

# BIKO



## THE QUEST FOR A TRUE HUMANITY

An exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the death of Bantu Stephen Biko





# FOREWORD

It is the dictate of history to bring to the fore the kind of leaders who seize the moment, who cohere the wishes and aspirations of the oppressed. Such was Steve Biko, a fitting product of his time; a proud representative of the re-awakening of a people.

**Nelson Mandela**

Thirty years ago, on 12 September 1977, Bantu Stephen Biko, one of South Africa's greatest leaders and philosophers, was murdered in detention by the apartheid regime.

The Apartheid Museum, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Steve Biko Foundation, seek to honour Biko's memory by staging this major exhibition to commemorate his contribution to lifting the veil of oppression in our country.

Unlike Biko, many others who died in detention for their opposition to apartheid have sunk into obscurity. We take this opportunity to pay tribute to all 115 people who died in South Africa prisons from 1963 - 1990 in their quest for a better world.

As Nkosingithi Biko, son of Steve Biko and the CEO of the Steve Biko Foundation, puts it,

May this exhibition contribute to replenishing our national memory.  
May it serve to bring to the fore of our consciousness the contribution of those who paid the ultimate price.

**Christopher Till**  
Director  
Apartheid Museum  
September 2007

## APARTHEID MUSEUM



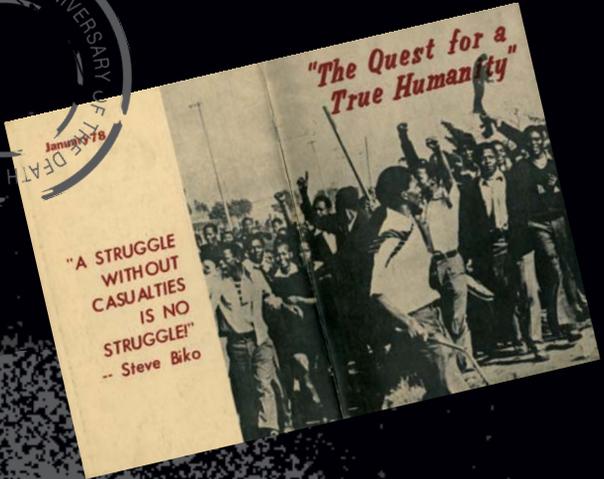
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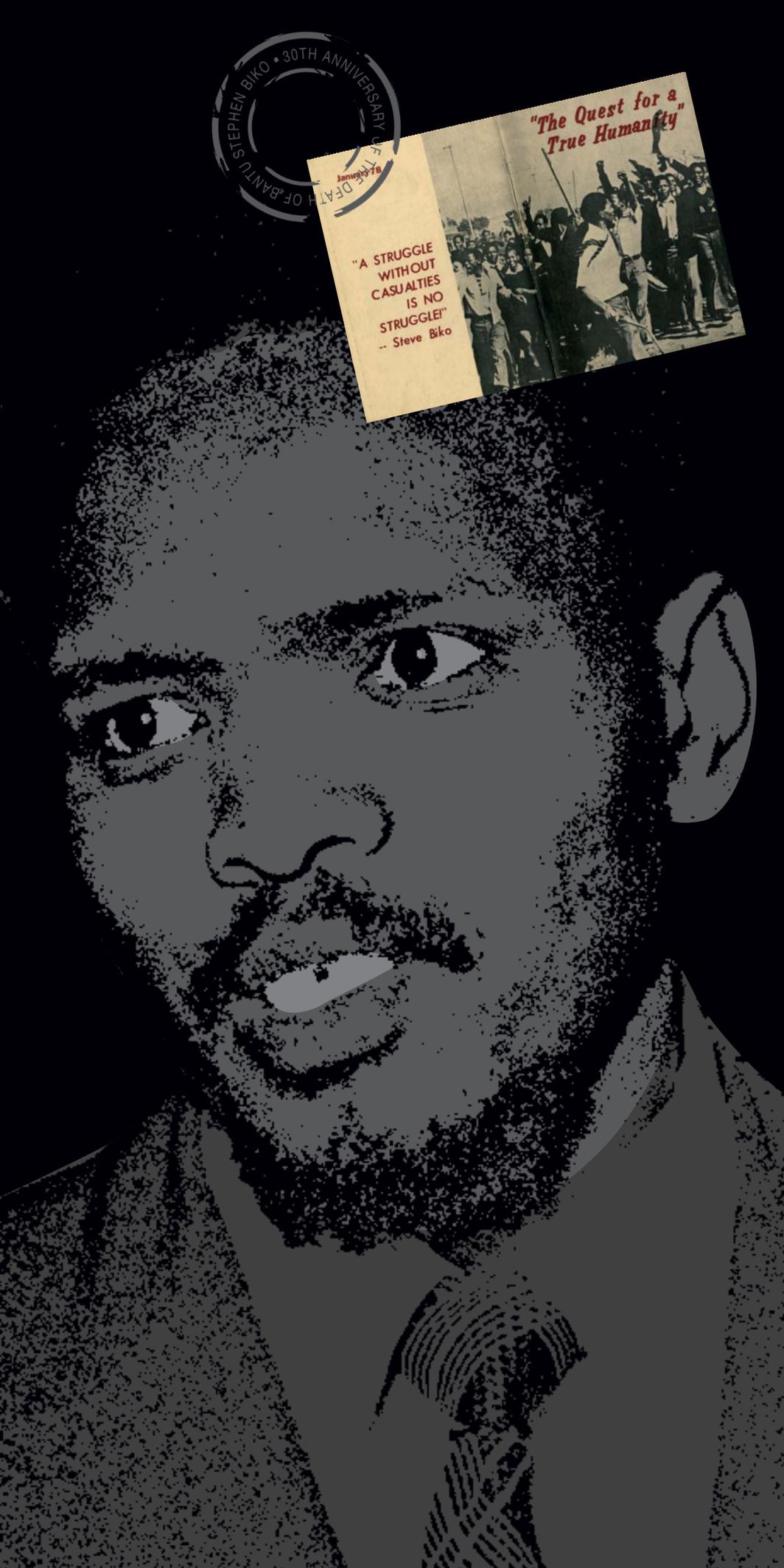
**steve biko**  
foundation

