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FrankTalk

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Quest for a True Humanity Achieving the Vision

"We have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common brotherhood. In time we shall be in the position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible—a more human face."

Steve Biko

Mkosinathi Biko



December 18, 2011 would have been Steve Biko's 65th birthday, and thus possibly the year of his retirement from the world of work. For this reason, it is safe to speculate that this would have been a year of

introspection for him, as he took stock of his life. Given his vocation, his introspection would predictably have had a socio-political bias.

The political space of which Steve Biko was a part has seen a number of its principal "isms" turned on their heads. In the past, the predominant discourse was that of socialism versus capitalism. In what would have been the year of his retirement, central banks around the world are arguing that they need to apply a little socialism in order to rescue capitalism. Closer to home, the principle and devotion of yesteryears has been expended. In its place is despicable expediency fuelled by crass materialism.

Endowed with commendable insight, topped off with a great sense of history, one can only imagine what

Steve Biko's take on the contemporary body politic would have been. What would he have made of the face of the New South Africa? How would he have described her soul?

In this, the second edition of the FrankTalk Journal – *Quest for a True Humanity: Achieving the Vision* – we bring you views on the state of South African society, and how far we have progressed in becoming the nation with a more human face that Biko spoke about. Based on a compilation of various FrankTalk dialogues that have taken place to date, this edition explores a number of issues that were at the fore of discourse during 2011: hate speech versus freedom of speech; race relations; and economic inequality among others. Among the featured contributors are colleagues, friends and contemporaries of Biko; as well as a new generation of thought leaders and activists.

We are pleased to share these views with you here. We also invite you to share your own thoughts on the state of South African society and Biko's legacy with us throughout this 65th birthday year.

You may submit an article to us via admin@sbf.org.za; or through the FrankTalk blog: <http://sbffranktalk.blogspot.com/>. We also invite you to dialogue with us through facebook <http://www.facebook.com/TheSteveBikoFoundation> and Twitter @BikoFoundation.

Destitution, Disease, Despair

Oppression is the enemy of humanity. In its grasp, one witnesses the shattering of mankind, self-destruction of the oppressed and oppressor.

Oppression is a waste, it is destructive on all fronts; oppression diverts and pollutes the best energies of man.

At the heart of oppression is an economic framework in which one group of people benefits from the exploitation of another.

This false righteousness for the sake of exploitation causes a peculiar social readjustment.

The oppressed – now locked into a dangerous economic framework – must be convinced that suffering is their fault and that their oppressors have an unassailable right to administer such exploitation.

This framework causes a vicious existential disruption where all of a sudden a native people with their own understanding of the world – their traditions, rites and rituals – are stripped of identity and handed a new one in which their colonial masters have apotheosised themselves and they are reduced to an inferior status.

These words and sentiments were expressed by Frantz Fanon (1952) and Albert Memmi (1957) and echoed by Steve Biko in his lifetime, in the context of the search for answers to the slave mentality that was so much of a handicap to black people finding themselves and seizing the initiative to break the chains that imprisoned them.

Thirty four years after Biko's death, Africans are celebrating their freedom from oppression.

South Africa's step into majority rule was a step towards a nonracial, neoliberal society.

Things have seemingly changed – whites no longer ride in different buses nor sit on different benches or use different toilets.

One can see black and white walking down the same streets, sitting

next to one another in restaurants and living side by side as friends and neighbours.

TV programmes broadcast proud messages about "17 years of freedom." This new democracy seems to have provided answers to the injustices of the apartheid past.

However, the reality of the South Africa that Biko would find today

paints a different picture. The years of "freedom" have come to mean years of not dealing with the problem of racism in this country.

The integration touted by government has not reconciled the racial disharmony of apartheid.

The white neighbour might smile and greet the black neighbour, but it is clear that a certain relationship still exists between them.

Biko would find what he had always known – that apartheid was not "petty" but a separation that pushed for the dehumanisation of the oppressed to sustain power. The reality created by the monster of oppression is a society ailing from a disease of the mind called "racism."

Biko had described Black Consciousness as an attempt to infuse black people with pride in themselves,



Professor Ben Khoapa

their efforts, their value system, culture, religion and outlook on life.

Today, he would see the task of Black Consciousness as incomplete and call for more revolutionary "fists" to be raised to urge black people to seek liberation from the psychologically devastating situations of colonisation and apartheid. He would call for the creation of a socialist state that would rectify the economic legacies of exploitation.

Three decades later, Biko would not only affirm the call he made to fellow citizens but would do so with urgency because the problems facing the country and other black people in the diaspora have

magnified to a global nature.

He would also call for an increased sophistication in developing tools of analysis and development of appropriate paradigms.

Like Fanon, Biko had traversed a long, painful road of intellectual labour and arrived at results that are instructive and inspiring.

Yet if we leave matters where destiny stopped him or occasionally quote him for convenience, we would be eulogising him. It is much more fruitful to build on his works, distil aspects of his contributions relevant to current problems and work to further what he pioneered.

Any consideration of Biko and his contributions brings to the discourse the effects of that historical scandal and realities that are awakening us to the fact that the "human factor" in oppression and plans for national reconstruction have been neglected for too long with grave consequences.

The evident crises in individual identities and collective histories cannot be ignored. The alarming increase in alcoholism, mental disorders and personal violence in urban and rural areas invite the attention and contributions of our professional caregivers and other "helping" professionals.

The last decade has shown how entrenched old inequalities in economics and structure of domain are. Dreams of equality and dignity

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have not come true for many of our people and old wounds continue to fester, more than ever now as the bankruptcy of an assimilated elite and false symbols like flashy cars are understood.

