

THE UNIVERSITY IN THE GENESIS OF BLACK CONSCIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction

The Black Conscience Movement in South Africa is inscribed with a special stamp in the long itinerary of the South African people's struggle against the *apartheid* regime, as one of the great unifying processes of the forces that opposed the philosophy and practice of separate development in the Austral country during the seventies, and the main one emerging within the university campus. This movement is generated from the intellectual experience of black university students who, anchored in the philosophy of a pan-black thought influenced by various exponents of pan-African thought, undertook the task of recreating these ideological springs in the *apartheid* scene with the aim of contributing to the total liberation of blacks in South Africa, in a context in which the main currents of the anti-*apartheid* movement had been inhibited as a result of government repression.

The present work is aimed at answering some questions that arise in the way of research on the causes of the origin of Black Consciousness within the university campus. In historical and social processes we are used to pointing out the multi-causality of the events of history and in the case that concerns us we cannot speak of an exception. The emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa is marked by a multiplicity of variables in which the structural phenomena of Mandela's country are intertwined with certain circumstantial processes associated with the lives of black university students in South Africa, which sowed the germ of political unrest, with the aim of changing their society, starting from the internal life of the Universities. These young people were sensitized by the intellectual development

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of blacks on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean with all its charge of liberation and opposition to white hegemony, which marked the evolution of black ideologies throughout the 20th century. At the same time, they found themselves in a context of oppression and segregation that cloistered the desire for fulfillment of those young people moved by that counter-hegemonic and rebellious thinking.

The ideological resonances of the American black movement and the decolonization processes in the African continent are frequently referred to as a fundamental reference in the emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa. The movement's founding leader himself occasionally draws on the black thinking of some of these figures who impacted black philosophy and thought on three continents. In this author's consideration, these two fundamental aspects of black thought and movements in the American continent must be evaluated, but without detaching it from the process of decolonization in Africa. Steve Biko himself stated:

The development of consciousness among South African blacks has often been attributed to the influence of the American 'black' movement. But it seems to me that this is a consequence of the conquest of independence that many African states have achieved in a short time (Biko 1989, 54, own translation)².

However, the development of Steve Biko himself is a result of the evolution of that black thought that has been influenced by many personalities from the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American world. The existence of certain parallels in the history of black people in America and in Africa cannot be denied, as in the case of the North American movement to fight for civil rights and the concomitant processes of blacks in Africa. Biko cites in his article "White racism and black conscience" a fragment of Aimé Césaire when he resigned from the French Communist Party and reflected the problems of the peculiarity of the history and culture of a people, then the South African leader argued: "Almost at the same time that Césaire said this, a group of angry young black men was emerging in South Africa who were beginning to

2 "El desarrollo de la conciencia entre los negros sudafricanos ha sido a menudo atribuido a la influencia del movimiento 'negro' americano. Pero a mí me parece que esta es una consecuencia de la conquista de la independencia que muchos Estados africanos han logrado en corto tiempo".

‘grasp the notion of their peculiar uniqueness’ and who were eager to define what and who they were” (Biko 1989, 51-52, own translation)³.

Those tools were the ones that that generation of South African black students projected within the scenario of the southern country, where, in addition, black people made up most of the population, in a difficult context of repression in which the maturation of that black consciousness occurred, within that black university vanguard that gave a very broad dimension to their movement, paradoxically from that pan-black conception. In this direction, Biko resorted to the thought of another great Afro-Antillean who permeated the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, in this case Frantz Fanon, when he expressed:

As stated by Fanon *apud* Biko:

The consciousness of being is not closing a door to communication ... the national consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension. This is a sign of encouragement, because there is no doubt that the black-white power struggle in South Africa is but a microcosm of the global confrontation between the Third World and the wealthy white nations of the world that manifests itself in a more real way as the years go by (Biko 1989, 57, own translation)⁴.

There is a direct or indirect intertwining between those two processes in the contemporary history of the black, the Africa that decolonizes and the black America that fights for its rights, in which personalities from the Afro-Caribbean and Afro-American world stood out, based on the libertarian goals of African nations. In the particular case of South Africa, due to the delicate situation between black and white, and *apartheid* that was manifesting itself against the current in the midst of the African decolonization process, these ideas had fertile ground for their development, which would materialize in a movement born within the university walls.

