

Shifting Sands: Steve Biko's Legacy, Efforts to Commercialise Him and the Foundation¹

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Introduction

This paper seeks to make a case for the defence of the legacy of Steve Biko that seems to be under threat from a number of initiatives that claim to be advancing his legacy. To encourage a more informed debate, a conscious decision has been taken by this writer to steer away from what can easily, and wrongly, be misconstrued as personal attacks on those who are at the forefront of some developments that make a claim to Biko's name. Unless there are no other ways of approaching the debate, references to individuals will be avoided.

In trying to address the stated aim of this paper the following shall be examined in some detail. First, I examine the legacy of Biko and how I think it should be understood and preserved. Second, I examine the manner in which both the Steve Biko Foundation and some of the initiatives that claim to be preserving Biko's legacy are doing it and argue that they are doing it in a wrong and, in fact, dangerous way. The conclusion that I reach in this paper is that these attempts and claims should be challenged. Such challenges must be understood within a context of robust political debate and not necessarily be reduced to so-called personal attacks.

Before proceeding, let me state that robust debate is a crucible of maturity. Attempts to close any form of debate by labelling it as personal attacks runs the risks that amount to closure and the upholding of certain ideas as being absolute and beyond criticism. This approach is dangerous and belongs to the conservative Judeo-Christian tradition. Those who enter the realm of politics, and by association public space, should do so knowing very well that their ideas and actions will be scrutinised, celebrated and/or heavily criticised, all these depending on how well they are received.

Public debate is like shifting ocean sands. While soothing, especially when the feet are splashed by the ocean waters, the sand keeps on shifting. It is easy to delude oneself and keep on enjoying the soothing feeling, of the stories that you tell yourself, without realising that, splash after splash, the sand shifts and soon the feet are sinking, angle-deep.

¹ This paper should be treated as work in progress. Some arguments will be weak and need tightening. It might also have a number of gaps in terms of some facts because it is written entirely from memory. This is largely due to the fact that it was written in a distant place (the paper was written while on a research visit in Angola between the 5th and 8th September 2003). I have no references to make and even the works that I cite are from my memory. Therefore, some of the dates may be incorrect. However, it should be treated as a reflection of my approach to the project and as a further reflection of the direction adopted in the debate that prompted me to write it. The debate occurred within an online debate list called WeWrite, from which grew this journal. The writer can be contacted at consoletleane@yahoo.com.

Steve Biko's Legacy: How should we understand it?

As Nyanisile Peter points out, Biko's ideas have to be understood and interpreted within the broader development of the Black Consciousness philosophy. In fact, as Peter further illustrates, there is a real danger of confusing Biko with BC and vice-versa. On the other hand it cannot be denied that Biko was, at the time, the most visible and eloquent spokesperson and ideologue of the movement and it is therefore not surprising that his ideas as a person are often, if not all the time, equated with BC. This is a fact that we can only attempt to resolve adequately at our peril. It is bound to stick with us for a long time.

It is also true, and this is the approach adopted in this paper, that Biko's ideas were part of a collective. He was influenced by, and also influenced, others. His ideas were taken forward as part of that collective effort. Therefore, the development of those ideas did not end on the 12th of September 1977. Work continued on them.

I will not repeat the known facts about the evolution of the BCM. What I will rather do is to highlight some few points with a view of building a further point that is related to this paper.

First, the emergence of the Black Community Programmes (BCP), the NGO-like, developmentalist element within the BCM. The BCP is arguably one of the most misinterpreted of developments within the BCM's history. There are two simple factors that need to be understood when dealing with the BCP that will easily resolve the confusion, and at times deliberate misrepresentation, that is often associated with the project.

The first point that needs to be made is that the BCP was formed at a time when making developmentalist demands (around clean water, health, education etc) on the apartheid government was a waste of time. Instead, the most meaningful form of struggle at the time was *resistance*. Demands were always met with utter coldness and sheer ignorance.

Realising this point, and propelled by its belief in self-reliance, the BCM founded the BCP with an aim of proving the fact that black people could do things on their own. They had no government to lay a claim on in any case. It can be argued that this approach was gleaned from the call for separatism that was made by the young Malcolm X, that is, before he broke away from the Nation of Islam.

With informed reflection we can argue that while this approach was 'revolutionary' at the time it was in fact a bit reactionary. It was feeding on the current deception of NGOs that argued that states are failing to provide for their citizens and therefore those citizens need to do things for themselves.

The second point that needs to be considered is that, given that they were overt political organisations with radical ideas for their time, both SASO and the BCP could not raise funds in the same way that the BCM was able to. To prove this point, one simply needs to check some of the historical documents on the BCM and the amounts of assets that the BCP and other cultural organisations that were banned in 1977 had when compared to SASO and BCP.

