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Guest/Topic: Asha Ransby-Sporn on *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire

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[Intro context: Monica and Page talk about the upcoming vote on the Chicago city budget, the power of narrative as a site of resistance, and their thoughts on this episode's conversation with Asha Ransby-Sporn.]

00:00 **Monica:**

Thanks so much for tuning in to this week's episode. I know for me a lot of things have felt super overwhelming and out of control. I was actually talking on a panel earlier this week and I mentioned how it feels like we are sort of waking up every morning not really knowing what news is going to come at us, and we kind of just wake up and brace ourselves for what is to come. And it feels really scary and hard.

And because it is really scary and hard, I just really appreciate you all who are tuning in and continuing to listen to this podcast every week because I know for me, this project has been really keeping me super grounded and has kept me from spiraling out, to be honest. And yeah, it's just, it's really, it's a really helpful space for me to like, connect and build with folks during this pandemic. So, yeah, how have you been holding up, Page?

00:52 **Page:**

Yeah, um, we're at the stage where officially weekends mean nothing anymore, like at all. *[laughs]* I just, yeah, you know, we have... It's been a struggle to just find the time to even record this little intro because it's just so many meetings. And you know, we found this time -- it's Sunday afternoon, which used to be my, like, day of rest and resetting and cleaning, and I am five hours into meetings already. So anyways, yeah, I am... I had a cute conversation with my mom, actually, where she was like, You just got to get to December 21st, because then you can just start to observe the days getting longer again, and it helps. I'm just like, I gotta get to December 21st. It's something, it's some literal ray of light of hope in the future, yeah, but it's a lot.

This week, you know, it's going to be a lot. We've got in Chicago here, we're expecting City Council to vote on the budget. And it's not looking like it's going to pass. And it seems like, you know, it's this interesting thing where we don't want this budget to pass. It's Lori's budget and it gives a greater proportion of city resources to the police, which we don't want. But a lot of aldermen are going to vote no because they oppose the property tax increase. And we want to make sure that the problem here, that we're, we're forcing Lori to lose on our terms, those being that we don't want this budget to pass because it is anti-Black, right? It's anti-Black. It gives more money to police and it doesn't have progressive tax revenue. And so that's going to be a big thing that's happening right now. We want Lori to lose because it doesn't include things like treatment, not trauma, where we're diverting resources and having less police interacting with people. And we want it to lose because it doesn't include progressive tax revenue, not just because it increases taxes on people who own property. So, yeah, it's gearing up. It was not a weekend, and it's going to be a long week.

02:57 **Monica:**

Yeah, you know, I kind of want to keep on my tradition of letting listeners know, especially listeners outside of Chicago, how much I don't -- how much we don't like Lori Lightfoot here in Chicago. So, so in what shit did Lori-Lightfoot-pull-this-week news? Lori, yeah, you were talking about the budget, Lori announced that she's now including quote grant protection and her budget because quote, there isn't much good to vote for in her budget. This woman is literally holding protections for immigrants hostage to make sure her budget passes. She's, oh my god, she's threatening aldermen who don't vote in favor of her budget. She's making these ridiculous stay-home PSA's, like these videos when the reality -- about about how we should stay home because of COVID, but the reality is that her negligence has caused all of these cases to skyrocket by reopening so much of the city before we were even ready to. So yes, I've been thinking about how we're just really battling this disinformation struggle here locally with her because her identity and her supposed values say one thing, but then her actions do something completely different, something really harmful.

And I know that winning the narrative isn't some organizers favorite thing to do, and a lot of folks that I deeply respect don't see that as part of an organizing strategy. But to me, I really feel like we really can't separate the narrative battle from our organizing strategy, especially if we want to shift power in order to cover more ground in Chicago and, you know, everywhere. So I think it's important to, yeah, just keep naming how harmful and toxic she is for our, for our struggling communities here in Chicago.

04:34 **Page:** Yeah, Fuck Lori Lightfoot. Um, if you didn't know there's a whole ass campaign called Stop Lightfoot that is well documented. Also, yeah, I mean, I think that's a perfect segue though, because today, you know, we talked to Asha Ransby, who is so brilliant. I was really

excited to just listen to what she had to say about any book of her choosing. And I really liked the discourses on colonialism that she brought to us. And yeah, and I mean, I want to talk more about how you felt about the interview and this episode. I really loved it. I remember one of the things that I was really -- felt important to reground myself in is how colonialisms in these systems of oppression are not just the enforcement, right. Are not just police, right? And are not just policies, they're also the ways that we think, write their ideologies. And I think ideologies are the things that feed and fuel our narrative.