3 “Casi al mismo tiempo que Césaire dijera esto, emergía en Sudáfrica un grupo de jóvenes negros coléricos que empezaban a ‘captar la noción de su unicidad peculiar’ y quienes estaban ansiosos de definir qué y quiénes eran”.

4 “La conciencia del ser no es cerrar una puerta a la comunicación...la conciencia nacional, que no es nacionalismo, es la única cosa que nos dará una dimensión internacional. Este es un signo de aliento, porque no hay duda que la lucha de poder blanco-negro en Sudáfrica no es sino un microcosmos del enfrentamiento global entre el Tercer Mundo y las naciones blancas ricas del mundo que se manifiesta de una manera más real a medida que transcurren los años”.

The historical context

Since 1948, South Africa was governed by the Nationalist Party that brought the *apartheid* ideology to fruition, once a previous stage of strengthening the identity contours of conservative white ideologies had been established, mainly that coming from the Afrikaner colonato. *Apartheid* began to develop a government program based on the separation of the entire South African social fabric based on an ethno-racial criterion. This is reflected in a powerful legal and institutional body designed to materialize the government's proposal, whose laws were aimed at segregating all settings of social and private life, including privacy, but in the most advantageous way for the white community.

In the sixties of the last century the different movements of the interracial struggle had been inhibited in their fight against the *apartheid*, as a result of the hardening of the repressive policies of the South African government. The previous decade had represented a historical turning point in relation to the organization of the different tendencies and parties that gathered around the common objective of achieving the dismantling of the perfidious regime. The Alliance of Congresses had been one of the most transcendent results with a cluster of organizations that were radicalized in the heat of their confrontation with the *apartheid*, highlighting the leadership of Nelson Mandela and shaping the prominence of the African National Congress (ANC) in the course of events⁵.

In the 1950s there was a trend towards the unification of all the organizations opposed to *apartheid*, based on a model of peaceful struggle, but with a trend towards violence, directly related to the repressive response of the government. This process of unity crystallized in the summer of 1955 in the famous People's Congress, as expressed by Professor Reinaldo Sánchez Porro: "The important gathering was the culmination of a year-long campaign in which the members of the Congress Alliance went house to house throughout South Africa, collecting the demands of the people for a free South Africa" (Sánchez Porro 2016, 274, own translation)⁶. In this conclave the historic Freedom Charter was proclaimed, which proposed the solution of the national and class problem in South Africa based on the equality of

5 This Alliance was made up, in addition to the ANC, by the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the Congress of Democrats (COD) of the whites who opposed *apartheid* and the Coloured People's Organisation, later (CPO).

6 "La importante reunión fue la culminación de una campaña de un año en la que los miembros de la Alianza de los Congresos fueron casa por casa por toda Sudáfrica, recogiendo las peticiones del pueblo en función de lograr una Sudáfrica libre"

all its children, and after proclaiming all the rights seized from the South African people, it culminated by stating that: “For these freedoms we will fight, shoulder to shoulder, throughout our lives, until we have conquered our freedom” (Entralgo 1979, 476, own translation)⁷.

The racist regime did not take long to project its plans to stop the rise of the anti-*apartheid* movement trying to divide the people through the Bantustans, which began to be applied in the following decade, articulating this policy with the strengthening of repressive mechanisms and the consolidation of the *apartheid* institutions⁸. By the 1960s, *apartheid* had touched very sensitive fibers in society such as the educational sector. We must take a parenthesis here because it directly interconnects with the emergence in the late 1960s of the Black Consciousness Movement. The first five years of this decade had not been very happy for the organizations that opposed apartheid, after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, due to the demonstration promoted by the Pan-African Congress to oppose the law that restricted the movement of South Africans within their own land⁹. The ANC opted, after a long debate, for armed struggle and the training of many of its leaders abroad. But between 1963 and 1964 the ANC leadership faced the Rivonia trial as a result of the regime’s persecution and eventually sentenced to life imprisonment, others captured were sentenced to long sentences and others had to leave South Africa to avoid capture. Therefore, the second half of the