STEPHEN BIKO • 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF BANTU



*"The Quest for a True Humanity"*

"A STRUGGLE WITHOUT CASUALTIES IS NO STRUGGLE!"  
-- Steve Biko



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The **Apartheid Museum** is committed to popularising 20th century South African history, with a particular emphasis on the apartheid period. It has a programme of travelling exhibitions, like this one, which are designed to take the museum to the community.

**Tel: 011 309 4700**

**[www.apartheidmuseum.org](http://www.apartheidmuseum.org)**

The **Steve Biko Foundation** strengthens democracy by championing dialogue, scholarship and programmes on the relationship between identity, agency, citizenship and social action.

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# BIKO

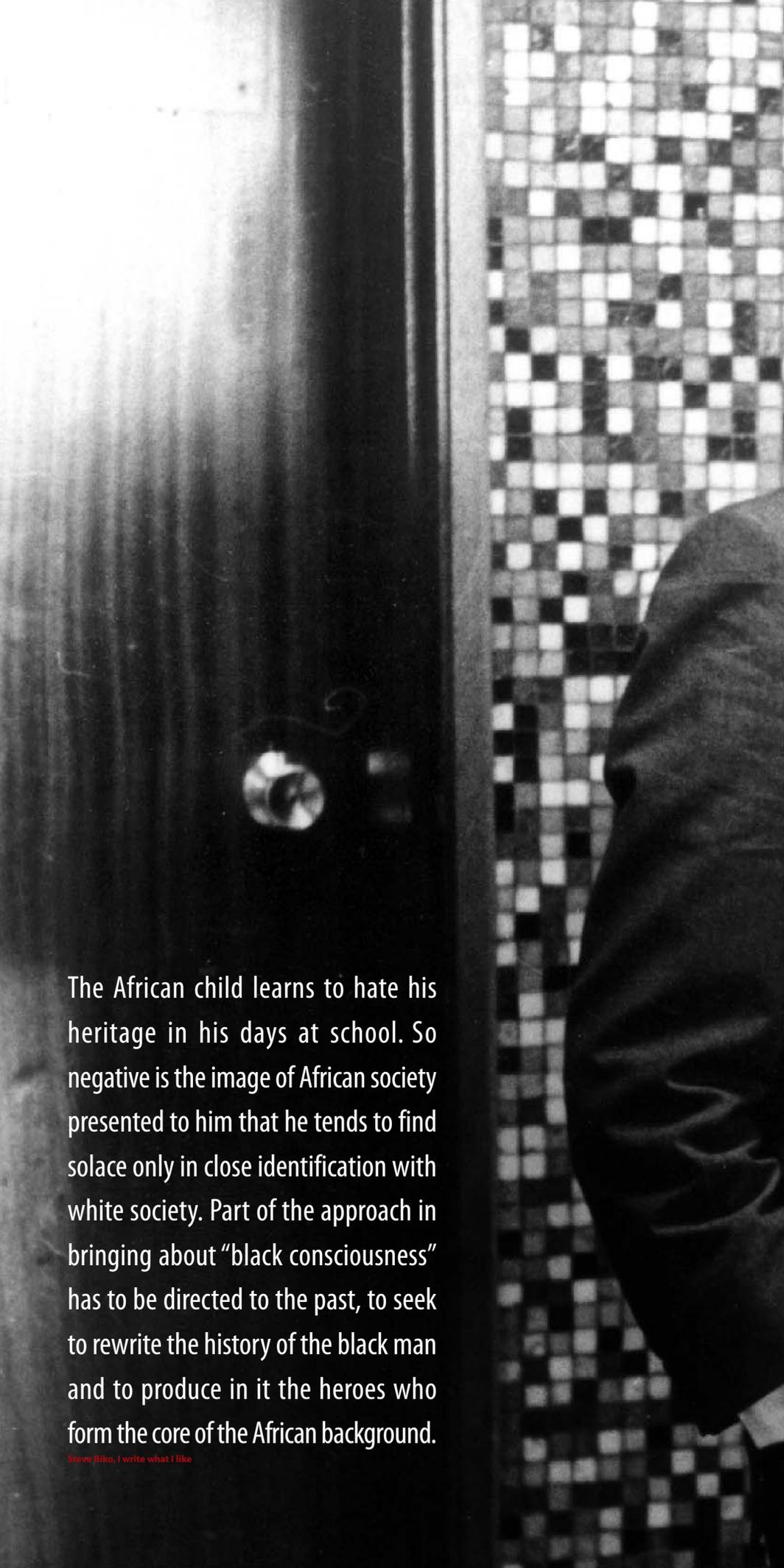
## THE QUEST FOR A TRUE HUMANITY

An exhibition commemorating the 30th anniversary of the death of Bantu Stephen Biko

In Sesotho there is a saying that *motjheka sediba ha a se nwe* – he who digs a well does not drink from it. Only those who come after him will quench their thirst from its cool water. When the forebears formulated this adage they had Bantu Stephen Biko in mind.