And that's why narrative is an important site of resistance and pushing and challenging because it's the tip of the tongue, right, of the head of the ideology. And so I don't think it's insignificant when we force her to change -- the reason she's giving or to try to change the conversation and to veer away from what's going on. And yeah, I appreciate the connection to disinformation that you're making.

05:56 Monica:

Yeah, yeah. Asha made these connections between surrealism and abolition when we were talking about the methods to ending colonialism like towards the end, I, yeah, I just think that there's so many different ways we need to be talking about abolition and so many different like metaphors and really concretely think about what abolition looks like. And so, yeah, so Asha is really I think she's really good at breaking down like super large ideas, right, into really easy to digest snippets. So I think folks are really going to like this episode. I'm really excited for folks to listen.

06:29 Page:

Yeah. If there's any conversation that we've had that I wish we had another hour, I definitely -- this was one of them. Asha in this episode is talking about discourses on colonialism, and in his book, he is... It reads like it -- Is it a book? Is it an essay? Is it a poem? And it talks through colonialism experiences as a Black person who's experienced colonialism and speaks to resistance and revolution, and was written at a time where you have anti-colonial movements popping off across the world. And it had great influence. And it was really cool to talk about this book because I think it is still relevant. Absolutely. But maybe especially right now where I think interesting conversations are happening about the connections between capitalism and colonialism and anti-Blackness.

And I know for me, it took me the whole conversation to realize like, Oh, I'm learning different definitions right now. And it's helping unlock and see the world differently in ways that are helpful for the ways that I want to keep fighting. And so I really loved it. I would love to talk more about this with folks. I'm curious to hear what people think. And with that, just take a listen.

[INTRO STARTS]

[Sound of book pages turning, soft instrumental music]

07:45 **Monica:** You're listening to the Lit Review Podcast.

07:47 **Page:** We're your hosts, Page May and Monica Trinidad.

[Musical hip hop beat playing in background from "Chicago" by David Ellis]

07:51 **Mariame Kaba voiceover:** "I think it's essential for people to learn together in order to be able to understand what we're up against."

07:57 **Protest Chanting:** "CPD, shut it down! New Jim Crow, shut it down!" [chanting] "I said No Cop Academy, 95 mil for community!"

08:07 **Page voiceover:** "We must disrupt, we must disobey, we must agitate, we must escalate, we must break, we must create, we must abolish, we must transform -"

08:15 **Young person voiceover:** "I remember, she was shot by my house -"

08:19 **Mariame voiceover:** "In sharing our ideas, we're stronger."

08:23 [Music Lyrics] "Welcome to Chicago, this is home for most. This is the home of the wealthy, making cameos. This is the house of the heartless, the home of the cold. Man, my dog gets more acknowledgement than homeless folks. This is a house, a generation filled in Audy homes..."

[Music Fades]

[INTRO ENDS]

08:37 **Monica:**

Asha! We're really glad you're joining us on the podcast today to talk about how this essay has influenced you as an organizer in Chicago. And for those that don't know, Asha, Page and I go way back to We Charge Genocide organizing in 2014. We traveled to the United Nations together in Geneva, Switzerland, to lift up the name of Dominique Franklin, Damo, who was killed by Chicago police that year. And we also co-authored a short essay on that whole experience in the book: *Who Do You Protect? Who Do You Serve? Police Violence and Resistance in the United States*, published by Haymarket Books. So we're really excited to have you here. Thanks so much for joining us today. Um, for folks that are listening, can you tell us a little bit more about who you are? What do you do, and why you do it?

09:24 **Asha:**

Yeah. Well, first of all, thanks for having me. Yeah, I'm really excited to dig into talking about this book with y'all. So, yeah, I'm Asha. I live here in Chicago. I am an abolitionist. I am an organizer. You know, most recently have been throwing down with the Defund CPD campaign, and the Black Abolitionist Network, have organized a long time with BYP100 and I'm also now supporting the new youth anti-militarist formation that is Dissenters So yeah, that's kind of where

I situate myself. I came into organizing also as a poet, which is relevant to why this book is important to me. So, yeah, that's me.

