

Exploring Consciousness and Good Faith in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Governance

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### **Abstract**

This paper revisits the key themes of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness movement, exploring what it means to govern consciously and in good faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even though the context for Biko's Black Consciousness Movement was apartheid and its many deleterious impacts on the African people, post-apartheid South Africa, and indeed, the global community, is still facing ever growing inequality and social and economic injustices.

This paper examines both the possibilities and limitations of applying Biko's wisdom to policymaking and good governance in addressing the growing global challenges. To this end, the first section of this paper explores ideas of consciousness and complicity, particularly in terms of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, in comparison to Biko's philosophy. The second section highlights the profound ideas associated with Biko's Black Consciousness movement, and the third section examines the possibilities of translating his ideas into practice in this new millennium. We begin by proposing five practices that public institutions might implement to create a more just and responsive government: (1) commitment to personal, organizational, and institutional change; (2) honoring difference without striving for its erasure; (3) the institutionalization of epistemic justice; (4) power sharing; and, (5) a commitment to engage in practices grounded in good faith. We conclude by acknowledging the challenges and pressures, particularly from the global political environment, which might pose limitations to such practices, and we suggest potential methods for engaging in fruitful dialogue as to how nations might carry on Biko's legacy in the struggle for social justice and economic equality in 2018 and beyond.

## Exploring Consciousness and Good Faith in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Governance

### **Introduction**

At the 16<sup>th</sup> annual Steve Biko Memorial lecture in Pretoria, South Africa, Davis (2016), speaking about Black Lives Matter and other global resistance movements, admonished activists and South African dignitaries alike to resist what she deemed “the tyranny of the universal.” The tyranny she spoke of is the tendency of the universal to erase difference, context and particularity; it is to promote assimilation over cultural distinctness, and to favor abstract notions of political ontology over the historically situated political subject. In this age of divisive politics, group protest, violence, and police militarization, the erasure of the historically situated subject signals a postmodern age in which it seems that democracy is deconstructing itself.

Historically, the idea of consciousness has been the linchpin of revolution and the perceived antidote to cultural hegemony. From Marxist thought to the Black Power movement, the decolonization of African nations, and the antiapartheid struggle in South Africa, consciousness has played a key role in Black social movements. The implications of solidarity movements rooted in notions of critical consciousness on governance, however, are not always well understood by individuals on the outside of these movements looking in. This is particularly so for government officials and street level bureaucrats who interact with members of these movements as they take to the streets in protest. Misunderstandings abound and, in the United States, conversations about #blacklivesmatter are reduced to a battle of hashtags with many outside of the movement issuing the popular rejoinder of Black Lives Matter. What is needed is a more informed and nuanced understanding of consciousness – of what it means to

“stay woke” in the age of Black Lives Matter and of the implications of Black solidarity for 21<sup>st</sup> Century governance. Not all movements are identical. Not all possess the same philosophical roots. For example, in the case of the Black power movement in the United States, Diouf and Woodard (2016) note how many organizations of the 1960s and 1970s had ideological commitments that varied between “Marxism, revolutionary nationalism, territorial nationalism, and cultural nationalism” (p. XII). However, there is always the potential for solidarity across social movements even as the contexts and histories from which these movements are born differ from nation to nation. With the understanding that Black social movements vary across space and time, Martin and West (2009) speak of black internationalism as “...a product of consciousness...the conscious interconnection and interlocution of black struggles across man-made and natural boundaries—including the boundaries of nations, empires, continents, oceans, and seas” (p. 1). The concept of Black internationalism is an important one for understanding the historical and collective impact of diverse Black social movements rooted in notions of critical consciousness as it allows us to examine the ways in which such movements impact contemporary governance practices within and across nations. The work of Steve Biko, the founder of the South African Students’ Organization (SASO), an anti-apartheid student organization that promoted Black Consciousness, provides an interesting case study with regard to the impact of solidarity movements on governance.

The purpose of this paper is to address the following questions: What is critical consciousness? How might Steve Biko’s philosophy advance our knowledge of consciousness? What are the implications of like-minded solidarity movements for governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In many ways, Biko’s work continues to be an exemplar for current social movements, particularly with regards to Black Lives Matter in the US and Fees Must Fall in South Africa.

