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# 13 BLACK MAN, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN

White people are white people

They are burning the world.

Black people are black people

They are the fuel.

White people are white people

They must learn to listen.

Black people are black people

They must learn to talk.

OFAY-WATCHER, THROBS-PHASE; POEM BY **MONGANE WALLY SEROTE**, 1972<sup>1</sup>

Basically, the South African white community is a homogeneous community. It is a community of people who sit to enjoy a privileged position that they do not deserve, are aware of this, and therefore spend their time trying to justify why they are doing so. Where differences in political opinion exist, they are in the process of trying to justify their position of privilege and their usurpation of power...

...The role of the white liberal in the black man's history in South Africa is a curious one. Very few black organizations were not under white direction. True to their image, the white liberals always knew what was good for the blacks and told them so. The wonder of it all is that the black people have believed in them for so long...

..Nowhere is the arrogance of the liberal ideology demonstrated so well as in their insistence that the problems of the country can only be solved by a bilateral approach involving both black and white. This has, by and large, come to be taken in all seriousness as the modus operandi in South Africa by all those who claim they would like a change in the status quo. Hence the multi-racial political organizations and parties and the 'non-racial' student organizations — all of which insist on integration not only as an end goal, but also as a means...

..Does this mean that I am against integration? If by integration you understand 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. I am against the superior-inferior white-black stratification that makes the white a perpetual teacher and the black a perpetual pupil...I am against the fact that a settler minority should impose an entire system of values on an indigenous people...

...From this it becomes clear that as long as blacks are suffering from an 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. Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grassroots build-up of black consciousness, such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim.

'Black Souls in White Skins?', inaugural article in the 'I Write What I Like' series by 'Frank Talk', South African Students Organization (SASO) Newsletter, August 1970, later revealed to have been authored by SASO President **STEVE BIKO** (COPYRIGHT: SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS ORGANIZATION (SASO))'

Black Consciousness (BC) was an angry blow against the frustration and impotence of 'the lull'. The walk-out of black students led by Steve Biko from the white liberal-dominated NUSAS in 1968 heralded the demise of the era of fear and submissiveness and the birth of a psychology of liberation. The rebellious founders of SASO rejected the label of 'non-white' and pioneered the unity of African, coloured and Indian as blacks against the white oppressor.

You must know that, during the early - from 1963 - say 1960 up to about 1965 or '66 - there was a lull in this country, and that is accepted.

Even those who were involved in politics, unless they were your relatives, they could not even tell you whether he was in P.A.C., or whether he was in A.N.C., and - but as early as about 1967, some people got in-

“From 1960 up to about 1966 there was a lull in this country, but as early as about 1967 some people got involved in trying to shape a new direction. We were debating issues like the disaffiliation from NUSAS, as part of this new mood which wanted to get away from liberalism as a form of struggle.

At that stage we were in a state where we were searching for our own identity. We had to liberate ourselves from this psychological oppression, and to do so the argument was that you have got to be away from the people who on a daily basis infuse you with an idea of their superiority, because if you continue to be with them you will forever not be able to extricate yourself.

It's a question of oppressor and oppressed, so we had to galvanize ourselves, and that's why we came with the concept of black solidarity: to bargain from a position of strength. The first thing that we sought to do was just to extricate ourselves from the oppressor and all the agents of oppression — which needed us to run away from multi-racial organization. We needed to inculcate into the minds of our people that they are not inferior to any person, and secondly, that we all belong to one human race.”

PANDELANI NEFOLOVHODWE, SASO member from its inception, active at the University of the North

