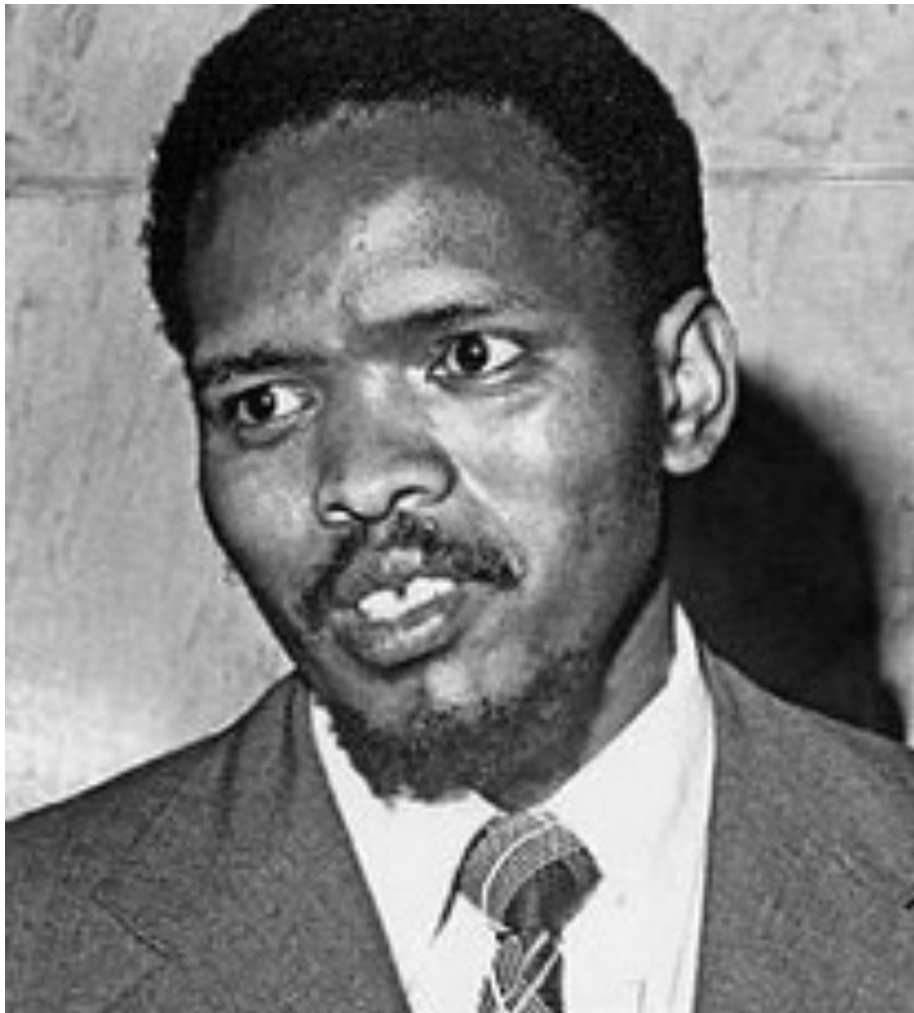


BANTU STEPHEN BIKO
AND
THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT
TRIBUTE PAPER



Volume Three of VANTAGE POINT: Bantu Stephen Biko and the Black Consciousness
Movement

First Edition, 2020

Written and contextualized by Zoe Amanzi

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For feedback and inquiries to collaborate reach out: vantage.point.zine@gmail.com

Coming in the next issue:
The Black Wallstreet: Greenwood Tulsa, Oklahoma

INDEX

I. APARTHEID - THE SYSTEM OF INSTITUTIONALIZED RACIAL
HATRED - A SHORT OVERVIEW

II. BANTU BIKO - GROWING UP SOUTH AFRICAN

III. BIKO SPEAKS – BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

IV. "OUR STRATEGY FOR LIBERATION" - ACHIEVING THE
VISION OF A TRUE HUMANITY

SOURCES



I. APARTHEID - THE SYSTEM OF INSTITUTIONALIZED RACIAL HATRED. A SHORT OVERVIEW

The election of the National Party in 1948 paved the way for institutionalized Apartheid, a regime based on racial segregation. Acts and laws passed before 1948 had already divided the population in South Africa into different racial and ethnic groups, providing the superior position to whites. It is important to mention the big land reforms: The Native Land Act of 1913 and The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, proclaimed most of South Africa's land for the white minority and the rest for the black majority. This distribution manifested an unequal usage of land. Land shortage proved to be an effective tool to impose pressure on the majority of South Africa's population within South Africa's borders. Scholar Herman Giliomee (2009) stressed that the main driving force behind the earlier Apartheid legislation was the protection of a so called 'Afrikaaner Identity'. "The ideology of segregation was primarily expressed as a means to defuse potential class conflict and maintain overall white hegemony." (Beinart/ Dubow 1995: 145)

The first thirty years of the twentieth century saw a strong Afrikaner opposition to the British white settlers. Afrikaner nationalist theoreticians worked on issues such as language equality for Afrikaans, Afrikaner self-government and the situation of the impoverished part of white Afrikaner society. "However, the process which was to consolidate the common nucleus of their color consciousness and policy of differentiation into a national idea or ideology was to take place only in the 1940s." (Dubow 1992: 210) This change was evident as the creation of a unified, homogenous white group including all whites, became a central focus of the National Party. While on one hand the unification of all white elements of South Africa's society was promoted, the further division of African's

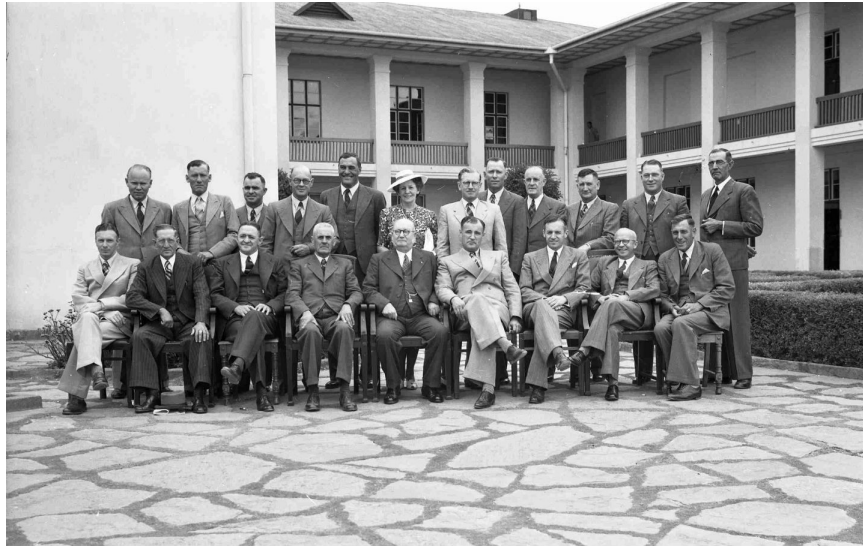
into ethnic groups was imposed. This was designed to avoid the creation of a unified opposition against the Apartheid state. (Cf. Beinart 2001: 146)

Scholars approach Apartheid from different theoretical angles: race and class. Some of them warn to look at Apartheid as 'just' a racist way of leading and exploiting a country. Dominant influences of different schools of thought, like Darwinism, Social Evolutionism, or later on, Eugenics, had a strong impact on the constitution of the mind of generations of Afrikaner people, as well as European scholars. "The imagery of social Darwinism is clearly discernible in three important areas of political debate: speculation about the relative intelligence of blacks and whites, the almost universally expressed horror of 'miscegenation', and fear of racial 'degeneration' following upon uncontrolled development of a black and white proletariat in the cities." (Beinart/ Dubow 1995: 155) The racist ideology of Apartheid grew out of already existing notions of human differences. (Cf. Dubow 1992: 210) Even if the biological argument for racism was not part of the daily Nationalist political rhetoric, it suffused everyday white language.

Between 1936 and 1946 the urban African population grew by 57,2%, outstripping the urban white population. An increasing number of Africans were staying in the cities and in peri-urban areas permanently. While African employment in the urban areas was expanding, the conditions in the black townships were worsening. The majority of people in the reserves suffered from malnutrition, poverty and overpopulation. Roots of these problems was a serious land shortage. During the Second World War, the South African industry expanded strongly, leading to an increased influx of African workers into the urban areas. Unskilled / semi-skilled white workers in the city perceived this as a threat. The intensification of trade union activities for African interest, ongoing strikes (like the strike of mineworkers in 1946) and boycotts challenged the

previous social order. "It was under these circumstances that Apartheid came to be formulated with particular urgency." (Dubow 1992: 211)

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SEGREGATION, 1948



Prime Minister D.F. Malan (front row, center) in South Africa, in 1948. His National Party endorsed and created the blueprint for apartheid. (picture taken from the National Archives of Namibia)

"In sum, then, by the 1948 election the contours of the problem of influx control facing the state were starkly defined. The election took place in the midst of an economic upswing, marked by rapid industrial expansion, which depended increasingly on African labor. Yet, at the same time, white farmers were complaining bitterly about worsening labor shortages, and the proliferation of black protests in the cities had exploded the political calm of the preceding decades." (Posel 1997: 39)

The NP (National Party) took office in 1948 under D.F. Malan. Their primary political steps were focused on containing African urbanization and promoting the interest of white farmers. Policies were aimed at changing the situation of

severe labor shortage on white owned farms. The shortage occurred due to better wages payed in the industrial sector. (Cf. Posel 1997: 62)

The political situation in South Africa grew more tense after World War Two. After 1948 institutionalized segregation was steadily implemented. The Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act and the Immorality Act (1950), as well as the extension of the pass laws (1952) deepened the control and repression over the black population and misdemeanors were punished by law. (Cf. Sodemann 1986: 39ff.) The Nationalists were very concerned about their capacity to maintain power. Afrikanerization of the state was an important task. Native Affairs posts were filled with political supporters.

Interestingly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN in 1948 - after WW2. The NP-regime gained power in South Africa the same year, stripping the majority of South Africans off their basic human rights until the regime's downfall 46 years later.

RESTRICTION OF PERSONAL RIGHTS

According to the UN-Human Rights definition the category of personal rights includes a variety of different rights, like: the rights of personal freedom, the right to life, the right of security, the right to choose marriage, work, and education. The South African Apartheid government violated these rights for the majority population.