The high expectations brought about by promises of national independence and the “war on poverty” has been replaced by a generalised demoralisation and cynicism.

It is by no means insignificant that about 800 million of the world’s population is so impoverished that it constitutes a global “underclass” characterised by malnutrition, disease, illiteracy and living in squalor. It has the highest rates of mortality at any age, has health problems and life expectancies of less than 50 years and a reduced capacity to work.

This global underclass reflects the extremes of a reality for a majority of the world’s population.

Unjust distribution of resources, rapid population growth and an increasing degradation of the environment have forced millions more into destitution, disease and despair.

The continuing desertification of land, reducing soil nutrients and arable land, combines with the desertification of values and threatens social disintegration and even cultural extinction in parts of the developing world.

It is in considering these problems and seeking solutions to them that Biko and his work are particularly significant.

South Africa has entered a new era. It is for this reason that Black Consciousness still lives and it reminds us that as Biko so aptly said: “The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.”

The call for solidarity of the oppressed is valid and urgent but it is also good to realise that the battle has changed. No longer is the struggle of liberation against a regime that one sees every day patrolling the streets of the townships, checking people’s passbooks.

The new regime is global, it is everywhere, checking your credit card number, your bank statements and determining your future from

“The real importance of the Black Consciousness Movement is not the nature of its disappearance; it is in the nature of its reappearance.”

thousands of kilometres away.

This is the new colonialism and it requires a new conscientisation.

As a young student pointed out to me the other day: “The real importance of the Black Consciousness Movement is not the nature of its disappearance, it is in the nature of its reappearance.” The Black Consciousness Movement is needed more today than ever before. As the neoliberal ghosts of mental slavery drive the oppressed masses of South Africa into a new colonisation of Western capitalism, a new Black Consciousness needs to return to its mass-mobilising roots in order to continue to give South Africa its ‘human face’.”



Poet Don Mattera, Neville Alexander, Liepollo Pheko & Oshadi Mangena at a FrankTalk seminar interrogating the state of SA society.



A Quest for a True Humanity

In reflecting on the state of the nation, it is fitting that we honour one of South Africa's most powerful revolutionaries both in thought and action, Steve Biko; and in doing so, measure the extent to which his quest for a true humanity has been realized—if at all. Writing on “Black Consciousness and a Quest for True Humanity,” for the book, *Black Theology, the South African Voice*, sometime between 1967 and 1972, Steve said, “We have set out on a quest for true humanity and somewhere in the distant horizon we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination. Drawing strength from our common plight and out brotherhood,” (I suppose in this day and age we would talk about personhood), Steve goes on to say, “In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible, a more human face.”

It is clear then that the glittering prize that pervaded the revolutionary

dreams and imaginings of the 1960s and 70s was a South Africa with a more human face. These phrases, glittering prize, the distant horizon, a more human face, are poetic metaphors for a radically different South Africa where race, class subjugation and exploitation of black people would have no place. Where black people would have come into their own psychically, psychologically and physically free to define their social, political and economic destiny. So the question arises: did we as black people really define our own destiny? Were we coerced into it? Were we opportunistic?

While the situation of black people is central to Black Consciousness, it is clear that the South Africa with a more human face includes all of South Africa's people irrespective of colour. However, speaking from an analysis of the historical condition of black people, as it persisted then in the 1970's, Steve asserted that the problem, or the thesis, was strong white racism to which the antithesis had to be strong solidarity amongst black people on whom white racism sought to prey. The synthesis of violence, as we in the Black Consciousness Movement saw, was a true humanity where power politics would have no play.

This position reflected the notion that the problem was apartheid and the antithesis, a prescriptive non-racialism into which blacks would

“Steve also cited the need to reduce the material element that was slowly, creeping into the African character. These are prophetic words indeed given the materialism that seems to be grabbing and pervading our own black community.”

be accommodated, assimilated and exploited in a system informed primarily by white values and needs. In another article entitled “White Racism and Black Consciousness,” the South Africa with a more human face is highlighted when Steve states that, “The stress placed on the values of human relationships by black people has to be restored as well as the high regard for people, their property and life in general” and this has great resonance today given the disregard we see in relation to the majority of black people in the country.

Steve also cited the need to reduce the material element that was slowly creeping into the African character. These are prophetic words indeed given the materialism that seems to be grabbing and pervading our own black community.

So the question: is there a glittering prize on the horizon? This query is somewhat whimsical because we are now citizens of a “new” South Africa. Purportedly equal citizens – whether black or white – in terms of our much lauded Constitution, with the Bill of Rights setting out a range of human rights to which we are all entitled.

Many would say that these documents and the institutions that uphold these rights sketch out the human face of South Africa that Steve and the Black Consciousness Movement espoused. In fact, the constitution moves beyond racial discrimination in its articulation of discrimination, and consequently oppression, on the basis of a number of other grounds such as sexual orientation, gender and so on. This would imply that our experiences of race and class subjugation have made us sensitive to other forms of discrimination, which essentially denied human beings their basic

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humanity. At the heart of a South Africa with a more human face is the recognition of and the respect for this essential humanity.