7 “Por estas libertades lucharemos, hombro a hombro, durante nuestras vidas, hasta que hayamos conquistado nuestra libertad”

8 The Bantustans were a project of the South African regime, which took shape since the 1950s to fragment the majority black population on the basis of a criterion of tribal division. These tribal “ghettos” were projected by the Tomlinson Report of 1955 whose objective was the promotion of these homelands with a retribalizing purpose. In the end, that majority of the population was cloistered in 13% of the country’s land, by the way, in the least useful lands. Over time some of those Bantustans formed autonomous governments, governmental entelechies that depended on the entire South African structure and infrastructure, such as the Transkei corresponding to the Xhosa ethnic group, Ciskei also Xhosa, Kwazulu, Lebowa of the North Sothos, Gazankulu of the Tsonga, Vhavenda, and Bophuthatswana of the Tswana. Later, these Bantustans had to face an important group of labor problems and problems related to overcrowding, as a result of the government’s act of dispossession of that population expelled from their places of origin to those reserves.

9 The Sharpeville Massacre was a sad event in South African and *apartheid* history that filled the hands of the South African regime with blood. These events took place in March 1960 as a result of a demonstration organized by the Pan-African Congress to publicly burn their passes, opposing the pass laws enacted by *apartheid* to control the movement of the majority of the South African population. The event raised a great wave of rejection around the world against *apartheid*. These events led to a revision of the ANC’s philosophy of struggle to oppose *apartheid*, hitherto anchored within the limits of a peaceful struggle. But after Sharpeville there was a process of radicalization of the ANC that was reflected in the creation of its armed wing, the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* or Spear of the Nation.

sixties passed as a period of transition and rethinking of the social movements that faced the South African regime.

The problem of Bantu education

The Black Conscience, which emerged between university walls, was a new platform for the relaunch of the project of liberation of the South African people, but taking as a reference other ideological sources that disconnected with the philosophy and practice of interracial struggle. The government had tried to exorcise the dangerous potential of the education and training of these people, through Hendrik Verwoerd and his model of Bantu education. Even before *apartheid*, black people did not have a training that matched that of white, due to the structural reasons of South African society, conceived so that non-whites were immediately integrated into the labor world of the worker in the mines and the farms and the domestic service of the whites. In this sense, it is not idle to refer to certain parallels and resonances with North American society since the last decades of the 19th century after the Civil War, when the South began to guide the education of the black according to their industrial interests, a process that acquired certain relevance in the voice of a black man like Booker T. Washington, who gained some support from his region and also important detractors like William Du Bois, who opposed the instrumental education based on the industrial world promoted by Booker T. Washington, and Tuskegee¹⁰ Institute-style educational segregation. Washington opposed the maximum elevation of the cultural level of blacks, as reflected by Du Bois most explicitly:

Mr. Washington clearly calls for Black people to relinquish, at least for the moment, first, political power; second, to the insistence on civil rights; and third to higher education for black youth, in order to concentrate all their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth and the reconciliation of the South (Du Bois 2001, 56, own translation)¹¹.

¹⁰ The Tuskegee Institute is an educational institution that emerged in the United States in the late nineteenth century, in Alabama, which represented the principles of educational segregation in relation to the black who later recreated *apartheid* in South African educational institutions.

¹¹ “El señor Washington pide claramente que el pueblo negro renuncie, al menos por el momento, primero, al poder político; segundo, a la insistencia en los derechos civiles; y tercero a la educación superior para la juventud negra, con el fin de concentrar todas sus energías en la educación industrial, la acumulación de riquezas y la conciliación del Sur”.

Like southern interests in the United States, the *apartheid* regime sought to control black education in a more efficient way, this did not exclude plans oriented towards higher education. The architect of that policy was the Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Verwoerd, who would later become President of the Republic. The centralizing policy of the regime was essentially aimed at creating an institutional framework that would support the legal tools approved by the government and that would control education, curricula, teachers and everything related to the formation of black people and non-whites in a more general sense. There is a staggering and hardening of this policy, first projected towards general education, which of course has a noticeable impact on higher education. In *Educación bantú: Política para el futuro inmediato* the projection of the government is reflected, in the words of Verwoerd himself:

The policy of the Department is that Bantu education must be based on the Reserves and have its own objectives according to the spirit and what Bantu society represents... There is no place for it in the European community outside of certain limits and some forms work... For this reason you are not allowed to receive any training that results in your absorption by the European community (Tabata 1980, 38, own translation)¹².

