

Induction into the Black Consciousness Movement

Peter Jones was born in Somerset West near Cape Town in the early 1950s. He was classified by the apartheid government as “Coloured.” (For additional information, refer to Multimedia Resources about racial classification.). In 1968 he attended the University of the Western Cape, where he became involved in the South Africa Students’ Organization (SASO). This was the beginning of his involvement in the Black Consciousness Movement. Jones went on to hold positions in the Black People’s Convention and to work closely with Steve Biko in the Black Community Programs organization.

Listen to this clip of Peter Jones talking about his experiences of getting involved in the Black Consciousness Movement and analyze how his testimony can be used as a source for historians.

Before You Listen:

Note what you already know about the Black Consciousness Movement. What do you predict Peter Jones will talk about? What questions would you ask him if you were doing the interview? (What would you like to know about the BCM?)

While Listening:

Note the impressions you have and the emotions you feel. What facts can you get from this interview? Does Peter Jones provide answers to the questions you would have asked him? Does he say anything that surprises you?

After Listening:

Comprehension

What did Peter Jones experience while growing up that would motivate him to become politically involved, even though he says he came from “a [completely] non-political” background?

What kind of materials did he and other students read?

How did he and other members of the Black Consciousness Movement view how they were related to the community?

Evaluate

Is Jones a credible source? Why, or why not?

Is he helpful in giving you a sense of the history of the struggle against apartheid?

How does Peter Jones' position as someone involved in the Black Consciousness Movement influence his perspective about it? How might his racial classification affect his perspective? He was interviewed almost thirty years after the events he talks about and after the South African transition to democracy. How might this influence how he talks about this particular history?

How does this interview contradict or support your other sources?

Create

Write an essay about how this interview supports or contradicts statements about South Africa's history that you read in the unit. For example, discuss the statement, "Adherents to Black Consciousness stressed self-reliance to build up their capacity as a people." Say whether or not the interview supports the statement you choose to discuss and give at least three examples from the interview to show why or why not.