10:05 **Page:**

Let's talk about it. Yeah, so this book is somewhat of a poem from what I gather, uh, slash essay. And before we talk too much about it, can you give us a little bit more context about what was going on when it was written and a little bit more about the author, maybe to give us some background?

10:24 **Asha:**

Yeah, definitely. The essay that grounds this book was first written by Aimé Césaire in 1950 and then rewritten and republished in 1955. Aimé Césaire is a Black surrealist thinker and revolutionary and poet from Martinique who, you know, went and spent some time and studied in France, in Paris, where he kind of interacted with the French surrealist poets and really kind of connected with that movement, and was also a part of the French Communist Party, and he was a publisher of the French Communist Party that published the original essay. And, you know, 1955, right? So you're seeing rising, you know, colonialism is on its last legs, and you're seeing rising independence movements around the world, and people are, you know, people across, you know, the Global South that they're aware of the darker nations, whatever – yeah, this is a formative text in those resistance movements and how people are understanding the systems they were up against and how we really reformulate our identity to fight for liberation.

11:36 **Page:**

I feel like there's all these conversations happening now about colonialism, fascism, revolution, that this book is very applicable for right now, and I'm excited to be talking about it. Can you tell us more about what led you to read it?

11:50 **Asha:**

Yeah, I read this book early in college after recently having moved to New York and really finding a radical community of peers, was a very transformative time for me. And yeah, I had joined this group called Students Against Mass Incarceration, which was a Black radical prison abolition group. When I joined, like, most of what we were doing was reading things and staying up late and talking about ideas and like, I lived in this social justice house in college, so it was very, you know, holds a lot of memories for me. And we would like sit on the stoop of that and kind of talk politics often.

And so this book was one that was like shared with me of a friend who was in that group with me, and we literally had this copy that got passed around and like different ones of us, were writing, you know, notes in the margins. And like, by the time I got it, like pages were falling out. Yeah, me and that group of friends and comrades are really excited about just the idea of

Black surrealism and the idea of revolutionary poetry. We were all writing poems at the time, I was a part of a poetry collective. We would like, smoke weed and play these surrealist writing games that we read that Césaire had done, you know, back in the day. So yeah, it really spoke to us and it was a book that I read in community and read my comrades notes in the margins at the time.

13:16 **Page:**

Can you just start to tell us more about like what is Césaire talking about? What is this book about?

13:22 **Asha:** *Discourse on Colonialism*, Césaire is really about the nature of colonialism in the 20th century and a critique of European thinkers who promoted these ideas of progress and civilization and the rights of all, while upholding very explicitly racist ideas about racial inferiority and justifying the brutal violence of colonization. And it just kind of like, blowing up all of these ideas that are the dominant ideas in Europe at the time and exposing the contradiction of saying that you're in that whole idea of civilization, right? That you can call yourself a civilized society and, you know, literally send armies into other parts of the world to demolish other -- I mean, there's some very graphic descriptions of the violent nature of colonialism in the book.

And the thing is relevant to the conversation around fascism that he does in the book is that he is really critiquing also the moral righteousness of these same thinkers who wrote about being appalled and condemned Hitler and, just compares how similar their ideas, ideologies and ideas actually were. And he, you know, he argues that because of colonialism, because of capitalism, Hitler is the logical conclusion. Like, this is exactly what all of these systems have always been about. And it's kind of, you know, hypocritical for folks to be acting like this is a surprise when this is exactly what the same, you know, nations have been doing to other people around the world for a long time.

One, he really he talks about kind of pre-colonial African societies and affirms their like sophistication of firms, things that we can learn from those societies and also makes it clear that he's not advocating for like a kind of utopian like return to the past, but more so like a disruption of the idea that Europe equals civilization, that colonized societies were uncivilized, that that whole framework is a European invention used to justify white supremacy, violence and exploitation. And yeah, that's kind of the basis of this, you know, term, an idea that he coined called Negritude.

15:54 **Monica:**

Can you quickly say for folks listening who might not know what negritude is, what that means? And also, there's this distinct word that he uses in the book to describe these acts of

dehumanization that are occurring in Europe. Can you talk about that, too? I think these terms are important for folks to understand in order to contextualize what Césaire is talking about.