1. SASO is a black student organization working for the liberation of the black man,<sup>2</sup> first from psychological oppression by themselves through inferiority complex, and secondly from the physical one accruing out of living in a white racist society.
2. We define black people 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 aspirations.
3. SASO believes that:
  - a) South Africa is a country in which both black and white live and shall continue to live together;
  - b) That the white man must be made aware that one is either part of the solution or part of the problem;<sup>3</sup>
  - c) That 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;
  - d) That therefore we believe that in all matters relating to the struggle towards realizing our aspirations, whites must be excluded;
  - e) That this attitude must not be interpreted by blacks to imply 'anti-whitism', but merely a more positive way of attaining a normal situation in South Africa;
  - f) That in pursuit of this direction, therefore, personal contact with whites, though it should not be legislated against, must be discouraged, especially where it tends to militate against the beliefs we hold dear.
4. a) SASO upholds the concept of Black Consciousness and the drive towards black awareness as the most logical and significant means of ridding ourselves of the shackles that bind us to perpetual servitude.  
b) SASO defines Black Consciousness as follows:
  - (i) Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind, a way of life;
  - (ii) 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;
  - (iii) The black man must build up his own value systems, see himself as self-defined and not defined by others;
  - (iv) The concept of Black Consciousness implies the awareness by the black people of the power they wield as a group, both economically and politically, and hence group cohesion and solidarity are important facets of Black Consciousness;
  - (v) The message of Black Consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the black community.
5. SASO believes that all groups allegedly working for 'integration' in South Africa — and here we note in particular the Progressive Party and other liberal institutions — are not working for the kind of integration that would be acceptable to the black man. Their attempts are directed merely at relaxing certain oppressive legislations and to allow blacks into a white-type society.

I knew very little to begin with - I knew very little. I remember one old man I talked with at home when I was very strong B.C. - B.C. member, you know - advocate - and he look at me and said : Are you boys - I'm sure if you were around the '50's you would have joined P.A.C. - you would have - you have - you would have been Sobukwe people - I'm sure - because he had the historical background and he could just listen to

Although supporters of Black Consciousness claimed political nonalignment, the rhetoric associated with the new ideology was derivative of the American Black Power movement<sup>4</sup> and reminiscent of the PAC. Thus the slogans of the day became 'Black is Beautiful', a reference to the 'Afro' look of unstraightened hair and unlightened skin,<sup>5</sup> and 'Azania Shall be Free!', from the name the PAC advocated for a liberated South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

“When we came to Ngoye we were immediately grabbed by SASO. All my university days I was SASO. I know some people come into the struggle because they are workers and they feel the exploitation at the factory place— this is not my experience. I only got into politics through the student movement at university.

**What was your view of the PAC at that time?**

I knew very little to begin with. I remember one old man I talked with at home when I was a very strong BC advocate, and he looked at me and said, 'You boys, I'm sure if you were around in the '50s you would have joined the PAC, you would have been Sobukwe people.' In terms of rhetoric, I think we were close to the PAC, but the people we wanted to be with were people like Mandela and Lutuli and ANC people. You know, this whole question of BC being PAC-leaning, it wasn't a reality when we were at home.”

MASTERPIECE GUMEDE, who joined SASO at the University of Zululand (Ngoye) in 1972

The South African government initially interpreted the formation of SASO as a vindication of its policy of 'separate development', while white liberals felt threatened by the rise of Black Consciousness.

The emergence of SASO is one of the sad manifestations of racist policy at government level. The cornerstone of apartheid is the bantustan policy, through which blacks are compelled to regard themselves as separate people — a people set apart — who can aspire to progress only on the basis of exclusivity. The result is the emergence of a 'blacks only' mentality among blacks. The promoters of SASO are wrong in what they are doing. They are promoting apartheid. They are entrenching the idea of racial exclusivity and therefore doing the government's work. Fortunately, they represent only a small minority of black students.

'Sad About SASO', *Daily Dispatch*, a liberal English-language newspaper edited by DONALD WOODS in East London, 10 August 1971

“Did you experience any anti-white attitudes from blacks in that period?”

Yes, I went through that. The SASO president at the time, Temba Sono, I knew very well because I had been his chaplain when he was in high school at Lemana in the Northern Transvaal, and I went to listen to him. He expounded the whole BC philosophy and said, 'The time has come where we've got to say, "White man, get off our backs, we're going to do it on our own and we reject you. If you want to go and do something, do it in your own community."'

And I got up at the end and I said, 'How do you think that the white man is ever going to find out what the hell he's got to do unless he's challenged by black people?' And he took the opportunity of saying, 'You know, you are my old chaplain, but this is where you reveal just what a bloody racist you are.' He just lashed out at me – it hurt.

Eventually I came to understand how important it was for black people to undergo that process of psychological liberation. I came to realize that we, as whites, were actually projecting our guilt onto blacks. You know, I have been involved in all these multi-racial efforts within the church and I've been extremely upset by the insensitivity of whites. White people are not good at listening – they are very good at telling other people what to do. So that when black people are articulating – and don't forget that they articulate in the language which is not their mother tongue – white people somehow just ride roughshod over that kind of expression of black feelings.

