

I am from Reunion Island, it's an island in the Indian Ocean and that would help me explain a lot of what will follow. And I've been working a lot with artists, as was said, I organize workshops with artists and activists, in which we produce a performance, a public performance that we do in the streets or in a places like that, and it's connected usually with current events. The last one was about the object of the museum, and the question of looting and preservation. And so we did like a street theatre.

So, many things are happening, but it would explain, why especially for me there is no theory or practice of liberation and emancipation without looking at art and culture. Not only practices and production, but also how we can transform and be freed of the dominant ways of representation.

So, to answer the invitation, I thought of going through some points. To begin with, of course, decolonization for me is not just about the past, but also about what is in the present. What is coloniality and what is colonization in the present. And why colonization is not only still alive in the 21st century but is, in fact, central to the regimes of domination, extraction, and disposition. Therefore, talking about colonization, I will also talk about decolonization, which for me is a practice, in which we live through and WITH difference and contradiction. Differences are allowed to be expressed and to exist; we do not need total agreement to act, practice together, and forge alliances.

My second question about why colonization is still not only alive, but, in fact, central to the regime of domination and exploitation, and what does it say about the universality of human rights and about liberal democracy.

Then I want to ask how we can understand the permanent state of war in the world established in 1945, which was presented as an age of peace and freedom. And so what is peace and have we ever had peace?

Finally, I will say a few words about how I actively approach remembrance by working with my parents' archive as well as my personal archive. Because I am currently in the process of creating a film on the anti-colonial struggle in Reunion Island as well as the southwestern Indian Ocean region, including South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Comoros, and Reunion Island. A part of the world often neglected in Europe and still largely framed under the influence of the Atlantic paradigm. Everything happening over the Atlantic and I mean in the Indian

Ocean and the Pacific are barely a knowledge, even though they are extremely important, I will say.

So, my first point is the question of colonization, of what's colonization in the 21st century. Of course, events in Gaza reawaken this conversation—not only because of the war itself, as there are wars elsewhere—but because of the impunity and lack of sanctions. So, how do we think about the question of how are wars conducted and what allows impunity? And how actions are effectively planned, including in Gaza, that result in ethnic cleansing. How the word Nakba can be also used for all the events of erasure and ethnic cleansing. As well as the reintroduction of the notion of genocide, ethnic cleansing, settler colonialism and imperialism.

So, what is anti-imperialism today and what is decolonization in the current context? How do we develop a non-denialist approach to thinking with, imagining and supporting the struggle for decolonization, for healing, for truth, for justice, for freedom- a struggle in resonance with the longer arc of struggle against colonial, racial, patriarchal capitalism and social and genocidal history. In the face of the many forms of silencing and institutional denial of ongoing genocide and wars, and the structural forms of racial, genocidal violence throughout our planet, I ask, whether the slow and often complicit process of art and cultural practices have anything left to contribute to resistance, to the affirmation of life against the entrenched cultures, that produce and organise self-destruction and death.

I will come back to that. But first, the discourse of peace. In 1945 we saw the birth of Pax Americana - a new world order of peace and freedom, of the free world emerging. But where was that peace? This year, 2025, marked the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Europe from Nazism, important in the light of war in Ukraine launched by the Russian Federation. But this celebration did not include Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the French repression in Guelma and Sétif in Algeria in 1945, the Nakba in 1947, or the insurrection of 1947 in Madagascar. And also the celebration this year excluded the Russian contribution to the defeat of Nazism in Europe. And let's not even talk of the loss of life everywhere in China, in Africa, and in India during that war.

The European narrative of liberation often presents the postwar era as a triumph of liberty and liberal democracy, a story of peace. Speeches framed these events in terms of sacrifice and peace, even as contemporary leaders like Trump challenged

NATO and Ursula von der Leyen declared that "the West as we knew it no longer exists." And Friedrich Merz, the German chancellor, was to state that I quote, "given the threat to freedom and peace on our continent, we must do whatever it takes regarding defense.» 16 European Union states immediately confirmed that they will trigger a budget exemption to significantly increase defence spendings.