Shortly after the election of the National Party, the Mixed Marriage Act No 55 was implemented. This act prohibited marriage between whites and other races to avoid further amalgamation between the races. (Cf. Beinart 2001: 147) The

Apartheid regime feared miscegenation and the 'declining racial value if mixed with a non-white race' (social Darwinism). They also feared a potential increase of mixed-race electorate in the cities. (Cf. Beinart 2001: 147)



In 1950, the Immorality Amendment Act made sexual intercourse between white and non-white illegal. (Cf. Dugard 1978: 69) Besides the stated reasons above, this type of legislation was to penetrate and control every area of social relations. (Cf. Lester 1998:112)



The Population Registration Act of 1950 had severe consequences. It classified and divided the South African population into three broad racial groups: white, native and colored. According to this Act Indians fell under the colored category. The criteria used to determine these categories were based on appearance, social acceptance and descent. (Cf. Beinart 2001: 148) The Act described a white person as one whose parents were both white, a person who looks white, or a person whose habits and speech would suggest whiteness, it also excluded a person who by appearance is white, but is generally accepted as a colored person. (Population Registration Act 1950: 277) Blacks (in the documents referred to as Natives) were defined as being members of an African race or tribe. Coloreds were defined as people who were neither white nor black. The Department of Home Affairs was responsible for handling the classification process. This act forced the black population to carry passes. Those passes contained information of employment, background, and fingerprints. If a black person was checked within a white area without a pass he was directly put to jail or forced to labor on white farms.

The Separate Amenities Act had severe impact on the structuring of urban society: public facilities had to be separated between white and non-white. Africans could no longer use "white beaches", "white benches", "white restaurants", nor "white toilets". This law was a masterpiece of segregation, calling for not only separate but also substandard facilities for blacks. Not only amenities should be separated, also the 'job reservation' was modernized. Between 1956 and 1959 the regime reserved a far wider range of jobs for whites only in the private and public sector.

RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT

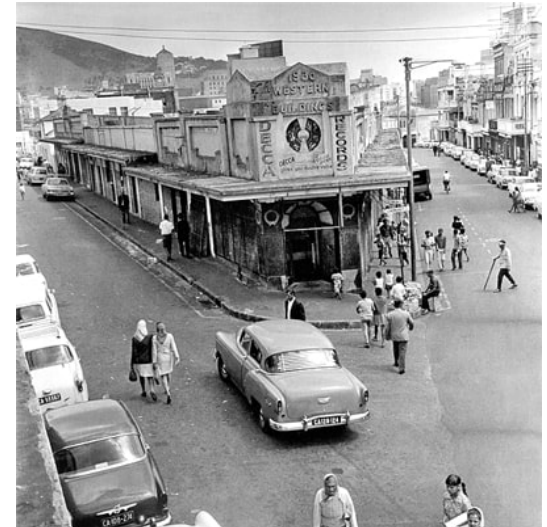
Another center piece of Apartheids' early legislation was the Group Areas Act 1950. This act completed what the Native (Urban Areas) Act had started in 1926. The idea stayed the same: the creation of constricted 'reserves' for the black population of South Africa. The big difference between the two acts was that the former was not binding, which meant, that the municipalities could decide on their own, whether they implemented racially divided living areas or not. The Group Areas Act made the implementation of segregated living areas obligatory by law. The primary aim of this act was to deepen residential separation. At the same time it prevented further influx and settlement of rural blacks in the urban areas, which through the act were declared as white areas. The government set up semi-urban locations for blacks, coloreds and Indians, the so-called "townships", which were located on the edges of the urban areas. Over the next

decades, forced resettlement was one of the main consequences of the act.



One huge resettlement project took place in Cape Town. The government destroyed a lively community, where mainly blacks but also

coloreds and Indians lived together. District Six was a place of severe social importance to the black community, with a flourishing musical and artistic scene. "District Six lost around 60,000 people (...) by the 1970s it was a city-center wasteland." (Beinart 2001: 153) Offences against the Urban Areas Act were punished. In the year 1957 / 1958 around 200,000 black people were consequently convicted to forced labor on white farms. (Cf. Wellmer 2005: 3) This helped to



District Six before demolition

reduce labor shortage. Farms were the least controlled spheres of industry, often resulting in harsh working conditions and child labor. (Beinart 2001: 209)



Another law of the early 1950s defining the personal freedom of all groups, except whites, was the Separate Representation of Voters Act. This Act passed through parliament in 1951. It determined that colored people were to elect four white representatives. This act gained strong opposition within the black and colored community. But also, white groups opposed it. The

government set up black ethnic governments within the declared black 'homelands'. It prepared the way for a new system, where local and regional governments were set up in the reserves. It was not real self-government, as they were still subordinate to white interests. (Cf. Beinart 2001: 161)

The Natives (Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents) Act of 1952 was an additional measure by the government to impact labor mobility. The act made the carrying of a reference book at all times obligatory by law. This reference book held details about the owner, like place of origin, employment record, tax



payments, etc. Also, a permit was necessary to enter urban areas. These permits enabled the work-seeker to stay in restricted urban areas for 72 hours. If a person couldn't find work within that time frame, he had to leave town immediately. The Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953 called for separate and unequal amenities in public, such as public transport, parks, beaches, toilets, restaurants and so on. It defined who was allowed to use which facility. (Cf. Beinart 2001:152)

All measurements aimed at eliminating black daily life and culture within white towns. It also aided to provide a low-wage labor pool. Within the townships and reserves, population growth led to an increasing number of landless families (about



50%). At the end of 1980 the South Africa Development Trust created twenty-four new "towns", housing more than two million people. "Millions of people found themselves in barely planned rural slums, which were urban in respect of their population density and lack of agricultural opportunity, but rural in relation to facilities, services, and employment." (Beinart 2001: 213ff.)



On an educational level the Bantu Education Act 1953 defined and limited the educational opportunities of Africans throughout the country. The directive of education was removed from missions and provincial authorities and was subordinated to the secretary of Native Affairs. "Education at the 5,000 or so mission schools had produced, in Nationalist eyes, an academic training with too much emphasis on English and dangerous liberal ideas. It was seen as the foundation of an African elite that claim recognition in a common society." (Beinart 2001: 160) The Extension of University Education widened the measurements to a university level in 1959. Until then, there were a few mixed campuses, where blacks and coloreds as well as whites were educated. (Cf. Karis/ Carter 1977: 803)

In 1954 Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs stated the following: "There is no place for him [the Bantu] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour (...) Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze." (Verwoerd in Soudien / Kallaway [ed., 1999]: 494) Verwoerd's statement shows the use of racist differentiation between "we" and "the other". Wulf D. Hund, a popular scholar in racism analysis, characterizes the process of racial construction as multilayered and a game of exclusion and inclusion. Racism always created contrastive pairs. To create one group in superior position,

another must be inferior. (Cf. Hund 2007: 20f.) Color based racism is a social construct, deepened into a social relation. White racism provided the base for economic and political supremacy of the white group. From colonialism over post-colonialism to imperialism. (Cf. Hund 2007: 69ff.)

RESTRICTION ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Apartheid laws restricted the economic and the personal sphere of the majority population. Laws also infiltrated the way black and colored South Africans could resist and speak their minds against the brutality and oppression they were facing.

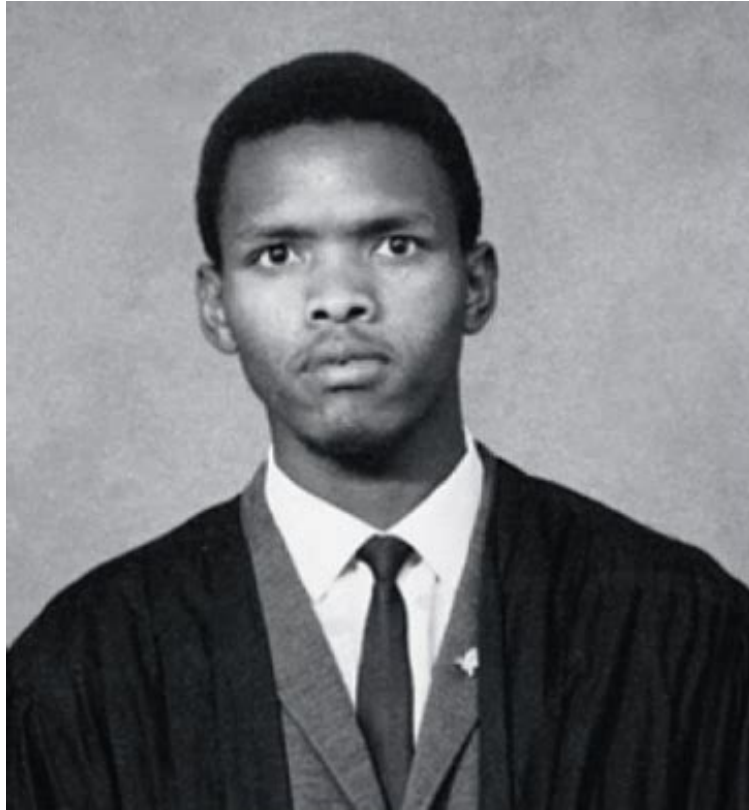
One of the earliest laws regarding the restriction of political work was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950. This act banned any type of engagement with communist thought. It was motivated by the NP's fear that communism would have too much influence on Africans as well as working-class whites. The communist party was promoting unity among workers of different races, with the unifying experience of being workers in a classist system. "The surge of grass-roots militancy in the 1940s gave new momentum to the Communist Party of South Africa (...). By 1945 the CPSA had established branches or groups in the African areas of most industrial towns." (Posel 1997: 36) The act also had severe impact on any other political oppositional activity working for a change of state. Additionally, it gave the Minister of Justice the power to ban a person, if he / she made herself suspicious in any way. A banned person was restricted to a certain geographical area and could not take part in any political gathering. Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and a lot more were victims of this act. White communists were expelled from parliamentary participation. (Cf. Posel 1997: 36)

The Natives Settlement and Disputes Act 1953 banned blacks from registering with trade unions and the Public Safety Act of 1953 increased penalties for protest offences. This act was passed in response to the ANC's civil disobedience campaigns. It granted the British governor general authority to set aside all laws and declare a state of emergency. It further provided the detention without trial for any dissent. (Cf. Lester 1998: 124) The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1953 asserted that anyone accompanying a person found guilty of offences committed during protests or in support of any campaign would also be presumed guilty and would have the responsibility to prove his or her innocence.

