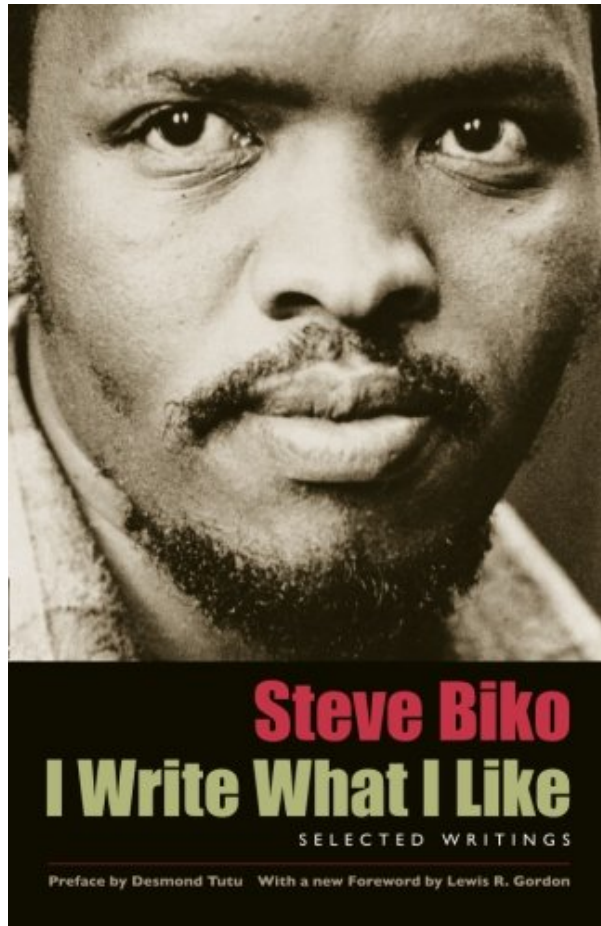
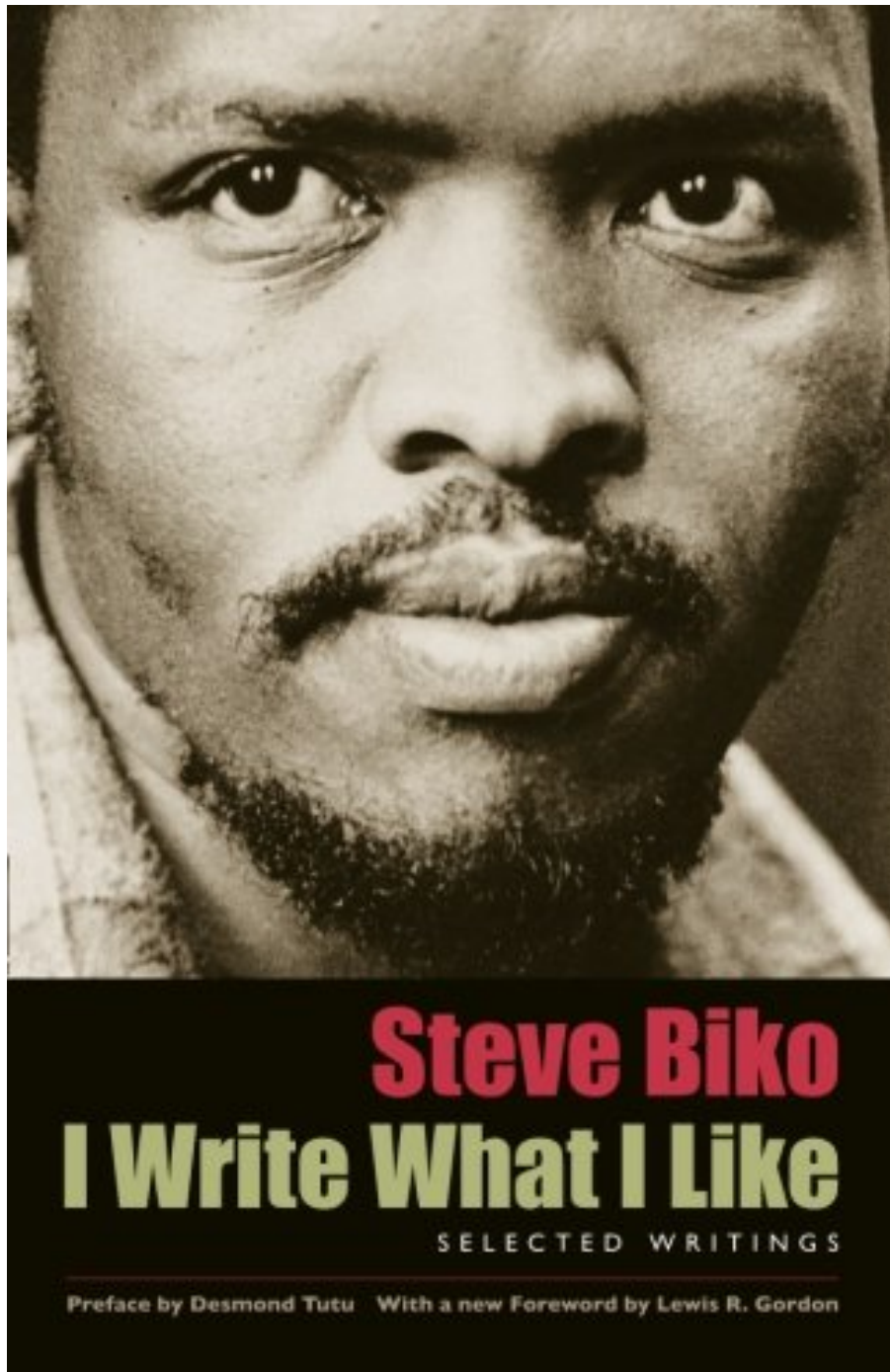