By the 1950s, education already had the mark of segregation, but the new centralizing effort of the government was articulated with the projects of Bantustanization of social life, whose paroxysm was the creation of the Bantustans, to which we referred above. The policy of strengthening educational segregation was intended to prevent a dangerous social mobility of blacks, and the circulation of progressive and advanced ideas in function of their liberation, as expressed in all contemporary black thought. The new institutional framework was accompanied by the respective reduction of funds for education in black schools, beyond being a public education supported by the South African State, there was a tendency and decision of the government to gradually eliminate financial support from the State for Bantu education, which should be sustained from now on, according to the government projection, with the resources from taxes on that population.

¹² “La política del Departamento es que la educación bantú debe de estar en función de las Reservas y tener sus propios objetivos de acuerdo al espíritu y lo que representa la sociedad Bantú...No existe lugar para esta en la comunidad europea fuera de ciertos límites y algunas formas de trabajo...Por esta razón no se le permite recibir ningún entrenamiento cuyo resultado sea su absorción por la comunidad europea”.

The birth of the Black Consciousness, therefore, is founded on the demolition and the fracture of the barriers interposed by the government for the education of the South African black people, a policy that was based on two essential principles, the structural phenomena that contradicted the legitimate formation from black to university level and the institutional tools developed by *apartheid*, mainly from the 1950s, with the aim of achieving social, educational segregation and the total inferiority of black, mixed and native peoples in the South African social fabric.

This progression towards segregated education was concretely reflected in the passage in 1953 of the Bantu Education Law, which created a department oriented to these objectives¹³. This legislative process would be completed in the 1960s with the laws that regulated the formation of mixed and natives in 1963 and 1965, respectively. Of course, these institutions marked the line of a censored educational policy towards teachers and publications for the training of students, conditioning the new texts that should be placed in the hands of the students.

As early as 1948, when *apartheid* was recently created, President Daniel François Malan expressed himself in favor of a segregated higher education as he posed in the following terms:

13 This law placed under the direct administration of the state, through the Ministry of Bantu Affairs, the educational institutions of the country, and therefore under the principles of segregation promoted by the government. Previously, it was very complex for the government to have control over all these institutions because they were under the control of the provincial governments and their laws, as well as ecclesiastical and private institutions. With the Bantu education law, control of the schools was transferred to the Department of Native Affairs, removing them from the administration of the provincial authorities, while private institutions could choose between transferring their institutions to the department or keeping them private, but abiding by all instructions of the department related to the admission of students, teachers, the means of instruction etc. The main decisions regarding school subjects began to be taken from government agencies where the presence of blacks, mixed and Asians was practically nil.

An intolerable situation has developed here in recent years in our university institutions, a situation that has led to certain frictions, due to the annoying relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans... We do not want to stop higher education for non-Europeans and we will take all necessary measures to guarantee to the native and mixed peoples the university improvement as much as we can, but in their own sphere; in other words, in separate institutions (UNESCO 1967, 83-84, own translation)¹⁴.

Segregation and South African Universities

In the 1950s, the government had already created a commission to study the possibility of implementing segregationist measures in university education. The Holloway Commission had not issued a favorable report towards *apartheid* in Universities, among other reasons, for logistical reasons and the existing infrastructure. Despite this report, the South African regime forced towards a university bantustanization, which affected the few universities that did not use an ethno-racial criterion for the enrollment of their students. A member of the Commission synthesized in 1957 the centralizing effort of the regime:

[...] The purpose of such legislation is to deviate from the old university tradition that had been maintained throughout the history of the Universities in South Africa, the tradition by which they themselves, and not an external authority, determined the conditions of admission in their classrooms (UNESCO 1967, 83, own translation)¹⁵.