16:15 **Asha:**

Yeah, I mean, I think in short, negritude was this term that he coined to encapsulate a pride in Blackness and a reclamation of the history of African-descended peoples as like something, you know, to learn from at a time when it was really normalized to accept or believe that, you know, the African continent was a place of like savagery or barbarism, those were like normal things to say. And it also is like, you know, we talk about reclaiming language over the time. And so like the term, you know, 'Negri' was like someone considered an offensive term. And so it was kind of like reclaiming a negative term that people would use to talk about Black people. And it was diasporic as well, which I think is unique and relevant.

So the term he uses, thingification, I think is, it sounds maybe like the word objectification that we use now and it's related to that, but maybe he's talking about something a little bit different. And I think really, what thingification is trying to get at is this process of dehumanization, separation from the humanity of all of us that happens through violent and brutal systems and processes like colonization, and that you can only even actually execute and implement something that violent if you're reducing the humanity and all of it. And, you know, seeing people as animals and seeing, you know, land as objects and, you know, treating our entire environment and, you know, society in this way, that is, kind of like sucking the meaning out of it, if that makes sense. Thingifying it. He also invokes like kind of all Europeans who are like going about their everyday lives until Hitler, like not being upset about the horrors of colonialism, he really calls them into being accountable for the violence that has been happening throughout this history and caused the atrocities of colonialization, something that is actually dehumanizing to everyone.

18:32 **Page:**

I think one of the things that is really helpful for me is I remember when I first started organizing and was -- especially when Black Lives Matter started coming up, there was this tension of like, but we all saw white supremacy and the desire to sort of collapse everything into racism. And this book, I think it sounds like, is helping to clarify these sort of different structures of the logic of white supremacy and, um, and making the distinction between capital -- like, that capitalism and colonialism are both projects of it, with technologies, but also ways of thinking and like words and things like that. First of all, like does that sound right? Also, here in the U.S., usually when we talk about decolonization, we're not talking about Black people. And so what are the ways that you see this book helping to influence things like the Black Lives Matter movement?

19:23 **Asha:**

I think it's... I think what you're saying is right. Césaire doesn't necessarily say that in the book, but I think he demonstrates it right? So this is not written in the format of a typical political, philosophy-type situation. It's a prose poem. Sometimes you feel like he's talking to you. Sometimes he's talking to the European thinkers that he's like quoting in the book. At one point, he puts a quote in there, and then it's like, Who do you think said that? Like, It sounds like Hitler, right? And he's like, No, this is like somebody else. So it's very conversational and very kind of stream of consciousness-y. But I do think that what you're summarizing is really what he's trying to show and demonstrate, right?

That one, that there are these fundamental ideas or assumptions that we take for granted that we all get taught and structure society and we don't even acknowledge them as ideas. And so one, he pulls us to the surface and then exposes that, like none of this shit makes sense without racism, and not even just racism, but the creation of race as a justification for really, really brutal violence and control that happens through colonization and then sets us up for modern capitalism.

20:53 **Monica:**

But who are -- who are we talking about when we're talking about the people that are involved in this colonialism? And I know that Césaire refers to these watchdogs of colonialism in the book. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

21:07 **Asha:**

So Césaire talks about a number of different people, so one, he talks about and names like specific generals and military leaders that did the in-person physical work of killing people of rampant, enacting rampant sexual violence, torturing people and decimating communities.

Then he talks about the thinkers and the people who put forth these ideologies that kind of are treated as the most, you know, elevated form of like, how we be in civilization. And it's all kind of this empty. It's this empty language of equality and all of that. But they're like the same people that write about racial inferiority so he exposes that contradiction. Definitely, that piece feels relevant to today when we're looking at kind of like just blowing up this language of equality.

And then the last group of people, which I think is what you're talking about that he talks about are just kind of the people that go to work every day. They're maybe not the academics who are writing those things, but they're participating in institutions that are promoting these ideas. They're the bank tellers. They're the people that know or read the headlines that these violent things are being done in their name or in support of their national identity or their nation or whatever, and who don't say or do anything about it. And he talks about those as really being the people that let this, let these atrocities continue.

22:59 **Page:**

So I guess -- so as you were saying that, that just felt like America, like it -- doesn't that indict everyone in America, first of all? And then also, I think when you were introducing the book, you were explaining that sort of this is written at the moment where all this revolt is taking place in colonialism. So I guess, I want to challenge this idea of like that where post-colonial, what does that mean, right? I mean, I'm saying this with a wink-wink nudge-nudge like, "we don't have empires anymore." Right? So what? What does this mean?