The Terrorism Act of 1962 marked the beginning of a structural tool to imprison political opponents without trial. The purpose was "the obvious gathering of intelligence (...), the destruction of anti-apartheid-organizations by separating them from leaders and activists; and general intimidation, disruption and deterrence which forced thousands underground." (Merrett 1990: 29) No time limit for detention existed. Merret writes that detentions affected all organizations of the opposition deeply. By the mid 1980s about 25,000 political spearheads were detained. Deaths of political prisoners in detention went up to 80 between 1963 and 1986; Biko was the 44th man to die by force in detention. (Cf. Merrett 1990: 30)

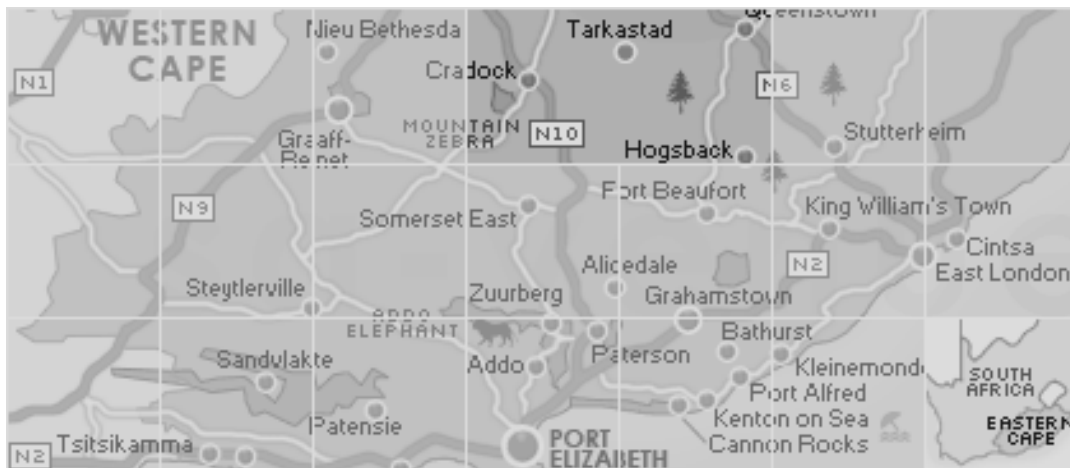
II. BANTU STEPHEN BIKO

GROWING UP SOUTH AFRICAN



"Born shortly before 1948, I have lived all my conscious life in the framework of institutionalised separate development. My friendships, my love, my education, my thinking and every other facet of my life have been carved and shaped within the context of separate develop."

(Biko 1970: 27)



Bantu Stephen Biko was born on December 18th, 1946 in Tarkastad, Eastern Cape. He was the third child of his parents, father Mzingaye Biko and his mother Alice Nokuzola, called Mamcethe. Bantu was Steve's first name, literally meaning 'people'. His family referred to him by this name. (Cf. Wilson 2011: 18) He was brought up in a Christian surrounding, living in a house in the black location of Ginsberg, King William's Town. His father was a policeman who died when Steve was 4, after suffering an illness. Mamcethe worked as a domestic worker to support her family. She always put great emphasis on the education of her children. Steve was a good student. His effort at school earned him a sponsorship for Lovedale Missionary Institute when he was 16. Lovedale Missionary was a boarding school in the Victoria East division of the Cape Province. Steve's older brother Khaya attended the same school, but was arrested shortly after Biko arrived there. Police suspected him of sympathizing with the Pan African Congress (PAC), which was already banned at that time. Steve was arrested too. Up to this point he had never actively engaged in politics - his plans were to become a doctor. Police released Biko after investigating him but he was consequently expelled from school.



Mamcethe

Khaya disappeared for the next 10 months. It was at this time that something inside Biko changed. The arrest and his brother's disappearance were fueling a his understanding the danger of Apartheid posed on a personal level. As he described it himself: "I began to develop an attitude which was much more directed at authority than at anything else. I hated authority like hell." (Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 23) At 18, Biko enrolled in the boarding school of St. Francis, a college in Mariannhill near Durban. St. Francis was run by catholic nuns and monks, mainly liberals, as he recalls it. He states that it was an atmosphere far from government intervention but still, "(...) one began to see the totality of white power." (Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 24) Biko was curious about questioning the system within the church with its authoritarian structure. He used his time for debate about things, which were important to him personally. During his time at St. Francis Biko met Father Aelred Stubbs, who would later be of great importance to him. "It was the start of an important and long-term relationship between spiritual 'father' and 'son'." (Wilson 2011: 25) Father Stubbs remembers receiving a long letter from Steve in his personal memoirs 'Martyr of Hope': "After introducing himself as Kaya's brother he launched into a long series of questions about the Christian faith." (Stubbs 1978: 155) The time Biko spent at Mariannhill College was a time of ongoing European decolonization on the African continent. However, a different story was unfolding in South Africa. The 1960 massacre at Sharpeville and the following ban of the main opposition parties, ANC and PAC, marked an intensification of authoritarian white rule over the country. Biko was only 13 years old when the political opposition was banned. Stubbs called the years between 1963 and 1967 'demoralizing years' for the people, especially the students of South Africa, as



the repression after Sharpeville was highly intensified. (Cf. Stubbs 1978: 56f) Biko recalls hearing and talking about decolonization and strong African leaders like Algeria's Ahmed Ben Bella, Hastings Banda of Malawi or Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya.



In 1966 at the age of 20, Biko received a scholarship and started attending the medical school at Wentworth, Durban (UNNE-University of Natal Non-European Section) Linda Wilson writes that Biko wanted to become a lawyer but that in those days it was safer and easier for a good black student to go to medical school. (Cf. Wilson 2011: 26f, Stubbs 1978: 156) "Thus many intelligent and remarkable young black students, for whom medicine was not necessarily their first choice, found themselves there in a core group with a measure of freedom which did not exist in any other long-established liberal university (...)" (Wilson 2011: 29) Biko was conscious about what was going on around him and soon expressed his distaste for what he saw as an "appalling silence" (Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 28) of Africans not strong enough to face the enemy.

After enrolling in the UNNE, he immediately joined the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Unlike many other black students and black student groups who did not agree with the non-racial approach of the NUSAS, Biko was eager to join the multiracial union. In 1967 he represented the NUSAS at congress at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. He was confronted with segregated residential facilities for the participants. Indians and Coloureds were allowed to stay in town, whereas Africans were required to stay some distance away in a church hall. Only white students could stay at the university residences. *"I realized that for a long time I had been holding onto the whole dogma of non-racialism almost like a religion, feeling that it was sacrilegious to question it (...)"* (Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 31) Although white liberals were allies in the cause for equality and justice, they were holding the passport of white privilege at all times. Biko realized, that the white liberals had a problem of their own, and this was the position of superiority, *"(...)" and they tended to take us for granted and wanted us to accept things that we're second class."* (Biko cf. in Wilson 2011: 31) Biko would later describe the "inferiority complex" carried by black people in response to white superiority.



In July 1969 at Turfloop University, they founded the South African Student Organisation (SASO) to represent South Africa's students of color. Steve Biko served as its first President. (Cf. Wilson 2011: 36) Biko had natural leadership qualities. Friends around him described him as a good listener and a heart-warming person who was personally dedicated to the cause of emancipating and liberating the oppressed people of the country.

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Father Stubbs writes that Steve was always "too big a man to put ideology before persons"(Stubbs 1978: 158). In the early days SASO wanted to avoid working with white liberals, as it was seen as an obstacle for true liberation. In his private life Biko maintained and cherished certain friendships with white folks. One of them, Donald Woods, would later write Cry Freedom, a Biography of Bantu Stephen Biko.



"There was a burning inner spirit which filled his limbs, so that he always met you with his own powerful presence." (Stubbs 1978: 159) His personality made equality between

the leaders and members of SASO possible. Everyone had a voice and a mind to be heard.

Mamphela Ramphele writes in her autobiography, "*he enabled people to go beyond the limits they placed on their own capacity and agency.*" (Ramphele 1999 [1995]: 109) In July 1970 Barney Pityana became

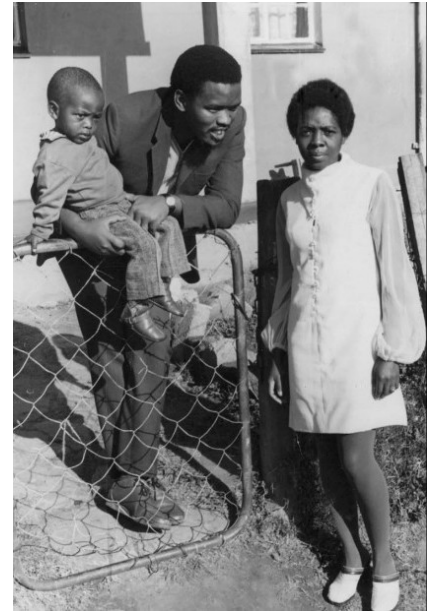


Biko with Mamphela Ramphele

second president of SASO. Around that time Biko started his column 'I Write What I Like' under the synonym Frank Talk. It was an essential part of spreading the message of Black Consciousness to a wider audience. (Cf. Wilson 2011: 41) Pityana described Biko as the one bringing in ideas, who was the fundamentalist within leadership and describes him as stubbornly opinionated, but "[h]e did not dominate and he had the capacity to be delighted by counter-argument." (Pityana in Wilson 2011: 44f.) SASO became a sub-culture at the university. The members were reading books outside their study subjects, educating one another through discussions and envisioning a better future without racism. In political and theological matters, Biko and Pityana were the leading proponents. "*Steve respected people and he made people respect each other. His whole attitude and his whole experience were a working-class attitude and experience (...)*", Bokwe Mafuna, who worked for SASO and later on in the SASO's black workers' project, recalls. (Wilson 2011: 52) Biko's style of leadership was extraordinary. He lived for his vision, putting more emphasis on the long-term, rather than falling for the frustration of the daily oppression black people of South Africa had to deal with.



In 1971 Biko got married to Ntsiki Mashalaba. She was not actively involved in the political life but stood beside Steve, as the mother of their two children. "*I very much accepted him.*" (Ntsiki Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 70) When Biko got expelled from Wentworth College he decided to choose the political road, quit his studies at the university and fully dedicate himself and his time to the evolution of the Black Consciousness philosophy and the Black Consciousness Programme.



The Black Consciousness Programmes put great emphasis on education and development of skills within the black community, as well as leadership training. "Biko's work was to awaken the people: first, from their own psychological oppression through reorganizing their inferiority complex and restoring their self-worth, dignity, pride and identity; secondly, from the mental and physical oppression of living in a white racist society." (Wilson 2011: 54f.)