As such, it is important that those in government interfacing with these movements have a better understanding of what critical consciousness is, what it endeavors to do, and its implications for 21<sup>st</sup> century governance. We begin with an overview and critique of Hegel's slave-master dialectic and its relevance to critical consciousness, and then proceed in the second section to address the contributions of Steve Biko to our knowledge about critical consciousness and Black solidarity movements. The third section addresses the implications for governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In translating theory to practice, we outline critical steps government actors might take in response to Black resistance movements across the diaspora.

The analyses that follow hinge on one powerful difference between Hegel and the philosophies of Black resistance movements: Where Hegel's account of the lord and his bond servant results in the acquiescence of the marginalized and subjugated, Black consciousness in the tradition of Steve Biko refuses the status quo and finds itself willing to fight to the death for one's liberation. Thus, we argue that consciousness facilitates conflict resolution and fosters what King and Zanetti (2005) refer to in the context of public administration as a process of "decentering the ego" and "democratizing expertise" (p. 128). The term *consciousness*, as used in this paper, refers to the critical and reflective process by which a body comes to see itself not as an object but as an authentic subject possessing agency, as a product of lived experience, and as a being capable achieving liberation for self and others.

### **Philosophical Underpinnings of Consciousness: Hegel and the Master-Slave Dialectic**

Western understandings of critical consciousness can be traced back to Hegel's (1977) parable of the lord and the bondservant in *Phenomenology*. In this account, the bondservant (slave) becomes conscious of his status as an object in relation to his lord (master), and through work of his hands, discovers himself to be a conscious, independent subject. For Hegel, the

preconditions for true consciousness, independent consciousness, are absolute fear and service.

The slave and master exist in dialectical relation to each other and resolve their opposition by first accepting their respective positions and then finding freedom and consciousness in and through their relationship. Through service the bondservant discovers his humanity, his being *for himself*, and in the moment of absolute fear he sees the consciousness of his oppressor reflected back on him and in doing so finds his own independent consciousness.

...just as the lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness.  
(Hegel, 1977, p. 117)

Thus, for Hegel, both doing and becoming are intricately related. According to Marcuse (1999/1941), this led Hegel to define the act of thinking as one's realization that the objective world is really a subjective world—it is the product of objectifying all that appears external to the self. In this way, thinking turns back on itself and becomes true consciousness by understanding that the world is the creation of individuals as they act on their external environment. Freedom originates in thought but finds true expression when one "...enters into the world in full consciousness that it is 'his own' world" (Marcuse, 1977, p. 119). Therefore, just thinking one is free constitutes only an abstract freedom; to achieve real freedom, one must go beyond thinking oneself free and continue to act in concert with others on the world in full consciousness. In this way, true consciousness is a relational, not atomistic, co-producing of the world; it is the making of history: "The self-conscious subject attains his freedom not in the form of the 'I' but of the We, the associated We that first appeared as the outcome of the struggle between lord and bondsman" (Marcuse, 1977, p. 120). From this one can deduce that, as Barad has (2007) noted, "[t]he world and its possibilities for becoming are remade with each moment"

(p. 396). True consciousness is a continual process and a relational pursuit, the transcending of the old relationship between lord and bondservant that gives way to a relational ontology in which truly conscious individuals act on the world and co-create it together in its becoming. The first step in developing true consciousness, then, is intrinsic to the human mind. The latter is extrinsic to self and deeply relational. Critics of Hegel note that the slave-master relationship is only resolved through the slave's passivity and contrast this with modern anti-racist resistance movements. Consequently, there is no account in Hegel's narrative for what might happen if the slave were to violently contest his master except that the death of one or both might negate consciousness all together.

Africana scholars question the precondition that both the slave and the master require recognition from one another to realize *being for self*, namely the philosophy that consciousness cannot be attained through violent confrontation and a fight to the death (More, 2015). This is illustrated by More (2015), who notes that, in Hegel, the slave accepts his or her servitude, and the master, his or her ultimate position of dependence (*being for another*) on the labor of the slave. Conceived this way, servitude is "...a product of the absolute fear of death" and "[i]n the struggle to death for recognition, slave consciousness is the one that refuses to risk its life (More, 2015, p. 102). The difference between Hegel and Biko's philosophy therefore hinges on the role of fear in the attainment of freedom: In Hegel, the fear of death results in acquiescence as both men find consciousness in and through the other. To Black existentialist scholars, consciousness is found in resistance, and liberation, in the willingness to face death for one's cause. As More notes, examples of the latter are found in both Steve Biko and Frederick Douglass. Both men were willing to die, and in fact, overcame the fear of death, which was not sufficient to lock them indefinitely into positions of subjugation. To Franz Fanon, the master in Hegel's account differs

