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Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

**Bantu Stephen Biko letters**

1973 - 1977

Sc MG 963

Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

## Summary

**Creator:** Biko, Steve, 1946-1977

**Title:** Bantu Stephen Biko letters

**Date:** 1973 - 1977

**Size:** 0.01 linear feet (1 folder)

**Source:** Purchase, Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 2019.

**Abstract:** A rare collection of 12 typed letters signed by Steve Biko, written to the Chief Magistrate of King William's Town between May 16, 1973 and July 19, 1977, just weeks before Biko's death in police custody. The collection also includes 9 carbon copy responses/handwritten memos from the magistrate relating to Biko's requests. This collection of letters shows an increasingly exasperated Biko bravely challenging the petty demands of the apartheid regime.

**Preferred citation:** [Item], Bantu Stephen Biko letters, Sc MG 963, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Barrye Brown, 2019.

## Creator History

Bantu Stephen Biko was an anti-Apartheid activist and founder of the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), as well as a leader in the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa. He was born in Tarkastad, South Africa on December 18, 1946; the third of four children born to Mzingaye Mathew Biko and Alice 'Mamcete' Biko. Biko's life's work was to awaken the people: first from their own psychological oppression through recognizing their inferiority complex and restoring their self-worth, dignity, pride and identity; secondly, from the mental and physical oppression of living in a white racist society. In order to deal with activists, critics, and political opponents of the Apartheid regime, the white South African government began to issue banning orders to punish and disperse the leadership of the Black Consciousness Movement. Banning was an extreme form of restriction, where an individual's movement was confined to a specific magisterial district. The harsh aspects of banning prevented one

from entering institutions of learning, from talking to or interacting with the press, from publishing, and from attending gatherings of any kind. Individuals who received banning orders were in charge of their own imprisonment. If they failed to adhere to the guidelines of their bannings, they were subject to further punishment and imprisonment by the Security Police of South Africa. In 1973, Biko was 26 years old when he was banned to his mother's residence in King William's Town. In 1977, Biko was arrested for travelling outside of his magisterial district to Cape Town. He was killed while in police custody on September 12, 1977.

## **Scope and Content Note**

A rare collection of 12 typed letters signed by Steve Biko, written to the Chief Magistrate of King William's Town between May 16, 1973 and July 19, 1977, just weeks before Biko's death in police custody. The collection also includes 9 carbon copy responses/handwritten memos from the magistrate relating to Biko's requests. This collection of letters shows an increasingly exasperated Biko bravely challenging the petty demands of the apartheid regime.

**Arrangement:** The Bantu Stephen Biko letters collection is comprised of 21 letters and is arranged in two sub-series: Letters from Bantu Stephen Biko (12) and Letters to Bantu Stephen Biko (9).

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Anti-apartheid movements -- South Africa  
Apartheid -- Law and legislation  
Black nationalism -- South Africa  
Blacks -- South Africa -- Politics and government  
National liberation movements -- South Africa  
Political prisoners -- South Africa

### **Geographic Names**

South Africa -- Race relations

### **Names**

Biko, Steve, 1946-1977

## Container List

### Letters from Bantu Stephen Biko

- f. 1 Letter to Chief Magistrate 16 May 1973
- f. 1 Letter to The Chief Magistrate 6 December 1973
- f. 1 Letter to The Magistrate 13 March 1974
- f. 1 Letter to Mr. F. R. de Villiers, Magistrate 13 March 1974
- f. 1 Letter to Mr. F. R. de Villiers, Magistrate 13 March 1974
- f. 1 Letter to the Principal Magistrate 8 April 1976
- f. 1 Letter to The Magistrate 20 April 1976
- f. 1 Letter to The Principal Magistrate 23 April 1976
- f. 1 Letter to The Principal Magistrate 2 June 1976
- f. 1 Letter to The Principal Magistrate 4 February 1977
- f. 1 Letter to The Magistrate (2 pages) 28 June 1977
- f. 1 Letter to The Magistrate 19 July 1977

### Letters to Bantu Stephen Biko

- f. 1 Letter from Magistrate 11 December 1973
- f. 1 Letter from F. R. de Villiers, Magistrate 23 July 1974
- f. 1 Letter to The Officer in Charge (Security Branch) from F. R. Villiers, Magistrate 8 April 1976  
This letter is not addressed to Bantu Stephen Biko but is a cover letter from the Magistrate, F. R. Villiers, to the Officer in Charge. In this letter, the Magistrate makes reference to an enclosed copy of a letter sent by Biko.
- f. 1 Handwritten note from Magistrate, King William's Town 23 April 1976
- f. 1 Letter from Magistrate, King William's Town 8 February 1977
- f. 1 Letter from C. P. Downing, Magistrate, to The Officer in Charge (Security Police) 28 June 1977  
This letter between the Magistrate and the Officer in Charge pertains to Biko's "application for relaxation restriction orders".
- f. 1 Letter from Magistrate, King William's Town 12 July 1977  
Letter pertaining to Biko's "Request for Exception from Terms of Restriction Order".
- f. 1 Letter from Magistrate, King William's Town, to The Officer in Charge (Security Police) 19 July 1977  
Letter regarding Biko's "Application for Relaxation of Restriction Order".
- f. 1 Letter from C. P. Downing, Magistrate, King William's Town 1977 August 4