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Transcription of the 13TH Steve Biko Annual Memorial Lecture delivered by

Professor Ben Okri at UCT on 12 September 2012

Molweni! Vice-Chancellor, Max Price, Mr Nkosinathi Biko, members of the extraordinary Biko family, members of the Board of Trustees, the Minister of National Planning, Deputy-Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, distinguished guests, comrades, ladies and gentlemen – and in South African parlance, all protocols observed. Preliminaries first: I really want to thank the Biko family for the magical honour of giving this talk today and for inviting me to South Africa for my first visit to your really beautiful country. It's more than an honour to give the 13th Steve Biko Lecture commemorating the 35th anniversary of his brutal death and transition from activists against Apartheid to one of the guiding ancestors of justice and freedom not only in South Africa but all over the world. I want to especially thank Nkosinathi for the personal invitation as well as to congratulate him for the extraordinary work they have done in making available to the world the transfigured meaning of Steve Biko's legacy.

Fifteen years ago Nkosinathi inaugurated the creation of a Steve Biko memorial, and these memorial lectures have acquired great significance. I am struck by the richness and variety of the people who have given the lectures, from the great Nelson Mandela himself to the delightful and dancing Desmond Tutu, giants of black and African literature like Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ndebele, who gave the inaugural lecture and Alice Walker; formidable presidents like Thabo Mbeki and that legendary Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel.

As you know, this is the 13th Memorial Lecture, and I happen to have considered the number 13 to be a very lucky number indeed, combining as it does the Hebrew letter for 1, which means love – do your research – with the Hebrew letter for 3, which means unity. Maybe the fusion of love and unity in a world fatally divided and dangerously unstable, may be one of the secret themes of my talk this evening: *Biko and the Tough Alchemy of Africa*. Your great struggle and your history have been the background music to our lives. We grew up with a consciousness of your struggle and your suffering, and terrorism that accompanied us through the years. In a sense your struggle highlighted to us all over the

continent the meaning of justice. As a child growing up just after independence in Nigeria, one of the first moral questions about the world was posed to me by your circumstance, that there was a country, that there were countries in which it was enshrined that one race was inferior to another and that one race can dehumanise another, posed to me questions that went right to the root of existence. For many of us it even made us question the existence of God; such injustice we felt could only exist in a godless universe.

The Sharpeville massacre of 1966 with its unforgettable images that seared themselves into the consciousness of the world was one of those world events that awoke us from our moral sleep. I was roughly the same age as the children being slaughtered in that famous picture and it instantly made me aware that our fates are one. I don't know how other people in other continents saw that picture but from that day I too became a black South African and we suffered with you in your sufferings and willed you on in your struggles.

You have no idea what you mean in the historic consciousness of the world. Sometimes it seems that awful things in history happen to compel us to achieve the impossible, to challenge our idea of humanity. Your struggle mirrored around the world, is one of the greatest struggles of our times. It poses and continues to pose the biggest questions facing humanity; massive philosophical questions that have never really been tackled by the great thinkers of the human race. These are some of the questions which your history posed: Are human beings really equal? Is justice fundamental to humanity or is justice a matter of law? Is there evil? Can different races really live together? Is love unreal in human affairs? Why is there so much suffering? Why do some people seem to suffer more than others? Can the will of a people overcome great injustice? Can a people transform their lives and their society through the power of a new vision? Does God exist and is God unfair?

All across the continent and everywhere where human love responds to the suffering of others, these questions were nagging kind of music. All across Africa these questions troubled us – and among the voices that articulated a profoundly bold and clear response to these big questions of fate, injustice and destiny, one big voice pierced our minds was that of Steve Biko. One of my points of affinity with Biko is with his rigour and his high-standards of expectation of the human and the African spirit. He asks fundamental questions like: Who are you? What are you? Are you what others say you are? What is your selfhood? What makes you a man or a woman? He asks questions which will be relevant in hundreds of year's time, questions which are an inevitable part of a free society. We need to reincarnate Biko's rigour, his high-standards and his forensic questioning of society and of all of his assumptions. We need to keep alive Biko's fierce and compassionate truthfulness. In fact, we need Biko's spirit now more than ever. If he were here today he might well ask such questions: Is the society just? Are we being truthful about one another? Has there been a real change of attitudes and assumptions on both sides of the racial divide? He might have expressed concerns about the police reaction to the striking miners of Marikana. He would have said that it does not need to be said that the murders and the use of apartheid law to try the miners are shocking to the international community and that it has disturbing resonances with his own death. He might well ask: Has there been reconciliation without proper consideration? He might ask whether the things that he fought against have merely mutated like certain cancerous cells. It is a strange kind of fate for Biko to have suffered for

in being so unjustly cut down so early, he remains for us perpetually poised in the stance of his difficult questions.