Zakes Mda , Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, 2001

Bantu Stephen Biko will be remembered for many things. He was a leader, a philosopher, a visionary and a revolutionary. Biko was one of our country's outstanding intellectuals, whose ideas contributed immeasurably to the freedom struggle in South Africa.



The African child learns to hate his heritage in his days at school. So negative is the image of African society presented to him that he tends to find solace only in close identification with white society. Part of the approach in bringing about "black consciousness" has to be directed to the past, to seek to rewrite the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background.

Steve Biko, I write what I like



# THE AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

Biko, the intellectual, was the product of a rich African intellectual tradition that dates back hundreds of years. Early black intellectuals came from a time when knowledge was developed and transferred to future generations through *izibongo* (praise poems) and the oral tradition.

Later a new generation of intellectuals emerged through contact with missionary education and exposure to Christianity. These intellectuals grappled with the often contradictory value systems of the African tradition and the colonial world view.

## TIYO SOGA (1829 - 1871)

The Eastern Cape, where Biko was born, had a rich African intellectual heritage. One of the earliest intellectuals from this area was Tiyo Soga, the first Xhosa to be ordained as a Christian minister and one of the first Africans to study abroad.



Museum Africa

“Soga was known for collecting fables, legends and proverbs, fragments of history ... and, the ancient habits and customs of his countrymen ...”

N. Masilela, *New African Intellectuals*

Sol Plaatje (front row, second from left) with the staff of *Tsala ea Bechoana*



Museum Africa

## Solomon T. Plaatje (1876 - 1932)

Solomon T. Plaatje another great South African intellectual, was a man of many talents. He was a journalist, a linguist, an interpreter, a novelist, a historian, a translator and a political leader.

Plaatje was a founder member and first General Secretary of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which would later become the African National Congress (ANC).

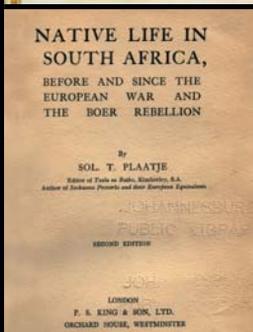


Museum Africa

Plaatje founded two newspapers *Tsala ea Bechoana* (The Friend of Bechuana) and subsequently *Tsala ea Batho* (The Friend of the People).

With other leaders of the SANNC, he travelled to England to protest against the 1913 Native Land Act. This Act set aside 8,7 % of South Africa's land for black people. All the remaining land was reserved for white ownership.

Plaatje chronicled the shocking effects of the Land Act in his book *Native Life in South Africa*.



Museum Africa

In subsequent travels overseas, he was fortunate to meet with such dynamic leaders, Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois, with whom he had a robust exchange of ideas about the role of black people in overcoming their own oppression.



The deceased child had to be buried, but where, when and how? Even criminals dropping straight from the gallows can claim six feet of ground on which to rest their criminal remains, but under the cruel operation of the Land Act little children, whose only crime is that God did not make them white, are sometimes denied that right in their ancestral home.

Sol Paatje, *Native Life in South Africa*, 1913

APARTHEID MUSEUM

Photo: WPA Historical Photos

Taylor

MAFEKIN & CAMP COLONY, S

# SOWING THE SEEDS OF SELF-RELIANCE

## Charlotte Maxeke (1874 - 1939)

Charlotte Maxeke (top left), one of the most accomplished African women of her day, toured North America in the 1890s as a member of a choir. She attended university there and was one of the first African women to earn a university degree. When she returned to South Africa, she introduced the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church into the country.



Maxeke pushed strongly for African unity — not only in South Africa, but in the whole of Africa. She is best remembered for leading the march against passes for women in Bloemfontein in 1913, in which she forced the authorities to back down. In a time of women's subservience, Maxeke embodied the spirit of African assertiveness and self-reliance.

## John Langalibalele Dube (1871 - 1946)

John Langalibalele Dube, like so many of South Africa's great intellectuals, came under the influence of the missionaries in his early years.

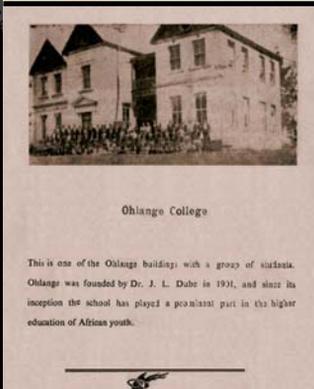


Dube, who was to become the first President-General of the SANNC in 1912, founded the Zulu/English newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* (Sun of Natal). He used the newspaper to call for African unity and to expose the negative effects of white rule.



“One who comes once in many centuries ... no one else in his generation has accomplished so much with such meagre economic means. He was a scholar, gentleman, leader, farmer, teacher, politician, patriot and philanthropist.”  
B.W. Vilakazi, poet and author

Dube obtained his doctorate in the United States. He spent time at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, which focused on self-reliance by providing African Americans with vocational training.