In February 1973 the Apartheid regime banned Biko and other leaders of SASO including Barney Pityana, Harry Nengwekhulu and Strini Moodley. A ban was a systematic approach to stop people from continuing their political work. For Biko and the other banned SASO members this meant a severe constraint. Banned people were restricted to a certain district - usually their place of birth.

In Biko's case he got sent back to King Williamstown, to the house of his mother. He was not allowed to move out of the district.



Biko's mother's house in King Williamstown

Visiting any other district was forbidden. He was not allowed to enter any educational institution. He was not allowed to write anything for publication, which consequently hindered the proliferation of the Black Consciousness thought. The newspaper Black Review was finished shortly after Biko's banning order and had to be published under a different editor's name. He was not allowed to speak in public nor to be around a group of people. One main purpose of the banning order was to silence the banned person. A banned person was only allowed to be with one person at a time, complicating the daily life and overall communication severely. The only way to divert the banning order was to prove one had changed their attitude towards Apartheid. This so called "change of heart" could only be accepted by the minister. A ban could last for five years or longer. Biko lived in banned condition till the day he died. His mother remembers the moment he stood in the doorway, "there was something deep in this child and I had an understanding of what was going on." (Mamcethe Biko cit. in Wilson 2011: 78) She stated that she was truly afraid that her son would be imprisoned forever.

Trapped in King Williamstown Biko established BCP in the Eastern Cape and became branch executive. Reverend David Russell, an Anglican priest helped him on multiple levels in the establishment of BCP. He was a confidant and friend Steve could rely on. (Cf. Stubbs 1978: 163, Wilson 2011: 80) Russell, knowing about the local conditions as well as the security police's actions, agreed to install the office for SASO and the BCP in the old church on Leopold Street. Security police closely watched banned people. Life became tricky, turning into a cat-and-mouse game if the banned person wanted to stay politically active. Harassment by the security police was relentless. "The banning order was studied, the loopholes found, and those banned began to interpret it for the police." (Wilson 2011: 86)

Father Aelred Stubbs underlines the power of Biko's mother, and her way she interacted with the security police. She showed mastery in the way she protected Steve and those around him. "Her son made it clear from the first day that he was in no way going to be subjugated by his restriction order. Out of love for him she complied." (Stubbs 1978: 163) Biko managed to have anyone he wanted into his mother's house, as Father Stubbs remembered. Even his wife Ntsiki and the children were living with them, Biko tried to spend hours each day with his son Nkosinathi and later his daughter Samora. "Sometimes he would break his banning order to drive Ntsiki back to St. Matthew's [where she worked as a nurse], far outside the permitted magisterial district of King. Life was to be as normal as possible." (Stubbs 1978: 163) "They [security police] found it extremely difficult to handle his style, his intelligence, his statements; a man of that caliber." (Wilson 2011: 89) Biko was consistently breaking his banning order. He was aware that the banning order existed to undermine his ability to continue his work against the system of oppression. By recognizing it as such, it fueled his determination to handle it as well as possible to keep working towards the

Black Consciousness Movement's goal of conscientizing the black masses.

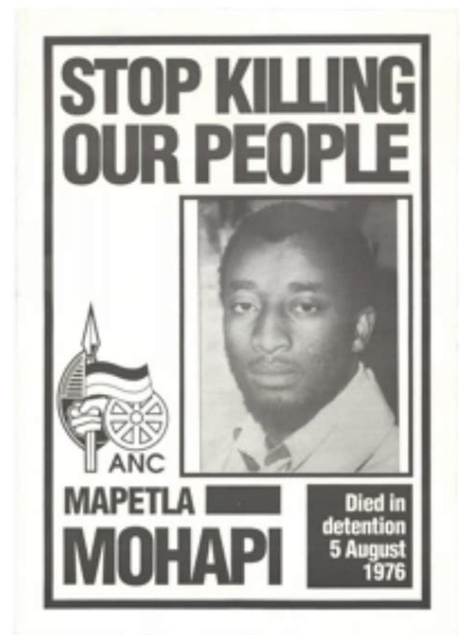
Steve was very active in the years of his banning. The BPC rented a unused church right in King Williamstown and used it as administrative office, a research and publishing department. It also included a showroom for the clothing. The clothing was produced at the local home industry centers (run by the Border Council of Churches) and leatherwork from Njwaxa, a nearby town, where BPC initiated the establishment of a cottage industry in cooperation with Father Timothy Stanton. The most ambitious project was the creation of the Zanempilo Community Health Center. This clinic provided good healthcare for the people, which was previously lacking in the area. (Cf. Stubbs 1978: 167) The clinic officially opened in April 1975; Mamphela Ramphele was their first medical officer. Stubbs describes the center as "*the incarnate symbol of Black Consciousness*." (Stubbs 1978: 169)

In 1974 another bunch of SASO and BPC members were arrested and held under Section 6(1) of the Terrorism Act. The renowned SASO-BCP Trial was held in Pretoria starting on January 31st, 1975, lasting till December 1976, when nine people were convicted. Steve Biko was an important witness in this trial. "He displayed the capacity to walk through a minefield of cross-examination without compromising himself or incriminating the accused." (Wilson 2011: 106) He was able to handle the situation brilliantly, using the stage he never had under his banning to speak about the political and ideological principles and intentions of the Black Consciousness Movement. Through his appearance in public he could heighten the moral and strengthen the people's solidarity.

Meanwhile life in King Williamstown continued. 1975 was a year of significant progress, compromised only by the vandalism attack on the BCP

offices in Leopold Street in September, and the sudden death of Steve's older sister around the same time. King Williamstown became the center for all BC committed people. The political wing of the movement Black People's Convention (BPC) grew in strength. "Steve recognized the vital need to conscientize and thus politicize the masses by community development action." (Stubbs 1978: 181) Due to his ban, Steve could not hold an office in the BCP, but he was consulted in every matter.

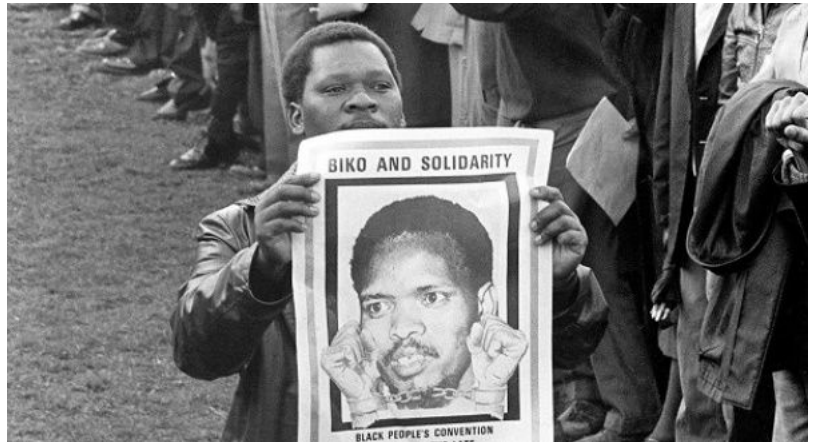
"Within a month of Biko giving evidence in Pretoria, on 16 June 1976, a transforming political event occurred, the Soweto Uprising." (Wilson 2011: 110) Biko stated, that everybody was surprised, as no organization was behind this peaceful protest of students against the imposition of Afrikaans as language of instruction. The police answered by force of arms, killing hundreds of students throughout the country. After Soweto nothing stayed the same. Students were fleeing the country



to join the military resistance. Joining either the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) or the military formation of the PAC, Poquo. "There was a crackdown in the King William's town area." (Wilson 2011: 118) About a month after the Soweto killings, Mapetla Mohapi was arrested. He had been the permanent secretary of SASO administering a trust "Zimele" in King, a fund that was operating for the benefit of ex-prisoners. Mohapi died in custody three weeks later on August 5, which was a traumatic event for the people around him. In the time after, more and more Black Consciousness activists got detained, like Mamphela Ramphele, and most of the other activists working in the BCP in King Williamstown. Biko was also detained on August 17, two days after Mohapi's funeral. They were

released over a period of several months, but scattered to locations all over the country to prevent the continuation of their work. Ramphele was banished to the northern Transvaal. "After the long detentions of 1976 the state continued to break up and destroy the carefully established network all over the country by consistently removing people." (Wilson 2011: 120) It was hard to maintain the work, as there were not many people left to fill the gap. Nearly all leading spirits were either in detention or banned. Steve was released in December 1976, after 101 days in detention, shortly before Senator Dick Clark, chairman of the US-Senate sub-committee for Africa applied to see him in detention.

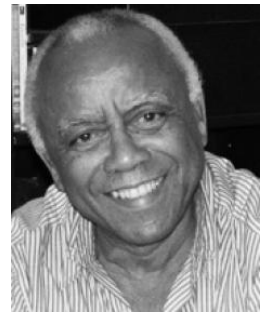
"The scene was darkening, and we all sensed we were living on borrowed time as the enemy became more desperate." Father Aelred Stubbs remembers. (Stubbs 1978: 197) Biko was appointed honorary president of the BPC in order to provide him with the leadership-label necessary to communicate with foreign journalists and political ambassadors. He had an intuitive knowing about whom to trust and whom to avoid. It became of pressing importance to let the outside world know what was going on and to give an inside view on the overall situation of Apartheid South Africa, as the scope of action on a national level had been reduced to an unbearable crawl.



Biko was convinced that any foreign government who boycotted Apartheid would play a crucial role in breaking the power of the regime and further black liberation. He was invited to come to the US, under the auspices of the

USA-SA leadership exchange program but he refused explaining that he would only accept such an invitation when "America had given proof of a radically changed policy towards South Africa" (Wilson 2011: 124)

In August, Biko broke his banning order again to see Neville Alexander in Cape Town. Alexander was a founding member of the National Liberation Front. He was imprisoned from 1964–1974 in Robben Island. Biko wanted to hear what the imprisoned political elite (ANC and PAC leaders) suggested about which path to take. When Alexander was released, he immediately was put under house arrest. Biko did not receive the message, that Alexander cancelled their meeting due to the high-risk Steve's visit would pose to both of them. Alexander's house was monitored all day and night. Peter Jones, a BPC activist and companion, brought Steve there and remembered that they waited for hours, but Neville Alexander refused to see him. They were driving back to King early morning, when the situation seemed less dangerous.