Forming an NGO-like structure at the time was a logical, convenient, strategic and tactical way in which the 'political' BCM could have the necessary resources to advance its political programmes.

These methods were resuscitated by Azapo in the early eighties. However, because the security police were much 'cleverer' than in the 1970s, many of these projects were exposed for what they really were, one after the other.

In examining the methods employed by the Steve Biko Foundation, which are community projects, we need to ask ourselves if these are taking the legacy of Biko forward or backward. I have already demonstrated that the BCP and other developmentalist projects were initiated because of defiance and loss of hope in the system and, secondly, as a way of channelling funds towards more overt political initiatives. These two conditions are no longer necessary. No need to elaborate this point. But perhaps more importantly, we need to ask ourselves what Biko and his associates had as their central thrust: community projects or political struggle.

Available evidence, if we read the documents of the BCM at the time carefully, suggests that Biko and associates were indeed simply using developmentalist approaches as cover and not as the central import for the existence of the movement. This is also clearly demonstrated by Biko's own writings. Throughout, Biko wrote about two main themes. One, black peoples' oppression and how it manifested itself. Two, the approach that black people would have to take in order to overcome their oppression. At heart they were political activists who were involved in a deeper political struggle.

A further reading of Biko's writing suggests a strong leaning towards a socialist ideal. This much is demonstrated in some of his later essays after the formation of SASO when he had completed the task of educating his peers about the basic tenets of BC.

Biko's writing can be divided into two ideal types, if one can follow what sociologists often do when they divide the work of writers like Karl Marx into the 'young Marx' and the 'more mature Marx'. At the risk of sounding like these sociologists, I suggest that it is possible to distinguish two phases in Biko's writings.² The first one is the 'Young Biko', who was ahead of his

² I do not necessarily subscribe to this method. I use it to demonstrate the point that Biko's writings showed a lot of development and seemed to have been influenced by his own

peers in terms of the need to break out of the control of the liberals and was further able, perhaps more than his peers, to articulate this breaking out. It can be argued that he had to convince them of the need to break out of the hold on black people's aspirations by white liberals. At the same time, SASO had to explain itself both to the liberal world that had claimed all along and occupied the space of expression on the black persons oppression, and the sceptical, cowed black world that ever since the banning of both the ANC and the PAC, accepted white patronage and tutelage.

The second phase of Biko's writings (the 'mature Biko' if you like) emerged after the first phase of self-explaining, expression and sometimes even impatience and anger at not being understood, was over. The main challenge at this stage was to articulate BC as an independent ideology that was not a poor cousin of the banned Charterist or Africanist ideologies. It is here that we see Biko starting to articulate the actual analysis of the situation then and also even starting to say exactly what the BCM conceptualised as the future society.

It was during the second phase that a distinct BCM worldview emerged. Biko wrote, among others, about an egalitarian society, interpreted by some as meaning socialism. In fact an ordinary, and even political, dictionary meaning of the term suggests some system along socialist lines. This is articulated in the short article in *I Write What I Like* titled "Our Strategy for Liberation" which was an interview/speech given to an American.

The 1976/7 SASO/BPC treason trial also provided a platform for Biko to articulate what were clearly anti-capitalist views. In fact there is talk by some that a case can be made that Biko's articulation in the *Strategy for Liberation* borrows a lot from Leon Trotsky's *Ten Point Programme*. Whether this is true or not is a matter of debate.

Taking a cue from the correct argument that Biko's writings should be seen as part of a collective it then becomes much easier to argue that the BCM was on course to proceed to develop a synergy between race and class analysis. In fact, Biko himself had, in one of his mature essays, talked about the poor and demonstrated that it had to be black people who had to be regarded as the poor and therefore the true working class as opposed to the aristocratic class of white workers. It is here that the genesis of a later conceptualisation of the black working class, articulated later by Azapo and the National Forum, can be said to be having its earlier roots. More on this later!

Before proceeding it must be remembered that Biko had also challenged the idea of a pure class approach. He argued sarcastically that those who make this argument should go and tell that to some Van Tonder.

political and theoretical growth. For instance, it can be argued that Frelimo's victory in Mozambique (which was celebrated by the BCM through the Viva Frelimo Rallies, and leading to the arrest of the SASO 11 who were eventually sentenced to Robben Island) influenced and further radicalised Biko.

A concrete articulation of the race/class dynamic was well captured by Diliza Mji at the last SASO conference in 1977 where he challenged the conference to infuse a clear class analysis into BC. This was carried through. Of course a contradiction emerged when the BPC on the other hand adopted the Mafikeng Manifesto that was, for all intents and purposes, and while sounding quite revolutionary at the time, a bourgeoisie nationalist document.

