Title: Manifestation of Negro thought in Frantz Fanon's writings: "Black skin, white masks" and "The wretched of the earth".

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Abstract:

This study aims at highlighting the work of one of the most prominent figures in the twentieth century: the Martinican militant, politician, philosopher and thinker: Frantz Fanon, who played a leading role in condemning the colonizing project and the imperialist hegemony. It will also illustrate his relation with the "Négritude" movement which arose in the 1930's and whose main purpose was the rehabilitation of the Blacks in general and Africans in particular. Fanon approved "Négritude" movement at first, but he backtracked later because he adopted a different position and view concerning the black's culture and the movement's former principles set by the movement's founders such as Leopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire. Fanon's different vision concerning the Blacks thought was influenced by his personal experience, particularly after he joined the Algerian revolution and adopted its people's militating cause. Furthermore, his trip to France for studies, and later joined the French army where he lived and experienced different types of racial discriminations practised by the white man against the Blacks, led him to hold a different opinion about "Négritude" that he showed in most of his literatures, particularly: "Black skin, white masks" and "The wretched of the earth" that he devoted to the Blacks ethnicity and culture and his renouncement to both Black and white racism. Fanon thus, became among the most outstanding intellectuals who adopted the Negro's diaspora, claimed their rights, defended them and denounced the process of marginalisation and cultural deprivation they were facing, through his writings. He wanted the Blacks to live with dignity and take pride of their identity, and the whites to renounce to any kind of discrimination. Despite the colour of his skin, Fanon had always had a neutral position towards "Negritude" movement, moreover, he didn't approve all the ideas it suggested, yet, he didn't even adopt most of the principles the movement tried to anchor. He, however, praised the movement's positive points and rejected its negative ones after he noticed it started to get racially biased.

Keywords:

Negritude movement- black skin- Fanon –white masks- the wretched of the earth-Black literature –the Black - Leopold Sédar Senghor- Aimé Césaire, for the sake of Africa.

1-Introduction:

"Negritude" is the intellectual movement and theoretical visions led by French-speaking Black intellectuals. Those visions arose and spread in the 1930's through intellectual and literary activities of several thinkers, historians and writers. It was an intellectual reaction to colonial influences and practises, and the policy of assimilation that France was practising within African and Caribbean colonies. The reason that drove "Négritude" supporters to take a multitude of visions and axes based on cultural, historical, civilizational and artistic dimensions in the Black's environment, to defend the historical and philosophical heritage of the African continent and drive the Blacks to take pride of it.

The Martinican activist and writer Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) is one of the most prominent figures of the 20th century who condemned the colonizing project and the imperialist hegemony. He was considered among the most outstanding intellectuals whose writings have influenced anti-colonial movements across the world, including Africa. Though he had a short life, it was significantly full of struggle.

Fanon's works were anti-racist, wishing to assimilate all Humans and prevent retro philosophies claiming black superiority or white racism. He was among those who adopted the Blacks diaspora issue; he claimed their rights and defended them and sought to face the imperialist west through undermining its centrality, condemning its dominating projects aiming at marginalising and excluding the other. Fanon was advocating Black intellectual thoughts and reacted to their marginalization. He also put an end, through his writings, to the cultural assimilation the Blacks were widely exposed to.

In his first literatures, Fanon adopted the Negritude movement's ideas and opposed to the mechanised controlling white world. Nevertheless, it is noticed that in Fanon's last book "the wretched of the earth", his view concerning Négritude had quite changed, showing different intellectual views, since he considered Négritude as an unwanted idea, yet harmful and appeared in a period where the Blacks were under a stage of examination.

From this standpoint, we will deal with the Négritude in a more analytic approach, from Fanon's viewpoint, thus by answering some necessary questions:

- What does Négritude mean? -What are the reasons and conditions of its foundation?- What was Fanon's writing role for the rehabilitation of the Black's situation? - What

was the impact of Fanon's personality, education, experience and thoughts on Négritude movement?

2- The movement of Négritude or Negritification.