On August 17, 1977 they reached Grahamstown and ran into a roadblock. Both were immediately detained. Jones was released after 533 days without trial. "What happened in room 619 happened countless times. The security laws allowed detainees to be held in terror without any protection" (Wilson 2011: 140) Biko was never to be released alive.

Bantu Steven Biko was killed in detention on September 18, 1977. His death left a huge gap in the Black Consciousness Movement, the fight for black liberation and the lives of the people who loved him.





"He had a much greater fear of betraying himself than a fear of physical violence even to the point of death." (Wilson 2011: 141) Steve explained his attitude towards security police talking about death:

"My attitude is, I'm not going to allow them to carry out their programme faithfully. If they want to beat me five times, they can only do so on conditions that I allow them to beat me five times." And he said to the police men trying to get information, no matter how hard the treatment would get: "If you allow me to respond, I'm certainly going to respond. And I'm afraid you may have to kill me in the process even if it's not your intention." (Biko 1977:153)

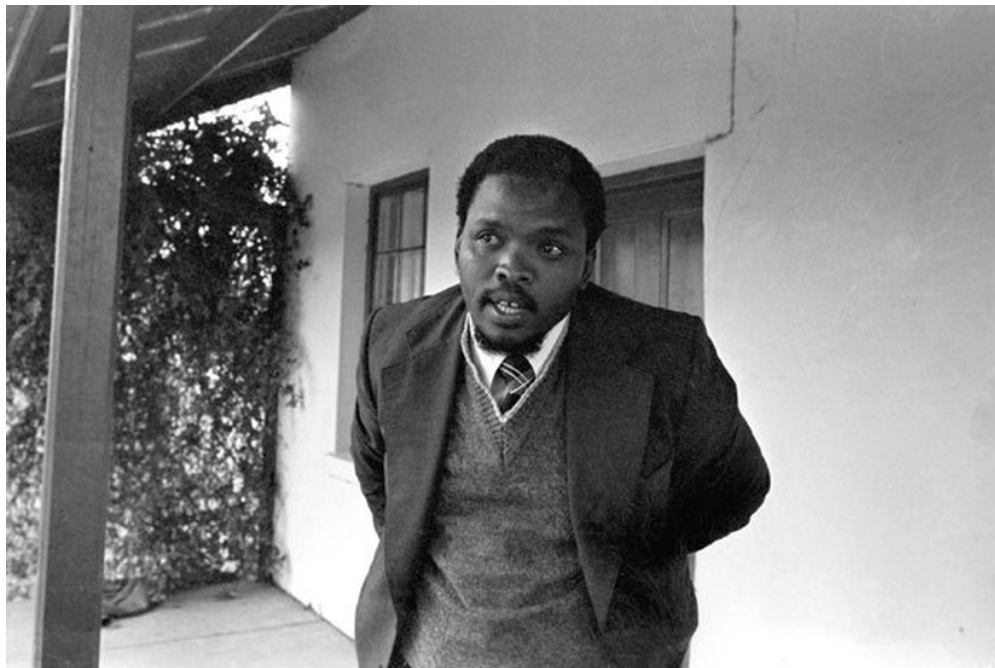


BIKO SPEAKS

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

"The early Biko is trying to justify black withdrawal from integrated organizations, which he believes is a false integration under false and unequal conditions for no useful purpose. The later Biko believes that black confidence and capacity to lead the struggle has been restored, and the time has come to march forward to a new society."

(Mpumlwana 1996: XIX)



THE DEFINITION OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

"BEING BLACK IS NOT A MATTER OF PIGMENTATION"



Black Consciousness was a concept addressed to anyone oppressed. It focused on black South Africans but Biko expanded the concept by stating that "being black is not a matter of pigmentation- being black is a reflection of a mental attitude." (Biko 1971: 48) This is an important part in understanding what Black Consciousness is. It is not merely about color or race. Even if a person is classified as Indian, or as colored in South Africa, this individual is still part of the oppressed race (class) and according to Biko defined as black. Hindered to fully participate in society and enjoy his full human rights. "We [SASO] have in our political manifesto defined blacks as those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspiration. (...) Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being." (Biko 1971: 48)

In Marxist tradition, political philosopher Herbert Marcuse defined "False Consciousness" in the 1960s as the intrinsic ideology that dominates the consciousness of exploited groups, helping to perpetuate the system of

exploitation. (Cf. Langston 1968: n.p.) The Black Consciousness philosophy aimed at changing that. Biko's deep analysis of the system and its dynamics allowed him to create a unique concept. He distinguished between black, non-white and white. By creating these containers, he provided a deeper analysis of blackness. Being non-white did not mean that the person is black. This explains the first definition of "being black is not a matter of pigmentation". Biko explains this point further: "If one's aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment impossible, then that person is a non-white." (Biko 1971: 48) A non-white is also a person who calls a white man "Baas" - an Afrikaans term for master or lord - any non-white who serves in the police force, security force, or working together in any way with the oppressor. (Cf. Biko 1971: 48)

Within the Black Consciousness thought, the exclusion of whites was not in focus, but the unification of black people was. The accusation that BC was a racist response to a racist system fails to understand the motives behind this philosophy. Regarding this accusation Biko tried to explain and stated the following: "What blacks are doing is merely to respond to a situation in which they find themselves the objects of white racism. We are in the position in which we are because of our skin. We are collectively segregated against-what can be more logical than for us to respond as a group? Somehow, however, when blacks want to do their thing the liberal establishment seems to detect an anomaly." (Biko 1970: 25) White liberals, who were fighting on the side of blacks, were worried about the development of the BCM as 'racially exclusivist'. "They want to shy away from all forms of "extremisms", condemning "white supremacy" as being just as bad as "Black Power!" (Biko 1970: 21) The Black Power movement was, at about the same time, on its peak in the United States. "Black People- real black people- are those who can manage to hold their heads high in defiance rather than willingly surrender

their souls to the white man." (Biko 1971: 49)

In a SASO leadership-training course in December 1971 Biko spoke in front of his colleagues. He defined Black Consciousness as the following:

"Briefly defined therefore, Black Consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression- the blackness of their skin- and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. Black Consciousness therefore, takes cognizance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value system, their culture, their religion and their outlook in life." (Biko 1971: 49)

Biko speaks of the need to completely change the underlying system of exploitation. He saw in African Socialism a desirable form of governance for South Africa. The new consciousness of the black man and women - to value themselves as what they really are and not what the racist system wants them to be - should serve as a foundation for a different future. The liberation of the mind stood in the center of the black consciousness philosophy. Biko writes that it was mental bondage, which bounds a man to servitude. Achieving psychological liberation of the black masses, who had been confined and shaped through centuries of racism and paternalism, was pivotal for physical liberation to take place and for racism to be effectively overhauled. (Cf. Hirschmann 1990: 5) "We want to attain the envisioned self which is a free self." (Biko 1971:49)

Biko analyzed racism as being an essential part of the exploitative attitude of the white man. He stated that capitalist exploitation gave way to the discriminatory practice against black people of the world over the last 400 years. *"(...) it is a case of haves against have-nots where whites have been deliberately made haves and blacks have-nots."* (Biko 1971: 50) Black people were made to be in the inferior position in all aspects of life. Apartheid determined who not to marry, where not to work, where not to live, where not to drive, where not to eat, where not to sit, where not to wait, where not to talk, where not to swim. The economic segregation made the black majority an economically disadvantaged group. There were laws that prohibited economic advancement for blacks as a whole, excluding black work force from most positions. Blacks were to fulfill the low qualified, low paid jobs. Apartheid policy occupied all aspects of life of a black person. Biko gave an example, trying to explain the theory of the haves vs. the have-nots as follows: A white worker, even if he was the 'most down-trodden' still had a lot to lose if the Apartheid system would collapse. A unification of the working class across the color line would have severely threatened the system of Apartheid. For that reason, competition along the color line was enhanced and deepened. Laws and regulations protected white workers, putting them in a better position on a legal basis. Biko located high racist elements against blacks in the lower ranks of white working-class society.

"Hence the greatest anti-black feeling is to be found amongst the very poor whites whom the Class Theory calls upon to be with black workers in the struggle for emancipation. This is the kind of twisted logic that the Black Consciousness approach seeks to eradicate. (...)One must immediately dispel the thought that Black Consciousness is merely a methodological or a means towards an end. What Black Consciousness seeks to do is to

produce at the output end of the process real black people who do not regard themselves as appendages of white society." (Biko 1971: 51)

Black solidarity was of severe importance to form a strong opposition to the existing dominant system of racial discrimination. Biko promoted non-violence as a way and means to counteract the brutal system of Apartheid. "No race possesses the monopoly of beauty, intelligence, force, and there is room for all of us at the rendezvous of victory." (Césaire cit. in Biko 1972: 61) *"In an effort to divide the black world terms of aspirations, the powers that be, had evolved a philosophy that stratifies the black world and gives preferential treatment to certain groups."* (Biko 1972: 61) In When in 1968 Biko and others, decided to form an exclusively black student body, he explained: *"The biggest mistake the black world ever made was to assume that whoever opposed apartheid was an ally. For a long time, the black world has been looking only at the governing party and not so much at the whole power structure as the object of their rage."* (Biko 1971: 63)

Biko had to justify why it was so important for the black students to have their own bodies of representation and be spearheading their own aspirations. He knew that the majority of whites did not mix up in black politics, but he was curious about the motives of that *"bunch of nonconformists (...) do-gooders (...) liberals, leftists"* because *"these are the people who argue, that they are not responsible for white racism and the country's 'inhumanity to the black man'. These are the people who claim that they too feel the oppression just as acutely as the blacks and therefore should be jointly involved in the black man's struggle for a place under the sun."* (Biko 1970: 20) Biko called them the people who claim to have *"black souls wrapped up in white skins"*, a straight reference to Frantz Fanon's masterpiece "Black Skin White Mask". (Biko 1972: 63f, Fanon 2008 [1952]) Biko showed that the white liberal had

a curious role in the black man's history ever since. Only few black organizations of the past had been under black direction. White liberals sought the solution to the problem of Apartheid in a bilateral approach, where black and white would work together. This idea might be relevant in a society where nobody is discriminated against, but in a racially segregated society, there would always be a huge gap between the experienced realities of black and white everyday life.

"(...) everything they do is directed at finally convincing the white electorate that the black man is also a man and that at some future date he should be given a place at the white man's table. Hence the multiracial political organizations and parties and the "nonracial" student organizations, all of which insist on integration not only as an end goal but also as a means." (Biko 1970: 20f.)