The humaneness of every human being is observable in how their country, their fellow South Africans, government and its institutions recognize this; but again, we come back to the question, is there a glittering prize in the distant horizon? Quite clearly, this question is a rhetorical one and quells the idea that the new dispensation ushered in a South Africa with a more human face. South Africa remains, despite its new clothes, an essentially capitalist, patriarchal state. Perhaps the mistake many have made is to assume that post 1994, negotiations ended the liberation struggle. Worst still, it seems that the glittering prize has been translated literally to mean the self-enrichment that so many of our enterprising tenderpreneurs are aiming for. All of us are aware that our country has a reputation as one of the most unequal societies in the world. We are bedeviled by unemployment, corruption, lack of proper housing,

endemic violence against women and abuse of children, lack of education and infrastructure. These are just some of the many things that we lack in this country. The gap between the rich and the poor has grown exponentially and clearly our reconciliation processes have not dealt with the deep-seated traumas of our racist past.

So, if we accept that these are signs that we have not attained a fully human South African face, then yes, there is a glittering prize; but it remains there, on that distant horizon. We have not yet won that glittering prize. It is clear that envisioning the glittering prize on that distant horizon speaks to Steve's realization that the quest for true humanity, not only in South Africa but the world over, is a difficult one. The horizon moves forward every time you move towards it. Many of us have grown old and very cynical at times about the way things have panned out in this country. However, there still remains in us the belief that society can be changed radically for the better. We talk about 'isms' in that we speak of socialism,

feminism, and so on. We get together and still talk about speaking the truth. There is still uncertainty as to why we do not speak about revolution because there is certainly need to do so. Many of us believe that a better world is possible, not because as a well-known feminist says, "we cling to the utopian fantasies" but because we have struggled – many of us most of our lives – to create an egalitarian, non-exploitative, anti-racist, anti-classist, anti-xenophobic, anti-homophobic and anti-sexist world. We cannot stop believing that such a world is possible and attainable, even if not in our lifetime.

"At the heart of a South Africa with a more human face is the recognition of and the respect for this essential humanity."



Socio-Political Developments in South Africa Reflections on the Myth of Reconciliation

September is an interesting month in light of several key moments, including the murder of the heroic Bantu Stephen Biko and the remembrance of the decade since 9/11 rocked the US' 'invincibility' to the core. This event held the rest of the globe ransom to a 'war on terror' that has left the sane world more vulnerable, untrusting, divided and politically and racially polarised, targeted and frustrated than before. It is an interesting month given the way that we view memory and heritage and the fact that we are un-remembering, or re-remembering, these seminal events differently and with particular disregard for the many 9/11's in our own contexts and spheres as Afrikan people. The 'orgy of grief' across the

Atlantic has captured front pages in every newsroom in this country. It is doubtful that the New York Times or Washington Post have equivalent coverage of the death of Biko, and this challenges and reminds us that we have often ignored the memory of the catastrophes, calamities and holocausts of our own times and nations.

Thus, September is a singularly critical month to remember ourselves. This paper talks about the historical context of socio-economic power in this country and how that links with the on-going and present manifestations



of social inequality. The paper will then speak briefly about a race discourse; because it is impossible to speak about socio-economic or socio-political issues in this country without anchoring them in a race discourse due to their mutual and virtually symbiotic relationship. Following that, the paper will speak about a word which has acquired an uncomfortable fluidity and which has to be re-constructed and re-configured- "reconciliation." That relates to the reconciliation of men and women; reconciliation of our history and our present; the reconciliation

between the truth and lies; as well as reconciliation between what is now and what is to be.

South Africa's historic transition is fraught with moments of audacious optimism; an optimism which is liberally interspaced with the increasingly interrelated feelings of rage, desperation and betrayal. These are the scripts which were written long before 1994, at the moment that so called democracy dawned in this country. In 1994, as perceived by many South Africans, there was going to be a cry of angels, the sound of chariots, an orchestra and wonderful choirs welcoming and ushering us into a bodacious new era of hope, and we would immediately see the disappearance of informal settlements. Where there were shacks, there would be houses. Where there was darkness, there would be electrification. Where people had been walking to water there would be pumps and tubs appearing magically and mystically.

What we have instead experienced is that the script has not gone according to 'the plan'. Instead of disappearing completely, instantaneously and mystically in 1994, 350 years of racial and economic domination have in fact become moving targets and much more difficult to detect. In many respects race based capitalism has been entrenched and enabled by this dispensation. This is all the more so due to the massive co-option and 'un-remembrance' of the growing black elite class. What we have experienced is the retention of white capital domination under the aegis of black political rule, snuggled comfortably under the radar of 'democracy', unaccountable and unperturbed by even the dimmest possibility of a shift in their privileged situation. This is a complex conundrum to address and yet we speak of a better life for all. This story of post-apartheid South Africa was scripted to be a happy one, replete with stories of lives that have qualitatively and substantially improved for the majority of people. Clearly the definition of both 'better' and 'all' is far more restrictive than anticipated by the millions of African people who queued up to vote, believing that 'better' meant tangible and accessible improvement

in their grinding living conditions of dispossession; and that the 'all' included the millions of heirs of three hundred years of this systematic dispossession.

Tragically, what has instead emerged is a growing underclass and a crisis of citizenship. This construct refers to citizenship as a state of being that enables provision, belonging, control and ownership. The ownership of discourse, ownership of narratives and ownership of catalytic self-agency are still removed from the Afrikan tongue and pen. This is clearly one of the problematics that manifests as a crisis in citizenship. According to the anti-historical paradigm, white people arrived on supposedly empty territory and black people were dispossessed and displaced from their own countries. It is the same story told across the world. It is similar to the story of Aotearoa, [now called New Zealand], Australian Aborigines and Native Americans across both Latin and North America. What distinguishes the South African story is that it has been recast and reframed as an issue of civil rights rather than liberation, rather than an anti-imperialist war as evidenced by many battles of resistance as early as 1653, months after the arrival of the first European settlers. The last hundred years have seen the notion of race based capital used to form a sense of Darwinist inspired otherness and class division, even though it was not named as such at the time. This paper seeks to contribute to the struggle to correct the on-going narrative of the historical and anti-historical manner of addressing race, class and gender politics in this country today.

