially the quilombos, had a social importance in the act of preventing this group from completely disintegrating, but they mostly showed a psychological importance by offering ancestral or modern devices to embrace and care for its members. Even after slavery, since racism did not fully come to an end, but rather became more sophisticated after abolition, black spaces – from *baile black* to *maracatu*, from *capoeira* to *candomblé*, among other examples – continued and continue to carry out this function.

Kabengele Munanga wrote a book to contextualize the theme of *blackness* – or, according to him, black identity (*"Blackness - Uses and meanings"*). In his onslaught, he makes it clear that this is a complex subject whose understanding goes beyond historical movements and the black community's confrontation with white supremacy. The concept of *negritude* brings together human groups marked by a common history of discrimination through eyes of the Western "white" man, who called

himself "black". But the concept is not restricted to the difference in skin tone, it goes further and brings to the center of the discussion the devastating phenomenon of racism, which systematically tries to destroy cultures, dehumanize subjects, physically and psychologically affecting individuals. Therefore, blackness was created as a reaction to the ideology of whiteness. You are, today, among the most respected scholars on racial relations and racism in Brazil, and you defend, according to your studies of Fanon's work, that we maintain these racial categorizations: white and black, for the construction of new modes of social, economic and political relationship. Can you tell us a little about what you consider essential for us to reach this stage of social awareness?

This subject is quite delicate, but necessary, and its approach requires the consideration of some historical and philosophical aspects. Let's see: as Fanon teaches us, it was the white man who created the black man at the exact moment he refused to recognize him as human. This refusal occurred during the period when mercantilist Europe witnessed the emergence of bourgeois notions of freedom and equality as natural human presuppositions. These notions represented a major break with medieval notions of the world and paved the way for the consolidation of bourgeois sociability, a vision of the world adequate to the then emerging capitalism. At the same time, the material (metals, spices, drugs, etc.), cultural (new worldviews) and epistemic means that allowed this rupture stemmed primarily from the extractive violence perpetrated by colonial appropriation.

There are two problems here that I have called, respectively, the "Lockean paradox" and "white identitarianism". John Locke was one of the foremost defenders of freedom and equality as inalienable human attributes and as a condition for democracy, but at the same time, he was a shareholder in one of the largest Dutch companies for the trafficking of enslaved people. The apparent paradox, which is actually a contradiction, consists of the following equation: how can a defender of universal freedom among men accept slavery in the colonies? Either freedom is not universal – which would jeopardize the bourgeois project of replacing feudalism – or any type of human slavery would be unacceptable – which would jeopardize the colonial sources of consolidation of the mercantile bourgeoisie. The response of the European bourgeoisie was emphatic: "Africans and indigenous peoples

are not men”, and could, therefore, be enslaved. Thus, ethics, politics and esthetics do not extend to them. Here is white identity: a project, such as, but not limited to, the Enlightenment, which speaks of the universal human but only manages to see the white man as an expression of this universality. This is the case of universalist France sending troops to Haiti, its most profitable former colony, to repress a revolution that was inspired by the French Revolution itself.

In this way, it is necessary to first emphasize that the black men and women are fantasy and ghostly creations of colonialism. Ghostly, because all the transgressions and monstrosities that white people don't want to see in it are symbolically deposited in this sign. Incidentally, the white, by creating the black, creates himself, as a symbolic racial entity, castrated from everything that he projects onto the supposed “black”. Fanon claimed that Whites and Blacks are “affective aberrations” that needed to be overcome so that each individual could be seen and at the same time see himself in all of humanity and not merely in what colonialism attributes to its supposed racial group. The main question that remains is: ok, smart guy, how do we do this? Racism is first and foremost a power relationship, with strong subjective roots, but with the power to decisively influence social order. It does not end by decree or by simple individual desire. Thus, it must be confronted and dismantled not only in its epistemic or symbolic premises, but also in its material bases. Who could lead this confrontation if not the most harmed by it?

What I am trying to say is that, even if the “black” sign was a ghostly creation of white people, it is not possible for human beings framed as such to ignore this classification, as it has objective and subjective effects on their lives. What has been witnessed in recent centuries is that the various forms of black African or Afro-diaspora agency were essential. whoever finds it. It was and still is they who brought about ruptures in society's racist social order, which, as Fanon claims, speaks of man, but kills him wherever he may be found. Without the quilombos, the black movement, without the pan-African or blackness ideologies, we would not even be talking about this topic and this social group would possibly have already been completely diluted.

