

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

“WE HAVE A GOD WHO DOESN’T SAY, ‘AH . . . GOT YOU!’ NO. GOD SAYS, ‘GET UP.’ AND GOD DUSTS US OFF AND GOD SAYS, ‘TRY AGAIN.’”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s work has contributed to confronting the bigotry and violence of South Africa’s apartheid system. Born in 1931 in Klerksdorf, he graduated from the University of South Africa in 1954 and was ordained a priest in 1960. He studied and taught in England and South Africa, and in 1975, he was appointed dean of St. Mary’s Cathedral in Johannesburg, becoming the first black South African to hold that position. In 1978 he then became the first black general secretary of the South African Council of Churches. Outspoken against the evils of apartheid, he was vilified by friends, foes, press, and politicians, alike. Yet through extraordinary patriotism, commitment to humanity, his vision, and ultimately his faith, he persevered. After South Africa’s first democratic, nonracial elections in 1994, which effectively ended eighty years of white minority rule, the new parliament created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, appointing Tutu as its head to lead his country in an agonizing and unwavering confrontation of the brutality of the past. His faith is exemplified by his belief that the battle for the triumph of good will be won or lost, not by prayers alone, but by actions taken to confront evil here on earth. Today, Archbishop Tutu chairs “The Elders” a group of prominent world leaders who contribute their integrity and moral stature to deal with some of the world’s most pressing issues. Other members include Kofi Annan, Mary Robinson, Aung San Suu Kyi, and fellow Speak Truth to Power Defenders, Muhammad Yunus and Jimmy Carter.



Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ©2000 Eddle Adams

INTERVIEW TAKEN FROM KERRY KENNEDY’S BOOK *SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER*, 2000

There’s a high level of unemployment in South Africa that helps fuel a serious level of crime. These things feed off one another because the crime then tends to make foreign investors nervous. And there aren’t enough investors to make a significant impact on the economy so the ghastly legacies of apartheid—deficits in housing, in education, and health—can be truly addressed.

If you were to put it picturesquely, you would say this man and this woman lived in a shack before April 1994. And now, four years down the line, the same man and woman still live in a shack. One could say that democracy has not made a difference in material existence, but that’s being superficial.

There are changes of many kinds. Things have changed significantly for the government, despite the restrictions on resources. The miracle of 1994 still exists and continues despite all of these limiting factors that contribute to instability. They are providing free health care for children up to the age of six and for expectant mothers. They are providing free school meals and education through elementary school. But the most important change is something that people who have never lived under repression can never quite understand—what it means to be free. I am free.

How do I describe that to you who have always been free? I can now walk tall with straight shoulders, and have this sense of pride because my dignity, which had been trodden underfoot for so long, has been restored. I have a president I love—who is admired by the whole world. I now live in a country whose representatives do not have to skulk around the international community. We are accepted internationally, in sports, etcetera. So some things have changed very dramatically, and other things have not changed.

When I became archbishop in 1986, it was an offense for me to go and live in Bishopscourt, the official residence of the Anglican archbishop of Cape Town. Now we live in a village that used to be white, and nobody turns a head. It's as if this is something we have done all our lives. Schools used to be segregated rigidly, according to race. Now the schools are mixed. Yes, whites tend to be able to afford private schools. But government schools, which in the past were segregated, have been desegregated. Now you see a school population reflecting the demography of our country.

I was an advocate for sanctions and as a result, most of the white community regarded me as the man they most loved to hate. They would say, "Sanctions are going to hurt blacks." Yet South Africa was prosperous largely on the basis of cheap labor, using the iniquitous migratory labor system, where black men lived in single-sex hostels for eleven months of the year. Even my constituents were ambivalent about me. And so you had graffiti like: "I was an Anglican until I put Tu and Tu together." Some were really quite funny, like "God loves Tutu" adding, "The gods must be crazy." If looks could kill, they murdered me many times over. When I got on a plane in Johannesburg, or a train in Cape Town, the looks that I got were enough to curdle milk.