Biko labeled the white liberal's type of integration as undesirable and artificial, because *"the people, forming the integrated complex have been extracted from various segregated societies with their inbuilt complexes of superiority and inferiority and these continue to manifest themselves in the "nonracial" set-up of the integrated complex."* (Biko 1970: 20) It is an integration that puts the suppressed group in the moral system of the group in power. *"It is rather like expecting the slave to work together with the slave-master's son to remove all the conditions leading to the former's enslavement. (...) Once the various groups within a given community have asserted themselves to the point that mutual respect has to be shown then you have the ingredients for a true and meaningful integration."* (Biko 1970: 21) This statement makes clear that Biko was not against integration per se, but *"(...) a breakthrough into white society by blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of*

behaviour set up by and maintained by whites, then YES I am against it." (Biko 1970: 24) Integration as a means suggests that solving the problem of discrimination would be possible, while the patterns of society stayed unaltered.

"At the heart of true integration is the provision for each man, each group to rise up and attain the envisioned self. Each group must be able to attain its style of existence without encroaching on or being thwarted by another. Out of this mutual respect for each other and complete freedom of self-determination there will obviously arise a genuine fusion of the life-styles of the various groups. This is true integration." (Biko 1970: 21)

Till this point was reached, it would be impossible for the black man to work side by side with white liberals, relying on them to free them out of oppression. A real overthrow of existing patterns of power-relations and economic structure was aspired.

"The liberal must understand that the days of Noble Savage are gone; that the blacks do not need a go-between in this struggle for their own emancipation. No TRUE liberal should feel any resentment at the growth of Black Consciousness. Rather, all true liberals should realize that the place of their fight for justice is within their white society. (...)The liberal must apply himself with absolute dedication to the idea of educating his white brothers that the history of the country may have to be rewritten and that we may live in 'a country where colour will not serve to put a man in a box'." (Biko 1970: 25)

In its early years, whites were excluded from participation in SASO politics. However, later on, many people who engaged with the BC programs were

white. Close associates of Biko were white. They were fighting for the common goal: equality for all people, regardless of race.

"The call for Black Consciousness is the most positive call to come from any group in the black world for a long time. It is more than just a reactionary rejection of whites by blacks. The quintessence of it is the realization by the blacks that, in order to feature well in this game of power politics, they have to use the concept of group power and to build a strong foundation for this. Being an historically, politically, socially and economically disinherited and dispossessed group, they have the strongest foundation from which to operate." (Biko 1972: 68)



Biko Family Defiant
© Hulton Archive / Getty Images

Therefore, the philosophy of Black Consciousness expresses group pride rather than exclusionism. *"At the heart of this kind of thinking is the realization by the blacks that the most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."* (Biko 1972: 68)

"(...) no matter what a white man does, the colour of his skin- his passport to privilege- will always put him miles ahead of the black man. Thus in the ultimate analysis no white person can escape being part of the oppressor camp." (Biko 1970: 23) For the emancipation of the black man, there can only be one-way: self-empowerment.

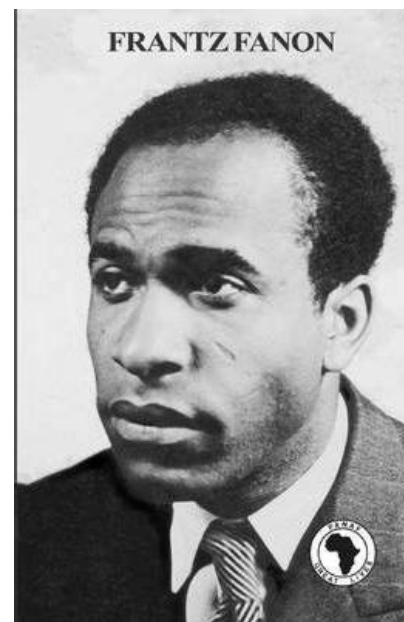
INFERIORITY COMPLEX VS. SUPERIORITY COMPLEX



"From this it becomes clear that as long as blacks are suffering from inferiority complex- a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision- they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his own sake." (Biko 1970: 21)

Biko states that it was in the black man's hand, to deliberate himself from oppression. One step in the process was to recognize the fact that both sides, the black and the white people of South Africa were downtrodden by racial jurisdiction. They were miseducated to believe that there is a real difference between a black man and a white man, between a colored girl and a white girl. Those created realities were introduced by colonialism. Inferior-superior, black-white complexes started to dominate the thinking. In reading Fanon, Biko and his comrades discovered some inspiring messages, which they saw relevant for South Africa.

In *Black Souls White Masks* Fanon mentioned the factor, that although the white colonizers had always been fewer in number, they never felt inferior. The black man, however, was made to feel inferior at the moment the white man decided to define the black man as slave. (Cf. Fanon 2008[1952]: 73) "The problem of colonization, therefore, comprises not only the intersection of historical and objective conditions but also man's attitude toward these conditions." (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 65)



Fanon recognized an unconscious desire by the black man to change color to avoid further discrimination. He concluded that it was important for the black man to realize this voice inside, because *"once his motives have been identified, my objective will be to enable him to choose action (or passivity) with respect to the real source of conflict, i.e., the social structure."* (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 80) To overcome this complex of self-contempt Black Consciousness saw the correction of false images as crucial. Main aspects to re-define the black man's self-worth were education, history, culture, economics. Biko speaks of a process of acculturation that took place since the first European did go on shore in 1652, where *"the African began to lose a grip on himself and his surroundings. (...) Somehow Africans are not expected to have any deep understanding of their own culture or even of themselves. Other people have become authorities on all aspects of the African life or to be more accurate on BANTU life."* (Biko 1971: 40f.)

The use of certain terminology was effective in alienating the black man from himself. Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* is of theoretical relevance. Biko was intrigued with the writings of Frantz Fanon, who - influenced by Hegel's

master-slave dialectic - used the concept for analyzing the 'psychology of the oppressed'. Fanon quotes Hegel: "Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by acknowledged or recognized." (Hegel cit. in Fanon 2008[1952]: 191) When alone, the self does not need definition. But living in a society, the other - as reflection - creates the self. The self is constructed by the moral codes and standards that exist within a certain space. Humans need recognition to create a feeling of worthiness and status. It is therefore 'the other' who defines the self and vice versa. As Fanon explains, this concept also happened between white and black, when the white master 'recognized' the black slave. In the Hegelian master/slave dialectic "an absolute reciprocity" exists. It is the slave who defines the status of the master. And it is the master who defines the status of the slave. If there was no slave, there cannot be a master.



Translated to the South African context, there would not be a superior white man, if there was no inferior black man. The color problem would cease to exist. Fanon also quotes Jean-Paul Sartre, who discussed Négritude (in his

essay Orphée Noir- preface to Senghors's Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie et Malgache) as an "anti-racist racism" and defined it as an antithesis to the thesis of white racism, which is created to disband itself eventually in multi-racialism.

"The thesis, the anti-thesis and the synthesis have been mentioned by some great philosophers as the cardinal points around which any social revolution revolves." (Biko 1973: 90) Steve Biko made an overall analysis of Apartheid, based on the Hegelian Theory of Dialectics, concluding the following: *The thesis is "white racism"; antithesis is "solid black unity". The synthesis resulting from the regained balance between black and white would be an "egalitarian non-racial society".*

"This is why we reject the beggar tactics that are being forced on us by those who wish to appease our cruel masters. This is where the SASO message and cry; "Black Man, you are on your own!" becomes relevant." (Biko 1973: 91)

EDUCATION & REWRITING HISTORY



"The homes are different, the streets are different, the lightning is different, so you tend to begin to feel that there is something incomplete in your humanity and that completeness goes with whiteness." (Biko 1976: 101)

The reality of segregation goes along with the notion of good and bad, superior and inferior. It is an everyday reality, created by law, where black people live in poverty, physical and psychological, constantly confronted with discrimination.



In the Black Consciousness philosophy, the liberation of the mind was defined as the ultimate requirement for a holistic liberation from oppression. Education was an integral part of the deliverance from oppressive forces. The regimes' laws to constrain the ways and means in which the black people were educated, was essential for a perpetuation of hierarchy. The Bantu Education Act introduced in 1953 was directed at the division of educational system along racial lines, for white and black, as well a separation along ethnic labels. (Cf. Norval 1996: 131) The original document of the Bantu Education Act 47 of 1953, Nr 2 (b) says the following:

"There shall cease to be vested in the executive committee of a province any powers, authorities and functions, and the provincial council of a province shall cease to be competent to make ordinances, in relation to native education." (Bantu Education Act 1953) In 1968 the government spending on a black pupil was only 6% of that of a white pupil. Inequalities were huge and obvious. (Cf. Gilliom 2009: 196) "By bringing the bulk of urban Africans into a few years of basic schooling, Bantu education provided a mechanism of social control, which could be used to fight crime and political militancy."

(Hyslop 1999: 54) Furthermore, it produced a semi-skilled workforce, which was needed within the urban areas. Biko described that the mind of the oppressed was virtually overcrowded by the topics the white regime considered appropriate for South Africa's people of color. There were no black heroes, no black heroines, tradition was labeled barbarism and underdeveloped. *"Strangely enough, everybody has come to accept that the history of South Africa (...) starts in 1652."* (Biko 1971: 70) These means proved to be effective to alienate black from their own self. Fanon defined this alienation as a negation of the own culture and the black self through seeing the self through the eyes of the white oppressor, connecting everything that is good with whiteness. He also called this process lactification, the desire to become white, or whiter than one is. (Cf. Fanon [1952] 2008: 80) "No wonder the African child learns to hate his heritage in the days of school." (Biko 1970: 29) How we see ourselves is connected to the collective story: "It may be our minds that govern us, our souls that guide us, but it is our bodies on which our histories are written, in which our stories are embedded." (Fiffer/ Fiffer 1999: xi) Biko, in analyzing this process, declared that the black man *"tends to find solace only in close identification with the white society."* (Biko 1970: 29)