2-1 <u>definition of Négritude:</u>

Négritude expresses one of the ideological dimensions, orientations and typical visions for African unity. Its supporters saw in the black colour, the most prominent foundation to the emergence of the Black African identity. Négritude means the value of Blackness that represents the opposition of French-speaking black Africans to the nature of their roles, and sought through it, respect and self-confidence as well confidence in their ethnicity. It is thus, the Blacks cultural protest against their existence denial as a Human beings and a way to show their conceptions, features, inheritance and effects that characterise the black man and the Blacks worldwide (1). Negritude movement held several definitions; an intellectual, cultural, social and political movement. The Senegalese writer Leon Diop described it in "The African presence" magazine as a movement born to reject the Blacks assimilation and advocate the black African personality which is definitely distinct from the colonial one. The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre (3) gave Négritude a more romantic description, going back to ancient mythology: "Négritude in the African poetry, is Racism against Racism, it is the power of negativity as a reaction against white superiority advocacy, a contrast in a general philosophical sequence leading, in the end, to a universal Humanity free of racism." He also says: "Négritude is the Tam Tam tunes in the streets of Dakar..." (4).So, according to Sartre, this movement is characterised by the interest in abstract physical values, however, Negritude means spiritual, subjective and cultural values (5).

In the same context, Frantz Fanon wrote: "The concept of Négritude is the emotional and logical contrast of the White man's disrespect to Humanity. Négritude arose as a reaction to the Whites contempt for the Blacks. It emerged in some cases as the only fact able to suspect discrepancy and disrespect" (6).

Moncef Bekkai said that Negritude is a movement aiming at the rehabilitation of the Blacks and stress their contribution to the rise of great world civilizations. The Blacks were the core interest of the movement that would provide those latter with self-determination, self-respect and self-confidence (7).

Arnold Toynbee (8) described Négritude as: "a consistent movement of two major aspects: in its negative phase, it aimed at renouncing western domination and in its positive one, it was a hindrance to embrace western, military, political and economic systems and its spiritual culture (9).

Aimé Césaire (10), one of the movements founders said: "Negritude is simply the acknowledgement of our Black origin and the acceptance of this reality, our Black destiny, history and culture (11).

Césaire believes that Négritude is also a movement of rebellion and struggle for the decolonisation and rehabilitation of the black man (12) and Africans refusal of the colonial cultural values. Black American writer Stanley Allan believes, it is the African poet's expression of pride of his lineage and the self- confidence they take about their ethnicity, which is a dialectic combination meaning racism against racism leading to Humanity free of racism. It is obvious that Négritude means to its supporters: "Africa's cultural personality" past and present, based on two major pillars: firstly, history and the civilizational heritage and secondly, the existence of contemporary thoughts, thirdly, the attempt of integrating the African soul in the core of universal Human conflicts (13).

Senghor has undoubtedly made the most appropriate definition of Négritude as he declared: "When I talk about Négritude, I am talking about a civilization where Art is manifested technically and visually..." (15) And he added: "It is the sum of the Black world civilizational values, according to what it is expressed in the life and achievements of the Blacks.....it is but the will of self-realisation and development. It includes all the Blacks over the world; in Africa, America, Asia and Oceania. He also adds "Negritude is a reality, it is culture, the sum of economic, social, political, intellectual, moral, ethical and artistic values belonging to black Africa and the minorities we have mentioned before (16). In an interview with Senghor about Négritude, he said: "The word has a compound meaning: objective and subjective one; objectively, Négritude means the Black world civilizational values, and subjectively, it means the way undertaken by any black person or group of blacks to practise these values converging in their civilisation" (17).

2-2- The emergence of Negritude movement.

From the late of the 1920's to the beginning of the 1930's, Paris had witnessed a huge number of Caribbean and West Africans flow of people coming for studies (18), they were not merely passer-byes or just guests there, but stayed at least for more than a decade, however they were submitted to live on the margin of the French society, They sought their original nations from which they migrated through Anthropology and sociology writings. They didn't feel any kind of belongings to neither France nor its colonies as were called then. They and the African intellectuals of that period felt they belonged to Africa, not to Senegal, Gabon or Ivory Coast which they considered as artificial borders. They felt the importance of their tribal origins. They represented a small minority of educated people who advocated the Pan African movement of "Négritude" and advertised it.

