

# Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity

**By Steve Biko**

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# Steve Biko



- Martyr of the anti-apartheid movement and founder of the Black Consciousness Movement
- Born In King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa
- Early Education
- Enrolled in the University of Natal Medical School
- South African Student Organization(SASO)

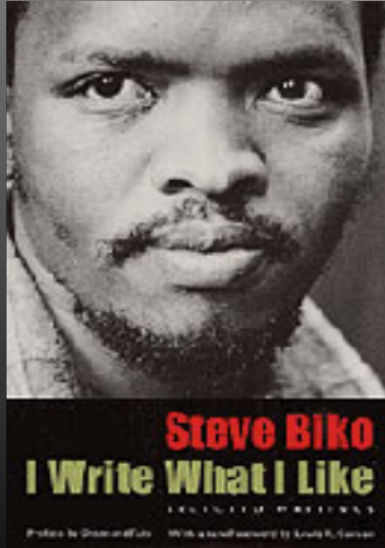
2-was the third child born into a regular family, but his father died when he was four. He still managed to excell in school but he got expelled from his high school due to his “anti-establishment behavior( anti-apartheid, poltical) had an earl yinterest in politics./trensfered to catholic boarding school

3-he still went on to college where he received a scholarship and it is there where he began to question the apartheid system and the conditions that his people had to endure.

4-He was initially involved with the multiracial [National Union of South African Students](#) (union dominated by white liberals), but after he became convinced that Black, [Indian](#) and [Coloured](#) students needed an organization of their own, he helped found the [South African Students' Organisation](#) (SASO) in 1968, and was elected its first president. SASO evolved into the influential [Black Consciousness Movement](#) (BCM)

5-As one of the founders and then elected pres. of the Black Peoples Convention in 1972, (brought together roughly 70 black conscious groups) he was expelled from medical school.

# Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity



- Steve Biko is banned 1973
- "I write what I Like"
- Writings from 1969 to 1972
- "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

In 1973 he was banned under the Apartheid government. And could no longer do public speeches/ was only allowed to speak to one person at a time in public settings in attempt to suppress the rising political movement. *Write What I Like* contains a selection of Biko's writings from 1969, when he became the president of the [South African Student Organization](#), to 1972, when he was prohibited from publishing(1973).

*Write What I Like* reflects Biko's conviction that black people in [South Africa](#) could not be liberated until they united to break their chains of servitude, a key tenet of the [Black Consciousness Movement](#) that he helped found.

1. The reading was taken out of a portion of Steven Biko's I write What I like.

## Black Consciousness



- “Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realisation 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 to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude.”
- Group pride and determination

Black consciousness was a movement that sought to unify black south Africans who were oppressed due to the color of their skin. No matter what tribe or town you belong to, status, or schooling, the foundation of our oppression is most importantly built upon the fact that we are black and because of such inferior. ( and because of this.. The list trickles down into other factors and justification, but it all starts with the fact that we are black) so Biko urges the black south Africans to unify under the premise of their blackness to operate as a group.

“ Thought that BC would lead to group pride and determination so that the South African Colored people could be confident in demanding their freedom

He believed that BC was the key to physical freedom and Mental Freedom -picture goes along with Cabral and how the oppressed needs to seize the culture/identity of the ppl or their rule would not be effective.

# Colour Issue in South African Politics



- The color Question in South African Politics
  - Moral Justifications
- Shift from economic reasons to the black man being viewed as inferior
- Race Problem
  - Two Fighting Dimensions

# False Political Coalition Between Blacks and Liberal Whites

- Wrong analysis of the situation
- Basic problem as viewed by both sides
- “Everybody in the corn missions knows what’s right but all are looking for the most seemly way of dodging the responsibility to saying whats right

Biko says this to explain that “you can try to dodge the responsibility by seting up laws here and ther and separate schooling and the bantu states etc, but all you’re doing is dodging the issue and not coming up w/ a concrete solution. **You can dodge the responsinbilty of doing something about the issue to to the level of comfort the colonizers are experiencing, but that does not erase nor solve the issues at hand.**



# Religion and Philosophy of the Black Conscious Movement

- R-examination of Christianity
- Their Religion was wrong and barbarous - contradictions
- Redefining religion in the context of the Black Consciousness Movement
- Form own strategies
- Examine and question old concepts, values, and systems
- “If one is free at heart , no chains can bind one to servitude, but if one’s mind is manipulated and controlled by the oppressor .. Than there will be nothing the oppressed can do to scare his powerful masters.”