I received death threats, but that was not unexpected. If you choose to be in the struggle, you are likely to be a target. There are casualties in a struggle. Of course, it isn't nice to have threats and things of that sort. But it is par for the course.

When they threatened my children, that really upset me, that really got my goat. If somebody is intent on threatening me, that's okay. But they didn't have a modicum of decency. They could hear it wasn't me, it wasn't my wife, it was only a child on the telephone. They could have either dropped the telephone, or said, "Can you call your father, or call your mother?" But they didn't.

One threat came from a group called the "White Commando." They said that either I left the country by a certain date, or they were going to dispense with me. We told the police, who showed a sense of humor. One said, "Archbishop, why don't you do us a favor and stay in bed that day?"

I think my family would have felt that they were disloyal if they pressured me to change. I asked Leah, my wife, once, "Would you like me to keep quiet?" I have never been more wonderfully affirmed than when she said, "We would much rather be unhappy with you on Robben Island (the South African island prison where black political prisoners were jailed), than have you unhappy thinking you were free (in the sense that I had been disloyal to what I believed was God's calling to me)." Anything else would have tasted like ashes. It would have been living a lie. There is no

reason to live like that. I suppose I could have been maybe part of a struggle in a less prominent position. But God took me, as they say, "by the scruff of the neck," like Jeremiah, who for me is a very attractive character because he complained: "God, you cheated me. You said I was going to be a prophet. And all you made me do is speak words of doom and judgment and criticism against the people I love very much. And yet if I try not to speak the words that you want me to speak, they are like a fire in my breast, and I can't hold them in."

Now you can't believe it's the same country. The pleasures of conforming are very, very great. Now it's almost the opposite. I mean on the street, they stop to shake hands and talk. When we found out that I had cancer, I was getting cards from the most unlikely quarters. At least on one occasion a white woman wanted to carry my bags and her family gave up their seats for me. It's a change, yes, it's almost like we are in a different country.

Our country knew that it had very limited options. We could not have gone the way of the Nuremberg trial option because we didn't have clear winners and losers. We could have gone the route of the blanket amnesty and say wipe the slate clean. We didn't go either way. We didn't go the way of revenge, but we went the way of individual amnesty, giving freedom for truth, with people applying for forgiveness in an open session, so that the world and those most closely involved would know what had happened. We were looking particularly to the fact that the process of transition is a very fragile, brittle one. We were saying we want stability, but it must be based on truth, to bring about closure as quickly as possible.

We should not be scared with being confrontational, of facing people with the wrong that they have done. Forgiving doesn't mean turning yourself into a doormat for people to wipe their boots on. Our Lord was very forgiving. But he faced up to those he thought were self-righteous, who were behaving in a ghastly fashion, and called them "a generation of vipers."

Forgiveness doesn't mean pretending things aren't as they really are. Forgiveness is the recognition that a ghastliness has happened. And forgiveness doesn't mean trying to paper over the cracks, which is what people do when they say, "Let bygones be bygones." Because they will not. They have an incredible capacity for always returning to haunt you. Forgiveness means that the wronged and the culprits of those wrongs acknowledge that something happened. And there is necessarily a measure of confrontation. People sometimes think that you shouldn't be abrasive. But sometimes you have to be to make someone acknowledge that they have done something wrong. Then once the culprit says, "I am sorry," the wronged person is under obligation, certainly if he or she is a Christian, to forgive. And forgiving means actually giving the opportunity of a new beginning.

It's like someone sitting in a dank room. It's musty. The windows are closed. The curtains are drawn. But outside the sun is shining. There is fresh air. Forgiveness is like opening the curtains, opening the window, letting the light and the air into the person's life that was like that dank room, and giving them the chance to make this new beginning. You and I as Christians have such a wonderful faith,

because it is a faith of ever-new beginnings. We have a God who doesn't say, "Ah...Got you!" No, God says, "Get up." And God dusts us off and God says, "Try again."

