

Reflection paper #2  
Due in class Wednesday, September 22, 2004  
Political Violence, the State, and Theoretical Controversies

In this week's readings, *The Wretched of the Earth*, and *On Violence*, the Martinican-born psychiatrist and activist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) and German Jewish philosopher and political theorist Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) are writing in the 1960s – a tumultuous time around the globe. Each grapples with the way in which popular movements for liberation, political recognition, human and civil rights have used violence to achieve certain ends, albeit from very different perspectives. To greater or lesser extent they also examine the historical use of violence as a tool of colonialism, as a means of “pacifying” the nation-state, and as a looming specter of nuclear annihilation in the Cold War. Both assert claims about the extent to which violence is natural or biological, rational or irrational, or cultural/historical, among other possibilities. At the heart of both writings, however, are concerns about the ability for individuals and groups to change the world as global industry, science and technology, and unequal resources concentrate power and knowledge in the hands of a few (nations or individuals).

Arendt makes two seemingly contradictory statements:

“Violence does not promote causes, neither history nor revolution, neither progress nor reaction; but it can serve to dramatize grievances and bring them to public attention” (79).

“The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world” (80).

How would Frantz Fanon respond to Arendt's statements if he had had the chance and why?