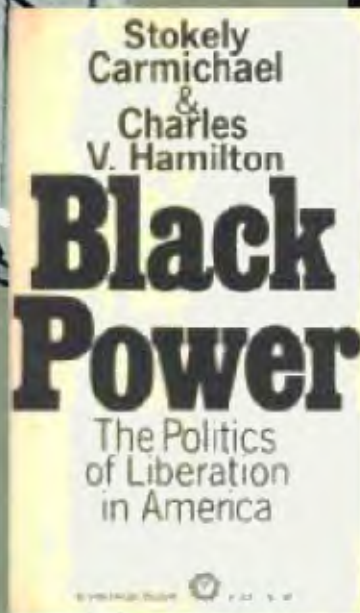
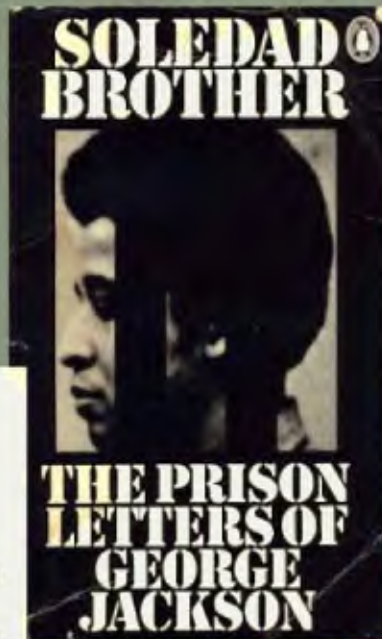
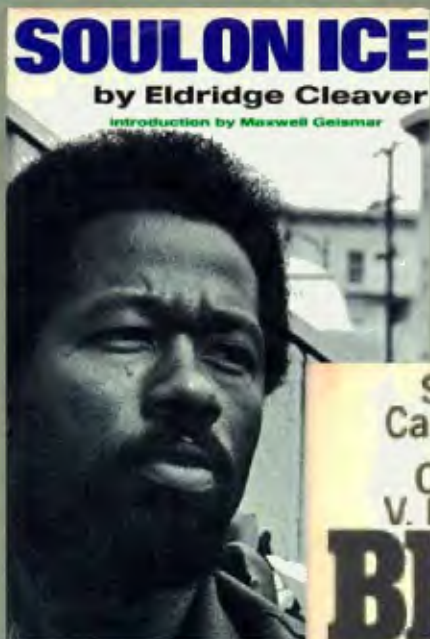
So that's why I say that my first exposure to BC was a traumatic experience in one way, but it was also a very salutary experience. And that was confirmed to me when I went to Biko's funeral,<sup>8</sup> because there were 30,000 people in that football ground, with a sprinkling of whites, and I'll never forget standing with a friend of mine in this sea of black people. The one particular song they were singing was 'Abelungu Bayizinja', which means 'Whites are dogs', and there was this guy standing next to me singing for all he was worth, and then he turned to me with a beautiful smile and he said, 'Ja, they are dogs — I don't mean you.'

And this is where I believe that blacks have a hell of a lesson to teach us. We've got some bloody obsession about race — they just look at a person as a person, as a human being. If only white people in South Africa could know that. Whites say to me, 'Aren't you scared of going into Soweto? Won't they do something to you?' I've never felt scared.”

FRANCOIS BILL, who served from 1971 to 1974 as chaplain at Fort Hare University and lecturer at Federal Theological Seminary, both blacks-only institutions in the Eastern Cape



We said we welcomed the fact that UDF has brought all the progressive elements in our society together in fighting apartheid, and we also welcome the emphasis on B.C. insofar as this is a necessary process in our liberation, but we simply would not want to see that kind of B.C. as an end in itself, which in other words, perpetuates a kind of new racism, if you like. Now -



THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT WAS INSPIRED IN PART BY THE US BLACK POWER MOVEMENT OF THE LATE 1960S. THE WRITINGS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEADERS, THOUGH BANNED IN SOUTH AFRICA, WERE SMUGGLED INTO THE COUNTRY AND WIDELY CIRCULATED IN UNIVERSITY CIRCLES.

It was in part to combat white fears that the Christian Institute of Southern Africa (CI)<sup>9</sup> set up Spro-cas, the 'Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society',<sup>10</sup> which answered Black Consciousness with 'white consciousness'.