The Mafikeng Manifesto talked about Black Communalism, an archaic argument that attempted to show that black people had always scorned capitalist development and instead embraced a somewhat socialistic economic system. This postulation was misguided in the sense that it unconsciously celebrated the feudal systems where class systems were still in their infancy. What the approach failed to appreciate was that colonialism had disrupted the revolutionising of the productive forces within African societies. It can be argued that this same kind of misconception was behind Julius Nyerere's so-called African Socialism (Ujamaa) that was further behind the failed villagisation strategy by Nyerere. This approach was later exposed for its bankruptcy by Mohammed Babu in his book *Africa socialism or socialist Africa?*

The above theoretical and ideological anomalies were corrected when Azapo was formed in 1979. It can be said that the period from 1979 to 1982 saw the correcting of backward and mistaken ideas within the BCM. This period saw the refinement of the Mji thesis (1977 SASO conference) and Biko's earlier yet not-so-well-refined ideas on the fusion of race and class analysis. The 1982 Azapo congress was a milestone in that it elevated race/class analysis to levels never seen before in the country. Earlier attempts on this thesis either privileged race over class or vice versa.

Attempts within Azapo to further develop this thesis were taken to greater heights by Mike Tissing. This was over and above a number of papers written at the time by different people. He penned a paper that would not only turn into some 'bible' for many Azapo members but also caught the attention of a number of intellectuals. The paper was titled *Black Solidarity for a Socialist Azania*.

Tissing's paper was arguably the first serious and most comprehensive assessment of the political economy of South Africa from a Marxist analysis that was fused with BC. In many ways it was in the mould of the work already done by some BC activists in the USA, working within the internationalist socialist camps but not losing or compromising the uniqueness of the black experience.

This development was to find publishable expression in the pages of the then *Frank Talk*, a journal named after Biko's pen name that was to act for sometime as the theoretical organ of the BCM. Another important development was the founding of the *Azanian Labour Journal* by Mandla Seleokane, a respected theoretician within the BCM.

One talking point within the BCM was that the *AJL* was following a Trotskyist line, a point that exposed the backwardness of some elements within the BCM who mouthed all the bad things about Leon Trotsky (and Seleoane himself) without having read even a single page written by him (Trotsky).

Back to **Frank Talk**. While the *Azanian Labour Journal* had to deal with immature accusations of Trotskyism *Frank Talk* was on the other hand receiving more acceptance. It can be argued, with hindsight, that part of the reason was that some elements within *Frank Talk* were harbouring Maoist tendencies which were popular at the time given the appeal of a brand of Maoism that advances a case for armed struggle, something of cult heroism in the 1980s.

Despite the differences in theoretical emphasis, whether real or perceived, between *Frank Talk* and the *AJL*, both served to advance very important and incisive theoretical developments within the BCM. There were other, slightly less significant theoretical platforms like *Umtapo Focus*. In fact, these publications were the reasons behind the intellectual sharpness of many BC adherents during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Three major developments were to concretise the deepened Marxist orientation that the BCM was taking. The first one was the publication at the end of 1989 of the last issue of *Frank Talk*. The issue dealt with the following issues, among others: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union; the pending negotiations between the ANC and the Nationalist Party; and the state of the nation then.

The first was contained in an article written by Socrates Philane Makhaye. The article examined and tore to pieces the so-called Perestroika and Glasnost and why the Berlin Wall fell and what the significance were. It can be argued that while Joe Slovo's article, *Has Socialism Failed?* received a lot of attention within intellectual circles Makhaye's article was sharper and went far beyond what Slovo achieved even though it did not receive widespread coverage like Slovo's. The essence of the article was that the Eastern Bloc of countries was never socialist in the first place (after Lenin). At that time the SACP was struggling with whether to admit that the USSR under Stalin and others was never socialist, a debate that was captured in the pages of the now defunct *Work in Progress* and to some extent the SA Labour Bulletin when Ashwin Desai and Adam Habib challenged Slovo's until-then unchallenged one-man show. The SACP was also confused about Perestroika and Glasnost. One issue of *Umsebenzi* sang praises for that initiative.

Also in the same issue of *Frank Talk* was an article by Duma Baqwa titled *A Tadpole Philosophy*. In that article Baqwa argued strongly against negotiations and advanced a strong argument for the mobilisation of the black working class guided by a clear race/class analysis.

The second development was the Conference for a Democratic Future meeting held at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1989. The Mass Democratic Movement (read ANC) sought the conference to adopt the liberal Harare Declaration. The BCM/Azapo (read Azapo) shot the suggestion down. The conference further demonstrated the BCM's growing Marxist leaning. The analysis given at the conference, led largely by Muntu Myeza, was found within a Marxist paradigm.