from the colonizer/oppressor in Africa: “For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master scorns the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work” (p. 195; footnote). The “slave” in the colonizer relationship, and likewise in the account of Frederick Douglass, did not find himself, his *being for self*, in his work but rather in his struggle for freedom, the violent confrontation with the oppressor: “For Hegel, the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object [work]. Here, the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object” (p. 195; footnote). In Douglass’ (1995/1845) account, he found his *being for self* in that moment of confrontation:

My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me. (p. 43)

Examples of resistance by colonial subjects in African nations and slave rebellions throughout North America reveal that it is in the existential moment, in the question of death or survival, in the search for meaning in the face of oppression, that true consciousness emerges (Gordon, 2000). Therefore, it is not the case that Hegel’s slave-master dialectic does not apply to Black notions of consciousness, but rather that in its application to such movements it must account for possibilities of resistance, conflict, and a willingness on the part of the subjugated to fight to the death (More, 2015). One learns from Hegel that consciousness is not just an intrapsychic phenomenon but rather one that is relational and collective as well. Thus, it is not enough to abstractly realize one’s *being for self*, but rather in that realization one must understand that it is necessary to act in solidarity with like others.

The relational implications of solidarity, coupled with the existential quality of Blackness (Gordon, 2000; Sithole, 2016) as something that has long faced the threat of annihilation, make

critical consciousness a particularly salient component of Black liberation movements. This requires, as Sartre (1956) theorized, that the subjugated refuse to be relegated to masochists, and the dominant refuse to become sadists who supplant their own consciousness onto the marginalized. Doing the latter results in what DuBois (1994/1903) referred to as “double consciousness,” meaning that, to be both a Negro and an American, results in “...a world which yields [Blacks] no true self-consciousness, but only lets [them] see [themselves] through the revelation of the other world....this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 2). Accordingly, it is argued that Black individuals come to possess the consciousness of those who subjugate them, through this relationship, under the gaze of the oppressor, resulting not in true consciousness, being for self, but in the lived experience of trauma and self-hatred (see: Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2005, p. 91). DuBois recognized this when said that the history “...of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self” (p. 2). This is the recognition of self as an independent consciousness capable of acting in relation with others to bring about a better world. As Freire (2016/1970, p. 109) noted: “Humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality—historical awareness itself—thus represents a step forward from emergence...” In Friere’s (2016/1970) critical pedagogy, heavily influenced by Hegel and Fannon, “action and reflection occur simultaneously” and “[c]ritical reflection is also action” (p. 128). In and through such action, critical consciousness leads to solidarity, and solidarity toward the possibility of a better future—not just for like others but for all of humanity. For Biko, Black Consciousness was

not just a willingness to fight to the death, contra Hegel, but rather a call for substantive political change and an end to the apartheid state.

### **Revisiting Steve Biko**

Steve Biko envisioned a more humane South Africa, and frustrated with the liberalism of the multi-racial National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), he became active in student organizing, founding the South African Student Organization (SASO), and promoting Black Consciousness as a way to unite the Black people of South Africa against the apartheid state (Biko, 2002/1978). In academic circles, it is difficult to speak of Steve Biko's Black Consciousness movement, his resistance, without addressing Hegel's (1977) slave-master dialectic. Biko's embrace of Hegelian dialectical materialism extended primarily to the plane of ideas (In Hegelian terminology, Steve Biko (1978) argued that "...since the thesis [to apartheid] is a white racism there can only be one valid antithesis i.e. a solid black unity to counterbalance the scale" (p. 51)); however, subsequent scholars who note Biko's intentions to counter the "roots of [Black] self-negation" that so permeated apartheid South Africa (see p. 101), argue that his politics and his philosophy stood at odds with the Hegelian slave-master dialectic. Where Hegel clearly provides an important starting point to understanding critical consciousness; Africana philosophy rightfully questions the universality of Hegel's work and its relevance to Black people's struggle for freedom across the diaspora. Steve Biko's writing in and of itself counters the slave-master dialectic as it was both an act of resistance and a fierce willingness on Biko's part to stare death in the face even as the apartheid state sought to silence him. For Biko, Black Consciousness was a vehicle for the attainment of freedom and a more humane society:

Black Consciousness is an attitude of mind and a way of life, the most positive call to emanate from the black world for a long time. Its essence is the realization by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group to rid

themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. (Biko, 2002/1978, p. 92).

