



## *Arming Black Consciousness*

As the ruling party in South Africa since 1994, the African National Congress has become synonymous with and indivisible from the fight against apartheid rule. This has left little space for competing accounts, visions and political projects to find their appropriate place in the historical narrative. In this innovative book, Toivo Asheeke moves beyond well-trodden histories of South Africa's liberation struggle, to tell a previously neglected story of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), a militant revolutionary nationalist wing of the anti-colonial resistance. Using archival sources from four countries and interviews with former veterans of the movement, Asheeke explores the BCM's engagement with guerrilla warfare, community feminism and Black Internationalism. Uncovering the personal and political histories of those who have previously received scant scholarly attention, Asheeke both illuminates the history of Africa's decolonisation struggle and that of the wider Cold War.

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# Arming Black Consciousness

The Azanian Black Nationalist Tradition  
and South Africa's Armed Struggle

TOIVO TUKONGENI PAUL WILSON ASHEEKE  
*Georgia State University*

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*This book is dedicated first and foremost to the working people who fought and continue to fight for the liberation of the Pan-African world from racial capitalism and all its institutions. It is also dedicated to my family members who were unable to receive a PhD given the racist and sexist nature of the societies in which they lived. Moreover, this work is dedicated to, and has been animated by, my comrades on all sides of the Black Atlantic who have lost their lives in pursuit of freedom. Lastly, I want to dedicate this book to my maternal grandmother Jacqueline E. Wilson who was called to glory on 8 January 2021.*

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In closing, to echo a Trinidadian revolutionary ancestor, this book makes no pretence to have been written in tranquillity or through a

neutral, dispassionate objective lens. As a student, teacher and practitioner of the Black Radical Tradition, such a state of mind is impossible to realise and far from desired. It was conceptualised, discussed, written and rewritten as Black people in Africa and the African diaspora fight for their lives and land, Palestinians and Kurds struggle for land and independence, Thermidorian white supremacy rises in power, LGBTQIAP+ revolutionary activism becomes more visible, environmental activism takes centre stage and as the bullets and missiles of war rage in all parts of the heteropatriarchal racial capitalist world-economy. Such is the context of my time, and this book is a product of it, with much of the fire, urgency, anger, confusion, hope and determination. I make no apologies for it. This work attempts to sketch a history of the Azanian revolution and if written under other circumstances most assuredly, it would have been a different but not altogether better book. Lastly, contrary to what is fashionable in books such as these, there will be no talk of all mistakes, errors and failings are solely on the author. To paraphrase a Guyanese revolutionary of another time and place, that is bourgeois subjectivism, and it must be rejected in its totality. Responsibility of collective projects such as this must always be communal, particularly regarding how we fix the shortcomings in the material world this text seeks to document.

*Abbreviations*

AAPC	All-African People’s Conference
AAPSO	Afro-Asian Peoples’ Solidarity Organisation
ALC	African Liberation Committee
ANC	African National Congress of South Africa
ANCYL	African National Congress of South Africa Youth League
APLA	Azanian People’s Liberation Army
APLF	Azanian People’s Liberation Front
ASSECA	Association for the Educational and Cultural Advancement of the African Peoples of South Africa
AZANLA	Azanian National Liberation Army
AZANYU	Azanian Youth Unity
AZAPO	Azanian People’s Organisation
BAWU	Black Allied Workers Union
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BCMA	Black Consciousness Movement of Azania
BCPs	Black Community Programmes
BLF	Black First, Land First
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BOSS	Bureau of State Security
BPC	Black People’s Convention
BPP	Black Panther Party
BWP	Black Workers Project
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CoT	Committee of Ten
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DIP	Division of Internal Propaganda
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EPLF	Eritrean People’s Liberation Front
FAPLA	Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation

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FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
IRE	Isandlwana Revolutionary Effort
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
MK	Umkhonto We Sizwe
MNC	Mouvement National Congolais
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
NAT	Department of National Intelligence and Security
NP	National Party
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organisation
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress of Azania
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
RAM	Revolutionary Action Movement
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
SASM	South African Students' Movement
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SAYRCO	South African Youth Revolutionary Council
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
SSRC	Soweto Students' Representative Council
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TAA	Tanganyika African Association
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
UANM	United African Nationalist Movement
UM	Unity Movement
UMSA	Unity Movement of South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola

USARF	University Students African Revolutionary Front
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WUS	World University Service
YWCA	Young Women’s Christian Association
ZANC	Zambian African National Congress
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People’s Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army