So, this current conjuncture must be analyzed. Conjuncture, as Stewart Hall has argued, is a moment both of danger and of opportunity in intellectual, cultural and political terms. It is a call to action. In ethnographer Melissa Gregg's words: all conjunctural politics is, I quote, "method of describing the unique circumstances a particular moment poses— typically disheartening in terms of his own socialist ideals — while at the same time providing the grounds for a potential route out of such circumstances." Or in cultural theorist Jeremy Gilbert's words, it means being aware of, I quote, "the importance of mapping the specificity of the present, of signing, of situating current developments historically, of looking out for political threats and opportunities".

The present moment is marked by fascism, ethnonationalism, the instrumentalization of regressive religious forces, militarization of the public space, and the criminalisation of dissent. As well as by the accusations of anti-semitism by artificial intelligence for the dominant classes and an anticipation of the global counterrevolution. Simultaneously, there are anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, revolutionary feminist, queer, and trans movements, radical environmentalist struggles, pro-Palestinian solidarity, and fights for land and water. The long counterrevolution can also be traced in the continuous efforts by conservative forces to slow, to hinder, and to stop the struggle for peace, joy and freedom.

Current leaders have no imagination. What they have rather is no hesitation to maim, to torture and to kill. They deepen authority and encourage wars. They promote hate. A shift at the same time is happening. The west, the Americas and Germany is in crisis, challenged by China, India and Russia (whatever we think about that alliance and we can talk about it), and by countries in the Global South. Meanwhile, Far-right movements, rooted in the atomization of society and the collapse of community solidarity, promote division. What the far-right and Conservatives have long looked for is the «anti-state state». In other words, a state that puts an institution - parliament, police, army, tribunal and media - at the service

of austerity and war. It's a culture of cruelty, of indifference to life. And that culture is encouraged through police being against citizens, through angry men against women, queer, trans, through racism against black, Arab, Muslim, Roma, Asian, while allowing the occasional appearance of a pride parade or a celebration of international women's day.

And meanwhile, as budgets are cut, as well as budget in education, liberal democracy with all its limits is being attacked because in fact liberals have a loaded attack. Sinking reversely this conjuncture means effectively looking at the assault that are planetary on climate, and the state of militarization increasing, the crisis of liberal democracy, the authoritarian regime, the constitution being changed to please the leader. The government decisions having no action for climate change and the shift. So, how do we think of this time of change where the arrival to the horizon is not clear.

So let me go back a little. The culture of this global order and war. As I said, this year, there was an anniversary of the Nazi defeat. On May 5th, 2025, the German Foreign Ministry released a short documentary, "The Keys to Freedom" by Oscar winner and German filmmaker Wim Wenders. "The keys to freedom", Wenders says, should stand as a reminder, I quote, that "peace cannot be taken for granted". We see in this documentary, in the very short one, that's just barely six minutes long, the French school in Reims, where the Nazi army chief of staff, general Alfred Jodl signs Nazi Germany's total surrender during the night of May 8th, 1945. As we know, at the insistence of the Soviet Union, the decree was ratified in Berlin the following day. Not only because the Soviet army were the first to enter Berlin, but also because the contribution of the Soviet forces to the victory could not be ignored. This is why it's celebrated on May 9th.

When does choice of France on May 8 makes sense of what follows? It is a "west" victory that carries a message for us today. In "The Keys to Freedom", archival footage is combined with images of Wenders rendering through the French school that, I quote, "became the center of the world". Dramatic music accompanies the entry of Nazi general in the school. Again we hear what Wenders says, I quote, "12 years of terror, six years of war, the Holocaust, the worst crime the world has ever known, and here in a school in Reims". In the school museum there is a set of keys on display that the US commander-in-chief returned to Reims Mayor after the

ceremony of surrender, saying to the mayor: "These are the keys to the freedom of the world". "I was very touched by the sight of this key", Wenders says, "but the peace brought in that schoolhouse is now under threat". I quote Wenders: "I have lived 80 years in peace, a peace, the night in this school brought to us all. Today there is a war in Europe again, it is also a war against Europe, it is now up to us to take the keys to freedom in our own hands".

Well, this choice to situate "The Keys to Freedom" in France and in Europe says a lot, apparently the world has learned nothing in 80 years of life. It is a Euro-centric history, as if this history ended in that European center, with not a single word about the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It speaks of Ukraine, but not of Gaza or Sudan, Congo, Kashmir or any other place of the world that does not belong to the white west. Its «peace for all» is peace for Western Europe, not peace for everyone. Not even in Eastern Europe (what was used to be called Eastern Europe) and certainly not in Madagascar, Algeria, Vietnam, Cameroon, South Africa, Palestine or many other places in the global south. Even in Europe, where the dictatorship lasted until the mid 1970s in the heart of Western Europe, in Spain, in Portugal and in Greece, this blissful ignorance is not an exception. It is a dominant narrative in Europe that the end of World War II and the victory of Nazism brought peace and progress for everyone. The European narrative of liberation from Nazism, what Europe has called peace has been at the expense of wars waged against people around the world.