In one instance, I was preaching in a posh church of some of the elite in the white Afrikaner community, a Dutch Reformed church, and I was probably the first black person to have done so.

I spoke about some of the things we had uncovered in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. For instance, the previous government had had a chemical and a biological warfare program which was not just defensive, and had been looking for germs that would target only black people. They wanted to poison Nelson Mandela so that he didn't survive too long after he was released from prison. One of the ministers in the church came and joined me in the pulpit, and broke down, saying he had been a military chaplain for thirty years and didn't know these things. He hoped he'd be forgiven and I embraced him. There are others who have been less than forthright, but generally you have had people say, "We are sorry." Most of our people are ready to forgive.

There are those who are not ready to forgive, like the family of Steve Biko. That demonstrates that we are dealing with something that is not facile. It is not cheap. It is not easy. To be reconciled is not easy. And they make us so very aware of that.

One of the extraordinary things is how many of those who have suffered most grievously have been ready to forgive—people who you thought might be consumed by bitterness, by a lust for revenge. A massacre occurred in which soldiers had opened fire on a demonstration by the ANC (African National Congress), and about twenty people were killed and many wounded. We had a hearing chock-a-block full with people who had lost loved ones, or been injured. Four officers came up, one white and three black. The white said: "We gave the orders for the soldiers to open fire"—in this room, where the tension could be cut with a knife, it was so palpable. Then he turned to the audience and said, "Please, forgive us. And please receive these, my colleagues, back into the community." And that very angry audience broke out into quite deafening applause. It was an incredible moment. I said, "Let's keep quiet, because we are in the presence of something holy."

RECONCILIATION

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU

LESSON GRADE 9-12
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE: JUSTICE

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

Article 6: Right to Recognition as a Person before the Law

Article 7: Right to Equality before the Law

Article 8: Right to Remedy by a Competent Tribunal

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What approaches are used to resolve conflict?
- What needs to be in place for reconciliation to be successful?

TIME REQUIREMENT: 80 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Know who Archbishop Desmond Tutu is and why he is a Nobel Prize recipient and human rights defender.
- Distinguish between different approaches to achieving justice and resolving conflict.
- Advance peaceful means to conflict resolution.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9

VOCABULARY:

- Reconciliation
- Apartheid
- Afrikaner
- Patriotism
- Restorative justice
- Repression
- Post-conflict
- Revenge
- Genocide
- Amnesty
- African National Congress

CONCEPTS:

- Justice
- Human rights
- Individual Responsibility

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED::

Internet Access

TEACHER TIP:

- Students should have an introduction to at least one case of internal conflict, political or ethnic.
- This lesson should be taught after students have studied the post World War II world and global issues.

MATERIALS:

- Interview with Desmond Tutu from *Speak Truth To Power* www.rfkhumanrights.org / click on **Speak Truth to Power** / click on “Defenders” tab
- Desmond Tutu: Hope in Troubled Times <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ILCdwJj37iw>
- Desmond Tutu: Truth and Reconciliation: <http://blogs.nysut.org/sttp/2010/11/06/video-desmond-tutu/>

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Ask students to read the interview with Archbishop Tutu from *Speak Truth To Power* and view “Desmond Tutu: Truth and Reconciliation”: <http://blogs.nysut.org/sttp/defenders/desmond-tutu/> and <http://blogs.nysut.org/sttp/2010/11/06/video-desmond-tutu/>. In this lesson, students will gain a greater understanding of ways to resolve conflict.
- After reading the interview and viewing the video, conduct a class discussion based on these questions:

Interview:

- How does Archbishop Desmond Tutu define forgiveness?
- What examples of forgiveness does he write about?

