Cry Freedom (1987)

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The Background of South Africa

Composition of Population

- Black African 79.5%
- White (mostly Afrikaners) 9.2%
- Coloured 8.5%
- Indian/Asian 2.5%
Afrikaners

We made it.

We built it.
Apartheid was adopted as a formal policy by the South African government led by National Party (NP) in 1948 general elections. People in South Africa were forced to live in separate places defined by race.
The government assigned racial groups to different residential and business sections in urban areas (exclude non-Whites from living in the most developed areas.)

Education was segregated, the government crafted a separate system of education for black South African students (was designed to prepare black people for lives as a laboring class.)
Soweto Uprising of 1976
Afrikaans Medium Decree (1974)

The decree that Afrikaans would be used as a language of instruction in schools.

"I have not consulted the African people on the language issue and I'm not going to. An African might find that 'the big boss' only spoke Afrikaans or only spoke English. It would be to his advantage to know both languages."

South African Deputy Minister of Bantu Education, Punt Janson, 1974.

"We shall reject the whole system of Bantu Education whose aim is to reduce us, mentally and physically, into 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'."

Soweto Students Representative Council, 1976.
“It has been decided that for the sake of uniformity English and Afrikaans will be used as media of instruction in our schools on a 50-50 basis as follows:

2.1. English medium: General Science, Practical Subjects (Homecraft-Needlework-Wood- and Metalwork-Art-Agricultural Science)

2.2 Afrikaans medium: Mathematics, Arithmatic, Social Studies

2.3 Mother Tongue: Religion Instruction, Music, Physical Culture

The prescribed medium for these subject must be used as from January 1975.

In 1976 the secondary schools will continue using the same medium for these subjects.”

● Due to the **Bantu Education Act (1953)**, it gives rise to the increase of black students’ attendance in secondary school as well as the involvement in political issues.

● On 30 April, 1976, students from the Orlando West Junior School in Soweto went on strike and boycotted classes.

● The protest (in Soweto) is planned by Soweto Students’ Representative Council (SSRC) with the support of Black Consciousness Movement (BCM).
16 June, 1976

- High school students in Soweto organised a mass rally on 16 June 1976.
- Singing Nkosi Sikelel (today’s national anthem)
- About 10,000 students took part in the protest.
- Heavily armed police responded with teargas and bullets.
- Protesters killed by police is usually given 176, yet is estimated around 700.
- Originally, official claimed only 23 students were killed.
AFRIKAANS IS THE OPPRESSOR'S LANGUAGE.
Aftermath

- Many white South African citizens and students were outraged at the government’s action in Soweto.
- The massacre gave rise to many other riots and violent protests across South Africa in towns like Cape Town, which led to more casualties.
- Most of the bloodshed were stopped in the end of 1976.
Influences

- Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) comes to its peak as the Soweto Uprising broke out.

- Many activists and liberals are inspired by Soweto Uprising and BCM, which gives birth to organisations like AZAPO, COSAS, etc.
Beginning of the end,
Donald.
100 PHOTOGRAPHS
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL IMAGES OF ALL TIME

SOWETO UPRISING • © SAM NZIMA
- Sam Nzima (journalist)
- Shot the photo of the death of Hector Pieterson. (right)
- Published by World Newspaper.
- Banned by the government.
Biko

Seven Qi

Andy Yang
Steve Biko (1946-1977)

- A South African anti-apartheid activist
- Excelled from his first school for “anti-establishment” behavior
- Elected as a president of BPC (Black People Convention) and was expelled from medical school
- Popularizing the slogan “Black is beautiful”.
- Arised “Black Consciousness”
- Banned by the apartheid government in 1973
- Severely beaten by state security officers, resulting in his death
Steve Biko argued that blacks

1. Oppressed themselves
2. Endure those unfairness
3. Admit they are inferior to the white because of the apartheid system
4. Confront the problem bravely

Steve Biko values

1. Human right — Liberty (Mentally & Physically)
2. Non-violent methods (Never uses the violent approach against apartheid)
Biko’s arguments and values

Color:


1. Color should not be the way to distinguish human.
2. There should be no different treatments between white and black.

Equality: I just expect to be treated like you expect to be treated. We just as weak and human as you are. (Biko v.s De Wet)

1. As a human, we are the same, so we should be treated in the same way.
Blacks should stop accepting those hardships, which government gives to them.

Even in the harsh environment, blacks should find a way out to develop hope.

He wants to awake the blacks to build up their own humanity.
Why the blacks should be apartheid? To the whites, our existence seems to be illegal. We want to be treated like human, having the same rights as the whites do. We should be treated like human, and have our legitimate place in the world.
Biko's God-like portray

*Attractive*

He's very articulate.

This one's wild about Steve.

You see, he has that way with women.
as beautiful as we are.
Stay in the middle and we'll cover you.

Articulate

You're a dirty player, Biko.

Admired

It's OK.

I was taught by a Catholic priest.
Legendary

one man stays with Biko all the time.

I am.
Biko in the movie vs. Biko in reality - misrepresentations in the film

The Guardian (UK Newspaper) sums its movie review up by saying, ‘A well-meaning film about the white liberal experience in South Africa – but, if you want to know about Steve Biko, look elsewhere.’