So, paradoxically, the so-called blackness – understood as a moment in which the black person refuses to be the object of the other and seeks to define him/herself by his/her own terms – has the merit of denouncing racism and, likewise, of

providing spaces in which to embrace and care for people with these traits cursed by the white social order. For Fanon, blackness is a fundamental condition for overcoming racism, configuring itself as the affective antithesis of white hatred and, for this reason, reveals an incomparable subjective importance. From this point of view, it is an urgent task to blacken mental health, the production of knowledge, progressive, and revolutionary struggles and society as a whole, thereby confronting white identity. Whites, like Blacks, must die as such, so that the cosmopolitan dream that Kant called the particular-universal can emerge. However, there is no possible death of racialization without first recognizing its existence and radically confronting it to the point of dismantling its objective and subjective bases. One cannot combat anti-black racism without blackness, as it offers a certain identification that inverts colonial terms and symbols, enabling new bonds and social processes that give rise to the emergence of a type of subject.

The big question raised by Fanon is that this fight cannot lose sight of the fact that the radical “black”, who sustains the word *blackness* (*negritude*), is him/herself a colonial invention of the white man, who, at some point in the very struggle that affirms him/her, also needs to be questioned and overcome, at the risk of consolidating itself as a new type of barrier, now self-attributed, which prevents individuals from identifying themselves and being able to be identified with humankind. At this moment of supra-assumption (*aufheben*), “the quilombo” ceases to be a mere isolated space of resistance within the slave society, and is transformed into that which Beatriz Nascimento defended: the possibility of being at home wherever we are.

You were one of the people who started reading Fanon from the perspective of sociogenesis as the structuring axis of all Fanonian thought. Knowing that Fanon was a psychiatrist and, therefore, was concerned about human suffering, especially with the social dimensions of psychic suffering, we would like you to talk a little about how you understand that the perspective of sociogeny is articulated with such concerns as those of Fanon.

I would like to thank you for recognizing my contribution to disseminating Fanon's thinking in Brazil, but I remember that it his work had already been read in Brazil since the 1960s, influencing the work of such thinkers as Paulo Freire, Gauber Rocha, Abdias do Nascimento, Clóvis

Moura, Milton Barbosa, Amilton Caroso, Lélia Gonzales, Neuza Santos Souza, among others. Incidentally, the book *Tornar-se negro*, by Souza, is a classic of Brazilian anti-racist psychoanalysis that finds in Fanon one of the main theoretical bases. Likewise, it is clear that Fanon was essential in the dialogue that Gonzales establishes with Lacan. My contribution is infinitely humbler and more recent in a debate that predates it. In any case, it is true that I have a share in the recognition of the sociogenic category in Frantz Fanon's thinking.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, after acknowledging the importance of Freudian ontogeny for psi knowledge, hitherto dominated by phylogenetic perspectives, Fanon states that sociogeny must run hand in hand with phylogeny and ontogeny. This excerpt, although enigmatic, offers us important clues about his psychological proposal: phylogeny is the study of what is universal to us, whether as a neurochemical structure or as a psychic apparatus, and ontogeny is the understanding of the individual and singular trajectory of constitution of the subject. In sociogeny, Fanon calls for psychological attention to the social, cultural contexts and power relations under which subjectivity is structured.

This means that the understanding and consideration of capitalism, colonialism and racism are also a psychological task, with practical implications for the clinical provision of care, but not only that... care, in Fanon, is not limited to the clinic, even if it can present itself as a fundamental space for the cases that demand it as such. Let us note, however, that sociogeny comes "hand-in-hand", and not before, phylogeny and ontogeny. Which means that in psychological care the consideration of the "social" cannot obliterate the singularity of the subject under the penalty of reinforcing, even if well-intentioned, racialization.

In Fanon's life experience, he came to know the effects of violence on himself and on the lives of colonized subjects, psychic illness, the depersonalization of individuals. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, it is understood that this violence should be "organized as a liberation struggle, which allows one to overcome". However, at the very beginning of Chapter 1, he states: "...decolonization is always a violent phenomenon". We would like you to comment a little on these two phrases of Fanon's thought, especially how he thinks about the dimension of violence that constitutes colonialism itself, as well as the fact

that some readers of his time interpreted this book as an ode to violence.