Professor Malherbe interpreted these events, no longer from a perspective of the social consequences of said process, but from the evident reduction of the institutional autonomy of the high houses of studies in

14 “Una situación intolerable se ha desarrollado aquí durante los últimos años en nuestras instituciones universitarias, una situación que ha conducido a determinadas fricciones, debido a la molesta relación entre los europeos y no europeos... Nosotros no queremos detener la educación superior para los no europeos y tomaremos todas las medidas necesarias para garantizarles a los pueblos nativos y mestizos la superación universitaria tanto como podamos, pero en su propia esfera; en otras palabras, en instituciones separadas”.

15 “[...] el propósito de dicha legislación es la desviación de la vieja tradición universitaria que se había mantenido a lo largo de la historia de las Universidades en Sudáfrica, la tradición mediante la cual, ellas mismas, y no una autoridad externa, determinaba las condiciones de admisión en sus aulas”.

the Austral country. Since before the approval of the University Education Extension Law, certain extracurricular activities such as residence, sports or recreational activities had been segregated in the so-called open universities, even in the University of Natal they accepted non-whites, but in classrooms different from those of whites, with some exception when it came to post-graduate courses. When the Extension Act was passed in 1959, the South African government's intentions were toward university Bantustanization. The result of this policy was that universities began to accept students of an ethnic group or race, for example, the University of Durban was destined for the population of native origin, the University of the Western Cape for mixed, the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Natal for Africans, mixed and natives. On the other hand, the University College of Fort Hare was reserved for the Africans of the Xhosa ethnic group, the University of Ngoye for the Zulu and the Swazi, the University College of the North was oriented for the formation of the Sotho, the Bendoa and the Sanga.

This had a noticeable impact on the higher education of the majority of the South African people, the non-whites:

In 1983 the four English-speaking Universities (Cape Town, Witwatersrand, Natal and Rhodes) had 14% black students. But both the five Afrikaans universities – Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch, Pretoria and Bloemfontein (University of Orange Free State) – and Port Elizabeth's bilingual (English/Afrikaans) had just 1% black students. (Tazón (s/a), 79, own translation)¹⁶.

Here it can be perfectly visualized that the regime's legislation had a deeper impact on Afrikaans universities than on English-speaking ones, a situation that is perfectly understood knowing that the Afrikaans people and nationalism were the hard core in the creation and development of the spawn of *apartheid* through its Nationalist Party. Some English-speaking universities, especially those in Cape Town and the Witwatersrand, and even Natal's were called open universities, which resulted in the acceptance of students of different ethnic origins. But this onerous consequence, as referred to above, is not the exclusive result of the regime's legislation but of the structural and social conditions of the heterogeneous South African people, whose majority was anchored in a condition of inferiority imposed by the

¹⁶ "En 1983 las cuatro Universidades angloparlantes (Ciudad del Cabo, Witwatersrand, Natal y Rhodes) tenían un 14% de alumnos negros. Pero tanto las cinco universidades en afrikaans – Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), Potchefstroom, Stellenbosch, Pretoria y Bloemfontein (University of Orange Free State) – como la bilingüe (inglés/afrikaans) de Port Elizabeth tenían apenas un 1% de alumnos negros".

ruling white minority. This subaltern situation inhibited the opportunities for improvement of the black, but also of the mixed and natives from elementary education, an educational balance that is projected towards higher education in the percentages set out above. English-speaking universities, although with a less fundamentalist stance, were also hit with a significant reduction in their non-white student body.

Therefore, we can say that there were conditions that favored the gestation of the Black Consciousness Movement, within the university campuses. The new movement that emerged at the end of the sixties would become the great ideological boomerang of the educational policy of the *apartheid* regime, articulated with the other variables related to the national problem in South Africa, the intense repression of the anti-*apartheid* movement, as well as the international context of the decolonizations and the struggles for the civil rights of the forgotten peoples in the world, at the end of the decade of the sixties. But as can be seen, there were spaces for interracial communication mainly in the so-called open universities and through student organizations and it will precisely be in those interstices of interracial student convergence, where the germ of Black Consciousness was born, since the black student body could experience more easily double discrimination, inside and outside university spaces. In spite of everything, there was a group of young people who broke down the obstacles of Bantu education and were trained in universities, even if they were segregated university institutions.

