

BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS: ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND ROLE IN THE LIFE OF  
THE COMMUNITY. (Temba Sono)

I begin unhesitatingly by stating that we have been defined as non-this and non-that. Our essence, for a long time has been in negation and nothingness. We have unashamedly chorused this negative historical definitions by others that we have unwittingly contributed to our own relegation to the nether regions of human existence. No wonder it is only in a country like South Africa that one group of people has become the negative of another. We are 'non-whites' whose basic humanity lies in the essence of non-beingness. We were not only so defined but in our powerlessness we connived at this degrading and denigrating definitions. All this we did and others were just too happy to demonstrate how we fit in into this category of sub-humans. All because we are not white.

This historical acceptance of the inferior category resulted in the in-built value systems of a depraved, deprived and quasi-deranged beings. By accepting this the white man came in to round-up the remnants of his dirty work. He deliberately oppresses, suppresses and even depresses us. We are discriminated against, denigrated and even denied our dignity. Simply because we are not white. We have never denied that we are NOT white, but we have always (at least some of us) denied that we are non-whites. All these things have been done to us; simply because God chose to create us black.

We are economically exploited and expropriated for the benefit of the few. We are politically dispossessed and disenfranchised simply because this social disorder must give order, security and comfort to the few. This no doubt is naked racism.

The black community of this world especially in a military camp like South Africa is invariably inevitably on a collision course with this racism, unless we enter into a collusion with this racist system in order to create and tighten further fetters to keep us in bondage, which would be a very tragic thing indeed. Black students come to learn in due course that this racism is sustained and nourished by force, exploitation and discriminatory legislations. As students living in a circumscribed social structure we in time come to realise that power is ruthlessly employed by whites to maintain the privileges of the few.

Consequently black students are also kept in check by this oppressive culture. It denies them the right to think and act independently as autonomous human beings. The illogic of this coercive society demands that all less privileged people cannot have the right of choice of free participation in institutions of their own desire. This is racism in operation.

A Governmental whim is the sole and final determinant of Black students' lives. Their friendships are circumscribed; both their geographical and spiritual residences are heavily ordained. In the name of whiteness

ties are perpetrated. Hence black students have discovered that they have no choice but to march boldly on the road to collision; there are no detours; detours are betrayal to humanity at large. Black students are forced to face the realities of this age and challenge this racistic whiteness whose sole motive is the exclusivistic preservation of power in the hands of the whites. This is a historical truth. We too can escape escalating the challenge.

Fed up with whiteness, and fed to the brim with Blackness as a faith black students have begun questioning the validity of white assumptions. White "christian" ethics decree an ethical non-violence code but unashamedly practice brutal force in socio-political sphere. The inherent discrepancy implicit in the White Moral Code is naturally irreconcilable with the tenets of true humanity, which humanity is embodied in the faith of Black Consciousness. White social order begin with the false premise that whiteness is value. Whiteness is here equated with value. But if whiteness is true what about blackness?

Whites have a ready-made answer to this question: "O Lord, wash my hands so that they must be as white as snow, because black is the badge of evil, the dungeon of hell. O God the prince of evil is dark himself. So let there be all whiteness. Amen". But is it true? Is this blatant supplication to a White God true humility?. Is whiteness the passport to eternity? It may be true that whiteness is the avenue of and to pleasures and privileges, but does this automatically lead to superior humanity? Is whiteness really a passport to Heaven? Whites, impervious to anything black, steeped neck-deep in the vitriol of their racism, answer 'yes' to these questions. Blacks naturally do not believe an iota of this answer. They answer with an overwhelming 'No' to these questions.

Without doubt the student community deny the validity of this 'divine' political domination by Whites over blacks. They refuse to accord respectability to the vile and heinous usurpation of human dignity of blacks. As enlightened people living in an enlightened community black students recognize the paranoic and pathological desire of certain people who should be black but nevertheless are whiteist in aspirations. Black consciousness comes in here to eradicate the dregs of these whiteist hang-overs which are nothing else but disguised complexes of inferiority. Black consciousness is a faith which attempts to bring lost brothers and sisters to the mould and fold of true humanity. It seeks to re-establish the true values of man back to man himself.