To maintain political control of South Africa a certain type of government is required, and it is impossible to separate completely what it must do to blacks from what it does to whites. A minority cannot rule a majority by consent. It must therefore be prepared to use force to maintain control, and this in turn requires a cultural climate that sanctions killing. It must be continually on its guard against 'subversion' and be prepared to react to it rapidly. A climate develops in which people who are not even white dissenters fear to speak of politics or to openly criticize government policy. Thus the political cost to whites of maintaining economic privilege is that they lose control over many other areas of their lives and become subject to an external authority.

The political fear and loss of freedom is accompanied by an even more insidious cultural unfreedom. Psychologically insecure individuals are threatened by change. They turn in upon themselves, blindly assert their importance, their own identity and their own cultural traditions, but are not capable of opening themselves out towards the future. Race prejudice prevents intelligent thought about the nature and functioning of society.

But these patterns can be broken. And it is important to try to break them. It is important to show the whites what they have to gain from a free, democratic society. Until white South Africans come to understand that their present society and their present position is a result not of their own virtues but of their vices; until they come to see world history over the last five hundred years not as the 'triumph of white civilization', but simply as the bloody and ambiguous birth of a new technology; and until they come to see these things not in guilt for the past but in hope for the future, they will not be able to communicate with black people, nor ultimately with one another.

I felt that, in my own experience, but I don't think that holds for the rest of the Christian Institute because that tension remained powerful until its banning essentially, and the tension expressed itself oh, very much when, for example, SASO and BCP would regularly need the resources of the Christian Institute in the form of money, cars, typewriters, paper, anything, and there was a strong sense in which the Christian Institute would always provide and

“ Through Spro-cas, the white programme [the counterpart of a programme for blacks], we were to find ways of translating a non-racial society into an active programme by cooperating with white groups, student or church or anything. We didn't fare very well because it was a heyday for SASO and soon, while in white politics it was a very fruitless period. In fact, after a two-year period we closed the white programme down and expanded the black programme, simply because we had not made any serious impact in the white community.

I think BC had an impact on the liberal white who was plagued by guilt, but I don't think that that moved whites to action or to resistance or to a clarity about their position. The tension expressed itself very much when, for example, SASO and Black Community Programmes (BCP)<sup>11</sup> would regularly need the resources of the Christian Institute. There was a fleet of cars that we constantly loaned out, and there was an attitude in the BC structures that because it was provided for by whites it need not be respected. And that resulted in there being a preponderance of cars being wrecked.

It was the black CI staff who then demanded of the white staff that they should cease giving cars or anything to SASO until SASO had rethought their position, and that really we were providing at the level of our own guilt — which was just nonsensical. And shortly after this decision was taken, unanimously by the staff, I was approached and I said, 'Sorry, no car.' And I was immediately told, 'Oh, you bloody racist.'

But the point I'm making is that I learned in that situation to know that if my motive is guilt, it is merely another form of patronage of the black person. And therefore I cannot be a political person in the South African struggle and refuse to accept that I can have arguments, disputes — and for that matter, break-ups — with black people whom I'm closely relating to. The colour of their skin cannot determine the nature of that relationship. ”

HORST KLEINSCHMIDT a NUSAS leader in the late 1960s who worked for the Christian Institute in the early 1970s

“ The Black Consciousness philosophy evolved over time beyond its initial social and cultural focus, and by the mid-1970s a critique of BC which stressed economic issues was beginning to emerge from the youth and students. This development sowed the seeds of an eventual rift between the more left-wing SASO and the BC veterans who went on to found the movement's non-student wing, Black People's Convention (BPC).

The two political trends have always been struggling against each other: the non-racial attitude that the whites have got a role to play, and that the whites do not have a role to play: 'Black man you are on your own, you must free yourself.' There were people I met — who I only later came to discover were ANC members — who were putting across this line that we cannot define ourselves only in terms of blackness, that oppression has never been a political vehicle. They argued that we should move out of this social identity to one which is much more dynamic, which sets forth perspectives for the future.

I think contact with the ANC was growing. More people from outside were coming into the country, books were coming from outside. There was a dearth of material at that time: published material of the ANC was particularly valuable and one treasured it as if it was gold. We even had a 'mobile library' — books which moved from hand to hand amongst selected people. You see, we knew the ANC was underground, but the problem was finding the underground members of the ANC. At that time more and more of them were coming out of prison and coming to see us, SASO, to see who we were. We used to listen to Radio Freedom every day when there was a broadcast.