The birthplace of Négritude movement was "Louis le Grand" High school in Paris, where did Damas (20), Senghor and Césaire met and talked for the first time about

Négritude .They believed they were no students from Guinea, West Indies or West Africa but rather a black student (21). Concerning the term "Négritude", it was Césaire's creation in the years (1932-1934) in Paris (22).

He used the term for the first time in his poetic collection: "Back to motherland brochure" (23) which appeared for the first time in 1939 and took 3 or 4 years to be accomplished. The term "Négritude" was also mentioned in one of Senghor's poems in 1939 and another in 1942. However, it was only used fluently after 1948 in an introduction of Jean Paul Sartre in Senghor's poems selection. These poems were from Malagasy and black poetry in French language. "Négritude" was used as a terminology but later on as an ideology (24).

When Négritude thoughts started to take shape in Paris during that period, it had a revolutionary aspect approaching a doctrine of racial supremacy capable of diverging into a counter position, preventing from adapting to or communicating with the French. However this idea was settled after the break of World War 2, since the movement served for dialoguing with the French administration. Senghor delivered his famous speech about negritude at the University of Oxford in 1961 where he discussed the origin and development of the movement from a psychological, social and historical aspect: "....If you want to understand Négritude, Man has to go back to Latin cities in the period between the 2 great wars, I was raised with the students of those cities, the Black intellectuals who were seeking their personal identities" (25).

Negritude was "made" in Paris by young people from different places in Africa and the new world with miscellaneous cultures but with a great common denominator: their black colour, the French language, colonial heritage and life in Paris. The colour of the skin might be the most important factor since it became the basis for the Blacks and their pillar (26).

2-3- The reasons for the emergence of Négritude movement

The Blacks search for their identity at the end of the 19thcentury and the beginning of the 20th, constituted a real controversy, since the issue was considered by some people as a compulsory bet, however, some others saw it as a worth exploring theme, indeed, they said: "We are the founders of a new generation of Blacks, and we want to express our personality without shame or fear, if this satisfies the Whites, then we are happy, and if it does not, we do not care"(27). This new generation focuses on rehabilitating the Blacks identity thus African personality and the embodiment of back to Africa legend (28).

Leon Diop on the other hand, thinks that the secret behind the birth of Négritude is the world current truth who has always believed there is no culture beside the western's and no high values except western values (29), in the same context says Senghor:

"We have been taught at High school that we don't have any civilisation, we were not invited to the world's banquet, yet, we are just a piece of soft wax that can be manipulated and you(the Whites) may give us the only path of hope which is to allow us to merge" and he adds that in order to understand the reasons for the emergence of Négritude, it is always necessary to turn back to the years between world war 1an world war 2: "We were Black students living in the Latin city holding youth's outburst and affection, their naivety and spontaneity». They found themselves overwhelmed by frustration because they are seen as black skins, values and genius free, they come as beggars to the white man's tables, they were before, unaware of colour discrimination, they considered themselves as ideal youth, however, Europeans still saw them as Blacks (30).

Injustice is thus, when you are judged through superficial characteristic which is indeed the colour of your skin. Senghor describes this colour of skin as a prison that blocks the true personality, nevertheless, Senghor always focuses on the beauty of blackness in his poetry but this shame and disgrace felt over their skin colour, ensures a sort of reaction, he says in the same context: "....On the contrary, the French were the ones who forced us to reveal ourselves or discover ourselves by ourselves, at the beginning, we felt unable to merge but we very soon managed to absorb the French language and Mathematics, but incapable of getting out of our black skins and black souls so we searched hard for a team spirit"(31).

The search for a collective spirit is reasonable and acceptable when we see that each of Senghor, Césaire and Damas came from different backgrounds in separate parts of the world with distinct social conditions. They only coped with each other through the colour of their skin, their despair and probably their remote common origins. Due to their spiritual and psychological instability, they found in the search for a collective spirit, their comfort. At the beginning of the movement, they showed a certain fanatic version to western religion, besides the resentment and disgust, generated by the colonial government, made things worse, but the situation soon turned to a challenge and a total renouncement to the French civilisation (32).

This was the situation like in between the two wars, a period of ideas fermentation for the Blacks, a reaction against the 19th and 20th century secularism and the European mental coldness and stiffness, which impacted African students in a way that they rejected all what sounded Western and directed themselves to negritude origins and its source (33).