In life there are no neutral tones. Life is purely an Either/Or situation. You are either human or non-human, either a man or a woman, an exploiter or an exploited; you are a possessor or a dispossessed; you are either black or white; you are either a problem or a solution, an oppressor or an oppressed. There are no half-way stations here except in the mystical terminology of the liberals, whose true role properly examined is that of seductive oppression: oppressing people by default. We must not be aware that their role is to cheat us of our wits and teach us their hypocritical

Black Consciousness implies the totality of involvement of all oppressed people to recreate new value systems that shall regard man as man for what he is; i.e. a value system which will free man from the bonds of self imposed slavery accruing out of living in a racist society. Black Consciousness is a way of life which attempts not only to break the chains of servitude but liberates the Black man from an induced sense of inferiority. Black Consciousness means the closing of ranks of all oppressed people in the world. They must come together and as a solid force move forward and destroy the racist myth that says they are born inferior and shall die as third rate beings in a white powered universe.

This concept broken down means:-

1. The liberation of all oppressed people from psychological and physical imprisonment.
2. The solidarity referred to is Black Solidarity which recognises that black people have one thing in common; oppression. The focal point of their suffering is skin images. We must therefore rally around this central point of suffering. As soon as all people realize that they are oppressed simply because they do not own a white skin, they will submerge their differences to form a cohesive group and challenge the racism that is meted out by the white world.
3. The self definition referred to here is a new mental structure that seeks to answer the question; Who am I? What am I? Am I a being; a positive being, with positive values? If so who is my author?
4. A combination of 1, 2, and 3 mean only one thing; the creation of new life styles that shall eradicate the white superstition that Black people are foreigners in their country of birth. If you do not believe me listen to what Hertzogites or Herstigers say about us: "The Coolie does not belong here. He has no home here.

of Vendaland ". Now is this true, I ask you.

The Herstigers have merely articulated in clear blunt language what other whites hold true but lack the courage to give it expression except in the sanctity of their bars and bathrooms.

The Black students do not only deny these claims but propose alternate life-views - politically, educationally, culturally, religiously and economically. But before they formulate their own alternatives they must first adopt that faith which calls upon these people who have been disbanded into various categories of inferiority, euphemistically called non-whites, to throw away their shackles and create a new social order.

According to the beliefs of Black consciousness not everybody who is not white is actually black. There are those people whose soul is an appendage of Wonderboom, Lower Houghton, Berea or Brighton Beach. These are the black skinned white-souled lost brothers.

have sold their black souls for the meagre dubious returns of the wits of Baaskap. In view of this it is obvious that blackness is primarily an attitude to life rather than a matter of the images of pigmentation.. No doubt colour does play a role and it is only incidental but who brought the colour issues to our attention in the first place? Let us not play down the influences of the last 300 years of physical beatings and slave mentalities.

Because Black consciousness wishes, among other things to eliminate White racism, it has been villified as meaning Black racism. Some people who should know better do not know that powerlessness is never commensurate with racism. Without power black people can never be racists, let alone practice it. They can never go about this country of ours placing notices reading 'none-this' and 'none-that', <sup>since</sup> they have no power to do so. Power is as power does. Power is effective to the extent that it is wielded and the critics of Saso too betger know this. So can we not be called Black Power groups. In South Africa this charge is as absurd as meaningless.

As for saying Black Consciousness is a form of racism it is surely to demonstrate the height of naivetty. Such conception panders to the absurdities absolute. If Blacks say so then I can only express my concern at this schitzophrenic thinking. Whites have no need to cry 'racism'. What have they been doing since 1652?

These Caucasians refuse to abdicate from their ensconced and entrenched throne of Power because by so doing they would be creating a solution to a problem which they are happy to let remain a problem.

Can the malady and malaise of this society be cured by anything? Since God refuses to arbitrate man must arbitrate himself. The blackman has to tell whitey that he is fed <sup>up</sup> with his educational, political, theological and cultural prescriptions to this sick paranoic society.

The black student is seeking new dimensions to education. He regards the majority of his educational norms to be anachronostic and irrelevant to his own needs. He believes that by having a bilateral interchange with his community he would be on the sure path to liberation. He believes his educational system is enslaving and it must be rejected and new ones be brought in.

Racism means discrimination for the purposes of exploitation. All whites are exploiters - some exploit directly others indirectly. The latter are the chorists of "ag tog", 'ooh', "shame" whenever some black skinned unfortunate fellow is in the hands of some burly Van der Skiet. Yet whenever balloting times come they quickly desert their corridors of 'ag tog' and 'shame' and prefer a bulleting bass to continue his with his trigger-happy morality. What has happened to their 'my god' poohha? When Ba's Boss is back into power these tearful apologists will once more come with their sentimental bubble about bad the 'other' white is. These are the directionless multiracialists or integrationists

Black consciousness. The black students are trying to educate the community to know that they are on their own and must rely on their own resources for any salvation. They are their own Messiah and not even God will descend from his ivory tower and come and help them. Besides God is never in the habit of coming down to solve any body's problems. The Black community, especially the Christian community is still paralysed and immobilised by this false notion that sometime in the forever receding future God will come. Fortunately even the Church is beginning to see the light and stop preaching this divisive whiteist tactic.