Biko's Black Consciousness contained both intrinsic and extrinsic components—it was not just a state of mind (what would have been an abstraction to Hegel and Marcuse) but a way of being—*being for self* in concert with like others. Sithole (2016) notes that “Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness, a formidable project in the face of oppression, has always been at the existential juncture that is informed by the politics of becoming” (p. 49). Indeed, Biko's writing itself was an act of his own becoming. As in Fanon's critique of Hegel's slave-master dialectic, Biko turned away from the object (the relegation to second-class status), and toward the oppressor and wrote in defiance under the pseudonym of Frank Talk. In this way, he became the author of his own subjectivity, partnering in solidarity with oppressed others (Sithole, 2016).

For Biko, writing was an onto-epistemological act and a relational one at that: “If the starting point of Biko's meditations demands for Blacks to come to themselves and to rid themselves of the inferiority complex – that is, reconfiguring ways of rehumanization—it is to institute another form of ontological relationality” (Sithole, 2016, p. 200). Juxtaposed against the militarization and industrialization of the West, Biko sought, through Black Consciousness, a way in which the African continent could make its own contribution by “...giving the world a more human face” (Biko, 2002/1978, p.47). Black Consciousness became, for him, a way of humanizing the world and giving blackness both subjectivity and meaning: “The lived experience of blackness and invariably that of black bodies, is the existential milieu that Black Consciousness has been struggling to bring into meaning” (Sithole, 2016, p. 63). As Sithole (2016) argues, the refusal to make Biko a martyr in his death allows Black Consciousness to live on in the project of decolonization and in the contesting of an anti-black world. To make Biko a martyr is to “depoliticize” him, but to let him live on allows for his ontological transformation

from object to subject. That is, Sithole argues, martyrdom is death and the end of ontology. To let Biko's Black Consciousness live on is an ontological act of resistance in itself: "Reengaging Biko's subjectivity from the decolonial turn means opening up the horizons of the politics of possibility in opposite to the eclipse of imagination" (p. 201).

The life of Steve Biko and his philosophy of Black Consciousness is nothing like the acquiescing slave in Hegel's dialectic—but it is an exemplar of the ontological and relational quality of critical consciousness as it is employed in social movements. Protest, like that of Steve Biko, is an ontological act—even in torture: As More (2015) notes: "Though beaten, handcuffed, bruised and pulverized, Biko refused to speak, refused to be broken. By refusing to be broken he reaffirmed the human—for us and for humanity" (p. 112). Imprisoned at Port Elizabeth in South Africa, Biko was tortured and eventually died of brain damage on September 12, 1977. More writes that the death of Biko and, in the narrative of Frederick Douglass, the death of Mr. Demby, "...ruptures the master/slave, oppressor/oppressed dialectic... This is because the master or oppressor is a master or oppressor only to the extent that there are beings who accede to servile or oppressive relationships" (p. 114). Although such relationships—apartheid in South Africa, and slavery in the United States—have been abolished by the law, Black solidarity movements continue to contest structural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical factors that perpetuate these oppressive conditions that constitute an existential threat to Black lives. Importantly, Biko's philosophy of Black Consciousness continues to live on in present day social movements. As Davis (2016b) notes, it is inspiring young activists across the diaspora articulating new demands for the recognition of Black humanity and full inclusion for Black LGBTQ and Black female bodies. With the rise of these movements, however, it is important to

address the implications for governance and the ways in which government actors may address the grievances of marginalized groups seeking to bring about substantive political change.

### **Implications for Governance and Conflict Resolution**

In this section, we address the implications for governance and the resolution of conflict between movement activists and state actors. Important to this project is understanding the ways in which Black resistance movements have contoured both the practice and the development of knowledge in the academic discipline of policy and public administration. First we summarize this history. Next, we present practical steps for government actors to respond to and interact with social movements grounded in Black Consciousness. Last, we address some of the limitations that may prevent improved relations between state actors and activists, as well as substantive policy changes from taking place.