The last phase in the development of Biko's ideas is perhaps the most controversial and one that many people will agree to disagree about. This was the build-up to the split within Azapo. One of the struggle's best-kept secrets was the rift that had developed between the exiled element of the BCM, which finally settled in Harare on the one hand, and other exiled groups and the internal element on the other. We will not go into details about this safe to say that the Harare group took over Azapo in 1994.

An ideological strife ensued immediately after 1994. What emerged was an official revisionist tendency within Azapo. For the first time after clarifying that the so-called 'Buy Black' initiatives were confined to a particular time and had no relevance after so many developments there were attempts to literally go back to such initiatives. There were suggestions for community programmes that were tailored exactly around how the BCP operated. There was even an initiative called 'Stretch the Rand' (check Azapo's website www.azapo.org.za) that if looked at critically is taking a backward move into history instead of advancing the struggle. In short, what emerged was a backward interpretation of the material conditions on the ground, an interpretation that was, and still is, premised on the misguided notion that because the incumbent government is under black hands it needs to be given 'critical support'.

The above development was, and still is, based on the premise that the so-called black economic empowerment is acceptable, only if it can be refined and all processes are put in place to ensure that black people own the economy (in a bourgeoisie sense).

It was only natural that there would develop a rift within Azapo that later led to the formation of the Socialist Party of Azania (SOPA). This very differences and attempts to take a backward journey would later lead to the second split within Azapo, resulting in the formation of the Black Peoples Convention (BPC), an interesting name in the sense that it also refers back to, and in fact goes back to history.

What can be argued from the above historical reconstruction is that BC has undergone radical developments. In a nutshell, BC has been taken to greater heights in terms of how to answer to new situations and realities such as the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

It can be concluded, and of course giving space to those who want to disagree, that BC has managed, and correctly so, to weave its central arguments with those of Marxist class analysis. From this it can further be

argued that with time BC discarded backward interpretations of the condition of black people, some as irrelevant tactics and strategies (community programmes) and some simply as ideas whose timing was misinformed but more importantly whose timing is long over (black communalism and whatever it means).

In celebrating Biko and taking his legacy forward we need to ask ourselves if we are able to move in tandem with some of the developments that have been outlined above, that is, from idealism (which can safely be regarded as nationalist) to a more scientific appreciation of reality. It would seem to me that Biko cannot be celebrated without taking into account some of these developments that have occurred around the philosophy that he co-founded. If we are true to the argument that his was not the only contribution we need to take into consideration those from his other comrades.

It therefore stands to reason that celebrating the legacy of Biko by emphasising the peripheral aspects of his life is not only a gross misinterpretation of applied strategies and tactics, it is also revisionist in political terms. What we see being done in the name of Biko is backward. In this regard we can draw from David Monyae who correctly points out that we must not read Biko like we did in the 1970s and 1980s. Reverting back to community projects in an attempt to preserve the legacy of Biko is doing exactly that.

The Commercialisation of Biko's Image and name

In order to fully understand the debate around whether Biko's image and name are being commercialised or not we have to look at the not-so-distant history and compare this rising phenomenon (of branding Biko) against other well-known examples.

History is a science. It adopts an approach whereby patterns are observed and lessons drawn from the dynamics that emerge from such patterns. From history we are able to examine the present and develop some predictions for the future. Of course, unlike in the natural sciences, where scientific predictions are in most cases accurate if the methods applied were formulated correctly, social science predictions can sometimes be wrong because social developments are not simply mediated by external forces but also by human agency. Nonetheless, we should still draw from the scientific method - historical and dialectical materialism.

There are at least three major and relevant examples that come to mind when seeking to draw historical lessons on the commercialisation of political icons. These are Albert Einstein, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, and Bob Marley. The latter might be a rather difficult example because he facilitated the commercialisation of the reggae music particularly on the US market. We should however still consider his example because of its relevance for this paper.

What we learn from the above examples and what cannot be denied is the fact that commercialisation (or popularisation as some would euphemistically call vulgar money-making) has not resulted in increased consciousness on the side of the consumers of the products sold by the marketers and producers. Nor has it raised their status within pockets of society that have not traditionally aligned themselves with the ideas and lives of these icons. Let us illustrate this rather general observation.

There is no evidence that Einstein's popular posters and T-shirts (the one where he sticks out his tongue being the most famous) have led to increased appreciation of his work. It can be argued without any fear of contradictions that the only sections of the society which know Einstein very well and respect him are the natural sciences community, the political left, and only a tiny section of general readers. His theories of relativity and socialist positions are known only to very few people.

