

South Africa: Apartheid and the Role of Religion

This lesson plan was developed using resources from the PBS NewsHour Extra: "South Africa After Ten Years of Freedom": http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/safrica_4-13.html and the New York Times Learning Network's "Separation Anxiety: Reflecting on Life and Laws After Apartheid": http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20060111wednesday.html?searchpv=learning_lessons.

Background: This lesson will give students insight into South Africa, both under apartheid and in post-apartheid years. They will examine the historical context of this legal discrimination system and draw comparisons to other systems of legal racism with which they are familiar. Students will learn about the actions taken to end apartheid, particularly the actions taken by members of the church to heighten awareness during apartheid and to mollify tensions in post-apartheid years, including the present.

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Consider circumstances in modern history during which groups of people were segregated by race or ethnicity.
- Understand the basic historical context of apartheid.
- Identify the major concepts and terms relevant to South African apartheid.
- Learn about the system of apartheid as it was practiced in South Africa and actions taken to change it.
- Discuss the role of Desmond Tutu and other religious members in ending apartheid.
- Discuss the role of the church as a whole in influencing events related to apartheid.
- Learn about the changes taking place in South Africa since the end of apartheid, including the way those changes were initiated or influenced by the church.

Day One: Background on Apartheid, Apartheid in Practice

1. (10 minutes) As students enter class, have them examine a photograph taken during the apartheid era (<http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/images/151906.jpg>) (*Appendix 1*), either projected from the Internet onto a screen or copied and distributed on their desks. After students have been seated, they respond to the following prompt in their journals: "Where and when do you think this photograph was taken? Under what circumstances in modern history have groups of people been segregated by race or ethnicity?"

Allow students a few moments to write; then have them share their responses with the class. Some examples from modern history might include, the United States, Sudan, Germany, other countries affected by the Second World War, and the focus of today's lesson, South Africa. Explain that the photo was taken from a United Nations archive documenting apartheid in South Africa. If time allows, you may wish to review the term "apartheid" and share some of the other images from this collection with students before continuing to the article:

(<http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/apartheid.html>) (*Appendix 2*).

2. (5 minutes) What do students know about apartheid in South Africa? Brainstorm and develop a list of what they know and any associations with particular events and people, along with any other elements of South African culture and society they know.
3. (10 minutes) To aid students in gaining background on apartheid and where South Africa stands today, briefly explain the key historical points of apartheid (See **Quick Guide to Apartheid and its End**).

After explaining the basic history and context of apartheid, ask students the following questions:

- What events led to the end of apartheid?
 - What kinds of methods do groups of people often use to stand up to the government, and what problems do they face?
 - Do you think the TRC was successful in reconciling a divided South Africa? What other similar commissions or processes have worked or not worked in other parts of the world? (Students may mention the Nuremberg Trials, tribunals in Iraq, truth commissions in Latin America, etc. and the extent of each one's effectiveness.)
 - If you had been living in South Africa at the time, what do you think you would have done?
 - Do you think the international community could have done more to bring about the end of apartheid before the early 1990's? Why or why not?
 - Do you think a system as unjust and discriminatory as that of apartheid could exist in the twenty-first century? Why or why not? Are there any comparable systems in place today?
4. (10 minutes) Now turn to the [Key Words and Concepts](#)

Click on the following link to get to the PDF file:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/safrica_termstk.pdf

Read this handout together, stopping along the way to clarify or discuss. Encourage students already familiar with the terms to expand on the information given. The objective is for students to gain some familiarity with South Africa's history, especially as it pertained to the system of apartheid.

5. (15 minutes) To get a feeling for the kinds of restrictions imposed during the Apartheid era, distribute and discuss the handout on "[Apartheid in Practice](#)."

Follow this link to the PDF file:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/safrica_apartheid.pdf

Discussion: Get students to talk about what apartheid was like. Based on American values, what practices do students find particularly upsetting. How do conditions compare to the treatment of Blacks in the United States? How would you feel living under those restrictions? Can you relate them to any other discriminatory practices throughout history?

Day Two: The End of Apartheid, South Africa Post-apartheid, the Role of Archbishop Desmond Tutu

1. (5 minutes) Take a few minutes to review what students learned on Day One. For instance, what were some of the most striking examples of discrimination practiced during apartheid? What did living under apartheid mean for Blacks, for whites, for Indian, for Chinese, for mixed people?
2. (15 minutes) Some call it the miracle of South Africa: a country which some in 1990 thought would be the powder keg igniting a third world war. In 2004 South Africa commemorated its "first decade of freedom" showing the world a remarkable example of nonviolent change. The matching exercise which follows, "Comparing Apartheid and Post Apartheid Times," can be done individually or as a class exercise where students walk around and find their match.