3- Frantz Fanon and Négritude movement.

3-1 His birth and upbringing.

Frantz Fanon was born on July 20th 1925 in Fort de France in the colony of Martinique (34). He was born and raised out of the African continent but became interested in

black African issues after his interaction with the Algerian revolution. As a French colony, Martinique had the privilege to be home to a population who enjoyed its full rights of French citizens (35), Fanon's family belonged to the Martinican small Bourgeoisie. His father was a customs inspector and his mother owned a store in Fort de France, he was the fifth of eight children and led a happy life (36).

Fanon went to Cshoelcher High school in the colony of Martinique, and Aimé Césaire was one of his teachers there. He then moved to France to study psychiatry at the University of Lyon where he witnessed segregation and racial discrimination against Africans, after that, he joined the French army to fight against Nazism and Fascism; His military experience mixed with his realisation of racism and white soldiers' supremacy on black soldiers while France was claiming to fight Nazism upon their pretention of ethnic purity. Fanon was thus convinced of the hardship to overcome the colour barrier that was the principal cause of racist practices (37).

His experience as a psychiatrist, treating the poor patients in France, allowed him to encounter some Algerian Africans, and read about the French colonial rule in this area, particularly after being trained with the French army in Algeria, made him realise the destructive effects left by the French army in there(38). Fanon settled in Algeria and worked as a psychiatrist at Blida hospital. When the Algerian revolution broke up in 1954; he joined in and worked with the National Front of Liberation (39). Fanon's experience with the Algerian resistance, strengthened his relationship with black Africa and became a member of the official Algerian delegation to have attended Accra African Populations Conference in 1958 (40).In 1959, Fanon became the permanent representative of the National Front of Liberation Party in Accra, a year after, he participated in a field trip to Mali with the purpose of opening a third front there and gather more solidarity among the Great Desert populations, but in the same year, he was diagnosed with Leukaemia and died on December 7th 1961 in Washington and was buried in Algeria (41).

3-2- Fanon's most important writings.

Fanon's first book was "Black skin, white masks" published in 1952 (42) after his disappointment concerning what he saw when he volunteered in the French army as to fight racist Nazism, he noticed the Black soldiers being treated differently from the white ones, in Paris and in Lyon where he completed his studies. The immigrants were selected according to their race, their ethnicity and geography. Consequently "Black skin, white masks" was the fruit of seven years of experience and notes where he demonstrated the impact of racism on helpless black people (43).

In this book, Fanon tried to sensitise the blacks and make them aware of colonial tricks to fulfil their colonising project through their ethnic and racist ideology, considering the blacks as animals, easy to enslave and colonize. Fanon doesn't consider Blackness

as a symbol of slavery, evil or sin, it is the white man who spread this ideology, the blacks don't have to adopt the whites' culture to be freed from their inferiority and alleged complex. The Blacks have however, to claim their recognition from the Whites as humans who possess the same physical and intellectual abilities as them. Through the same book (Black skin, white masks), Fanon attempted to create a confession space to the black man who has long suffered from the complex of inferiority, and find the appropriate place he deserves besides his white brother (44).

Fanon was famous for another book; (The wretched of the earth), published in 1961 and translated in several universal languages beside Arabic in many successive editions (45). This book is Fanon's last book that he dictated to his wife in his last days. It was completed in July 1961 and printed posthumously in spring 1962. Its introduction was written by Jean Paul Sartre. The book got a great fame and Aimé Césaire said about it: "The greatest book ever about Decolonization's manifestations and issues is Fanon's book: **The wretched of the earth"** (46).

Fanon has drawn, through his last book, the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, and set the planning to ignite the revolutions from below and how to keep it safe from the colonizer's manipulations and the local elites subjected to it. The book's main idea is that violence was the only way to eliminate colonization and the abominable racism practised in its colonies. He wrote "The wretched of the earth" in Algeria where he noticed that discrimination was not only practised against the Blacks but also against all those who have a different culture than the colonizer (47).

"For the African revolution" is one of Fanon's most important books published posthumously as a number of articles that appeared in "El moujaheed" newspaper. The book is divided into four parts: the first part deals with the issue of culture and racism, the second: for Algeria, the third: to the liberation of Africa and he tackled in the fourth part the African union (48).