And to think of Biko is to have these questions always come alive in our minds. He is like Kafka's axe that can always be used against the frozen seas of lies and hidden attitudes that fog up the flow of a society's possibilities. He is a figure of constant truth that will continue to haunt the history of this nation as it negotiates through time the continued hidden legacy of Apartheid. It is not surprising that his most famous work is called *I write what I Like*. In a sense Biko transcends politics and has in him something of the terrible integrity of the true artist, one who with hammer-blows will relentlessly pursue his vision of exalted truth regardless of its consequences. In that sense Biko is more than just the unfinished conscience of this land; he is also that finger pointing at the only acceptable future: a life and a society in which citizens can be proud of what they are. Biko's spirit is permanently, fantastically set against the humiliation of man and woman. His spirit is set against the mediocrity of consciousness, the mediocrity of a consciousness that lives without a sense of what has happened to others. He is not an easy guy. He does not like laziness or lazy thinking. He has the rigour of a young man who will not accept that a decent life is impossible for his people. He will not accept that an agreement has been reached without frank and exhausted dialogue. He may well think that too much has been given away too soon. He may even think that the people who have not honestly acknowledged the death of the injustice they inflicted on others may still in fact harbour deceptions of those injustices.

In many ways Biko reminds me of Nietzsche; he did not trust pity and he might have thought forgiveness not really forgiving till the fire of truth has been brought into the consciousness of the one to be forgiven. Generosity without steel can be a weak thing, just as steel without generosity can be a cruel thing. This may be one of the real tragedy of Biko's death. The apartheid struggle needed a dual strand: it's hard and is gentle; its sternness and its compassion; its fire and its water. With the murder of Biko some tougher questions which would have been insisted upon might have found a more authentic advocate. The fact is that a nation cannot escape from itself and from all of its truths and all of its lies. If its lies linger too long in the unspoken dialogue of a people, sooner or later they will lead to unpleasantness. Even though Biko be absent, the people in the shanty-towns, the poor and the hungry feel the shadow of those lies, feel the pointedness in their lives of the questions that Biko might be asking today. I think I'm going to have some water.

Great struggles tend to throw up great spirits. Great suffering tends to throw up great minds who refuse to accept the terms of that suffering. Something of the spirit of Prometheus breathed in the voice of people like Steve Biko; voices who refused to accept the definition of his people by those who define it downwards. Prometheus suffered his incarnation incarceration on the great rock of Tartarus because he stole fire from the Gods to give to humanity. One of the recipients of that fire was Steve Biko. I am aware that there are many recipients of that fire – people like the great man Nelson Mandela, father of the nation, figures like Chris Hani. But Steve Biko's fate is one of latest in a long chain of Promethean destinies. Like the phoenix of classical mythology, his end was his beginning. The power and truth of his ideas spread with a special brilliance because of the flame of his death. It is one

of the curious things about history that whenever they kill the incarnation of truth its voice is multiplied a-thousand-fold.

Your history has taught the world a thing or two about the human spirit. From you we learned that eventually the spirit is unconquerable. From you we learned that history is not inevitable but must be fought for with love, with courage and with wisdom. From you we learned that the impossible belongs to those who have not peered deep into the darkest darkness of the night and still believe in the cycle of the sun. Forgive this rhapsody, but often we take history for granted and those who live through it and come through it take it as a kind of nightmare or a dream and therefore a kind of unreality. For most of my life it seems that Apartheid could not be overcome. Our rage at its reality seemed to have collapsed against what seemed like its eternity. It seemed one of those unacceptable facts etched into the fabric of the world. In England, where I lived in the latter part my life, it was assumed by many that Apartheid would be with us for generations. It seemed like one of those unalterable facts like fate or the moon or like hunger. But a great injustice rouses something very deep in the human spirit, something deep that goes all the way back to the Gods. We can almost say that greater justice awakens in us the same forces that shape the world, a force greater than destiny itself, a force that comes from the fire of the demiurge a force that tears down mountains and throws up continents; a force like bursting volcano, a force of thunder. This is a force slow to arouse but once roused and awoken, hard to control. Such a force unleashed itself in the French Revolution and gave birth to one of the great nations of the world and some of the great philosophies of freedom. Such a force was aroused in the American Revolution, one of the Father Revolutions of the human race. But this force does not unleash itself in revolutions only; it can burn in civil wars, it can implode in gulags and forced inhuman policies and orgiastic historic rages.