Pass out the [Matching Exercise](#) handout

Follow the link to get to the PDF file:

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/world/safrica_matching.pdf

The Items in column A indicate conditions in the South Africa under apartheid. Those in column B contain some of the changes which have taken place in the last decade. Cut out each of the statements in both columns A & B and color code to indicate the time period for each. Divide the class into 12 groups and distribute the clipped statements. Have each group walk around the class until they find the statement that matches theirs from pre or post Apartheid. Extra research on the topic may be encouraged to enhance the presentation (Suggestions are shown in italics).

For the teacher:

Answers to the matching exercise: 1 (D); 2 (C); 3 (B); 4 (E); 5 (F); 6 (A).

3. (15 minutes) Explain to students that various religious leaders were associated with bringing about the end of apartheid, but the role the church played as a whole is considered controversial.

Start by talking about Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his role in ending apartheid and alleviating post-apartheid tensions. Have students read the [BBC profile of Desmond Tutu](#) (*Appendix 5*) either aloud in class or individually.

Discussion: How did Desmond Tutu help end apartheid? In what ways did his involvement in the church influence his actions? How was Tutu received by the international community?

Day Three: The Church and Apartheid

1. (10-15) Discuss the church's role, in general, in ending or influencing the end of apartheid. Briefly give students an overview of the church's involvement in apartheid and ending it (See **Quick Guide to the Church and Apartheid**).
2. (15-20 minutes) Share the article "South Africa's churches, after apartheid" (*Appendix 6*). Before reading, ask the following questions:
 - In what historical events has the church been influential?
 - In which of these has the involvement been controversial (i.e., the church has either seemed to ignore or support a practice now considered unethical)?
 - How do religious organizations and world events influence each other?
3. After reading, discuss the following:
 - What do you think were factors in helping end apartheid, both religious and nonreligious? How did key leaders shape the roles of particular institutions? Does this remind you of anything else from history or today?
 - What seems to be the situation today in South Africa? In what ways have South Africans moved on from apartheid? In what ways is it still struggling? (These might be good questions to add on to during the videoconference.) What has the church been doing to improve the situation in South Africa since apartheid?

Teachers: For more information and links, see *Appendix 7*.

Appendix 1:

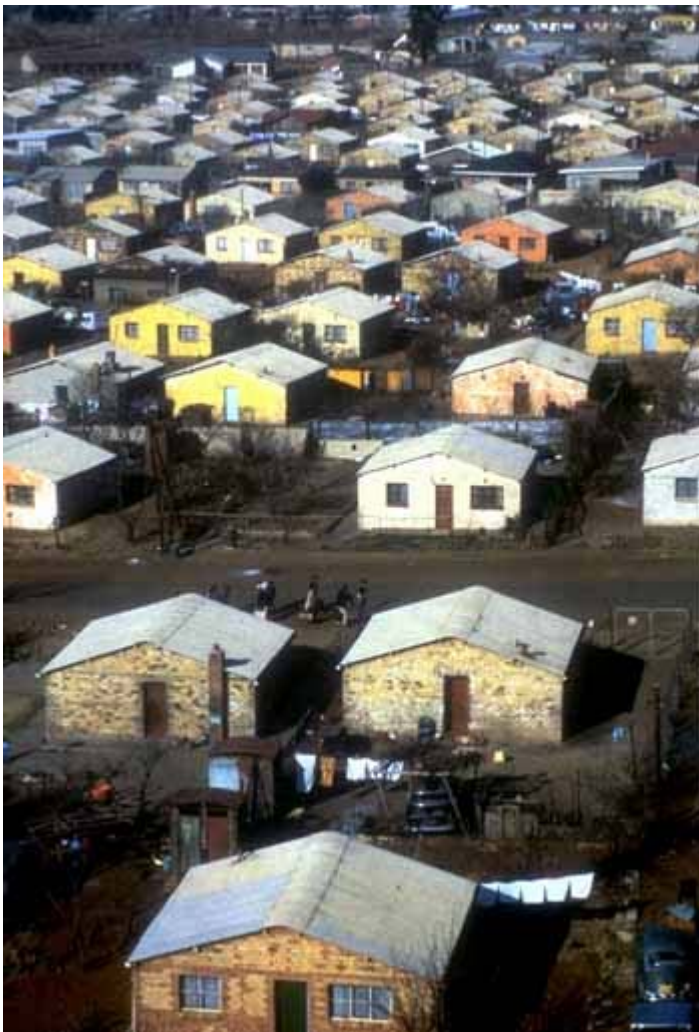
From the United Nations Archive: <http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/images/151906.jpg>



Appendix 2:

Excerpt from United Nations archive:

<http://www.un.org/av/photo/subjects/images/151906.jpg>



Appendix 3:

Article from BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3743389.stm>

Profile: Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe may have just described him as "evil", but Archbishop Desmond Tutu remains a much loved figure across the world - principally for his role in South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

During the long years that Nelson Mandela was in prison, Archbishop Tutu spoke out against the regime - and won the Nobel peace prize in 1984 for his efforts.