### **Brief History of Political Interactions Between the State and Black Lived Experience**

Historically, in the United States, the academic disciplines of political science, public administration, and public policy have had a complicated and entangled past with issues of race and discrimination. From Reconstruction to Jim Crow to Hurricane Katrina, Witt (2006) provides a descriptive analysis of the ways in which the racial problems plaguing the nation have contoured the body of academic public administration literature yet strangely remained on the margins of the discipline with few scholars willing to engage in serious dialogue about race and oppression:

Public administration theory writers ought to heed how historic refusal to face race hysteria continues to shape the field, now more in the breach than directly: for race as either cause or effect, or as taken to be a phenomenological force defying nominalist attributions, has been relegated a bit part in the drama of democracy by public administration writers (p. 60).

Arguably, both public administration and public policy have been substantially informed by the interfacing of these disciplines via the US government's interaction with Black individuals, stretching back to the days of slavery. Real world issues, this is, outside of the academy, pertaining directly to the treatment and rights of African Americans, historically have informed scholarship and policy learning among elites in the areas of Reconstruction (Farmer-Kaiser, 2010), Civil Rights (McAdam, 1999/1982), urban redevelopment (Dahl, 2005/1961), black power, protest, and public housing (Lipsky, 1970), the implementation of economic development programs (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1970) and the treatment of Black women in past and contemporary American social policy (Hancock-Marie, 2004). Indeed, Pressman and Wildavsky's (1970) highly influential *Implementation* focused on the implementation of an Economic Development Administration program in the city of Oakland, CA—a city chosen partly due to the racial tension and the belief of local and national political officials that a massive scale riot in the city was imminent. These are just a few examples of the ways in which policy learning occurs as a result of the predicament black lives have found themselves in as a result of the institutions of slavery, Jim Crow, and other structural forms of oppression. As Witt (2006) predicted over a decade ago, the tensions in race relations during Hurricane Katrina and the unwillingness of public administration writers to seriously engage with the seemingly intractable racial problems of American society seems to have foreshadowed the current tensions in the second decade of this new millennium. As historian Taylor (2016) notes:

...paradoxically, at a moment when African Americans have achieved what no rational person could have imagined when the Civil War ended, we have simultaneously entered a new period of Black protest, Black radicalization, and the birth of the new Black Left. (p. 193)

As Davis (2005) argues, the Civil Rights movement produced many gains for African Americans but likewise rendered historically racialized and gendered bodies as abstract beings before the law. Dahl (1967) noted that in the Civil Rights era defacto segregation of African Americans, despite its unlawfulness, occurred because majority White politicians were able to denationalize racial conflict rendering issues of racial justice the problem of local and state governments. Such strategems occurred (1) in the 60 years following the Constitutional Convention, (2) in the decade following the Civil War (during Reconstruction), (3) during the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, following *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and (4) in effort to localize rather than nationalize Black civil rights and the issue of segregation:

In the first case, nationalizing the conflict led directly to civil war; in the second, to violence and federal troops, to Little Rock, Freedom Riders, murders in Mississippi, demonstrations, Selma, and passage of Civil Rights Acts in 1957, 1960, 1964 and 1965. (Dahl, 1967, p. 182)

Yet the nationalization of racial conflict, and thus the immanent nature of racial progress, at least legal racial progress, was inevitable. Schattschneider's (1960) analysis of the privatization and socialization of conflict remains helpful: "...conflicts are won or lost by the success that the contestants have in getting the audience involved in the fight or excluding it..." (p. 4). Thus those in control of the involvement or exclusion of certain actors ("the audience") or the voting population are frequently able to control the outcome of the conflict. To privatize it is to keep the audience at a minimum, to socialize it is to involve the public and leverage one's allies on a larger playing field. Dahl (1967) recognized that this strategy, at least in part, enabled the disenfranchisement and oppression of African Americans for centuries. Arguably, however, the rise of the Black International, beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with Garveyism, assisted Black Americans in the long struggle to secure their civil rights despite efforts of White politicians to forestall racial progress. Likewise, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many black activists around the

world stood in solidarity with Black people in South Africa who were contesting the violent crimes of the apartheid state.