- Main character -- died in the middle part of the movie
- Little personal everyday life
- Skipping the torture part of his death
- His affairs with women
Biko’s death

- Imprisoned for a total of 26 days, from August 18 and ending on his day of death, September 12.
Details

- Kept naked in a cell for 20 days -- not allowed out of his cell even for air or exercise.
- **September 2, Magistrate's visit**: "I have been naked since I came here". The magistrate made no reply.
- **September 6, interrogation**
- **7.30 A.M. 7 September**, Biko already has brain damage
- **9.30 A.M. Dr. Lang** dives medical check-up -- no pathology!!
- **September 11-12, Pretoria prison without any medical records**, 11 hours after leaving Port Elizabeth.
- **September 12**, Dr. Van Zyl gives intravenous drip
Biko’s affairs

“One cannot give a full account of the personality of Steve without mentioning his powerful sexuality.”

--Donald Woods

<Biko>

- Doctor Memphela Ramphele
- Fathering three other children with two other women besides his wife
Biko in the movie vs. Biko in reality
-Stephen Biko vs. Denzel Washington(AF)

- Looks alike (gained 30 pound, had the caps removed)
- Establishing the Denzel–Steve character
- Making it Acceptable, plausible and entertaining
- Even for propaganda: Denzel’s good look leave audiences impressions of Biko
“It’s more of a slice of a — for lack of a better word — hero’s life.” — Denzel Washington

- Too well-round!
- An “African” Hero in “White” Hollywood
- Me: It doesn’t bother!
- Different intentions: want to call audience’s attention & use Donald Woods as a hook & actually focus on the white?
Donald Woods
Travis
Donald Woods (1933-2001)

- South-African journalist
- Anti-apartheid activist
- Editor of Daily Dispatch
- First private citizen to address the United Nations Security Council
- Family business of trading post in Transkei
  → fluent English, Xhosa, and Afrikaans
- Supporter of separatism policies at first
  → began questioning separatism during legal studies
First Meeting with Biko

Before the meeting

Your Mr. Biko is building

a wall of black hatred in South Africa.
First Meeting with Biko

During the meeting

I wanted to meet you for a long time.
First Meeting with Biko

After the meeting

He is impressive.

You really think this is worth the risk?
Visiting Black Township

Was that kid you a few years ago?

Something to do with your blackness,
Visiting Black Township

The debate

We have no separate words for members of the family.

What do you call World Wars I and II?
Befriending Biko

Never mind six months in jail for Mr. Woods.
You need a black leader you can talk to.

We didn't colonize this country, Mr. Woods. We built it.
Woods & Kruger

who came to us for work, remember. We didn't force anyone to labor.

We know there has to be a way to work together and live together.
The Escape

- As accurate as possible
- Mostly helped by local black people
- Bruce Haigh contributed to breaking Apartheid rules in reality.
Cinematic Techniques
Kyle Hsu
Gene: Employs photos to tell a story

The effect: Documentary-like

- Frozen moment, close-up of people’s body movement
- Showing the drama and cruelty of the raid
Framing

- Power struggle
  - Biko V.S. Captain De Wet
  - Equally divided by black and white

- Trial Scene
  - Camera tilting up to Biko
  - Biko looking down on the judge
Soweto Riot

- Elevated view behind the children → Switching to the back of police
- Two sides of narratives (black & white)
- Carnival V.S. Violence
Sound/Music

• National Anthem of South Africa
  - First time: Biko’s Funeral
    (1) No musical accompaniment
    (2) Morn → depressing & solemn
  - Second time: Closing
    (1) Orchestral accompaniment
    (2) Triumph → cheerful & hopeful
Lighting

- Lighting establishes the contrasting atmospheres between black and white households
  - Donald’s backyard: bright & spacious
  - relaxed; delightful
  - Biko’s house: dim & confined
  - depressing; oppressive

and even mining companies threw a few pennies in.

If you get caught out of your banning area,
Controversy in the Film

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Controversy in the Film

● Positive arguments
  - Achievements of *Cry Freedom*
  - Impact on people’s understanding nowadays

● Negative arguments
  - The missing part on Black Conscience after Biko’s death
  - The necessity of focusing on Donald Woods
Positive Arguments

- Raise public awareness and improve their understanding
  
  ➔ Be aware of the unequal and unjust society
  
  ➔ Provide an understanding of apartheid to modern society
The raid on Crossroads squatters' camp
Horrid living conditions
Forced relocation

Police raided Crossroads, the illegal township near Capetown,
Comparison between the lifestyle
Biko - the Inspiration
“Blacks are not going to take it anymore”

- Soweto Uprising
  - To protest the introduction of mandatory Afrikaans-language instruction
- South African Students Organization
- Black Consciousness Movement
- The "father" of the Black Consciousness Movement
- The first icon of anti-apartheid movement
Negative Arguments

Is it necessary to have such huge portion of film focusing on Donald Woods (white)?

- Richard Samuel Attenborough
  - Dual role of director & historian
  - To change the western view on apartheid
  - Audience: White society

“film is no mere historical document. Nor is it just a work of art using history to clarify the present. It is an exquisitely framed meditation on the theme of liberation.”
The Cause & Effects of Focusing on Donald Woods

➔ Newspaper editor

➔ To show how apartheid affects people at all levels
  ◆ Expose government’s indifference and ignorance

➔ The relationship between Woods & Biko
  ◆ Biko: the life mentor of Woods
  ◆ White South African
  ◆ A liberal

  Found out the reality of apartheid
● Demonstrate how apartheid affects people at all levels
Flashbacks

I would have met you in the church,

that no one can ever put back.

like "black is beautiful"?
About the Director——Richard Samuel Attenborough

✓ 29 August 1923 – 24 August 2014

✓ Actor, filmmaker, entrepreneur
AWARDS

Oscars

BAFTA

Golden Globe Awards
Conclusion
Question

Is the film *Cry Freedom* a “buddy film”?
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