

Notes From the Underground

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The Historical Underground

Voices From the Past

Frantz Fanon: *by Greg Kosc*

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was a Martinican who was born into the French Empire. After France was badly defeated by Germany in World War II, he joined the Free French Forces in order to liberate France from the clutches of the racist Nazis. While Fanon thought he was participating in a noble venture to better the world, he was confronted with racism in the Free French Army. Even though large numbers of the Free French Forces were colonial troops from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, they were treated poorly during and after the war by white Frenchmen. This experience had a profound effect on Fanon.

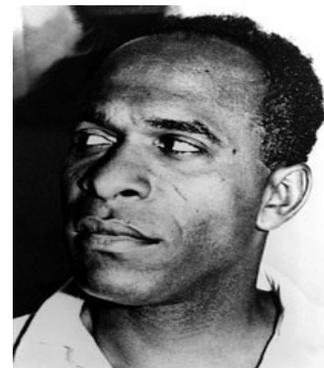
After the war, Fanon went to France in order to study psychiatry. While in France, Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White*

Masks, which examined the psychological ramifications of French racism. Fanon claimed that it was impossible for a black man to live a healthy psychological life, in the face of white racism. In French culture, blackness had become associated with evil and inferiority; therefore, black Frenchmen were forced to abandon their traditional culture and adopt white culture. Fanon argued that having to wear these white masks meant that black men were disconnected from their bodies and their past.

After graduation in 1953, Fanon took a post at a hospital in the heavily segregated French colony of Algeria. Schools had strict quotas on the numbers of Algerians allowed in French schools, and Frenchmen found everyday ways to snub the colonized population. For instance, Algerians were not allowed to join French sport clubs, and Frenchmen always addressed Algerians in the familiar “tu” form rather than the more polite “vous” form. Once the Algerian War broke out in 1954, Fanon was forced to treat an increasing number of victims of French torture, which alienated him from the French. He eventually resigned his post as a civil servant and fled to Tunisia in order to work with other Algerian revolutionaries.

As the war was still raging and he was dying of leukemia, Fanon published his most well-known work, *The Wretched of the Earth*. This book was a piece of Marxist revolutionary literature, and it explained his theory that only rural peasants were economically detached

enough to carry out a true revolution in a world dominated by capitalism. In his view, too many Algerians had significant economic ties and interests with France; therefore, they could not be trusted to lead the revolution as they would seek to lead it in order to benefit themselves. In keeping with a Marxist perspective, Fanon also warned against internal divisions and too deep a commitment to Islam and traditional beliefs. “Fatalism,” he declared, “relieves the oppressor [the French] of all responsibility since the cause of wrong-doing, poverty, and the inevitable can be attributed to God.” Fanon advocated for an abandonment of Western sports, a commitment to education, and the creation of a new modern national culture. Not only would this modern culture deemphasize religion and traditional leadership, but it held out the promise of moving beyond a nostalgic immersion into traditional African culture and sterile clichés such as dressing in African garb. Fanon thought that cultures were lived expressions of relationships and that a new culture could be created by uniting people in a struggle against oppression and for economic justice.



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Women in History

"Today Henriette DeLille is on the path to canonization as the first African-American saint in the Roman Catholic Church."



Henriette DeLille

Henriette DeLille was born in 1832, a quadroon free woman of color in New Orleans. Her mother and sister were members of the quasi-marital system called *placage*. This system supported a relationship between a white planter and free woman of color in New Orleans and nowhere else. The relationship was not recognized by church or common law yet flourished and produced several generations to continue the practice in New Orleans until after the Civil War.

Placage afforded the woman in the relationship a home, furnishings, an allowance and domestic help. Male children born under this relationship were provided an education in France once they reached the

age of 16, and the best possible education for girls was in private schools throughout New Orleans.