He was chosen by President Mandela to chair South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and investigate the crimes committed by all sides during the apartheid regime.

He has now retired as a political figure, but "the Arch", as he is known, remains irrepresible and influential in his seventies.

Early days

Desmond Tutu was born in 1931 in a small gold-mining town in the Transvaal. He first followed in his father's footsteps as a teacher, but abandoned that career after the passage of the Bantu Education Act in 1953.

He joined the Church and was strongly influenced by many white clergymen in the country, especially another strong opponent of apartheid, Bishop Trevor Huddleston.

Desmond Tutu became the first black Anglican Dean of Johannesburg in 1975.

He was already a high profile Church figure before the 1976 rebellion in black townships, but it was in the months before the Soweto violence that he first became known to white South Africans as a campaigner for reform.

*“We refuse to be treated as the doormat for the government to wipe its jackboots on.
Archbishop Desmond Tutu”*

Inevitably, his pleas for justice and reconciliation in South Africa drew him into the political arena - but he always insisted that his motivation was religious, not political.

The churchman constantly told the government of the time that its racist approach defied the will of God and for that reason could not succeed.

Speaking out

Desmond Tutu was elected Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986.

As the first black head of the Anglican Church in South Africa, he continued to campaign actively against apartheid.



Tutu is a familiar and highly regarded figure in the west

In March 1988, he declared: "We refuse to be treated as the doormat for the government to wipe its jackboots on."

Six months later, he risked jail by calling for a boycott of municipal elections.

Archbishop Tutu warmly welcomed the liberalising reforms announced by President FW De Klerk soon after he took office in 1989.

These included the unbanning of the African National Congress and the release of Mr Mandela.

'Appalled at the evil'

In November 1995, the then President Mandela asked Archbishop Tutu to head a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. His task was to gather evidence of apartheid-era crimes and to recommend whether people confessing their involvement should receive amnesty.

At the end of the Commission's inquiry, in August 1998, he attacked South Africa's former white leaders, saying most of them had lied to the Commission.

The Commission's report was accepted by the government, but was criticised by those who felt it fell a long way short of its aims.

Archbishop Tutu was accused, for instance, of bending over backwards in dealing with Winnie Mandela, who faced allegations of very serious crimes.

But he was often overcome by the pain of those who had suffered and said that he has been "appalled at the evil we have uncovered".

Archbishop Tutu also suffered from prostate cancer during the inquiry.

Criticism of foreign policies

Archbishop Tutu has travelled widely and has spoken out on foreign issues.

In 2002 he accused Israel of practicing apartheid in its policies towards the Palestinians.

He said he was "very deeply distressed" by a visit to the Holy Land, adding that "it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa".



Tutu said his motivation to join the fight against apartheid was religious



Tutu (left) and Mandela celebrate South Africa's right to host the World Cup in 2010

Also that year, he warned that Zimbabwe was sliding into dictatorship under President Robert Mugabe.

Earlier this year, Archbishop Tutu urged US President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to admit they had made a mistake in waging an "immoral" war in Iraq.

In January, Archbishop Tutu started a new job as a visiting professor in post-conflict studies at King's College London.

His office has said he would not be commenting on Mr Mugabe's attack.

Appendix 4:



South Africa's churches, after apartheid

By Nicole Itano

From the September 30, 2003 edition: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0930/p14s01-woaf.html>

For many South Africans, the struggle against apartheid is over. Nearly 10 years after its demise, blacks now lead the government.

But the Rev. Molefe Tsele knows that the scars of his country's tumultuous past still run deep. Apartheid, he says, corrupted the soul as well as the state, and churches must now help people relearn the values that will help them live together peacefully.

"We promote Christian values, and those values are truth, justice, love, compassion, and human dignity," says Dr. Tsele, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). "Our view is that our history has actually resulted in most of those values being lost, especially since our history related to the abuse of Christianity - so many people associated Christianity with discrimination on the basis of race." The Dutch Reformed Church used theology to justify apartheid.