Dube embraced this idea of self-reliance, creating a similar-styled institute at Ohlange in Natal in 1899. Steve Biko was later to champion this spirit of self-reliance but with greater emphasis on blacks becoming agents of their own destinies.

# THE MOVE TO AFRICANISM



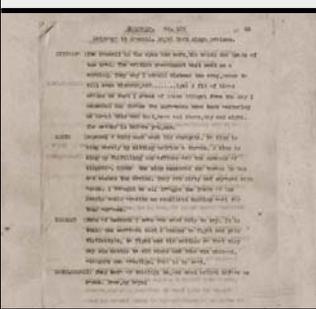
## Herbert I. E. Dhlomo (1903 - 1956)

Herbert I. E. Dhlomo wrote plays and poetry about African history and customs. His thinking influenced the young lions, who formed the ANC Youth League in 1944, and later Steve Biko and his contemporaries in the Black Consciousness Movement.

In Dhlomo's play, *Cetshwayo*, the field marshal of the Zulu army, Dabulamanzi, calls on the black man to rage against the notion of his own inferiority.



H. I. E. DHLOMO, an old friend of the late Dr. Vilakazi, author of a best-selling book of poetry, "The Valley of a Thousand Hills", is assistant editor of the Natal weekly "Ilanga Lase Natal." His work has been published in many of South Africa's foremost journals, and he has contributed to Drum several times.



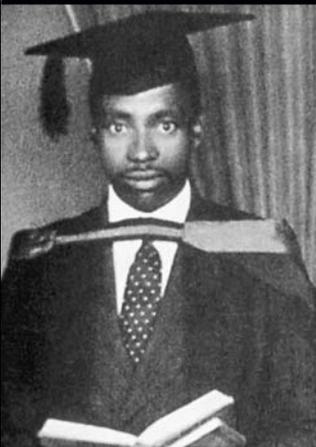
"Black man!  
Black man! Trust yourself. Serve yourself. Know yourself ... Had the black himself known and that power exploited, we would be our own lord ... Black man you are your own enemy!"

H.I.E. Dhlomo

"Black man! You are on your own!" Steve Biko

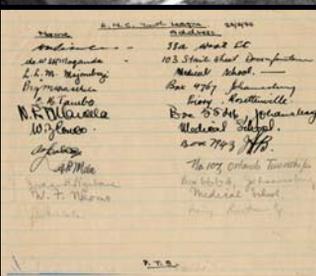
"Nature has endowed the black man with all the elements of power, of creation and of nobility, and it is his duty not to allow himself to be swamped by the doctrines of inferiority."

Anton Lembede



## Anton Muziwakhe Lembede (1914 - 1947)

Anton Lembede will be remembered as one of the most outstanding African intellectuals, who died an untimely death at the age of 33. As first president of the ANC Youth League, he inspired a tradition of Africanism, a creed of African nationalism for black South Africa.



## Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe (1924 - 1978)

Robert Sobukwe (back row, right) was a man of great intellect and charisma. A fervent Africanist, Sobukwe saw the struggle against white oppression as an African struggle. It was in this context that he broke away from the ANC in 1959 to form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).



"We are not anti-white. We do not hate the European because he is white! We hate him because he is an oppressor. And it is plain dishonesty to say I hate the sjambok and not the one who wields it." Robert Sobukwe

# PAN AFRICANISM TO BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The birth of Black Consciousness in South Africa in the late 1960s was a product of local conditions and a creative synthesis of ideas from a variety of sources.

A number of intellectual movements preceded Black Consciousness. The first of these was Pan Africanism which called for the unity of all the people in Africa and those who are descended from Africa. The roots of Pan Africanism could be found in both the United States and in Africa.

## Marcus Garvey, Jr. (1887 - 1940)

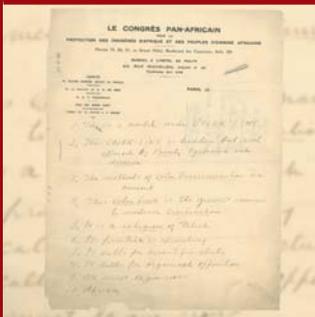
Born in Jamaica in 1887, Marcus Garvey is best remembered as a champion of the Back-to-Africa Movement, which encouraged those of African descent to return to their ancestral home. Garvey used slogans like Africa for Africans. Similar slogans, such as *mayibuye i-Afrika!* (Africa should be returned to its rightful owners!), were used by the ANC Youth League in the 1940s and later by the PAC in South Africa.



Library of Congress USA

## W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 - 1963)

W.E.B. Du Bois was a scholar and founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) - the largest and oldest civil rights organisation in America. Known to many as the father of Pan Africanism, Du Bois organised the first of a series of Pan African Congresses. These conferences, which inspired African leaders, were major milestones in the process of decolonisation in Africa.



University of Massachusetts



University of Massachusetts

“The shadow of a mighty Negro past flits through the tale of Ethiopia and of Egypt the Sphinx. Throughout history, the powers of single blacks flash like falling stars, and die sometimes before the world has rightly gauged their brightness.”

W.E.B. Du Bois

In 1960, Du Bois was invited by Kwame Nkrumah to his inauguration as the first president of independent Ghana. The following year he accepted Nkrumah's invitation to move to Ghana and subsequently became a Ghanaian citizen. He died in Ghana in 1963 and, after a state funeral, was buried in Accra.