23:30 **Asha:**

Yeah. I mean, we certainly do have empires and the end of colonialism as it looked in the first part of the 20th century, it was really a reform of that version of imperialism. The innovation is neoliberal capitalism. And so we have nation states around the world, many of which were kind of like quote unquote "one" through independence struggles that ended this kind of more direct form of colonialism. But I kind of like hint at earlier this idea that, you know, those colonial relationships still exist. The racial hierarchies still exist, even if the world has figured out more coded ways of talking about it, right? So we're not talking about savages, but we're talking about criminals. And both of those things are just talking about anti-Blackness. You know where they're not saying that literally indigenous peoples of the Global South, like, didn't have the human capacity to govern themselves or to manage their own land. So that's not exactly the knowledge that's being said, but it's that countries are developing or the U.S. needs to like, go somewhere to wage war under the guise of bringing freedom and democracy. There's still this same idea and logic that these, like nation state superpower-type countries have some moral superiority, a better way of governance, and they have to export that.

And that piece has always been the part that was -- that's the facade, that's the curtain. And underneath that is the strategic use of racial hierarchy to justify violence that allows like this exploitation to happen. So it's not that, you know, other parts of the world are necessarily struggling by any fault of anyone's own. But that violence has maintained the destabilization of indigenous economies in a way that allows the U.S. and European nations to exploit and profit off of everyone.

26:09 **Monica:**

Yeah, and to what Page was saying too I was like, Oh my god, yes, this is this is, I mean, this is America. This is what we're seeing today. Does Césaire offer... in the book, any sort of strategies or like solutions? How do we eradicate colonialism? How do we end colonialism?

26:26 **Asha:**

I mean one, the surrealism piece, I think, is central because what he's really doing in this book is laying out all of these ideologies, some of which are invisible, some of which are hyper visible and like tearing them apart. And I think, you know, surrealism he sees as a tool not only for

demonstrating kind of how we break free of the logics that structure our society, but even for himself as someone who, you know, went to school and studied in the heart of empire. You know, as something that allows him as an individual, as a revolutionary to break free of some of the things he's been indoctrinated in. So does that as a tool, I think is important.

27:15 **Page:**

Can you clarify, what is surrealism?

27:18 **Asha:**

So. I mean, it started as a literary and artistic movement. I think the key thing that people know are like paintings that look like a warped reality, but it started as a literary and poetic movement that was kind of about being able to imagine beyond the rules that dictate how our current reality works. Yeah. So, Césaire, there's an interview at the back of the book where he's quoted saying that it was finding surrealism and finding the French surrealist that he met in Paris was less of a revelation and more of an affirmation and a confirmation. And, you know, Robin Kelley writes a lot about Afro-Surrealism to and just kind of affirms and repositions it in the Black Radical Tradition, as you know, both a way to access and reclaim the past, but also to imagine, and not be confined by the things that were maybe actually even indoctrinated like by ourselves. And so, yeah, doing that through art, through poetry, through imagination, but also seeing as deeply, deeply political. I mean, I think, I don't know, that to me speaks a lot to what we talk about when we talk about abolition, right? It's like literally not just about tearing down the physical prisons, but like getting the cops out of our heads thing to be able to even see what's possible. So, yeah, that's what surrealism is about.

28:55 **Monica:** When I think about surrealism, I think about the exquisite corpse, which is like, where in the artist's world, I don't know how many people do this, but you take a piece of paper and you draw something and then you fold it and then you pass it to the next artist and then they add a next part and so on and so on. And it's like this collective art process. And so, yeah, so I think when I think of surrealism, I do think about this like collective imagination and this possibility for like, another world, right? And like something that can exist beyond what's right in front of us. And it makes me think of something that Bria Royal, who is in FTP [For the People Artists Collective] would say; she said once during a panel, she was like, *All of this shit is just some made up shit and like we can make shit up to and it could be better.* You know, and I just I love that. And so that's sort of what was going through my head with this piece.

29:49 **Asha:**

Yeah, the exquisite corpse thing. It's funny because we used to do a version of that, but it was with poems. And so you would write a line and, you know, fold the piece over and right then and another person would write the next line of the poem and they would be like these super insightful things. And we'd have such great conversations just based off of that in a way that if

we were responding to what was put in front of us or confined by that we never would have seen or put together.