At an early age, Henriette rejected *placage* as a way of life for herself and chose a life in service to God and her people, the Africans and blacks, free and enslaved, of New Orleans. Her choice in life began after meeting a staunchly religious female and admiring her life of piety, poverty, chastity and prayer. As Henriette grew in her religion, she grew in her desire to be a servant to her people through life as a religious devotee.

The Roman Catholic Church bowed to the law of the time and did not allow white and

black women to live together as a religious community, which meant that Henriette and her followers had to make arrangements for living and working on their own.

Luckily, the small group found support from a Catholic priest who assisted them in taking vows as a religious order: Sisters of the Holy Family. It took many years before official recognition came from the Church and the Sisters were granted official status and a habit. None of this happened during the earthly life of Henriette which ended in 1862. Today Henriette DeLille is on the path to canonization as the first African-American saint in the Roman Catholic Church.

~ Florinda Morse Royal

This Month in History



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Because Martin Luther King was born in the month of January, the U.S. Government enacted a law in 1983 to make the third Monday of the month a national holiday in celebration of his remarkable achievements as a Civil Rights activist. By now most Americans understand why King's philosophy was so powerful, but what is perhaps less known about this man and the passive resistance movement he galvanized is that his ideas did not generate from within the landscape of 1950s American soil. Well before King's rise to prominence, two towering black intellectuals, Benjamin Mays and Howard

Thurman, traveled to India in 1936 and 1937 to meet with Gandhi, who had experienced a great deal of success in India using the passive resistance model against British repression that he learned of in South Africa years earlier. Then, Mordecai Johnson, who never met Gandhi but learned about his ideas through Thurman, introduced the philosophy of peaceful non-cooperation with whites to a crowd of students in 1950 at a lecture in Pennsylvania, which King attended. Although skeptical at first on whether or not these ideas would work in an environment where black Americans were

being lynched throughout the South, his continued conversations with another great civil rights leader, Bayard Rustin, eventually convinced him that it was the only path to success. After Rosa Park's inadvertent bus boycott became a national success, King's ideas were put into place throughout the South, making white Americans feel uncomfortable about their own prejudices, thereby igniting the spark of change that this country badly needed to finally implement its founding ideas without contradiction.

~ Bradley Borougerdi

Historical Movie Review

J. Edgar

Academy Award-winning director Clint Eastwood has teamed up with the talented Leonardo DiCaprio to explore the life of one of America's most powerful yet controversial figures in the twentieth century, J. Edgar Hoover. *J. Edgar* is a film that covers the personal and political trials and tribulations of Hoover, whose ambition and passion created an organization for the preservation of his ideal America: the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In regard to the actual film, one must come to the understanding that this movie is not about the political Hoover with splashes of his personal life but rather the opposite. Eastwood explores the human element of Hoover's person, brilliantly portrayed by DiCaprio, for the purpose of providing the viewer with their own understanding as to why Hoover would later do what he thought was right to preserve the America, the FBI, and ultimately himself. Throughout the film, DiCaprio

portrays Hoover as a timid and insecure man, trapped in the image of what he thought America expected him to be, and more interestingly who his mother wanted him to be. Relationships between Hoover and an array of characters are the basis of the film, ranging from a somewhat Norman Bates (*Psycho*) mother-son relationship between Hoover and his mom, to his awkward interaction with women throughout the film. The one relationship that garners the most attention in the film is that between Hoover and his closest confidant and companion, Clyde Tolson. Throughout the film, it is apparent that Hoover has a deep love and admiration for Tolson, rumored to be Hoover's lover. However, personal and political influences forced Hoover to bury his expression of love towards Tolson and instead artificially create moments of cruelty and sadness. The film portrays a man who loved America and a small inner

circle of people, but his inability to relate to either of these loves results in questionable and controversial moments throughout the film, specifically in regard to the extent the FBI used and abused its power as a federal organization. This movie review may fall short of what you were expecting, but this reflects some of the shortcomings of the film, for *J. Edgar* did not explore in great detail the historical implications of Hoover's work. Basically, this movie is not about the FBI's infiltration of the Civil Rights Movement or their scientific police work in hunting down America's Most Wanted. Instead, the film is a personal look into the life of a man who would come to be the face of law enforcement in America, yet within his own life lacked what he thought he was providing Americans — security.