The architecture of race based imperialism and capitalism necessitated an increased, deliberate and systematic structural marginalisation of the African majority in this country. African people's movements were restricted and only linked to the needs of capital and capital intensive economic activity. This model was ruthlessly applied mentally as well as physically through cheap labour in cities, sub-standard Bantu education and the employment reserves where black people are still located in townships, farmlands or peri-urban areas across the country. Across modern South Africa, our spatial plan-

"What we have experienced is the retention of white capital domination under the aegis of black political rule, snuggled comfortably under the radar of 'democracy', unaccountable and unperturbed by even the dimmest possibility of a shift in their privileged situation."

ning is testimony to the legacy of regulated and legislated movement and it is imperative that we deconstruct the economics of apartheid.

Apartheid did not, for example, die primarily because of moral outrage or the liberation struggles and valiant attempts of people like Ntate Biko, Professor Alexander, Ms. Asha Moodley and countless others. It died because it was no longer economically viable. It was not profitable anymore and the concept of positive engagement and constructive engagement, which those complicit in apartheid corroborated with, was becoming too morally disgusting and unprofitable for capital to openly remain engaged with. What then emerged from this was that the hard core anti-imperial struggle was mischievously rebranded as a far more innocuous anti-apartheid and race issue.

I suspect that if anyone asked any of our current heroes and sheroes whether they spent one day in jail, one moment under house arrest, lifetimes in exile and risked their lives for access to beaches and park benches they would probably laugh with derision. This behoves us to begin to reconstruct and retell the obliterated truth about ourselves to ourselves and to our children: that the South African / Azanian question was and remains the struggle of access to resources, land and self-determination.

It is therefore critical to reconstruct the discourse on reconciliation away from liberal interpretations that remove liability and responsibility from the

white minority. Reconciliation implies one of two things: (1) that there was originally a relationship of equilibrium, parity, mutual understanding, respect and honour. When we speak of reconciliation it is often related to couples who for whatever reasons are not relating well, and who through counsel and communication can be reconciled.

(2) Reconciliation also assumes that both parties own proportional responsibility for the damage or unhappiness caused, and agree to an appropriate undertaking to correct and heal the situation. Instead, in this country, we have accepted a false construct that insists that reconciliation is something that can happen even though social, racial and economic inequalities were, and are still, completely ignored; and where the perpetrators of race-based, capitalist and political oppression were granted amnesty without accountability, liability or redress. This is self-evident in the method with which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) conducted its proceedings. The TRC consolidated the interests of capital by failing to subpoena the large multinationals that subsidised the apartheid regime for decades; and by allowing apartheid architects like PW Botha and FW de Klerk to thumb their noses at the process or to be undeservedly rehabilitated as 'visionary statesmen.' Instead, the process opened up painful wounds and arbitrarily assigned a monetary value of R7 000 to somehow absolve perpetrators from responsibility and to assuage the experiences of a small group of people who suffered under the colonial apartheid regime. Even Judas would have expressed contempt at this offering of the proverbial thirty pieces of silver.

When we speak in various contexts and spaces, I believe that it is important to address reconciliation within the economy. Professor Sample Terreblanche was calling for exactly this when he proposed the 'Truth and Justice Commission.' The idea was roundly rejected by the new government and capital interests who deemed that foreign investors would be averse to doing business in South Africa and that the script of the new rainbow nation

would be spoilt. This rainbow has to be continuously bleached and air-brushed in order to maintain a comfort level free from restitution, justice or even any obligation of honest reflection by a minority at the expense of majority discourse, majority truth and majority experience.

It is therefore important not only to speak about reconciliation between people, but reconciliation between the past and the present. Our economic status tells us that the past is still with us. One of the truths of the last 17 years is that on average, the African majority in South Africa is 12 or 13 percent worse off than they were before 1994; and that the minority population are a similar proportion better off than they were before 1994. The rich are richer and the poor are poorer and this poverty is both racialised and gendered. The majority of people in this country are Afrikan people and of those, the majority of the indigent are women. Despite this, there are very few sufficiently cohesive and coherent structural interventions to bring women and African people away from the margins into the centre of the economic narrative. Instead, the policy and transformation discourses are dominated by the insistence on utilising instruments such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). Despite the many additional B's and E's to denote enlarged beneficiary base, it is still an effective mechanism of entrenching minority rule with the complicity of the new Afrikan oligarchy. In truth, the economy has not substantively transformed nor transferred power, and it is not changing complexion. This is evidenced by the consolidation of an existing and new oligarchy; and this oligarchy is strongly linked to and enabled by a political agenda. The troubling trend and growth of an interfacing relationship between party politics and the politics of financial/capital power augurs very badly for this country.

Reconciliation should also mean the beginning of reconciling between the past and the present in the context of what was and what is now. The past is characterised by the reality that black people were marginalised in this country economically, socially, politically and educationally and that this marginalisation was legislated.

The present era is characterised by the current regime, whose possibly good intentions on paper have resulted in very little tangible success in effecting a shift in these power dynamics and power relations. This speaks to the reality that citizenship and its substantive, liberatory meaning have not been addressed sufficiently. South Africa has signed up to major supra-national agreements such as the World Trade Organisation and the Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement [with the European Union] that were negotiated long before 1994. These agreements are critical to the protection of the socio-economic status quo; and most unfortunately the majority of people in this country are unaware, uninformed of the implications of such arrangements.