30:15 Page:

Yeah, actually, the day that I met you, Asha, you were leading a training at, we were at UIC somewhere and you led us in... First of all, you define power in a really helpful way for me. And then you led us through this activity where we folded up a piece -- or we got a piece of paper and you would write the answer to a question, any question that no one knew what the question was! And then you would hand it to the next person and they would write the question -- I'm trying to remember, it's something to do with, you were writing a question without knowing no context? And then someone was answering a question that they didn't know what it was. And I can be very process and structural, and I have absolutely internalized a lot of like logics of colonialism and capitalism and activities like that really challenged me and I do me and I was like, This isn't going to work. And then it was the most amazing -- like you just thought of all these really dope things without having any idea. There was just this undoing of structure and taking basic things like the question comes before the answer and just like flipping that on its head. So, yeah, that was, that was the first time I met you.

And I'm wondering, actually, do you think that that has anything to do with why the book is written the way that it is, where it's not a how to, it's not a manual. Is it an essay? Is it a poem? Is it a book? like that, even of itself feels like part of the point?

31:41 Asha:

Yeah, I think absolutely, I think you're seeing like a window into Aime Césaire's brain and like, a trained philosopher writing in the way that they're taught. And I think that's a part of, you know, the magic of-- in some ways, it feels like a literary kind of collage he posts quotes not to like to analyze them, but to talk to them and to make them talk to each other. And he goes between, like, talking to you, the reader, and talking to the people he's quoting, and talking with himself. And yeah, that's just like, he takes you on a journey. And I think, I don't know, that's a powerful way to engage with the text, I think.

32:24 Page:

So how has this book influenced your organizing, the ways that you move through organizing spaces and what were your main takeaways?

32:32 Asha:

I think that, yeah, really the main takeaway is the importance of ideology. Both, you know, in deconstructing the systems that we're up against, and in terms of just equipping ourselves to know what we have to do to get free and reformulating ideas to form a vision of the world. You can call it hegemony. You could call it dominant ideas. You could call it the status quo, but there

are these fundamental ideas or assumptions that kind of just float over society. We don't even all the time acknowledge them as ideas.

And the role of organizers, of radicals, of people who want to change the world, is to expose that and to pull the carpet of normalizing all of that out from under it or pull back the curtain and expose; these are actually ideas and beliefs, and you can choose to believe in them or not. And that's kind of like a necessary part of even making change possible in like a radical or fundamental or transformative way. And so creating that space for people is super important.

And, you know, I've read other things that talk about that same thing, that this kind of spoke to it in a powerful way for me, you know, kind of like a poetic, revolutionary enlightenment-type thing is necessary to become truly radicalized. And, you know, I think we can get really caught up in like the material world, but it's ideas that dictate how the material world works. And so we have to engage meaningfully in them in order to change material conditions.

Césaire is kind of affirming that like, you know, there are examples in the world of how to structure society that we can look at in history, and we also have the agency and possibility in future to imagine things that have never been done before. And so, yeah, I mean, I think that empires have to fall, not just reform. That empires are still here, like they didn't go anywhere. There's -- they still exist. They're the same ones, and they have just reformed how they enact imperialism and how they exploit the world, and particularly how they use white supremacy to do those things.

And I think on a global scale, there needs to be a restructuring of who governs. And that means there's not going to be a nation-state with the same name as the empire that colonized, you know, a third of the world anymore. Those things, the empires need to truly fall and something else needs to emerge. And it's not going to happen through reforming the same political structures and systems.

So, yeah, and I think, I don't know this is interesting to engage with, and I didn't talk about this, but Césaire -- [Franz] Fanon was Césaire student and as you know, I think more like, well known or more well-read. And, you know, I don't know. I think it's interesting to think about how Fanon's ideas about national liberation movements and independence movements apply today and how we see the shortcomings of that when the Empire still exist. And Fanon was even critical of Césaire's negritude because he thought it was too broad -- the diaspora, the diasporic piece wasn't enough and that people had to have a sense of national identity. If you're leading a national -- like a national liberation movement, I get that people need to feel connected to that. But yeah, I don't know. I'm kind of riffing now, but I think those things in conversation with one another tell us lessons for now.

