Prompt

Compare how various authors understand the nature of power and the possibilities of resisting it.

* How is power maintained through social, political, and economic structures?
* What role does the control of knowledge, time, or space play in the exercise of power?
* How can we characterize the relationship between power and violence?

Chosen Authors

* Malcolm X – *Black Revolution*
  + Power struggles
  + “Necessity” of violence
  + Systemic racism (economic, social, and political structures)
  + Nature of power:
  + Possibilities of resisting it:
* Frederick Douglass – *The Nature of Slavery*
  + The violence necessarily linked to slavery
  + Social structures, affect by conscience (the gravity of the soul)
  + Power struggles
  + Religious systems
  + Nature of power:
  + Possibilities of resisting it:
* Achille Mbembe – *Time on The Move*
  + Time’s effects on power
  + Knowledge’s effects on power
  + Social structures that extend power into the future
  + Nature of power:
  + Possibilities of resisting it:
* Optional: Frantz Fanon – *On Violence*
  + Nature of power:
  + Possibilities of resisting it:

Requirements

Orient your thinking more thematically and trace topical threads through our readings. Prioritize a comparative analysis of the readings. Compare how various authors understand the nature of power and the possibilities of resisting it.

Summaries

Keep in mind:

* How is power maintained through social, political, and economic structures?
* What role does the control of knowledge, time, or space play in the exercise of power?
* How can we characterize the relationship between power and violence?

Time on the Move – Mbembe

Power is maintained through sociology and history. People write down things about snapshots of the world, and a linear timeline of snapshots makes up history. In this writing, certain peoples and geographies are positioned against “us,” the main characters.

The control of knowledge that the writers of history have enables them to keep power in the West and diminish Africa conceptually. They also control time by making history take the structure of a linear progression of separate events. In some ways, they control space as well, by making the distance between the European and American continents and the African continent seem so far.

The relationship between power and violence is intimate: to gain power, people utilize violence. Violence is the weapon of power, its harbinger.

The Nature of Slavery – Douglass

Power is maintained through social structures. The relationship between slave and master is a social and necessarily violent structure.

Knowledge is kept in the hands of those in power and denied from the powerless. In fact, gaining knowledge is a way of gaining power (as Douglass did). Occupying the time and space of a person’s life is another way to keep power.

The relationship between power and violence is essential. You cannot have power without violence. Like Mbembe said, violence is a tool for obtaining power; further, a necessary tool.

Black Revolution – Malcolm X

Power is maintained through social, political, and economic structures.

The control of knowledge is important to exercising power.

The relationship between power and violence is intimate, but not implicit. In other words, you *can* have a shift in power without violence. For the first time in history, there is a system is in place for this to occur.

Mbembe and Malcolm X see power as *broadly* acquired through violence while Douglass sees power as *necessarily* acquired through violence. They all agree that resistance can, and should not feel guilty, about being violent too.