Far more people need to be aware that South Africa is in the grip of particular trade agreements at the World Trade Organization for example, that these measures reduce our Afrikan countries to facilitating states and our leaders to consultants whose job it is to hold the door open for unfettered access by western interests into our markets. For this reason, it is critical to reconcile the past and the present, and to understand that there is an on-going narrative between the past and the present, and that of necessity it must always be interrogated and tested for veracity.

In order to reach the core of the basic architecture of our memory and history, we need to locate and relocate these dilemmas within a discourse and narrative of truth. To a great extent, BEE for example largely distracts us with the acquisition of

"Reconciliation without knowledge of the self, knowledge of history, understanding of the mechanisms of the economy, and the mechanisms of political discourse - where the outliers are diverting us from core issues of this incomplete liberation struggle - is a dangerous and false reconciliation."



wealth for a narrow proportion of the society. This is not a surprise when we recall what the prophets such as Nkrumah long warned us about; the co-option of the Comprador class into the white capitalist agenda. The dilemma of citizenship is also linked to the dilemma of trust, particularly in the current South African context. The crisis of eldership as evidenced by some of the reprehensible conduct of school teachers towards female students, or the crisis of families that fractured family units. This continues to bear bitter fruit of separateness, perverse and skewed male and female identities as part of our psychoses. The end of apartheid did not end gender violence and sexism, but the expectation was that these evils would steadily lose power – they have not and instead the so called liberation era has presented us with an anti-feminist, post Beijing backlash that gender desks and government policies cannot contain.

The on-going notions of entitlement are reminders that identity is at stake, including white rights and white privilege that accuse the African majority of wanting too much, too soon and seek absolution from any obligation to cede any wealth, power or privilege. Trust in the state has largely been lost by many people as evidenced by voter apathy, community insurrections, protracted wage disputes and endemic corruption. There are many outliers that are intended to distract us from the issues at hand, one example being the chaos and on-going spotlight placed on the conduct of the Youth

League. These outliers contribute to the dumbing down of the general political narrative in this country and remove attention from critical trends unfolding in our country. This is a space where it is a risky and perilous undertaking to speak about what people like Biko and Sobukwe were speaking. It is becoming dangerous to love our country and still speak against some of the questionable judgments, appointments and tender processes that we see headlining our news weekly.

How do we reconcile the space for constructive dissent, of constructive inclusion and the space to disagree, without being branded a 'counter-revolutionary?' In the interests of that necessary space, it is imperative to claim back the state as the defender, the protector and the trustworthy vehicle of our common aspirations and of our common values. It is for us to define and redefine how we intend to respond to the desperate need for plurality and to the growing voicelessness of our democracy; voicelessness that is becoming entrenched by particular legislation, judgments and appointments that threaten to silence us.

The consecutive appointment of not one, but two questionable police commissioners is one such example of our tongues being silenced by shock. There are more civilians dying at the hands of the police now than there have been since 1994 and in the last few years, there has been an increase in civilian deaths. Andries Tatane was not the only casualty; Tatane is a metaphor for the death of

dissent, the death of disagreement and the death of popular discourse to expose contradictions in South Africa.

In this state of un-reconciled reconciliation how do we speak about heritage and or even celebrate it? This re-telling of our history and deconstruction of truth is again officiated by the Archbishop. Archbishop Tutu officiated the TRC and he is now officiating the death of memory in this country, the death of a viable political history by placing key moments of our history on a braai and allowing them to literally and figuratively go up in smoke.

How are we going to redeem our education system when young people are not able to identify the trajectory of struggle? When children of 11 and 12 years of age can barely spell 'apartheid'? It is absolutely critical to state that our languages are being decimated and torn from our screaming mouths. How and what do we then reconcile with? Reconciliation without knowledge of the self, knowledge of history, understanding of the mechanisms of the economy and the mechanisms of political discourse – where the outliers are diverting us from core issues of this incomplete liberation struggle – is a dangerous and false reconciliation. The falsehood that has become 'reconciliation' must be revisited and redefined to deliver us from the sinking sand on which we stand. We must rather stand on the clarion call to self-determination articulated by Biko, and chart a course fitting to the men and women who, like Ntate Biko, left us before the call was fully heard and heeded.

Mayibuye i-Afrika, Mayibuye i-Azania.

"...on average, the African majority in South Africa is 12 or 13 percent worse off than they were before 1994; and that the minority population are a similar proportion better off than they were before 1994. The rich are richer and the poor are poorer and this poverty is both racialised and gendered."

The Politics of Truth

Participants in the state of the nation FrankTalk dialogue.



This paper begins with a personal reminiscence about Steve Biko, who with his comrade Peter Jones, was arrested in August 1977, virtually directly on their way from my house in Cape Town. At the time, they were on their way home to King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. Although Steve and I were at that time both under house arrest, we tried to meet; but for a number of reasons we did not. Some of them are very poignant reasons and some of them are reasons which have led to a lot of personal regret.

The important thing is that Steve was on a mission to help various groups of people in the country at the time. All of it underground, as

Professor Neville Alexander



you can imagine, to unite the liberation movement both inside the country as well as outside. That was the mission. Steve literally died in pursuit of the unity of the people of South Africa, of Azania, and it is something that we should remember: that Steve's death was

not only unnecessary or brutal but that it was martyrdom, a sacrifice for the unity of the liberation movement. What we see today in South Africa is a mockery of that. This article will therefore look at the big picture, and will try to provide a type of navigation system to try and see where we are actually heading and whether we can reach that destination, the glittering prize.