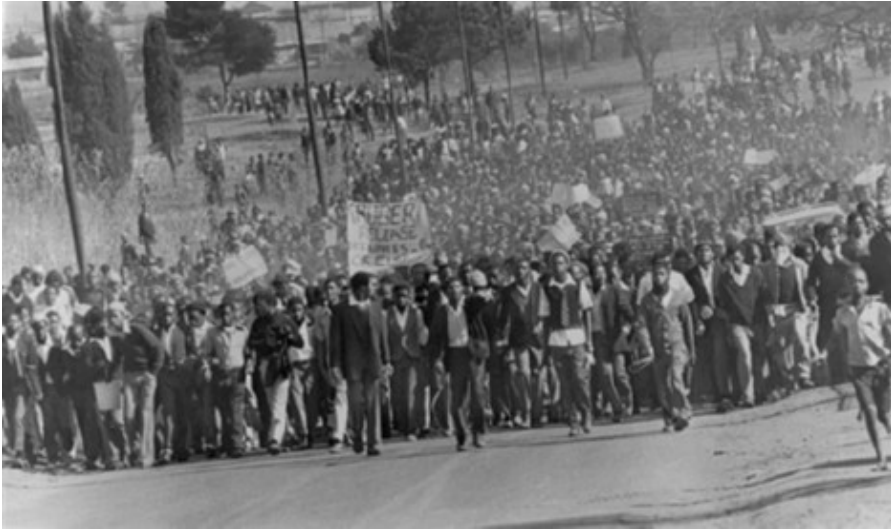
Double Consciousness is a term W.E.B DuBois, one of the leading Pan African philosophers of the US had coined in 1903. According to its definition, double consciousness arises out of the process of looking at one's self through someone else's eyes. DuBois speaks of the oppressed to which a true self-consciousness is denied because the dominant culture devalues them. (Cf. Warfield Rawls 2000: 243f.) *"I did not create a meaning for myself; the meaning that was already there, waiting."* (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 113) What Fanon describes here, is not only the label of race, which binds one to a certain scheme, but more exactly all the associations, stereotypes, values and

limitations that come with skin-color. It is here where Biko and the Black Consciousness see the opportunity for change. Black Consciousness had to be directed to - and strengthened by - the past. "A people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine." (Biko n.y: 29)

"To add to the white-oriented education received, the whole history of the black people is presented as a long lamentation of repeated defeats. Strangely enough, everybody has come to accept that the history of South Africa starts in 1652. No doubt this is to support the often-told lie that blacks arrived in this country at about the same time as the whites. Thus, a lot of attention has to be paid to our history if we as blacks want to aid each other in our coming into consciousness. We have to rewrite our history and describe in it the heroes that formed the core of resistance to the white invaders, more has to be revealed and stress has to be laid on the successful nationbuilding attempts by people like Shaka, Moshoeshoe and Hintsa. It is through the evolution of our genuine culture that our identity can be fully discovered." (Biko 1972: 70)

Fanon, who analyzed the society in Martinique and the use of French language stated: *"One of the most direct routes of racial alienation is through the adaption of the language of the oppressor."* (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 114) Biko summed up: *"You tend to think that it is not just a matter of language, you tend to tie up also with intelligence in a sense, you tend to feel that that guy is better equipped than you mentally."* (Biko 1976: 107)





When Afrikaans was made obligatory in schools as the language of instruction, nationwide protest occurred. What started as a student protest against the forced introduction of the

oppressor's language emerged into a nationwide movement against oppression. After the Soweto Uprising, with its many deaths, the country was in a state of emergency. As Lou Turner and John Alan write in the analysis of Soweto and Steven Biko, in August 1976 "scarcely a day (...) passed without police shooting down demonstrators somewhere, as township after township exploded. By September 2, 1976, the revolt had spread to the 'Coloured' masses



(...), when 3,000

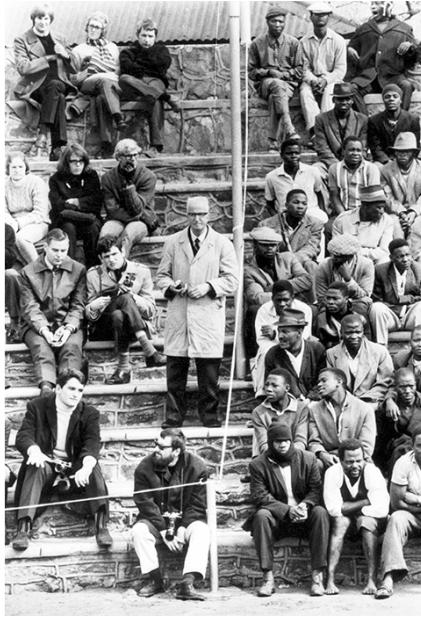
Coloured youth brought the conflict for the very first time directly to a white area itself-downtown Capetown." (Turner 1978: 10)



Black workers held a three-day general strike to gain the right to withhold their

labor. This strike sent shock waves through the economy. The repercussion of these events showed that the white system of Apartheid "was nakedly exposed, disclosing that its very existence was dependent on Black labour." (Turner/Alan 1978: 10)

ECONOMIC OPPRESSION - "HAVES" VS. THE "HAVE NOTS"



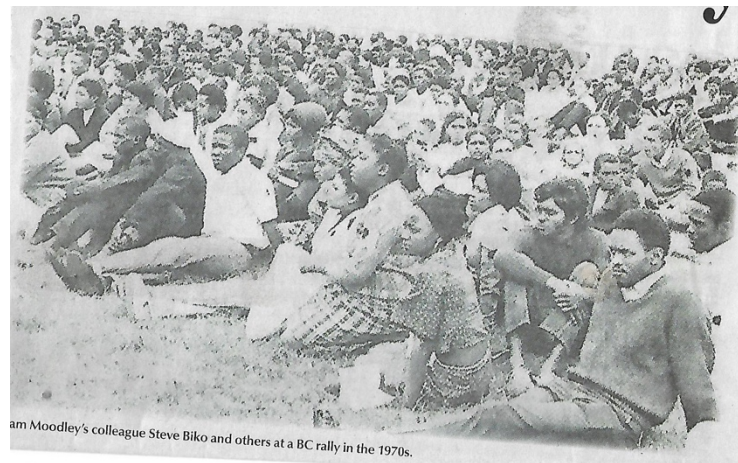
The economic exploitation of black labor was a main pillar of Apartheid economy. The white group was on the receiving end to enjoy the privileges of a well-functioning economy. The racial legislature created an unjust situation, by first creating a separate geographical space for the black population (starting already in 1913 and 1936 with the Land Acts, continuing in 1950 with the Urban Areas Act, which declared the cities "white only", no black settlement was allowed in the urban areas). Most of the land allocated to black people was difficult to cultivate due to poor soil. The Apartheid regime tried to avoid that blacks were able to remain solely in subsistence economy. It was decades before the NP came to power that the cornerstone of this policy was laid. It was crucial to force the majority of Africans into the system of wage labor to provide the work force that was needed in the mines and other industries. This was done by creating a system of head tax for all men of color. *"The logic behind white domination is to prepare*



the black man for the subservient role in his country." (Biko 1970: 28) Biko saw the economic exploitation of the black man as the basis or motivation for racist discrimination. *"To a large extent the evil-doers have succeeded in producing at the output end of their machine a kind of black man who is man only in form. This is the extent to which the process of dehumanization has advanced."* (Biko 1970: 28) The reason for this dehumanization is the plain reduction of a man to his labor power. As Marx had stated, this kind of alienation - which separates a man from himself, by reducing him to his labor power - makes him an alienated form of himself. In Apartheid there are two streams of alienation. One is through exploitation. The other through racial discrimination and oppression. In Biko's words:

"There is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons. The leaders of the white community had to create some kind of barrier between black and whites so that the whites could enjoy privileges at the expense of blacks and still feel free to give a moral justification for the obvious exploitation that pricked even the hardest of white consciences. (...) In order to believe this seriously, it needs to convince itself of all the arguments that support the lie. It is not surprising, therefore, that in South Africa, after generations of exploitation, white people on the whole have come to believe in the inferiority of the black man, so much so that while the race problem started as an offshoot of the economic greed exhibited by white people it now has become a serious problem on its own. White people now despise black people, not because they need to reinforce their attitude and so justify their position of privilege but simply because they actually believe that black is inferior and bad. This is the basis upon which whites are working in South Africa. And it is what makes South African society racist." (Biko 1973: 88)

Biko analyzed the situation of economic exploitation of the majority of the South African population and its ramifications *"[a]ll in all the black man has become a shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity."* (Biko 1970: 29). Biko argued that the majority remained in the stage of exploitation because the options for change seemed unattainable within Apartheid.



Sam Moodley's colleague Steve Biko and others at a BC rally in the 1970s.

"Being part of an exploitative society in which we are often the direct objects of exploitation, we need to evolve a strategy towards our economic situation. We are aware that the blacks are still colonized even within the borders of South Africa. Their cheap labor has helped to make South Africa what it is today. Our money from the townships takes a one-way journey to white shops and white banks, and all we do in our lives is pay the white man either with labor or in coin. Capitalist exploitative tendencies, coupled with the overt arrogance of white racism, has conspired against us. Thus in South Africa now it is very expensive to be poor." (Biko 1973: 96)

"OUR STRATEGY FOR LIBERATION"

ACHIEVING THE VISION OF A "TRUE HUMANITY"



"The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself, to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward looking process. This is the definition of 'Black Consciousness'". (Biko 1970: 29)

In an interview in 1977, Biko's last interview before his death, later published under the title of "Our Strategy for Liberation", he sums up the force of Black Consciousness thought and politics. The interview shows the transformation

and growth of his position since the founding of the BCM. A lot had happened since the emergence of Black Consciousness..

"We try to get blacks in conscientization to grapple realistically with their problems (...) to develop what one might call an awareness, a physical awareness of their situation (...) to be able to analyze it and provide answers for themselves." (Biko cit. in Arnold 1979: 33)

The individual man or woman is the micro-place of change; the starting point for subsequent change on the macro-level. It is the process of change, from being an object of oppression and racism to becoming a subject determined by one's own thoughts. It was inevitable to reject the connotations and prejudices that came with skin-color. The feeling of inferiority was connected to skin-color. It was important to recognize and consciously reject these ascriptions. Only then a real liberation of the mind could begin. In this context of redefinition, learning the true African history with its glorious kingdoms and vast achievements was important, as well as changing the language of the system – for example using the term black instead of non-white. The roots of real self-esteem lay in the respect for and knowledge of the past and a sense of awareness as well as pride of what was gained and achieved.

The first important step on the organizational basis towards self-definition of the black man was to distance himself from the paternalism of white liberals within the oppositional ranks. *"The white man specifically has got to decide whether he is part of the problem – in other words whether he is part of the total white power structure that we regard as a problem – or he accedes and becomes part of the black man, that is the target of the problem. (...) In this context because of the privileges accorded to them by legislation and because of their continual maintenance of an oppressive*

regime whites have defined themselves as part of the problem. (...) Therefore we believe that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realizing our aspirations, whites must be excluded."(Biko 1977: 122f.)