Most of Fanon's books turn around the idea of injustice, servitude and discrimination. He once called for the renouncement of discrimination and then moved to colonization renouncement, predicting thus, the future of the colonised countries.

3-3- Fanon's vision of Négritude.

Frantz Fanon has acknowledged the historical importance of Négritude movement which appeared when colonization was progressing in African countries. Négritude was considered as a historical driving force with the ability of rehabilitating the Blacks situation and self-confidence, and breaking their stereotyped image. It also enabled their adhesion and contribution to the process of history, it managed to change their image from lazy and lustful to a valuable person, all thanks to Négritude movement which resisted to discrimination and colonialism (49).

The effects of racial discrimination as a colonial policy have possessed and influenced Fanon during all his life. He believed during his young age that he was able to overcome his colour barrier relying upon his culture and personal energy. He realised after he joined the French army and through his work experience that far from their educational and cultural background, black Africans are always seen in the whites' eyes as Negroes belonging to the lowest social ranks and should be submitted to French assimilation system and anchor in their minds the values making them conceive their colour as a symbol of evil powers preventing them from speaking out their identity and being proud of it, thus, their only ambition would be to be seen and accepted as French. Consequently, Fanon started to notice the emergence of some sort of discrimination among the Blacks themselves, some of them, who felt westernised, even behaved with contempt and scorn against their black peers. This is, in Fanon's eyes, the highest degree of assimilation, leading the African to leave his past, history and colour he considers as worthless dimensions. He (the African) then wears a "white mask" on his black face and thus denies his identity. Fanon, however, asserts that the blacks cannot get rid of their black skin curse (50).

Fanon acknowledges that the blacks have the same rights and duties in French societies, and he opposed both white and black racism since they are both free of Humanity, for Fanon, the black has to be proud together with his white brother. The purpose behind writing "Black skin, white masks" was indeed an initiative from Fanon to free the blacks from the white's hegemony, the blacks had to go back to their remote past to seek their identity and be proud of it. Fanon says: "The black is a mysterious man", he was marginalised by the White with all means of servitude, colonialism and discrimination (51).

3-4- Fanon's opposition to Négritude.

Although Négritude was very popular when it emerged in the 1930's and 1940's and was welcomed and supported by several cultural and intellectual backgrounds as well as governments and states which listened to its demands, its notoriety started to backtrack at the end of the 50's and the beginning of the 60's. English and French speaking African intellectuals didn't hesitate to severely criticize and show negative opinions about the movement. The 1930's to 1960's generation who advocated the concepts and visions of Négritude started to retrieve except Leopold Sédar Senghor who defended the movement until his death. A new generation of intellectuals more interested in social and economic development, as well as science and technology took in charge the movement, holding a more realistic vision far from any kind of ethnic or racial beliefs. In other words, the new generation was more interested in current African issues instead of the past and Negro's soul (52).

Fanon was amongst the first who saw that despite the virtues of Négritude in decolonization, it was necessary to substitute it with literatures directly inspired from revolutionary struggles, he thus criticised Senghor and Rabemanajara's respective positions against the Algerian revolution when discussed at the United Nations. He described their position as not honorific and said: "This kind of situations is the evidence for the banality of Négritude" (54).

In his book "The Wretched of the earth" published in 1961, Fanon talks about Négritude with a different logic and concepts foreshadowing a change in his thoughts. He conceived Négritude as an unwanted yet a harmful fact which appeared as a result of Blacks humiliation and that it was a declining historic approach. It is also noticed that Fanon's past values have declined and this is what illustrates his vision shift concerning the movement of Négritude: "I don't want to sing the past at the expense of the future" (55).

Fanon's position was explained by some intellectuals in the light of his Martinican background where slavery and exploitation were practised and were not met with any kind of struggle or civilizational renaissance. Slave trade however, did not take an end with the population struggle.

Fanon visualised Négritude differently after his visit to Algeria and his experience with Africa and its people, he later confirmed when he said: "indulging in the past is the only condition for freedom and its source", however, it seems that this influence was suspended and his experience background was the pivotal influence for his vision of the past and Négritude movement (56).