When we examine the present situation, we see that we are faced

with a ruling party that is firmly entrenched; but one that is fractured for a number of reasons. Even though there are many different class interests vying for dominance within the African National Congress (ANC), it is clear that because the ANC, like similar parties throughout the world, makes similar compromises for similar reasons, it is locked into a paradigm of rule that is determined by the neo-liberal economic orthodoxy that is prevalent across the world.

The fact is that the paradigm of rule is informed largely by the need for foreign direct investment and the maximization of exports. Due to that, the ANC is locked in that paradigm of rule, no matter what it says, no matter what it does, that is the determining factor. The strategic positions are held by international and national capital in this country. There is no question about it.

All of this is happening in an international economic climate marked by a deep, growing recession. The United States has been in recession for the last year but it has not acknowledged this. In this worldwide recession, any belief that export led development in South Africa is going to save us economically is a pipe dream. The latest economic statistics from the Reserve Bank demonstrate very clearly that things are going down and they are going to stay down for a long time.

At the global level, there is a counter dynamic emerging in South-South Cooperation that we in our country largely associate with BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), formed to increase the possibility of more space for independent sovereign states that may be able to leverage more power from those who have in the past dominated – mainly the North: Europe, North America, Australia and so on.

The second point that this paper makes is that the real beneficiaries of the compromise of 1994 are, besides the white capitalist class who now have open sesame across the whole African continent – something they never had before, and indeed many South African companies have become multinational in that sense – the black middle class, even if it is a hire-purchase middle class. The middle class that can be toppled back into the proletariat. It is crucial to understand the value system of that middle class because that is where the leadership of the country is coming from today; a middle class that has become so degenerate in its value system, it has forgotten what it is we fought for, how we fought for it, how we suffered for it. This is part of the reason that we cannot turn the ship of the state around to face a different direction. This is what is meant by the politics of truth.

When we look at the position of the ruling party, besides the Democratic Alliance (DA), which is openly the party for capital, there is the Congress of the People (COPE), you have Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and you have a few other smaller groups and all of these are no hope parties. All of them are divided, fractured and

for a very simple reason. The fact that from a past which was informed by the struggle for a true humanity, they now have to accustom themselves with neo-liberal barbarism. The brutality of this is a philosophy that says “I am the purpose of all life. I am what it is all about. You give me and I might give you back but I am not obliged to.”

That is the struggle in these parties and it is the reason why those who have a modicum of decency in them are falling away. They are splitting away by either dying away or doing some small enterprise. In this way all these parties are no hope parties. They cannot become neo-liberal parties and by attempting to become one, most of them are either going to end up as the Independent Democratic Party (IDP) did inside the DA or inside the ANC, which is virtually the same thing today.

However, the aura of liberation continues to give credibility to the ANC, which it deserves. It was the mainstream of the liberation struggle and there is no question about that. This gives it the dominance that it has and that is the reason why the most effective opposition today is inside the ANC and not outside. It is the reason why the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and other groups inside the ANC are more effective than the DA, IFP or any of the other parties. While this is the case, their attempt to turn the ANC into a socialist movement is not going to happen. They are going to be shifted aside one of these days. Hopefully not in the brutal way that it has happened in other countries where communists were liquidated by the capitalist class inside political parties. In Indonesia, almost a million communists were decimated for the very same reasons.

There is a global dilemma of socialism. The credibility of socialism was lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is because in the eyes of most people, the Soviet Union was the actual existing socialist example, and when it collapsed the credibility of socialism collapsed. This does not mean that socialism as a revolution has had its day; instead, the point is to find a way back into that way of thinking that is more relevant to the

“It is about getting people to understand what is actually happening in the country; revealing and exposing the truth, so that people see the power that they have in changing things. That is what is meant by the politics of truth.”

times. We cannot continue speaking in the language of the 19th century. There is a need to find a new set of metaphors in order to get people to understand what the truth really is. Unless you are fatalistic and say that human beings are greedy, brutal, and domineering by nature, all of which is untrue. People die for others and that alone, whether you are a mother of a child that is threatened by death and you are willing to die for that child or whether you are a soldier willing to die for your fellow soldier, disproves any idea that human beings are simply greedy and self-centered. Human beings are as pliable as anything else and that is what we need to believe. That is where we need to start.

We talk about truth in this set up because we need to recapture the state and this we can achieve without taking power. By changing the world in this way we are actually capturing the state. There are a few attempts currently in South Africa to get people once again into believing in the credibility and the viability of the struggle against the capitalist system. To get people to believe that there is an alternative.

In doing this, we need to get to the point where people want to believe that there is an alternative and are prepared in a passionate way to fight against capitalism. To get them to fight against post-apartheid capitalism with the same passion and commitment which people like Steve Biko demonstrated in their lives and death.

It is about getting people to understand what is actually happening in the country; revealing and exposing the truth, so that people see the power that they have in changing things. That is what is meant by the politics

of truth. It is about accountability; about getting people to understand, for example, that big firms pay less for electricity per unit than what an ordinary household pays. This is because capital and foreign direct investment remain supreme. This is the kind of truth that we need to expose to the people of South Africa. This needs to be done to demonstrate accountability, to deepen democracy and to get public participation in the politics of this country.

There is still time to redirect the ship of state which has turned to be a ship of fools. It is a ship of fools and we have to turn it around. Public participation will help this country get to that horizon, the distant glittering prize that Steve Biko spoke about. This has to be done properly by getting people to understand that when they form a neighbourhood watch and when they establish a reading club in a poor

"This work is not about lamenting, complaining and condemning. It is about empowering, doing things ourselves, and taking charge of our own lives."

community where households do not have literature, they are empowering themselves and the entire community. There are many ways in which communities can do this and it has to be done systematically. It should be coordinated into a movement.