Shutterstock

Nkrumah, a strong advocate of Pan Africanism, declared that “the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent”. By leading Africa’s independence movement, Nkrumah became a source of inspiration throughout the African continent. He played a significant role in the creation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, a precursor to the current Africa Union. Sadly, his achievements have been somewhat diminished by his later excesses of power.



# THE NEGRITUDE MOVEMENT



The second intellectual movement to precede Black Consciousness was the Negritude Movement, founded by those struggling against French colonialism. Negritude grew out of the discrimination and alienation experienced by African and Caribbean students in Paris during the 1930s. It was an attempt to define black culture in terms of universal black values and black self-expression.

## Aimé Césaire (1913 - )

Born in Martinique in the Caribbean, the poet, playwright, and politician, Aimé Césaire developed the concept of Negritude in Paris in the 1930s.

Césaire explained that the problem of black culture cannot be posed without simultaneously posing the problem of colonialism which had disrupted the history of Africa, destroyed the African economy and brainwashed Africans all over the world into accepting the idea that they were inferior.



Roger Mallet, TopFoto

“Because the conqueror dictated what was right and what was wrong, he caused the development of an inferiority complex in the black people ... this prevents the black man from articulating his aspirations and determining his future”.

Steve Biko, I write what I like



Bobby McKeon/History Archive

Two leading black intellectuals in the 1960s, Ezekiel Mphahlele (centre, with the South African delegation at the 1958 Conference of Independent African States in Ghana) and Wole Soyinka (below) from Nigeria were critical of the Negritude Movement.

Soyinka famously remarked:

“A tiger does not declare its tigritude.”



Bobby McKeon/History Archive

Naked woman, black woman  
Clothed with your colour which is life,  
with your form which is beauty!  
In your shadow I have grown up;  
the gentleness of your hands was  
laid over my eyes ...

Naked woman, black woman  
I sing your beauty that passes,  
the form that I fix in the eternal,  
Before jealous fate turns you to ashes  
to feed the roots of life.

Leopold Senghor



Roger Mallet, TopFoto

## Leopold Senghor (1906 - 2001)

Leopold Senghor was one of Africa's foremost poets and the first president of independent Senegal. As a student in Paris in the 1930s, he was also one of the founders of the concept of Negritude. Like Césaire, he argued that black civilisation long preceded white colonialism and it was therefore untrue that the French were bringing civilisation to their colonial subjects.

# THE SPIRIT OF REVOLUTION

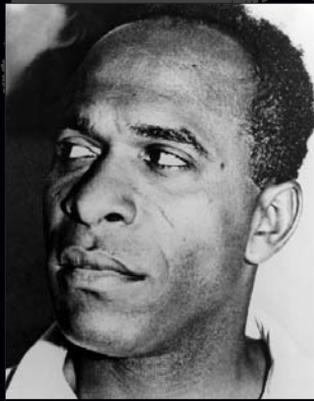


Another external influence on Black Consciousness was the spirit of revolution, inspired both by the writings of Frantz Fanon and the Black Power Movement in the United States.

Both Fanon and the Black Power Movement advocated a militant approach to social transformation.

## Frantz Fanon (1925 - 1961)

Frantz Fanon, born in Martinique in the Caribbean, was a psychotherapist, a writer and a revolutionary who inspired anti-colonial liberation movements around the world. He pioneered the idea that the oppressed needed to liberate — or decolonise — their minds.

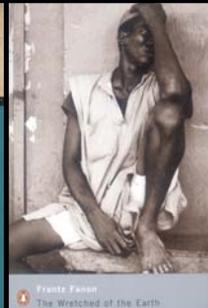


Bobby African History Archive

Fanon's ideas captured the imagination of many African revolutionaries, and informed the thinking behind liberation struggles throughout the Third World.

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, was an analysis of the effects of colonial subjugation on the human psyche. He advocated revolutionary violence in order for Africa to throw off the shackles of its colonial past.

Johns Hopkins Public Library



Poal Spang Archive

"... Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect." Frantz Fanon

## Amilcar Cabral (1924 - 1973)

Amilcar Cabral brought the spirit of revolution closer to home as a founder member of the *Movimento Popular Libertacao de Angola* (MPLA). The liberation movements against Portuguese rule in Southern Africa were a source of great inspiration to Biko and to the youth of Soweto.



Bobby African History Archive

Although Steve Biko admired Fanon, and there are many references to Fanon's works in his writing, Biko himself never espoused violence as a legitimate form of resistance to oppression.



Unknown

# THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT

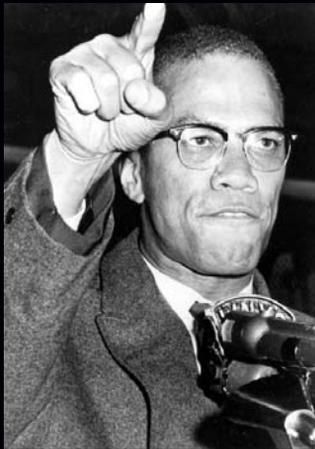


While the Civil Rights Movement in the United States challenged segregation through non-violent confrontation, the Black Power Movement supported the use of violence as a means of achieving freedom and equality.

## Malcolm X (1925 - 1965)

As the most influential leader of the Black Power Movement in the United States, Malcolm X had an impact on Biko's thinking. Malcolm X strongly urged blacks to be proud of their heritage and their African roots.