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From Library Journal

"Readers will find his essential humaneness, intelligence, and lack of malice as impressive as his eloquence and compelling arguments," said LJ's reviewer (LJ 2/15/79) of this volume combining articles and interviews that Biko first wrote under the nom de plume Frank Talk. It includes a preface by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

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From the Inside Flap

"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." Like all of Steve Biko's writings, those words testify to the passion, courage, and keen insight that made him one of the most powerful figures in South Africa's struggle against apartheid. They also reflect his conviction that black people in South Africa could not be liberated until they united to break their chains of servitude, a key tenet of the Black Consciousness movement that he helped found.

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Biko's writings will inspire and educate anyone concerned with issues of racism, postcolonialism, and black nationalism.

From the Back Cover

Steve Biko was one of the foremost figures in South Africa's struggle for liberation from the apartheid regime. Murdered by the police when he was only 30, he had already established himself as a leader through his work as a political activist and his writings on Black Consciousness. I Write What I Like was first published in 1978 shortly after his brutal murder in detention. This collection of writings displays all the qualities which have made Biko one of the most influential thinkers in contemporary South African politics - a profound humanity, passionate conviction, humour and courage.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Frantz Fanon vs Steve Biko

By Dark.O

I am somewhat disappointed with the book - maybe because I have read most of the books authored by Frantz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth*. Although I have sympathy with the author and his cause, no new ideas were added to the argument regarding black consciousness and apartheid.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Five Stars

By Mrolong

Awesome book to read and very informative in terms of South African politics.

23 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Powerful "Black Consciousness"

By Gary Gil

"*I Write What I Like*" was set on the backdrop of the thankfully defunct system of apartheid, but the parallels to our modern world remain both pertinent and poignant.

While activists such as Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela fought apartheid on the political and economic front, Steve Biko fought it on the most basic psychological level. He rejected the fundamental premise that made racism and subsequent apartheid possible. The premise he rejected was "that one kind of man was superior to another kind of man". The questions he posed and the answers he gave made him the most dangerous man alive to the white minority government of South Africa.

The movement Steve Biko helped found was called "Black Consciousness". Many decried it as a form of afro-centric racism. That characterization could not have been further from the truth. Black Consciousness differed sharply from other anti-apartheid movements in that it advocated the preservation and advancement of black culture from the individual level. Far from being reverse-apartheid, Biko called for blacks to have their own institutions, their own achievements, and preserve their own languages and cultural heritage - not to the exclusion of whites but with a clear assertion that their culture was valid, valuable and should be allowed to thrive and grow.

Biko asked the questions that were too hard to answer for their simplicity. "How can one prevent the lose of respect between child and parent when the child is taught by his know-all white tutors to disregard his family teachings? Who can resist losing respect for his tradition when in school his whole cultural background is summed up in one word - barbarism?"

Blacks struggling for equality in South Africa were labeled "terrorists" by the white minority government. This fact resonates ominous parallels with America today. As we rush to shred the rights enumerated in our constitution under the euphemistically titled "Patriot Act", we should be wary of this history. Surely people demanding equality for themselves by non-violent means were not terrorists. Yet this is how they were defined. Anti-terrorism laws, without an objective definition of "terrorism", can be turned against anyone the government finds... uncomfortable.

Torture is another concept that is being openly discussed these days. The question "would we torture of this reason or that reason?" assumes on some level that torture is effective. Steve Biko had some very important observations on torture, as he was often the subject of it; "If you want to make any progress, the best thing is for us to talk. Don't try any rough stuff, because it won't work." - "If you guys want to do this your way, you have to handcuff me and bind my feet together, so that I can't respond. If you allow me to respond, I'm certainly going to respond. And I'm afraid that you may have to kill me in the process even if it's not your intention."

Steve Biko died September 12, 1977. Authorities initially claimed that his death was the result of a hunger strike. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, published March 1999 stated that: "On 7 September Biko sustained a head injury during interrogation, after which he acted strangely and was uncooperative. The doctors who examined him (naked, lying on a mat and manacled to a metal grille) initially disregarded overt signs of neurological injury." By 11 September Biko had slipped into a continual, semi-conscious state and the police physician recommended he be sent to hospital. Instead he was transported 1,200 km to Pretoria - a 12-hour journey which he made lying naked in the back of a Land Rover. A few hours later, on 12 September, lying on the floor of a cell in the Pretoria Central Prison, Biko died from brain damage. Yet he and his culture were the ones called barbarians.

Biko said, "The most potent weapon in the hand of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." As we look to our world today, we must be leery of those who seek to mold our impression and thus our beliefs. There are forces out there with much to gain by inciting division and reactionary strife. Divided we fall

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