We were not anti ANC's political ideas at that time — never — because we felt that it is a liberation movement, we are a students' movement, and these are the people we need, we want to have the material they are giving us. That is why SASO became so receptive to ANC ideas later on. The situation was constantly developing; we were meeting hard practice which could not be fitted onto those ideas which we had developed in college.

Let me just inform you: we had a national executive committee meeting in 1973 in which we had sent out people to go and meet the liberation movements, to talk to them and say, 'In what way can we work together?' We wanted contact with these people. SASO people were sent to the two movements, and the only movement which replied positively was the ANC.

As a SASO leader you had been supportive of a decision to avoid contact with whites; did it then surprise or disturb you to see whites accepted in the ANC?

This time I knew that I am not meeting whites who are going to push me around — this time I was meeting whites who were comrades. We could think together, work together, act together, and plan together for the future — it's quite a different thing. The non-racialism of the ANC was positive because it involved a very clear analysis. It was not just theory, but it came from the nitty-gritty analysis of the contradictions which are existing in the South African situation: how is race a factor? Why is non-racialism a policy position which is the only way forward to bring about a situation where apartheid can be eliminated? One cannot eliminate apartheid with apartheid. ”



“ I did not understand BC as an end in itself. At that time I think it was important for people inside the country to find something which could motivate and rally people and put confidence again in themselves as black people. But it was very clear to me that there’s a limit to which BC can take you, and you had to find the next step up, because it was very clear to me from the beginning that BC was not going to bring the government down. From an historical point of view, it was clear that no amount of talking and no amount of conscientizing people will do that. I would say it was like a growing child: you need to crawl before you can walk, and so BC was just one of those stages that you needed to grow up in politics. But you couldn’t be BC forever — and there was no other alternative except the ANC.

***Was the ANC’s non-racialism an issue for you before you joined?***

Well, the ANC had an alliance with different racial groups, but the issue really was to fight for the rights of the Africans — it was not to fight to get rid of the whites. The whites were just a fact of history: they were there and there was nothing much to do about them. To be honest with you, at that time I didn’t think there were enough progressive whites to make a difference. I didn’t think that all whites were bad, but I just thought there weren’t enough whites who were prepared to stick their necks out for us.

***So what kind of work did you do as an underground ANC member?***

They didn’t want us to talk overtly — I mean, that would have been disastrous because I don’t think at the time there was anyone who was talking overtly about the ANC. But they did want us to influence other people that we are in contact with, those who we thought had reached a stage in BC where they wanted something else, like us.

We felt that it was our task to try and influence the debates and the discussions in BC to have more leanings towards ANC policies — without saying they were ANC policies, if you see what I mean. You would talk about things that are in the Freedom Charter, what kind of education people should fight for, what sort of land policies. And also influencing people towards not seeing the struggle as waged only by Africans, coloureds and Indians, but that other people should also have a role to play.

And more so, to influence people that when they left South Africa they should join the ANC. Because there was quite a big group of BC people which was just being wasted in Botswana. They were not part of any liberation movement, they were keeping themselves as a BC group. Obviously there was no way forward for them, and some of them were even discussing forming their own army wing.<sup>13</sup>

***So what was the reaction you got?***

Well, some thought that the ANC hadn’t done enough. It’s very easy when you are in South Africa to think you can just go out and get trained and come back and fight, because it’s very difficult to come to grips with all the problems and complications of training people and infiltrating them back to the country.

***You didn’t get questions or criticism about the ANC’s working relationship with whites?***

I would say that there were a few — but not really many — who just wanted to know what sort of role they had in the ANC, because everyone, including me, had the idea that it’s the Africans who should be in the frontline and who should be in the leadership.

When I say we wanted to meet the ANC, we wanted to join the ANC, it does not mean that we didn’t have any reservations — we did think they were a bit slow. Even after having spoken to them and appreciating the problems they were facing, we still felt that. But we felt that to make them fast we had to actually help them: join the ANC and try and put our enthusiasm into the ANC.

***Do you think there was any re-directing of SASO as a result of your ANC involvement?***

I think so. Having met with the ANC and got a better perspective ourselves, we did try to get SASO to think about things in a much broader way, and to try and introduce the subject of ANC — maybe not directly — but by inviting known ANC people like Winnie Mandela<sup>14</sup> to our conference to be the guest speaker, and so on. And there was some attempt to actually introduce the subject of class and an economic programme into SASO.

