

## WHY?

Okay. Listen to this: don't hold your horses . . . nor even your breath. This is beyond the countdown. No apocalyptic funk here.

We – me and my literary, street fighting, academic, intellectual, folk story loving, bean counting, science loving, science despising, coffee society, anti-coffee society friends – are about the now!

We have one *soul* purpose: to interrogate the now, rewrite – especially distorted historical bits and pieces about us – into a still journeying narrative and portrait, that attempts to answer who are we, to us, to you and to the world.

And why it is important to miss your lunch or even supper, your New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Mail & Guardian, Sunday Times., etc. – but not us: our tongues, prose, beauty, fights.

In time – beginning today – you will understand why it will do you good to have a front seat in the first row of our engagements with the world – especially our engagement with Africa, including its Yankeeified south.

## WHO ARE WE?

You will understand why we have opted to march and write – especially write, for if truth be told, the best of us are armchair revolutionaries and in today's mass communications world, the armchair writer is as significant as the street fighters in effecting change.

Hence the warning: we Writers (We Riders! And hey, we coined that term before the film on Che's Bike Riding across Latin America) will be there with and for the voiceless, the abused, the ignored: women, children, the landless, the illiterate, the workers, artists, Latin Americans, Indian peasants, the Palestinians, the Chagoans . . . every single soul that is dealing with and fighting oppression by one power or the other, in this world.

We are the coherent picture that the Bambaata Rebellion, Bullhoek Massacre, Seattle Movement, Civil Rights Bus Rides in Alabama, Brixton Riots, the 1976 June 16, the 1984 Reef Faction Fighting, the Zapatista struggles, the Indian Monsoon Peasants struggle and all other unmentioned struggles; the fractured and varying international African women's feminist movement and all other causes began painting, some time back and never got around to finishing the final touches.

We acknowledge the picture has been painted, the voices heard, but we are framing the picture – for posterity – and in so doing, have an option of discarding, beautifying or peeing on that picture all together.

We are your political nightmare, cultural daydreams, the most beautiful and argumentative – in its pre-Aristotelian, its real literary and social coherent, sense – commentators you have always heard about, wish to hang with, and have not read in a packaged magazine, journal or online site.

Remember that tacky perfume popular in the black townships, barriers, ghettos and villages back in the 1980s? ***We are the Fire!*** The fire James Baldwin warned you about in ***The Fire Next Time.*** The rage without its natural pillar – outrageousness.

### **10 Commandments: what 10 Commandments ?**

*We follow many Gods, hence why we love the Chinese dragon with a million Heads.*

For social, political, cultural identity, we choose to see ourselves as **black**. This *black* includes our (white, pink, purple, yellow, rich, poor, etc.) friends whom we love but do not allow in our site, for reasons which we do not have to explain to you – not yet.

To this end, I would refer you to an editorial below. But first, please walk alongside me into some of the fascinating and verve'ful lines – which strolled from their writer's speeches/ books/ papers and interviews into this pre-editorial – before I could actually delve into our new editorial, for the new site:

The significance of these lines ain't that different, in symbolic meaning (the essence!!!), from the lullabies your momma or granny use to sing as she prepared that huge, hot, stewing, spicy and nutritious family meal you grew up looking forward to.

Like a doctor's prescription – hmm, its too sweet, or too bitter, but **3 spoons of this 3 times a day** we'll help – we are not so foolish as to think they will eradicate or even offer full diagnosis into and of the spirit of blackness – as in black beyond party black consciousness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

But even a thinkers' band as diverse and full of beef, zeal, raw as well as refined energy (the power to take the fight to the authorities and the disempowered, the spiritually defeated as well as to the mind and emotion censors!) needs a record, or CD of inspiration to help along the route. A quick disclaimer, though:

**This is one band of writers, ideas hawkers, political harlots, activists, visionaries, culture vultures and lovers – in one journal – which does not**

**have a mantra, credo or religious philosophy other than the fact that we are a young, gifted, beautiful, black and pretty robust motley crew made of the mad and the maddeningly provocative – often but not always for its sake!**

You can camp us in one kraal: **we(Writers) do give a damn!**

**\* Folks, these ten lines are in no way OUR 10 commandments \***

1. “Deprived of spiritual content, black people read the bible with a gullibility that is shocking”.  
-Steve Biko, in a chapter titled “We Blacks” (*I write what I like* pg 31, 1996 ed. )
2. “I am bothered by the phenomenon of a black majority in power, seeming to reduce itself to the status of complainants as if they had a limited capacity to do anything significant about the situation other than drawing attention to it”.  
-Prof. Njabulo Ndebele’s paper, Iph’Indlela? The 1<sup>st</sup> Steve Memorial Lecture,2000
3. “What we want is not black visibility but participation in shaping the soul of the country”.  
-My paraphrasing of Steve Biko’s line, also in *I write what I like*
4. “Truth is, black people are inherently, almost genetically hip and nobody embodied that better than Miles Davis. Still, Miles abused black (and all racial) women and I despise him for that”.  
-Culture Critic Greg Tate in his essay collection *Flyboy in the Buttermilk*
5. “Are we – African people – inherently barbarian? Why do we solve our differences with so much violence?”  
-Prof. Shadrack Gutto. A question- asked by poet and author, Kofi Awoonor in the 1960s African Literary Conference, Makerere University
6. “It’s like this: ever since I was young – and after my introduction to jazz, poetry and the arts – all I wanted was to be black, Period. To be black was to be alive”.  
-Jack Kerouac, 1952
7. “Black bodies have been habitually exploited within European culture, our culture’s always been a way for us to buy another day of survival”.  
-Greg Tate, *What White People Are Taking From Black Culture*, 2003
8. “Black,” as a political idea, is the synonym for the best of everything”.  
-Greg Tate
9. “The inherent worth of a black body does not need to be affirmed by the mere proof of white racism against it”.  
-Prof. Njabulo Ndebele, By Invitation, Financial Mail, 2000
10. “To take part in the African revolution, it is not enough to write a revolutionary song, you must fashion the revolution with the people. And if you fashion out with the people, the songs will come by themselves and of themselves”.  
-Claude Ake