When a people overcome the impossible, they achieve eventually a kind of evolutionary shift and epistemological break. They realise, eventually, deep in their souls something powerful about their will: they are never quite the same people again. They change subtly something in their DNA. They also experience a state of unreality.

History is like a nightmare we wake up from after a struggle and blink in stupefaction at the strangeness of daylight. With awakening a great energy is freed; a new question is posed: the nightmare is over but what do we do with the day? We do not have enough psychologists of history. Everyone seems to treat history as if our reaction to it should be logical. The people have emerged from a mutual nightmare, what should they do upon awakening? What should anyone do after a long trauma? What can anyone do?

Nations too, like individuals, need to heal. And healing takes several forms. For some, healing is probing the wounds, seeking causes, pursuing redress. For others, healing is dreaming, it is an active vision during which time a future is dreamed of, shaped and put into place. For them healing is an opportunity to transform themselves out of all that suffering, all that trauma, and the heroic effort of all that overcoming. The unfortunate thing about history is that it gives us no rest, no holidays. There are no pauses; we go from struggle to struggle. The struggle to overcome and then the struggle to live, to grow, to realise the potential seeded in our bones. We go from tearing down the unacceptable to building the desirable without much of a break in the dance.

But how long does this magic period last, the period of raised consciousness when a people realise that the surging through them of all the best energies of the human spirit? When they have effected a profound change in their destiny and feel the euphoria of overcoming? How long does it last, this sense of having climbed a mountain-top against all the odds and gazing back down over the journey accomplished and feeling for a long historical moment the sense that with the will power and the vision clear, anything is possible?

Historical exaltation is too short. Life comes rushing in. No one can dwell on a mountain-top long; the air there is too pure and unreal. The value of mountain-tops is not to live on them but to see from them. To see into the magic and difficult distances, to see something of the great journey still ahead; to see, in short, the seven mountains that are hidden when we climb. It may be only once that a people have such a vision. Maybe very, very great nations have such a vision a few times, and each time they do they affect a profound renewal in their history and take a quantum leap in their development. Most nations never glimpse the mountain-top at all; never sense the vastness and the greatness of the gritty glory that lies ahead of them in the seven mountains each concealed behind the other. Maybe Ancient Greece saw such a vision a few times and dreamed up its notion of a flawed democracy and left its lasting legacy in its architecture, its literature, but above all in its political structure for unleashing its genius upon the world. Maybe Ancient Rome saw such a vision a few times too and built straight roads through history, wrestling with the idea of freedom and tyranny and conquered a sizeable portion of the known world, and left for us their ambiguous legacy of empire, literature and might.

But it is not often that a people reach a mountain-top and descend with a rich vision of a transformed life for all of its people and then set about realising it. Too often the euphoria gets swept away into an ideology of state. Too often it is squandered. Too often that great moment is lost and never to be experienced again and eventually forgotten in the mountainous piling up day after day after day after day of ordinary reality; the mire of history, till disillusion and despair and boredom set in. And a people who could have given mankind a new reality of how a society can be in a world where so many good dreams are failing, becomes a society that scrabbles in the sand, its eyes weep in poverty with division and tribal conflict at its heart and emptiness in its days, its resources and hopes eaten away by corruption – a society that faces into the darkness and the dullness with that glimpse of the mountain-top faded into ordinary sunlight.