The same can be said about Bob Marley. Besides being so highly commercialised there is no evidence that his ideas and that of reggae music, which stands for clear political ideas (that is why Lucky Dube is not respected by real reggae followers, because what he sings what cannot be said to be authentic reggae), there is no evidence that Marley's popularisation has led to increased appreciation of reggae, Rastafarianism and all that they stand for. In fact Marley's example is more relevant to the debate on Biko. What capital has managed to do is to divorce Marley from reggae and Rastafarianism. He has been individualised.

Guevara's example is perhaps the most vulgar. Despite the fact that Che lived no other life except that of struggle (even his Cigar smoking and golf playing were in the context of struggle), he has now been so badly commercialised that the Italian photographer who captured the famous photograph that is used in many garments has been considering to reverse his earlier decision not to copyright the photograph. He is now considering to copyright it and sell the copyright to the Cuban government so that it can begin to defend Che's legacy.

Again, there is no evidence that the Che T-shirts and posters have brought an increased appreciation of his ideas. There is no doubt in my mind that a quick snap survey of those wearing a Che T-shirt will reveal that they would not even know the person on the T-shirt, except in cases where the name is written. In such cases, there is no doubt in my mind that they would not know who Che was, that is, what he did and stood for.

Einstein, Marley, and Guevara remain icons and symbols of struggle only to those who have taken effort to read and develop an appreciation of their ideas and lives. For many they remain famous faces on T-shirts and posters, decorating university residence rooms while the occupants hold ideas and lead lives that are diametrically opposed to the ideals held by the names decorating their walls.

It would seem that those who argue that Biko might as well be commercialised in order to mainstream his ideas are living in a fools' paradise. The one or two examples of some teenager who wear a Biko T-shirt and know exactly who he was and what he stood for can, without any doubt, be said to be an exception rather than the rule. Those who pursue this line of thinking have clearly failed to draw lessons from history. If they have it might be that they hope that things will one day turn out positively, that someday commercialisation will facilitate appreciation of revolutionary ideas. What an oxymoron of an idea!

Because we are not endowed with prophetic gifts our attempts at predicting the future can only, or at least largely, draw from the past and the present.

As demonstrated above the past does not offer a glimmer of hope or suggestion that things might turn out differently. In the absence of any past references or inspiration, let us turn our attention to the present.

The present manifests itself in two parallel projects. First, the Stone Cherrie clothing project; and then the Steve Biko Foundation.

A look at the Cherried Stone

It is important, when examining a current, unfolding phenomenon, to extrapolate a number of features that are clear from view. We move from what we can clearly see to what might be confusing.

First, Stone Cherrie can be linked to what one can liberally term a Rosebank fashion trend. This trend is characterised by emergent fashion expressions that are linked or influenced by YFM, upper middle class youth expressions.

Overall, these expressions are influenced by the dress styles of Kylie Minogue, Britney Spears, Christina Aguera, Lenny Kravitz, Beyonce Knowles, and many more. Competing with these fashion expressions is the local concept of Loxion Kulcha that, if one examines it carefully, is a poor carbon copy of the US-based FUBU (For Us By Us) concept.

The fundamental ideological thrust of these fashion trends, which link with a particular lifestyle modes, is what can be viewed as diluted versions of post-modern aesthetic expressions. It is to be found within the emerging discourse of youth expression underlined by expressions like "We do things for ourselves", "Doing our own thing". Sociologist Nthabiseng Motsemme and journalist and social critic Bongani Madondo are experts on this and can either confirm, correct or extend this observation.

While these developments pretend to raise the consciousness of young people, particularly young black people, the real effect is that they depoliticise them. They are devoid of any serious approach to politics, often arguing that young people are bored by hard-core politics, as if it was not young people who hurled stones at the police in the 1970s and 1980s, and as if it is not young people who are involved in the Palestinian *Intifada*.

These anti-politics expressions are to be found on such platforms as YFM, Take 5 (SABC1), Duku Duku (SABC 1), Craze (etv) and many more.

Many commentators have fallen into the trap of accepting these depoliticisation projects. They argue that young people should be given spaces to explore their own choices, as if young people do have choices because the so-called choices are in fact prescribed and manufactured ways of life, of speaking, of walking, that are imposed on them by the conservative US media.

Against this background what chances are there that Stone Cherrie's attempts at 'popularising Biko' will succeed?

We have demonstrated how the 'popularisation' of Che, Marley and Einstein, have failed to do justice to the causes they lived for. We have also located the context within which Stone Cherrie draws its inspiration, identity and existence. It is difficult to see how this project, bourgeoisie in character as it is, and found within a de-politicisation programme, will, against this grain, achieve a feat that the very context within which it operates, works against. It might be that Stone Cherrie will succeed in 'popularising' Biko. If that is the case, we then need to ask, which Biko?