The sixties, the black student movement and the birth of Black Consciousness

In the 1960s the main student organization was the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), and there had long been an ideological debate among black students about black membership in that organization. Some were in favor of joining the student body, while another group of detractors saw this institution as part of the South African regime. The truth was that it represented the so-called “open” organizations but with a predominantly white criteria and analysis of events, taking into account the composition and the debates that took place there. As Barush Hirson puts it:

During the 1960s, black students campaigned for the right to join the National Union of South African Students (...) NUSAS was also excited to welcome their colleagues into their ranks (...) there were always voices that opposed it, expressing that NUSAS was part of White Imperialism. The United Movement of Non-Europeans always took that point of view, between 1954 and 1957 it was oriented towards the support of the students in Fort Hare for their disaffiliation from NUSAS (Hirson 1979, 65, own translation)¹⁷.

NUSAS had been criticized from both extreme positions, also many members of the government questioned it for its open nature and its liberal stance. However, in the sixties it had not lost its leading role within the student body, including the black students who made it up, but with the aforementioned characteristics of the predominance of white discourse in the organization. White students did not experience double segregation, in and out of school, as was part of the daily life of non-white students. On the other hand, since the 1960s, students had seen their inter-student contacts reduced by the government's policy of centralization and segregation. We are talking about young people who were born or raised under the conceptions of *apartheid*, and in full development and hardening of their segregationist positions. The black students, therefore, had a group of concerns, in light of the repression deployed by *apartheid*, which went beyond the liberal demands of their white colleagues, who did not suffer this situation in their own flesh. In that direction, it was a matter of time before black students created an alternative organization that was capable of recreating all those claims and concerns of the black student body.

In 1967, the University Christian Movement (UCM) was formed, an organization that contributed to increasing synergy and communication among black university students, unlike NUSAS, which was a predominantly white organization. As Steve Biko himself put it shortly after:

¹⁷ “Durante los años sesenta los estudiantes negros hacían campaña por el derecho de afiliarse a la Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Sudáfrica (...) NUSAS también estaba entusiasmado por darle la bienvenida a sus colegas en sus filas (...) siempre había voces que se oponían expresando que NUSAS era parte del Imperialismo blanco. El Movimiento Unido de los no europeos siempre adoptó ese punto de vista, entre 1954 y 1957 se orientó hacia el apoyo de los estudiantes en Fort Hare para su desafiliación de NUSAS”.

The fact that within a year and a half of its existence the UCM had a black majority in its sessions is significant. Hence, with the constant practice of bringing the students of the universities together, the dialogue between the black students began again (Biko 1989, 131, own translation)¹⁸.

The University Christian Movement would be a laboratory for debates on the problems of black students, which would later be transferred to the future South African Students' Organization (SASO), made up exclusively of black students, which became the launching pad for South African society of the Black Consciousness Movement, under the leadership of Steve Biko and other university students. NUSAS had been inhibited from its previous activism as a result of the repression of the regime and had become an essentially passive organization complicit in the dictates of the segregation promoted by *apartheid*. The point of no return that motivated a group of black students to create SASO was the well-known NUSAS congress at Rhodes University where black participants were, once again, segregated: "[...] the university authorities prohibited African student delegates from staying in the residences (...) The African delegates had to sleep in a nearby church in an African neighborhood and eat separately from their white companions" (Vizikhungo, Maaba y Biko 2006, III, own translation)¹⁹.

But in addition to these symbolic gestures, a group of black student delegates from the conference realized the predominance of a hegemonically white discourse within this organization, which made them understand that to change the situation it would have to be through other means. This had its greatest crisis peak at the 1968 University Christian Movement Conference, which was interrupted because it took place in the white city of Stutterheim, where blacks could not stay longer than 72 hours. Steve Biko wanted to use the University Christian Movement conference to channel his idea around an exclusively black organization, using a scenario where the majority of the delegates were black, the Christian Movement had mainly taken hold in black universities and had contributed to the reconstruction of the interuniversity dialogue between these students. After the event of breaking the course of the conference by the 72-hour law in a white city, the irreconcilable divide between black and white students and their determination became much

18 "El hecho de que dentro de un año y medio de su existencia el MCU tuviera una mayoría negra en sus sesiones es significativo. De ahí que con la constante práctica de reunir a los estudiantes de las universidades empezara el diálogo entre los estudiantes negros otra vez".

