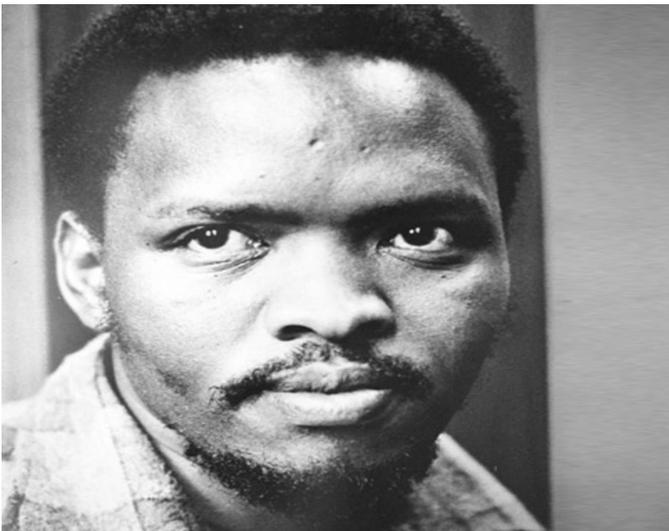




## A STEVE BIKO JOURNEY TO MARTYRDOM

Bantu Biko was born on 18 December 1946 in Tylden, and grew up in Ginsberg in Qonce in the Eastern Cape. We use the indigenous Qonce instead of “King William’s Town” because we do not understand how a British King could have a town in Azania. Biko was so ahead of his time that it can be said that special human beings like him occur once in a generation.



Biko had the PAC or ANC to join, but he chose to establish his own Movement with a distinct philosophy and political line. Historians say there was a “political lull” in Azania at the time Biko and his Comrades rekindled and fanned the fires of the Azanian Revolution. The people were too scared to be associated with the struggle after the banning of the ANC and PAC by the white settler-colonial regime. Once Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement marched forward, in no time Azania was in flames in the name of the 1976 June 16 Uprising. When Biko was later asked about the poten-

cy of the BC philosophy, he answered in one word, “Soweto”.

Hereunder, we provide his Steps to Death:

**18 AUGUST 1977:** Biko and Cde Peter Jones are arrested at a makeshift roadblock in Makhanda (Grahamstown?). Biko is transported to the Walmer Police Station in Port Elizabeth where he remains on handcuffs for 20 days before he was transferred to the Security Police interrogation headquarters called the Sanlam Building.

**6 SEPTEMBER 1977:** He is transferred to the Sanlam Building where he sustained a brain injury after being tortured and brutally assaulted by 5 racist policemen. He was bleeding profusely, but he was forced to remain standing with no medical help.

**7 SEPTEMBER 1977:** At long last, the police call in a Dr Lang who finds “nothing wrong” with Biko despite his badly swollen face, hands and feet. Strangely, the racist doctor alleges that Biko is “shaming”. Another racist Dr Tucker is called, and he suggests Biko be taken to hospital.

**10 SEPTEMBER 1977:** Biko’s condition has deteriorated alarmingly. Dr Lang recommends that Biko be driven 1200 km to the prison hospital in Pretoria despite the availability of the state of the art hospitals in Port Elizabeth.

**11 SEPTEMBER 1977:** Biko is put in the back of a Land Rover police van naked and handcuffed. He is driven for more than 12 hours from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria, while he is in a critical state.

**12 SEPTEMBER 1977:** Biko dies naked on a mat on a stone floor in a prison cell. Apartheid Minister of Justice and Police Jimmy Kruger claims that Biko died of hunger strike. He entertains the white racist parliament which breaks into laughter when he tells them: "I am not saddened by Biko's death and I am not mad. His death leaves me cold".



**25 SEPTEMBER 1977:** Biko's funeral is held at the Victoria Stadium in Qonce. About 20 000 people manage to attend the funeral, while thousands more are turned away by the racist police.

## CONFRONTING FEAR

September is a sacred month for all Black Consciousness adherents. This is because it is the month during which we commemorate the murder in police custody of our Founding Father Bantu Biko.

Biko was murdered on 12 September 1977. In a truly free Azania, September 12 will be a public holiday. While there are other political leaders who were murdered in custody, Biko's contribution to the liberation struggle remains unmatched. He championed mental freedom, but more importantly dealt with fear, which enabled hundreds of thousands of young people to confront the brutal apartheid system with nothing but sheer courage. It is therefore an inescapable conclusion that BCM's political contribution and its June 16 Uprisings was a catalyst that ushered in the dawn

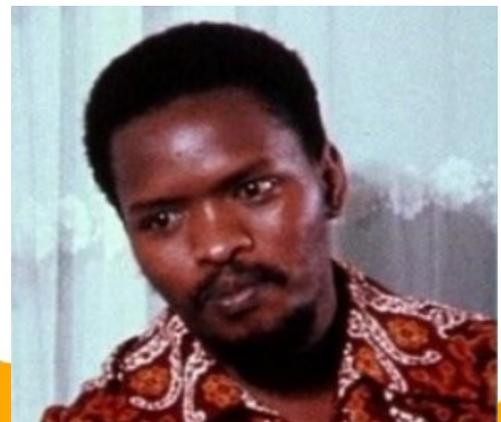
of democracy in 1994. That is why Biko deserves to be remembered by all freedom-loving people.

