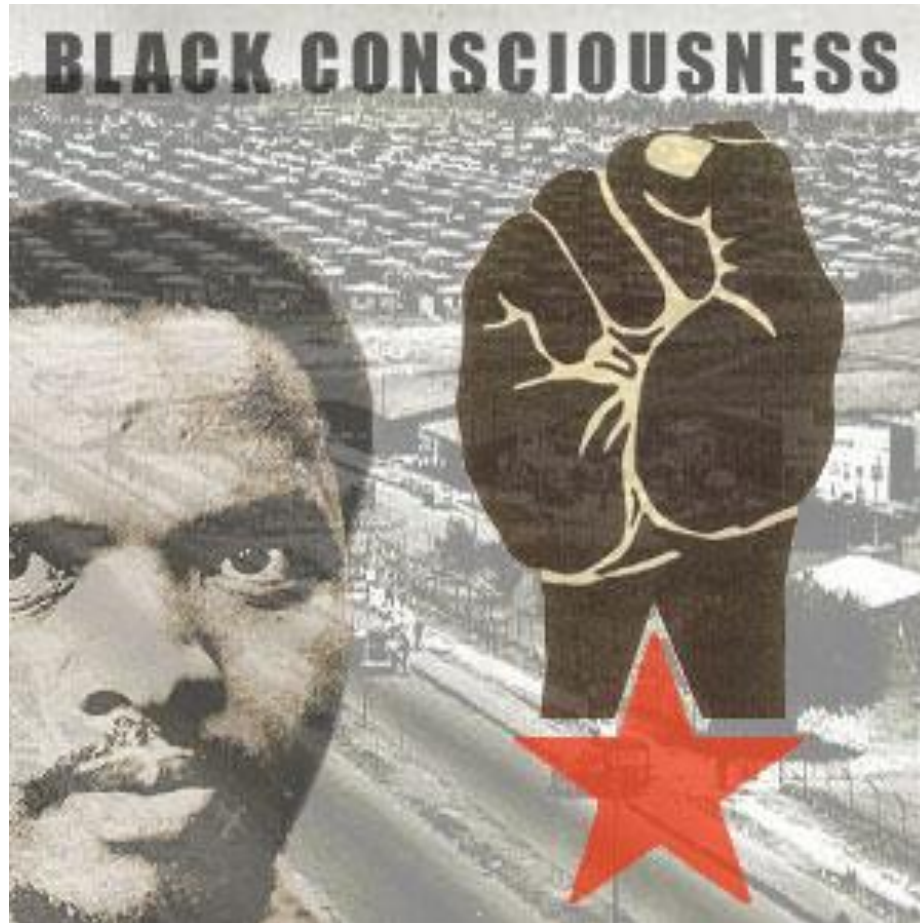
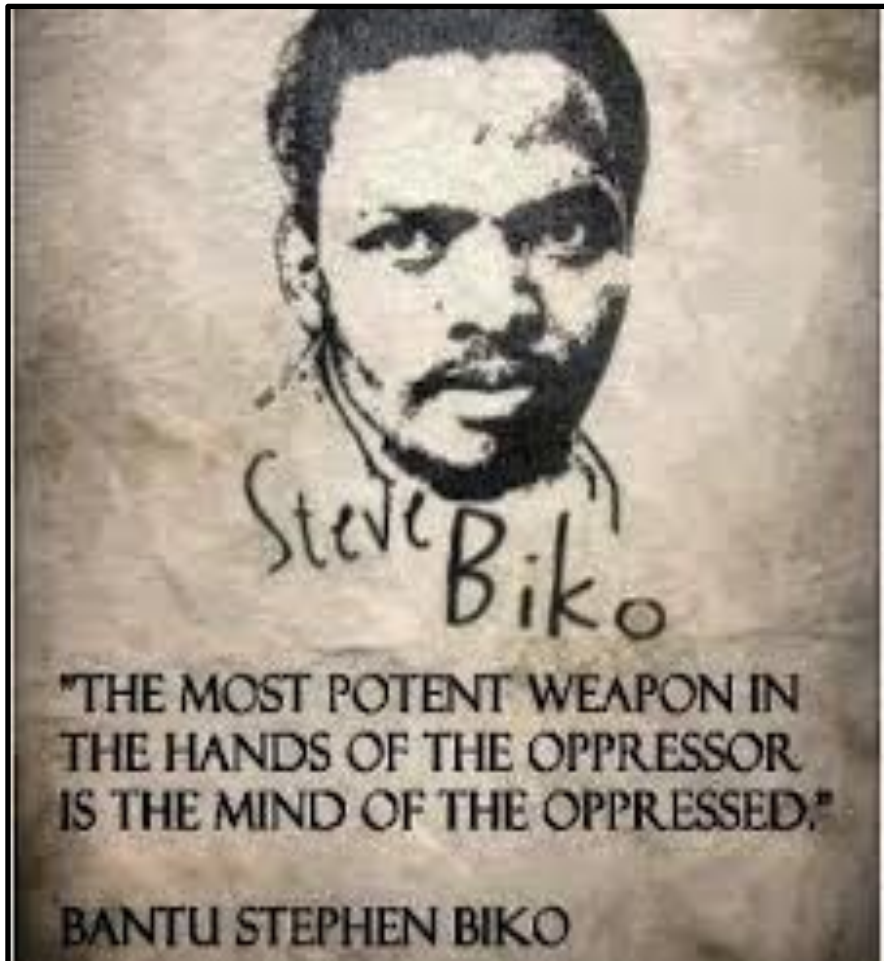