The Pax Americana instituted after World War II, and, according to media and politicians currently under threat by Trump, was a systemic organization of a militarized world under US leadership. The new institution of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and NATO were created, they are charged with enforcing the domination of the US dollar and preserving the interests of multinational. True, there was peace in the Western Europe, Western Europe and social progress. Though it was not always peaceful for the working class, for the migrant, for anti-fascist, anti-militarist, gays and queer, anti-imperialist. But yes, most people could go about their daily lives without fearing bombs or military occupation.

So, it continues this narrative of peace. Anti-Muslim racism helps society of the European Union to justify their anti-migrant policies of the genocide in Gaza, while

the occupation of public space by armed police and soldiers, and the criminalisation of protests are justified in the name of protective peace. This is what Rosa Luxemburg called "armed peace" in 1911, the other face of militarism, a peace enforced by the police and the army.

In fact, have we ever had peace? Or continuous war against people aspirations for freedom, abolition, and decolonization? According to Uppsala conflict data program (UCDP), between 1989 and 2023, armed conflicts have brought deaths of 3.8 million people, both combatant and civilian. And more than half of these deaths have occurred in Africa. The Middle East and Asia have been the next most affected regions with approximately 7,000 and 6,000 deaths respectively. Europe and the Americas have seen the fewer deaths and even, you know, with what's happening in Ukraine, which is not undermining.. what is happening, you know, and that there is a war and destruction. In 2023 the number of conflicts involving states - total 59 - is the highest number recorded since 1946. According to the Watson school "Cost of war" project, US spendings on head operation between October 2023 and October 2024 has been over 17.9 billion US dollar. The Watson school also reported that US back, you know, Israeli military operation since October 7 will lead for higher indirect than direct deaths rate. 160 million people have died in wars during the 20th century. These direct and indirect deaths are the result of CIA supported coup, military invasions, military dictatorships, French military intervention in Africa, as well as English and Portuguese, and the afterlife or nuclear tests everywhere from Soviet Union to the Pacific and Algeria, of chemical weapons and chemical contamination by the holders of imperialist power.

War has put a long shadow over a peace, as we know. Armies left behind their weapons with chemicals that go in the soil and in the water. Europe has not been spared during this age of peace. Witnessed effectively the war in Yugoslavia, but also, of course, in Ukraine. In "Washington Bullets", a story of the CIA coup and assassination, the historian Vijay Prashad retraces the succession of coup from 1953 UN to the 2019 ousting of Evo Morales in Bolivia. It shows a relentless commitment to hinder liberation. In 1950, a remarkable poet Aimé Césaire wrote, "Europe is indefensible." He underlined the fact that genocide and ethnic cleansings have been happening in the global south for decades before coming back. What he called, you know, "the shock in return" in Europe with Nazism.

Today we could say that perhaps the west is indefensible. To live in Europe is to live on a continent drowning in its own insignificance and arrogance, while having to endure the insane mediocrity of its defense of imperialism. But perhaps we should go back further than what Vijay Prashad is suggesting, go further back in the past and remember Haiti. Very quickly, in summary, 1791 the beginning of the insurrection by the enslaved 500,000 enslaved in Saint-Domingue, a future Haiti, a French colony that provided more than half of the sugar consumed in Europe. In 1803 the Haitian army inflicted a huge defeat to the Napoleon army. In 1804 on January 1st it was the birth of the black republic. What I want to remind of is that it was irrepresentable. It could not be that this event could not be represented in European history. And I mean the birth of a black republic could not be conceived. Revolutions during of the 18th century should be remembered: the French revolution, the English revolution or the North American revolution. These were the true revolutions, where freedom was effectively enacted, even though in the United States slavery continues and the French and English imperialism continue to destroy around the world. The France state imposed blockers and sanctions upon the young republic until 1825, when a ransom was imposed that ruined the young republic. Followed in 1914 by US occupation, all along the banks were looted and new laws imposed. What I mean by that, there is a long history of enduring freedom and liberation and how do we understand that? Why liberation is so scary?