He also argued that black people in America should seize freedom by any means possible.



Rea/Tony Cox

"I am for violence if non-violence means we continue postponing a solution to the American black man's problems. If we must use violence to get the black man his human rights in this country, then I am for violence." Malcolm X

## Stokely Carmichael (1941 - 1998)

Steve Biko often referred to Stokely Carmichael as being one of his important influences, and kept his book, *Black Power*, constantly at his bedside.

Born in Trinidad, Carmichael moved to the United States in 1952 where he played a central role in the Civil Rights Movement. However, he came to believe that the lack of militancy of the Civil Rights Movement was failing blacks in America, and became a strong proponent of Black Power.



Dariusz Jastrzebski

Like Biko, Malcolm X opposed racial integration. Instead, he promoted the idea of black separation, believing that blacks needed to be self-reliant.

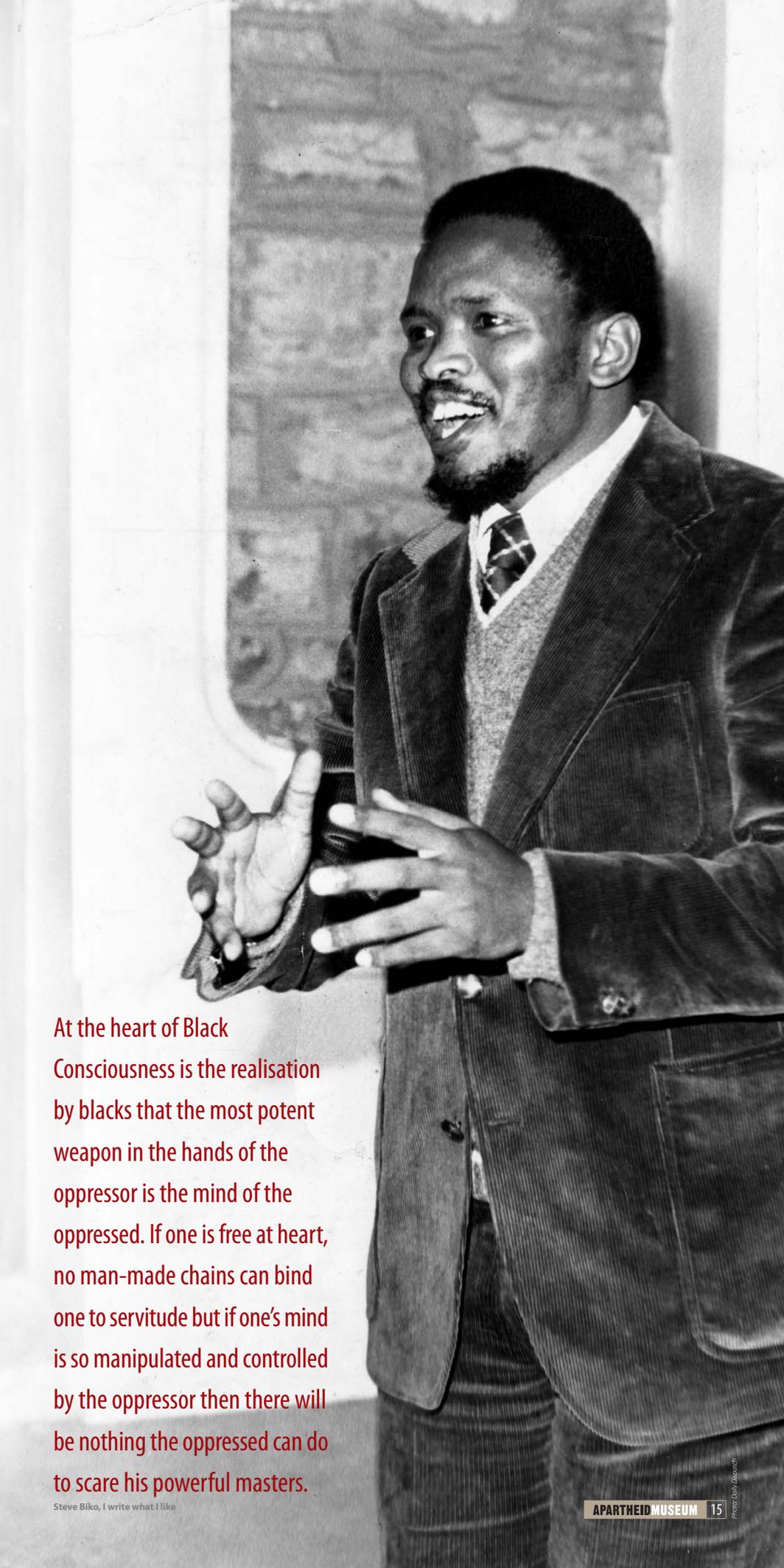
Carmichael also adopted the slogan, "Black is Beautiful", and advocated a mood of black pride and a rejection of white values of style and appearance.

"Before the black people should join the open society they should first close their ranks to oppose definite racism that is meted out by the white society, to work out their new direction clearly and bargain from that position." Stokely Carmichael



Michael Corcoran, Reuters

Adopting the name Kwame Ture, he settled in Guinea, West Africa with his South African wife, famous singer and struggle activist, Miriam Makeba. He helped to establish the All-African People's Revolutionary Party and worked as an aide to Guinea's prime minister, Sekou Toure.