People who enjoy something cannot sincerely criticise it. If they do they can only be hypocrites. You cannot come to an ideological conference table and shed a few cups of tears <sup>about</sup> how sorry you are because blacks are oppressed & you immediately go back to your white laager and enjoy the fruits of the object of your criticism, <sup>without being a hypocrite.</sup> Hence black students tell and must keep on telling their unfortunate and uneducated brothers in the black Ghettos that what is common to all of us is a white monolith. No black man ever fits into the white scheme of things, except those non-whites who in their desire to bootlick the whiteman demonstrate such twisted logic that they suffer from delusions of grandeur.

Whites cannot and must not be accepted into black ranks. They will pollute and whiten our cause and course. They are forever looking for divine explanations and celestial rationalizations to the iniquities inherent in their inequalities and inquisitions. They try and demonstrate to a bewildered Black population how moral their immorality is. They know their own hypocritical and nefarious roles but still those dull-witted people who should be blacks yet are non-whiteist value-orientated, still pay homage to this angry policy-god of the Caucasoids.

Hence the black student today does not accept nor does he recognise the normative criteria as universally valid for all people. He rejects them because they are exploitative and oppressive. Since that unfortunate date, 1652, people who have been enslaved and discriminated against have had to endure sufferings of all sorts: physical and moral tortures of great magnitude. It is for the reason that some black souls have forever been captured by the Caucasoids and they refuse to conceive of any other earthly other than this.

Yet we know that our objective is great and dark. Our road is straight, black and arresting; our intentions are black, dark and noble. We do not wish to escape from ourselves; neither do we wish to destroy whiteness among whites; but what we wish to do is to destroy whiteness as far as it affects us. To eradicate this cancer from our midst.

We are godless as it is now. Our gods have been scarred away by the hells and ghosts of the white bible. We therefore have become the marginal people; always playing peripheral roles. Alienated from God, from one another, and from ourselves. We are nothing else but white stereotypes.

We can only be what we want to be only if we stand up and BE what we want to be. We can be black, with black face and black faith and our deeds the

The epitome of that which is nobler- Blackness. We do not have to prove our humanity in spite of our blackness. Our blackness is an aspect of humanity. This is what the student in the black community teaches the people. He does this through the self-help schemes.

We say all this because we know what we are because we know what we want to be. To be thus is to be ourselves. This is where a facet of Black consciousness comes to teach the people who they are and who their maker is. This facet is Black Theology. This theology is not a theology of absolutes but it is a theology of existential problems. It deals with the realities of this hell rather than with the beauties of the hereafter. 'I have come to liberate the poor and set the down-trodden free', said Jesus, one thousand nine hundred and seventy one years ago.

This is the message we must give the people: liberate the poor and set the down-trodden free. All history has followed this road. I do not have to tell you that the liberating consciousness behind the Afrikaner victory in 1902 was this liberating consciousness. I don't have to mention other historical phenomena in order to show that this consciousness is as alive as it is vital.

It is no wonder that it is the youth - the black youth of this country who first articulated this consciousness. Nor is it a coincidence. They have been watching the lives of black people going to the dogs, nay they have passed the dogs they are heading for the pigs.

"Unless you have an ideal to fight for, even to die for, then you have no right to live". These words were said to me by one Rector of these tribal universities. "If you haven't found something you will die for, then you aren't fit to live", said Martin Luther King. Now black man, you are your own redeemer, but where is your ideal?

How many of us here schooled in the Academy of sugary values had we been given the chance of escaping out of skins, would not jump out faster than lightning? Simply because we would want to escape from imprisoning skin? In other words we hated ourselves. We may deny it but we hated ourselves. We were ashamed to be seen in our ugly skins. We preferred a whiter skin. That skin would be an opening to hamburgers, cakes Mercedes Benz, swimming pools, and Heaven itself. That is why there are still people who hate themselves, for lacking a four-letter word I will call them euphemistically, 'non-whites'. Blacks no longer care for these white values. There is something to be lived for: liberation. Liberation in the context of Black consciousness is a far more wider connotation. It refers to the total emancipation of the whole man.