# ***Steve Biko & Black Consciousness in South Africa 1960s - 1970S***



# Climate of South Africa in the 1960s



- **Very little protest in South Africa in the mid 1960s due to state repression:**
  - After Sharpeville (1960), ANC and PAC banned
  - Key members of the liberation movement were imprisoned or went into exile
  - New legislation increased the Apartheid state's power to suppress protest (eg detention without trial, house arrest)
  - Increasing militarization of state
  - Armed wings of ANC and PAC curbed by state
  - **But in late 1960s: Emergence of new form of protest**  
**= Black Consciousness**

# Steve Biko Brief Background

- Born in 1946. Raised in a good home. Father was a police officer.
- Educated in Catholic schools and received a good education. Very liberal schools that promoted political activism.
- Got involved in politics in medical school.
- Founded the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) in 1968.
- “Black Consciousness” ideas developed during this time.

# Why was Black Consciousness necessary by late 1960s?

- ‘Divide and Rule’ Policy: The Apartheid government created of ‘homelands’ for different African language groups and their urban planning policies (which divided townships into different language groups) aimed to divide black people, to prevent them uniting as black people to resist Apartheid.
- The Apartheid government tried to push a policy of ‘separate but equal’ and of ‘separate development’.
- Steve Biko believed it was essential to strip away the language of ‘separate development’ and see Apartheid for what it was - a racist policy which oppressed black people because of their colour.

# The philosophy and aims of Black Consciousness (BC)

- BC started as an attitude of mind rather than a political movement.
- It defined as 'black' all those oppressed by Apartheid.
- BC aimed to raise black confidence to bring about liberation.
- Promote pride in black identity, culture and history.
- Challenged white 'liberals'.
- Promoted black unity.



## **Biko's definition of Black consciousness.**

- “Black Consciousness is in essence 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 in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration [deviation] from the "normal" which is white.”



# Aims of BCM - in Biko's words

- “It [BCM] seeks to infuse [fill] the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life. Blacks no longer seek to reform the system because so doing implies acceptance of the major points around which the system revolves. Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish. Such a major undertaking can only be realised in an atmosphere where people are convinced of the truth inherent [inborn] in their stand.”
- “Liberation therefore is of paramount [vital] importance in the concept of Black Consciousness, for we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage [slavery]. We want to attain the envisioned self which is a free self. Black Consciousness is an attitude of the mind and a way of life... The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”



# 1968: Establishment of South African Student Organisation. Led by Steve Biko

**July 1971** SASO's Policy Manifesto stated:

- i) "BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS" is an attitude of mind, a way of life;
- ii) The basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the Blackman must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic dignity;
- iii) The Blackman must build up his own value systems, see himself as self-defined and not as defined by others."

# ***BC Movement influenced by:***



## **Internationally**

- Africanist views of Congress Youth League and PAC
- Black Power in USA
- International youth revolt of 1960s
- Independence movement in Africa
- Growing international criticism of SA

# ***National Party government's response to Black Consciousness:***

- Government welcomed BCM it at first. It saw it as fitting in with policy of 'separate development'.
- But Biko was highly articulate and his support was growing. He was clearly not going to be easily bought off or controlled by Apartheid regime.
- Government increased its policy of repression: expulsions, arrests, bannings (Biko was placed under house arrest in Kingwilliam's Town)
- In 1977 Biko was killed while in police custody and BC organisations were banned.

# *Causes of the 1976 Soweto student protests*

- [System of Bantu Education:](#)
- Aimed to prepare black people for unskilled labour
- Schools poorly equipped; teachers inadequately trained; results poor; high drop-out rates
- Government spent far less on black education



# ***1976 Soweto uprising – a Turning Point in SA History***



**Student Protests against Education Policy which began on June 16 1976**

- ▶ **became uprising against apartheid regime and oppression**





# Impact of the protests and the Soweto uprising

## **Disruption of education:**

- Government backed down on language policy
- But schooling disrupted until following year

## **State reaction:**

- Student leaders detained; 1000+ killed; thousands wounded

## **Increased support for armed struggle:**

- Links between student protesters and ANC
- Thousands fled country and joined ANC and PAC in exile
- Armed struggle increased with new recruits

## **Negative effect on SA's image:**

- International criticism increased
- Destroyed attempts by government to end isolation
- Business leaders put pressure on government to reform

## **Further repression of opposition:**

- 1977: 17 anti-apartheid organizations with links to Black Consciousness banned (eg SASO, SASM, BPC, SSRC)
- Steve Biko killed in police detention