We invest great hopes in people who manage a great overcoming. Maybe because of a certain nostalgia for our lost moment when we too could have been a light to the world, or maybe for a nostalgia for what can be the hope that we too can affect our own modest daily overcoming against destiny. We like to believe that those who suffered can show us the true meaning of that suffering, which is the point anyway for humanity to be. There is no greater value to suffering than in having the authority to create a better, fairer, truer and more beautiful life for its people. There are those who think that suffering brutalises and dehumanises and turns men and women into animals. There are those who see in Africa's troubles, nothing but what they unintelligibly call 'African nihilism'. There are, to be sure, many cracks and fissures in the human spirit and unimaginable horrors have been unleashed in Europe and Asia and America; history shows no one to have completely pure

hands. But those who have had injustice perpetrated on them, who have suffered unbelievable variations of humiliation and brutality, ought to have a special light and vision on the nature of justice. This will be true of course but for what Hamlet calls "bad dreams". Hence the necessity of that unique kind of feeling.

Personally I favour healing as dreaming. A society comes through fire a nightmare and it ought to heal through dreaming; not a dream of sleep but the dream of vision. In some ways unreality is easier than reality. And the reality of freedom demands more consistency, vision, courage and practical love than was suspected in the unreality of injustice. And what defines a society is not how it overcomes its night but what it does with the long ever-after days of sunlight. Some will say that re-emerged from the night with our hands tied and that the sunlight still has a lot of night in it and that the terms of our freedom and the context of our independence put led weights on our feet in a field where others have been running with free feet and machine-assisted feet for hundreds of years before we entered the strange game.

Some will even say that at every stage of our emergence into sunlight we were hassled, sabotaged, undermined and the terms of our participation fixed and limited – and that we are being judged in a game in which the terms and conditions are twisted and lopsided in ways so subtle that no one notices how they've done our participation before we begin. Some will say many such things – how we play not our game but the game of others, and how our leaders are confused and our participants corrupted, and the people cheated and betrayed and left behind in hunger and poverty in the long after-years of sunlight.

These things may or may not be true. What is true is that no one will hand us the destiny that we want. No one will carry us to the future that our bones and our history crave for. We must do it ourselves. It seems that the courage and the ingenuity, and the toughness required for getting us out of the night are indeed required much, much more for the ever-after day of the long after-years of sunlight. Freedom was just the overture. Indeed, freedom may just turn out to be a very small part of the true story of a people. The real story begins with what they did with that freedom.

Part 2:

This has been the real challenge of Africa. This has been the real challenge of our times. Can we make something worthwhile of our freedom? Can we be fruitful and workable nations? Can we create a good life for our people? But more crucially, can we make sustained and important contributions to the world and help in our own way to take forward human civilisation? On the whole it can be said that African nations began with hope, fell in chaos and staggered into dependency. Or to take another variation it can be said that African nations began in unity, collapsed into multiplicity and stumble in division. Or to weave one more jazz note of history; that African nations began in dreams, were overwhelmed by reality and stumble about in nightmare. Or to take a classical turn, African nations came, saw and squandered.

All across the world in the late fifties and sixties could be heard what Byron once called the First Dance of Freedom. Not long afterwards came the cry of failure as civil wars, tribalism,

coups and corruption descended on the recent freedom dances. Then came the long decades of animi, that was such a feast of gloating and salivation for western observers. People emerged from the African world into a European-shaped reality in two or three generations and no one wonders that there would be some confusion. People entered an arena in which others have been shaping themselves as nation states over hundreds of year and no one wonders that they would at first seem inadequate. The fact is we might have lost control of our self-perception. We might have lost control of how we see ourselves in the modern world. We see ourselves and measure ourselves with outwardly determined standards. We don't play our game.

We don't choose our values; but more seriously, emerging from African reality into modern reality has had one major effect: time has gotten speeded up for us. We are having to accomplish in 10 years what it took European nations 2000 years to accomplish. Africa is having to compress in a short time her own equivalent of the Roman Conquest, the Viking marauders, the Black Death, feudalism, Civil War, the Industrial Revolution with its dark satanic mills, capitalism, the poverty act, the union of the four warring nations and the unholy spoils of colonialism – all into a few solitary decades.

There is however another way to read history. It could be said that African nations have emerged from the long reality of their selfhood into a different time and are engaged in a complex historical adjustment. We need to define history more accurately, and the history of African people, the Bantu, the Zulu, and the Yoruba's, to give a tiny example, is long, unique and needs to be written and studied. History is not the story of the impact of the western world on the African world; that is a small part of our history.