The potential rise of the new Black Left, the social movements around the world, and solidarity between them—from Palestine to Ferguson to Johannesburg—articulate a similar, but updated, version of Black Consciousness and protest (see: Davis, 2016a; Taylor, 2016). Like Biko and Douglass and Fanon (and the countless iconic Black female activists who also fought for racial progress) contrary to Hegel's slave, it is unlikely that these new activists will passively accept the conditions of oppression they perceive are plaguing Black life. As revealed in the previous section, Black Consciousness is both intra- and inter-personal, it is relational, and it considers protest as a form of ontology, or onto-epistemology, as individuals and contest their lived experience of oppression and seek redress from the state.

### **Implications for Governance**

What is the state to do? Although peaceful protest is the ideal and the willingness on the part of men like Steve Biko or Frederick Douglass to engage in a physical struggle for freedom does not itself constitute a desire for violence, violent clashes, such as those in Ferguson, Palestine, and Johannesburg at the University of Wits, often occur when the protest of oppressed populations is met with militarized force by dominant groups. In addition to tactical ways to de-escalate conflict, it is imperative that front line bureaucracies (and scholar-practitioners who may work with local governments as these encounters with protesters unfold) learn to engage in practices that foster responsive government and substantive democratic progress. Ways of governing and ruling, as well as the public spaces in which conflict is socialized, possess their own ontologies (Stivers, 2008). If communication and conflict resolution is to be had, it is critical that the ontology of governance practices match the ontology of social movements. That

is, just as critical consciousness, or Biko's Black Consciousness, is both relational and an onto-epistemological project, government might do well to respond with ways of governing that are grounded in similar ontological assumptions—that is, by privileging and advocating for participatory democracy. In practice, this means matching and responding to the ontological nature of social protest by governing in ways that are both relational and responsive.

Using an interpretive lens to interact with solidarity movements might mean drawing on themes of intentionality, historicity, and reflexivity (see: Bevir, 2013/2011). This means focusing on the “centrality of meanings” as a response to the existential threat perceived by protesters, seeing them as racialized and gendered bodies that have been rendered abstract by the law and thus need to have their humanity recognized, and engaging in dialogic encounters with different others that engender reflection by both parties (Bevir, 2013/2011, pp. 52-53). These interpretive practices do not just belong to the academic researcher but, rather, these practices can and should be taught to government actors as a means of interacting with diverse others in public spaces.

Most important is that government actors translate theory into practice. In her *Lectures on Liberation*, Davis (see Davis & Douglass, 2010) notes that “Western society, and particularly the era of the rule of the bourgeoisie, has been characterized by the gap between theory and practice, particularly between freedom as it is developed conceptually and the lack of freedom in the real world” (p. 69). The goal of 21<sup>st</sup> Century governance, if it is to implement lessons learned from Steve Biko, must be to bridge that gap and begin to fill the void of freedom in the lives of the marginalized. There are five practices that government actors can implement immediately. They are commitments to (1) personal, organizational, and institutional change, (2) honoring

difference without striving for its erasure, (3) the institutionalization of epistemic justice, (4) power sharing, and, (5) a refusal to engage in practices grounded in bad faith.

Peterson (2011) acknowledges four qualities of decision-making in contemporary governance that are applicable here. Decisions must be suitable to the particular context and severity of the problem, robust in the face of uncertainty, innovative enough to counter the tendencies toward bureaucratic routinization, and (4) aptly normative, that is, value-based decisions that bring about substantive improvements for Black lives. Thus, to commit to personal, organizational, and institutional change—transformative change—in ways that bring freedom to the marginalized, one must commit to decision-making that addresses the gap between freedom in theory and freedom in practice. This means concrete, normative change.

Secondly, government actors must resist “the tyranny of universalism” that renders difference into sameness and refuses to acknowledge the value of diversity and particularity. Such are the dangers of liberalism and an overemphasis on equality, which often, even if tacitly, encourage assimilation and sameness rather than heterogeneity. It was for this reason that Steve Biko rejected what he felt was the tokenism of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), arguing “What we want is not black visibility but real black participation” (Biko, 1978, p. 5). That is, efforts at liberation for Blacks ought not to end with platitudes on paper about equality and freedom, or the presence of a couple of Black people on the frontlines, but such a commitment must espouse a true commitment to substantive democracy and policy changes.