Fanon criticised Négritude as a cultural and national movement from several viewpoints we can summarise in the following:

- 1-Négritude refusal of the existence of a unique and homogeneous black culture.
- 2-The Négritude idea refuses and opposes black culture purity during the colonial period.
- 3-Négritude's continual interest in the colonial period or past African cultures is renounced.
- 4-The fear of Négritude's excessive interest in culture which does not improve the Blacks everyday life.
- 5-Négritude should not consider the colour of skin and the culture as the only criteria to determine the blacks' identity.
- 6-Négritude should be opposed since it confirms the Black's supremacy at the expense of other ethnicities.

Fanon thus, believes that valorising and glorifying the pre-colonial period is unreasonable, he thinks we should not glorify the past at the expense of the present. It was hard for Fanon to criticize Négritude in his article "Culture and discrimination"

though he did not expressly mention the movement. According to him, traditions and old beliefs are over and there is no need to go back to them (57).

Based on what has been mentioned, Fanon has been criticised in his last works; the movement and writings of Négritude, which he believed, did not respond to the problem of the Blacks identity, and was not sufficient to defend it against the colonial racial insults. It was not even able to find an answer to meet the needs of the Blacks identity. He justified his attack by claiming that the existence of "black soul" allegations was easily destroyed in the light of the European cultural and political environment lived by certain people, which confirms the non-existence of the so-called "black virtue". There was consequently no turn back to the past because the Blacks 'future should be seen with a European civilisation concept. This can be illustrated through Fanon's experience background outside the African continent, thus in France and his intellectual influence with western globalisation (58).

At the beginning of his work, Fanon was influenced by Négritude movement, however, it seems that his professional life and interaction with western civilisation, and whatever assimilating policies it implies, he sought a substitute vision based on utilitarian logic, a practical approach and a more pragmatic vision to realize an African institutional identity as an alternative to traditional Négritude convictions, the thing that made him abandon the movement in his last works (59).

4-Conclusion:

Frantz Fanon was one of the 20th century popular but controversial intellectuals. In the end of this research, we can draw out some important following conclusions:

- -Négritude was a tool to anchor the resistance culture which undermines several types of colonization and realises people's freedom besides its permanent work of unifying black populations' values.
- Frantz Fanon is considered as a multi-dimensional figure, besides being an African and Algerian, French but also international par excellence he played a leading role in many scientific, humane and professional fields. He is a psychologist, sociologist, and philosopher. He is also a militant in war and political issues who believed that colonial resistance must be faced with violence from the oppressed.

Fanon did not have the same ideas about Négritude movement as Aimé Césaire, Senghor and others, although they all share the same interest in the Blacks sufferings and issues. Fanon however, wants the black to be acknowledged the same rights and duties in the French society, as he also had an opposing vision to the discrimination practised against both the blacks and whites.

Fanon wanted the black to be proud of himself in front of the white man exerting no mutual racism. The purpose of his book "black skin, white masks" was an attempt to make the black getting out of the white's hegemony.

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Finally, I conclude that in spite of being black, Fanon held a neutral opinion about Négritude movement, he didn't accept all of its ideas nor adopt most of its principles. He, however acknowledged its positive views and didn't tolerate its negative ones particularly when it began to be racially oriented.

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- -9-Saoudi: previous ref p 159.
- -10- Aimé Césaire: born on June 26th 1913and died on April 7th 2008, Martinican poet and politician. Went to elementary school from 1919 to 1924 when he went to Victor Schoelcher High school in Fort de France in September 1931. He then won a scholarship from the French government and went to Paris to complete his studies at Louis Legrand High school where he met Senghor for the first time. See:
- -Pierre Akinwande: **Negritude et Francophonie, paradoxes culturels et politiques**, Editions L'hamarttan, Paris 2011, pp128-132.
- **-11**-Blerald Alain ph: **Négritude et politiques aux Antilles**: Editions Caribbeennes, Paris 1981 p 7.

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- **-14- Leopold Sedar Senghor** (October 9th 1906- December 20th 2001) born in Joal, Sudan , then moved to France in 1928 and completed his studies in Sorbonne University. He worked as a teacher as well as in politics and was France's representative overseas in the French National Assembly. He became the first Senegalese president after Independence. He is one of the most important leaders of the Négritude movement. See:
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