History is not objective. The meaning of history keeps on revealing itself through time. Like a text of infinite interpretability, history yields new meanings in relation to the eyes that behold it and the pressures of the times. History may be memory, history may be vengeance, history may be redemption – but whatever history is, it is too soon to extrapolate the meaning of our recent histories. Those who write about history in haste and fall into quick judgements, find that the long unfolding of events change the meaning of the facts upon which they base their judgements. Time is a great ironist. The historian who makes a quick judgement against the United States of America right in the middle of her apocalyptic Civil War, would be made fooling by the unfolding destiny of that nation.

History may be fact, history may be a dream, history may be revelation. It is not how things *are* that count, it's what you *do* with them, what vision you have and with what strength you march towards that vision. We need a new consciousness. History is always responsive to a new consciousness.

Part 3:

Do you want me to keep going? I'm just trying to make sure I'm not talking to myself. They say the greater the mistakes the greater the lessons that can be learned. Africa has surely made enough mistakes for us to learn about. Among other things we are rich in mistakes. Some nations in the world make their mistakes over thousands of years, we made ours over

decades. We have made enough mistakes to become nations of genius if we had that inclination. Maybe that is why there is the beginnings of a new consciousness, a new stirring of national success slowly creeping across the continent. But what are some of these mistakes: the slide towards dictatorship and tyranny, corruption becoming a 'natural' part of the national fabric, the depletion of national resources by ruling elite, the erosion of civil liberties, the failure to realise that nations can die just like businesses, companies or individuals. You do not need me to tell you that if Biko were alive today, his cry to Africa would be to put its house in order. He would be appalled at the civil wars, the failure to feed and educate the people, the greed of government officials, and the general failure to live up to the promise of the great struggles for liberation. He would be harder on us than our critics because he would expect from us the highest standards of national life.

I interpret Black Consciousness not only in relation to the history of oppression; I interpret it also as an injunction to the highest fulfilment of a people's possibilities. Black Consciousness means nothing if it does not also mean the best flowering of our reality. To me Black Consciousness means equality, freedom, community, grassroot transformation, but it also means excellence, humanity, foresight, wisdom, and a transcendence of our weakness and our flaws. Stripped of its specific context of Apartheid the core of Black Consciousness does not seem to me a polarising message. Rather it is a call for the awakening of the spirit, a call such as the ancestors might have made. Wherever a people are oppressed, the first thing they must remember is who they are. But once liberation has been achieved, the first thing they must remember is who they want to be. The heart of Black Consciousness is a message of 'becoming'; its goal is not limited, it hints as a continuing journey of self-discovery and self-realisation. This can be as wide and as expansive as the mind that interprets it. There can be no end to a self-realisation. Every day we discover more and more who we can be – this is what Black Consciousness says to me: become who you are, and also, become what you truly can be. It is an injunction of greatness. In fact, it is an injunction to leadership. It says in effect that black people because of their history and all that they have learned, should show the world a new way of being – to paraphrase, a better way of being human. I'm coming to the end, slowly.

Part 4:

There are three kinds of leaders. There are the ones who make; there are the ones who bring meaningful change. There are the ones who make change real. And then there are those who squander the possibilities of their times. The challenge of our times has always been the challenge of leadership. It is not the only challenge but it is the most symbolic. Black Consciousness is an injunction to leadership because the people can only be as liberated as its leaders are – in that sense Black Consciousness says that to liberate in your mind and freeing your consciousness, you should be your own leader. Everyone therefore carries the burden of leadership. To that degree, the leaders that you have says something about the kind of people that you are.

Previously leadership was considered on its own as an isolated event of responsibility. We tended to blame our leaders for our failings. The micro responsibility of Black Consciousness

implies that we should blame or praise ourselves for our leaders for they are what we have enabled them to become. To me Black Consciousness suggests that the people take the responsibilities for their lives, their societies, and their destiny. This is not a textual but an intuitive reading of Black Consciousness. I am not advocating civil unrest but. I am not advocating civil unrest but that the people are complicit in how their societies are run, how their history turns out. The people cannot be passive about the single most important thing that affects them, which is the running of their lives. In that sense there is a micro and a macro dimension of Black Consciousness, but its core is that of liberating for time and in all historical circumstances the consciousness, the conscience and the spirit of a people. After all, the people cannot come away in their oppression and fall right asleep after their liberation. A continued wakefulness is the burden of Black Consciousness; a continued vigilance is its responsibility. More than that, an ever-higher refinement of the possibilities of the people, an ever-higher reach in its potential and the realisation ought to be its goal.