Video:

- What are the three ways the archbishop gives as examples on how to deal with post-conflict reconciliation? Give your interpretation of each example.
- What did Archbishop Tutu mean when he said, “The past refuses to lie down quietly,” with regard to reconciliation after apartheid was outlawed?

ACTIVITY 1:

Carousel Activity:

- Write the following words on flip chart paper and post them on the classroom walls: Punishment, Revenge, Reconciliation, and Retribution.
- Ask the students to write their “first thoughts” about each word.
- After they have completed responding to each word, ask the students to write one word or statement under the appropriate word.
- Break students into four groups and distribute one word per group. Have each group discuss and present the collective thinking about the word they were given.
- As a class, discuss the responses and decide which approach will bring about the best resolution.

ACTIVITY 2:

Give students the following quotations and discuss their meaning:

“Until we can forgive, we will never be free.”—Nelson Mandela (anti-apartheid activist, former president of South Africa)
“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”—Nelson Mandela
“Reconciliation is to understand both sides; to go to one side and describe the suffering being endured by the other side, and then go to the other side and endure the suffering being endured by the first side.”—Thich Nhat Hanh (Vietnamese monk and activist)

- Divide students into two groups for a debate. Allow time for students to discuss their strategies for the debate and to write talking points.
- One side should argue that reconciliation is necessary.
- One side should argue against reconciliation.
- After the debate, discuss how neither side of the debate has to exclude the other.
- Reconciliation includes justice.
- Use this quote:
“Reconciliation should be accompanied by justice, otherwise it will not last. While we all hope for peace, it shouldn’t be peace at any cost but peace based on principle, on justice.”—Corazon Aquino (former president of the Philippines; first female president in Asia)
- Point out continuing problems in countries or for groups which have not reconciled.
- Have students try to think of other countries in which reconciliation has succeeded or failed.
- Students should pick a divided country/region and write a paragraph of forgiveness from the perspective of each side to the other.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ‘ratifying’ them and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)

- **Article 3:** Prevention, Prohibition and Eradication of Apartheid and Racial Segregation
- **Article 5:** Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- **Article 6:** Protection and Remedies against Racial Discrimination

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR)

For more information, visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ website: www.ohchr.org

BECOME A DEFENDER

- Watch the video clip Desmond Tutu: Hope in Troubled Times: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILCdwJj37iw>. While Archbishop Tutu is widely known for his role in the Truth and Reconciliation hearings in South Africa, he is a passionate believer that each and every person can make a difference.
- Start a peer mediation program in your school. If there is already one, become involved.
- Create materials such as posters and brochures to use in a teach-in at your school, community center, faith-based group, or civic group. The materials should specify a global conflict (including the USA) and attempts to reconcile the parties' differences. Consider how these local groups could assist in helping the global organizations.
- Draft a play using a global conflict that is in negotiations for reconciliation. Use information from the archbishop's interview and videos, as well as knowledge of social studies to write a convincing argument for reconciliation.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation in Rwanda:

<http://www.peacemakers.ca/research/Africa/RwandaPeaceLinks.html>

This website lists organizations working on peacebuilding in Rwanda. This list consists of both government and civil society organizations and is largely edited by its readership.

Race and Reconciliation:

<https://www.mott.org/work/civil-society/>

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation funds organizations that work in South Africa and the Western Balkans to overcome legacies of violent ethnic or racial conflicts.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation:

<http://forusa.org/>

The Fellowship of Reconciliation, with a history of almost a hundred years of work for peace, justice and non-violence, focuses the power of compassionate action by individuals throughout the world to their work for reconciliation.

EurasiaNet.org:

<https://beta.eurasianet.org>

EurasiaNet.org provides information and analysis about political, economic, environmental and social developments in the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as in Russia, Turkey, and Southwest Asia.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

Assistance (International IDEA):

<https://www.idea.int/our-work/what-we-do/conflict-security>

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) focuses on supporting stronger democratic institutions and processes, and more sustainable, effective and legitimate democracy. .