Some people were quite positive about it and thought we should further explore this kind of thinking, because they were feeling that they’d reached the ceiling of BC and the ANC was going to open other avenues. But there were other people who actually said, ‘You must be very careful. These people are known to be tomatoes.’ And ‘tomatoes’ was meaning ‘red’, and ‘red’ was meaning communist I think that comes from the fact that South Africans — at least our generation — have never been allowed to know what communism is. We’ve been told how bad it is without being told what it is. Now things have changed: in the same way that people are much more open to carrying the ANC flag, they’re probably much more open to the Communist Party. It was ignorance and state propaganda.”

**NKOSAZANA DLAMINI-ZUMA**, a BC supporter recruited to the ANC while visiting Swaziland in 1975, then elected SASO vice-president in 1976<sup>15</sup>

I like to look at that period of B.C. as a period in which there was a disconnection between the - disconnection in the historical evolution of the struggle, I would (.....) (060) because I really don't think that anything new has happened

The watershed marking this shift in Black Consciousness away from a colour-based analysis came in 1976, with the outgoing address of the last SASO president to serve out his full term of office, Diliza Mji.<sup>16</sup> He argued that if BC was to survive as a viable philosophy it needed to 'start interpreting our situation from an economic class point of view' informed by 'an accurate perception of who the enemy is'. This 'late SASO line' characterized the government's agenda as the promotion of an aspiring black middle class with a stake in the free enterprise system, concluding that, 'All they are saying is that blacks should be exploited by blacks.'<sup>17</sup>

“ Funnily enough, BC, when it started off, had as one of its central principles that it recognizes the validity of the older liberation movements, and some of us truly believed that we were taking over from people who had gone on before us. But that was exactly where the mistake was, I think. It was a very romantic situation, where we looked at the ANC and the PAC as organizations of equal credibility, equal contribution, and I wouldn't think that a lot of us were clear about the differences that lay behind ANC and PAC, beyond just saying that there were white communists in the ANC and that the PAC was objecting to the hijacking of the black people's struggles by white people, and so on.

During that time we did not have any exposure to any other political forces. In trying to analyze you used the BC framework, and sometimes one just found oneself frustrated, not able to answer questions. I'll give you some examples. What used to really worry me was the fact that a lot of the oppression in this country was actually perpetuated by black people like ourselves — Transkei's Chief Matanzima and so on. Security Police surveillance of our movements was very, very obvious and a lot of this was done by black Security Policemen. So through those sort of tangible experiences one began searching for an answer to some of these obvious questions, and it was clear that an answer lay outside the BC framework.

#### *When did you start searching beyond BC?*

Around '74, '75, BC was under heavy questioning. We were challenged to answer questions like: how can we bring about change in the society? This in itself made us aware of the class nature of society. It led us on to realize that students are just a part of it — in fact, not even the most important part. We became aware that there are workers and trade unions which were emerging around that same time. The strikes here in Natal in '73 were very important events that one could not just ignore.<sup>18</sup>

We tried to conscientize people through educational projects, literacy projects, and things like that, but in implementing those projects, it was quite clear that we were only reaching a few selected groups of people, and not in any systematic way. It was quite clear that we were not making any impact outside the student movement.

Then there was a BPC conference that was held in Mafeking in 1976. Personally, I must say that that was my turning point, because the document that was supposed to be the economic policy of BC was no different than the present sort of capitalist nature of the society.<sup>19</sup> It was not an alternative at all, and although I did not have a clear understanding of an alternative society, I knew at that time that the answer to the problems of the society lies not only in a different political order, but also in an alternative economic system. I must say that at that conference, purely around this document, it became quite clear that there were two main trends within BC itself: there were people who were questioning the nature of society in a broader sense, and then there were those who were vehemently defending the racial way of interpreting our own society.<sup>20</sup>

I remember very clearly what happened after that: in June of '76, at the SASO congress which was held in Hammanskraal, most of the campuses in Natal and Jo'burg were said to belong to the camp that has sort of betrayed BC, because they were beginning to raise more fundamental questions. People in Cape Town, Natal, and some people in Jo'burg were together in interpreting things differently. But people in the Cape, and some people in Jo'burg — these were mainly people around Steve Biko — they were very unhappy about the direction that SASO was taking.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, when I got detained in '76 in the aftermath of the [Soweto] uprisings that, I think, was the breakthrough, because one got in touch with people who were returning from the Island. So that in talking to such people, one then was able to reconnect the pieces that were missing about our history, the history of the struggle in South Africa. You must remember that our political development was not from a textbook: it was from participating in events that were happening at the time, and having developed in a period whereby the movements had been banned and people who belonged to those movements had been silenced.

