



MADISON COOPER

(Untitled) Fanon



Memories Behind the Image

I knew who I was. Coming from a predominantly Black suburb and attending schools with predominantly Black student bodies there was little room to question who I was. I didn't have a reason to validate myself in the eyes of my community. My identity was solidified through listening to local radio stations 105.7FM and *The Groove* every day in my mother's car. My culture was ingrained in a Southern Baptist church which enveloped me in a sea of brown faces. I was reassured and affirmed through the love of a beautiful Black family; a Black family that has taught me more than I can fathom. I knew two things were for certain: my name and that I was Black.

However, after moving out and beginning my college career, I began to notice a shift. I began to feel a strain on my identity. I no longer felt that immediate connection to my culture that used to come so easily. I felt a little lost. Of course, this is not to say that my blackness is the sole purpose of my identity, but its capacity cannot be compartmentalized. Nevertheless, attending a predominantly white institution (PWI), one in which the Black caucus made up only four percent of the entire student body was a little jarring.

Durag Day (2021) reminisces on one of the first feelings of isolation at a PWI. Durag Day was an event organized by the Black Student Caucus at UT where students gathered around MLK's sculpture while all wearing durags. From there, it felt like being *Black* at UT meant being a part of the Black Student Alliance or the African American Culture Committee. To be *Black* at UT, considering the fractured social options, felt like fitting into a clique that I had a difficult time obtaining. I felt somewhat isolated—separated from a community and experience I know so much about but can no longer realize.

In 2019, I was introduced to Frantz Fanon, a notorious Black philosopher, and writer by Professor Patrick Walter in a Cinema of Black Protest course. Since then, I've found myself returning to his works in subsequent classes. Because of that, Frantz Fanon has become a source of inspiration for this narrative. Fanon delves into ideas surrounding the lack of ontological resistance within the Black community. Additionally, in his work *The Fact of Blackness*, Fanon talks about how colonization has stunted the ability of Black people to possess ontology and escape from preconceived ideas about themselves.

This idea was first applied to my life during my first semester at UT. A conversation had erupted among the class on which music streaming platforms we all used. When I responded with *Amazon Music*, a laugh shot out from the crowd, followed by a White, male student yelling "your ghetto ass" (*Ghetto Ass, 2021*). I was mortified. Up until this point, I had never been called ghetto before. Up until this point, I considered that student my friend. Frantz Fanon has a passage in one of his works titled *The Fact of Blackness* in which he illustrates a scene in which, upon seeing him, a White child turns to his mother and says "mama, see the negro! I'm frightened!" (Fanon 258). He later goes on to state that he "[became] aware of [his] uniform. [He] had not seen it. It [was] indeed ugly" (Fanon 260). Similar to Fanon, I had not been aware of my uniform as it appears to others. How I defined myself as Black did not align with how others defined me as Black.

For that reason, (*Untitled*) *Fanon* has allowed me to visualize and recollect memories, moments, and places that have shaped my identity as a Black person.



TOP
They'll Take Better Care of You There, 2021.
Inkjet print on adhesive fabric. 24 × 36 in.
(61 × 91.4 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

RIGHT
Ghetto Ass, 2021. Inkjet print on adhesive
fabric. 24 × 20 in. (61 × 50.8 cm). Courtesy of
the artist.



Madison Cooper: (Untitled) Fanon
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COVER

edge (control), 2021. Inkjet print on adhesive fabric. 36×48 in. (91.4×121.9 cm).
Courtesy of the artist.