This also means that government actors must push for authentic change and a commitment to working with members of minority groups by first eschewing what Fricker (2007) refers to as epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice occurs when marginalized groups

experience testimonial injustice, that is, when their voices are not taken seriously by dominant groups and individuals are objectified rather than treated as human subjects: “It demotes the speaker from informant to source of information, from subject to object” and denies them the recognition and legitimacy that stems from being participants in an epistemic community, from creating and sharing knowledge. Hermeneutical injustice, on the other hand, occurs when marginalized groups are denied participation in social practices of meaning-making that aid in helping communities of individuals to make sense of their experiences. The result, then, is a form of structural alienation through the inability to participate or take part in social and political practices.

This results in either of two ways Butler (2004) identified as resulting in marginalization from the public sphere: “...one operates through producing a symbolic identification of the face [of the marginalized] with the inhuman, foreclosing our apprehension of the human in the [public] scene; the other works through a radical effacement, so that there never was a human, there never was a life, and no murder has, therefore taken place” (p. 147). Modern governance can render minority groups inhuman when they appear in public spaces or they can outright deny their existence on an ontological level. To honor difference then is to acknowledge the full humanity and the bodily existence of groups who may otherwise be occluded from appearing and participating in public life.

Full epistemic inclusion warrants substantive power sharing spatially as well as conceptually. That is, government actors must allow marginalized bodies the ability to not just appear in public spaces but to hold space as fully human actors. This means a refusal to engage in practices grounded in bad faith. To deny both one’s humanity and the ability to appear in public spaces that allow individuals to make claims on the state is to ontologically obliterate an

individual or group of individuals. It is to objectify and to deny the consciousness of the other. When government actors refuse governance based on bad faith, they allow for the humanity of the other. Similarly they understand that space must be made for resistance movements to articulate their demands to be heard and acknowledged, for full hermeneutical inclusion, in the social and political practices that give meaning to one's life.

### **The Trap of Pluralism**

One of Steve Biko's harshest criticisms of the South African apartheid state was that the oppression of Black people was carried out under the guise of the liberal doctrine of pluralism. According to Biko, integration and assimilation, the advocacy of a non-racial society by would-be reformists, gave way to a power dynamic in which Whites dictated the political direction of South Africa and Blacks took on the role of the pupil in the face of the White master. The Black consciousness movement rejected this kind of cosmetic pluralism. To Biko (1978):

At the heart of true integration is the provision for each man, each group to rise and attain the envisioned self. Each group must be able to attain its style of existence without encroaching on or being thwarted by another. Out of this mutual respect for each other and complete freedom of self-determination there will obviously arise a genuine fusion of the life-styles of various groups. This is true integration. (p. 21)

True integration in the spirit of Biko goes hand in hand with resisting universalism. The pressures of global capitalism and new governance style reforms promoted by the World Bank and IMF, particularly in the development world, may exacerbate the limitations to promoting Biko's legacy. True integration may be difficult as diverse groups of actors are folded into mainstream society. For example, the imposition and standardization of Western values by transnational entities, NGOs and the like, as requirements for development aid, may encourage cosmetic rather than substantive democratic reforms among non-Western nations experiencing ethnic and other forms of group conflict. As such, it is in the hands of government actors to

ensure, in Biko's words, that pluralist doctrine, if it is to be used at all, instill substantive reforms allowing for minority group members a clear path toward the attainment of "the envisioned self."

### Conclusion

As new social movements, grounded in notions of critical consciousness, emerge around the globe, it is important for public administration professionals to have a better grasp of what critical consciousness is and how it functions within solidarity movements such as Steve Biko's Black Consciousness. From #feesmustfall to #blacklivesmatter—from Ferguson to Palestine to Johannesburg—protestors are contesting what they perceive to be unjust policies of the state and in so doing are articulating new ways of being. These movements are the embodiment of the politics of becoming. They resist the passivity of the slave in the tradition of the Hegelian dialectic and continue to carry Biko's torch of resistance. In fighting for their liberation they transcend the fear of death. As their demands for state redress are not likely to abate, it is imperative for government actors to respond to protest in ways that promote conflict resolution and reciprocity. Doing so necessitates an understanding of the ways in which critical consciousness functions within these social movements, a willingness to view these moments through a critical, interpretive lens, and a commitment to translating theory to practice. Above all, cosmetic pluralism must be supplanted by substantive democratic participation so as to continue Biko's legacy of bringing more humanity to the world around us.

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