This work is not about lamenting, complaining and condemning. It is about empowering, doing things ourselves, and taking charge of our own lives and there is a lot of pressure on us to do this.

One of the attempts to do this is a Truth Conference which came together in Durban a year ago. Processes like the Truth Conference are the way to go. That is the way we are going to empower ourselves. Through such initiatives we will make information available to the public on issues such as education, the public health service, the delivery of energy and job creation. If we expose this truth we will show that intellectuals are not people who have gone to universities but people who understand how society is structured and how it works. That is what an intellectual really is.

This does not mean, however, that this movement should be anti-government or anti-ANC. There are people within the ANC and inside government who are equally committed to this. What is needed is to come together. The problem is

that because of patronage and the fear of losing jobs, people are doing things that they know in decent times they would not think of doing. An atmosphere and environment of fear is once again polluting this country. It is the fear of being made poor overnight and being ridiculed.

The management of dysfunctional local and provincial governments such as the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga needs to be explained to the nation. In this way we will be able to demonstrate the possibility of an alternative. This has to become a movement of people that will put pressure on government and if government cannot deliver, this movement will have the courage to change their government.

Today we live in a democracy and we must exploit every possible legal angle to get to the things that we want. Not by way of violent revolution certainly, not at this stage, but rather the empowerment and self-organization of the urban and the rural poor. Through the use of the gift of formal education as well as access to books and information, those who have this gift can make it possible for those who do not. Through this, the urban and rural poor can be empowered. It is our task. It is our duty. We have to expose the truth. This truth is what will liberate us.

Free Speech **vs** Hate Speech – The Dividing Line

Last year I attended a FrankTalk Dialogue Session hosted by the Steve Biko Foundation entitled *Free Speech versus Hate Speech, What is the Dividing Line?* This session was held in the wake of the public fall-out that erupted from an article by Eric Miyeni that was published in the Sowetan newspaper in the weeks leading up to the FrankTalk event. This article sparked what came to be known in many sections of the media as the “Black Snake” debate. It is not the purpose of this piece to recount the details of this article or the related

events that lead up to the SBF-hosted event, save to point out the topical significance: some of Eric Miyeni’s statements in the Sowetan article were actively debated as having flirted with or crossed the line between free speech and hate speech.

I personally had my reservations about the FrankTalk dialogue’s title because I felt that the “answer” to



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the question posed was far too obvious: the “dividing line” is blurry and dependent on contextual factors such as history, intent, perceptions, etc. I was more interested in a debate that might consider how the so-called Fourth Estate was able to internalize and respond to this complexity in a way that takes some responsibility for the role that it plays in contemporary South Africa,



something which I feel has not been spoken of nearly enough. Nonetheless, the SBF Dialogue Session served to raise some important points, and in a round about way spoke to these issues.

Firstly, the debate highlighted for me the many ways in which the country's media and its courts – as the two major channels within which this debate appears to currently play itself out in – frequently and selectively hide within neo-liberal discourses that are most often adopted from “Westernised” contexts that have very little in common with dynamics confronting contemporary South Africa. This allows the key protagonists within these channels to somehow absolve themselves of taking into consideration the context within which they actually exist and operate. In other words, there often appears to be an intellectual, or even emotional, “cop out” that takes place in terms of the way we think about concepts such as free speech and equality before the law in that we appear to subconsciously apply the global legitimacy and thinking subsumed within these concepts to local contexts within which the inherent structural and other inequalities that still characterise our society are not adequately taken into regard.

Let us consider a practical manifestation of this tendency. During the FrankTalk dialogue it was rightly pointed out that engaging issues of hate speech/free speech within the South African legal system could only be genuinely considered fair if all South

Africans had equal access to the courts. It should be patently obvious that this is not the case, thus elevating certain minority sections of society's “rights” (i.e. the economic elite who are mostly white) above those of the majority of South Africans, mostly made up of poor, black people. These issues could very well be thrashed out in the courts in a society where very little inequality exists, but we live in one of the most unequal societies on earth. This thinking neglects, for instance, the countless hate speech incidents that are still perpetrated against poor black South Africans on a daily basis. These types of incidents will not receive the same publicity, and therefore engagement, as those perpetrated against the white minority because victims often do not have access to the channels within which this publicity or debate is currently generated, namely the media and the courts.

Secondly, and most importantly, what the SBF event showed me, more than anything else, was just how much we are actually crying out for engagement around these issues in the first place. For the purpose of analogy, I was made to think about the obese person who knows they need to lose twenty kilograms in the medium to longer term but who is completely incapable of visualising what that means for them at their next meal. In South Africa we are constantly reminded of the South African societal vision for harmonious integration, whether that be through short-lived sporting events that are cast as “nation building” or through

TV commercials (e.g. Castle Lager's sporty portrayal of some utopian place where South African men of all races collectively cheer for our sporting heroes, beer in hand of course) that depict a multiracial future that very few of us have actually ever seen. I think there are many of us that sincerely yearn for this future but the barriers between us – the mental ones being the strongest of these – often appear so impregnable that we are left to reflect on sporadic and symptomatic outbursts in the media or distant court judgements as some kind of symptomatic representation of the anguish that we collectively feel at what has remained unsaid between us. We know where we'd like to go but we have no idea what that means for our day to day behaviours, so we resort instead to violent vomiting on make-believe stages and random disconnected judgements delivered by arbitrators supposedly appointed to speak on our behalf.