Fanon studies violence supported by the anti-colonial Marxist reading of Hegel, in which violence is an unavoidable expression of history. There is violence in peace and in social order, and the suppression of this violence is violent in itself, simply because it disrupts and dismantles order. For this reason, Karl Marx wrote, in *Capital*, that violence is a kind of midwife of history because it allows for the establishment of capitalism through colonial expropriation which surpasses old feudalism and gives rise to the new bourgeois society. At the same time, it is because this same violence can, as Marx argues, overcome bourgeois sociability towards other forms of social existence. It is in this tradition that Fanon inserts himself and resumes the Marxian observation according to which colonialism is, in itself, a social formation that derives its objective truth from violence.

Without it, colonialism would not come into being and in it, the colonist teaches the colonized, with rifle butts and supposedly stray bullets, that the only possible language is violence. It is not that there is no violence in central capitalist societies, but there it can be disguised by a sense of belonging to the bond, through democracy and the Welfare State. In the colony, violence cannot be disguised and is presented in its raw state, materialized in every absence of rights and presence of domination, in such a way as to install itself in the mind of the colonized. The question for Fanon is that if "violence is the midwife of every old society that is pregnant with a new society", the end of the violent colonial social order is only possible through a complete dismantling that subsumes it in a new sociability. This birth is only viable through the organized and radical social rupture that will be experienced by the beneficiaries of the order as violence, but it is unavoidable and, ultimately – as Sartre reminds us in the preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* – frees not only the Blacks from their blackness, but also the Whites from their whiteness, emancipating them from the death of their racialized persona. It is this, and not a cheap apology for violence, that Fanon's approach to the theme treats.

Could you address the concept of *crossroads*, which you mention when you introduce us to Fanon's ideas? The richness of this representation is precisely the possibility of looking at the object of our interest from different points of view, putting the different in dialogue, converging on a common point. You bring us this

bias, which is not only a differential in the sense of approaching studies on racism, but also broadens our observation and worldview. Can you tell us about it?

The crossroads category was presented by Leda Maria Martins in a seminal article in which she spoke of bodily orality and memory. She resumes the Bakongo epistemes of the cross, abundantly present throughout the Afro-Brazilian exilic imaginary, as a theoretical horizon to articulate dialectical elements that tend to appear separate in Christian Manichaeism and Cartesian dualism. It is within this critical tradition that I have proposed thinking at the crossroads, as a dialectic, sometimes synthetic, sometimes dissonant, encounter of multiple elements that make up a certain universe. Marx said, regarding society, that the concrete (social reality) is concrete because it consists of a synthesis of multiple, often contradictory, determinations, that is, unity in diversity. This perspective seems to me crucial for the field of mental health and for especially for psychology, as it allows phylogeny, ontogeny, and sociogeny to articulate dialectically, without one dimension being subsumed due to the explanation of the other, while at the same time, they are thought, each one, in its mutual influence on the others: what Marx, reading Hegel, called reflexive determinations.

At this point, I distance myself from those authors who are thinking of the crossroads, in post-structuralist terms, only as an *uncertainty* and *in-between* place to propose a materialist approach that recognizes the undefined subversion of what is in the “between”, but does not ignore that the “between” is only possible through concretely given alternatives: sociogeny. At the same time, I understand Fanon himself as an author of different crossroads, between phylogeny, sociogeny, and ontogeny; between subjectivity and politics; between Marxism, blackness, existentialism, and psychoanalysis; between the radical and revolutionary demand for a future that does not ignore the past and does not fail to position itself in the face of the dilemmas of the present; in fact, it seeks to extract the new from it.

In this dossier, we are fundamentally concerned with the effects of racism on black women, as well as with the care offered to them in Brazil. We would like you to talk a little about how you see the specificity of these people, considering that we live in an extremely socially unequal, patriarchal, and racist society. And yet, consid-

ering the COVID-19 pandemic, how are these black women crossed by this new context?

There is a debt of mental health, in general, and psychology, in particular, with this public. In *Racism and sexism in Brazilian culture*, Lélia Gonzalez reminds us of the importance of black women for the Brazilian cultural construction and, above all, for the formation of the various forms of political resistance that we have. Even so, it is the most neglected and violated group by public health policies in general, however, its contribution to psychology and psychoanalysis is still invisible. Names like Virgínia Bicudo, Neuza Santos Souza, Maria Lúcia da Silva, Isildinha Batista Nogueira, Clélia Prestes, among others, including Lélia Gonzalez herself, not only used psychology or psychoanalysis to formulate their practices, but their theories and clinical practices also provide key subsidies to the field.