All evidence cited thus far suggests that often 'popularisation' delinks the image and name from the ideals and life which the person held and lived. We have also demonstrated that Biko was a political activist and he should be viewed and celebrated as such.

Starting with the latter, it is inconceivable how Stone Cherrie, a depoliticised project as it is, will succeed, let alone attempt, to 'popularise' a political Biko - a radical Biko. It is also inconceivable how Stone Cherrie will succeed to fuse and maintain the link between the image and name on the one hand and the ideals and life of Biko on the other. If the examples of Che, Marley and Einstein are anything to go by, then we can expect only one route that will be taken by Stone Cherrie.

If we agree that Stone Cherrie does not have the wherewithal to celebrate Biko the activist. And if we agree again that previous attempts by others to celebrate the 'lives' of icons have not led to both quantitative and qualitative increases in the appreciation of these icons' ideals and lives, then we can also conclude that the Biko that Stone Cherrie will 'popularise' is not a Biko that we know, a Biko who stood and died for certain political ideals.

In the light of the above there are only two options left for Stone Cherrie. First, they can adopt a backward, revisionist, reductionist approach by emphasising just one aspect of Biko, the undeveloped version of "Black is beautiful, feel proud." The second approach will be to celebrate Biko the face (the handsome and charming Biko), name and image minus the ideals, life and development.

What is likely to emerge will be a combination of the two. In the face of some criticisms that they are simply commercialising Biko, Stone Cherrie will continue to sell the face, image and name while making a poor attempt to also incorporate the half-baked ideas like “black in beautiful”. This will then assist to legitimise them while at the same time placating and delegitimising criticism. On the other hand the messenger will increase his trips to the bank. Money will be rolling in. In my book, this is simply called vulgar commercialisation.

The Steve Biko Foundation

Unlike Stone Cherrie, the Steve Biko Foundation is not a commercial venture. This makes it difficult to view it through the same lenses that one views the former. There is therefore a challenge to develop a unique approach when examining whether the Foundation does celebrate Biko in an appropriate manner.

The Foundation does commemorate Biko on September the 12th every year and publicises these commemorations better than any of the organisations that claim to uphold his ideas. Just like Biko, the Foundation does have a number of community projects. Again just like Biko, the Foundation holds workshops for young people and attempts to give them a variety of life skills. So, what is this criticism against the Foundation?

The following section will be grounded on a critical examination of the Foundation’s attempts to preserve the memory of Biko. Let me from the onset put the conclusion before the arguments. One activist once commented, referring to something that was written by someone else, that it is possible to kill the true memory of an icon by remembering him/her. This is the correct way of viewing the Foundation.

In the second section of this paper we demonstrated that Biko should be understood not in static terms but as a component and active part of the BCM. It was further demonstrated that there were some dynamic developments in Biko’s political life and further that some of his political stances, like involvement in community projects, were mediated by prevailing circumstances at the time and are therefore not to be taken at face value to reflect his deeper political thoughts. Of course some might say that we are speaking for Biko here. Whether we are correct or wrongly, this is the nature of political analysis.

Even where and when he spoke for himself Biko did articulate positions that demonstrated that his was a radicalised approach to the race/class question in the country, that he anticipated a socialist transition for the country; that there is a need to move towards an “egalitarian society”.

From Biko’s political development we can take the liberty of employing the analysis that his political thought was close to, that is, a Marxist conception of certain developments that the Foundation is involved in.

Firstly, one of the operating approaches of the Foundation is to involve Biko's close associates and family in a number of initiatives. In fact, it is here that many people make the mistake of saying that the Foundation has left out some Biko's associates and selected only a few. The response by Saths Cooper when he was Azapo president in the early 1980s at Medunsa to one Charterist ideologue (who was a former BPC member) who asked why Azapo was advocating socialism whereas the BPC advocated Black Communalism (already dealt with in this paper), is very illustrative. Cooper responded in his sarcastic fashion that he was known for at the time. He said something like, "Well, political positions develop and change with time. With time we have discarded Black communalism in the same way that we discarded you."

If we follow the logic of the above example we will then agree that the argument that friends should not be forgotten when remembering Biko is flawed and backward. Just like in a marathon, certain people fall on the way and it cannot be said because they were part of the starting line-up they must all be given gold medals. Politics does not work that way. It is not some religious practice where those who fall by the wayside are prayed for and begged to "come back to the fold".

Political activism is a matter of choice - current choices and not just past choices that elevate someone to higher levels. Therefore, no foul play should be alleged on the side of Biko's former comrades who have chosen other paths. Let us then proceed to the second consideration; the involvement of family.