I am convinced that we have historically been so successfully socialized to defend – and therefore maintain our separate “ways” that we are somehow still paralysed by the fear of losing our identity if we engage freely. Worse still is the fear of shifting our identity to a more collectively representative place to begin with. When we are able to constructively confront these perceived “threats” to our sense of self, we might be ready to expose ourselves to the many alternative realities that constantly and concurrently play themselves out within our society, thereby creating more of the kinds of spaces that will allow us to truly and collectively engage our pain (read our past), and therefore begin to adopt the behaviours we need to realise that seemingly elusive vision for our future. This is critical if we are to truly break the poisonous cycle of social “othering” that still pervades our society at so many levels. But don't take my word for it. Just ask one of the millions of Zimbabwean migrants currently living in SA, many of whom may have escaped to our country from desperate poverty and brutal persecution, what it feels like to now find themselves in the midst of all this unresolved pain.

Contributors' Biographies

NKOSINATHI BIKO

Mr. Biko is the Chief Executive Officer of the Steve Biko Foundation. He is a founder member of the board of trustees and chaired the Steve Biko Foundation for the first five years. Mr. Biko graduated from the University of Cape Town where he pursued a Bachelor of Social Science (Economics) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing Management. He studied Property Development and Finance through the University of the Witwatersrand. He is also a published writer and speaker and has given lectures on the international circuit.

PROFESSOR BEN KHOAPA

Professor Khoapa has a distinguished career in higher education in both South Africa and abroad. Over the past thirteen years, he has served in various capacities at the DUT and its predecessor. As Vice Chancellor of Technikon Natal, he led the institution into the merger with ML Sultan Technikon. His international work experiences include being Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at the Grand Valley State University in Michigan, USA and Visiting Professor at the National University of Lesotho. Professor Khoapa obtained his PhD in Social Welfare from the Case Western Reserve University and his MSc in Social Administration from the School of Applied Social Science in Cleveland, Ohio in the USA. In addition, Professor Khoapa is a member of various professional associations from being President of the Durban YMCA to a member of the Board of Trustees of the SBF. His publications and presentations are numerous ranging from matters pertaining to social work, education, cultural diversity, social change and poverty and inequality. His work on the life and thoughts of Steve Biko has received wide acclaim.

ASHA MOODLEY

Asha Moodley graduated with a BA from the University College for Indians at Salisbury Island, majoring in English and Psychology. She joined the South African Students Organization (SASO) and the Black People's Convention (BPC) and assisted the BC

trialists and their families during their mammoth trial in 1976 and 1977. She commenced work as a researcher for the Black Community Programmes in King Williams Town in 1977 and worked with Steve Biko and Thami Zani. She was detained later in the year under section 6 of the Terrorism Act for a year and half. On release at the end of 1978, was banned for 5 years and restricted to the district of Es-court. She returned to Durban in 1982 and has since been engaged in anti-racism, anti-classism and anti-sexism work. She is currently the chairperson of the KwaZulu Natal branch of the Socialist Party of Azania, a member of the Board of the Umtapo Center, a member of the Editorial Advisory and Management Boards of Agenda and also a Board member of the Refugee Social Services. Asha is currently employed as the office Administrator of the Legal Resources Centre in Durban which is a public interest law center.

LIEPOLLO LEBOHANG PHEKO

Liepollo Lebohang Pheko is Executive Director at NGO think tank the Trade Collective. She is exploring social accounting tools for measuring instrumental behavior as it affects women, the environment, low income communities, employees and other social and development indices. She is a policy analyst, social entrepreneur and social activist. She is also the Africa co-convenor of the World Dignity Forum and is part of the African Social Forum Secretariat. Ms Liepollo is also co-owner and Director of a development consultancy called Four Rivers which has consulted with the United Nations, SADC, several government departments and NGOs in the areas of organizational development, environmental impact assessments, agenda mainstreaming, programme development and evaluation, policy formulation, modeling and assessment and statistical analysis. Four Rivers has a decidedly alternative approach to ethics. She also writes essays, articles, commentaries, freelances and has contributed to two books on international trade.

PROFESSOR NEVILLE ALEXANDER

Professor Neville Alexander was born in Cradock in the Eastern Cape Province and graduated with an MA in German from the University of Cape Town. He joined the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa which was established in 1960. However, he was ejected from APOUSA in 1961 and with Kenneth Abrahams and others formed a study group of nine members in July 1962 known as the Yu Chi Chan Club (YCCC) which was replaced by the National Liberation Front (NLF) of which Alexander was a founder. From 1964 – 1974 he was imprisoned on Robbin Island. After being released he has done much pioneering work in the field of language policy and planning in South Africa and since the early 1960s he has been influential in this respect. His most recent work has focused on the tension between multilingualism and hegemony of English in the public sphere. He is currently a director of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA) at the University of Cape Town.

HILTON JOHNSON

Hilton Johnson has a Masters Degree in Forced Migration Studies from the University of the Witwatersrand and a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in Economics from the University of South Africa. He currently works as an independent development consultant focussing on transformation management, stakeholder analysis, community engagement, strategic facilitation, and capacity building. His current and previous employers include Idasa (The Institute for Democracy in Africa), The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, The African Centre for Migration and Society and various members of the FirstRand Group. His work over the past 12 years has spanned the public, private and social sectors and actively seeks to establish strategic partnerships for the purposes of advancing key developmental outcomes, particularly centred around the role of migration and democratic governance, both locally and regionally.

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