36:32 **Page:**

There's interesting conversations happening around how we view a Black nation within the U.S. But then it has weird dynamics to the fact that we're not quite settlers, but we're also not indigenous to here, anyway, so this is a big question, that I'm wondering if this essay helps us think about it as Black people that were stolen and brought here?

36:55 **Asha:**

Yeah. I mean, I think this is important, and you know, in my new role at Dissenters, I have been thinking a lot about, I think you have to talk about slavery in telling the history of colonialism. You have to do it. And when we talk about thingification, like what more literal, dehumanizing thing happened than these colonizers came, took control of lands and people, *killed* people, and then pointed to some and tried to turn us into property. And then brought us to like some other place that they also were colonizing, and forced generations into slavery to build up another empire.

So I think you have to talk about that in the history of colonialism. I don't think it's a separate or like disconnected legacy. And yeah, that is -- we were colonized too, right, not just like our lands, but our bodies and our, and ancestral legacies and all of that. You know, even to how, like Césaire writing from the perspective of being from Martinique, right? Like Black people were brought all across the Caribbean and forced into slavery. Not, you know, not just in -- this happened in the US, of course, but it happened in places that were simultaneously being colonized. So yeah, I think our liberation is important in talking about decolonization. I think connecting it to the defunding the police piece. You know, I think it's about taking -- defunding the police is about taking resources and taking legitimacy away from policing, right? And so I think that's kind of maybe where some of the ideology piece comes in and that, the history of policing, or so much of how police function and work from like surveillance technologies to physical strategies that they use to literally the process of fingerprinting was something they experimented with and first started doing in the Philippines, it was through colonial police forces that were...the origins of policing is all tied up in colonialism, both European colonialism and colonialism, and how they've used, you know, colonies to experiment with strategies that they then bring back to control Black people and vice versa.

39:39 **Monica:**

Thank you Asha so much for being on our show today. Folks can find *Discourse on Colonialism* online as a downloadable PDF. Encouraging everybody to check it out. Read it! Let us know your thoughts on it, too. Asha, we ask every guest to close us out with their favorite passage from a book. So if you can read to us, what moved you in this book?

40:06 **Asha:**

Okay! It's been great chatting. I love this, and I'm pulling out my passage. I wanted to know, can I read two passages?

40:20 **Monica:**

Sure! *[laughs]*

40:24 **Asha:** Okay, so I referenced this passage earlier, but I'll read the actual passage. And this is the very beginning of this section, so that'll be like a feeling for how he kind of writes.

“Therefore, comrade, you will hold as enemies. Loftily, lucidly, consistently. Not only sadistic governors and greedy bankers, not only prefects who torture and colonists who flog, not only corrupt check working politicians and subservient judges, but likewise and for the same reason, venomous journalists, goiterous academics reaked in dollars and stupidity. Ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, presumptuous Belgian theologians, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of niche, the paternalists, the embracers, the corruptors, the backstabbers, the lovers of exoticism, the dividers, the agrarian sociologists, the hoodwinkers, the hoaxers, the hot air artists, the humbug and in general, all those who performing their functions in the sordid division of labor for the defense of Western bourgeois society, try in diverse ways and buy infamous diversions to split up the forces of progress, even if it means denying the very possibility of progress. All of them tools and capitalism, all of them openly or secretly supporters of plundering colonialism. All of them, responsible. All hateful. All slave traders. All henceforth answerable for the violence of revolutionary action.” And then, he continues, *“The essential thing is that they're highly problematic subjective good faith is entirely irrelevant to the objective social implications of the evil they work to perform as watchdogs of colonialism.*

42:35 **Page:**

Thanks so much for listening to another episode of the Lit review. A podcast where we interview people we love and respect about books to help grow our movement. We are your co-host, Monica Trinidad and Page May, two Chicago-based abolitionist organizers. We'll be back next week with another episode next Sunday. Same time. Same place. Want to learn about a specific book? Email us your suggestions at theLitReviewChicago@gmail.com or find us on Facebook. And if you like this episode, give it a shout out on Twitter or Instagram. Our handle is [@LitReviewChi](https://twitter.com/LitReviewChi). Financial support for the production of this podcast is thanks to our amazing Patreon subscribers. Learn more about becoming a Patron at Patreon.com/TheLitReview. Keep reading!