The renewal of a people of continent is a miraculous thing. And it happens when a great new idea takes root in a people; when they see the image of themselves not as they were but as they can be. It is a renewed self-vision. Its source is a potent and enchanted vision; it is conveyed through inspiration and sustained by example. Through the undercurrents of our minds, the idea is passed along that we can have good houses, good roads, decent education, fulfilling jobs. The idea is passed along in the undercurrent of our minds that we can stand tall and be fruitful under the sun. The idea is passed along that no one needs to starve and that everyone can have access to health services. The idea is passed along that we can question many of our beliefs; we can apply reason to our inherited notions that we can transfigure our superstitions. The idea is passed along that we can transcend our tribalism without losing our roots; that we can transcend our religion without losing our faith. The idea is passed along that we can transcend our race without losing its uniqueness; that we can transcend our past without losing our identity. It is passed along that we can only look forward and that has been done many times in history all over the world and is being done slowly today in Asia and places like Brazil – that we can remake our societies closer to our heart's desire. The idea starts along that now is the time to show the true greatness on the part of your liberation. Now is the time to create a society commensurate to the ideals which the people fought for and for which so many died. That the fire of your history is a refining fire, producing from the blood of martyrs the goal of a new civilization.

Part 5

In alchemy there are two ways to accomplish what is known as a great work. They are called the dry way and the wet way. The dry way is short and dangerous. The wet way is long and safe. In political terms the short way requires a certain kind of dictatorship, thoroughly unified people and highly focused vision – Japan, the Soviet Union and China in some ways exemplify this; they try to bring about fantastic transformation in society in a very short time. The results are often ambivalent. With Stalin and Mao, millions died in the spectre of the gulags haunt success experiments. Only Japan uniquely showed the fruitfulness of this difficult way. But for national of diversity involved in a land of many tribes

and many races, the ideal seems to be the wet way. Europe took time to arrive at its current stability. America needed 200 years and a civil war to become itself.

We must measure time differently. Our history began long before the history of others. We must measure time not in the length of oppression but by the persistence of our dreams – and our dreams go back a long way, way beyond the fall of Carthage, which Mandela says we are to rebuild, and way beyond the first imperfect Egyptian pyramids. The cycles of time, like the inundation of the Nile, have deposited on us the immeasurable silt of human experiences. We have great wealth in all that is at the root of humanity. If there is a correlation between experience and wisdom, between suffering and understanding, Africa is the riches delta of possible transformation. The dream of our ancestors nestles in the Rift Valley, when the greatest enemy of man was not man but night itself. Our ancestors battled with all manner of monsters and evils within and without – and this long period of time and long march to civilisation must have forged in them some unconquerable sense of a human spirit. Just as rocks bear the strata of the ages they have witnessed, so deep inside us are the strata of unmeasured overcoming.

Let us be tempered. May the fire of history burn us into a new consciousness. Let the white learn from the black and the black learn from the white. I'm quoting Taoism here. Different histories come together in one great sea. Let us raise one another. You have something special to give the world, and the gift of your genius, our genius will be revealed not long after we claim the right to be ourselves. We can be no one else. We must therefore accept as history, we must therefore accept our history with all of its flaws. We should hide nothing from ourselves about who we have been. We can only transform that which we face. What we are now is only the present slice of a picture of ourselves; there can be no final definition of what we are. We grow and change in accordance with necessity and vision, and yet in some mysterious way will become more and more ourselves.

Thirty-five years ago a visionary son of the soil who was going to become a doctor, was slain. From his grave may a thousand dreams of freedom rise. May the vengeance for his torture and his slaughter be the constant coming into being, of a beautiful South Africa. A beautiful South Africa where the frisson between the races be always creative and compel them towards dynamic harmony, and where the intelligence in the rich nurturing of citizenship is nourished by the dragon's blood of his and other martyrs' immolation. Pass the word on. Pass the word along the five great rivers of Africa – from the Cape of Wise Hope to the sinuous mountains and the tranquil savannah. Pass on the word that there are three Africas. The one that we see every day; the one that they write about and the real magical Africa that we don't see unfolding through all the difficulties of our time, like a quiet miracle. Effect the world with your light. Press forward the human genius. Our future is greater than our past. Bless you all.

This is a transcribed version of the speech delivered by Professor Ben Okri at the 13th annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture held at the University of Cape Town on 12 September 2012

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