When Tsele accepted a scholarship at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in 1989, it was an escape of sorts. After years on the front line against apartheid - first as a student and later as a minister - and two years of being detained without trial, he was tired - tired of the hatred, tired of fighting. But in Chicago, walking through campus late at night, Tsele said he would often be stopped by police and asked to show his student ID card. White students, he says, were never hassled. And in Chicago, too, there were rich neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods, black neighborhoods and white neighborhoods. The segregation wasn't mandated by law, but it was there all the same.

"To me, America was a lesson that eliminating racism was not just a matter of passing legislation," he says.

When he returned home with his wife and three children after five years in America, he found a changed country. Nelson Mandela was president, and apartheid was dead. But Tsele wasn't ready to call the struggle over. He took a teaching post at a Lutheran seminary to help train a new generation of church leaders, advised politicians, and became active in social-justice movements.

As general secretary of the SACC, he has big footsteps to fill. Archbishop Desmond Tutu won a Nobel Peace Prize for his work as general secretary in the 1980s.

For Tsele, the challenge has been to find new purpose and unity for the organization in the postapartheid era.

"The church must be prepared to be a nuisance," he says, acknowledging that he often finds himself at odds with the government he helped elect. He sees former heroes of the struggle growing rich, while the majority of South Africans remain poor. Perhaps most seriously, he sees a government that has failed to provide leadership on the AIDS crisis.

While Tsele is quick to criticize government, he also says many challenges facing South Africa today - such as poverty, AIDS, domestic violence - are not ones the government can solve alone. And while South Africa's many churches disagree on issues like gay marriage and condom use, they agree that values like morality and love must be reinstilled.

Although Tsele has been praised for his leadership on issues like AIDS, at times he has also been accused - even from within his own organization - of sounding too much like a government minister, particularly on the issue of Zimbabwe.

While much of the world found fault in last year's election of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, the SACC declared the elections legitimate. For someone whose political ideas were honed in the Black Consciousness movement, it was not easy to criticize Mr. Mugabe, himself a liberation hero, for taking land from rich whites and giving it to poor blacks. But as the situation there has deteriorated, Tsele and the council have become more outspoken and more active in trying to negotiate a solution.

Despite the challenges still facing South Africa, Tsele is still hopeful for the country's future. "We must not be peddlers of gloom and doom," he says firmly. "One thing we have to deal with is the fact that we are now in government. We have to figure out how to be responsible citizens, responsible critics."

[Full HTML version of this story which may include photos, graphics, and related links](#)

Appendix 5:

Additional Web Resources:

South Africa's official Web site for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/>

Center that helped in the TRC's creation and implementation:

<http://www.csvr.org.za/projects/truthcom.htm>

For current South Africa news stories

<http://allafrica.com/>

Numerous links to a wide range of selected topics concerning South Africa, including parliament, political organizations, stock exchange, tourist information, education, etc.:

<http://adminet.com/world/za/>

Web site of the South African government

<http://www.gov.za/>

Sample United Nations resolution against apartheid

<http://ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/243/56/IMG/NR024356.pdf?OpenElement>

References:

BBC's World Service:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/africa/features/storyofafrica/12chapter7.shtml>

Excerpt from the Constitutional Rights Foundation, "Bill of Right in Action," Spring 1996 (12:2), Updated June 2000:

http://crf-usa.org/bria/bria12_2.html

BBC's Special Report:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/truth_and_reconciliation/202453.stm

Witness Magazine:

Printer-friendly version of <http://www.thewitness.org/article.php?id=713>

Contemporary Africa Database:

<http://people.africadatabase.org/en/profile/3653.html>

African National Congress Website:

<http://www.anc.org.za/un/conference/sbrittion.html>

Quick Guide to Apartheid and Its End:

After a long history of racial tension in South Africa, the National Party came to power in 1948 on a ticket of racial segregation and support for poor Afrikaners (white Dutch living in the country). The National Party immediately passed laws to establish the apartheid structure of government, including these three most significant blocks of legislation:

1. **The Race Classification Act:** Every citizen suspected of not being European was classified according to race.
2. **The Mixed Marriages Act:** Marriage between people of different races was prohibited.
3. **The Group Areas Act:** People of certain races were forced into living in designated areas.

Under apartheid, every citizen was classified each year into four categories: White, Black (Native), Indian, and Colored (mixed race). In one test, officials would put a comb through the person's hair—if it got stuck, that meant the person would be identified as Black.