Biko's teachings are timeless. 41 years after his brutal murder, Biko's words are still a guiding torch to our people. Biko taught us to confront fear, the irrational fear for death.

After the banning of the PAC and the ANC in the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre, our people were fearful of the apartheid junta. This explains the political lull that was only ended in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement under Biko and his Comrades such as Ranwedzi Harry Nengwekhulu, Strini Moodley, Mosibudi Mangena, Saths Cooper and Pandelani Nefolovhodwe.

The apartheid regime used fear to suppress our people's quest for freedom. 41 years after Biko's death, fear is still a factor in our politics. While the Constitution allows people the right to join a party of their choice, many of our people fear to associate with AZAPO because they fear the possibility of not getting a government job, they fear not getting a government tender, they fear not to be promoted.

This fear has contributed to the creation of an effective one-party dominance in the country. This fear has to be confronted if our democracy is to be meaningful. Even those who are members of the ruling party fear to stand up for what is right against their leaders because they risk being pushed out into the political wilderness. The corruption that has become entrenched continues because many of our people fear to say and do the right thing. It is time that we embrace Biko's teachings that we should confront fear and stand for a principle.



## IN BIKO'S WORDS

"Black Consciousness is an attitude of the 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."

"What we are saying now is that at the present moment we have a culture here which is a European culture. This country looks ... like a province of Europe. You know, to anybody who perceives the behaviour pattern it looks like a province of Europe. It has no relationship rootwise to the fact that it happens to exist in Africa... We don't behave like Africans, we behave like Europeans who are staying in Africa."

"We do not want to be reminded that it is we, the indigenous people, who are poor and exploited in the land of our birth. These are concepts which the Black Consciousness approach wishes to eradicate from the black man's mind before our society is driven to chaos by irresponsible people from Coca-cola and hamburger cultural backgrounds."

"So as a prelude whites must be made to realise that they are only human, not superior. Same with Blacks. They must be made to realise that they are also human, not inferior."

"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

"The basic tenet of black consciousness is that the black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity."

"Being black is not a matter of pigmentation - being black is a reflection of a mental attitude."

"It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is if you realise that the only vehicle for change are these

people who have lost their personality. 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."

"The blacks are tired of standing at the touchlines to witness a game that they should be playing. They want to do things for themselves and all by themselves."

"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."

"The greatest weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."

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



## BIKO WARNED US AGAINST WHITE LIBERALS

At the height of apartheid repression, there were some “good” whites or liberals who wanted to hijack and lead our struggle for liberation. The Black Consciousness Movement saw through them and coined the slogan: “Phansi namabhunu asithandayo (Down with the boers who love us).

According to Bantu Biko, the Founding Father of our Movement, whites could not be part of the problem and still be part of the solution. Whites cannot be oppressing blacks and getting all the white privileges and still have the right to tell Black people how they should respond to white oppression.



Said Biko of white liberals: “We are concerned with that curious bunch of nonconformists who explain their participation in negative terms: that bunch of do-gooders that goes under all sorts of names -liberals, leftists etc. 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. In short, these are the people who say that they have black souls wrapped up in white skins”.

The liberals created a lot of confusion in the Black community. We spent a lot of time trying to distin-

guish between a “good” white person and a bad white person. It was easier to deal with a genuine racist than a flexible liberal who would argue that he is not a racist because he has a black person as a friend, even if he has not visited him at his home.

The liberals have succeeded to dilute our demand for the repossession of the land and that is why some sections of the Liberation Movement accepted and spread the misguided notion that the land “belongs to all who live in it”. The liberals are sophisticated. They do not tell you what they do not like. For example, they will say that they are not opposed to the Expropriation of Land as long as that does not disturb or undermine the economy. They know very well that any radical program to take land from whites and give it to Black people will of necessity affect the economy.

The liberals would publicly embrace Black Economic Empowerment but would quickly qualify that this should not be based purely on race, and that other factors such as merit and capacity should be considered. They just do not have the guts to say they are opposed to the BEE.

So, when we hear that Solidarity - a right-wing organisation that has fashioned itself as a champion for white power and white privileges - say they will embark on a strike at Sasol to voice their opposition to a scheme that offers shares to Black people only, we have to admire their honesty. This is because what Solidarity is saying is what many liberals feel but they do not have the courage of their conviction. Many liberals practise subtle racism and because it is subtle, it is almost impossible to confront and fight.

But with Solidarity, we know where they stand. They are against any action that will address the legacy of apartheid and colonialism. They do not pretend otherwise, unlike the liberals who have mastered the art of confusing our people.