I like to look at that period of BC as a period in which there was a disconnection between the historical evolutions of the struggle. I really don't think that anything new has happened now — it's just that people have rediscovered the period that they, unfortunately, had missed because of the repression and so on.”

DILIZA MJI, SASO National President, 1975 -76

In October 1977, the government finally banned the Black Consciousness movement, issuing the first organizational restrictions since the 1960s against seventeen BC bodies.<sup>22</sup> Many analyzed this delayed state response — nearly a decade after BC first emerged — as evidence that it was the decline of the conservative Black Consciousness tradition that had prompted the bannings. Pretoria had tolerated the Black Consciousness era: what it would not abide was the reconnection with the history that had gone before it. But the bans came too late. The new trend toward non-racialism was now firmly entrenched, and the revival of the Congress tradition had already begun to eclipse Black Consciousness.

now - it's just that people have rediscovered the one period that they, unfortunately, had missed because of the repression and so on.

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>From Mongane Wally Serote, *Yakhal'nkomo*, Renoster Books, 1972. 'Ofay' is African-American slang from the 'Harlem Renaissance' era (1920s): a derogatory word for a white person, derived from Pig Latin for 'foe', pronounced oe-fay.

<sup>2</sup>The sexist language and ethos of the Black Consciousness Movement was grounded in a number of factors. BC's base among the black middle class meant that its influence was largely confined to university students and the intelligentsia, a male-dominated sphere in that period. Feminism had not yet made the impact on South Africa that it had in the US and Europe. By the early 1980s, black political organizations like the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) were responding positively to criticism of their sexism (epitomized by the common call to order in meetings: 'Gents...'). As of the mid-1980s, the United Democratic Front and the Congress of South African Trade Unions included far more women in their leadership than the political groupings of the previous decades, with greater prominence given to women's issues. By the late 1980s, political activists commonly featured a call for a 'non-sexist' South Africa in their demands for a democratic and non-racial society.

<sup>3</sup>A paraphrasing of an aphorism from American Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver.

<sup>4</sup>This is not to imply that the only international influence on BC was from the US. The evolving ideology was also influenced by news of the liberation movements active in the neighbouring states, the student uprisings in Europe, and the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia. However, black South Africans learned of these developments via mainstream media reports. The little socialist analysis that filtered into South Africa in this period came mainly via Western books and journals, e.g., analysis of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere's 'tijamaa' village model of socialism.

<sup>5</sup>Yet at the same time, other aspects of the BC image were the use of English and a great concern for dress and appearance. Furthermore, the Afro look was later co-opted by both white capital and black small businesses to market Afro-style designer clothes, hair care products and salons specializing in American-style perms.

<sup>6</sup>A contentious term deriving from the Arabic word for a black person, 'zanthus' loosely interpreted as 'the land of black people'. The ANC rejects the word as historically and geographically incorrect, and etymologically derogatory because of its association with the East African coastal slave trade. While the term was originally proposed by the PAC in the early 1960s, it only gained currency a decade later, in Black Consciousness circles.

<sup>7</sup>Sono later changed his views, advocating closer cooperation with whites in a controversial speech to the 1973 SASO General Students Council. This resulted in his ouster from the SASO presidency by BC militants.

<sup>8</sup>Steve Biko died in detention in September 1977; an inquest exonerated the Security Police despite evidence that he died after torture, and the doctor charged with Biko's care was penalized for misconduct by the Medical Association of South Africa.

<sup>9</sup>Based in Johannesburg and formed in 1963 (a result of the Cottlesloe Consultation, convened by the World Council of Churches following the Sharpeville massacre), the CI was headed by Dr Beyers Naude of the Dutch Reformed Church. Spro-cas was also sponsored by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), but the CI did most of the administration and fund-raising for the project.

<sup>10</sup>The project gave rise to six commissions under the Special Programme for Christian Action in Society, which published material such as *Power, Privilege and Poverty: A Spro-cas Report*, 1972.