~ Eric Salas

Conversations With History

Charles "Chuck" Hope

What courses do you teach at TCC?

I am an associate professor of history at Southeast Campus and I teach both sections of U.S. History (1301 and 1302). I have taught Cornerstone and team-taught history and sociology classes. I have also taught accounting and management courses.

How and why did you decide to become a historian?

I grew up in San Antonio which is full of history. Also, the centennial of the

American Civil War raised my interest in history.

What is your academic interest and field of expertise?

My graduate work was on Francisco Vasquez de Coronado's hunt for Quivira. Quivira is a place visited by Coronado on his expedition for the mythical Seven Cities of Gold. I would identify my areas of expertise to include U.S. business history and Spanish Texas history.

If you could have a conversation with any historical figure, who would it be and why?

If there was one person I could have one final conversation with, it would be with Robert E Lee. At the heart of the conversation I would try to understand what happened those three days at the Battle of Gettysburg. Even though Lee was the commanding general of the battle, I wonder how he felt about the performances of his subordinates.

If you could change any historical event, which would it be and why?

If there is any singular event in history that I would change, it would be to prevent the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, for it drastically altered various aspects of society.

If Lincoln would have lived, how different would Reconstruction have been? Would there have been the level of animosity between the North and South, that some might consider, exists even today?

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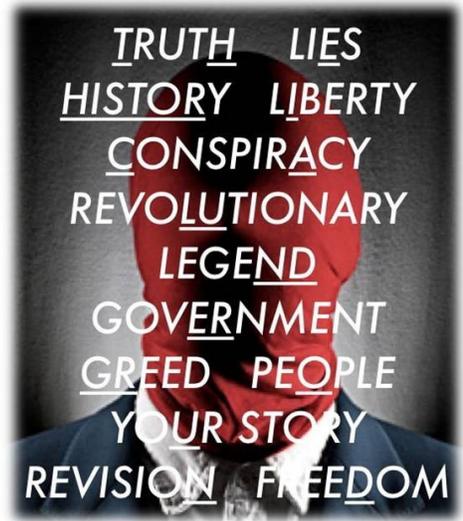
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“HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE”



Join Us: Meeting Date/Time: TBA

Contact: Bradley.borougerdi@tccd.edu



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Letter From the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to 2012 and the third installment of *Notes From the Underground*. First, we hope the Mayans got it wrong. Second, we hope that you enjoyed your break from academia and are ready to tackle the rigors of the upcoming spring semester. Last but not least, The Historical Underground would like to acknowledge and send a sincere thanks to Sally Jinks of Graphic Services for all her support and advice with the initial launch and subsequent issues of this newsletter. We would also like to thank Amy Staley, Doug Peak, Natalie Gamble and everyone else at Student Services for being so helpful and supportive of this newsletter. Your work with students and their organizations enables them to be successful and achieve their dreams, and we at the Historical Underground thank you for that. We are looking for new members and newsletter contributors, so if you'd like to get involved, attend any of our weekly meetings, which will resume January 24, 2012. The Historical Underground will be making some changes to the day and time we will hold our meetings this spring semester. If you would like to stay informed as to when these changes will occur, please request membership to The Historical Underground under Clubs in CampusCruiser. In conjunction with Student Services, the Historical Underground will present a lecture series during the month of February to celebrate Black History Month. Instructors Brad Borougerdi and Eric Salas will present a lecture on the rise of Pan-Africanism in America and its relationship with Malcolm X's Black Nationalism, respectively. We are very excited to serve your interest in history and hope to foster a love for the subject on campus like never before. Thank you very much for your support and enjoy the reading!

Volume 1, Issue 3 Contributors: Eric Salas, Bradley J. Borougerdi, Greg Kosc, Florinda Morse Royal