Apartheid drew opposition since its inception, most notably from the Black organization African National Congress (ANC) and English-speaking South Africans and young Afrikaners. Among other protests, in 1960, the ANC organized a peaceful demonstration over the inferior schooling of Black children in a township called Sharpeville. Police fired into the crowd and killed 69 people.

After that, the ANC was outlawed and turned increasingly to armed revolutionary activities. Nelson Mandela, the ANC's most prominent leader, was arrested and jailed many times for protest; in 1964, he and other ANC leaders were sentenced to life in prison for sabotage and treason.

Even so, opposition protests continued, and in 1976, Black school children in Soweto, a Black township outside of Johannesburg, began demonstrating against the required use of the Afrikaner language in their schools. The government responded this time with even more violence than it had before and killed, among others, 134 people under the age of 18. Anti-apartheid demonstrations and other activities continued into the 1980s.

Throughout this time, the international community was beginning to take note: South Africa had been banned from the Olympic Games, and many nations, including the United States, applied economic sanctions. Some individuals took part in boycotts of South African products and banks, as in the famous South African apple boycott of 1977, led by German churchwomen.

At the same time, the percentage of whites living in South Africa was shrinking, dipping to just 14 percent by the end of the 1980s. In the face of this decline, some white South African leaders began to look at the situation more realistically: How long could such a small group hope to dominate an ever-increasing number of Black South Africans? One such leader was Frederik Willem (F.W.) de Klerk, who became president of South Africa in 1989.

An attorney like Nelson Mandela, de Klerk realized that South Africa had to change and worked to dismantle apartheid. In 1990, he released Mandela from prison and began negotiating with the ANC to transfer power from the white minority to the Black majority. The ANC, for its part, abandoned its support for an armed revolution.

In 1991, de Klerk and Mandela agreed to end white-minority rule without bloodshed, and in 1994, South Africa held its first all-race elections. Although many expected violence during these long-anticipated elections, peace prevailed, and the ANC gained control of the national parliament with 63 percent of the vote. The parliament, in turn, chose Nelson Mandela as the new president of South Africa.

During his inauguration on May 10, 1994, Nelson Mandela remarked, "We understand there is no easy road to freedom. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world."

The challenges now faced by President Mandela and the Black majority government were immense: the Black majority suffered from a shortage of land, jobs, education, housing, and healthcare. In response, Mandela's government introduced a strategy called "Growth, Employment, and Redistribution," which sought to encourage open markets, privatization, and a favorable investment climate.

In a significant push for unity, Mandela and the new congress created South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995 to investigate crimes committed during apartheid. Mandela named Desmond Tutu, Archbishop of Cape Town and first Black leader of the Anglican Church in South Africa, as chair of the TRC. The TRC's primary objective was to expose crimes committed, not necessarily punish the perpetrators, in an effort to reconcile and move on from South Africa's dark past. In that regard, the TRC has been hailed as one of the more successful truth commissions in recent history, having sorted through more than 20,000 statements from victims of human rights abuses and 7,000 applications for amnesty. The work of the TRC drew out apologies from some former white leaders like de Klerk and culminated in a report published in 1998. Tutu continued his work in reconciliation from his position in the church.

Mandela retired from office in June 1999, succeeded by his trusted deputy, Thabo Mbeki. Mbeki is currently the president of South Africa.

Quick Guide to the Church and Apartheid

During apartheid, the church often used theology to justify white superiority. In 1957, in fact, the Native Laws Amendment Act contained a 'Church Clause,' which allowed Africans to be barred from a worship service if they were considered to be 'causing a nuisance.'

According to the account of Can Themba, a magazine writer in South Africa at the time, the treatment from independent churches was unpredictable. Some allowed Blacks to enter and others abruptly turned them away.

In recent years, church organizations, most notably the Dutch Reformed Church, have been coming forward to take a more active role in propelling South Africa away from its dark past. The Dutch Reformed Church, once ostracized by the South African Council of Churches, is now a significant force in South African politics; in 2004, it rejoined the Council in what many consider a milestone in the country's reconciliation process. A spokesman for the Church said that the 3-million-member denomination apologized for its past and was "humbled" by its acceptance into the Council.

The South African Council of Churches, then, has been stepping up its political involvement in recent years. In many ways, the church offers a prophetic voice in the face of struggles: Njongonkulu Ndungane, archbishop of the Anglican Church in the Province of Southern Africa, said "The church has a right and a responsibility to hold up government decisions to a lens of moral scrutiny." Church leaders like Ndungane and Molefe Tsele, general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, are sizeable forces in post-apartheid issues like the remaining racial discrimination and economic development.