<sup>11</sup>Part of BC's national umbrella body, Black People's Convention (BPC), BCP ran clinics, literacy training, creches, etc. in black communities.

<sup>12</sup>The first time this slogan appeared in print was in Barney Pityana, 'Priorities in Community Development', SASO Newsletter, September 1971.

<sup>13</sup>Some governments and non-governmental agencies made concerted attempts to build a 'third force' to counter the ANC and the PAC, especially in the period immediately following the 1976 Soweto uprisings. For example, the then-Nigerian government feted Soweto student leader Tsitsi Mashinini and supported an abortive effort to form a military wing of the Black Consciousness Movement, the South African Youth Revolutionary Council (SAYRCO), while some Western governments and organizations favoured 'non-aligned' South African exiles in scholarship applications.

<sup>14</sup>The wife of Nelson Mandela, and in her own right a leading member of the ANC Women's League and FedSAW in the 1950s, as well as chair of the ANC's Orlando branch. Banned and restricted from 1962 to 1975 and tried under the Terrorism Act in 1970, she was detained in 1976 upon her reinvolvement in politics, banned again, and then banished to a small town in the Orange Free State in 1977. A prominent symbol of the ANC who made a point of attending ANC trials (of blacks and whites) during her few months of freedom, her presence at BC events was significant.

<sup>15</sup>Following note 2 (above), it is worth mentioning that Dlamini is female. While the underrepresentation of women in legal opposition politics has been frequently noted, obvious security concerns have so far precluded an analysis of the role of women in underground structures.

<sup>16</sup>Mji was elected in December 1974, following the arrest of the entire SASO executive (later prosecuted in the SASO-BPC trial). He was re-elected in June 1975 and served a full year's term of office. Mongezi Stofile was elected SASO president in June 1976, but was detained two months afterwards, released in February 1977, and then banned in June 1977. The last SASO president, Faith Matlopane, served from June 1977 until SASO was banned in October of that year.

<sup>17</sup>'Presidential Address to 8th General Student Council', reprinted in SASO News Bulletin June 1977. The dearth of other historical documents marking the shift in SASO policy is the result of two key factors: the discovery of a suspected Security Police agent at the 1976 SASO General Student Council, which prompted the withdrawal of most other documents from the record; and state pressure on SASO in the eighteen months preceding its banning (e.g., via prosecution of SASO leaders and tighter monitoring of its international funding), which meant that there was less time and money for the production of SASO publications that could have highlighted these ideological developments.

<sup>18</sup>Some 61,000 workers were involved in a series of strikes in Durban in early 1973, the first major labour unrest in South Africa in more than a decade.

<sup>19</sup>In this document, also known as '31 Points', BPC adopted 'black communalism' as its economic policy, defined as 'a modified version of the traditional African economic lifestyle' and 'an economic system which is based on the principle of sharing, lays emphasis on community ownership of land and its wealth and riches, and which strikes a healthy balance between what may legitimately be owned by individuals and what ought to be owned by the community as a whole'.

<sup>20</sup>Another point of contention concerned BPC's lack of consultation with SASO in the preparation of the document, a departure from the cooperation of the past that signalled to SASO that the BC old guard was starting to regard itself as a 'third force' vis-a-vis the existing liberation movements, and no longer simply as a caretaker body. After a threat by the SASO executive to break relations with BPC over the issue, SASO presented an alternative economic policy — which was rejected by BPC as 'red'. The dispute was compounded, in the view of SASO, by BPC's appointment of Biko as life-president' at the 1977 Mafeking conference, followed by his release from detention timed to facilitate an unmandated meeting with an aide to a visiting American politician, Senator Dick Clark.

<sup>21</sup>An indication of the depth of the SASO-BPC divide was revealed with the detentions that followed the October bannings. Some forty leading activists were divided into four tellingly nicknamed cells in the Transvaal's Modder Bee prison: the mainly SASO contingent (plus a group of ANC prisoners) that supported a class analysis was in 'Vietnam' and 'University' (after Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University, which catered for African and Third World students), while the mainly BPC grouping that continued to emphasize race (including prominent older leaders from the Soweto Committee of Ten thrown up by the 1976 uprisings) was confined to cells dubbed 'America' and 'Britain'.

<sup>22</sup>The BC-supporting Christian Institute was also banned.