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## Part II The Editorial

Heading: **History won't forgive us if we fail this moment**

Beautiful people, once again, I must applaud, no, "observe" sounds better, that **We Write** is a *helluva* mind canvass for some of the hottest, deepest, angriest, silliest, depressingly sentimental, African neo-nationalist, charterist ideas, the most compelling site of socialist (as in societal and not communist) discourse happening on planet earth today.

Don't be surprised to hear somebody uttering, in frenzied love and disbelief, down your street, corporate boardrooms, lecture rooms and radio studios:  
*aboBantu baya theta, Thixo!*

That's how many of those kept in close contact and fed "life according to we-writers" often describe this list and its players, affectionately known as **The Riders . . .we Riders:**

NB: we ride on and with the winds, are responsible for any uplifting change they effect.

As an initial participant on many of the topics, themes, ideas, fights and hot literary love making sessions on this list for the past four years, I must admit that I am now privileged to have been chosen to situate myself on the ground stand and be a cheerleader for no particular player/writer, when we writers and their sharp pens [weapons of non-economic empowerment?] take to war: within the list and against the world's illnesses.

I am just bowled over as well, inspired as often angered by the sort of stirring writing goin' on here.

Okay I will let you know a secret you already know, but please allow me to blurt it out: even at its most irritating, we-write's submissions are more contextually, literarily, as well as intellectually engaging than the most *haute* wannabe, lipstick – and what passes off as political and cultural – journalism we often read in South Africa and around the world: UK, India, Nigeria and the US, amongst other areas I can speak with authority on.

Also, at best, this material (posted on the WeWrite list) is a hell more engaging stuff than you could find in academia, university loyal journals or state sponsored conference literature.

You will be forgiven for asking: "are they that stirring? I mean isn't their wewrite list *nuffing* but a braggart's paradise and the whole bunch, just a bunch

of wanna-be literary and marginal political wankers punch drunk on hearing their own voices”?

If that was not funny, I would have taken serious offence, contracted Iron Mike Tyson to chew off both of your ears and get you permanently sorted out.

But seriously – and – trust me as somebody who has his feet in both journalism and cultural leftfield, at least I have the luxury of an *insider trader*'s status on these: these young black South African (**we, with a small case “w”**) writers from varying educational, institutional, street, city, village, and cultural backgrounds are the creators and guardians of what is known as the South African pulse, today.

South Africa and its possible colonies (don't kill me, I have a right to dream and disabuse myself of those nightmares through humour) Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho... is their starting point (what Dambuzo Marechera said is, “the mid-point of the scream”) but the world is their canvass!

They disturb as well as inspire.

No, the word “empowerment” in all its NGOish, lipstick and high heeled glory, journalistic crumpiness, Saville Row suited and sailing towards the Mediterranean sun corporate bombast . . . does not figure atop their list of things to do when they face the blank computer screen to write, battle and exchange their curiosity, fears and unleash their version of how this world looks, sounds, behaves and especially embraces this thing called blackness – which, for them, applies to both those who believe in and/or invest their energies in fighting this thing called black consciousness in its several African voodoo, ideological and cultural guises.

You will find in this list/journal some of the most annoyingly radical, disturbingly informed land activists, smart ass legal brains, hardened community organisers, anti-academic academics, soul drippingly, sentimental and informed vicious culture critics, failed radicals left out of the gravy train, successful gravy trainers who opted out, book lovers, filmmakers, slam poets, blues poets, kwaito and hip-hop poets, uber-feminists – in the age when everybody is convinced all feminists have been locked in lesbiana village, somewhere in a cave in Yemen, and Lebo Mathosa, Britney Spears and Lill' Kim are offered as the new age femme-fatale radicals.

On this list, you will find those and more: folks who leave the last at parties and arrive first at book sales . . . scary and beautifully disturbing voices. All Africans either born here or as Bruce Springsteen said, “In the USA”, or elsewhere.

While some write and heave disturbingly (Marx given a hip-hop analysis, Chinua Achebe a township critique, Mandela missed, hugged and dismissed

with frightening accuracy, economy rescued from the stock exchanges to ordinary folks' wishes, Steve Biko worshipped, trashed, revisited with a fresher contemporary out-inlook, religion and Darfur looked from the inside outside of Arabism and Africanism – whatever that means today – JM Coetzee's supposed genius given the black left field critique) . . . we writers observe, comment and report on the world and its idio-what? (oh, idiots!) and idiosyncrasies with unsaintly panache.

From Johannesburg, London, Michigan, New York City, KwaZulu Natal, some in their travels across Africa, Lagos, Mombasa, Harare, Kinshasa, Dakar, the world . . . the whole shebang . . . they rock the world: we write is them and they make weWrite:

Phambili!

**Bongani Madondo**

Editorial Writer, otherwise known as chief moaner, fights organiser & resident griot: (The Djeli)