And I want to go back to something, so more wars on liberal democracy. Western wars are long been waged to impose, enforce and save western values. These values just ARE immediately comprehensible and recognizable, inevitably principle, moral and noble. The United States, Canada and Australia, you know, which were created with a firm declaration even against all Europe, which was still under monarchy and tyranny. I've been able to claim to defend freedom and human rights, while their cities were built on the corpses and villages of the people they exterminated, while they stole indigenous land and children. And these children were sent to horrendous boarding schools, where they were harassed, beaten, tortured and killed and subjected to forced assimilation. These nation states possess internationally acclaimed museums and prestigious collection of stolen object for colonized and exterminated people.

The US and the Great Britain have a veto right at the United Nations Security Council. Their decision about climate disasters and militarism affect the whole world. They launch devastating wars with total impunity. But they declare a love of liberty, of women's rights, of children, of freedom of expression. They love children more than any other people, they say. If the states have succeeded in hiding their crimes and claiming universality, if they have been able to protect each of their criminal from being trialed, we are not imitating them. These countries are the embodiment of a benevolent and civilized order, while the crimes of other states are tented their reputation.

And yet colonial occupation inevitably contaminates liberal democracy. Laws must be adopted to protect property rights over stolen land, to distinguish between citizens, to militarize society, and a feeling of being under constant threat must be nurtured. That sentiment is not wrong in itself. Settler knows that whom they discriminate against, whom they humiliate, criminalize all dream of revenge. But settlers also entertain a sense of omnipotence that when it is shattered, push them to terrorism and violence. What cultural shift must we do to escape that way of thinking?

Double standards indicate what has been in fact at the heart of imperialist policies. Peace here, war everywhere else. If colonization is about demonization, making human being into disposable animals, what is being human? However, calling people "dogs", declaring that they are animals that must be killed, because their presence is confrontational to those who call themselves human, does not indicate a confusion between animals and humans. Those who dehumanize people, love their dogs and cats. They join association for animal rights, defense and protection. They care about the animasl in their zoos. When they assimilate people with animals, they indicate that a life can be destroyed as well as its environment, its cities, its cultural and historical site. We witness effectively the destruction of museums and archaeological and historical sites in Gaza, in Yemen, Kashmir but also of course before that in Iraq, Afghanistan and Cambodia, and what is being destroyed in Ukraine as well.

So, this is the remark I wanted to make about this question of remembrance, and I want to move now to more details about the invitation that was made. It has to reflect on postsocialist, postsviet history and to work from the narrative of sinti and



Roma, jewish, BIPOC, disabled and queer people. The project, as I read on the webpage, has invited artists who are working from diverse perspective, methodology and reproach, and approaches towards remembrance work connected to Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Israel, Georgia, Bulgaria, Germany. And I look at the work, you know, that in fact you know, Masha cited on the web page, culture of remembrance, you know, for instance, "bitter truth" or "spectrum of injustice" - on gender nonconforming lives under Nazi rule, or "where memory gathers bones" and I read the text. The question that was raised is "How is transnational remembrance possible?"

I was educated in the French public system in Reunion Island because Reunion Island is still a French territory, so, I learned also about World War II from European perspective, I saw a lot of Hollywood World War II films, western movies. And I was educated in all the propaganda for a world center around Europe and the west. But my father also had told me another story. My father, who was a Vietnamese and a Reunion descent, was 16 when he traveled from Reunion to England to join the free French army. Like perhaps you know, about also... was also in this case. He was parachuted behind Nazi troops to reinforce local resistance before the 1944 Normandie landing. So, I learned about another history, Nazism seen from the south, you know, from a French colony, a place therefore where rights were denied to non-white people. And I reflected on the connection later, you know, between fascism and colonization. How in colonies, you know, fascists experimented with racial laws that then they transported later on to Europe. I mean, we know about Italy in Ethiopia or you know in Libya, and of course a German in current Namibia. So if you allow me I will move to the global south and ask how is transcontinental decolonial remembrance possible. I'm currently working, you know, it was said, on a film on the mass movement in Reunion Island between 1950s and 1980s. And that movement called itself communist and anticolonial. It was joined by people from different social status, ethnic background and religions, you know, because in Reunion you have as well, you know, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Afro-Malagasy, also religion. So, from all this and different social statuses, ethnic backgrounds, religions and genders. That communism that was in Reunion and is also... that we can find also in Sudan, in Egypt, in

Senegal, Thailand, Singapore, India or the Caribbean, is buried under the Europe and Western history of communism and revolution.