A system of fear was created by the government. Its security system was more likely to be *"force-oriented rather than intelligence-oriented"*. *"The tripartite system of fear – that of white fearing the blacks, blacks fearing whites and the government fearing blacks and wishing to allay the fear amongst whites – makes it difficult to establish rapport amongst the two segments of society."*(Biko: p.79) A cycle where one fear is feeding the other. The system of fear had to be overcome to act against the oppressive government. Black Consciousness argued that changes could only occur, when the black man starts to formulate their aspirations. And black people start to create programs for black people, without the leadership of whites. The main element to start anew was to overcome what was created throughout the last hundreds of years: "a psychological feeling of inferiority" which was deliberately cultivated by the system of discrimination. (Cf. Biko 1971: 79f) Universities were unable to produce useful leadership for black people. *"Everybody found it more comfortable to lose himself in a particular profession, to make money. (...) Through our political articulation of the aspirations of black people, many black people have come to appreciate the need to stand up and be counted against the system. There is far more political talk now, far more political debate and far more condemnation of the system from average black people than there has ever been since possibly 1960 and before."*(Biko 1977: 145)

Biko spoke of *"the essence of a united whole"* to attain an egalitarian society. Not only must oppressed people form a unity, but also a political unity must be attained. ANC, PAC and the Black Consciousness movement decided to

form a liberation group, as their power in unity would have been way stronger than in division. After the Soweto uprising in 1976, all Black Consciousness organizations had been banned. Homes and offices of SASO and BPC members had been raided and most leading persons were detained. The Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) was created in 1978, aiming at the establishment of a non-racial and socialist workers republic.

On the question of non-violence, Biko argued that Black Consciousness and the BPC always stood for a non-violent solution of the problem of inequality. He explains that it was in the hands of the National Party to decide in which direction the fight against Apartheid would go. If the government would keep using violence against the opposition instead of talking, the reaction would likely become violent at one point. Biko was sure that the people would reach a state where they were willing to risk their lives. He foresaw a battle between white and black. The incidences since Soweto had caused a lot of fear within white society. The government was realizing that their power was at risk. (Cf. Biko 1977: 151) Biko also pointed at the vast numbers of blacks who did not see a solution through non-violent means anymore.

"I think there is no running away from the fact that now in South Africa there is such an ill distribution of wealth that any form of political freedom which does not touch on the proper distribution of wealth will be meaningless. The whites have locked up within a small minority of themselves the greatest proportion of the country's wealth. If we have a mere change of face of those in governing position what is likely to happen is that black people will continue to be poor, and you will see a few blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society will be run almost as of yesterday. So for a meaningful change to appear there needs to

be an attempt at reorganising the whole economic policies within this particular country." (Biko 1977: 149)

This quote shows where the Black Consciousness thought was headed, i.e. changing the whole system of society. The redistribution of resources, such as wealth and land would be crucial. A mere change of "color" would not change the deeply imbedded system of inequality that was cultivated for centuries. The whole system would need to be recreated to put more focus on humanity instead of money accumulation in the hand of a ruling elite. The National Party lived in fear of being overthrown by the oppressed majority. They created laws and used violent methods to protect their position on top of society. *"Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grass-roots build-up of black consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim."* (Biko 1970: 21) Biko examined repeatedly that black people's money is floating back to the white community. As the system was based on the enrichment of whites, it was not easy to circumvent the support of the white system. By using white-owned transport, buying in white-owned stores etc., black people were supporting the system. Therefore, it was inevitable to create own institutions and to *"examine the possibilities of establishing business co-operatives whose interests will be ploughed back into the community"*. (Biko 1973: 97) Organizational development was important to channel the forces.

"The last step in Black Consciousness is to broaden the base of our operation. One of the basic tenets of Black Consciousness is totality of involvement." (Biko 1973: 97) This meant that all blacks must unify. All kinds of fragmentation, as promoted by the Bantustan strategy to split up the force of the oppressed people, had to be rejected. For only unity could bring about the needed strength.

"We are oppressed not as individuals, not as Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use this very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group. (...) In a true bid for change we have to take off our coats, be prepared to lose our comfort and security, our jobs and positions of prestige, and our families, for just as it is true that 'leadership and security are basically incompatible', a struggle without causalities is no struggle."(Biko quoting Stokely Carmichael, 1973: 97)The liberation struggle should ultimately lead to a non-racial society, where man is just man for his own sake. Biko calls it "a quest for the true humanity".

"We see a complete non-racial society. We don't believe, for instance, in the so-called guarantees for minority rights, because guaranteeing minority rights implies recognition of portions of the community on a race basis. We believe that in our country there shall be no minority, there shall be no majority, just the people. And those will have the same political rights before the law. So in a sense it will be a completely non-racial egalitarian society."(Biko 1977: 150)

Biko explained that Black Consciousness was aiming at achieving an open society. During the BPC-SASO trial in 1974 Biko was asked, what he meant by the phrase "the open society". He explains to the judge: *"We regard an open society as one which fulfils all the three points I have mentioned just now [one man, one vote, no reference to color]. Where there can be free participation, in the economic, social and (...) equal opportunity and so on."* (Biko 1976: 122)



*"In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon
South Africa the greatest gift possible- a more
human face."*

(Biko 1973: 98)

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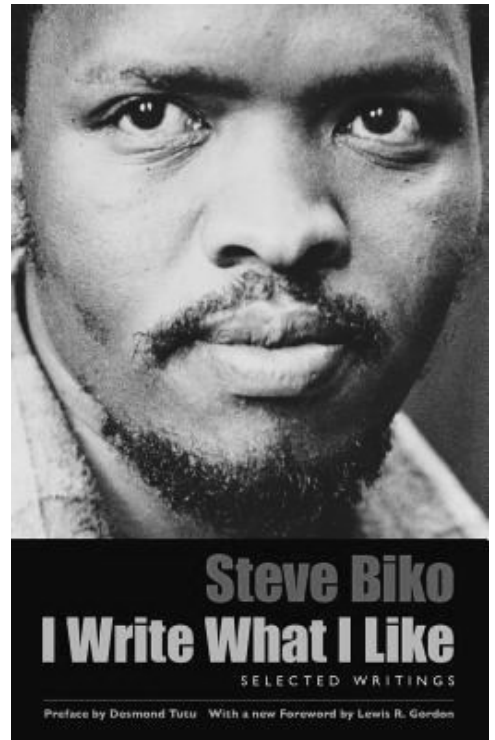
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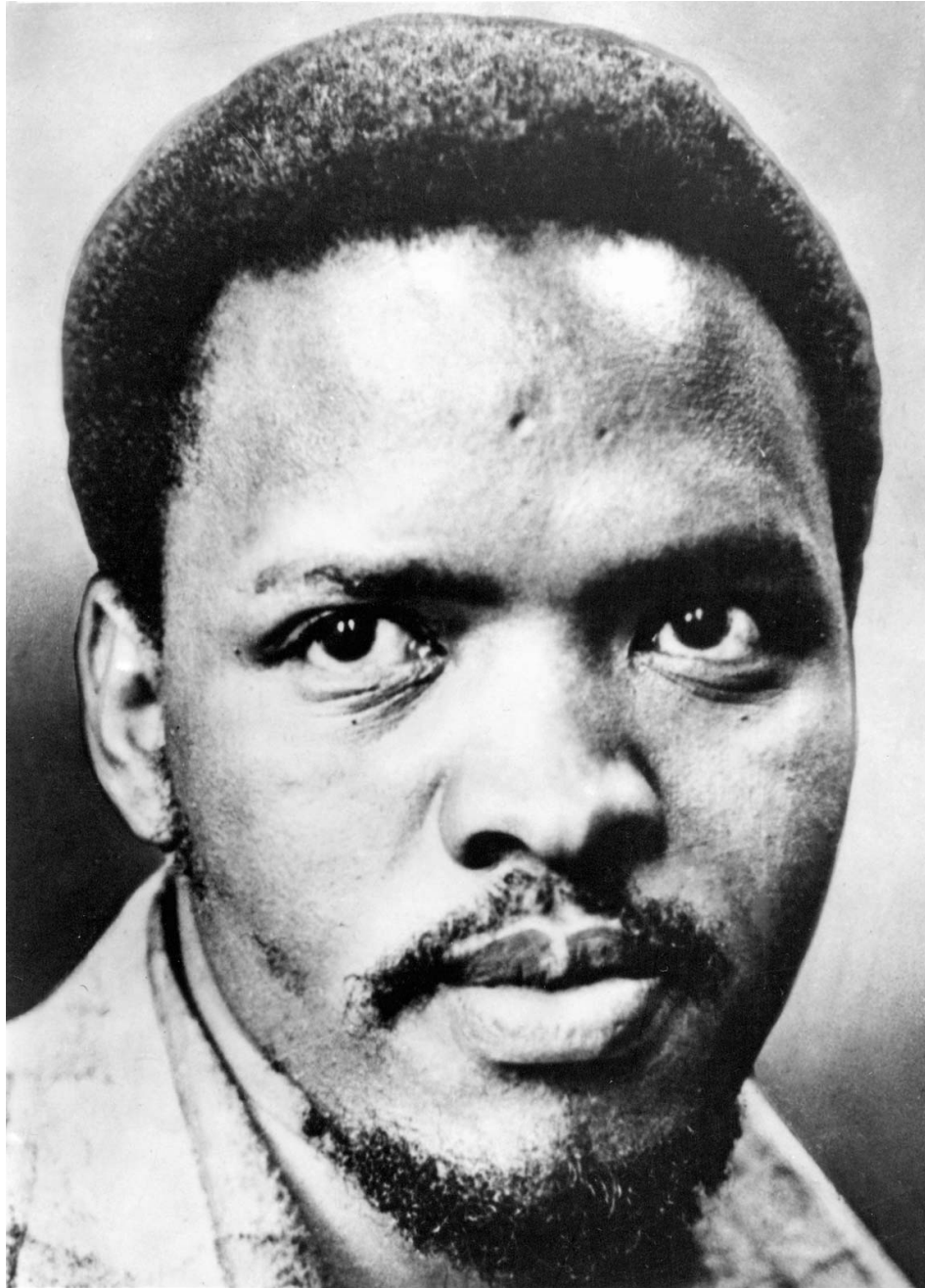
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