At the heart of Black Consciousness is the realisation by blacks that the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. If one is free at heart, no man-made chains can bind one to servitude but if one's mind is so manipulated and controlled by the oppressor then there will be nothing the oppressed can do to scare his powerful masters.

Steve Biko, I write what I like

# 1946-1965 BIKO S EARLY LIFE



Barbara Wills

Young boy reading by  
Gerard Sekoto

People, especially from overseas, ask me why Steve was called Bantu. They think *bantu* is a derogatory, racist word. But it is Bantu with a soft “B” – and it means ‘the one for the people’.

Nkosinathi Biko, eldest son of Steve Biko

Bantu Stephen Biko, or Steve, as he was popularly known, grew up in Ginsberg in the Eastern Cape. His father, Mzingaye Biko, died when Steve was four years old, leaving behind his wife, Alice Nokuzola, Mamcethe (top), and four children, Bukelwa (second from top), Khaya (third from top), Bantu and Nobandile (bottom).



Steve Biko Foundation



Steve Biko Foundation



Galverson



Steve Biko Foundation

One Sunday afternoon a young boy walked through the streets of a township. With a book under his arm, he headed for the shade of a tree in the veld. While the other boys played in the streets, he loved to sit on his own under a tree. Here he could read about the world and its people. The young people and the old people of the township all knew who that little boy was. “There goes Steve Biko with his books,” they said. Chris van Wyk

To Bandi Biko, her older brother, Steve, was like any young boy growing up in a township. Though Bandi describes Steve as a lazy boy, she has fond memories of her brother as a naughty schoolboy and an entertainer who had great sense of humour.

He was very well liked by his peers and friends and started showing his leadership qualities at a very young age. His friends usually fetched him from his home to play street football, bare-footed. They would not begin a football game without him.

Bandi Biko

# Steve had no care in the world for politics. But this was to change when he was expelled from Lovedale. This was when the great giant was awakened.

Khaya Biko

Steve enrolled at Lovedale College in Alice in 1963. But three months later the school closed as a result of strikes by senior students.

Biko was among the many students who were arrested. He was released after the authorities established that he had not been involved in organising the strikes. He was nevertheless expelled from Lovedale because his older brother, Khaya, was one of the student leaders.

From that moment onwards I began to have a healthy disregard for authority. I hated authority like hell!

Steve Biko

Father Aelred Stubbs was a lecturer at the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FEDSEM). He was based in the Eastern Cape and was a confidante of many students affiliated to the University Christian Movement — including Biko. After Biko's death, he compiled Biko's writings into the seminal *I write what I like*.



WHS Historical Report



St Francis College, Maseru



St Francis College, Maseru



WHS Historical Report

Biko was refused entry to all the schools in the area. He eventually completed his schooling in 1965 at another missionary school, St Francis College at Marianhill Catholic mission station in Natal. At Marianhill, Steve began to correspond with a Father Aelred Stubbs, a teacher whom he had become acquainted with at Lovedale College.

He questioned Father Stubbs about Christianity and why we can have values which seem to be good values. Yet these values did not translate into action and address the oppression that was happening in South Africa at the time.

Nkosinathi Biko, eldest son of Steve Biko

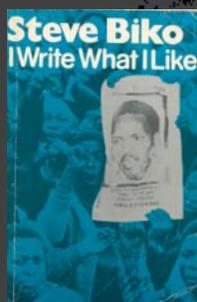
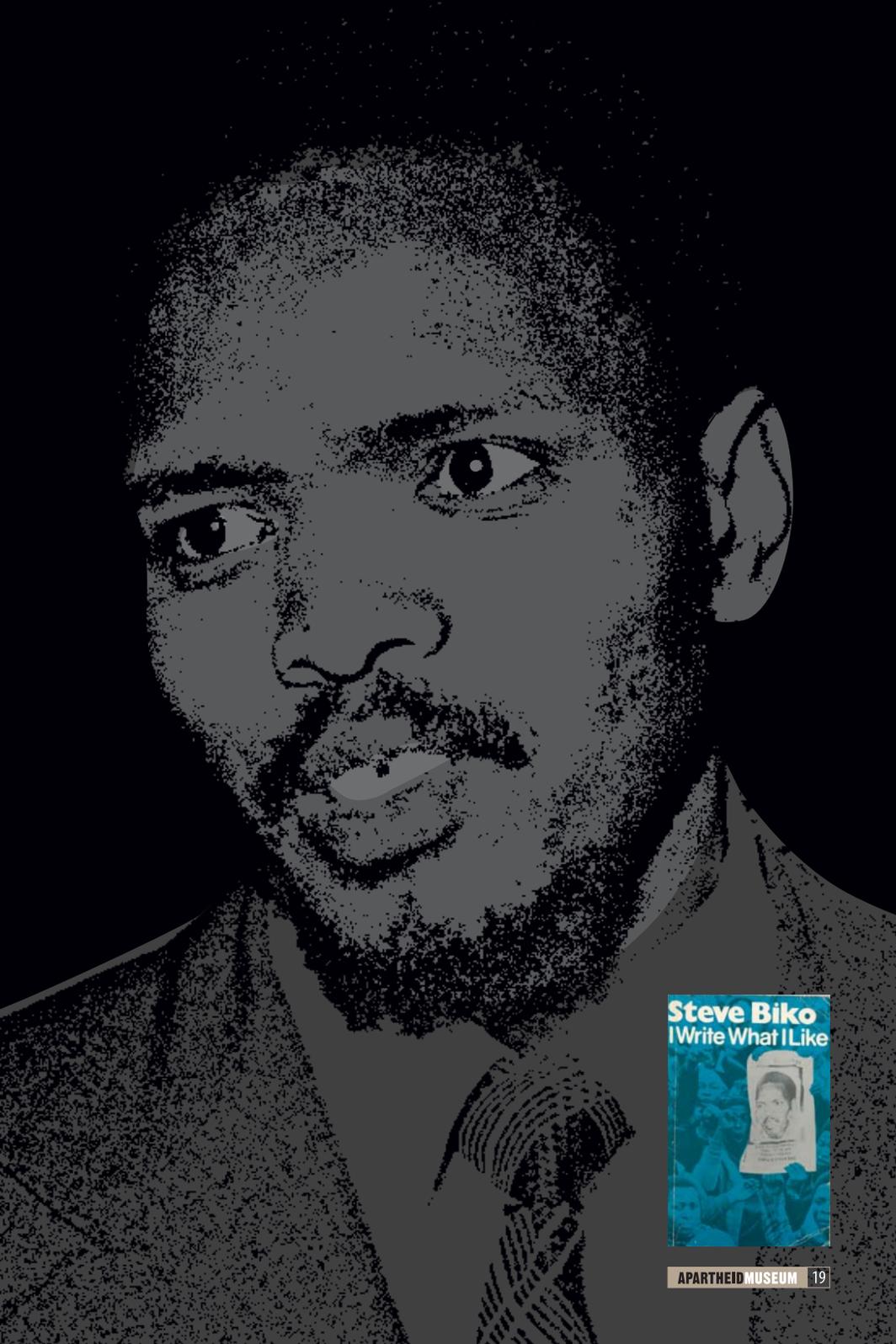
# THE EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ACT OF 1959