Since its inception the Foundation has been consistent in ensuring that Biko's family members are involved in its operations. It is not hard to find out why - having a family member of an icon makes it much easier to claim legitimacy. For this the Foundation has been successful. However, we need to ask hard questions about this approach.

Should we allow the development of a culture, as in the USA, where family takes some centre stage in the elevation and preservation of the ideas of an icon? Should we allow a situation like that of the Martin Luther King family where, by and large, his legacy has turned into some serious family business and not an attempt to deepen his ideas and 'dream' about the American society in a manner that he was involved - hardcore politics and not charitable initiatives?

It was demonstrated in the opening section of this paper that Biko developed his name (if we can use this liberal approach) within a strict paradigm of activism that is aimed at changing society. We have to wonder what value does the involvement of a family bring into the ideals and life that Biko gave to the world. Jenny Marx, the daughter to Karl Marx, did not simply advance her father's legacy in a manner that was difficult to reconcile with her father's legacy. Nor did the Marx family get involved in an initiative that would bring confusion as to whether they were doing that as a family or as activists. Jenny went on to develop her own intervention by becoming an

activist and theoretician in her own right, leaving the 'ownership' of the Marx legacy to revolutionary platforms and participating in those platforms as an equal.

We learn from the writings of particularly Fredrick Engels and Alexandra Kollontai that family is by its very nature a reactionary institution within the capitalist scheme of things. It is natural for a family to want to own, much to the exclusion of the collective. The conclusion that can be reached on this is that, crudely speaking, the institution of a family is a reactionary, backward expression of the ideal, the stereotyped, and the normalised.

Family is based on the perpetuation of the division of labour that obtains in capitalist systems and other backward systems. It perpetuates the stereotypes of the muscular, providing man; the caring, soft mother (read wife); and the obedient children who have to be nurtured to follow in the footsteps of the father and mother and 'do them proud'.

It has to be asked why, in this epoch of progressive conceptualisation of reality, whether we should have a situation where an icon's memory would largely be reduced to being celebrated along the lines of close associates and family. While many people might not see the underlying ramifications of this what needs to be exposed with this approach is that once there is emphasis on close associates and family immediately what emerges is an exclusionary pattern where one has to either trace or prove lineage or affinity. Also, the backward trappings of location (regionalism) would emerge. One can see this emerging within the Foundation. This is sensitive, but it needs to be said.

The other major point that can be observed with the way the Foundation celebrates Biko is that, just like in the case of initiatives like Stone Cherrie (examined earlier) there is a de-emphasising of the aspects of Steve Biko's development that were actually, before the prominence of the Foundation, the main ones that Biko was known for – radical political ideas whose main thrust is fundamental and not cosmetic political changes.

Instead of assisting to develop and take Steve Biko's ideas to greater heights the Foundation has effectively employed a revisionist approach whereby they seek to draw only, or at least mainly, from those aspects of Steve Biko that do not address the core of the situation which black people find themselves in. For instance, the Foundation, in its projects and other initiatives, would not address why the black youth needs to be involved in the projects that it initiates, that is, that they are either unemployed or involved in destructive behaviours as a result of the effects and ravages of the capitalist development on their lives.

It defeats all logic how, in the epoch where the attention of many analysts has turned to the current manifestations of capitalism and imperialism, a Foundation which is named after a man who raised questions about the system would effectively ignore these very issues. This sounds like talking about Jesus and not talking about the issues that he raised, something that some sections of the current church are guilty of.

Instead of taking Biko's name to more advanced levels the Foundation is effectively taking it back, back to the time of community programmes, and back to the time of a narrow definition of what Black Consciousness is all about. The reductionist psychologism, anthropologicistic, developmentalist approach is more dangerous to Biko than it is helpful. In fact, this approach falls exactly into the narrow interpretation that used to be prevalent within ANC circles, that BC is only the first step in the liberatory project and other views should take over from where BC ends. While the poverty of this BC was defeated and exposed over time by clearly demonstrating that BC is a holistic philosophy and ideology that can guide a complete struggle, current developments led by the Foundation take the clock back and reinstate that narrow view of BC. It is this narrow and self-fulfilling viewpoint that leads some to argue that Thabo Mbeki is an adherent of BC. What the advocates of this viewpoint fail to appreciate is that 'shouting blackness, or Africanness' all the time does not make one a BC adherent, that is, the BC that has been outlined in this paper. No true adherent of BC can preside over the continued exploitation of black people. No one claiming to be a BC adherent can preside and advance policies that are aimed at denying black people dignity by denying them land, decent housing, education, electricity and water to name just a few. The same can be said about any person, even former BCM activists, who are now champions of self-enrichment in the name of black economic empowerment. Just like the person that Cooper said the BCM discarded when they discarded old ideas like black communalism the BCM has to accept the fact that it will have to discard such elements. Indeed, as South African capitalism becomes more advanced many of us will have to get off the train and stop making false, self-fulfilling claims.