19 "[...] las autoridades universitarias prohibieron a los estudiantes africanos delegados permanecer en las residencias (...) Los delegados africanos tuvieron que dormir en un local de una iglesia cercana en un barrio africano y comer separados de sus compañeros blancos".

clearer to Biko, along with other colleagues such as Barney Pitso and Moloto to develop the idea of a new organization, this was the turning point. As Xolela Mangcu says: “For Steve that outrage confirmed the absurdity of interracial organizations between black and white students, and reaffirmed his call for a new exclusively black organization” (Mangcu 2014, 158, own translation)²⁰.

The founding or launching moment of the new student organization occurred at Steve Biko’s old school in Mariannhill, near Durban, in December 1968. The meeting in Mariannhill, with a few dozen colleagues present, decided the creation of the new organization under the name of South African Students’ Organization (SASO). An inaugural conference was organized and held in Turfloop in July 1969. With all those preceding events there was evidence of a fracture in the discourse and practice of organizations like NUSAS with the more legitimate interests of black students on and off the university campus: “It was now evident to Biko that black interests would never be adequately defended or promoted by white-led organizations such as NUSAS where most were satisfied with simple moral statements” (Karis, Gerhart 1997, 95, own translation)²¹.

Black students thought that activism within university organizations would be an adequate mechanism to respond to their concerns as a segregated South African people, but there were already many signs that this was not going to take place within the framework of a traditional liberal entity like NUSAS, which also was not in its moments of greatest activism due to the repression of the South African regime and the suspicion that the government felt towards that student body. It is in this scenario that the vanguard of the black student body decided to pursue its own path outside the white student hegemony. In this way Steve Biko, without intending to, became the most visible figure of the emerging movement, as Donald Woods put it: “[...] the main founder and inspiration of the Black Consciousness, which was directed in itself to prepare the young black man for a new phase of his liberation” (Woods 2017, 43, own translation)²².

20 “Para Steve esa indignación le confirmaba el absurdo de las organizaciones interraciales entre estudiantes blancos y negros, y reafirmó su llamado por una nueva organización exclusivamente negra”.

21 “Ahora era evidente para Biko que los intereses negros nunca serían adecuadamente defendidos o promovidos por organizaciones dirigidas por blancos como era el caso de NUSAS donde la mayoría estaban satisfechos con simples declaraciones morales”.

22 “[...] el principal fundador e inspiración de la Conciencia Negra, que estaba dirigida en sí misma a preparar al joven negro para una nueva fase de su liberación”.

Conclusion

For all the above, it can be seen that at the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, variables associated with the social structures created and consolidated by *apartheid* in the Austral country are intertwined with circumstantial phenomena of a generation of young university students trained within the separate development context, reaching a university education that allowed them to be in contact with black thought, and at the same time put that liberating philosophy in function of the national problem in South Africa.

Throughout the process, problems related to student life were articulated that put the mirror of segregation in front of the eyes of black students, mainly that university vanguard, which, anchored in a solid pan-black ideological platform, decided to embark on the exercise of making the way with the creation of SASO, the main launching scheme for Black Consciousness in South Africa.

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ABSTRACT

The origin of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa is related to the events that occurred within South African universities, especially the situation of black students. Situation that is perfectly articulated with the segregationist structures deepened by the *apartheid* regime in South Africa since 1948. In this sense, certain questions are formulated that come to light in the investigative process, mainly about that relationship that favored the origin of the notorious movement. To try to respond to this phenomenon, proposed variables and an analytical and historical-logical methodology were handled, the intention of which is to demonstrate the impact of the evolution of Bantu education and the importation into the educational sector of the segregationist proposals that created very unequal conditions for the advancement of students, based on their ethno-racial origin, as part of the Bantustanization strategy of *apartheid*. In this direction, a group of students was formed, who by the sixties had been born or raised with *apartheid* and who were doubly segregated inside and outside the University, but also influenced by the African decolonization process, the repression of the regime in the sixties and the social movements that took place internationally. To conclude that all those external and internal, structural and circumstantial conditions led to the birth of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, with a relatively new ideological platform in the South African scene of struggle.

KEYWORDS:

Conscience. Black consciousness. *Apartheid*. University campus. Black people.

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