The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 changed the higher education landscape in South Africa by separating universities along ethnic lines. The government's intention was to fragment black resistance and to separate blacks from their white sympathisers in the open universities. However, in reality these ethnic universities became hotbeds of revolution.



It is ironic that Black Consciousness had its roots in the isolated rural colleges designed to produce an educated elite in the homelands. It was on these bantustan campuses, especially the University of the North and the University of Zululand, that black students began to challenge the political situation during the mid 1960s. Steve Lebelo

Unfortunately the books you read at university are in English, a second language to you. As a result you never quite catch everything that is in a book. You certainly understand the paragraph but you are not quite adept at reproducing an argument that was in a particular book. This makes you less articulate as a black man, and more inward-looking. Biko, I write what I like





# 1966-1970 THE BIRTH OF SASO

Nowhere is the arrogance of the liberal ideology demonstrated so well as their insistence that the problems of the country can only be solved by an approach involving both black and white ... it is rather like expecting a slave to work together with the slave master's son to remove all the conditions leading to the former's enslavement. *Biko, I write what I like*

Biko did very well at school and won a scholarship to study medicine. In 1966, he enrolled at the black section of the University of Natal Medical School in Durban, the only educational institution in South Africa attended by a significant number of Indian, coloured and African students. Biko immediately threw himself into student politics.



National Archives

Medical students Brigette Savage (left), Rogers Ragavan, Ben Ngubane and Steve Biko at the University of Natal in 1966



University of Natal

Biko was elected to the Students Representative Council and in 1967 participated as a delegate to a National Union of South African Students (Nusas) conference at Rhodes University. At the conference, black students protested when the university did not allow mixed accommodation and eating facilities.



City Library

Though Steve is not in this photograph of the 1967 Nusas Congress, he definitely attended that congress because he took us all out on a hunger strike over Rhodes University's refusal to allow black students to stay on campus during the congress. It was my first hunger strike so I remember it clearly!"

Duncan Innes, Nusas President, 1968

Johan Fick of the ASB, Steve Biko of SASO and Neville Curtis of Nusas



Department of Education

Biko also had a close relationship with Neville Curtis, who was Nusas President in 1969. Curtis helped create the Nusas wages commissions which contributed to the rise of independent trade unions in the 1970s. Curtis was banned along with Biko and 14 others in 1973.

# 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 by themselves. Steve Biko



In the eyes of Biko and his comrades, Nusas was a predominantly white organisation comfortable with playing safe politics. Black students began to question whether white liberals were in a position to define the texture and tempo of resistance.



UICM Biko/Magdy/Archives

At the University Christian Movement (UCM) meeting at Stutterheim in July 1968, delegates supported Biko's idea for an all-black movement. In 1969, at the University of the North (Turffloep), near Pietersburg (now Polokwane), black students launched the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), with Biko as its first president.



COOPER/ARCHIVES

Abram Onkgopotse Tiro addresses a SASO meeting at St Peter's Seminary at Hammanskraal. As president of the SRC at Turffloep in 1972, he delivered a speech in which he sharply criticised Bantu Education. This led to his expulsion from Turffloep. Third from the right, Mosioua Terror Lekota looks on.



THE IRRAWADDI

We are oppressed not as Zulus, Xhosas, Vendas or Indians. We are oppressed because we are black. We must use that very concept to unite ourselves and to respond as a cohesive group. We must cling to each other with a tenacity that will shock the perpetrators of evil ... This is where the SASO message and cry "Black man, you are on your own!" becomes relevant. Biko, I write what I like