The last point that can be observed about the Foundation, which for some of us is very illustrative, is the association that the Foundation has developed with big capital. It does not take a rocket scientist to realise that big business would not knowingly finance a project that has the potential to bring meaningful change in the lives of the poor.

From its engagement with the government through to the funding of NGOs and community based organisations, capital (both local and international) knows only one rule, profit maximisation. Even if there might not be direct financial gains accrued out of an investment into a given initiatives, we know that there are other indirect benefits, be they good public relations for the company or tax breaks. There is no initiative supported by capital that does not advance this motive. This is the simple rule of capitalist operation, reductionist as this analysis may sound to some. Capital does not have a conscience, and it never will.

If we reconcile the observations made earlier, that Biko and his colleagues, both during his lived years and after, have developed a radical philosophy that sought change; that taking back the legacy of Biko to community programmes is reductionist and backward; and lastly that capital does not invest in initiatives that have any semblance of being progressive, we can come to the conclusion that while the Foundation does not necessarily

commercialise Biko in the same manner that Stone Cherrie does, there is reason to be worried or concerned about its operations.

A critical examination of the Foundation's work reveals that it has so far failed to promote Biko as he developed over time. Some have even been more direct by suggesting that while liberals failed to kill Biko in the early 1970s, and the apartheid regime failed to kill him in 1977, and the ANC also failed to kill him in the 1980s when they gave an order in 1995, Kabwe, Zambia, that "the BCM is a third force that must be killed", the Foundation will succeed where all others failed – killing Biko. The Foundation will succeed in doing this simply because it has managed to claim that all that it does is in the name of Biko. Talk about killing a man's memory by remembering him! But, does all these imply that there is a suggestion that the Foundation should fold and rather join or be a front of, or support organisations like the Socialist Party of Azania?

Before providing a direct answer to the above question let me state it that this is a typical anti-intellectual suggestion. It is based on an urge to silence those who express differing views. It is unwittingly based on an appetite to suppress dissent and consider other views. It is Tharcherite – "There Is No Alternative". This approach closes down debate.

The Foundation, being an organisation that operates in the public arena, and would from time to time invite attention to itself, must be subjected to open and rigorous debate. At least one of the benefits of liberal democracy is that there is space for free debate, of course limited by material resources. The Foundation and those who lead it are not holy cows.

Now turning to what the Foundation should rather do in the place of current directions there are a number of considerations that can be made. First, the Foundation can become a research institution that places itself along the lines of development that Biko and his colleagues developed. It can therefore become the centre for critical/radical social science (in broad terms) research. Existing examples along these lines are AIDC, ILRIG, a tendency within the Wits EPU, and many more.

Second, the Foundation can become a community centre that facilitates progressive/radical peoples' pedagogy. In this way the Foundation can be of service to communities by educating them on variety of topics. An example of this would be the 1980s Funda Centre or even the current day Khanya College.

Third, the Foundation can become a hub of activism, education, or other progressive activities in varied ways. An example of this is the Community House in Salt River.

The limitation of course in all these suggestions is that these are framed along NGOs lines and all the criticisms and contradictions that can be said about NGOs and CBOs will then apply to the Foundation.

The above suggestions do not at all suggest that the Foundation would then have to place itself under or be taken over by existing BC political parties. They have their lives to live and they have their mess to sort out. But the Foundation can do itself a whole lot good by moving away from the bourgeoisie cloak under which it is comfortably operating.

This radical shift will have consequences. The one major consequence is that funding from all the current financial backers will dry up almost immediately. The second challenge is that the Foundation will have to change its outlook completely and move itself towards 'the people'. This will be a culture change for the Foundation.

Is the Foundation capable of making the above changes?

I have my own doubts. Until then, we will continue to take it to task. Heavy, no blows barred, task.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to demonstrate that the legacy of Steve Biko needs to be understood and seen through the lens of radical development. Using this lens this paper has examined two initiatives that have become popular and seek to 'popularise' the memory of Steve Biko, the Stone Cherrie fashion house and the Steve Biko Foundation. The paper tried to show that these two initiatives have adopted a backward, reductionist and narrow understanding of Steve Biko. Lastly, this paper has tried to answer to the question on what the Foundation can do in order to address some of the issues identified as being of serious concern. The paper ends by recommending that the Foundation can change its image and become more progressive than it is currently.