The Religion brought over by the missionaries was not completely wrong but misused and it needs to be re-examined and defined in the context of the black conscious movement

**-with the ultimate acceptance of western religion, down went traditional African values. This caused strife btwn. The converted and from the other and were taught to despise and b ashamed those who defended the indigenous**

Missionaries were the 1<sup>st</sup> ppl to come and relate to blacks in a human way- under colonization mvmnt to “civilize and educate” the savages. They also believed in one God/ worshiped God and all aspects of their life as opposed to isolation frm various aspects of life----- **however the basic intention went further to judge perceptions of beauty/moral judgement & sought to infuse euro identity n2 these societies**

they were told that their religion was wrong in barbarous, however, there are some traces of Christianity in early African religion

4-Contradictions= missionaries argued that theirs was a scientific religion and theirs superstitious all in spite of the biological discrepancy in at the base of Christianity

**QUITE A LARGE GROUP OF BLACK PPL IN SOUTH AFR. ARE STILL CHRISTIANS STILL LIVING IN CONFESSION OUT OF THE ASTR MATR**



# Education

- What's being taught in the schools

-Needs to be redefined to bring back structure in the home

“In being forced to accept the Anglo-Boer culture, the blacks have allowed themselves to be at the mercy of the white man and to have him as their eternal supervisor.”



-SAME AS THE CONTEXT W/ MISSIONARIES. --- CHILDREN WERE TAUGHT TO QUESTION THE VALUES OF AND COSTUMS OF THEIR SOCIETY

-THUS, CHILDREN/PARENTS SAW LIFE DIFFERENTLY WHICH LED TO LOSS OF RESPECT FROM EACH GROUP, WHICH GOES AGAINST THE AFRICAN SOCIETAL RULES (IT'S A CARDINAL SIN 4 CHILDREN TO LOSE RESPECT 4 THEIR PARENTS)

-TAUGHT BY SCHOOLS TO DISREGARD FAMILY TEACHINGS/ THUS IS FORCED TO ACCEPT THE EUROPEAN CULTURE

**-BCM SEEKS TO ERADICATE THE ALLOWANCE OF BLACKS BEING @ THE MERCY OF THE COLONIZER WHO TELLS THEM HOW GOOD THEY ARE AND MAKES THEM ASHAMED OF BEING WHO THEY WERE CREATED AS.**

# Culture

- History and culture
- Freedom through culture
- Restoring cultural importance

“We must restore to the black man the great importance we used to give to human relations, the high regard for people and their property and for life in general; to reduce the triumph of technology over man and the materialistic element that is slowly creeping into our society”

-Jst as Cabarl. This reading brings attention to the fact that colonialism goes further to not only take control of the native, but must turn and disfigure that person's history and culture in order to fully seize control.

-Great attention must be paid to history in coming to consciousness of our “blackness”

**HISTORY: WE HAVE TO REWRITE OUR HISTORY/ PRODUCE IN IT THE HEROES THAT FORMED THE CORE OF RESISTANCE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN LOOKED OVER BY EURO'S THROUGH BIASED STORIES WRITTEN ABOUT THEM**

**CULTURE MUST BE RELATED IN CONCRETE TERMS IN ORDER TO RELATE THE PAST TO THE PRESENT – TO SHOW A POS EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN BLACK MAN**

-African culture has continued to develop as opposed to the “return of the bush concept” that suggests them to be nothing but drunkards and sinful, barbarous creatures.

# Economics

- Poverty
- Organizational development of blacks
- Totality of involvement

-since we are day by day being exploited we need to find a strategy to our economic situation. As of now all we do in our lives is pay the white man either with labor or in coin.

-**POVERTY**:the poor ppl stay the furthest fm town/ spend more\$ on transportation to wrk w/ the whites --- the black ppl are the ones nonetheless who are poor but are plagued w/ expenses and disparities (schol books, wlk long distances on tarred roads-new shoes, \$ on fines due to restrictive laws, no hospitals-have to pay for medical care)

**USE ECONOMIC POWER AND EXAMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING BUSINESS CO-OPS, WHERE FUNDS WOULD GO BACK DIRECTLY TO THE COMMUNITY**

**TOTALITY OF INVOLVEMENT**: blacks must sit as one unit and no fragmentation or distraction fm the outside could be tolerated. b/c we are oppressed not as individuals but b/c of the color of their skin