On the other hand, Fanon’s proposal of care for individuals belonging to discriminated groups is very interesting and deserves to be mentioned: As we have already pointed out, the requirement of recognizing sociogeny is not, in any way, the disregard of phylogeny and ontogeny. This, I think, has fundamental clinical implications: the individual who arrives at the clinic – even if he shares social elements with a certain social group and this particularity does not nullify the more universal psychic processes – must be considered in his singularity. Fanonian sociogeny cannot be the disregard of what is singularly unrepeatable and immeasurable in the subject, but rather the sensitivity to the fact that the singularity always manifests itself in some context and this context also has its place in clinical listening. However, the starting point of the clinic must always include listening to the singular. This detail allows one to provide the subject with the clinic he needs at that moment, and not a sociologically formatted manner that disregards his/her internal processes, many of which cannot be summarized – even though they can be crossed and aggravated – by discrimination.

In Fanon, emancipation implies a descent into the true depths of hell that allow the subject to recognize him/herself as such, which even implies recognizing him/herself as co-responsible for his/her own contradictions, or at least, primarily responsible for the decision of what to do with these contradictions. And this leap is not possible, initially, if the clinic is not blackened or made into a *quilombo* to the point of becoming a space for embracement, including

the pain caused by racism, sexism, transphobia, etc... However, it is the embracement without the invitation to descend into the true depths of hell that enables a critical reconciliation in the face of one's own limitations, contradictions and, above all, with the strange/unfamiliar that dwells in all of us; there, there is no possible emancipation. Obviously, in Fanon, this task does not end in the clinic, but rather finds a crucial place there.

Finally, we understand that, despite so much violence, ties were established in the underground of slavery, ways of survival were inaugurated in spite of the colonial masters, which have been renewed until today. They are networks founded under the sign of pain, but which did not succumb to it; they transformed it. Thus, history, religiosity, habits, and customs were maintained; the cuisine, the language, the dances, and the musicality have also crossed over time; this is blackness. Still in contemporary times, it is the networks of Candomblé grounds, schools of samba, of *jongo*, of capoeira, of favelas, that resist. It was this culture and struggle that offered its shoulders for black people to climb over the walls and reach the university and so many other places. Tell us a little about this diverse and plural Afro-Brazilianness and about what the possible ways are, in your point of view, to break with colonial logic, to overcome colonialism? Or, in other words, for the well-being of the black population. What questions are imposed today in the links between subjectivity and social ties, between politics and desire? Where are we?

There is a wealth of black intellectual production that has been showing that black political, intellectual, and cultural spaces are of incomparable importance in promoting the mental health of the black population. From the period of slavery to the present day, it has been observed that the struggle for better living conditions, for representativeness, for visibility, for the right to life, contributes not only to the transformation of society as a whole, but it also offers spaces in which so-

cial bonding is possible. This was one of the main functions of the *quilombos* during the period of slavery, and today, if we think together with Beatriz do Nascimento, we find this function in African religions, in *capoeiras*, in *afoxés*, in *samba*, or in funk dances.

Regardless of what can be said about these spaces, it is important to recognize them as health promotion practices and, in some cases, listening and care devices. A person who goes to a Taata Nkisi or Yalorixá to consult the sacred oracles, will confess his/her pains and anguish and find there, a listening technique; the person who is willing to live with the precepts of Angolan capoeira will have the opportunity not only to confront what W. Reich called a 'muscular armor of character', from psycho-corporeal movements that relieve the restriction to his pelvis, shoulders, and limbs, but also to see traces of his/her unconscious appearing with him/her in the circle, denouncing fears, desires, and weaknesses that, if conducted by an attentive master, can represent a valuable invitation to listen to him/herself and his/her posture in the world. It is not a question of mystifying these practices nor proposing to replace the clinic with them, but of reflecting on how much mental health loses, as a field, when its racism prevents this ancestral knowledge from being recognized, valued and invited to dialogue with Western knowledge. This is what Fanon proposed in his clinic in Algeria and Tunisia. A kind of calibalization of medicine that neither despises nor discards Western knowledge – not even that mobilized by colonial power – but relativizes and contrasts or articulates them with other health-producing matrices that are already present in society, but that have been ignored by legacies (and by) epistemic racism. A change in attitude, in this sense, would not only benefit the black population, who would have a better chance of recognizing themselves in the devices provided by mental health, but it would also impact the field as a whole, enriching its human repertoire beyond the rickety and castrated white identitarianism.

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Both interviewers participated in the entire interview production process.

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