When I talk about my project, for instance, I'm always asked if that communism was being affiliated with Moscow or Beijing, how did it answer to 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia or, you know how, it reacted to the Moscow-Beijing rupture, as if none of this movement could have its own autonomous position. I'm not saying that communist parties in the south did not associate at one point or another with Moscow or Beijing, or that their leaders and members never attended communist gatherings in Moscow or Bucharest or elsewhere, that they never celebrated the accomplishments of the Soviet Union. I just, you know, suggested that we shift the gaze from dominant Euro-centered form of remembrance. It means, perhaps, exploring the link between anti-colonial communism in the global south and socialist or Soviet history, but also not just in the Soviet Union, but other parts also of Europe and elsewhere. It means... and also exploring therefore the post anti-colonial communism remembrance in the global south and the post socialist or soviet history, and look at the connection and differences.

Working with the archive of my parents, both active members in Reunion anti-colonialist movement and with personal archive, I must find my voice, you know, my own voice and the tone, in which I will tell that story. Because I was present during many of the events that I want to evoke. I was a child and a teenager. As a child and a teenager, I witnessed the French state violence, its criminalization of opposition, its politics of censorship and denial, its use of all its institution, police, army tribunal, media to crush those, who oppose their politics. I witnessed, you know, police search in my house at 6:00 a.m. in the morning. I saw my father taken to the prison. I heard about the threats towards my mother. I witnessed also the content of public... French public education focused on France's king and its republic. I saw the repression of queer language and culture, and then later also how pacification means heading a politics of liberal multiculturalism.

I want to explore the conditions of this mass movement, success, and also its defeat. I want to look also at defeat and explore defeat politically. The fact that, you know, defeat is there, I mean, happened to movements, to social movements and to political movements, and how do we understand defeat not within the vocabulary of the military, but in the vocabulary of change. Because, of course, enemy and

adversary will not just say "oh, yes, of course, we forgot about your memory, now we got to, you know, listen to them, we know it's a struggle, right?" So to do that, I must free myself of the desire to answer French discourse or European discourse, you know, and representation. I mean, my desire to nonetheless, you know, denounce what the state... to remain within the denunciation of what were the crimes, and to try and to say "oh, we also had memories", "oh, we also had, you know, similar thing". To absolutely invent as much as I I will be able to an autonomous vocabulary.

I cannot be in a dialogue with a state that does not want to dialogue, as I witness, you know, every day in France. In a context of increasing power of far right party, anti-black, anti-arab, racism and anti-semitism, of complicity of state, of anti-threat, you know, of the European western government to the Russian Federation, of its capacity to imagine anything as an angling on its supremacy, that is declining. I do not need to lose my time with that. I need also effectively to work with people, who are producing cultural artistic tools that radically challenge that culture of cruelty and punishment.

In the article called "The Unavowable Holocaust", the anti-denialist coalition writes, and I quote, "We would like to suggest that the cultures and structures produced in the name or shadow of what's commonly thought as "after Auschwitz" was and remains an integral part of a denialist and revisionist cultural harm for perpetrating unseen, and downplaying the undergoing Nakba". Nakba being the term then, you know, for the erasure. "Clearly given the scope of what we are arguing, this was not then simply a cultural and infrastructural tool to deny, but through it to see and maintain the hierarchy order of the entire global racial, colonial and patriarchal maxis of power, and the basis for ongoing capital accumulation. Imagine a new tool, which means also that decolonization is not about our arrangements, but the abolition, the total abolition of regime and culture of deaths.

Of course, fighting for social, racial, gender justice, for land and water, for freedom against racism, anti-semitism, anti-queer, anti-trans and all forms of fabricated vulnerability, yes, we must continue this struggle every day. Absolutely every day, everywhere. But we also must forge autonomous spaces, working with few resources, but with a strength and energy and desire that fighting and resisting produce, with a joy of being together and imagining together.

So, a decolonial transcontinental remembrance will be working with difference, and acknowledging difference and the multi-level, you know, memories that are constantly worked on and revoked, and never heard. That is constantly a work in process. Thank you.